The State of Gender-Responsive Family Policies in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region
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In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a number of demographic and population trends have been observed, with countries in Eastern Europe experience a demographic transformation from population growth to population ageing, while Central Asian countries and Türkiye are home to youthful and growing populations. The importance of population dynamics for socioeconomic development and individual well-being, as well as for political stability and security, is critical, with demographic change significantly influencing countries’ progress towards achieving Agenda 2030.

In order to capitalize on these changes, governments, the private sector and civil societies need to ensure that they take a robust gender and intersectionality perspective when planning and implementing policies and interventions. Gender-responsive family policies are increasingly being seen as a powerful tool to do so, by supporting families’ care responsibilities, redistributing unpaid care work more equally between women and men, and removing barriers to women’s full participation in the labour force. Policies such as paternity leave, parental leave and flexible working arrangements can ensure that employees do not need to choose between the career and the family they want. Governments across the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region have become increasingly interested in adopting such policies, though their design and effectiveness have been mixed. A comparative analysis of national legal provisions on maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, carer’s leave, flexible working arrangements, and early childhood education and care was undertaken for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region to assess how far governments have come and what still needs to be done.

1. The Eastern Europe and Central Asia region includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as well as Kosovo. All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
Demographic change significantly influences countries’ progress towards achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals that are at its heart. Demographically resilient societies anticipate and understand the way populations are changing; develop responses that mitigate potentially negative effects for individuals, societies, economies and the environment; and harness the opportunities that demographic change can bring for people, prosperity and the planet.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia are experiencing diverse demographic shifts. Countries in Eastern Europe are at the forefront of a global demographic transformation from population growth to population ageing. Between 1994 and 2021, fertility declined from 1.8 to 1.4 live births per woman aged 15–49,² with all countries experiencing below-replacement fertility, including Albania (1.4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1.4), North Macedonia (1.4) and Ukraine (1.3).³ Fertility preferences remain far from being achieved. For instance, according to a 2018 survey of women and men in Albania, the ideal number of children per woman was, on average, 2.4 according to women and 2.3 according to men, well above the actual fertility rate.⁴ Individuals aged 65 years or older accounted for one in six people in Eastern European countries (15.8 per cent),⁵ with people in this age group accounting for 20.7 per cent of the population in Serbia; 18.1 per cent, in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and 17.4 per cent, in Ukraine.⁶

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³. Ibid.
⁵. World Population Prospects 2022.
⁶. Ibid.
Net population declines have been observed in all Eastern European countries, and by 2050 five countries are projected to see their populations shrink by at least 10 per cent: Belarus, 12.2 per cent; Albania, 14.0 per cent; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16.3 per cent; Serbia, 20.8 per cent; and Ukraine, 24.5 per cent.⁷ Population declines are exacerbated by significant outmigration of working-age populations, which affects productivity and the sustainability of ageing and family support systems, despite the remittances sent by migrant workers. Addressing population change in Eastern Europe therefore demands demographic resilience approaches that consider the impacts of low fertility, migration, population ageing and population decline on socioeconomic development and individual well-being, including social security systems, infrastructures and services. Supporting women and men in all their diversity to help them achieve their fertility and career aspirations through gender-responsive family policies represents a central part of such efforts.

In contrast, Central Asian countries and Türkiye host youthful and growing populations. In 2021, fertility rates stood at around three children per woman of reproductive age in Tajikistan (3.2), Kazakhstan (3.1), Kyrgyzstan (3.0), Uzbekistan (2.9) and Turkmenistan (2.7), and below replacement level in Türkiye (1.9).⁸ Young people aged 15–24 accounted for about one in six people in Central Asian countries (15.1 per cent)⁹ and Türkiye (15.4 per cent).¹⁰ By 2050, the population in all five Central Asian countries is projected to increase by at least 30 per cent,¹¹ and in Türkiye, by 13.0 per cent.¹² In these countries, demographic resilience may be achieved by harnessing the potential benefits of the demographic dividend. Investments in the education, health and employment of all adolescents and youth may result in accelerated economic growth.

Across the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, women are living longer and healthier lives than men. Between 1994 and 2021, female life expectancy at birth

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7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
increased from 70.8 to 75.9 years, while among men it rose from 62.7 to 69.3 years.\textsuperscript{13} The COVID-19 pandemic, however, limited longevity gains during this period. While gender differentials in life expectancy have narrowed over time, they exceed eight years in six countries due to much higher mortality rates among men, including in Ukraine (10.2 years), Belarus (10.4 years) and Armenia (10.8 years).\textsuperscript{14} Consequently, ageing has a female face, with women accounting for over 6 in every 10 people aged 65 or older in the region (62.0 per cent).\textsuperscript{15}

In recent years, the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region has witnessed an increase in forced displacement. The ongoing war in Ukraine has caused the largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II. As of 8 November 2022, Europe had recorded 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine; 86 per cent are women and girls.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, in 2020 Türkiye was home to the largest refugee and asylum-seeker population (3.9 million) in the world as a result of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.\textsuperscript{17}

Family structures and living arrangements have evolved alongside fertility declines, gains in life expectancy and changing migration patterns. Women and men in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region continue to delay marriage and parenthood. Women’s mean age at the birth of their first child increased from 26.0 to 28.3 years between 1994 and 2021.\textsuperscript{18} In 2021, women delivered their first child at the youngest average age in Azerbaijan (25.7 years) and Tajikistan (26.5 years), and at the oldest average age in Serbia (29.5 years) and Kosovo (30.0 years).\textsuperscript{19}

Marriage is becoming less central in shaping life-course transitions, with rises in the proportion of people marrying late or not at all. Decreases in marriage rates are partly offset by increases in cohabitation, which can represent an alternative or a prelude to marriage.\textsuperscript{20} In Georgia, for instance, the share of cohabiting couples with and without

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{18} World Population Prospects 2022.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Fulfilling the Potential of Present and Future Generations: Report on ICPD Programme of Action Implementation in the UNECE Region (United Nations publication, 2018).
\end{itemize}
children among all households increased from 0.6 per cent to 2.0 per cent between 2000 and 2019, while that of married couples with and without children decreased from 74.3 per cent to 71.4 per cent.21

The increased prevalence of divorce and male outmigration is leading to rises in the number of single-mother households, which are most common in Kyrgyzstan (7.0 per cent of all households) Georgia (7.3 per cent) Belarus (7.6 per cent), the Republic of Moldova (7.9 per cent), Kazakhstan (8.8 per cent) and Ukraine (9.0 per cent), based on data for 2012–2019.22 Gains in life expectancy and higher male mortality have led to an increase in one-person households, many of which are headed by older women. Data for 2012–2019 shows that one-person households account for more than 2 in every 10 households in Serbia (21.8 per cent), the Republic of Moldova (22.6 per cent), Ukraine (25.0 per cent) and Belarus (29.8 per cent).23

The importance of population dynamics for socioeconomic development and individual well-being, as well as for political stability and security, is therefore critical. The complex interrelationships between low fertility, internal and international migration, and ageing, and their effects on population growth and age structures have led governments in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region to implement human rights–based policies, including gender-responsive family policies, to support more inclusive, equal and prosperous societies.

