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LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN

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SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. The European Community has a long-standing interest in leave arrangements for workers with young children. This report reviews four types of leave arrangements: Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Parental Leave, and Leave to care for sick children. The report covers the 12 Member States of the European Community, plus Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden.
2. The case for leave arrangements is that they contribute towards the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, as well as other social and economic policy objectives, including equal opportunities, the health and well-being of children and parents, the well-being of families, improved economic performance and reducing unemployment.
3. Leave can be provided as a legal entitlement; or through collective or company agreements. The two approaches are not exclusive; collective or company agreements can supplement legal rights. The report gives examples of collective agreements which enhance leave arrangements for groups of workers, but there is no comprehensive source of data on the extent or nature of such agreements.
4. Within the EC, Maternity Leave is available as a general right in all but one Member State and is normally paid at a high proportion of earnings, but only one Member State offers a substantial period of paid Paternity Leave. Parental Leave is available in 8 Member States, with a ninth operating a 'career break' system; payment to parents varies considerably between countries, with most paying nothing or a low level of benefit. Belgium and Denmark have developed schemes in which child care is just one of many reasons why workers can take leave. Five Member States offer workers the right to leave to care for sick children; the length of leave varies and leave is unpaid, except in Germany. Overall, statutory leave arrangements are most developed in Denmark, Germany and Italy, and least well developed in Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.
5. All 4 non-EC countries have paid Parental Leave; Norway and Sweden are developing very flexible schemes. Sweden and Finland provide paid Paternity Leave; Sweden and Norway offer paid leave for parents to care for sick children. Taking account of the range of leave and conditions such as length, payment and flexibility, Sweden has the most advanced statutory leave provision among the 16 countries covered in this report.
6. The report considers evidence on how leave arrangements are currently used by workers with children. Parental Leave and other forms of leave are, in general, widely used when they are paid. Fathers make extensive use of paid Paternity Leave, but rarely take Parental Leave with the significant exception of Sweden. Parental Leave is used more by fathers in the public sector, in certain types of job, with higher levels of education and whose partners have higher incomes and levels of education. There are wide variations in the extent and quality of statistics and research concerning the use of leave arrangements.
7. The report considers evidence on the costs of leave arrangements. Parental Leave and other predictable types of leave including Maternity Leave do not appear to cause major

problems or costs to employers, although there may be specific exceptions to this general experience; they may also benefit employers. The cost to public funds depends on features of particular schemes, as well as the extent of savings in other areas of public expenditure. There may be costs to parents, depending to some extent on the structure of the leave arrangements and whether leave is taken disproportionately by women. Leave to care for sick children and entitlements to work reduced hours causes most problems for employers and parents. There are no comprehensive studies assessing the costs and benefits of leave arrangements.

8. The report draws a number of conclusions, including:
 - * Leave arrangements can contribute to a range of social and economic objectives, but only if a comprehensive, detailed, critical and dynamic approach is adopted. Without this approach, leave arrangements may be of limited or no value.
 - * The development of better and more effective leave arrangements requires regular monitoring and research.
 - * At present, few men take leave where it is available and most countries appear to accept this situation. The main exceptions are Nordic countries. Their experience suggests a number of conditions that need to be considered if leave arrangements are to be used by a significant number of men (for example, concerning payment, length, non-transferability and flexibility). Many of these conditions will also benefit women.
 - * To be fully effective and encourage their use by men and women, leave arrangements need to be flexible: this means responding to diversity in family and employment circumstances; and choice in how leave can be taken. The report provides examples of how a flexible approach to leave arrangements can be implemented in practice.
 - * Because leave arrangements are of such basic importance to reconciling employment and family responsibilities, a basic entitlement to the four types of leave needs to be guaranteed to all workers by law. This entitlement should be paid and flexible and include at least 16 weeks post-natal Maternity Leave; 2 weeks Paternity Leave; 12 months Parental Leave; and 10 days Leave for Family Reasons per child per year.
 - * Employers and trades unions can supplement this basic entitlement, as well as making other important contributions to the operation of leave arrangements.
 - * Introduction of a comprehensive, flexible and paid system of leave arrangements can be phased in over time. Where there are particular problems, for example in some small companies, extra support may be provided.
 - * At present, leave arrangements are mostly tied specifically to the birth and care of young children. An alternative approach would be to integrate Parental Leave into a strategy concerned with the working hours of men and women over their whole adult lives. This life course approach means adopting a 'career break' or 'time account' system, offering opportunities to take periods of leave throughout working life for a variety of reasons, including but not only caring responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

This report is a review of leave arrangements for parents in the European Community, and in four non-EC countries (Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden) which are currently applying for membership of the Community. Leave arrangements are important measures which can support parents to reconcile employment and caring for children. As such, the **European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Women and Men** (referred to below as the **EC Childcare Network**) has briefly reviewed and discussed leave arrangements in a number of its previous reports and also made recommendations about the future development of these arrangements¹. This report, however, is the first time the EC Childcare Network has focused exclusively and in detail on leave. In doing so, the Network is meeting some of the general duties given to it under the Community's Third Equal Opportunity Action Programme - "*to monitor developments, evaluate policy options (and) collect and disseminate information*".

Why review leave arrangements at this time? November 1993 was the tenth anniversary of the *Commission's proposal for a Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons* (discussed further below and referred to as the '*draft Directive*'). Since then, there have been significant developments on leave in a number of Member States. A number of other European countries are currently applying for membership, and it is of particular relevance therefore to understand their leave arrangements. The Community itself has maintained its interest in leave arrangements, and paid particular attention to them in two initiatives adopted in 1992 - the *Pregnancy Directive* and the *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care* (discussed further below).

At the same time, the need for leave arrangements is becoming ever more important, as the number of parents in the labour market in the European Community increases. Between 1985 and 1991, employment rates for mothers with young children (under 10) increased from 41% to 50% (excluding Portugal, Spain and the new German lander). Including Portugal, Spain and the new German lander, 58% of mothers were economically active (that is employed or looking for employment) by 1991. Economic activity among fathers with young children remains very high, over 95% in 1991, and nearly all employed fathers work long hours in full-time jobs (EC Childcare Network, 1993).

For these reasons, it seems appropriate to take stock of leave arrangements for workers with children at this time. But what are these leave arrangements? Broadly speaking, we can define four main types of leave: **Maternity Leave**; **Paternity Leave**; **Parental Leave**; and **Leave for Family Reasons**.

Maternity Leave is generally only for mothers (although it is possible for the post-natal part of the leave to be transferred to the father in extreme circumstances, such as the mother's

¹See *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity* (1988); *Childcare in the European Communities 1985-1990* (1990); *Men as Carers for Children* (1990). All Network publications available, free of charge, from the Equal opportunities Unit, European Commission (DGV/B/4), 200 rue de la loi, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

death or severe illness). It is intended to protect the mother and unborn infant in the last weeks of pregnancy and during childbirth; to allow the full recovery of the mother following childbirth; and to accommodate the breast feeding of the infant, at least in the early and most critical stages. It is essentially a health and welfare measure, concerned with the well-being of the mother and infant.

Parental Leave, by contrast, is for mothers and fathers, to enable them (in the words of the *draft Directive*) to take "*responsibility for the actual care of the child*". Its equal availability to mothers and fathers is a defining feature of Parental Leave, and this point is emphasised in the Commission's *Explanatory Memorandum* which introduces the *draft Directive*:

"Leave and other benefits granted (after Maternity Leave), particularly in relation to the care of young children, come under Article 5 of the Directive (No.76/207 on equal treatment as regards access to employment, vocational training and working conditions), since they constitute terms of employment that should apply equally to men and women workers" (Network's emphasis).

Parental Leave, when available, is generally taken by parents when children are very young; indeed, parents are usually required to take leave while children are under 3 (or younger). But there is no intrinsic reason why Parental Leave could not cover a wider age range in childhood, so that for example it could be taken at any period until the beginning of compulsory schooling - or indeed at any period until the end of compulsory schooling.

Leave for Family Reasons is also for mothers and fathers; the principle of equal availability applies as much to this type of leave as to Parental Leave. The *draft Directive* defined this type of leave in terms of duration ('*short periods of leave*') and purpose ('*for pressing family reasons*'). A narrow approach is simply to limit leave to situations where a child is ill. If a broader approach is taken, an important issue is to define what constitute '**pressing**' family reasons. The *draft Directive* did not provide a definition. Instead, it gave examples of '**pressing**' reasons: "*illness of a spouse; death of a near relative; wedding of a child; illness of a child or the person caring for the child*". These examples imply that Leave for Family Reasons does not have to be confined only to workers with young children and that '**pressing**' family reasons may cover a wide range of family responsibilities. But they do not provide clear principles that may be applied generally to help decide whether a particular circumstance should count as '**pressing**'. For example, should '**pressing family reasons**' cover parents' visiting their child's nursery or school? or parents taking their child to a medical appointment? or workers caring for a near relative who is ill?

One other type of leave for parents has been introduced in a number of countries, but has not been the subject of a draft or actual European Community Directive². **Paternity Leave** is, by definition, only for fathers. It is a period of leave to be taken at or near the time of

²The *Explanatory Memorandum* for the *draft Directive* does refer to Paternity Leave, in the context of a discussion about how the principle of equal treatment is applied in the draft Directive to Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons. Paternity Leave, it is argued, "*constitutes an acceptable and indeed desirable exception to the principle of equal treatment*".

childbirth (not necessarily immediately after birth, but within a short period after the birth). This type of leave has a number of purposes: to enable the father to be present at the birth of his child; to enable the father to have time with his newborn baby; to enable the father to have time with the mother and offer support; and to enable the father to provide sole or main care for other children and the home.

This review focuses in particular on Parental Leave, although it also covers the three other main kinds of leave. It consists of five parts:

- * the European Community's interest in and initiatives on leave arrangements;
- * the case for leave arrangements;
- * current leave arrangements in Member States and four other European countries;
- * how leave arrangements work in practice, in particular their usage and cost;
- * conclusions and recommendations.

There are two Appendices. The first summarises current statutory leave arrangements for the four types of leave outlined above, in the Member States of the European Community, and in Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The second gives examples of the flexible nature of leave arrangements in Sweden.

The information in the review comes from various sources, including questionnaires completed by members of the Childcare Network for their own country and a variety of other published and unpublished documents.

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY'S INTEREST IN LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

The draft Directive

The European Community has a long-standing interest in leave arrangements for workers with children. The First Community Equal Opportunities Action Programme, adopted in 1982, required the Commission to draft a Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons. This action had been recommended by the European Parliament, in a resolution of 11/2/1981, and was supported by the Economic and Social Committee in its Opinion on the new Equal Opportunities Action Programme.

The Commission put forward its proposal for a Directive in 1983, intended to cover "all wage-earners...in full or part-time employment in the public and private sectors" [Article 3(1)]. It did not therefore cover self-employed or family workers. Parental Leave was defined as:

"entitlement to leave of a given duration to wage-earners, fathers, mothers...consequential upon the birth of a child, during the period following the termination of maternity leave, or to workers, as defined above, on the adoption of a child during the period following its reception in the adoptive parents household, during which period of leave the beneficiary takes responsibility for the actual care of the child" [Article 1].

The *draft Directive* included the following proposals for Parental Leave:

- * minimum period of 3 months leave per worker, including those in part-time employment;
- * duration might be extended for single parents or in the case of a handicapped child;
- * leave to be taken before a child is 2 (except for a handicapped or adopted child);
- * payment for workers on leave was left to Member States to decide, but if made it should come from public funds;
- * leave should be taken as one continuous period and might be taken part-time, but only with an employer's agreement;
- * leave was an individual right, and could not be transferred from one parent to another, nor could both parents take leave at the same time.

Leave for Family Reasons was defined as:

"entitlement to short periods of leave granted for pressing family reasons to workers with family responsibilities" [Article 1].

Four 'pressing family reasons' were specified (see page 4), but as examples rather than a definitive list; it was left to Member States to define cases where this type of leave should be granted. The *draft Directive* included the following proposals:

- * entitlement to a minimum number of days per worker, including those in part-time employment, but for Member States to decide on the number;
- * duration might be extended for single parents or in the case of a handicapped child;
- * payment to be made on the same basis as paid holidays (ie. by the employer).

In the *Explanatory Memorandum* which accompanied the *draft Directive*, the Commission emphasised the importance of setting minimum standards for leave "*as part of the total strategy on economic, social and family policy and on an adequate demographic development*". More specifically, the Commission argued that Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons would contribute to **equal opportunity objectives**:

"the establishment of common standards (on leave) should be seen as an important development in the achievement of wider policy objectives regarding equal opportunities in society. The sharing of family responsibilities between parents is an essential part in particular of strategies designed to increase equality on the labour market".

The Commission therefore envisaged leave as a means to promote equal opportunities, through encouraging more equal sharing of child care and other family responsibilities between men and women. However, it also envisaged that leave arrangements could work against equal opportunities, if care was not taken:

"Parental leave should on no account, however, be seized upon as a discreet way of encouraging the permanent withdrawal from the labour market of working mothers. The actual duration of leave and the type of guarantees to which the working parent is entitled should be laid down with this consideration in mind... The present proposal sets out a number of principles in this respect, ensuring that parental leave, like leave for family reasons, is established as a nontransferable individual entitlement of the worker" (Network's emphasis).

In addition to a central concern with equal opportunities, the Commission considered that leave arrangements would contribute to **other social and economic objectives**:

"Of no less significance is the contribution of parental leave and leave for family reasons to the development of family policy... Parental leave is also to be considered as a form of leave of absence from work which can contribute to greater flexibility in the organisation of working time, and indeed to the reduction of working time... The development of various forms of paid or partly compensated leave from work can, under the right conditions, make a useful contribution to the reduction of unemployment... Parental leave can also offer an opportunity to provide valuable work experience for young people" (Network's emphasis).

The Commission's proposal received a favourable opinion from the European Parliament, although both the Parliament and ECOSOC recommended that leave should be paid. It was then discussed in the Council of Ministers from November 1983 to December 1985. But

negotiations were discontinued when it became clear that the proposal had no chance of being adopted, mainly due to the outright opposition of one Member States (although some other Member States had reservations about particular points of detail). The proposal is therefore still pending before the Council.

Other Community initiatives on leave arrangements for workers with children

More recently, the Community has become involved with another form of leave - Maternity Leave. In October 1992, the Council of Ministers adopted a Pregnancy Directive (or to give its full name, a *Directive for the Protection at Work of Pregnant Women or Women who have recently given Birth*). The Directive contained a number of measures concerned with the health and safety at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breast-feeding. These include an entitlement to 14 weeks Maternity Leave; workers taking leave must receive some financial compensation, at least equivalent to disability payment (although the Commission's original proposal had suggested that women on leave should receive full pay). This Directive, unlike the earlier draft Directive on Parental Leave, was put forward as a health and safety measure (under Article 118a the EC Treaty), and as such did not require unanimous support from all Member States.

Also in 1992, the Council of Ministers adopted a *Recommendation on Child Care*. Proposed as part of the programme to implement the *Community Charter on the Fundamental Rights of Workers* and the *Community's Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*, the Recommendation is intended to

"encourage initiatives to enable men and women to reconcile their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children" [Article 1].

