

COMMITTEE : ILO-Labour rights

ISSUE: How can we establish balanced parental leave that is shared between both parents in order to promote gender equality and combat workplace discrimination based on parenthood?

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PRESENTATION OF THE CHAIR



Hello delegates!

My name is Typhaine TCHOGNIA DJAMEN, and I am 16 years old. I am a student at the International High School of Ferney-Voltaire on the Saint-Genis-Pouilly campus. I have lived most of my life in France. I especially enjoy reading, spending time with my friends and meeting new people. I have been involved in MUN for two years, during which I have held the roles of logistics administrator and delegate.

This year, we will once again be debating at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. One of the topics we will focus on is wages and leave in the context of gender-based discrimination, which remains a significant issue in today's world. In fact, such discrimination not only causes inequalities in access to parental or family leave, but also in pay levels: women still earn less on average than men, even when in equivalent positions. These inequalities undermine equal opportunities and fundamental rights at work. Furthermore, they can hinder the careers of certain workers, particularly women, and complicate the balance between work and family life. I wish you all the best in your research on this issue.

I look forward to seeing you in January at the conference and concluding my MUN experience alongside you all.

KEYWORDS

Parental leave: leave granted after the birth or adoption of a child, available to fathers and mothers, to enable them to fulfill their family responsibilities. The ILO does not impose a universal duration or mandatory remuneration, but recommends equitable measures and adequate compensation.

Gender equality: refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, without these rights being dependent on gender, and taking into account the needs and priorities of each individual; it is both a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Gender stereotypes: a widespread opinion or prejudice about the attributes or characteristics that women and men possess or should possess, as well as the roles they play or should play. Gender stereotypes become harmful when they limit the abilities of women and men to develop their personal skills, pursue a career, or make decisions about their lives.

Employment discrimination: difference, exclusion, or preference based on criteria such as race, gender, religion, political opinion, or social origin, which prevents equal opportunities in the workplace. However, a difference based on the essential requirements of a job is not considered discrimination.

Parenting: parenting encompasses the responsibilities associated with raising and caring for a child, whether for the father or the mother.

OVERVIEW

1) Unevenly distributed parental leave

Parental leave is still mainly taken by mothers, which keeps them out of the labour market for long periods of time and reinforces gender inequality. Because women typically earn less than men, they are often the ones who take parental leave to minimize household income loss. In OECD countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, composed of 38

member countries, mainly developed countries), the average gaps are around 15% for employment and 12% for pay. Furthermore, the lack of accessible, high-quality childcare services often hinders women's participation in the labour market, particularly when it comes to full-time employment.

The European directive currently allows two months of leave to be transferred from one parent to another. In practice, these days are often assigned to the mother, further increasing the parental burden placed on them. This system perpetuates existing imbalances and hinders professional equality between women and men. The length of maternity leave also plays a crucial role: if it is too short, mothers may be forced to leave their jobs because they do not have enough time to recover from childbirth or to care for their child. Conversely, a leave that is too long, especially when only taken by women, can harm their careers, thus exacerbating wage inequalities.

According to the ILO, 53% of countries meet the minimum standard of 14 weeks, but 15% offer less than 12 weeks. The longest leave is granted in Eastern Europe (27 weeks), and in developed countries (21 weeks) compared to only 9.2 weeks on average in the Middle East. Since 1994, the length of leave has increased in most countries.

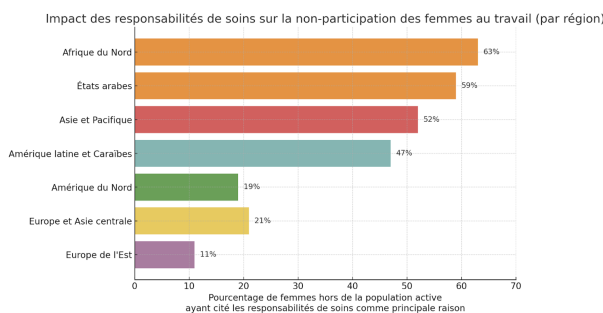
The ILO's global portal on care policies aims to promote gender equality and combat discrimination, particularly by disseminating data such as the length of maternity leave (in weeks) in each country. See the link to this portal: [ILO Global Care Policy Portal](#)

2) Gender inequalities

The unequal distribution of parental leave, which is mainly taken by women, hinders their access to the labor market. Globally, 45% of inactive women report taking care of family responsibilities, compared to only 5% of men. The gap is even more pronounced among women aged 25 to 54: two-thirds, or 379 million, cite this as the reason for not working. Taking on the majority of parental leave more often interrupts their careers, hinders their progress, and fuels the idea that they are less available to work. These barriers, both social and structural, contribute to the persistence of gender pay inequality.

