

# Leave Policies in the Time of Pandemic: an overview from the International Review on Leave Policies and Research 2020

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- Country note contributors to the *International Review for Leave Policies and Research 2020* were asked to provide information regarding the national policy responses to the Covid-19 pandemic for parents and other carers
- We have information for **41 countries**, section 3 in country notes, a summary and a table in the front section of the review. See [www.leavenetwork.org](http://www.leavenetwork.org)

# Policy responses up to the end of June 2020

1. Childcare and schools
2. Parental leave
3. Any other measures for parents and other carers

# 1. Childcare and Schools

- An extremely common, though not universal response, has been that ECEC (early childhood education and care) settings and schools have been **mandated to close for a certain period of time** between February and June 2020 (and beyond, but data collection ended in June)
- The periods of closure varied across and within countries
- Sometimes, ECEC did not close, but schools did
- When closure has been mandated, it has sometimes been total, but more frequently, there has been **some provision available for the children of key workers** and others who had particular reason to need it. This was particularly the case for younger children
- Even where formal ECEC has been available in theory, it has typically not been particularly well used by key workers in practice, who evidently have usually preferred to find other childcare solutions where possible
- For excellent detailed data see <https://fra.europa.eu/>

# Other Gaps in Care

- In addition to ECEC, it has been noted in several country notes (e.g. Austria, China), that where (informal and/or formal) long-term care is regularly provided by **migrant workers** who have been unable to travel from their home countries or regions, this has also led to a **care gap** during the pandemic that needs to be addressed by family members
- Also, **other day care settings** for adults requiring care as well as facilities for children with disabilities have been closed, which has led to a care gap that needs to be addressed by family members

## 2. Parental Leave

- Many countries have made **no changes to existing Parental leave** regulations
- A few countries (e.g. Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia) have **extended entitlements during lockdown**, in the case that the end of a benefit was due to occur at that point in time
- Another response found in a handful of countries (e.g. Québec in Canada, Luxembourg, New Zealand) has been to exceptionally **allow key workers to interrupt leave** in a way that might not normally be possible, so that they can go back to work without losing entitlement
- A few countries (such as Bulgaria, Germany) have considered how the lockdown might impact on **future eligibility to leaves** (such as months with income losses due to short-time work being exempt from future Parental benefit calculations for expecting parents) and taken action accordingly

# Emergency Leave

- A few countries were reasonably well set up with existing leave regulations, such as Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Sweden, as they **already allowed access to emergency leaves** and leaves to care for a sick child or relative
- Some countries have enacted **new temporary emergency leave measures** to provide job protection and (mostly partial) wage replacement to parents, in particular to parents of children with disabilities, and in a few cases other carers, who are impacted by day care closures and who may not be able to work from home
- Not all forms of leave are paid (or paid for very long)
- In most cases, there are **eligibility restrictions** on access to these temporary leaves, so it should not be assumed that all parents would have had access

# 3. Other Measures for Parents

- A very common response has been to **encourage workers to work from home** where possible rather than take such emergency leave. Sometimes a flexible approach to working has been the only policy response. Sometimes this has been reinforced by emergency temporary laws, sometimes it has been left between employers and employees to work out and not actually enacted into law
- Specific measures targeted at parents include free ECEC (e.g. Australia); **cash allowances** and/or one-off payments (e.g. Austria, France)
- Many countries considered ways to ensure parents on a low income were able to **feed their children** adequately (e.g. Chile, Estonia, Sweden)



# Pregnancy and Birth

- Extra pregnancy protection was available in some countries (e.g. Denmark)
- Fathers were not welcome at delivery of their babies during the pandemic (e.g. Sweden, UK – other countries?)

# Support for Other Carers

- Temporary leaves to care for those over 18 years who require support (e.g. Austria, Canada, Luxembourg) or for children with disabilities of any age (e.g. Cyprus)
- Presumption of priority to 'smart' work to those caring for or those with serious disabilities (e.g. Italy)
- Number of absence days to provide assistance to disabled family members increased (e.g. Italy)

# Support for Workers (who might sometimes be carers)

- Many countries have introduced a range of extraordinary social assistance and unemployment related assistance, much of which will have supported parents, even if they were not a specific target group
- Some governments are supporting employers (to support their employees)

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# Summary

- Parents and other carers who rely on formal care settings and schools have been profoundly impacted by the pandemic. The demands on them to provide care have increased greatly
- Some countries have considered how to support parents and other carers directly with small changes to existing leave policies or 'emergency' policies
- Other countries have focused efforts on supporting workers, some of whom may be parents or carers

If citing the complete review, please do so as:

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[http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp\\_and\\_r\\_reports/](http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/)

If citing an individual country note, please use the citation given as a footnote on the first page of that country note.

Please see individual country notes for more information.