



**Sustainability@Leave**

CA21150

Hana Hašková

## Parenting Leave Policies in the Czech Republic and Inequalities





## Parenting Leaves in the Czech Republic: Types of Leave and Design Elements



# Three main types of parenting leaves

- Maternity Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Parental Leave



# Maternity leave

- 28 weeks (37 weeks - multiple birth; 20 weeks - adoption)
- starts no earlier than 8 weeks before the expected date of birth; must not end earlier than 6 weeks after the birth
- **maternity leave benefit** pays 70% of reduced daily individual assessment base; capped

## Who is eligible?

- mothers who paid sickness insurance for 270 days in the last 2 years prior to the leave
- a father may receive maternity leave benefit instead of the mother from the 7th week after the birth

# Paternity leave

- 1 week introduced in 2018; extended to 2 weeks in 2022
- must be used within the first 6 weeks after the birth or adoption
- **paternity leave benefit** pays 70% of reduced daily individual assessment base; capped

## Who is eligible?

- employed fathers and entrepreneurs who paid sickness insurance for 3 months prior to the leave

# Parental leave

## Parental leave

- individual right of a parent until their child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday
- return to the job specified in their contract (since 2025: if a parent returns before the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, return to their original job)

## Parental benefit

- fixed total amount per child (350 000 CZK; approx. €14 466), which can be drawn in varying monthly payments within maximum limits depending on parents' previous income (higher-income parents may claim a higher monthly benefit)
- parents may take turns + adjust the monthly amount until the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday; cannot receive the benefit at the same time
- historically, recipients had to provide childcare all day and couldn't choose a higher monthly benefit
- recently, no limits to employment, income and use of daycare (except for child younger than 2: daycare limit of 120 hours/month)



# Inequality-Reducing and Inequality-Generating Elements of Parental Leave Design in the Czech Republic



# Who is (not) eligible and what do we know about take-up rates?

- access to maternity and paternity leave benefits is restricted to those who paid sickness insurance
  - e.g. full-time students, unemployed and parents with unstable employment histories excluded
- paternity leave benefit
  - used by approx. half of fathers, but a higher share of employed fathers due to the eligibility
  - not all eligible fathers use it due to the financial disadvantage of the capped benefit + cultural and organisational factors
- parental leave
  - fathers make up less than 2% of the parental benefit recipients
  - most mothers use parental benefit in low monthly payments until the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday
  - most mothers receive parental benefit after 28 weeks of paid maternity leave BUT mothers who are not eligible to paid maternity leave start receiving low monthly payments of parental benefit from childbirth

# Parenting Leave Policy in the Czech Republic and Gender Equality

- **factors contributing to the highly gendered use of parental leave**
  - policy design – fathers are eligible to parental leave, but there is no non-transferable payment connected because the non-transferable paid parental leave quota has not been implemented
  - high gender pay gap + capped benefits
  - strong but weakening “norm of threeness” + low access to daycare for children below the age of 3
- **parenting leave policy in the CR contributes to the gendered division of labour**
  - parental leave is used almost exclusively by mothers
  - among people aged 30-35, the gender gap in employment in the CR is among the largest in Europe
  - long-term detrimental effects on mothers’ wages and labour market trajectories

# Socioeconomic inequalities and heteronormativity

- incremental improvements (since 2008) were not inclusive
  - improved the situation mainly for middle-class families and parents with higher education
  - choice of shorter parental leave with higher monthly benefits limited in case of low-income families
  - increase in the access to childcare services (less affordable for low-income families)
- same-sex couples
  - no access to paid parenting leaves for non-biological and non-adoptive caregivers
  - an important change since 2025 – allowed adoption of a partner's child to same-sex couples in legal Partnerships
- increasing diversity of families and work trajectories calls for inclusive policies



# Final Discussion

## Existing research on parenting leave (PL) policies and inequalities in the CR

- impact on mothers' labour market participation, gender inequalities, fertility

## Research gaps

- lack of intersectional analyses; understudied processes contributing to the selectivity/inclusiveness of PL policies; relationships between PL policies and intergenerational reproduction of inequalities, involved fathering and changing norms of parenting; strategies of marginalised caregivers