Those living in rural areas or with few qualifications face even more obstacles. Working conditions are often less favorable. Salaries are lower, jobs are less stable, and flexible employment opportunities are rare, while childcare options remain limited. In addition, women

with low levels of education often hold precarious, low-paying jobs, which makes it difficult for them to return to the labor market after maternity leave.



Source: International Labour Organisation (ILO)

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708 million women cannot participate in the
labour
market due to unpaid care work, October 29, 2024

3) Professional discrimination

In low-income and lower-middle-income countries, women earn 33 and 29 cents for every dollar earned by men, respectively. In high-income and upper-middle-income countries, these figures rise to 58 and 56 cents. Globally, only 46.4% of women of working age are employed, compared to 69.5% of men, and at the current rate of progress, it would take nearly two centuries to achieve equal employment rates. Furthermore, women hold only 30% of management positions worldwide, and this proportion has increased only modestly over the past 20 years. Women are still largely overrepresented in low-status, low-paid sectors such as nursing, early childhood care, and assistance in family businesses. When they do work, they are more likely to be in precarious, unprotected jobs or jobs in the informal economy, particularly in low- and lower-middle-income countries. On average, they earn lower wages, work fewer paid hours, and enjoy fewer protections than men, who predominate in higher-status fields such as transportation and mechanics.

ILO TREATIES AND MAJOR EVENTS

15/06/2000

Convention n°183 on maternity protection: Adopted at the 88th session of the ILO General Conference in Geneva, this convention aims to guarantee maternity protection and the rights of pregnant or breastfeeding workers. In particular, it provides for the right to maternity leave, breaks for breastfeeding, and other protective measures. ([see here](#))

11/08/1983

Convention n°156 concerning workers with family responsibilities: The purpose of this convention is to guarantee equal opportunities and treatment for workers of both sexes with family responsibilities. It encourages member states to adopt measures to reconcile work and family life, taking into account national circumstances. ([see here](#))

23/06/1981

The R165 recommendation on family responsibilities: This recommendation aims to ensure that workers with family responsibilities are not disadvantaged in their careers. It also recommends adjusting working hours and allowing leave in the event of illness of a child or other family member requiring care. The goal is to prevent any form of discrimination based on family circumstances. ([see here](#))

25/06/1958

Convention n°111 concerning discrimination: This agreement prohibits any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national ancestry, or social origin, when such distinction, exclusion, or preference has the effect of compromising equal opportunity or treatment in employment and occupation. ([see here](#))

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

➤ Accesible, high quality childcare services

These services would enable both parents to share the time spent with their children, thereby reducing the pressure on mothers and encouraging fathers to become more involved. They also make it easier to return to work after parental leave, helping to limit discrimination related to parenthood.

➤ Monitoring returns from parental leave

To avoid professional inequalities upon returning from leave, companies should guarantee an equivalent position, the same career prospects, and publish anonymous reports by gender. This would protect parents, especially women, who are often penalized or perceived as less committed.

➤ **Individual and equal parental leave**

Parental leave is mainly taken by women because it is transferable to mothers, who are poorly paid. Making this leave mandatory, individual, non-transferable, and well paid (at 100% or 80%), with incentives for companies, would encourage fathers to get involved, reduce career barriers for women, and change attitudes.

➤ **Equal parental time credit**

Instead of being limited to the first few months, each parent has a personal, non-transferable time credit to use until the child reaches the age of 6, paid at around 80% of their salary, with social rights maintained. The company must adapt positions or recruit via a public platform. This system promotes shared involvement, reduces the invisible burden on mothers, allows fathers to be present at key moments, and limits career interruptions for women.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How long is parental leave in your country? How can it be divided between men and women?
2. In your opinion, do all companies currently respect equality in parental leave, particularly in terms of duration and remuneration?
3. How can work and replacements be managed effectively in companies when both parents take leave?
4. How can we prevent parental leave from being perceived as a constraint for companies or a source of discrimination in hiring?
5. What funding model would cover 100% or 80% of salary without undermining SMEs (companies with fewer than 500 employees)?
6. What progressive timetable would be most realistic for governments, employers, and employees to effectively adopt a new balanced parental leave system?

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videos :

- ❖ [Gender awareness in the workplace](#)
- ❖ [Pourquoi y a-t-il des inégalités de salaires homme/femme ?](#)
- ❖ [D'où viennent les inégalités entre hommes et femmes sur le marché du travail ?](#)
- ❖ [Comment réduire les inégalités hommes et femmes sur le marché du travail ?](#)