Parental Leave Policies in Austria: Equal rights, unequal consequences?

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Historical development

- **1957**: Parental leave for employed mothers
- **1961**: paid at low level for 1 year
- **1990**: Parental leave for both parents when employed; 2 years paid;
- **1997**: paid for 2 years only if father takes half a year
- **2002**: Childcare allowance for all parents for 30 months (+ additional 6 months if both parents share)
  - **24 months** Parental leave for both employed parents since **2002**
- **2008**: Childcare allowance for 30(+6), 20(+4) and 15(+3) months
- **2010**: additional short flat-rate option 12(+2), additional income-based Childcare allowance for 12 months (+additional 2 months if shared)
# Historical development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parental leave Eligibility</th>
<th>Payment Eligibility</th>
<th>Addit. income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Low level (~€ 415/month)</td>
<td>~€ 300/month</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Employed mothers only</td>
<td>Low level for 24 months</td>
<td>~€ 1,200/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Employed mothers (and fathers)</td>
<td>Low level for 18 (+6 if shared) months</td>
<td>~€ 1,350/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Employed mothers (and fathers)</td>
<td>Low level for 30 (+6 if shared) months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low level for 30(+6), 20(+4), 15(+3) months</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low level for 12(+2) - 30(+6) months</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Addit. income** changes from year to year.
Political aims

(1) **Better reconciliation of family and employment** through more flexibility in the flat-rate ‘account’ model

(2) **Higher involvement of fathers** through family time and partner bonus

(3) **Financial improvement for lone parents** through longer entitlement and higher income threshold

(4) Positive long-term effects for **labour force participation of mothers** and for **gender equality**
Current policies (since March 2017)

Maternity leave (*Mutterschutz*)
8 weeks before the expected due date and 8 to 12 weeks after

**New: Family time** (*Familienzeit*)
full-time leave period for fathers between 28 and 31 days within 91 calendar days after the birth of the child – *new*: legal claim from 1.9.2019 onwards

Parental leave (*Elternkarenz*)
Until the child reaches two years. This entitlement is per family.
Current policies (since March 2017)

New: Childcare allowance account: (until 2017: flat-rate 12+2/15+3/20+4/30+6)
- 12-28 months with €12,400 in total if taken by one parent
- 15-35 months with €15,500 in total if shared at least 80/20
- Additional earnings of up to €16,200 a year (~ €1,300/month)

Childcare allowance, income-related:
- 12(+2 if shared) months – 80% replacement, €12,000 min. (for one parent)
  – up to €28,000 (if shared)
- Additional earnings may not exceed €6,800 a year

New: Partner bonus if shared at least 40/60, + €1,000
Current policies (since March 2017)

Childcare allowance

→ **Eligibility**: all parents regardless of gender, parental status, employment status, partnership status and citizenship

→ *Universal parenthood model with gender-sensitive access* (Dobrotić/Blum 2019)

Parental leave

→ **Eligibility**: for employed parents

→ *gender-neutral access* (Dobrotić/Blum 2019)
Unequal outcomes and consequences

• Lone parents
• Unemployed parents
• Take-up rates
• Shared parental leave
• Employment and salaries after birth/after leave
• Foster parents in severe cases
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Take-up of childcare allowance

Father’s involvement

Source: Austrian Federal Chancellery, 2018
Sharing childcare allowance or parental leave?

Women’s re-entry: quota and duration in days

Quelle: L&R Database ‘WIMON 2006 bis 2014’, 2017
Employment of mothers and fathers with children < 15

Source: Statistics Austria 2017

- Not employed/unemployed
- On parental leave
- In part-time employment
- In full-time employment
Employment of couples with children < 15
Child Penalties in Earnings in Austria/Germany

Source: Kleven et al. 2019
Reasons

Structural level:

• **Gender-neutral** right to parental leave until 2\textsuperscript{nd} birthday
• **Gender-sensitive** access to childcare allowance until 1\textsuperscript{st} to \sim 3\textsuperscript{rd} birthday
• Decoupled
• Childcare facilities for children under age 3 scarce especially in rural areas

Social norms:

• Gender ideologies (Grunow et al 2018)
„All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job“ (Source: EVS 2018; Berghammer/Schmidt 2019)
Reasons

Individual and couple level:

• Historically developed social norms and cultural perceptions (Schmidt 2018; Schmidt/Vogl/Zartler 2019; Schmidt/Rieder 2016; Berghammer/Schmidt 2019; Mauerer/Schmidt 2019)
  • re motherhood → ‘My focus is the family, I earn a bit of extra money.’
  • re fatherhood → ‘I want to earn more, so I’m able to afford more for the child’
  • re child’s well-being → ‘He is still so small, we don’t want to leave him there’
  • Norms of gendered responsibilities at parents’ workplaces → ‘You’re a mother, so, how will you cope?’
Political aims

(1) Better reconciliation of family and employment
(2) Higher involvement of fathers
(3) Financial improvement for lone parents
(4) Positive long-term effects for *labour force participation of mothers* and for *gender equality*
Conclusions

• Gender-neutral parental leave
• Highly flexible Childcare allowance
• Asymmetric design
• Family time low paid
• Partner bonus low-paid
Conclusions

• Gender-neutral policy ⇒ non-transferable allowance and leave
• Childcare allowance ⇔ parental leave
• ⇒ Childcare facilities
• ⇒ Parents’ workplaces

(Dearing 2016; Dobrotić/Blum 2019; Doucet 2013; Grunow/Evertsson 2019)
Questions?
Remarks?

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References