23. Ibid.
Gender-responsive family policies benefit women, men and society at large

Demographic shifts coupled with economic and social change and efforts by international organizations and feminist and women’s movements have led governments and the private sector in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region to make gender-responsive family policies part of their policies. Entitlements such as maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, carer’s leave, flexible working arrangements, and affordable early childhood education and care have been increasingly regarded as a means to support women in fulfilling their career and fertility aspirations, redistribute the household and care burden more equally, and promote child development. Besides these mutually reinforcing objectives, gender-responsive family policies support building tolerant, non-discriminatory and demographically resilient societies.

Yet existing policy gaps as well as gender norms and stereotypes continue to hinder the achievement of a gender-balanced reconciliation between family and work responsibilities in all life phases. This is especially true for women during childbirth and early child-rearing, many of whom are forced to choose between their career and their family. Today, women in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region participate less than men in the labour force, get paid less, and bear a disproportionate share of the unpaid care and domestic work burden. In 2021, for instance, three quarters of prime-aged women (aged 25–54) living in a couple with children under 6 in North Macedonia participated in the labour force (75.5 per cent), compared with over 90 per cent of men (96.9 per cent). In Türkiye, these figures were 33.0 per cent and 96.4 per cent, respectively, in 2021.24 In 2019, the gender pay gap in monthly earnings exceeded 30 per cent in Kazakhstan (32.2 per cent), Armenia (34.7 per cent), Georgia (36.2 per cent), Uzbekistan (36.2 per cent) and Azerbaijan (42.0 per cent).25

25. UNECE Statistical Database.
Based on data for 2010–2018, women spend up to twice as many hours performing unpaid care and domestic work than men in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova; around three times, in Kazakhstan and North Macedonia; more than five times, in Türkiye; and over six times, in Albania. A holistic mix of gender-responsive family policies can therefore enable fathers to equitably share parenting responsibilities, in turn making women less likely to drop out of the workforce, thus reducing the gender pay gap and improving economic productivity. These policies can also help to reduce parenting stress and promote well-being among parents, which means better businesses, happier families and healthier children.

Among employers and in society at large, gender-responsive family policies have the potential to reverse deeply rooted gender norms and stereotypes that portray women as the primary caregivers and enhance men’s role as breadwinners. In Kyrgyzstan, for instance, 57.3 per cent of women and 64.7 per cent of men believe that if a woman earns more money than her husband, it is almost certain to cause problems. In Ukraine, these shares stood at 29.4 per cent and 32.4 per cent, respectively, and in Azerbaijan 53.4 per cent of women and 67.9 per cent of men agree that when a mother works for pay, the children suffer.

These same discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes perpetuate violence against women and harmful practices, prevent women from accessing positions of power, and limit decisions over their bodies and their sexual and reproductive health. Around 1 in every 10 women aged 15 or older in Tajikistan (12.0 per cent), Kyrgyzstan (11.6 per cent) and Türkiye (9.5 per cent) reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. In Tajikistan and Serbia, the share of men who agree that it is never justifiable for a man to beat his wife stands at only 26.6 per cent and 59.2 per cent, respectively. As of January 2022, women held one in four parliament seats in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region (26.7 per cent), and data for 2019–2022

27. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. SDG Indicators Database.
32. WVS Data Analysis Tool.
confirms that women held at least 4 in every 10 elected seats in deliberative bodies of local government in only Belarus (48.2 per cent) and Albania (43.6 per cent). A majority of men in Kazakhstan and Armenia believe that men make better political leaders than women (54.9 per cent and 76.6 per cent, respectively). Gender imbalances in managerial positions are observed in all countries in the region with the exception of Belarus, where women hold one in every two such positions (50.5 per cent).

As the region witnesses a wave of nationalist and xenophobic sentiment and politics that tie women’s primary value to their reproductive function, maternal care and the private sphere, gender-responsive family policies remain vital to achieving gender equality in the household and in public life, demographic resilience and sustainable societies.

33. SDG Indicators Database.
34. WVS Data Analysis Tool.
35. SDG Indicators Database.
The state of gender-responsive family policies in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region

A comparative analysis of national legal provisions on maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, carer’s leave, flexible working arrangements, and early childhood education and care in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, based on international reviews and national labour legislation, reveals a mix of gender-responsive family policies (see the Appendix). Overall, entitlements around childbirth and child-rearing do not tend to benefit working parents and their children equally. Instead, these remain focused mostly on mothers, and do not promote the full involvement of fathers in caregiving, which reinforces traditional gender roles and adds to women’s unpaid workload.

The analysis confirms that all countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region have adopted statutory provisions for maternity leave, yet many mothers are likely to see their earnings diminish during this period. In most countries, paternity leave lasts just up to seven working or calendar days or is not a legal entitlement. In half of the countries with legal provisions on paternity leave, fathers are granted unpaid paternity leave. The availability of parental leave and related monetary entitlements remains inadequate in many contexts. More often than not, parents in same-sex relationships, adoptive parents and self-employed workers are either denied their rights to these entitlements or may access them only with specific restrictions.
Legal provisions for paid carer’s leave that specifically target working parents are in place in a very limited number of countries; in several others, national legislation supports the uptake of unpaid leave for family care purposes by the general working population. Legal provisions enabling parents to work part-time until their children reach adolescence or during parental leave are common, while those regulating work from home and flexible working schedules are less widespread. Most children in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region lack access to free early childhood education and care services in the first years of their lives, particularly after their parents’ exhaustion of childcare-related leave. This childcare policy gap pushes women to a primary caretaking role, to the detriment of their career aspirations.

Supporting women’s fertility and career aspirations in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region therefore requires a shift from maternalistic policies to gender-responsive family policies that reduce and redistribute women’s unequal responsibility for care work with men, employers, the State and private service providers.

### Maternity leave

Paid and job-protected maternity leave has a host of benefits for mothers, children and their families in the areas of health, safety and economic security.\(^{36}\) ILO Maternity Protection Convention No. 183 (2000), ratified by Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, mandates a minimum maternity leave period of 14 weeks and requires that maternity leave cash benefits amount to at least two thirds of the woman’s previous earnings. ILO Maternity Protection Recommendation No. 191 (2000) recommends increasing maternity leave to at least 18 weeks to ensure adequate rest and recovery time, and, where practicable, raising maternity leave cash benefits to 100 per cent of women’s previous earnings.