Initiatives are recommended in four areas, including childcare services, the workplace, more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women - and leave arrangements.

"As regards special leave for employed parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children, it is recommended that Member States, taking into account the respective responsibilities of national, regional and local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organisations and private individuals...should take and/or encourage initiatives...These initiatives (on leave) should concern, for example, special leave enabling employed parents, both men and women, who so desire properly to discharge their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities with, inter alia, some flexibility as to how leave may be taken" [Article 4].

In its opinion on the Commission's original proposal for a Recommendation, the European Parliament again emphasised the importance of payment for parents on leave.

In summary, since the early 1980s the Community has identified that leave arrangements can play an important role in promoting a variety of policy objectives, particularly equal opportunities between women and men in the labour market. Three types of leave have been

the subject of proposals for action at Community level: Maternity Leave, Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons. So far, the contribution of leave arrangements to meeting the needs of workers with responsibilities for older children and dependent adults has only been recognised in the draft Directive proposals on Leave for Family Reasons (and even then, only marginally). Payment to workers on leave has been a contentious area.

Finally, discussions about leave have been linked to the goal of more equal sharing between men and women in family responsibilities. Member States have adopted this general goal. Article 6 of the *Recommendation on Child Care* says that:

"It is recommended that Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for freedom of the individual, increased participation by men (in the care and upbringing of children), in order to achieve a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women".

THE CASE FOR LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN

The Community has paid considerable attention to leave arrangements, in particular for workers with young children. Many Member States (and also countries outside the Community) have also developed the rights of workers in this area in recent years. Why has there been this growing interest? What is the case for leave arrangements?

At a general level, the case for leave arrangements is that they contribute towards **reconciling employment and family responsibilities** - in other words, that they enable women and men to combine tasks of social and economic importance, paid work and unpaid work³. This case has been recognised by Member States in the *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care*, which is concerned to promote reconciliation. The Recommendation makes it clear that leave arrangements will be most effective in supporting this objective when part of an overall programme of initiatives, for example including services for children and measures in the workplace to support parents at work.

Leave arrangements may contribute to a number of more specific policy objectives:

1. **Promoting equal opportunities between women and men in the labour market, through:**
 - a) enabling women to retain their position in the labour market during child-bearing;
 - b) encouraging increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children and more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women.

2. **Promoting the health and well-being of children, pregnant women, mothers and fathers, through:**
 - a) protecting the health of pregnant women, women immediately after childbirth, and unborn and very young infants;
 - b) giving sick children the right to have their parents present and, more generally, giving children the right to more of their parents' time;
 - c) giving parents the opportunity to spend more time with their children;
 - d) enhancing choice in the organisation of employment and family life;
 - e) reducing conflict between work and family life and reducing the 'double burden' on women by promoting more equal sharing of family responsibilities;
 - f) recognising the social importance of motherhood and fatherhood.

3. **Promoting the well-being of families, through:**
 - a) contributing to better family functioning and relationships.

³"The concept of reconciliation refers to harmonising, bringing together or making consistent different activities or interests so that they can co-exist without friction, stress or disadvantage" (European Commission Guide to Good Practice to Supplement the Council Recommendation on Childcare).

4. **Improving economic performance, through:**
 - a) making better use of human resources as a result of retaining women workers in the labour force and enabling parents to work under less stress.
5. **Reducing unemployment, through:**
 - a) using unemployed workers to make up for all or part of the working time resulting from parents taking leave.

We stress that leave arrangements may contribute to this wide range of social and economic objectives, because it is not inevitable that they will do so. Whether, and how far, leave arrangements contribute to particular objectives depends on various conditions being met, both in the structuring of leave arrangements and in complementary measures. We return to this point in the "Conclusions" section of the paper.

We also consider in the "Conclusions" section the potential contribution of leave arrangements to a strategy to give men and women more control and flexibility in how they allocate their time between employment and other activities (including, but not only, family responsibilities) over their whole adult lives.

THE CURRENT SITUATION ON LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR EMPLOYED PARENTS

Leave can be a legal entitlement, either available to all workers or with some exceptions. As already noted, the *draft Directive* on Parental Leave did not cover self-employed or family workers. It also allowed some scope for Member States to add further conditions limiting coverage: "*Parental Leave may be made subject to a requirement regarding length of service or employment, which must not, in any case, exceed one year*" [Article 5(3)].

Leave can also be provided through collective agreements or in the employment conditions of individual employers. The two approaches to leave are not mutually exclusive. Collective agreements or individual employer agreements may supplement a general legal entitlement (for example, extending the period of leave or supplementing the payment granted by law). In other cases, however, collective or individual employer agreements may give a group of workers access to leave that is not generally available (for example, they may offer paternity leave, when there is no general entitlement to this type of leave).

This section considers first leave arrangements that are **legal entitlements** for workers, then leave arrangements provided under **collective or individual employer agreements**.

Statutory Leave Arrangements

Appendix 1 provides a summary of statutory arrangements for Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Parental Leave and Leave to care for sick children and for other family reasons, for the 12 Member States of the European Community and for **Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden**. Appendix 1 refers to the situation existing at the time this report was completed (January 1994), but also includes changes in leave arrangements in **Norway and the United Kingdom** which will be introduced during 1994.

Maternity Leave

In most cases, EC countries offer a general right to Maternity Leave, paid throughout at a high proportion (75%+) of normal earnings.

There are two exceptions. In the **United Kingdom** conditions for eligibility restrict entitlement to about 60% of pregnant women workers. Most of the period of leave is unpaid; the paid period consists of 6 weeks at 90% of earnings and 12 weeks at a low flat rate. However, due to the Pregnancy Directive, changes in the law have been approved which mean that all women will be eligible for a limited period of paid leave (probably starting towards the end of 1994). **Denmark** provides a flat rate payment for the whole leave period, set at a relatively high level compared to average earnings.

In the Community as a whole, the length of leave is mostly between 14 and 18 weeks, with a number of countries offering extensions in certain circumstances (for example, multiple or

premature births). The **United Kingdom** has the longest period of leave at 40 weeks, but most of this period (22 weeks) is unpaid. In all countries, a specified period of leave must be used before birth and another specified period must be used after birth; however in six countries, a further part of the leave period can be used before or after birth as the mother chooses. In some countries (**Italy, Portugal**), leave may be taken by fathers in the event of the mother's death or disability.

A number of countries (**France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain**) offer additional entitlements to **mothers** who have returned to work, enabling them to take daily breaks from their jobs during the first 9-12 months after childbirth. In **France and Portugal** these breaks are specifically for mothers who are breast-feeding. In **Italy**, all mothers in full time employment have the right to two daily periods of rest, each of one hour, and these periods can be taken together so that mothers can effectively shorten their working day; **Spain** has a similar, if less generous, system. In **Greece**, women are entitled to one hour's break a day for 12 months after the end of Maternity Leave (24 months in the public sector).

The four non-EC countries all have a system of Maternity Leave, paid at a high proportion of normal earnings. In **Austria, Norway and Finland**, the leave covers the period before and after birth (in **Norway**, there is no separate system of Maternity Leave, but part of the Parental Leave period can only be taken by the mother and must be taken immediately before and after the birth). In **Sweden**, a specific Maternity Leave is only available before birth, and then only to women who cannot continue in their normal jobs and cannot be transferred to alternative duties. Other women can stop work two months before the expected date of delivery, but payment comes from the 'parental allowance' linked to Parental Leave; similarly, leave taken by mothers immediately after birth comes from the Parental Leave period, and payment comes from parental allowance, rather than being a separate system of Maternity Leave. Because eligibility conditions for Parental Leave - 6 months with the same employer or 12 months' employment in the preceding 2 years - exclude some women, all women are entitled to leave of six weeks before and six weeks after birth.

Austria gives breast-feeding mothers who have returned to employment the right to take daily breaks.

Paternity Leave

Four EC countries offer fathers an entitlement to Paternity Leave; but in three cases (**Belgium, France, Spain**), the leave period is very short (2-3 days). Only **Denmark** offers a substantial period of paid leave - 10 working days to be taken during the first 14 weeks after childbirth and paid on the same basis as Maternity Leave (ie. a relatively high flat rate payment).

Of the four non-EC countries, there is an entitlement to 2 weeks unpaid leave in **Norway** and 2 weeks leave at 80% of earnings in **Sweden**. In **Finland**, fathers can take 2 weeks of the Maternity Leave period, in which case the leave available to the mother is reduced. Fathers are also entitled to take 1 week of paid leave during the Maternity or Parental Leave periods which is exclusive to fathers and does not affect the leave available to mothers; leave is paid at 66% of earnings.

Parental Leave

Eight countries in the EC offer an entitlement to Parental Leave, although in two cases (France and Greece) parents working for smaller employers can be refused.

A ninth country (Belgium) has a system of 'career breaks' (*'interruption de carrière'* or *'loopbaanonderbreking'*) which can be taken for any reason, including the care of a child⁴. This system is not a general legal entitlement. In the private sector, it is a negotiated right based on collective agreements (since the beginning of 1994, there is a general collective agreement on 'career breaks' covering all private sector workers, but the conditions of this agreement may be improved upon in collective agreements covering particular industries within the private sector). In the public sector, it is a legal right. Taking a 'career break' in the private sector is subject to an employer's agreement (except where a collective agreement exists which removes this condition). In the public sector the right to a 'career break' does not extend to all services or to senior levels, where special permission must be sought "to safeguard the functioning of the service". However, because the system of 'career breaks' now covers all workers in Belgium, it is included in this report alongside statutory entitlements to Parental Leave.

Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom have no generally available system of Parental Leave, based either on legal entitlement or general collective agreements.

In most countries, the leave period per family is at least 6 months, extending to nearly 3 years in France and Germany. In Denmark, the basic entitlement is 10 weeks, but since 1992 this has been supplemented by an additional period. Until recently, this additional period (13 to 52 weeks per parent) was conditional on the employer's agreement and acceptance of a previously unemployed person as a replacement. From January 1994, this additional period has been replaced by an unconditional 6 months per worker, with a further 6 months per worker conditional on the employer's agreement. This means that the potential Parental Leave available to a two parent family is 2 years and 10 weeks, with 1 year conditional on the employer's agreement and the full period depending on both parents using their individual entitlement.

A significant feature of the new Danish system is that leave can be taken not only to care for young children, but also for training purposes - or for any other reason (ie. as a Sabbatical break from work). The original Parental Leave has therefore evolved into a broader concept, although at present the conditions of workers taking leave vary somewhat depending on whether they are taking leave for child care, training or other reasons (see Appendix 1). In this respect, the approach taken in Denmark is similar to that in Belgium, where the system of 'career breaks' is also not limited to child care reasons. **Both countries are evolving a system which offers the potential of taking leave or career breaks at different times and for varying reasons throughout working life.**

⁴'Career break' applies to all occupations, and not just professional, managerial or other higher status 'white collar' occupations; the system offers all workers the possibility of taking leave from their employment.

Only Greece and Netherlands give the full period of leave as an individual right (ie. each worker has a right to a period of leave). In both cases, this individual entitlement to leave is non-transferable. Elsewhere, with one exception, the full period of leave is a family right which can be allocated between the mother and father as they choose. Indeed, in Italy the leave is for the mother who can transfer all or part of the time to the father⁵. The exception is Denmark, where the initial 10 week period is a family right, but the additional periods of leave introduced since 1992 are individual and non-transferable rights.

Payment is made for the whole period of leave and to all parents taking leave in only Denmark, Italy and Belgium. In Italy, payment is made at 30% of earnings. In Denmark, payment for the initial 10 week period is on the same flat rate basis as Maternity Leave; the additional period of leave is paid at a lower flat rate. All workers taking a 'career break' in Belgium receive a low flat rate payment, which is higher if taken within 6 years of the birth or adoption of a second or higher order child; this means that workers taking 'career breaks' to provide care for young children receive favourable financial treatment.

Elsewhere, either no payment is made to parents taking leave; or if payment is made, it is only to some parents or for part of the leave period. In France, a low flat rate payment is made to parents taking leave if they have three or more children ('Allocation Parentale d'Education' (APE)). However, APE is not only available to parents who have taken leave since the birth of a third child. Apart from having three or more children, one of whom is under 3 years of age, the only condition to receive APE is that the parent has worked at least 2 years in the 10 years preceding the birth of the third child.

In Germany, a low flat rate payment is available until 24 months after birth ('Erziehungsgeld'); with some local exceptions, no payment is made for the last year of leave (between 24-36 months after birth). Payment is made to all parents for the first six months, after which it is means-tested; in practice, however, over 80% of parents receive the full payment. The benefit payment, which has been DM 600 a month since 1986, is not regarded as a compensation for lost earnings but as public recognition of the work involved in the care and upbringing of children. Consequently, it is available to all parents who are not employed (or who are employed for less than 19 hours a week), and not just those parents who were employed immediately before giving birth and are taking leave prior to returning to employment:

"(Maternity leave benefit and Erziehungsgeld) pursue different aims. The intention of (the former), according to the Federal Constitutional Court, is to resolve the conflict between the woman's responsibility as a mother and as a member of the workforce in the interests of preserving the health of mother and child. Consequently, the maternity benefit serves the function of preserving the mother's standard of living (as it was) before her pregnancy began. In contrast, the payment of (Erziehungsgeld) is based exclusively on providing for the upbringing and care of children" (Schiersmann, 1991; 65).

⁵One consequence of this situation in Italy is that a father whose partner is self-employed can never take leave because self-employed mothers are not entitled to leave.

Four German Länder pay a benefit during the third year after birth, a period which is unpaid for parents on leave under federal legislation. In France, the authorities in Paris pay parents who stop work at the birth of a second child. A similar system, of a common national payment with the option of local supplements, has recently been introduced in Denmark. Since the reform of Parental Leave in January 1994, local authorities have been given the power to supplement the basic benefit payment (80% of unemployment benefit) if they wish; one reason why local authorities might choose to pay this supplement is to reduce demand for childcare services, which local authorities heavily subsidise.

With one exception, Parental Leave is based on full time leave. In some cases, however, parents have the possibility of taking part time leave. In Belgium, the 'career break' can be taken on a part time basis, but subject to the employer's agreement. In Germany, parents on leave may work up to 19 hours a week for any employer, but again this depends either on finding an alternative position with another employer (subject to the agreement of the parent's original employer) or being offered part time employment by their existing employer; in both cases, the existing employer may refuse the request of a parent on leave on business reasons. In France, parents may take leave on a part time basis, choosing to work between 16 hours and 80% of full time hours.

The exception is the Netherlands, where Parental Leave consists of the right to work reduced hours, the minimum being 20 hours a week. Workers taking leave therefore must work part time.

In Italy, as in most other countries with Parental Leave, the entitlement applies to adoptive parents. In addition, the Italian system of leave recognises the needs of parents with a disabled child, for whom leave can be extended until the child's third birthday (or alternatively, parents can work a shorter day with financial compensation). In Greece, Portugal and Spain, parents with a disabled child may work a shorter day, but without compensation for lost earnings.

