



EU AGREES TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE MEASURES, INCLUDING LEAVE

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Parents will be allowed to take 10 workdays of paid paternity leave and four months of paid parental leave, while family caregivers will be entitled to five days of unpaid leave per year, under an [EU directive](#) that aims to improve work-life balance for workers. The directive will apply to all workers with an employment contract and protect them from discrimination by requiring national laws that impose “effective, proportionate and dissuasive” penalties for violations. The new directive agreed to by Council of the EU will repeal another EU directive on parental leave. Member states must implement the provisions within three years of the directive’s publication in the EU’s official journal.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DIRECTIVE

- **Paternity leave.** Fathers or equivalent second parents (regardless of marital or family status) will have at least 10 workdays of leave around the time of a child’s birth — national laws could allow the flexibility to take leave at different times. Workers won’t need to have a minimum service period before taking unpaid leave, but member states could make payment subject to having six months’ service prior to the child’s birth. Paternity leave pay must be the same amount as sick pay.
- **Parental leave.** Each parent will be entitled to four months’ paid parental leave for children up to age 8 — or any older age specified by a member state or a collective agreement. To encourage more fathers to take leave, the directive prohibits transferring more than two of the four months between parents. National laws must allow workers to take leave flexibly, but could require one year of service to take parental leave, set out notification arrangements for leave requests and specify circumstances under which employers could postpone leave. Member states can decide on the payment amount, but it should be sufficient to encourage both parents to use their leave entitlement.
- **Carers’ leave.** Workers caring for relatives who live in the same household and require significant care or support due to serious medical reasons will be entitled to five workdays’ unpaid leave per year. Relatives include the worker’s son, daughter, mother, father, spouse or civil partner (if civil partnerships are recognized by national law). Member states are urged to expand the definition to include others, such as grandparents and siblings, and to pay an allowance to carers. National laws

can set different reference periods for calculating leave, grant leave on a case-by-case basis, or require leave to be taken as a single period or individual days.

- ***Right to request flexible work.*** Workers can request flexible work arrangements for caring, including remote work, flexible work schedules or reduced work hours. National laws can limit the duration of these arrangements and require workers to have minimum service of six months. The current parental leave directive already allows parents to request flexible work arrangements to help meet their caring duties for children up to at least age 8.

The new directive retains the existing right for workers to take time off for urgent family reasons caused by illness or accident.

RELATED RESOURCES

Non-Mercer Resources

- [Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers](#) (Council of the European Union, 13 Jun 2019)
- [Press Release](#) (Council of the European Union, 13 Jun 2019)
- [Council Directive 2010/18/EU Implementing the Revised Framework Agreement on Parental Leave](#) (EurLex, 8 Mar 2010)

Mercer Law & Policy Resources

- [EU Moves Forward on New Work-Life Balance Measures, Flex Working](#) (29 Jan 2019)

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