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\(^{36}\) ILO, *Care at Work: Investing in Care Leave and Services for a More Gender Equal World of Work* (Geneva, 2022).
All countries and territories in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region have legal provisions on maternity leave in place, ranging from 16 weeks in Serbia, Türkiye and Turkmenistan to 52 weeks in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Most countries, however, grant working mothers with newborns maternity leave of either 18 weeks (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) or 20 weeks (Armenia and Tajikistan). In North Macedonia, the duration of maternity leave is 39 weeks. While maternity leave is available to adoptive mothers in all countries, its duration may be shorter than that enjoyed by biological parents. For instance, adoptive mothers in Türkiye, the Republic of Moldova and North Macedonia have access to maternity leave periods of 3 working days, 56 calendar days and 6 months, respectively.

Only five countries and territories allow the transfer of part or the entire maternity leave period to fathers (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia and Kosovo). Four of these grant the longest maternity leave periods to working mothers with newborns (Albania, 52 weeks; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 52 weeks; North Macedonia, 39 weeks; Kosovo, 52 weeks). This may serve to compensate for the absence of a parental leave entitlement (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) or for the ineligibility of fathers for parental leave (Albania and North Macedonia).

In contrast, the legislation in nine countries allows for the transfer of maternity leave to fathers only under exceptional circumstances, such as the mother’s death or imprisonment, or upon maternal illness or abandonment (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), while this legal provision is altogether absent in three other countries (Armenia, Kazakhstan and Türkiye).

During maternity leave, working mothers with newborns can expect to receive 100 per cent of their previous earnings in only eight countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). Armenia, Belarus and Georgia provide mothers with 100 per cent maternity leave cash benefits but up to a ceiling. In Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye and Kosovo, the mother’s earnings decrease progressively throughout the maternity leave period, starting at 100 per cent only in Kyrgyzstan and for a duration of 10 days.

37. Ibid.; Republic of Kosovo, Law on Labour, No. 03/L –212 (18 November 2010).
38. ILO, Care at Work.
Turkish mothers receive two thirds of their previous earnings. In Serbia, employed women who have six months of uninterrupted insurance before the start of maternity leave cannot receive a benefit lower than the national minimum wage of RSD 32,003 (US$ 300) per month. However, self-employed women, women farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads, and female casual workers receive a lower benefit, consisting of two thirds of their gross base earnings in the previous 18 to 24 months. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, maternity leave cash benefits range from 50 to 80 per cent of the reference wage in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to 100 per cent of earnings in the Republika Srpska and in the Brčko District. In four countries, maternity leave cash benefits are not available to self-employed mothers (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). All countries and territories in Eastern Europe and Central Asia rely on social insurance mechanisms to finance maternity leave, with the exception of Kosovo, which relies on an employer liability model.

In practice, coverage gaps in the provision of paid maternity leave remain. In only 5 of the 12 Eastern European and Central Asian countries with data for 2016–2020 did all working mothers with newborns receive a maternity cash benefit (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). Less than half of working mothers received cash benefits in Azerbaijan (16.0 per cent), Uzbekistan (16.0 per cent), Kyrgyzstan (23.8 per cent), Georgia (26.0 per cent) and Kazakhstan (44.2 per cent), while coverage stood at around two thirds of mothers in Armenia (61.5 per cent) and Tajikistan (66.5 per cent).

39. Ibid.
41. SDG Indicators Database.
42. Ibid.
Paternity leave ensures that fathers can take a short period of leave immediately following the birth of a child to support the mother and the newborn, bond with their baby and equitably share the unpaid care burden. Statutory provisions for paternity leave are central to challenging conventional gender norms that cast women as caregivers and men as breadwinners. Paternity leave is associated with increased long-term involvement on the part of fathers in unpaid care work, in turn promoting women’s participation in the labour force. Nowadays, paternity leave provisions are not explicitly regulated by international labour standards, yet the European Union Directive on Work-life Balance for Parents and Carers (No. 1158, 2019) recognizes the right of employed fathers to 10 days of paternity leave to be taken upon the birth of their child. The Directive calls on Member States to determine the timing and flexibility of paternity leave and encourages the provision of paternity leave cash benefits that are equal to maternity leave cash benefits, as both paternity and maternity rights pursue similar objectives. Today, at least 35 million employed men aged 15–54 in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region are either not entitled to paternity leave or are granted paternity leave of less than 10 working days.

All countries and areas in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region have legal provisions on paternity leave in place with the exception of Georgia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In these three countries, fathers can be involved in early child-rearing only by making use of their parental leave entitlement, which varies widely (Georgia, 84 weeks plus an additional 12 weeks until the child turns 5; Turkmenistan, 156 weeks until the child turns 3; and Uzbekistan, 104 weeks until the child turns 2). Statutory provisions on paternity leave, however, do

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43. ILO, Care at Work.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. UNFPA calculations based on the ILOSTAT database, covering all countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region with the exception of Turkmenistan, which lacks data on the employed population disaggregated by five-year age groups. Calculations use the latest national labour force surveys conducted during the period 2019–2021.
not benefit all fathers equally. Adoptive parents can enjoy paternity leave in just seven
countries and territories in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region (Armenia,
Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Ukraine and Kosovo),
while Armenia is the only country to grant paternity leave to same-sex parents.48

National legislation stipulates the duration of paternity leave in either working or
calendar days. In nine countries, fathers are granted paternity leave lasting just up to
7 working or calendar days (Albania, 3 working days; Armenia, 5 working days;
Kazakhstan, 5 working days; Kyrgyzstan, 5 working days; Türkiye, 5 working days
for the private sector, 10 working days for civil servants; Tajikistan, 7 calendar days;
Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 working days in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
3 working days in the Republika Srpska and the in Brčko District; North Macedonia,
7 working days; and Serbia, 7 working days). In four others, the duration of paternity
leave stands at 14 calendar days (Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and
Ukraine), while in Kosovo fathers are granted 16 calendar days: 2 days for childbirth
and 14 days for paternity leave.

Fathers receive 100 per cent of their previous earnings in only 6 of the 14 countries
and territories that have legal provisions on paternity leave (Albania, Bosnia and
Herzegovina, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Türkiye).
Employers fund fathers’ salaries during paternity leave in five of these countries
(Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye), while in
the Republic of Moldova these are paid from the social security fund.49 Self-employed
fathers do not have access to paternity leave cash benefits in any of these six
countries.50 Seven other countries grant unpaid paternity leave (Armenia, Azerbaijan,
Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine), while in Kosovo fathers
receive full earnings during the two days granted for childbirth, but the following
two-week paternity leave period is unpaid.