Usually, Parental Leave must be taken immediately after the end of Maternity Leave, but some countries offer more flexibility and choice. In the Netherlands, leave can be used at any time until a child is 4. The new leave arrangements in Denmark, introduced in 1994, enable parents to take leave at any time until their child is 9. The system in Belgium also offers choice to parents about when they can take their 'career break', and a higher payment is made to any worker who takes a break within 6 years of the birth and the adoption of a second or subsequent child.

All four non-EC countries considered in this report provide a legal entitlement to Parental Leave⁶, with a benefit payment to parents taking leave. Leave is a family right to be divided between parents as they choose - with one limited and recent exception. Under changes in the system in Norway introduced in 1993, 4 weeks of the leave period can only be taken by the father. As a general rule, if he does not do so, the period of leave is lost. In a few cases

⁶Since 1978, Parental Leave in Sweden has officially been called Child Care Leave, to emphasise that the main reason for the leave is the child's well-being and care. However, it is commonly referred to as Parental Leave, and the payment is called Parental Allowance.

this rule does not apply and the father's period of leave can be transferred to the mother, for example if the father is ill, unemployed, working abroad or off-shore or if he is self-employed and taking leave would be very costly. In addition, a period of 9 weeks leave can only be used by the mother (discussed above under **Maternity Leave**).

The period of paid leave is longest in **Austria** and **Finland**. Leave in **Austria** lasts two years, with the possibility of replacing the second year's full time leave by two years of part time leave (ie. spreading the leave until a child's third birthday). Unlike the three Nordic countries (where payment for part or all of the leave period is made at a high earnings-related level), there is a flat rate payment throughout the leave period in **Austria**. This payment is relatively low (in 1988, it was just over a quarter of the average wage and just over a third of the average wage for women); there is however a higher flat rate payment for lone parents and parents with a low income partner.

Finland provides a Parental Leave and a Child Care Leave. Following a period of Maternity Leave, there is a 26 week Parental Leave, then the possibility of taking a further period of 'Child Care Leave' until a child is 3. Parents taking this period of 'Child Care Leave' receive a benefit consisting of a basic allowance (a low flat rate amount, less than 20% of average earnings), supplemented by: (a) an extra allowance if there are two or more children under 7 and not in public childcare services; and (b) an income-related supplement. In addition to the national system of allowances, supplementary allowances are paid by some local authorities (for example, in larger cities where the cost of living is higher).

Where both parents are employed, one parent is entitled to take part time Child Care Leave until the end of the year when the child starts compulsory school. Depending on agreement reached with employers, this leave can take the form of a shorter workday or a shorter working week. An allowance is paid to parents taking this leave option until their child's third birthday, equivalent to 25% of the basic allowance for Child Care leave.

Paid Parental Leave in **Norway** and **Sweden** is rather shorter, but is marked by considerable flexibility. Parents in **Norway** can choose between length of leave and level of payment. They may take 42 weeks of leave, with benefits paid at 100% of earnings up to a maximum level (ie. the same level of payment and the same conditions as for sickness benefits), or 52 weeks with benefits paid at 80% of earnings.

From July 1994, the flexibility in the leave arrangements in **Norway** will be greatly increased. Parents will be able to choose to take up to 29 weeks (paid at 100% of earnings) or up to 39 weeks (at 80% of earnings) of their Parental Leave entitlement in the form of reduced working hours, rather than full time leave. In this case, they will be able to choose between working 50%, 60%, 75%, 80% or 90% of full time hours and taking 50%, 40%, 25%, 20% and 10% of their full time leave. If a parent chooses to use his or her leave entitlement on this 'part time' basis, the length of leave will be increased correspondingly.

For example, a parent or parents (who may share the leave as they choose) who have chosen to take 52 weeks leave at 80% of earnings might take the first 26 weeks as full-time leave: the remaining 26 weeks of leave can then be taken in a variety of ways, including reducing their hours of work by 25% for 2 years (ie. 26 weeks of full time leave becomes 104 weeks of quarter time leave); or by 40% for 65 weeks; or by 50% for 52 weeks. To take another

example, a parent or parents who opt to take 42 weeks of leave at 100% of earnings, might take the first 29 weeks as full-time leave and convert the remaining 13 weeks of full-time leave into 65 weeks worked at 80% of normal hours or 52 weeks worked at 75% of normal hours or 26 weeks worked half-time. The Norwegian of Children and Family Affairs estimates that this new "time account scheme" offers parents more than one hundred options if they choose the 52 weeks of leave at 80% of earnings. Parents can choose any option, although employers can object if they believe the proposed arrangement will substantially disadvantage them; in these cases, the dispute will be arbitrated by committee.

Since 1982, parents with young children (at least up to primary school age) have the right to work reduced hours, but with no benefit payment to compensate for lost earnings. Employers must agree to the arrangement, but if there is a dispute, the case is arbitrated by a committee. When the new "time account scheme" is introduced in 1994, parents will only be allowed to use this entitlement to work reduced hours after the end of their Parental Leave; in other words they will not be able to claim a double reduction of working hours under both the 1982 law and the "time account scheme".

In Sweden, each parent is entitled to 18 months leave. This is combined with Parental Allowance of 15 months per family paid at 90% of earnings (up to a maximum level) for the first 12 months paid, and at a low flat rate for the remaining 3 months. The allowance can be divided between the parents however they choose, and in effect gives a period of 15 months paid leave per family, and which can be taken at any time until a child reaches the age of 8 (or the end of the first year at school).

The Swedish system is very flexible. Parents can take part or all of their paid leave on a full time, half time or quarter time basis. They can take leave in one block of time or several; transfer leave between parents; and switch from full time to part time leave or vice versa. By law, parents are entitled to make up to three changes per year in their use of Parental Leave (that is, they may start a period of leave or change to part time leave three times during a year), although more frequent changes can be made with an employer's agreement. Finally, parents have flexibility in how they claim and use their allowance; for example, they can take 5 days Parental Allowance for every 7 days of leave, so spreading out the period of paid leave by taking a reduced payment over a longer period (see Appendix 2 for examples of how families have used the flexibility in the Swedish Parental Leave and other leave arrangements).

Sweden also offers parents the right to work a reduced working day (three-quarters of normal hours) until their child reaches the age of 8. There is no benefit payment to compensate for loss of earnings (unless the parent uses the parental allowance for this purpose, which is possible since the flexibility of the allowance payment enables it to be paid to cover half-day or quarter-day leave).

Leave for Family Reasons

No EC Member State has an entitlement to leave for a comprehensive range of 'pressing family reasons'. Five countries however offer workers the right to take some leave to care for a sick child. The most generous benefit, in terms of length and payment, is Germany,

which provides up to 25 days paid leave per parent in families with two or more children (with single parents having a double allowance). Elsewhere, **Italy** and **Portugal** offer long but unpaid periods of leave; while **Greece** and **Spain** offer shorter and unpaid periods.

In **Italy**, mothers with a child with a serious disability can take 3 days of leave each month, and this entitlement can be transferred to the father. In **Denmark**, special assistance is also given to families with a child who is handicapped or chronically or seriously ill. Parents are compensated for lost earnings due to the care of their child (for example, due to hospital visits) or, without time limit, if one parent has to give up work to care for the child.

Finally, parents in **Greece** are entitled to leave to visit their child's school, subject to their employer's agreement.

In the four non-EC countries, leave to care for sick children is available in the three Scandinavian countries (and, additionally, in the case of the illness of the person who normally cares for the child in **Sweden**). In **Sweden**, parents are entitled to 120 days per year per child under 12, receiving 80% of earnings for the first 14 days, then 90% of earnings. In **Norway**, leave is available to care for sick children under 12, the basic entitlement being 10 days per year per parent, paid at 100% of earnings; this is increased to 15 days if there are more than two children, while single parents are entitled to a double period of time (ie. 20 days per year). In the case of a disabled or chronically sick child, the leave period can be extended to 20 days per year, and can be taken over a longer period, until the child reaches 16.

in **Finland**, employed parents of children under 10 are entitled to an unpaid temporary care leave of 4 days if a child becomes suddenly ill. In addition, a family is entitled to a special allowance, paid at 66% of earnings for a maximum of 60 working days per year per child, if a parent participates in the care, treatment or rehabilitation of a child in hospital; this leave and allowance can also cover a child cared for at home, if the illness or disability is serious. For children between 7 and 15, the illness or disability must always be serious if parents are to qualify for the allowance. For all ages of children, if parents are to qualify for the allowance they must be participating in the care of their child at the request of a doctor; they must also be unable to go to work and get no pay during their period of absence from work. However, this allowance is not linked to a leave entitlement; the employer is not required to grant leave for taking care of a child over a longer period. Finally, an allowance can be paid to a parent with a child under 16 who, due to illness, injury or disability, needs special treatment and rehabilitation for more than 6 months, if that treatment or rehabilitation involves special financial or other strain for the family.

Collective and company agreements

Collective or company agreements can supplement legal entitlements or, in their absence, provide some leave entitlements to some workers. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive source of data on the extent of such agreements. But there are sufficient examples to suggest that collective and company agreements make a significant contribution in Member States, for example:

- * **Belgium:** see discussion on page 14 about the 'career break' system.
- * **Denmark:** all workers in the public sector and most (95%) in the private sector have the right to take paid leave on the first day of a child's illness. Public sector workers get full pay for Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leaves, as do approximately 45% of private sector workers.
- * **France:** all women in the public sector (and all divorced or widowed men) are allowed 12 days leave a year to care for a sick child, while a substantial number of collective agreements in the private sector make similar provision, sometimes for men and women, sometimes for women only. Many collective agreements provide for women on Maternity Leave to receive full pay.
- * **Germany:** 14% of companies covered in a 1991 survey had agreements offering employees a longer period of Parental Leave; some agreements offer opportunities for part time employment after the end of Parental Leave.
- * **Ireland:** civil servants can take five days paid leave in the case of serious and unforeseen illness of a child or partner.
- * **Italy:** most workers receive full pay while on Maternity Leave. Workers in the public sector receive extra payments while taking Parental Leave (100% of pay in the first month and 80% in the second month) and full pay for part of the time they take leave to care for a sick child. Some groups of public sector workers are entitled to 5 days leave per year for family reasons, and in a few cases this leave can be used to spend time at a nursery when a child first starts to attend.
- * **Luxembourg:** public sector workers are entitled to one year's unpaid leave or to work part-time until a child reaches the age of 4.
- * **Netherlands:** public sector workers receive 75% of earnings while on Parental Leave, and are allowed to work half their original hours; for example, a worker who normally works 32 hours a week may work 16 hours a week while on leave, whereas the statutory leave scheme sets 20 hours a week as the minimum working week.
- * **Portugal:** public sector workers are paid when they take leave to care for a sick child or relative. Men in the public sector are also entitled to 2 days paid Paternity Leave.
- * **Spain:** as the result of collective agreements, an increasing number of workers receive full pay while on Maternity Leave.
- * **United Kingdom:** some employers offer improved maternity leave provision or paternity leave. A 1988 study found that 15% of a sample of employers provided career breaks, the opportunity for employees to take a period of leave (usually unpaid) to look after young children.

In Sweden, under some collective agreements workers receive full pay while on leave, and there are also some additional rights to leave. In Norway, many fathers receive paid Paternity Leave as a result of collective agreements, and other agreements provide full pay

to workers taking leave. In both countries, agreements providing full pay for workers taking leave are particularly relevant to workers whose earnings are above the maximum level for receiving earnings-related benefit payments; for example, in Norway benefits are paid at 100% of earnings up to NOK 223,000 a year, but not beyond. In Sweden, benefits are paid at 90% of earnings up to a maximum level. In Finland, most workers are covered by collective agreements which ensure them full pay if they take temporary leave to care for a sick child.

In addition to having no comprehensive data on the extent of collective and company agreements in the Community (or the other four countries covered by this report), there is no comprehensive data to enable an analysis of which workers have access to leave as an occupational benefit and which have no access at all. Such evidence as exists suggests that generally workers in the public sector are more likely to benefit from improved leave arrangements through collective agreements. Apart from the examples given above, there is evidence in the **United Kingdom** that career break schemes (and other measures to support employed parents) are more widely available to public sector workers (McRae 1991; Tables 2.14, 2.15). The author of the study from which this evidence comes also suggests that *"there are wide differences in the availability of different types of arrangement for different categories of women within the same workforce"* (ibid.; 54) (Network's emphasis). Similar partial coverage is reported for **Germany**:

"Not all employees of a company are always entitled to take advantage of its agreement. In some cases, only women are eligible, although most company agreements now refer to mothers and fathers. Some firms set a certain length of employment as a precondition for receiving benefits, while in others only certain groups of employees are included or certain groups of employees are excluded" (Schiersmann, 1991; 71)

Collective and company agreements therefore raise questions about equality of access to leave arrangements which are offered as occupational benefits. Coverage will generally be uneven. Certain groups of workers are most likely to benefit, often those with more value on the labour market or working for certain types of employer.

Finally, it should be noted that Parental Leave as a legal entitlement is equally available to men and women. Within a two parent family, therefore, leave is equally available to the mother and the father. When leave to care for a young child is part of a collective or company agreement, it is equally available to men and women at the workplaces covered: but it is not equally available to the mother and father in a family (unless both parents are covered by the same agreement or contract).

HOW LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS WORK IN PRACTICE

Parents' use of leave arrangements

In the European Community

This section on parents' use of statutory leave arrangements within Member States of the European Community concentrates mainly on Parental Leave. Countries have been divided into three groups: countries where statutory leave is unpaid; countries where it is paid to some parents or for part of the time; and countries where all parents are paid for the full leave period.

In Greece, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain workers taking Parental Leave receive no benefit payments, unless some form of payment is provided through a collective or company agreement. There are no national statistics currently available in these countries on the use made of Parental Leave. The Network members in Greece and Portugal believe that the use of leave is low, by both mothers and fathers. The Greek member of the Network notes that "*Parental Leave in Greece is not paid, so the proportions of mothers taking leave is very limited... (but) there are no available figures*". The Portuguese member also notes that there is no statistical information "*since Parental Leave is not entitled to a benefit and is based on an agreement between employer and employee*", but adds that 'take up' is probably low:

"The main factor... is the fact that (leave) is not paid nor does it count for seniority and promotion purposes... Naturally, being unpaid leave the only parents who can take it without serious difficulties are those who can afford to live without salary or any benefit... All parents who can have their children in a child care service or with any family member, or with hired helpers during their working hours prefer to do so".

Parental Leave has been recently introduced in the Netherlands. Although there are no national statistics available on use, the Government is currently reviewing how leave arrangements are working. Two research studies provide some information, although not on the basis of a representative sample. A survey of employees of eight private and public sector organisations who had a child in 1991 found that 16% had taken leave - 13% of the men, and 23% of the women. Men were more likely to have used leave if they worked in the public sector and therefore received some payment while away from work. The main reason given for not taking leave (by nearly half of the employees) was financial, while a fifth referred to the culture of the workplace. A large number of women referred to the limitations of the leave system which only enables leave to be taken on a part time basis. A final issue was lack of information: almost half of the sample did not know about the law on Parental Leave which had only been introduced at the beginning of 1991 (Pelzer and Miedema, 1992).

