

Parental benefits in Central Europe



Labor organizations frequently fight against discrimination against women in the context of maternity and parental leave. Slowly but steadily the causes of working parents are becoming more visible in the legislation of Central and Eastern European countries.

Maintaining an objective approach is crucial but very difficult when dealing with maternity. International and local regulations must establish equilibrium between employers and employees in order to ensure fairness in the labor market and a stable economic environment, but most importantly a proper development for children. Regardless of our nationality, social status, age, and gender (and in order to maintain social balance), we are all directly or indirectly influenced by the way maternity and parental leaves are implemented at a national level.

A study prepared by Accace on this topic intends to provide an overview of the CEE region. It focuses on the main conditions, rights, responsibilities, benefits and the impact of international regulations on local parenthood-related legislation.

Maternity leave payment (Chart 1)

The maternity leave payment is mandatory in the countries analyzed. However, the way the allowance is computed differs, e.g., it is up to each country's

specific methods. The base could represent a percentage of the average salary or the contribution base, a computation based on a predetermined period of time, the daily assessment base or simply a percentage of the gross income established from previous years.

In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, employees have been required to contribute to a specific social contribution fund for around nine months (270 days) over the last two years. Hungary and Slovenia both set a mandatory twelve insured months over the last two years in Hungary or three years in Slovenia. Still, certain local legislation provides for those months, during which the employee did not earn any income, a minimum base usually calculated from the minimum salary in the respective country

In addition to maternity allowance and parental leave rights, in certain countries, the local authorities also offer a one-time benefit. In the Czech Republic, benefits are given for the first-born child only, whereas in Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, and Poland

they are received for every child born. In contrast, benefits are only given under specific conditions in Serbia, Slovenia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

Maternity leave limitations (Chart 2)

Currently the EU and the International Labor Organization (ILO) require a minimum fourteen-week maternity leave and a six-week postnatal leave duration. However, in the future it is expected that the minimum total maternity leave duration will be between eighteen to twenty weeks. The country with the longest maternity leave length so far is Bulgaria with a total of 410 maternity leave days (equaling more than 58 weeks).

Despite the fact that Ukraine is not a member of EU or ILO, their legislation meets the minimum recommendations in terms of length of maternity leave. A total of 126 days (18 weeks) is divided between prenatal leave of 56 days and a postnatal leave of 70 days.

Parental Leave (Chart 3)

The idea of making a certain period of the parental leave

mandatory for the other parent has been promoted and even introduced in the local legislations in the previous years. This is accomplished in order to encourage the involvement of fathers in children's care. The EU established a minimum of four months of parental leave. Gender equality is encouraged by making a one of the four months non-transferable.

Adoption

Maternity leave is granted not only for the protection of mothers who need to recover after giving birth but, also for the protection of the new-born. In Hungary, Poland and Serbia the conditions imposed for maternity leave and allowed are valid in cases of adoption as well. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have similar conditions for adoption. In the Czech Republic the employee is entitled to 22 weeks leave and in Slovakia up to 28 weeks. Ukraine on the other side does not have such generous legislation. The leave to which the employee is entitled in case of adopting a child directly from the hospital lasts 56 days. In cases where more children are adopted there is the possibility of an extension to 70 days.

For more information about Parenthood in Central & Eastern Europe, read the complete study at www.accace.com.

Chart 1: Maternity Leave Payment

Country	Percentage applied to base	Maternity allowance base
Serbia	flexible up to 100%	Average base 1-12 months
Slovenia	100%	Average base 12 months
Poland	100%	Average base 6 months
Croatia	100%	Average base 24 months
Ukraine	100%	Average base 6 months
Bulgaria	95%	Average base 24 months
Romania	85%	Average base 6 months
Hungary	70%	Last year's gross income
Czech R.	70%	Daily assessment base
Slovakia	65%	Daily assessment base

Chart 2: Maternity Leave Limitations

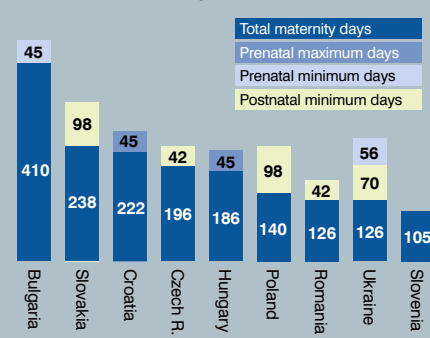


Chart 3: Parental Leave