Data on paternity leave uptake in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region is
scarce, but the few estimates available suggest that only a minority of fathers take
paternity leave. In 2020, a study conducted in countries of the Eastern Partnership

48. ILO, Care at Work; Kosovo, Law on Labour.
49. ILO, Care at Work; United Nations Moldova, “Contracted militaries can also enjoy fourteen-day paternity leave”, 1 August
(accessed on 1 April 2023).
50. ILO, Care at Work.
revealed that less than 2 in every 10 men in the Republic of Moldova (17.6 per cent), Armenia (14.3 per cent), Azerbaijan (10.9 per cent), Belarus (10.6 per cent), Georgia (8.2 per cent) and Ukraine (6.2 per cent) had taken paternity leave after the birth of their most recent child. In focus group discussions conducted as part of the same study, both women and men generally challenged the idea of men taking paternity leave by stressing men’s role as breadwinners within the family. In Albania, a small-scale study highlighted that only 3 per cent of employed men with children aged 7 or younger had taken paternity leave. Interviews with representatives from the Tirana Municipality confirmed that only two men had requested parental or paternity leave over the previous two years.

51. Anna Onyshchenko and others, Baseline Study on Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership (Istanbul, UN Women and UNFPA, 2019).
52. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. ILO, Care at Work.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.

### 3.3 Parental leave

Parental leave, usually available to either parent, allows mothers and fathers to take care of their child after the maternity and paternity leave entitlements have expired. Paid and job-protected parental leave is particularly relevant where universal and free early childhood education and care services are lacking, since it enables working parents to keep their jobs while caring for their children. Men are much less likely than women to use parental leave, although evidence points to similar benefits for women, men and societies to those of paternity leave. The ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation (No. 165, 1981) and ILO Maternity Protection Recommendation No. 191 emphasize the need to make parental leave available to either parent after maternity leave, while safeguarding employment and protecting employment rights. Both recommendations call on Member States to determine the duration of parental leave, the payment of benefits and the distribution of parental leave between parents, among other conditions. In contrast, the European Union Directive on Work-life Balance for Parents and Carers recognizes the individual right of workers who are parents to parental leave of a minimum of four months, including...
two months that cannot be transferred from one parent to the other. The Directive stresses that parental leave is to be taken before the child reaches a specified age, up to the age of eight, and calls for “adequate” compensation of the minimum non-transferable period of parental leave.

Legal provisions on parental leave are in place in all countries and territories in Eastern Europe and Central Asia except for the Republika Srpska and the Brčko District, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Fathers in these contexts, besides making use of their paternity leave entitlement, may be involved in early child-rearing by partially using their respective partner’s 52-week maternity leave entitlement after 6 and 26 weeks, respectively. In four countries, only mothers are granted parental leave, with leave periods varying significantly (North Macedonia, 13 weeks; Albania, 35 weeks; Türkiye, 26 weeks; and Tajikistan, 156 weeks). In Albania, North Macedonia and Türkiye, mothers are provided with unpaid parental leave, while in Tajikistan they receive 100 per cent of their previous earnings until their children reach 18 months. Among all Eastern European and Central Asian countries granting parental leave, Türkiye is the only country where adoptive mothers cannot access it. Currently no country in the region grants parental leave to same-sex parents.

In the remaining 11 countries, both parents are eligible for parental leave (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). In eight of these, parents are entitled to parental leave of 156 weeks — that is, until their child reaches the age of 3 (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Turkmenistan and Ukraine) — while shorter parental leave is granted in the other three countries (Serbia, 52 weeks; Georgia, 84 weeks; and Uzbekistan, 104 weeks). In all these countries, the availability of parental leave cash benefits also varies. For instance, parents in Kazakhstan receive 100 per cent of their previous earnings during

58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
the first 52 weeks of parental leave but no cash benefits up to the maximum 156-week parental leave.

In all countries where parental leave is paid, it is funded by social security systems except for Uzbekistan, which relies on an employer liability model. Parents in the Republic of Moldova can opt to either receive 30 per cent of their previous earnings during the three years of parental leave, 60 per cent for the first 12 months and 30 per cent for the following 12 months, or 90 per cent for the first 12 months. In Ukraine, parents receive an income-tested benefit up to a maximum of UAH 1,841 ($50). Since exercising the right to parental leave often entails income losses for households, a central part in expanding its uptake, and particularly among fathers, is ensuring that it is adequately remunerated. Self-employed parents do not have access to parental leave cash benefits in seven countries (Albania, Armenia, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan).

### Carer’s leave

Carer’s leave provides women and men with caring responsibilities across generations with greater opportunities to remain in the workforce and share the care burden more equally. As the region’s societies continue to age, care needs are projected to increase. Middle-aged workers, and women in particular, are increasingly becoming first responders to meet the care needs of their relatives, such as parents and siblings, in addition to caring for their children and remaining engaged in the labour force. Older workers also play a key role in the provision of care to younger generations when prime-age adults have migrated abroad. At the same time, working parents may need to take time off work temporarily if their child falls sick. The European Union Directive on Work-life Balance for Parents and Carers recognizes the right of each worker to carer’s leave of five working days per year and encourages Member States to introduce compensation for carers in order to support its uptake, particularly among men.

Albania, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia have in place legal provisions on carer’s leave targeting working parents with children. Eligibility varies, however, depending on the sex of the worker and their household composition, and cash

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61. ILO, Care at Work.
benefits differ. In Albania, workers are granted 12 paid days a year to care for their dependent children, and up to 15 paid days to care for children up to 3 years old. In Azerbaijan, women with children under the age of 16 and single fathers are entitled to unpaid carer’s leave of up to 14 calendar days. In the Republic of Moldova, women and single parents who have two or more children up to 14 years of age are entitled to unpaid carer’s leave for a duration of at least 14 calendar days. Employees also have the right to suspend their employment contract, contingent on the agreement with their employer, to look after a sick child of up to 10 years of age. In Serbia, workers are entitled to care for a sick or injured immediate family member up to age 6 for up to 15 days per illness episode, which may be extended up to a maximum of 30 days for justified reasons. In addition, Serbian employees are also entitled to paid leave of five working days a year to care for a seriously ill immediate family member.