A second study in the Netherlands looked at employees in three public sector organisations, who therefore would receive some payment if they took leave. The study concluded that women were more likely to take leave than men, and to take a longer period of leave. Men in particular were likely to say that they could not take leave because of the nature of their

job or because it would have an adverse effect on their careers (van Soest, 1992).

Some benefit payment is made to parents taking Parental Leave in France, but only if they have three or more children. Regular statistical information about the overall use of Parental Leave is not available. The only regularly available information concerns the minority of parents who receive benefit (APE) because they have three or more children (174,000 in 1991). However, this figure for APE recipients does not give an accurate picture of the use of leave even among workers with three or more children, since as already noted APE is not limited to workers on Parental Leave.

In a 1991 report, the High Council for Population and Family concluded that "*Parental Leave is still a rarely used measure*", but also noted the absence of quantitative evidence. This conclusion has been substantiated by a 1992 survey of public and private sector workplaces with 10 or more employees, commissioned by the Government Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales. The survey estimates that Parental Leave was taken in only about 10% of dual earner households with a child under 3, and that 99% of parents taking leave were mothers. Put another way, 1.6% of women employed in the private sector were on Parental Leave and 1.1% employed in the public sector.

Leave was most commonly taken by parents with three or more children (when parents taking leave would also qualify for a benefit payment); they accounted for around 50% of parents on Leave. The length of Leave taken varied with occupational status: workers in higher status jobs were less likely to take the full three years. Finally, although parents taking leave may work part time, this happened in less than 15% of cases (Renaudat, 1993).

The earlier report of the High Council for Population and Family suggested a number of reasons why the use of Parental Leave was low:

"(The main obstacles to parents taking leave are) inadequate information, a clear reticence on the part of many employers (particularly small businesses) and above all the fact that this leave is not paid and the guarantees of satisfactory conditions for returning to work are inadequate".

In Germany, all parents receive some payment for part of the Parental Leave period and the evidence points to a high and stable take-up of leave, running at about 96%. However, leave is almost entirely taken by mothers, with men accounting for only 1% of parents receiving benefit. As already noted, the German benefit payment ('*Erziehungsgeld*') is available to all parents, and not just those who have taken leave from employment; about half of the mothers receiving this benefit were on leave from employment. Most of the men claiming benefit were unemployed; in other words they had not taken Parental Leave to care for their young child but were out of work already. Finally, only a small number of women receiving benefit (about 3%) also worked part time, as they are permitted to do.

These figures for Germany refer to the period before the extension of Parental Leave to 3 years. There is no information on usage under the new arrangements, which have only been in place since January 1992. In a recent study, 40% of women in the new lander and 66% of women in the old lander said they want to take advantage of the full 3 years, women with

lower educational qualifications being more likely to express this preference. A substantial proportion of women in this study said they would like to work part time while on leave (49% in the new lander, 35% in the old lander). The German member of the Network observes that *"after the extension of Parental leave to 3 years it is very probable that the proportion working part time (while on leave) will increase"*.

All parents receive payment for at least part of the time they are on Parental Leave (or, 'career break') in Italy, Belgium and Denmark. In Italy there are no statistics on the number of mothers or fathers taking Parental Leave. In the absence of statistics, the Italian member of the Network gives her impression of the current situation:

"It is commonly believed that mothers are the parents that take leave, and especially mothers working in the public sector, except for a small proportion of fathers mostly working in the public sector. (Levels of leave taking are higher) in the public sector because there are fewer risks...and in general it is characterized by more favourable attitudes towards leave taking as it has a higher level of women workers".

The conclusion that leave is mostly taken by mothers is supported by a recent large-scale survey of public employees undertaken by the Government. Maternity and Parental Leave accounted for 19% of all days of absence from work; 95% of these leave days were taken by women, although only 38% of the workers in the sample were women.

In Belgium, a 1993 report provides a review of the use of the 'career break' system (Belgian Federal Service for Employment, 1993). While the data needs to be interpreted with caution, because the system was introduced gradually and with different conditions for different groups of workers, some broad trends can be identified. First, there has been a steady increase in the total numbers taking a 'career break', from 2,019 in the first year of operation (1985) to 57,994 in 1992. Second, workers in the public sector are more likely to take 'career breaks'; in 1992 they accounted for 56% of workers on leave but only 30% of all workers. One reason for this may be the higher proportion of women workers in the public sector. Third, 'career breaks' are mostly used by white-collar workers, with their share increasing over time. Finally, most 'career breaks', approximately 85%, are taken by women, and the proportion is probably higher for 'career breaks' taken to care for children. Whereas most women taking a 'career break' appear to do so because of family responsibilities, especially the care of children, many men appear to take a 'career break' in anticipation of retirement (and it should be remembered that the system in Belgium allows workers to request 'career breaks' for any reason). Thus, 65% of women taking 'career breaks' in 1992 were under 40, while 55% of men were over 40.

There is, in fact, no national information currently available on the reasons for workers requesting a 'career break', although this information is being collected from 1993 onwards. However, some regional data confirms that women are much more likely than men to take 'career breaks' because of children. In December 1992, in the Brussels region, there were 571 workers taking a 'career break' for this reason, of whom 95% were women. This same data set also shows that the group taking 'career breaks' was overwhelmingly white-collar workers (89%), and that over half were taking their 'career break' on a part time basis.

Reviewing this evidence, the Network member for the Flemish Community in Belgium

concludes that:

"There has been a real interest among employees in the system of 'career break'. Overall, however, it appears that the system remains quite selective. As the flat-rate payment (to workers taking career breaks) remains modest, it probably disadvantages and discourages one income households, especially if their total income remains modest; those earning most in two income households (usually men); and employees in certain industrial sectors where restrictions on the use of 'career breaks' have been noted due to the operation of a de facto threshold (usually 1%) on the proportion of employees who can take a 'career break' at any one time".

In Denmark, 88% of women are entitled to Maternity and Parental Leave (those not entitled include housewives, women in education or training or on welfare benefits), and 82% take leave - so almost all women make use of their entitlement. Moreover out of a potential period of 24 weeks post-natal leave (14 weeks post-natal Maternity Leave and 10 weeks Parental Leave), women actually take an average of 23 weeks. About 50% of fathers in Denmark take Paternity Leave, and this take-up rate has risen steadily, by 3-4% per year. By contrast, only 3% of fathers take any Parental Leave; those that do, take an average of 5.5 weeks of leave out of the 10 weeks available.

Fathers' use of Parental Leave has remained low since it was introduced in 1984. Research has been conducted in Denmark which throws some light on the reasons. A national study was undertaken in 1990, based on a sample of women who had children between 1984-89 and a sample of men who had taken at least 4 weeks Parental Leave in 1989. Mothers and fathers agreed on the main reasons why men do not take Parental Leave: finance (it would cost the family more if the father took leave, and it should be noted that mothers are more likely than fathers to work in the public sector - 52% v 29% - where workers taking leave get full pay); the length of the leave (the period of leave is too short, with most mothers still breast-feeding during the initial 10 week leave period); the workplace (the father's job does not permit leave); and the possibility of the father taking leave was never discussed. Each of these reasons was mentioned by approximately 20% of parents (Christoffersen, 1990).

These findings were confirmed in a later study, when about half the fathers said their partners wanted the whole period (for breast feeding among other reasons). Workplace factors were also identified. The workplace is generally well disposed to Paternity Leave but not so favourable to longer Parental Leave; more specifically, men take less leave and time to care for sick child in workplaces characterised by direct competition between workers and a weak culture of solidarity between the workforce. Finally, Danish research has found that fathers are more likely to take leave if: they are employed in the public sector; they are well educated; and their partners are well educated and have good incomes (Carlsen, 1993a, 1993b).

These findings relate to the Parental Leave entitlement introduced in 1984, giving a right to 10 weeks leave. An extension to this basic entitlement was first introduced in 1992, giving the possibility of a further 13-52 weeks leave, although paid at a lower benefit level and more conditional (for example, requiring the employer's agreement and the taking-on of a long-term unemployed person as a replacement worker). In its first half year, relatively few parents (1,260) used the scheme; public sector employees predominated. Barriers to taking

this additional leave included: the drop in earnings; employer resistance; uncertainty about whether child can return to the same daycare service; and lack of interest (Jensen, 1993). However, in its second half year, the numbers taking leave increased substantially (6,855). Overall, in its first year of operation, women accounted for 95% of parents using the scheme. This scheme has now been replaced by a new and less conditional entitlement, which came into operation at the beginning of 1994.

Danish research reveals two other important points. First, leave only accounts for part of men's absence from work when they have children. The national study on Parental Leave found that fathers not taking leave still spent 8 weeks at home during their child's first year; those taking leave spent 14 weeks, only part of which (5-6 weeks) was Parental Leave. Many Danish fathers use holidays, time off in lieu or change their working hours (eg. to do evening work) in order to extend their Paternity Leave and spend more time with their children:

"these forms of absence and of planning of working hours are not shown in any statistics. Therefore we cannot use parental leave statistics as a measure of men's desire for involvement in the care of children. Fathers are good at finding other solutions. The problem meanwhile is that these are individual solutions which the strongest groups at the workplace are best able to work out for themselves" (Carlsen, 1993a).

Secondly, workplaces may get accustomed to men taking leave, but less readily accept that men have continuing family responsibilities after leave has finished:

"when fathers return to work after their period of leave it is as if the workplace forgets that the men still have their child care duties in the family. The workplace reacts negatively when men can no longer take on so much overtime, are no longer willing to do so much work in unsocial hours, when men stay at home because children are ill etc" (ibid.).

Finland, Norway and Sweden

Parental Leave is paid in the three non-EC Nordic countries. The evidence points to high levels of use in all three countries, at least by mothers. In Finland, Parental Leave is used in nearly all families, but almost entirely by mothers; fathers account for only 2% of Parental Leave days (although, in 1991 45% of fathers took Paternity Leave). Nearly half of all families (46% in 1991) use the Child Care Leave following Parental Leave; again, this leave is taken almost entirely mothers. Although Child Care Leave lasts until children reach the age of 3, only a minority of parents (15%) take the full period; the average length of leave taken is 12 months.

In Norway, nearly all working mothers who are eligible take Parental Leave, but few fathers do so. National and local data show that less than 1% of fathers used the period of paid Parental Leave in 1987. At that time, the period of leave only lasted until 20 weeks after the birth, a relatively short period given the Danish findings about the significance of length of Parental Leave for take-up by fathers. More detailed analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of fathers who took leave, and their partners, shows a similar pattern to

Denmark:

"With respect to education, income and occupation, we find that the (fathers) who took leave have a high education, a middle range income and are, to a large degree, publicly employed... The interesting point is that when we analyse couples, we find that the user group are alike in that both the mother and the father have a high level of education and income. In other words, what we see is that the labour market position and the earning power of the mothers are strong... (which) strengthens their bargaining position in the family" (Brandth and Kvande, 1992; 6).

By 1991-92, when the Parental Leave period had increased to 28 weeks, the proportion of fathers taking leave had only grown to 2%.

Parental Leave in Sweden is unique for its combination of flexibility and high level of payment to parents taking leave; it is also available for a substantial period of time. In 1989/90, nearly all mothers (98%) took paid Parental Leave; during the child's first year, nearly half (44%) take more than 271 days, while a third took between 181 and 270 days, with an average of 262 days.

Unlike other countries discussed above, a substantial number of fathers also take leave. Nearly all fathers (86% in 1990) take the two week Paternity Leave, and nearly half (44% in 1989) now take some Parental Leave during their child's first year of life, double the corresponding figure for the first half of the 1980s⁷. Statistics for 1989-90 show that 50% of fathers have taken leave by the time their children are over 15 months.

Some other features of leave-taking among fathers should be noted. Fathers are more likely to take leave as children get older; in 1989/90 the proportion of fathers taking leave increased from 21% for children under 6 months to 35% for children aged 9-11 months and 50% for children over 14 months. One third of fathers taking Parental Leave make use of the flexibility in the system, for example taking short periods of leave or part time leave. Although about half of fathers take some Parental Leave, they account for a much lower proportion of the total number of days of leave used by parents; most of the leave is still taken by mothers. In 1989, fathers taking some leave during the child's first year averaged 43 days away from work compared to 262 for mothers, and these figures are similar to those in the early 1980s; overall, in 1990 fathers accounted for 7.4% of all Parental Leave days taken (the above statistics are from Riksforsakringsverket 1990, 1992).

Swedish research points to certain men being more likely to take Parental Leave, with many similarities to results from Denmark and Norway. Parental Leave is most often used and taken for longest periods by fathers: employed in the public sector; who are older; who have higher levels of education; who are employed in workplaces and in jobs (for example, childcare workers, librarians) which are predominantly female; and who have partners who are highly educated and have a high income, and are likely therefore to have a strong and

⁷This figure of 44% is for married and employed fathers; the Swedish Government notes that "there is no reason to believe that fathers cohabiting with the child's mother would act differently from married men".

permanent commitment to the labour market. Fathers least likely to take Leave include men with their own businesses and who work in the police force and the fire service (Riksforsakringsverket, 1993).

"Parental leave is mostly used by parents who have white-collar work. One reason is that civil servants always have had less problems to stay home for parental leave. People in private companies are more likely to face resistance from the employer in different ways. Another reason is that new ways of thinking, new family patterns, always tend to change more slowly within the working class. Research shows that the most significant factor is the education level of the mother. Well educated mothers tend more often to let their husbands share parental leave than others" (Sundberg 1993a; 8).

Statistics also show that fewer immigrant men have been using Parental Leave, and work is underway to identify the obstacles for this group of fathers - *"the project will end this autumn (1993), but we already have some conclusions... we know now that information must be given in another way to men from other cultures"* (ibid; 8).

Research in Sweden suggest some reasons why men do not take leave. Some working-class women with monotonous jobs in poor work environments prefer to stay at home (Lunden Jacoby and Nasman, 1989). While the high earnings-related benefit payment means that finance should not be a disincentive, some parents mention financial reasons. This may be because some families have not calculated what the actual outcome would be, although *"for families in straitened financial circumstances the difference that nonetheless remains may be decisive (and) this is likely to apply above all to working class families where indeed a smaller proportion of men take parental leave"* (Nasman, 1990; 10-11). Negative attitudes at the workplace can be another obstacle, with some studies suggesting more positive attitudes in the public sector (and better conditions of employment), workplaces dominated by women and for salaried as opposed to manual workers; however few parents say they have not taken leave because of negative attitudes. Similarly, although some parents mention other workplace factors (for example, their indispensability), the proportion is very small. While men may say they do not take leave for fear of their employer's reaction, several reports have shown these fears exaggerated (Sundberg 1993a).

