



Sustainability@Leave
CA21150



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Call for Grants

We are pleased to announce a new call for the Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) grants, Virtual Mobility Grants and Conference Grants.

Short-Term Scientific Mission Grants support research visit to a host organization located in a country different from applicant's country of affiliation. The visit must focus on specific work to be carried out within a defined period. Applicants may receive up to €4,000, depending on the duration of the stay and eligible expenses.

Virtual Mobility Grants support online collaborations on specific or broader topics that contribute to achieving the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) objectives and deliverables. These grants are intended to increase visibility and impact of the Sustainability@Leave Action. Applicants may receive up to €1,500.

For further information on STSM and Virtual Mobility Grants, including application

procedures, [click here](#).

Conference Grants are available to Sustainability@Leave members and are intended to support participation in conferences where applicants present work closely related to the topics addressed by the Action. Applicants may receive up to €750 under one of the following schemes:

- **Dissemination Conference Grant** – for all Sustainability@Leave members
- **Young Researcher and Innovator Conference Grant** – for Sustainability@Leave members under the age of 40
- **ITC Conference Grant** – for Sustainability@Leave members based in [ITC countries](#)

For further information on Sustainability@Leave Conference Grants and how to apply, please follow [this link](#).

Application opening (all grants): 16 February 2026

Grant period (all grants): 16 March 2026 – 10 September 2026

Please, note that due to a large interest in the STSM and Virtual Mobility grants so far, the processing of the applications may be delayed until mid-June.

Conference Grants applicants will be informed of the outcome within **four weeks** of submission.

Save the Date: Final Conference of the Sustainability@Leave Action



The final conference of COST Action Sustainability@Leave will bring together leading researchers, policymakers, and key stakeholders to assess the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of parental leave policies in the context of rapid social, demographic, and labour market change across Europe.

The event will present the main scientific and policy-relevant results of the Action and create space for dialogue between research and practice. Discussions will focus on how parental leave policies can better support gender equality, work–family reconciliation, child well-being, and broader social sustainability.

By connecting comparative research findings with national and European policy experiences, the conference aims to strengthen evidence-informed policymaking and stimulate future international research collaboration in the field of family policy.

Date: 26 May 2026

Location: Prague

Format: Hybrid event (in-person participation limited to approximately 80 participants)

Further information, including the programme and registration details, will follow shortly.

New Report on Knowledge Gaps in Parenting Leave Research



Mapping the Unknown: Research Gaps in Parenting Leave Inequality Research in Europe

Authors: Mare Ainsaar, Sonja Blum, Ruta Braziene, Jeanne Fagnani, Martin Gurin, Johanna Lammi-Taskula, Gerlinde Maurer, Marija Mosurovic, Dejana Pavlović, Thordis Reimer, Laurene Thil

The report builds on insights from a comprehensive review of research conducted across **24 European countries** and examines how parenting leave policies shape social inequalities and identifies important gaps in existing knowledge.

Key findings include:

- Existing research focuses predominantly on gender, particularly mothers' employment trajectories and fathers' leave uptake.
- Other dimensions of inequality — including income, insecure employment, migration background, health, disability, and family diversity — receive considerably less attention.
- Parenting leave policies tend to work best for parents in stable, well-paid employment, while those in precarious work are more likely to be excluded.
- Policy design is crucial: well-paid, individualised and flexible leave arrangements can reduce inequalities, but only when eligibility rules allow broad access.
- Workplace cultures and restrictive eligibility criteria often limit the effective use of formal rights.

The report concludes that making parenting leave more inclusive requires improved

data, broader research perspectives, and policy frameworks that reflect the diversity of contemporary families and labour markets across Europe.

Read the full report [here](#).

New Policy Brief on Parenting Leave Terminology

Policy Brief: Why Does Paid Parenting Leave Terminology Matter?

Developed by: Thordis Reimer,
Gerardo Meil, Pedro Romero-Balsas

This policy brief shows that the terms used for maternity, paternity, and parental leave are not neutral labels. They shape how rights are defined, how data are collected, and how evidence is interpreted by policymakers, researchers, and international organisations. Inconsistent or unclear terminology makes it harder to compare countries fairly, assess whether policies work, and learn from successful reforms.



The brief highlights several key concerns:

- Countries often use the same terms to describe substantially different entitlements and eligibility rules.
- International databases and comparative studies may simplify complex national arrangements.
- Apparent cross-national differences in research findings can sometimes reflect terminology choices rather than actual policy variation.

These challenges have practical implications. They may lead to misleading international comparisons, weaken the evidence base on gender equality and leave uptake,

and limit opportunities for effective policy learning.

The brief therefore calls for the development of a clearer comparative language. Rather than replacing national terminology, it proposes the use of “**parenting leave**” as an umbrella concept, combined with explicit distinctions between mother-only, father-only, and shared entitlements. Such an approach would strengthen policy transparency, improve monitoring, and support more robust evidence-based policymaking.

Read the full policy brief [here](#).

The Policy Brief is based on the findings published in Sustainability@Leave Report [Towards a comprehensive terminology on paid parenting leave](#) edited by **Gerardo Meil** and **Pedro Romero-Balsas**.