Seven countries have in place legal provisions that support leave for family care purposes targeting the general worker population (Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine). In Armenia, employees may be granted up to 30 days per year of unpaid leave to care for ill family members. A similar legal provision is in place in Belarus to help employees meet their family and domestic needs. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, workers are granted seven paid days of leave in one calendar year to care for an immediate family or household member who is sick. In Kyrgyzstan, workers may be granted unpaid leave for family reasons, the duration of which must be agreed with the employer. In Tajikistan, employees caring for ill family members are granted up to 14 calendar days of unpaid leave, while in Turkmenistan leave without pay in excess of 10 days may be provided to care for a sick family member. In Ukraine, workers may be granted unpaid leave of up to 15 calendar days per year for family reasons.

Georgia, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia have in place legal provisions that support unpaid leave for unspecified uses targeting the general worker population. The duration of such leave, which could be used for care purposes, can be at least 15 days in Georgia and should not exceed 3 months in North Macedonia. In Kazakhstan, the employee and the employer agree on the duration of unpaid leave. Turkish legislation contemplates employers granting “other types” of paid or unpaid leave to employees, which could be used for care purposes. In Uzbekistan and Kosovo, no specific legal provisions supporting the uptake of carer’s leave by working parents or the general worker population were identified.
Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements can support the work–life balance of workers caring for younger and older generations and keep them in the labour force. In some instances, they may also serve to increase the productivity of companies. The adoption of diverse, flexible working modalities has gained momentum since the COVID-19 pandemic, including flexible working hours, compressed hours, outcome-based commissioning, remote work, mobile work, term-time work and part-time work. The European Union Directive on Work-life Balance for Parents and Carers recognizes that both parents and carers have the right to request flexible working arrangements for the purpose of adjusting their working patterns, including, where possible, through the use of remote working arrangements, flexible working schedules or a reduction in working hours, in order to provide care. In line with the European Union Directive, this report focuses on part-time work, remote work and flexible working hours.

Entitlements regarding flexible working arrangements vary across countries, benefiting pregnant women, mothers and fathers to various degrees. Legal provisions regulating part-time work — either through a shorter workweek or a shorter workday — are available in 12 Eastern European and Central Asian countries and territories (Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Kosovo).

In Armenia, pregnant women and working parents with children under the age of 1 can engage in part-time work. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Brčko District, one working parent has the right to work part-time after ending maternity leave and until the child turns 1, while in the Republika Srpska one working parent of a child up to 2 years of age is entitled to work half-time if the child needs special care. In Kosovo, one of the parents can work part-time after the expiry of maternity leave and until the child turns 2 years old only if their child requires special care due to poor health conditions. In Türkiye, after the end of maternity leave and parental leave, which are available to mothers only, one working parent can work half their normal weekly working hours for 60 days for the first birth, 120 days for the second birth and 180 days for subsequent births. Afterwards, one parent can request a further period of part-time leave until their child starts compulsory primary education at 6 years of age, provided that the other parent is employed.
In Kazakhstan, pregnant women and parents of children under the age of 3 are eligible to work part-time. In Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, part-time work is restricted to pregnant women or women with children under the age of 14. In Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, this entitlement is also extended to fathers with children under the age of 14, while in the Republic of Moldova mothers and fathers with children up to the age of 10 are eligible to work part-time. In Ukraine and Uzbekistan, however, fathers and mothers may work part-time during parental leave, which is also the case in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A specific legal provision in the Republic of Moldova entitles mothers and fathers of children aged between 3 and 6 to work part-time.

Six countries have legal provisions in place enabling parents to work from home. In the Republic of Moldova, this entitlement targets mothers and fathers of children between the ages of 3 and 6, while in Belarus it is aimed at mothers and fathers of children under the age of 16. Mothers and fathers on parental leave may work from home in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Lastly, three countries have legal provisions in place supporting flexible working schedules. In North Macedonia, pregnant women, parents of children up to the age of 3 and single parents of children under the age of 15 are entitled to redistribute their working hours. Workers in Kazakhstan may be entitled to a flexible working schedule in order to combine social and other personal needs of workers with the interests of production. In the Republic of Moldova, employers can establish, with the employee’s written agreement, individualized labour contracts, with flexible working time, if this possibility is stipulated in the entity's internal regulations or in the collective or individual labour contract. The duration of the workday may also be divided into two segments: a fixed period, when the employee must be at their workplace, and a variable (mobile) period, when the employee chooses the hours when they will arrive and leave, while respecting the normal duration of the workday. No specific legal provisions supporting flexible working arrangements for working parents were identified in Albania, Georgia or Serbia.
Early childhood education and care

Besides having long-term benefits for children’s development, early childhood education and care reduce parents’ unpaid care burden, which is primarily shouldered by women, support their participation in the job market and generate jobs in the care sector.

Yet access barriers persist in national legislation in the form of population coverage, age restrictions and out-of-pocket expenses. Universal and free early childhood education and care are available from the first year of a child’s life in only Albania and Belarus, and at the age of 1 in Ukraine. In the remaining countries and territories, early childhood education and care services or primary education are available only from the age of 5 onwards, including Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Kosovo. In Uzbekistan, this public service is available only beginning at the age of 7. Today, only 1 in 10 children aged 1 in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region have access to universal and free early childhood education (10.6 per cent). In other words, 3.8 million children aged 1 in the region currently lack access to this service.

Large policy gaps between childcare-related leave — in particular, maternity, paternity and parental leave — and childcare services mean that childcare needs are primarily absorbed by women at the expense of their engagement in the labour force, or by domestic, migrant or other care workers who lack labour and social protection rights.

In many contexts, such policy gaps extend throughout the child’s first years of life up to the start of primary education. For instance, less than 3 in every 10 girls and boys participate in organized learning 1 year before the official primary entry age in Bosnia and Herzegovina (29.3 per cent) and Tajikistan (12.5 per cent), as shown by data for 2017–2020. This share stands at around two thirds in Uzbekistan (62.8 per cent), Armenia (62.9 per cent) and Ukraine (64.2 per cent), while coverage is nearly or virtually universal in Serbia (92.7 per cent), Albania (97.1 per cent), Belarus (98.1 per cent) and the Republic of Moldova (99.7 per cent).

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63. Ibid.
64. ILO, Care at Work.
65. SDG Indicators Database.
66. Ibid.
Recommendations

The state of gender-responsive family policies in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region confirms that governments are increasingly devising ways to support individuals in balancing their work and life responsibilities more equally. Yet the analysis has also identified shortcomings that hold back further progress. The following recommendations aim to contribute to legal reforms that further support the achievement of the fertility and career aspirations of women and men in all their diversity, and set the foundations of demographically resilient societies.

4.1 Maternity leave

- Increase the length of maternity leave to at least 18 weeks.
- Raise maternity leave cash benefits to 100 per cent of women’s previous earnings for at least the first 18 weeks of maternity leave.
- Ensure that adoptive mothers can enjoy the same maternity leave rights as biological mothers, including the same maternity leave period.
- Ensure that self-employed mothers have access to maternity leave cash benefits during maternity leave.