Three final conclusions about Parental Leave and fathers can be drawn from Sweden. First, the length of leave taken may be important if leave is to contribute to more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women on a longer-term basis:

"Several reports show that the length of Parental Leave used by men is of vital importance. Men who only stay at home for a couple of weeks do not get involved in how the domestic care is done, do not find their own way to care for the child and do not share this work more equally in the future. It is essential that men are induced to stay at home with their small children for at least three months. Only then will men find time to organise the daily child care and domestic work in their own way" (ibid.;2)

Second, the availability of Parental Leave has been backed up by a number of publicity and other projects intended to encourage men to use leave, many supported by public funds. In

recent years, trade unions have been involved:

"Campaigns for parental leave inside workplaces have always met with resistance. Thus it is necessary to encourage trade unions... Earlier trade unions did not care and said this was a private matter... (Now) the Swedish Trade Union Confederation has presented a campaign called "The best dad in the world" with pamphlets and posters... Campaigns made by the unions are often made very informative. They emphasise that there is a privilege to be used, a claim to be made. It tells you how to approach your employer and what help you can get from the union. In some workplaces the union has arranged special study classes for men as parents". (ibid.; 5).

There is, however, no research on the effectiveness of these complementary measures intended to promote more use of leave by men.

Third, as in Denmark, leave is only one way in which men may organise their paid work to spend time with their children:

"Most Swedish men do not take the amount of parental leave they are entitled to... There are several reasons for this... (including the jig-saw puzzle of working hours. Employees who are work shifts, evenings or nights have more time off in the day-time than employees with so-called ordinary working hours... If a man has such employment, but not his wife/cohabitant, it may not be that important for his family that he is the one who takes parental leave". (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992; 37).

Moreover, by using the flexibility in the leave system, and integrating it with days off in the normal course of working, men and women can spend more time with their children than the simple leave statistics suggest (for examples, see Appendix 2).

As well as Parental and Paternity Leave provision, Sweden has a generous system of leave in case of illness among children or their normal carers, amounting to 120 days per child per annum. There is however a big difference between the maximum amount of leave available to parents and the amount of leave actually taken by parents. In 1990, leave was claimed for 56% of eligible children, for an average of 8 days per child (up from 43% and 6 days at the beginning of the 1980s); the amount of leave taken per child falls as children get older (for example, in 1985 average leave of 9 days per year was taken for children under 5, falling to just under 4 days for children aged 11 years). Fathers constituted 41% of parents receiving benefit for this type of leave, and accounted for just over a third of the days of leave for which benefit was paid. The two day contact leave (to visit nurseries or schools) was used for 29% of children aged 4-12 in 1990; in 1987, men accounted for 34% of parents taking this type of leave (the above statistics are from the Swedish National Social Insurance Board, and were provided for a seminar 'From Motherhood to Parenthood' held at the Swedish Pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville, September 17 1992).

Finally, there is no information on how many parents use their right to work reduced hours until their child is 8 (possibly because there is no benefit attached). Experienced researchers however conclude that *"it is mostly the mothers who shorten their hours to take care of their children"* (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992; 37). This is consistent with employment rates which

show that in 1990 working hours for parents with pre-school children averaged 42.2 for fathers and 29.7 for mothers.

In summary, it can be seen that Parental Leave (and other forms of leave) are, in general, widely used when they are paid; that fathers make extensive use of paid Paternity Leave, but rarely take Parental Leave, with the significant exception of Sweden; and that Parental Leave is used more by fathers in the public sector, in certain types of job, with higher levels of education and whose partners have higher incomes and levels of education. There are wide variations in the extent and quality of statistics and research concerning the use of leave arrangements.

Costs of leave arrangements

The *draft Directive* proposed that Parental Leave payments should come from public funds and payments for Leave for Family Reasons should be paid by individual employers. In fact, payment for all statutory leave in the countries reviewed in this report comes from public funds⁸, with the exception of Maternity Leave in Germany, where employers have to make up the difference between the state benefit and the employee's average earnings. Data on costs to public funds of Parental Leave exist for some countries where payments are made for leave arrangements, for example:

- * Belgium (1992): BF 6.15 billion
- * France (1990): FF 6 billion [188,000 families receiving APE].
- * Germany (1993): DM 8.1 billion.
- * Denmark (1991): DKK 4.1 billion [118,304 parents] - NB. includes Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave.
- * Sweden (1991): SEK 14.3 billion [51 million days, at average payment of SEK 283 per day]. In addition, SEK 3,3 billion for Paternity leave, Leave to care for sick children and contact days.

While these figures indicate that substantial sums are allocated from public funds to pay benefits to parents taking leave, especially in Sweden, they do not provide any general conclusions about direct costs. These costs will vary depending on: the number of different types of leave provided; the length of each type of leave; the level of payment; whether payment is made to all parents or only some; the number of parents eligible for leave; and the proportion of eligible parents taking leave. The variability of cost depending on these different factors, and how they interact (for example, the rate of payment may affect the proportion of parents taking leave) is partly illustrated in a recent costing exercise undertaken in the United Kingdom. For example, the cost of 3 months Parental Leave per parent was found to vary:

⁸'Public funds' refers to money originating either from general taxation or from contributions that all employers are required to pay into a fund to finance benefit payments (eg. in Italy, payments to workers in the private sector on Maternity and Parental Leave are paid by employers who are then refunded from a national fund (INPS) financed by contributions from all private sector employers).

"(On full pay), the cost will be £624 million a year on the assumption of a low take-up rate and £819 million a year with a high take-up rate. If the payment is only a low flat rate, take-up rates will be lower and the cost with a low take-up is estimated at £136 million a year and £176 million with a high take-up" (Holterman and Clarke, 1992; viii).

Costs to employers may arise when workers take leave or receive payments while on leave which result from collective or company agreements. Other costs may arise from replacing the work of an employee taking leave. An important issue here is how employers actually cope when workers take leave. There are a number of possibilities, including: the employment of a substitute worker (from a temporary agency, from a pool kept by the employer to cover absences, hiring a new member of staff on a short-term or longer-term contract etc); sharing the work around among colleagues; or leaving the work undone (possibly to be done when the person on leave returns).

In Denmark, the most common solution (65%) for mothers taking Maternity and Parental Leave is to employ a substitute; otherwise the work is shared between colleagues (32%). For fathers taking Parental Leave, sharing the work among colleagues is much more common (54%) than employing a substitute (27%). However when parents take time off to care for sick children, then the use of a substitute is uncommon (10%), and it is much more common to share the work among colleagues (41%) or leave it until the parent comes back (29%).

In Sweden, *"the most frequent ways to fill the gap in personnel (due to Parental Leave) are by a substitute recruited from inside or outside the workplace and by re-arranging the work among the colleagues of the parent on leave"* (Nasman and Falkenberg, 1989; 16). The actual method chosen depends on the type of work and the position of the employee on leave:

"In a hospital it may be easy to replace a low skilled worker with a temporary worker while high turnover among production line workers makes it possible to absorb losses due to leave. For more skilled or senior workers this may be harder, so their work is either shared around or another worker 'acts up'" (Rapoport and Moss, 1990; 28).

Other factors affecting solutions adopted at the workplace. Large companies may be more able to replace workers on leave from their own resources or to establish systematic arrangements. The longer and more predictable the leave (for example, women taking Maternity and Parental Leave), the more likely a substitute employee will be used.

What is striking about Sweden, which has a long established and extensive system of Parental Leave, is how little difficulty it seems to cause most employers:

"Statutory Parental Leave in Sweden does not seem to present any major problems to employers...experience has shown that Parental Leave is workable and that what employers think is impossible is not impossible; initial worries went as it became apparent there are no really big problems...in general, implementation is facilitated because Parental Leave is predictable and employers get advance notice of an employee taking it. It only affects a small part of the workforce at any one time" (Rapoport and Moss, 1990; 27-28).

This last point, about the relatively small numbers affected, is emphasised by the German member of the Childcare Network:

"an average of only 1.1% of the labour force is on Parental Leave...Even in sectors with very high female employment like banks, retail and insurance companies, the average percentage of the employees on Parental Leave is low (1.9%)...Parental Leave accounts for about a third of turnover in the female labour force".

A study in Germany in 1989 found that 90% of companies had experienced no major problems with Parental Leave, and companies did not note any significant costs (Institut für Entwicklungsplanung, 1991). However in another study, 75% of companies said that the extension of Parental Leave to 3 years would bring problems, especially for small and medium sized companies (Capital Dokumentation, 1991). Only time will tell whether these fears are well-founded or whether they represent a tendency to anticipate problems that do not materialise in practice.

In general, therefore, there seems little evidence to suggest that Parental Leave (or other predictable types of leaves such as Maternity and Paternity Leave) cause major problems or costs to employers. There may however be very specific exceptions, concerning particular employees or some smaller companies, as Swedish experience illustrates:

"In a big company there is always someone to do the job. In a small company, however, replacements are hard to find...the absence of one single employee might change the company's rhythm of work totally". (Sundberg, 1993a; 7).

"Most employers' attitudes were that it was right that parents should be able to combine work and family. At the same time they said the (Parental Leave) law caused problems at least for employees who were very difficult to replace because of their position in the company, the type of work and their knowledge" (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992; 75).

In Sweden, leave entitlements to care for sick children, and also giving parents the right to work reduced hours, cause employers more problems, and are more likely to produce indirect costs:

"According to a study...employers were more positive towards longer periods of leave than shorter periods...(for example caring for a sick child), a type of leave which was looked upon as a big problem for the companies, and shortening working hours. The employers' negative attitudes towards these shorter types of leave are due to their belief that these leaves cause disruption in production, loss of labour which is difficult to replace and increased administrative work" (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992; 75-76).

It should however be noted that, where leave entitlements do not exist, parents will usually find other ways to care for a sick child, for example by claiming personal sickness, which may be equally disruptive. Assessing the costs of leave arrangements must always take account not only of the benefits, but also of the costs of not providing arrangements.

Costs to parents who take Parental Leave occur when they are not compensated fully for lost earnings; this frequently occurs, and mainly affects women. Other costs occur if parents suffer subsequent disadvantages as a result of taking leave, for example adverse effects on future employment and earnings or on their workload within the household. It has been argued that long periods of Parental Leave, taken predominantly by women workers, will reinforce existing inequalities in the labour market and the home. Speaking of the Parental Leave in her own country, a German academic has argued that current arrangements consolidate *"the existing division of work within the family and the difficult employment situation for women"*. Similar arguments have been made by a Norwegian and Swedish researcher:

"When applied to the gender-structured working world, parents use the legal rights in a way that preserves the unequal sharing of economic and practical parenting...women confined to typical women's jobs develop a work attachment that weakens their economic parenting and strengthens their practical parenting. In these families, the traditional division of parenting is consolidated (by leave entitlements) (Kaul, 1991; 124).

"If it were not for the legislation perhaps fewer women would be able to work after having children. But those who now, possibly thanks to the legislation (in Sweden), can keep their jobs are put in a worse situation at their places of work than they would have been if they had not used the reforms...Women's use of their rights to Parental Leave contribute to an increase in gender specific work conditions. That is, the law at the same time as it is meant to improve the situation of women, in fact also strengthens rather than diminishes the gender structure in the labour market... 'Remedies' such as the Swedish legislation on Parental Leave might very well improve the situation of women relative to the situation they had previously...At the same time, however, we must be aware that in this process the situation of women will deteriorate in relation to men: ie. subordination and gender differences in the labour market will increase" (Widerberg, 1991; 38,43).

Parents may also experience costs in the form of increased work pressure if they use entitlements to work reduced hours. Swedish studies have reported that many parents in this situation cope with the same amount of work as before they reduced their hours, having to fit 8 hours work into a 6 hour day (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992): an earlier study found that women wanting to work reduced hours in a local authority *"cannot go back to their old job and then they are expected to do a full time job on part time (hours, the result of which) is that the women work under stress"* (Widerberg, 1991; 35). Similar problems can arise with leave to care for sick children; parents may feel under pressure, from management and workmates, not to take this leave because of inadequate arrangements for covering their absence, resulting in colleagues having to do extra work. Widerberg (1991) has argued that these problems result from a failure of the legislation to require employers to organise work to support the use of entitlements such as reduced hours and leave to care for sick children.

On the other hand, Swedish studies of individual workplaces find a relatively small proportion of mothers and fathers who report that taking leave or reducing hours has adversely affected their opportunities for development and training or earnings' growth.

Moreover, as Widerberg mentions, costs may arise for parents if there are no leave arrangements due to fewer women continuing in employment after having children.

The situation therefore is unclear. At present, we can draw no clear conclusions about the full costs to parents of taking leave or entitlements to work reduced hours. There is insufficient research to assess the long term consequences of taking leave or the consequences of different ways of structuring leave (for example, taking account of length, payment and flexibility) and managing absences due to leave and working reduced hours.

Parental Leave has produced, in some cases, savings in other areas of public expenditure. In Belgium, there appears to be a saving in public expenditure as a result of the 'career break' system, which was introduced specifically as a means to reduce unemployment. This occurs because the benefit paid to workers taking 'career breaks' is less than the unemployment benefit which is saved when an unemployed worker replaces a worker taking a 'career break'. The exact savings are not known, but a hypothetical calculation estimated a possible net reduction in public expenditure of BF 7.85 billion in 1992.

In countries (like Denmark and Sweden) with extensive publicly funded childcare services, and commitments to extend these to meet parental demand, the direct cost of paying parents on leave can result in savings due to reduced demand for services for very young children. In Denmark, for example, "estimates show that for each month (that parental) leave is extended waiting-lists (for childcare services) are reduced by 2,600 places, provided that 75% of all mothers or fathers extend their leave" (Jensen, 1993;). In Sweden in 1989, 22% of children aged 3 months to 6 years were at home with parents on leave (this figure would include very young children for whom parents were taking leave, but also older siblings who parents on leave may choose to care for at home or may be required to withdraw from childcare services while on leave), compared to 48% attending publicly-funded childcare services. As the length of leave has extended in Sweden, so has the age at which children enter childcare services, until now it is unusual to fund children under 18 months in publicly funded services (although some private arrangements may be made for rather younger children while waiting for a publicly funded place).

These examples also illustrate how the consequences of paid Parental Leave for public expenditure depend on a variety of factors including: existing expenditure on childcare services; the extent to which workers on Parental Leave are replaced by unemployed workers; and the level of Parental Leave benefit relative to unemployment benefit.

There may also be savings for employers. Taking leave to undertake family responsibilities may enhance the performance of many employees when they return to work, not only because they may feel more committed and less stressed, but because caring for children develops generally applicable skills and qualities. The idea that parenthood, and leave taking, represent unmitigated social costs that must be borne, as best they can, by employers reflects a narrow and devaluing perspective on these important social activities.

"In Sweden, many companies are changing their attitudes towards parents who try to combine work and family... We believe there is an understanding at Swedish workplaces for problems that can arise when parents try to puzzle together work and family. The employers' attitude in general on parenthood is that parents can add

something important and positive to the company. Parents have feelings of responsibility and duty, they match the other categories of employees (to make) a good blend and their children become subjects for conversations and contacts among employees" (Bengtson and Nasman, 1992; 74-75)(Network's emphasis).

In summary, Parental Leave (and other predictable types of leave including Maternity Leave) do not appear to cause major problems or costs to employers, although there may be specific exceptions to this general experience; they may also benefit employers. The cost to public funds depends on features of particular schemes, as well as the extent of savings in other areas of public expenditure. There may be costs to parents, depending to some extent on the structure of the leave arrangements and whether leave is taken disproportionately by women. Leave to care for sick children and entitlements to work reduced hours may cause most problems for employers and parents. There are no comprehensive and detailed studies assessing costs and relating these to benefits arising from the impact of leave arrangements on social and economic objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

Developments since 1983

Since the Commission proposed a Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons in 1983, there have been major developments on statutory Parental Leave within the European Community.

