

Leave policies in the Czech Republic: the current issues

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Motives for improvements in parental leave system

- In the 1990s

- To release women from labour market
- Well-being of children

Recently

- pronatalist motives

Maternity leave

- 28 weeks (since 1987)
- 69% of gross daily wage (since 1993)
- Father could take maternity leave instead of mother only under exceptional circumstances

Parental leave

- Equal conditions for both parents were introduced since 2001
- Mother or father can take leave until the child's 3rd birthday
- Inconsistency in law related to parental leave and parental benefit: parental benefit is granted until the child's 4th birthday
- Parental benefit is a flat rate: in 2006 around €120 per month which is 20% of average gross wage

Recent changes in use of parental leave

- Since 2004 parents can work, full time or part time while receiving parental benefit
- Since 2001 parents can place a child under 3 years in a childcare facility for up to 5 days a month without losing parental benefit
- Since 2006 parents can place a 3 year old child in kindergarten for up to 4 hours each day without losing benefit

Family policy concept approved in 2005

- Confirmation of the direction introduced in the 1990s: rejection of de-familialist policies and emphasis on family responsibility in childcare
- As regards parental leave arrangements preference is given to well-being of children
- Modesty as regards the state support of childcare facilities for children younger than 3 years

Approved improvements in parental leave system since 2007

- Measures were prepared and approved within the election campaign in 2005-2006
- 1. the level of parental benefit will be doubled, thus it will make up 40% of the average gross wage
- 2. father will be able to take maternity leave instead of mother from the 7th week after the birth of the child

The current questions in research activities and political debate

- 1. How to involve fathers in childcare and family duties.
- 2. How to make parental leave system more flexible
- 3. Is there public demand for childcare facilities?

Farthers on parental leave

- In 2005 research was centred on the question „Why it is not attractive for men to stay at home with small child“
 - Financial situation
 - Opinion that childcare is preferable for women
- Negligible share of men on parental leave:
 - 2001 0,8%
 - 2005 1,5%
- In 2006 there is a medial campaign aimed to appreciate farther who have taken parental leave

Three – speed parental leave

1. to keep the current length of parental leave
2. to reduce the length of parental leave to 3 years together with the increase of parental benefit by 25%
3. to extend maternity leave together with an increase in financial compensation but at the same time to reduce parental leave to 1,5 year

Conclusion

- Parental leave arrangements support women to stay at home rather than support them to reconcile work and childcare.
- So far parental leave arrangements have failed to involve fathers in the childcare.