4.2 Paternity leave

- Introduce statutory provisions for universal paternity leave.
- Increase the length of the paternity leave period to 10 working days.
- Introduce obligatory paternity leave days in order to counter low paternity leave uptake rates.
- Raise paternity leave cash benefits to 100 per cent of the father’s previous earnings.
- Ensure that paternity leave cash benefits are funded by national social protection systems.
- Ensure that adoptive fathers can enjoy the same paternity leave rights as biological fathers, including the same paternity leave period.
- Ensure that paternity leave is available to same-sex parents.
- Ensure that self-employed fathers have access to paternity leave cash benefits during paternity leave.
## 4.3 Parental leave

- Introduce statutory provisions for parental leave.
- Ensure that parental leave is universal and available to either parent.
- Ensure that parental leave cash benefits are funded by national social protection systems.
- Raise parental leave cash benefits to an adequate level to make the uptake of parental leave more equitable and attractive to fathers, and to avoid large household income losses.
- Ensure a minimum non-transferable period of parental leave (‘daddy quota’) to counter low uptake rates of parental leave among fathers, to support fathers’ involvement in childcare and to avoid long career breaks for women.
- Ensure that parental leave is available to adoptive parents and same-sex parents.
- Ensure that self-employed fathers have access to parental leave cash benefits during paternity leave.

## 4.4 Carer’s leave

- Introduce statutory provisions for universal carer’s leave targeting the general working population and working parents specifically, to support the provision of care across generations and over the life course, and to share the care burden more equally.
- Ensure carer’s leave of at least five working days per year.
- Ensure adequate compensation for carer’s leave.

## 4.5 Flexible working arrangements

- Introduce statutory provisions enabling working parents with children and people with caring responsibilities to engage in part-time work, either through a shorter workweek or a shorter workday, to work from home and to adopt flexible working schedules.
- Ensure that part-time work, remote work and flexible working hours are available to both working mothers and working fathers at least until the beginning of universal and free early childhood education or care or primary education.
4.6 Early childhood education and care

- Introduce universal and free early childhood education and care ideally from the first year of a child’s life, but at least before the parents’ maternity, paternity and parental leave entitlements as mandated by national legislation are exhausted, to ensure a continuum of care during early childhood and to meet the care needs of working parents.

4.7 Gender norms and stereotypes

- Conduct national communication campaigns promoting egalitarian gender norms, including highlighting the value of male involvement in childcare and domestic chores.
- Engage the private sector to identify ways in which gender equality can be promoted in the workplace, and negative stereotypes related to employment and leadership can be reversed.
- Build the capacity of key actors across all media platforms to ensure that messages and communication do not reproduce or promote gender stereotypes but rather encourage diversity and equality.
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender equality principles within national education systems.
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## Appendix: Status of gender-responsive family policies in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region