Parental Leave schemes have been introduced into **Denmark, France, Portugal, Greece** (1984), **Germany** (1986) and the **Netherlands** (1991). Subsequently, there have been major developments to the existing leave arrangements in **Germany** and **Denmark**. **Belgium** has also introduced its system of career breaks (starting in 1985). By Autumn 1993, therefore, most Member States (8) have statutory Parental Leave, while a ninth Member State (**Belgium**) had introduced a 'career break' system conditional on employer agreement. In terms of length, all 8 schemes meet the requirement (equivalent to 6 months per family) included in the *draft Directive*.

However, most countries do not meet the other main condition proposed in the draft Directive - that Parental Leave should be an individual and non-transferable right. Only **Greece** currently does so for the full period of leave, while **Denmark** does so for most of the leave entitlement period. The **Dutch** scheme is individual and non-transferable, but leave is only available on a part time basis (the *draft Directive* specifies full time leave with the possibility of a part time option, subject to employer agreement).

There have been fewer developments on statutory leave for family reasons. There has been significant new or revised legislation in **Germany, Greece** and **Portugal**, but this is confined to leave to care for sick children, rather than a broader leave for family reasons. Paternity Leave, which was not covered by the Commission's proposal, has been introduced in **Denmark** (1984).

To date, least development of statutory leave arrangements has occurred in **Ireland, Luxembourg** and the **United Kingdom**. These three countries only offer Maternity Leave.

The four non-EC countries considered in this review have all developed systems of paid Parental Leave, lasting more than 6 months, although not on the basis of an individual non-transferable right; **Norway**, however, has recently revised its system to introduce an element of non-transferability. The three Nordic countries also provide both Parental Leave and Leave to care for sick children. Taking account of the range of leave arrangements they offer, and conditions such as length and levels of payment, **Finland, Norway** and **Sweden** have more advanced provision than in current Member States.

Because of inadequate data, no comprehensive account can be given of developments in collective and company agreements.

The objectives of leave arrangements

"The experience and analysis suggest that despite various verbal formulations that evoke a feeling of partnership, the (Parental Leave legislation) is actually constructed in such a way that it will probably be used primarily by women. Moreover, one cannot ignore that it affects working women comparatively negatively. Even leaving aside the economic preconditions and consequences of such a law, the purported freedom of choice between gainful employment and family responsibilities is an illusion...

One cannot fail to notice that the existing provisions primarily lead to a consolidation of both the existing division of work within the family and the difficult employment situation for women rather than encouraging equitable sharing of family and work responsibilities...

In general, freedom of choice really exists only when a decision can be made between two equivalent options. Because (the benefit payment) is not, in fact, a wage replacement but more a symbolic recognition of family work, there is no equivalency for many families... The very high rate of claiming of the benefit among eligible women should not lead to the rash conclusion that this is the best possible provision for women. It is far more often the case that women are forced to accept what the Act offers since they have no alternative because of lack of adequate child care facilities in West Germany" (Schiersmann, 1991; 77)

This quotation, from a German researcher, refers to Parental Leave in Germany. It is included not because Germany is unique in the issues referred to - it is not. Nor does it imply that Parental Leave arrangements in Germany are of no benefit to women or families. However, it illustrates how objectives frequently ascribed to Parental Leave - more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, greater choice - do not automatically follow from the introduction of leave.

As outlined in the earlier section on the "Case for Leave Arrangements", leave arrangements may contribute to achieving many social and economic objectives. In practice, though, leave arrangements only contribute towards an objective when:

- * the objective is explicitly recognised as a purpose of leave;
- * leave is structured in such a way as to contribute towards this objective;
- * complementary measures (for example, the provision of accessible child care services or other measures to promote more equal sharing of family responsibilities) are in place;
- * the effectiveness of leave is monitored, researched and regularly reviewed.

Without this comprehensive, detailed, critical and dynamic approach, leave arrangements may be, in practice, of limited or no benefit (or may even, in some cases, have adverse effects), and contribute little to any of the potential objectives.

However, much more work remains to be done if the effectiveness of leave arrangements is to be maximised and if a realistic assessment is to be made of what they can, and cannot, contribute to social and economic objectives. Routine monitoring of the availability and

use of leave arrangements is essential, so that there is clear and regular information on the extent and nature of leave arrangements (including statutory rights, collective agreements, company agreements) and about how leave arrangements are being used and by whom. More research is also needed on leave arrangements, including: how they operate in practice (from both a family and workplace perspective); their consequences (both beneficial and adverse) for employers and parents; and ways of improving their operation, minimising costs for parents and employers and maximising benefits. Research of this kind would benefit greatly from including a strong cross-national element and from regular exchange of results; similarly, some degree of comparability in monitoring would enable cross-national comparisons to be made.

Mothers and Fathers taking leave

Maternity Leave is almost universally used. Parental Leave, at least where it is paid, is widely used by mothers. Evidence suggests that women who might be expected to have a higher level of commitment to the labour market (those with higher levels of education and earnings, and in higher status jobs) are more likely to take shorter periods of leave where the full period available is long (ie. 2-3 years) and to share leave with their partners.

If an important objective of Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons is that they promote more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, it is obviously necessary that fathers use their entitlements to these types of leave. This is also important because if leave is taken only by women, then there is an increased likelihood that leave arrangements will have an adverse effect on women's employment and earnings, obstructing rather than promoting the achievement of equality of opportunity in the labour market. The present situation is, in general, not encouraging. Paid Paternity Leave is taken by large numbers of fathers. But few men take Parental Leave and most countries appear to accept this situation. The main exceptions are **Denmark**, where substantial research has been undertaken on the subject of fathers and leave-taking and there is a public recognition of the importance of more men taking leave, as part of a wider concern with the need for more equal sharing of family responsibilities; **Norway**, where recent reforms in the Parental Leave system are intended explicitly to encourage greater use by fathers; and **Sweden**, where significant numbers of fathers now use Parental Leave and leave to care for sick children.

Experience in these countries clearly indicates that certain groups of fathers are more likely to use leave arrangements, especially those employed in the public sector and who are well educated. The labour market position of mothers also seems to be important; fathers are more likely to take leave if their partners are well educated and have good incomes. The factors contributing to this profile are probably multiple, including ideologies about parenthood and employment, workplace attitudes, women's job satisfaction and labour market attachment and bargaining position between parents in the family.

The experience of **Sweden**, as well as the research undertaken in **Denmark**, suggest a number of factors that need to be carefully considered if leave arrangements are to be used by a significant number of men and make a real contribution to more equal sharing of family responsibilities:

1. **Payment:** Parents taking leave must be compensated for all or nearly all of their lost earnings; otherwise, no parent can afford to take leave or, if one income can be foregone, there will be a strong economic case for making this the lower income which, given current income inequalities between men and women, will usually be the mother. Payment to parents on statutory leave should come from public funds (as is currently the case in all countries covered by this report), to ensure individual employers do not carry a disproportionate cost, that individual workers are not put at risk of discrimination and because society at large has an interest in the objectives to which leave arrangements may contribute.
2. **Length:** The longer the Parental Leave period, the more likely men are to take it (up to a certain point at least). Few men will take leave while a child is under 6 months. For this, and other reasons, there is a strong case for arguing that Parental Leave should be available until a child is at least 12 months old. Swedish experience also suggests that the length of leave taken is important if Parental Leave is to contribute to increased participation by men in the care of children (and the care of the home) on a longer term basis. Short periods at home may be worthwhile for other reasons, but they do not enable men to develop confidence and competence; to this end, it is important that men are encouraged and supported to take a more substantial period, at least 3 months.
3. **Concurrent leave taking:** At present, it is usual for Parental Leave arrangements to permit only one parent at a time to take leave. However, this may be too restrictive, particularly in the early months after birth when both parents may want to spend some time together with their new child; moreover, fathers who want to take an active role in caring for their new baby may feel inhibited from taking Parental Leave while the baby is still being breast-fed if this means that the mother has to resume employment. For these reasons, there is a case for enabling both parents to take some portion of leave concurrently, either through altering the conditions of Parental Leave or by developing Paternity Leave so that it can be taken at any time during a child's early months.
4. **Non-transferability:** There is a strong case for at least part of the Parental Leave being made an individual and non-transferable right. The draft Directive proposed that the full leave period should be individual and non-transferable, and this principle has been adopted in Greece and the Netherlands. In Denmark and Norway, changes in the schemes have led to part of the leave being a family entitlement (to be divided between parents as they choose) and part an individual and non-transferable entitlement. The same principle can also be applied to Leave for Family Reasons (and several existing entitlements to leave to care for sick children are individual rights, for example in Germany and Sweden).
5. **Flexibility:** It has been argued (Carlsen, 1993a, 1993b), partly on the basis of Swedish experience, that men are more likely to take Parental Leave where arrangements have a high degree of flexibility, for example the possibility to take leave on a part-time basis ('flexibility' is discussed further below).
6. **A broad strategy:** Men may be more likely to take Leave in the context of a general

policy to promote increased participation by men in the care of children, so that leave-taking is part of a wider debate and a wider objective and is accompanied by other measures to encourage and support men's involvement in caring for children (for further discussion on this point, see EC Childcare Network, 1994).

7. **Employers, trades unions and the work environment:** Social partners and the individual workplace may play an important role in promoting the use of leave arrangements by fathers (and can also deter take-up by ignoring the issue or adopting a negative attitude).

In addition to these conditions, there has been some discussion in Denmark about the case for applying positive action principles to Parental Leave, for a limited period, as a means to increase take-up by fathers:

"(It was) recently suggested at a Danish Conference that during a transition period, men should be given higher financial compensation... Not surprisingly reactions were mixed. But if we really want to increase men's care of children and include in this their greater use of Parental leave, then I think we should consider untraditional measures. Positive discrimination during a transitional phase would be a good tool to this end" (Carlsen, 1993b).

Three final points should be made. First, to emphasise again the need for careful monitoring and research as an essential part of a strategy to increase men's take-up of leave arrangements. Regular monitoring can identify whether certain groups of men are less likely to use leave; research can contribute to understanding these differences in use of leave and may suggest ways of making leave arrangements more responsive. There is an important role for specific intervention projects and their evaluation, to help identify effective strategies for promoting increased leave-taking by fathers.

Second, there may be many reasons why a father does not take leave. If he does not do so, it does not mean that he is uncaring about his children. He may still be substantially involved in caring for his children, finding other ways of spending time with them. Leave is one means of supporting fathers and enabling them to spend more time with their children; it is not an infallible measure of paternal involvement. Because, for example, working-class or ethnic minority fathers take leave less often does not mean that they are less concerned fathers.

Third, many of the conditions proposed above for increasing men's take-up of leave will also benefit women. Indeed they can be justified as means to facilitate the use of leave by parents: for example the need for a high level of compensation for lost earnings (without this, many women will not take leave, in particular lone mothers and other women who are the sole earners for their families); the importance of flexibility in leave arrangements (which give both men and women increased choice and can benefit family relationships and functioning); and the supportive role of social partners and individual workplaces.

Flexibility in leave arrangements

In the section which deals with leave arrangements for employed parents (Article 4), the *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care* proposes that there should be "some flexibility as to how leave maybe taken". There are two main dimensions to flexibility. The first concerns recognising and responding to **diversity in family and employment circumstances**; leave arrangements should be flexible enough to accommodate this diversity. The *draft Directive*, for example, recognised the possible need for variations in Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons to meet the special or additional needs of single parents, parents with a handicapped child and adoptive parents. At present, there are examples of such variations in Maternity and Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons in a number of the countries reviewed in this report, for example extending the length of Maternity Leave in the case of premature or multiple births; extending the length of Parental Leave for multiple births, children with a serious disability and (where leave is an individual non-transferable right) for lone parents; and extending the age limit for leave to care for sick children where a child is seriously ill or has a handicap.

The *draft Directive* proposed that adoptive parents could take Parental Leave up to their adopted child's fifth birthday, rather than within two years of birth for other children. An alternative approach would be to apply a common time period during which leave should be taken, but defining this time as starting from the child's birth or placement in her adoptive home.

Diversity of employment circumstances needs to be taken into account. In particular, it is important to ensure that the substantial number of mothers and fathers who are self-employed or family workers⁹ are included in any leave system. For these groups, the issue of payment may be particularly important if they are to be able to take some time away from work. In many cases, substitute help may also be essential: 'replacement services' need to be available, especially in rural areas, to provide cover for mothers and fathers during maternity, paternity or parental leave or to enable parents to take time off to care for sick children. Such services already exist in some places. In **Finland**, for example:

"so that self-employed persons, and especially farmers, can benefit in full from their entitlement to maternity and parental leave, a substitute help system has been developed. As of January 1 1989, female farmers were entitled to substitute help financed by local government in connection with childbirth for thirty-three weeks...In the agricultural collective agreement negotiations conducted in 1990, it was agreed to length the entitlement period for substitute help to forty-four weeks (the length of full maternity and parental leave)" (Mikkola, 1991; 198).

Diversity of employment should also be taken into account in setting any eligibility conditions for leave arrangements, to ensure that these conditions do not exclude a significant number of workers, for example part-time workers, workers who are on short-term contracts and workers who have recently moved job or re-entered employment.

⁹ Within the EC, 15% of employed fathers and 20% of employed mothers with a child under 10 are self-employed or family workers (EC Childcare Network, 1993).

The other dimension of flexibility concerns how leave can be taken, for example whether Parental Leave must be taken in one block or whether it can be taken in several shorter blocks; whether Maternity, Paternity or Parental Leave can only be taken full time (or only part time) or whether parents can choose to take it full-time or part-time; and how much choice parents have about when they take these three types of leave. On this dimension, the *draft Directive* was not very flexible about Parental Leave. Parents had to take the full period of leave in one block, and if they took only part of their entitlement, they lost the rest - "*where parental leave is taken in part, entitlement to the remaining part shall cease*". In most circumstances, leave had to be taken within 2 years of childbirth. The possibility of taking leave on a part time basis, with the length of leave extended proportionately, was recognised, but made subject to the employer's agreement.

In the European Community, a number of countries allow women some flexibility about when they may take part of their Maternity Leave, with a period which can be used before or after birth. However, flexibility of Parental Leave is very limited. Leave must be taken within, at most, three years of a child's birth and in one block of time. Parents in France and Germany may work part time while on leave, but they are not entitled to take leave from their job on a part time basis; they must either find a new part time job or negotiate part time hours with their employer.

By contrast, the leave arrangements in Sweden have developed in a very flexible way, with parents having a wide range of choices which do not depend on their employer's agreement; anecdotally, it appears that Swedish parents are becoming increasingly aware of the flexibility in their system and of how to use this flexibility to meet their particular needs and preferences. More research evidence, both from the parental and workplace perspective, about the operation of this unique system would be invaluable. It should also be noted that changes in Parental Leave in Norway, to be introduced in July 1994, will increase the flexibility in the scheme, giving parents more choice about how and when to take leave, adding to an existing choice between length of leave and level of payment.

