



Sustainability@Leave

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Parenting Leave Policies in Croatia and Inequalities





Parenting Leaves in Croatia: Types of Leave and Design Elements



Parenting Leave Policy in Croatia

- Maternity Leave (hrv. rodiljni dopust/rodiljna pošteta od rada/rodiljna briga o djetetu)
- Parental Leave (hrv. roditeljski dopust/roditeljska pošteta od rada/ roditeljska briga o djetetu)
- Paternity Leave (hrv. očinski dopust)
- Other leave types: adoption leave; foster parents' leave; breastfeeding leave; bereavement leave; career break; carer's leave (short or long-term variants)



Maternity leave

Length: 28 (or 45) calendar days before the expected date of birth & **until the child turns 6 months** of age

Benefit: 100%; minimum=€ 503.24, no ceiling

Obligatory: 98 days (28 before & 70 days after the birth)

Since day 71, leave is **transferable** + it can be used **full-time or part-time**

Paternity leave

Length: 20 working days (30 if multiple births)

Benefit: 100%; minimum=€ 503.24, no ceiling

Can be used until the child turns six months

Parental leave

Length: 4 months per parent for the 1st/2nd child; 15 months per parent for 3+ children/multiple births

Benefit: 100%; minimum=€ 503.24; ceiling=€3,001.80

Quota: 2 months

Can be used until the child turns 8

Can be used full-time or part-time, in one or several blocks

Parents can be on leave at the same time

All employed & self-employed eligible, but for **full benefit:** at least **6 months of continual insurance** (or **9 months** of insurance with interruptions **over the last two years** + benefit calculated based on the earnings in the last six months

Other parents: citizenship-based scheme (same post-natal leave length with minimum benefit of €503.24 per month)

- ✓ **unemployed, farmers & parents employed on different employment basis:** health insurance status; registered with the unemployment office & 3 years continuous residency (as a national or foreign citizen granted long-term residence or permanent stay)
- ✓ **parents outside the labour system** (retirement, incapacity, studying): health insurance status; 5 years continuous residency (as a national or foreign citizen granted long-term residence or permanent stay)



Parenting Leave Policy in Croatia: main recent changes

- **Increase in parental leave benefits, e.g.**
 - employment-based: ceiling on parental leave increased from 80% of the budgetary base rate (€353.04) to 120% (€529.72 in 2017), then 170% (€750,5 in 2020), 225,5% (€995,44 in 2022) and **680% (€3,001.80 in 2025)**
 - citizenship-based: from 50% (€220.72) to ... 114% (€ 503.24 in 2025)...
- **Introduction and extension of paternity leave** (in 2022, 10-15 working days to be extended in 2025 to 20-30 working days, 100%)
- **Eligibility criteria – insurance-based criteria relaxed:**
 - 2020: 9 months of continuous employment or 12 months within 24 months (it was 12 or 18 within 24 months)
 - 2022: 6 continuous months, or 9 within 24 months





Inequality-Reducing and Inequality-Generating Elements of Parental Leave Design in Croatia



Who is eligible, who not?

- **Mixed scheme** combining employment-based & citizenship-based entitlements
- **Relatively inclusive leave policy system, but:**
 - Persons granted international and subsidiarity protection & asylum seekers excluded from citizenship-based entitlements
 - Newly arrived migrants face more difficulties in meeting citizenship-based criteria due to a request for long-term & continuous residence to be eligible (3 to 5 years)
 - Parents in non-standard or precarious employment are eligible, but typically receive lower benefits
 - Same-sex parents eligible, if they have a partner-guardianship status (via court decision)
 - Blended/multiparent families are not recognised



What do we know about take-up rates?

- Take-up rates???
- Maternity leave: all eligible mothers take some leave; transferable part: 0.2% of all users were fathers in 2024
- Paternity leave: 16,044 in 2024 (vs number of births: 32,069)
- Parental leave: 3.77% of all parental leave users in 2024



Parenting Leave Policy in Croatia and Gender Equality

- Gender quality elements are mostly incorporated in leave policy design due to **EU conditionality** (parental leave quota & paternity leave)
 - a low ceiling on parental leave until 2025
 - still unclear effects of recent reforms
- Earlier studies on the **experience of fathers on leave** (Varga, 2021):
 - a low ceiling on benefits seen as an obstacle for leave take-up
 - employers' antagonism towards fathers' decision to use leave (e.g. employer's dissatisfaction with father's decision to use leave, difficulties in agreeing on the leave use with the employer, the employer's attempt to discourage one father from taking the leave)
 - stigma (in company or wider society)...





Final Discussion



Parenting Leave Policies in Croatia and Inequalities

- **Relatively inclusive** scheme, but exclusions still present (e.g. newly arrived migrants, persons granted international and subsidiarity protection & asylum seekers, blended/multiparent families are not recognised...)
- **Gender equality elements** incorporated in policy design, but most of the leave is for mothers
- **Weak administrative data** (access!) – effects?
 - E.g. non-standard workers (eligible but do they & how do they use the leave? See Dobrotić, https://www.incare-pyc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/InCARE_engsum.pdf)
- **Weak alignment with ECEC** (childcare gap!)