### Maternity leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Duration of maternity leave</th>
<th>Transfer of maternity leave period to fathers</th>
<th>Amount of maternity leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>52 weeks (365 days)</td>
<td>Yes (267 days)</td>
<td>80% (for the first 185 days; 50% for the remaining days)</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>20 weeks (140 days)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100% up to a ceiling</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This may be extended by 14 more days in the event of a complicated birth, twins, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100% up to a ceiling (three times the national average monthly wage; as of May 2021, the average wage was BYN 1,419.6 [US$560])</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska: 52 weeks (365 days), 18 months for twins Brčko District: 12 consecutive months</td>
<td>Yes (after 42 days), exceptional circumstances (all)</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 50%–80% of the reference wage, depending upon the various cantonal regulations of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Republika Srpska: 100% of the salary the employee was earning during the last six months before the starting date of the maternity leave. Brčko District: 100%</td>
<td>[BiH 1], [BiH 2], [BiH 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days); 143 days in case of twins</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Public sector: 100% of the salary. Private sector: Maximum allowance of GEL 1,000 ($400) received from the state; salary remuneration % depends on the employer</td>
<td>[1], [Geo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Duration of maternity leave</td>
<td>Transfer of maternity leave period to fathers</td>
<td>Amount of maternity leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days):</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1] <a href="https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/ui_decret">https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/ui_decret</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The duration of maternity leave according to Article 99 of the Labour Code is 126 calendar days (70 calendar days before birth and 56 calendar days after birth). In case of complicated births or the birth of two or more children, 70 days are provided.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100% for the first 10 days; flat rate for the other 116 days (10 times the basic rate, which is KGS 100 [S$1.14] a month)</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>39 weeks (9 months)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 calendar days) or 20 weeks (140 calendar days) in case of complicated births or the birth of two or more children</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>16 weeks (28 days before childbirth and 3 months after childbirth)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>Mothers who have a period of six months of uninterrupted insurance before their leave starts cannot receive a maternity leave benefit that is lower than the national minimum wage (RSD 32,003 [S$300] net per month), though there is no minimum for the supplemental leave period. The maternity benefit for other categories of employees (e.g. self-employed, farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads, casual employees) is calculated by dividing the gross base of earnings in the previous 18 months (24 months in the case of farmers and owners of agricultural farmsteads) by 1.5.</td>
<td>[Srb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Duration of maternity leave</td>
<td>Transfer of maternity leave period to fathers</td>
<td>Amount of maternity leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>20 weeks (140 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>16 weeks for civil servants: 8 weeks before the birth and 8 weeks after the birth, but the woman can use all 16 weeks together after the birth if she does not use her leave before giving birth. If there is more than one delivery (in the event of twins, for example), then 2 weeks is added.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>16 weeks (112 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>18 weeks (126 days)</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>52 weeks (365 days)</td>
<td>Yes, the latter 26 weeks (183 days)</td>
<td>First 26 weeks: 70% of the annual basic salary they were receiving at their place of employment, paid by the employer. Subsequent 13 weeks: 50% of average annual salary in Kosovo (paid by the government). Final 13 weeks: unpaid</td>
<td>[2], [Kos]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Paternity leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Duration of paternity leave</th>
<th>Amount of paternity leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>5 working days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Arm]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbajian</td>
<td>14 calendar days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>14 calendar days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 7 days Republika Srpska / Brčko District: 3 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[BiH 1], [BiH 2], [BiH 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[1], [Geo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>14 calendar days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>7 working days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[Srb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>7 calendar days</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>10 days for civil servants, 5 days for the private sector</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>14 calendar days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[1], [Ukr 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Not available; parental leave may be used in full or in part also by the child’s father, grandmother, grandfather or other relative who is actually caring for the child.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>16 days: 2 days for childbirth plus 2 weeks' paternity leave</td>
<td>Two days fully paid; two weeks unpaid after birth or adoption until the child reaches 3 years of age</td>
<td>[2]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Parental leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Duration of parental leave</th>
<th>Parental leave eligibility</th>
<th>Amount of parental leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>35 weeks (4 months)</td>
<td>Available to both mothers and fathers</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1], [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>156 weeks (3 years), available to either parent</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>A flat rate is paid to a parent who takes time off work to care for a child under 2.</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child is 3), available to either parent or the actual carer</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Partially paid social leave in the amount determined by legislation (AZN 44 [$25] a month is paid for each eligible child younger than 18 months; AZN 28 [$16] a month for each child aged 18 months to 3 years)</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child is 3 years of age), available to either parent or the actual carer</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>35% of the national average wage from the relevant quarter is paid for the first eligible child; 40% for the second and subsequent eligible children</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; until child’s 3rd birthday, without pay&lt;br&gt;Republika Srpska / Brčko District: n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[BiH 1], [BiH 2], [BiH 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>84 weeks (587 days)</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Public sector: 57 days 100% Private sector: 57 days up to a ceiling of GEL 1,000 ($400) received from the state budget, salary remuneration % depends on the employer</td>
<td>[1], [Geo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child reaches 3 years of age), available to either parent or the actual carer; unpaid leave for a childcare worker until the child reaches the age of 3 years is granted at the choice of the parents — the mother or father of the child</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>100% for 52 weeks (1 year)</td>
<td>[1] Article 100 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Duration of parental leave</td>
<td>Parental leave eligibility</td>
<td>Amount of parental leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>312 weeks (until the child reaches 3 years of age), available to each parent or the actual carer</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Flat rate: KGS 700 ($8) a month (payment only to the mother)</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>13 weeks (3 months)</td>
<td>Available only to mothers. Fathers and adoptive parents are able to access this entitlement in the exceptional event that the mother is unable to use maternity leave.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child reaches 3 years of age)</td>
<td>Both parents and also grandparents and other relatives who are directly involved in caring for the child.</td>
<td>Option 1: 30% for the whole duration of parental leave option 2: 60% for the first 12 months and 30% for the following 12 months option 3: 90% for the first 12 months</td>
<td>[1], [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>52 weeks (365 days from the date of commencement of maternity leave)</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>[1], [Srb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>156 weeks (paid leave until the child reaches 18 months and additional unpaid leave until the child reaches 3 years of age)</td>
<td>Available only to mothers</td>
<td>100% paid to the mother until her child reaches 18 months; unpaid until the child reaches 3 years of age</td>
<td>[1], [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>26 weeks (6 months)</td>
<td>Available only to mothers</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[1], [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child reaches 3 years of age)</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Flat amount (65% of base amount for calculating state benefits)</td>
<td>[1], [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>156 weeks (until the child reaches 3 years of age)</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Income-tested benefit to a maximum of UAH 1,841 ($50)</td>
<td>[1], [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>104 weeks (until the child reaches 2 years of age)</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>Flat amount (200% of the monthly minimum wage)</td>
<td>[1], [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[2]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Carer’s leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Legal provisions for working parents</th>
<th>Amount of carer’s leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Albania**          | Legal provisions on carer’s leave targeting working parents.  
In case of indispensable care for dependent children, the employee shall be entitled to their salary with a leave of absence equal to no more than 12 days a year. An employee with dependent children of up to 3 years of age is entitled to paid leave of no longer than 15 days when their child is sick and this has been confirmed by a medical report. They are entitled to an additional leave of absence without pay that may not be longer than 30 days a year. Leave is granted to the spouse who effectively looks after the child. If such is not the case, then the leave shall be granted to both the child’s mother and father on an alternating basis. (Art. 132) | 100% | [Alb] |
| **Armenia**          | Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population.  
Upon the request of the employee, unpaid leave shall be granted to take care of an ill member of the family, in periods stipulated by a medical report, but not for more than 30 days within a year. (Art. 176) | 0% | [Arm] |
| **Azerbaijan**       | Legal provisions on carer’s leave targeting working parents.  
Unpaid leave of up to 14 calendar days may be granted for women with children under the age of 16 or for single parents. (Art. 130) | 0% | [Aze] |
| **Belarus**          | Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population.  
In order to meet family and domestic needs, the employee, upon application in writing, may be provided during the calendar year with unpaid leave not to exceed 30 calendar days unless stipulated otherwise by a collective contract, agreement or the employer. (Art. 190) | Depends on leave | [Blr] |
| **Bosnia and Herzegovina** | Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population.  
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Workers are granted seven days of paid leave in one calendar year in case of a serious illness affecting a member of the worker’s immediate family or household. (Art. 53) | 100% | [BiH 1] |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Legal provisions for working parents</th>