Flexibility is a central issue in leave arrangements, not only as a means to encourage more use of leave by men (and women), but to ensure that leave arrangements meet the many and varying needs of parents and children. Standardised systems which give parents minimal choice, either because they provide no options or make the use of options dependent on employer agreement, can at best be regarded as a first step in developing adequate and effective arrangements. To be fully effective, leave arrangements need to be flexible enough to reflect differences in the circumstances and preferences of children, parents and families. The examples above suggest some of the ways in which this flexibility can be implemented. However, as with leave arrangements in general, regular monitoring and research are essential to establish more clearly what is needed, how best to operate a flexible system to minimise costs and problems to parents and employers and to identify where the limits of flexibility need to be drawn.

Statutory entitlements, collective agreements and the workplace

The *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care* makes it clear that government and social partners have responsibilities for the development of leave arrangements (cf. Article 4). However, this broad principle of partnership needs elaboration if it is to become the basis of a working relationship that benefits parents and children, as well as employers and the wider society.

Leave arrangements are of such basic importance to the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, and a wide range of more specific social and economic objectives, that a basic entitlement needs to be guaranteed to all workers by law. **This basic entitlement**, in the view of the EC Childcare Network, should be at least:

- * **Maternity Leave** lasting 16 weeks after birth;
- * **Paternity Leave** lasting 2 weeks;
- * **Parental Leave** of 12 months per family, part of which at least should be a non-transferable individual entitlement;
- * **Leave for Family Reasons** of 10 days per child per year (although this might have to be extended depending on the definition and scope of Leave for Family Reasons, for example if it covered time to visit a child's nursery or school).

The basic entitlement should be paid (from public funds) at a high proportion (at least 80% of normal earnings), and be **flexible**, taking account of family and employment circumstances and parental preferences for how they want to take leave.

These represent basic and universal entitlements, and there is no reason why these statutory rights should not be extended. However, they leave plenty of scope for **additional entitlements from collective or individual employer agreements**. These might, for example, provide extended periods of leave, leave for additional reasons or payments in addition to the basic state entitlement. Employers and trades unions can, however, make other important contributions to the operation of leave arrangements, in particular in three ways:

- * They can encourage and support the take-up of leave entitlements by men and women. For example, as already noted, some **Swedish Trade Unions** have run campaigns to encourage more members to take Parental Leave; some Swedish companies give incentives to employees who take leave (eg. an insurance company has had a programme to encourage men to take leave, offering every man (and woman) who take at least 6 weeks leave a salary bonus - a report in the scheme shows that more men have been encouraged and the cost to the company has been small); employers can show that they recognise and value skills and experience acquired through caring for children, taking this into account, for example, when considering employees for promotion; work can be undertaken with managers and supervisors to help them to cope with, and respond positively to, leave taking (for other workplace measures, discussed in the broader context of fostering gender equity and reconciliation of employment with family life, see Rapoport and Moss, 1990; 54-63).

- * Parents who take leave can be assisted to maintain contact with the workplace while on leave and with re-entry at the end of their leave period.
- * In particular when parents take leave on a part time basis or for family reasons, the success of leave-taking will depend to a considerable degree on how far employers' adapt the work to the parents' leave or reduced hours. In these cases, a right to leave needs to be matched by ensuring that work is organised appropriately.

Finally, it has to be recognised that in certain circumstances, especially in some small companies, parents taking prolonged leave (in particular, Parental Leave) may create genuine difficulties. Rather than use this as an excuse for excluding employees in small companies from the right to leave, these companies should

"receive extra support in order to help them keep up the work when employees stay at home... This can be done in various ways. the employees may have to give notice months in advance, tax reductions could be offered to employ extra help etc. The important thing is not to neglect the fact that small employers really do have problems to cope when their employees exercise their rights. Supporting these employers will be the same as supporting their employees" (Sundberg, 1993a; 7).

Once again, there needs to be monitoring and research, to provide a basis for the development of a good partnership between government and social partners on leave arrangements, and to ensure employers receive support in implementing these measures. Good research will help to identify the extent and nature of problems actually experienced by employers (as opposed to problems anticipated) and good solutions to these problems. Regular monitoring will also help to assess not only usage of statutory entitlements, but access to and use of entitlements under collective and individual employer agreements.

Feasibility and affordability

Can European countries afford to develop a comprehensive, flexible and paid system of leave arrangements for workers with children? Or does this place too great a burden on employers, adversely affecting competitiveness, and too great a strain on public expenditure? The evidence to date suggests that types of leave that are predictable and enable long term personnel planning do not create major problems or impose large costs for employers, not least because they account for small proportions of the workforce. Unpredictable leave, particularly because of child illness, is more difficult and disruptive; but even where leave for family reasons does not exist, children still get ill and other family emergencies occur and parents will take time off work because of them.

In the context of increasingly flexible working arrangements, the management of workers taking leave is not a major or insuperable problem. Where there are particular problems, for example in some small companies, rather than reject leave arrangements as impractical, a more constructive response is to look for solutions and provide extra support.

Introduction of a comprehensive, flexible and paid system of leave arrangements does not have to be an immediate step. It can be phased in over time. For example, the system

in Sweden has been developed over a period of 20 years to reach its current advanced level, while there have also been major developments over a period of years in countries such as **Denmark, Germany and Norway**. Payment to parents taking leave, which always comes from public funds in the case of statutory leave, represents a partial recompense for their large and growing tax and social insurance payments.

Finally, in considering the question of feasibility, it is necessary to remember the case for leave arrangements. Leave is part of a network of policies needed to help parents reconcile employment and caring for children, and to do so in such a way as to promote gender equality in the labour market. In countries where most parents are employed, reconciliation is essential to the social and economic health of society, bringing benefits to children, parents, families, employers and society.

Directions for the future

At present, statutory leave arrangements are mostly tied specifically to the birth and care of young children. Looking to the future, an alternative approach might be considered. This approach to leave arrangements would be broader in its concerns and more flexible in its application. It would **integrate leave arrangements for the care of young children into a strategy concerned with the working hours of men and women over their whole adult lives - a 'life course perspective'**.

In broad terms, we can identify **two reasons for leave**. The first is to respond to **specific and pressing personal or family demands**. This category covers Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave and Leave for Family Reasons, as well as more established types of leave, for example for personal illness, military service etc. Leave taken for these reasons is likely to be relatively short-term (typically, Maternity Leave would be the longest period). Leave for Family Reasons might be extended to cover not only the care of a sick child (or other specific child related events), but also the care of a sick or disabled adult (spouse or close relative) or other pressing demands arising from responsibilities for adult family members (although before making specific proposals about this or other types of leave provision for carers with responsibilities for chronically sick or disabled relatives, systematic study of the issue is required to ensure that these proposals are appropriate).

The second reason for taking leave is to **enable a parent to spend more time with his or her child**, and would cover Parental Leave as it has developed recently. However, this type of leave could be integrated into a more general right to take periods of prolonged leave over the course of a working life time: a **'career break' or 'time account' system**. Entitlement to leave might be limited to certain defined circumstances (to care for a child, to care for an adult relative, to undertake further training) - or it could be available for any reason (as in the **'career break' system in Belgium** and the revised leave scheme recently introduced in **Denmark**). All or part of the entitlement could be available on a flexible basis, allowing considerable choice in how leave might be taken, including options to work reduced hours (as currently happens in Sweden, and is soon to be introduced in Norway).

A **'career break' or 'time account' system** could apply similar conditions, whatever the

reason for taking a career break. Alternatively, a two-tier system could develop. This might give additional benefits to workers taking leave for a particular reason: for example, workers taking a break to care for a child or an adult relative might receive preferential financial compensation, the right to take the break on a part-time basis and so on (cf. the Belgian 'career break' scheme which gives a higher payment to workers taking leave to care for two or more children). As 'career breaks' would be an individual right, they would be consistent with the recommendations made above about an element of leave being non-transferable.

There would be several advantages to such an approach. In particular, it provides a means of placing leave arrangements for workers with children into a wider discussion about the needs of workers with caring responsibilities (whether or not they arise from children), the re-organisation and reduction of working time, the re-allocation of paid and unpaid work and the re-distribution of income over the life course. A 'career break or 'time account' system can encompass the fact that men and women commonly have caring and other family responsibilities throughout their adult lives. It offers a way of reducing working time on a flexible basis, which recognises that circumstances, needs and preferences vary within the workforce as well as varying over the working life of the individual. It offers the possibility of reducing unemployment, through reducing the heavy workload carried at present by workers with children (and other caring responsibilities).

A 'career break' or 'time account' system, with its life-course approach, might contribute to reversing a trend of increased concentration of paid work into a decreasing proportion of the life course. A growing proportion of the labour force in the Community is aged 25-49 (51% in 1960, 62% in 1991 and rising) (European Commission, 1992; 10). This is partly due to increased employment among women in this age group (mainly due to more employment among mothers) but also because of the high level of employment among men in this age group and diminishing employment among younger and older men and women (in 1991, the employment rate in the EC for men aged 25-49 was 90% compared to 68% for the 20-24 age group and 64% for the 50-64 age group). This age group of 25-49 coincides with the period when most men and women face the caring responsibilities of bringing up children.

The most intensive demands from paid and unpaid work therefore increasingly coincide in the lives of men and women. There is an urgent need to find ways of redistributing the workload, both paid and unpaid, not only between men and women, and between employed and unemployed, but over the individual's life so that he or she has greater opportunities to increase or decrease involvement in paid work as the demands of unpaid caring work fluctuate. Leave arrangements may be one of the ways to achieve this objective.

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APPENDIX 1

STATUTORY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS IN MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND AUSTRIA, FINLAND, NORWAY, SWEDEN

Abbreviations used for countries

A - Austria; B - Belgium; D - Germany; DK - Denmark; EL - Greece;
ES - Spain; IR - Ireland; IT - Italy; L - Luxembourg; N - Netherlands;
NO - Norway; P - Portugal; SU - Finland; SV - Sweden; UK - United
Kingdom

MATERNITY LEAVE

B	<p>15 weeks. One week must be taken before the birth and 8 weeks after the birth; the remaining 6 weeks can be taken either before or after birth or divided before and after the birth. Paid at 82% of earnings for the first month, and 75% of earnings (up to a maximum level) for the remaining period. If the baby has to remain in hospital for more than 8 weeks, the mother may take her remaining period of post-natal leave after the child is discharged home.</p> <p>A 1991 law enables fathers to take the post-natal period of leave if the mother is dead or seriously ill. This law, however, has not yet been implemented.</p>
D K	<p>18 weeks. Four weeks before birth; 14 weeks after birth. Paid at flat-rate benefit equivalent to unemployment benefit [DKK 2,638 per week, equivalent to approximately 65% of the average earnings of an industrial worker].</p>
D	<p>14 weeks (+extra for multiple/premature births). Six weeks before birth; 8 weeks after the birth <u>plus</u> an extra 4 weeks for multiple or premature births. Paid at 100% of earnings.</p>
E L	<p>14 weeks. At least 7 weeks must be taken after the birth, 3 weeks must be taken before the birth, while the remaining 4 weeks can be taken before or after the birth or divided before and after birth. Payment made at 100% of earnings.</p>

E S	<p>16 weeks + 2 weeks extra for multiple births. At least 6 weeks must be taken after the birth, while the remaining 10 weeks can be taken before or after the birth or divided between before and after birth. Payment at 75% of earnings.</p> <p>During the first 9 months after birth, employed mothers or fathers have the right to one hour of absence from work per day, without loss of earnings; this period can be divided into two half-hours or may be replaced by a half-hour shortening of the normal working day.</p>
F	<p>16-26 weeks (+extra for multiple births). A minimum of 4 weeks must be taken before the birth, with a further 2 weeks [or 4 weeks for a third or later order child] which can be taken before or after birth. There is a further 10 weeks after birth [or 18 weeks for third or later order child]. In addition, in the case of a first child, a woman is entitled to two extra weeks of post-natal leave if she has twins, and 12 weeks extra for triplets; in the case of a second child, a woman is entitled to 12 extra weeks of post-natal leave for a multiple birth; with two extra weeks for multiple births to women who already have two or more children. Paid at 84% of earnings (but not taxed).</p> <p>During the first year after birth, employed women who are breast-feeding are allowed two breaks per day from their employment, each of 30 minutes.</p>
I R	<p>14 weeks. At least 4 weeks must be taken after the birth, with the remaining 10 weeks to be taken before or after birth or divided between before and after the birth; a further 4 weeks leave can be taken if the mother requests. Payment made at 70% of earnings (but not taxed) for the basic 14 weeks, but no payment for the optional 4 weeks.</p>
I T	<p>5 months. Two months before the birth; 3 months after the birth. Paid at 80% of earnings.</p> <p>During the first year after birth, mothers in full-time employment have the right to two daily periods of rest, each of one hour, and without loss of earnings; these periods can be taken together, in which case mothers can effectively shorten their working day by two hours; mothers normally working less than 6 hours a day, are entitled to a rest period of one hour a day.</p> <p>Maternity Leave and rest periods can be taken by the father in the case of the mother's death or severe disability.</p>
L	<p>16 weeks (+extra for multiple births). Eight weeks before the birth; 8 weeks after birth <u>plus</u> an extra 4 weeks for multiple births. Paid at 100% of earnings.</p>
N	<p>16 weeks. A maximum of 6 weeks can be taken before the birth and a minimum period of 4 weeks must be taken at this time, leaving between 10 and 12 weeks to be taken after the birth. Payment at 100% of earnings, up to a maximum level.</p>

P	<p>90 days. Sixty days must be taken after the birth, while the remaining 30 days can be taken before or after birth or divided between before and after the birth. Payment at 100% of earnings.</p> <p>Fathers are entitled, in their own right, to leave and the accompanying maternity benefit payment in the case of the mother's death or disability; or in the case of the mother attending a training course that might be affected by a long period of absence.</p> <p>During the first year after birth, employed women who are breast-feeding are allowed two breaks a day from employment, up to a maximum of 1 hour for each break.</p>
U K	<p>40 weeks. Eleven weeks before the birth, 29 weeks after the birth. Payment at 90% of earnings for 6 weeks, and a flat-rate payment for a further 12 weeks; the remainder of the period is unpaid. Conditional on 2 years full time employment or 5 years part time employment with the same employer [The UK scheme is not in fact leave, but a right to stop work and a right to be reinstated; this has implications for certain employer benefits such as pensions].</p> <p>However, new legislation to be introduced in October 1994, to conform to the Pregnancy Directive, will involve a two-tier system. All pregnant employees will be entitled to 14 weeks of leave and (with some exceptions) a flat-rate payment. In addition, many women will be entitled to the existing period of leave and payment.</p>
A	<p>16 weeks (+extra for multiple births/premature births). Eight weeks before the birth; 8 weeks after birth <u>plus</u> an extra 4 weeks for multiple or premature births. Paid at 100% of earnings.</p> <p>Employed women who are breast-feeding are allowed one 45 minute breaks a day if working between 4 and 8 hours a day, or two breaks if working more than 8 hours a day, without loss of earnings.</p>
N O	<p>There is no separate Maternity Leave, only Parental Leave (see below). However, mothers <u>must</u> take 3 weeks of Parental Leave before birth, and 6 weeks after birth; if they choose, they can take up to 12 weeks of Parental Leave before birth. Payable at 80% or 100% of earnings; see Parental Leave for more details</p>
S U	<p>17.5 weeks. At least 5 weeks must be taken before the birth and 9.5 weeks after, while the remaining 3 weeks can be taken before or after the birth. Generally paid at an amount equivalent to 66% of earnings</p>

S V	60 days leave before birth for women who cannot continue with their ordinary job and cannot be transferred to alternative duties; 50 days are covered by a maternity allowance, while payment for the other 10 days must come from Parental Leave allowance. Alternatively, women can take up to 60 days of Parental Leave before birth. Paid at 90% of earnings. All women, including those not eligible for Parental Leave, are entitled to 6 weeks leave before and 6 weeks after birth.
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PATERNITY LEAVE

B	3 days. Paid at 100% of earnings.
D K	10 days. Paid as for Maternity Leave
D	None.
E L	None
E S	2 days. Paid at 100% of earnings. The mother may choose to transfer part of the end of her maternity leave, up to a maximum of 4 weeks, to the father.
F	3 days, to be taken during the 15 days before or after the birth.
I R	None
I T	None
L	None
N	None
P	None
U K	None
A	None
N O	2 weeks. Unpaid.
S U	1 week. Paid as for Maternity Leave.
S V	2 weeks (10 working days). Paid at 80% of earnings.