Expert Contribution to Evaluation of Dutch Paid Parental Leave

On 22 January 2026, Sustainability@Leave members **Prof. Alison Koslowski** (UCL), **Prof. Mara Yerkes** (Utrecht University), and **Prof. Anna Escobedo** (University of Barcelona) participated in an expert session on paid parental leave in the Netherlands. The session was organised as part of an ongoing policy evaluation led by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Their participation provided academic expertise to inform the evaluation process and contributed comparative and research-based insights into the development of paid parental leave policies. This engagement reflects Sustainability@Leave’s commitment to supporting evidence-informed policymaking and strengthening the connection between research and policy development.

European Parenting Leave Policies Dataset



European Parenting Leave Policies Dataset

Authors: Sonja Spitzer, Adèle Lemoine, Zhanxiong Song, Claudia Reiter, Angela Greulich, Agneta Herlitz, Alžběta Bártová, Elisa Brini, Zuzana Dančíková, Dovilė Galdauskaitė, Libertad González, Evi Hatzivarnava-Kazassi, Helena Honkaniemi, Sol P. Juárez, Rannveig Kaldager Hart, Ida Lykke Kristiansen, Anna Kurowska, Katre Pall, Barbara Pertold-Gebicka, Tatjana Rakar, Tapio Räsänen, Konstantina Rentzou, Pedro Romero Balsas, Eva-Maria Schmidt, Laurène Thil, Dora Tuda, Lili Vargha, Daniele Vignoli, Sander Wagner, Katharina Wrohlich.

A significant new resource for comparative policy research has been released. **Sonja Spitzer** and **Adèle Lemoine** at the Vienna Institute of Demography have published the **European Parenting Leave Policies (EPLP) Dataset**, providing harmonised historical data on the design of parenting leave policies across 21 European countries from 1970 to 2024.

The dataset includes 33 variables covering key dimensions such as leave duration, cash benefits, flexibility mechanisms, and incentives designed to encourage fathers' uptake. It offers valuable opportunities for rigorous cross-national and longitudinal analyses of policy development over time.

We are pleased that several Sustainability@Leave members contributed to the dataset as national experts: **Alžběta Bártová**, **Zuzana Dančíková**, **Anna Kurowska**, **Tatjana Rakar**, **Konstantina Rentzou**, **Pedro Romero Balsas**, **Eva-Maria Schmidt**, and **Laurène Thil**. Find the European Parental Leave Policies (EPLP) Dataset [here](#).

Sustainability@Leave Open Online Course Underway

On 12 November 2025, Sustainability@Leave launched its Open Online Course on *Parenting Leave Policies and Inequalities*. The course is coordinated by **Dr Johanna Lammi-Taskula** and **Dr Thordis Reimer**.

Each Wednesday, participants have the opportunity to attend a lecture delivered by a national expert and to engage in discussion on the design and implications of parenting leave policies across different country contexts. The course provides a platform for comparative exchange and critical reflection on how leave policies shape social inequalities.

To date, 14 lectures have taken place, with further sessions scheduled in the coming months. The course will run until **20 May 2026**.

We are grateful to the national experts and members of the Sustainability@Leave Action for their continued commitment to sharing their expertise and contributing to knowledge exchange in this field.

Further information about the Online Course is available [here](#).

Upcoming lectures:

- 04/03/2026 – **Hungary** – András Gábos
- 11/03/2026 – **Croatia** – Ivana Dobrotić
- 18/03/2026 – **Lithuania** – Rūta Brazienė
- 25/03/2026 – **Albania** – Oriola Hamzallari
- 01/04/2026 – **United Kingdom** – Margaret O'Brien
- 08/04/2026 – **Finland** – Johanna Närvi
- 15/04/2026 – **France** – Jeanne Fagnani
- 22/04/2026 – **Iceland** – Guðný Björk Eydal
- 29/04/2026 – **Greece** – Konstantina Rentzou
- 29/04/2026 – **Portugal** – Marisa Matias Silva
- 06/05/2026 – **Slovenia** – Tatjana Rakar
- 13/05/2026 – **Turkey** – Murat Mercan
- 20/05/2026 – **Sweden** – Ann-Zofie Duvander

Past lectures:

- 12/11/2025 – [Introduction](#) – Johanna Lammi-Taskula
- 19/11/2025 – [Bulgaria](#) – Elitsa Dimitrova
- 26/11/2025 – [Spain](#) – Gerardo Meil
- 03/12/2025 – [Serbia](#) – Dejana Pavlović
- 10/12/2025 – [Germany](#) – Thordis Reimer
- 17/12/2025 – [Estonia](#) – Mare Ainsaar
- 07/01/2026 – [Czechia](#) – Hana Hašková
- 14/01/2026 – [Denmark](#) – Christian Chrstrup Kjeldsen
- 28/01/2026 – [Belgium](#) – Laurène Thil
- 04/02/2026 – [Malta](#) – Anna Borg
- 11/02/2026 – [Slovakia](#) – Daniel Gerbery
- 18/02/2026 – [Netherlands](#) – Mara Yerkes
- 25/02/2026 – [Kosovo](#) – Artan Mustafa