<th>Amount of carer's leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Legal provisions support unpaid leave for unspecified uses and target the general worker population. An employee shall have the right to enjoy unpaid leave of at least 15 working days annually. (Art. 31)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Geo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Legal provisions support unpaid leave for unspecified uses and target the general worker population. By agreement of the parties to an employment contract and on the basis of an employee's application, the employee may be granted unpaid leave. The duration of unpaid leave is determined by agreement between the employee and the employer. (Art. 97)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Kaz] 97 of the Labour Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population. For family reasons or other valid reasons, an employee, upon their written application, may be granted unpaid leave, the duration of which is determined by agreement between the employee and the employer. (Art. 133)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>Legal provisions support unpaid leave for unspecified uses and target the general worker population. The employee may be absent from work without salary compensation and contributions in cases and under conditions determined by a collective agreement but not exceeding three months in one calendar year. (Art. 147)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Mkd]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>Legal provisions on carer’s leave targeting working parents. Women who have two or more children up to 14 years of age and single unmarried parents who have a child up to 14 years of age shall be entitled to, on the basis of a written request, unpaid leave of a duration of at least 14 calendar days. (Art. 120) Employees have the right to take leave in order to look after a sick family member, subject to a medical certificate, for up to two years (Art. 78[1][b]). Also, employees have the right to suspend their employment contract contingent on both parties' agreement (employer and employee) to look after a sick child up to 10 years of age (Art. 77[d]).</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Mol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Legal provisions for working parents</td>
<td>Amount of carer’s leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Legal provisions on carer’s leave targeting working parents. Workers are entitled to leave to care for a sick or injured immediate family member younger than 7 years of age for up to 15 days per illness episode, which may be extended up to a maximum of 30 days for justified reasons; to care for a sick or injured family member older than 7 years of age for up to 7 days per illness episode with the possibility of extension for up to 14 days; in the case of a family member with severe health conditions (severe damage to brain structures, malignant diseases or other severe deterioration of their health condition) up to 18 years of age. The leave is paid at the level of 100% of the average earnings, calculated based on the average earnings on which health-care contributions were paid during the 12 months before the month when the leave started. Any employee shall be entitled to absence from work with salary compensation (paid leave) for a total duration of seven business days in the course of one calendar year in case of a serious illness affecting a member of their immediate family and in other instances stipulated in the employer’s by-laws and labour contract. (Art. 77)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>[4], [Srb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population. Employees caring for ill family members are granted up to 14 calendar days of unpaid leave. (Art. 116)</td>
<td>0% for employees caring for ill family members 100% for social leave</td>
<td>[Taj]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>Legal provisions support paid and unpaid leave for unspecified uses and target the general worker population. Other kinds of leave, with or without pay, granted by the employer during the year must not be deducted from annual leave. (Art. 56)</td>
<td>100% or 0%</td>
<td>[Tur]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population. Leave without pay at the request of the employee is provided for up to 10 days per year for good reasons. Leave without pay in excess of 10 days may be provided to care for a sick family member. (Art. 103)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Tkm]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Legal provisions support leave for family care purposes and target the general worker population. For family circumstances or other reasons, employees may be granted leave without pay for the period stipulated in their contract but not for more than 15 calendar days per year. (Art. 84)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>[Ukr 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Legal provisions for working parents</td>
<td>Amount of carer’s leave cash benefits available (% of previous earnings)</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>No specific legal provisions on carer’s leave for working parents or the general worker population were identified.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[Uzb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>No specific legal provisions on carer’s leave for working parents or the general worker population were identified.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[Kos]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Flexible working arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Duration of maternity leave</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>No specific legal provisions supporting flexible working arrangements for working parents were identified.</td>
<td>[Alb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Part-time work. A pregnant woman or an employee taking care of a child under the age of 1 may be granted a shorter workweek or workday (shift) or both. (Art. 141)</td>
<td>[Arm]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Part-time work. Upon a request from women workers who are pregnant or who have children under the age of 14, the employer has to give them a part-time daily or weekly job with pay based on their experience and seniority. In such cases, both parties have to agree on the timing of the workday or workweek. (Art. 245)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Work from home. A preferential right to conclude an employment contract for work from home shall be granted to mothers and fathers who are caring for a child under 16 years of age. (Art. 305)</td>
<td>[Blr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Part-time work. Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina / Brčko District: After ending maternity leave and until the child reaches 1 year of age, the mother has the right to work part-time. In the case of twins, a third or any subsequent child, the mother has the right to work part-time until the child reaches 2 years of age. The father can also use this right if the mother works full-time. Republika Srpska: Upon the expiry of maternity leave, one working parent of a child up to 2 years of age shall be entitled to work half-time if the child, as determined by a competent doctor, needs special care.</td>
<td>[BiH 1], [BiH 2], [BiH 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>No specific legal provisions supporting flexible working arrangements for working parents were identified. Breastfeeding mothers with children up to 1 year of age are given an additional 1 hour of break time (remunerated).</td>
<td>[Geo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Part-time work. Flexible working schedule. Upon receipt of a written application from a pregnant woman who is one of the parents (adoptive parent) of a child (children) under the age of 3, the employer shall enable said employee to work part-time. (Art. 70) In order to combine the social and other personal needs of workers with the interests of production, a flexible working schedule may be established for workers. (Art. 74)</td>
<td>[Kaz] Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Art. 70 (<a href="https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1500000414#70">https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1500000414#70</a>), Art. 74, (<a href="https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1500000414#74">https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1500000414#74</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Duration of maternity leave</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Part-time work. Work from home.</td>
<td>[Kgz]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The employer is obliged to establish part-time work or a part-time workweek at the request of a pregnant woman or a parent (guardian) of a child under the age of 14. (Art. 93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents can work part-time or at home while on parental leave to care for a child. (Art. 137)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>Flexible working schedule.</td>
<td>[Mkd]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The employer shall be obliged to enable employees easier coordination of family and professional obligations. (Art. 161)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>Part-time work. Work from home. Flexible working schedule.</td>
<td>[Mol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the request of a pregnant woman or an employee who has children up to the age of 10 or disabled children (including those in their custody) or an employee who is caring for a sick family member, in accordance with a medical certificate, the employer is obliged to permit them to work a partial workday or partial workweek. (Art. 97)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working arrangements can be requested by all employees, including parents. The duration of the workday can also be divided into two segments: a fixed period, during which the employee is at their workplace, and a variable (mobile) period, during which the employee chooses the time when they arrive and leave, while respecting the normal duration of the workday. (Art. 100 with index 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>No specific legal provisions supporting flexible working arrangements for working parents were identified.</td>
<td>[Srb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>Part-time work. Work from home.</td>
<td>[Taj]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During parental leave, women can work reduced hours or work from home. (Art. 224)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>Part-time work.</td>
<td>[4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After the end of paid and unpaid maternity leave, parents who are employees can work half their normal weekly working hours for 60 days for the first birth, 120 days for the second birth and 180 days for subsequent births. There is an additional 30 days in the case of multiple births, and part-time working arrangements can be extended to 360 days in the case of a child born with a disability. Only one parent can claim this leave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the end of maternity leave and subsequent unpaid leave, parents can request a further period of part-time leave until their child starts compulsory primary education at 6 years of age; the employer has to agree the length of the leave and how it is to be taken. The worker has to submit their request to their employer at least one month before their start date, and must provide written proof that their partner, the other parent, is employed. Only one parent can claim this leave and the other parent must be employed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country or territory</td>
<td>Duration of maternity leave</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Part-time work. The employer is obliged to grant pregnant women and one of the parents of children under 14 the right to part-time work or a part-time workweek at their request. (Art. 63)</td>
<td>[Tk2m]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Part-time work. Work from home. A part-time workday or part-time workweek may be granted to pregnant women or women with children under 14 years old. (Art. 56) During parental leave, mothers or fathers may work part-time or at home. (Art. 179)</td>
<td>[Ukr 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Part-time work. Work from home. At the request of a pregnant woman or a woman with a child under the age of 14, the employer is obliged to allow them to work part-time. (Art. 229) Parents may work part-time or from home during parental leave. (Art. 234)</td>
<td>[Uzb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Part-time work. One of the parents can work part-time from the expiry of maternity leave until the child turns 2 years old if their child requires special care due to poor health. (Art. 52)</td>
<td>[Kos]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Early childhood education and care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or territory</th>
<th>Starting age of universal and free early childhood care and education or primary education</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>0 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>0 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>6 years. The majority of children start primary school at age 7, although 6-year-olds can also be enrolled.</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Moldova</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>[6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>[5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources


National labour legislation


