Industrial relations

**Some progress of fathers taking paternity and parental leave in Europe over the past decade, but equal sharing of responsibilities remains low everywhere**

07 February 2019

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**The number of fathers taking advantage of their paternity leave entitlements has been on the rise in most countries over the past decade. However, with the exception of the initial family time typically taken around the time of the birth of the child, the data on parental leave suggest that this benefit is not yet fully exploited. The new report shows which Member States lag behind and will need to ensure the agreed individual right across the EU to paternity leave of 10 days and parental leave of at least 2 months.**

All EU Member States now have in place a paid entitlement for fathers to spend time with their children, either in the months around the time of the child’s birth or after this time. Between 2016 and 2018, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Cyprus were the last Member States to introduce such an entitlement for fathers.

However, this is not an individual right for fathers in all countries; in some countries, it is a family rather than individual right. Sometimes a father’s entitlement to it depends on the mother’s entitlement. Often, sub periods of ‘parental leave’ or ‘childcare’ are transferable between the parents, but it as is not always possible for both parents to take the leave (at least for a short period of time), in some cases the mother has to give her consent for the right to be transferred to the father.

While paternity leave taken around the time of the child’s birth is typically well paid – in the majority of cases with no significant loss of earnings – the periods are usually very short, ranging from a week or less (Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands) to two weeks (Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom); and in a few countries, the period is over two weeks.

Parental leave, in contrast, is typically less well compensated. In only around a third of the countries, the replacement ratio stands somewhere between 80% and 100%, but typically also with some upper thresholds and/or for shorter periods of the leave.

The report shows that progress has been made in several countries on increasing the share of fathers taking parental leave (Austria, Estonia for higher rates of benefits, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal), or in maintaining already high levels (Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden). But the research also shows that a good number of countries with available data remain at low levels of father participation (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania), despite some partial growth (Estonia for those receiving lower amounts of compensation or Slovakia).

This report has been compiled in the context of implementing the recently agreed EU Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. It brings together information on the incidence of fathers’ participation in paternity and parental leave from national statistics in Europe, in the form of the number of men among parents or per 100 children.