PARENTAL LEAVE

B	<p>No statutory leave. But workers can take 6-12 months full-time 'career break' from employment (or, in the case of the birth of a child, a 12 week period after the end of Maternity Leave). The 'career break' is not a right; it depends on the employer's agreement and the employer must be prepared to accept a previously unemployed worker as a replacement. Instead of a full-time 'career break', workers employed at least 3/4 time can request to work half-time, for a period ranging from 6 months to 5 years. Although a 'career break' or half-time work can be requested for any reason, it seems likely that it is mostly taken to enable mothers to care for children. Workers using this measure receive a flat-rate payment [BF 10,928 a month, for a full-time 'career break', BF 5,464 a month if reducing to half-time working], but a higher payment is made if leave is taken within 6 years of birth or adoption of a second child [BF 13,009 for a full-time 'career break', BF 6,505 if reducing to half-time working] or a third or higher order child [BF 15,090 and BF 7,545 respectively].</p>
D K	<p>10 weeks per family, paid as for Maternity Leave.</p> <p>In addition, each parent is entitled to 6 months leave, with a second 6 month period which is dependent on the employer's agreement. This individual entitlement to leave cannot be transferred between parents. Paid at flat-rate benefit equivalent to 80% of unemployment benefit [DKK 2,110 per week], but this may be supplemented by local authorities if they wish to do so.</p> <p>This new leave, introduced in January 1994, is also available for workers for training purposes and for any other reason (ie. as a Sabbatical break from work), with payment at the level of unemployment benefit (for training) and 80% of unemployment benefit (for a Sabbatical break). In both cases, however, workers taking leave are not guaranteed their jobs, unlike workers taking leave to care for children.</p>
D	<p>Until a child reaches 36 months, per family (including 36 months after the adoption of a child, if the child is under 8 years when adopted). Payment of DM 600 a month for the first 6 months, followed by income-related benefit until child is 24 months. The parent taking leave may work for up to 19 hours a week for any employer (unless the employer from whom the parent is on leave has a valid reason for objecting to the parent working for another employer, for example the parent's access to confidential and valuable commercial information). Leave can be taken by the mother or the father, or the parents may share the leave between them, in which case leave can be transferred between parents up to three times (for example, the mother takes the first year of leave, the father the second year and the mother the third year).</p>

E L	Each parent is entitled to 3 months unpaid full time leave. This individual entitlement to leave cannot be transferred between parents (lone parents are entitled to 6 months leave). Employers may refuse leave if it has been claimed by more than 8% of the workforce during the year.
E S	<p>12 months unpaid leave per family. A further period of 2 years leave may be taken, but the parent is not entitled to return to his/her former job unless it is free; otherwise he/she must wait for a vacancy to occur.</p> <p>Parents with a child under 6, or a disabled child, can reduce their working hours by between a third and half, but with no compensation for lost earnings; this can be claimed by both parents at the same time.</p>
F	Until a child reaches 36 months, per family. Employers with fewer than 100 workers can refuse to give leave, if they believe that for a worker to take leave would prejudice the production and functioning of the company and after obtaining the opinion of the worker-management committee (comité d'entreprise). Leave can be taken by the mother or the father, or the parents may share the leave between them, one following the other. The parent taking leave may work part-time (defined as between 16 hours and 80% of full time hours). No payment unless a third or higher order child, when a flat-rate payment is made (FF 2,871 a month, rather more than half the 'SMIC' or guaranteed minimum wage); the benefit can be paid at half rate in the year preceding the child's third birthday if the parent takes a half time job or a course of paid vocational training.
I R	None
I T	<p>6 months after Maternity Leave, to be taken before the child's first birthday. In the first place, leave is for the mother, but the mother can transfer part or all of the period to the father. Paid at 30% of earnings.</p> <p>In the case of parents who have a child with a serious disability, the period of leave can be extended to the child's third birthday, paid at 30% of earnings, or may be taken as two hours a day of paid leave.</p>
L	None
N	Each parent is entitled to a period of 6 months when they can work reduced hours (to a minimum of 20 hours a week); this entitlement can be taken at any time until children reach the age of 4 years. The entitlement to work reduced hours cannot be transferred between parents and there is no payment to compensate for lost earnings (except for a lone parent whose earnings fall below the social assistance level as a result of reducing working hours, in which case she or he will be compensated to bring earnings up to social assistance level).

P	<p>Each family is entitled to unpaid leave of between 6 and 24 months, to be taken at the end of Maternity Leave.</p> <p>Workers with a child under 12 years or a handicapped child (with the exception of managers) are entitled to work half their normal working hours; there is no payment to compensate for lost earnings.</p>
U K	None
A	<p>24 months leave per family. Payment of a flat-rate benefit [ATS 169.60 a day], with a higher rate for single parents or a parent with a partner on a low income [ATS 253.70]. Leave may be taken part-time in the second year, in which case part-time leave can also be taken for a third year (unless both parents take part-time leave in the second year); this is subject to the employer's agreement, but if consent is refused, the case may be settled in a labour court.</p>
N O	<p>52 weeks (260 working days) at 80% of earnings or 42 weeks (210 working days) at 100% of earnings. At least 9 weeks must be taken by the mother at the time of birth, 3 weeks before and 6 weeks after birth; the mother can use up to 12 weeks before birth. As a general rule, four weeks of the Parental Leave period must be taken by the father; if he does not do so, this leave period cannot be transferred to the mother and is lost (there are a few exceptions, for example in the case of fathers who are ill, unemployed, working abroad or off-shore or who are self-employed and would incur high costs if they took leave). Apart from the period that the mother must take and the period that the father must take, the remaining period of leave can be divided between the parents as they choose.</p> <p>Parents adopting a child under 15 are entitled to 46 weeks of leave at 80% of earnings or 37% at 100% of earnings.</p> <p>From July 1994, parents may choose to take their Parental Leave on a flexible basis. Upto 39 weeks (at 80% of earnings) or 29 weeks (at 100% of earnings) can be taken flexibly as reduced working hours (50%, 60%, 75%, 80% or 90% of full time hours). Where leave is taken in the form of reduced hours, the length of leave is extended correspondingly (for example, 4 weeks of full time leave becomes 8 weeks of half time leave if used to enable a worker to reduce his or her hours by 50%).</p>

<p>S U</p>	<p>158 working days per family (extended by 10 weeks in the case of multiple births). Paid at 66% of earnings.</p> <p>Further period of Child Care Leave available until a child is three, per family. Paid at low flat rate, with supplement if two or more children under 7 and not in public child care services and an income-related addition.</p> <p>If both parents are employed, one parent per family may also work reduced hours (either a six hour day or a thirty hour week) until the end of the year when a child starts compulsory schooling. Parents working reduced hours receive an allowance until their child is 3 years old, at 25% of low flat rate payment for parents taking Child Care Leave.</p>
<p>S V</p>	<p>18 months per parent (Child Care Leave). Payment (Parental Allowance) is available for 450 days per family, for 360 days at 90% of earnings and for 90 days at a flat rate [SEK 60 per day]; for multiple births, paid leave is extended by 90 days at 90% of earnings and 90 days at SEK 60 per working day. Leave and payment must be taken before a child reaches the age of 8 (or by the end of the child's first year at school), and can be taken in one block of time or several shorter blocks. Paid leave can be taken on a full time, half time or quarter time basis (eg.1 month full-time, 2 months half-time, 4 months quarter-time).</p> <p>Parents are also entitled to work 75% of normal working hours until their child has completed her first year of school, although there is no payment for lost earnings (unless parents choose to use part of their Parental Allowance).</p>

**LEAVE TO CARE FOR SICK CHILDREN
AND FOR OTHER FAMILY REASONS**

B	10 days unpaid leave per year for workers in the private sector; 4 days paid leave for workers in the public sector. This leave can also be taken for a range of other urgent reasons, including to care for partners or close relatives who are ill.
D K	None
D	10 days per year for each parent when there is one child, and upto 25 days per parent when there are two children or more. Payment at 100% of earnings. Single parents receive a double allowance (20 days for one child, upto 50 days for two children or more). Parents are eligible for leave until a child's 12th birthday.
E L	Parents are entitled to unpaid leave for children under the age of 16 years (or over 16 if the child is handicapped), the amount of leave depending on the number of children - 6 days per family if there is 1 child, 8 days if there are 2 children and 10 days if there are 3 or more children.
E S	Paid leave for each parent for the first 2 days of a child's serious illness (extended to 4 days in the case of a worker who must travel).
F	None.
I R	None
I T	Mothers or fathers may take unpaid leave, until a child reaches the age of 3 years.
L	None
N	None
P	Parents can take up to 30 days leave a year for children under 10 years. Leave is paid for certain workers (public sector, lone parents earning below a certain level).
U K	None
A	

<p>N O</p>	<p>10 days per year for each parent when there is a child under 12; 15 days if there are more than two children. Payment at 100% of earnings. Single parents receive a double allowance (20 or 30 days per year).</p> <p>In the case of a disabled or chronically sick child under 16, the period of paid leave may be extended to 20 days per year for each parent (40 days for single parents). If a child under 16 is suffering from a serious or potentially fatal disease, the parents are entitled to 3 years leave, the first year paid at 100% of earnings, the remaining period at 65% of earnings.</p>
<p>S U</p>	<p>4 days unpaid leave if a child becomes suddenly ill.</p> <p>Special allowance, paid at 66% of earnings for up to 60 working days per year per child if a parent participates in the care, treatment or rehabilitation of a child in hospital or (if the illness or disability is serious) at home. For children aged 7-15, the illness or disability must be serious. For all ages of children, there must be a doctor's request for the parent to participate in the child's care. Parents must be unable to go to work and get no pay. There is, however, no linked leave entitlement.</p> <p>An allowance can also be paid to a parent with a child under 16 who, because of illness, injury or disability, needs special treatment and rehabilitation for more than 6 months and if that treatment or rehabilitation involves special financial or other strain for the family.</p>
<p>S V</p>	<p>120 days per year per family for each child under 12, either if the child is ill or if the child's normal carer is ill (in the latter case, only 60 days leave per year is available). Leave can be taken for a whole, half or quarter day. Payment at 80% of earnings for first 14 days, then at 90%.</p> <p>In addition, 2 days per year per family for each child aged 4-12, in order to visit the child's school or day care centre. Payment at 80% of earnings.</p>

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF FLEXIBILITY IN SWEDISH LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

"The way various employment entitlements integrate and their flexibility was illustrated at a more individual level during an interview with a new father at the electronics company visited (part of a large multi-national firm). His wife had just given birth to their first child by Caesarian section. He had so far taken 2 days Paternity Leave. When his wife returned home from hospital, she would still not be fully recovered and he planned to take several weeks from his leave entitlement to care for a sick child or spouse [Leave for Family Reasons], followed by the remaining 8 days of his Paternity Leave. At this point, Parental Leave would begin. His wife would take 6-8 months, then he planned to take 3 months.. If by that stage they still had no nursery place, they would begin to take their Parental Leave on a new basis - drawing 5 days benefit for every (7 days) week of leave, to extend the period of paid leave." (Rapoport and Moss, 1990; 14)

"In the case of Family C (father a researcher, mother a librarian), for their first two children both parents had taken periods of full-time leave followed by leave on a half-time and quarter-time basis. The following gives a detailed account of the father's leave-taking for the second child, taken from the records of his employer:

- * 6 quarter days of Parental Leave for 'parent education' (ante-natal classes).
- * 8 days Paternity Leave.
- * 6 weeks of quarter time Parental Leave, working 75% of normal hours.
- * 2 days Paternity Leave.
- * 113 days full-time Parental Leave, plus one month annual leave.
- * 79 days half-time Parental Leave.
- * 12 weeks quarter time Parental Leave.
- * 9 months 10% leave, working 90% of normal hours (in agreement with employer).

For the third child, the mother was not planning to return to work until nearly two years after giving birth, using her annual leave period to extend her time away and spreading the (Parental Leave) benefit payments by taking 5 days allowance for every 7 days of leave. In addition, since the birth of their third child, the father had taken 10 days Paternity Leave; one days Parental Leave per week for nearly three months to look after the children while the mother attended a course of study; and used a 'contact day' of leave to visit the services attended by his two older children" (Moss and Brannen, 1992; 10).

**REVIEW OF LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS
FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN
[Update - November 1994]**

Since the report was first prepared, several countries have revised their leave arrangements. The Austrian Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has also sent additional information about statutory leave arrangements in Austria. These revisions and additional details are presented below, with page references for the original report where material has been revised or superseded.

AUSTRIA

Maternity Leave

- * Employed women who are breast-feeding are allowed one 45 minute break a day if working between 4.5 and 8 hours a day (*Appendix 1, page 51*).

Parental Leave

- * Fathers are entitled to Parental Leave only if the mother is entitled and waives this entitlement. An employee taking Parental Leave may undertake limited employment with her or his employer or with another employer as long as the earnings are below a specified level.
- * The period of Parental Leave is 2 years full-time, with the possibility of replacing this leave by 4 years of part time leave. Full-time leave and part-time leave can also be combined to give 1 year of full time leave and 2 years of part-time leave (*see page 17 and Appendix 1, page 56*).
- * From the beginning of 1994, payment for Parental Leave is ATS 180.80 a day, but ATS 268.30 a day is paid to a single parent or a parent with a partner on a low income (*see Appendix 1, page 56*).
- * Almost 90% of mothers take Parental Leave, but under 1% of fathers.

Leave to Care for Sick Children

- * Each employee has a statutory right to 1 week of fully paid leave per year to look after a sick family member living in the same household or to look after a child if the person who permanently looks after the child is unable to do so for a pressing reason (e.g. illness) (*see Appendix 1, page 58*).
- * Each employee has a further entitlement to 1 week of fully paid leave per year to look after a sick child below the age of 12 years (*see Appendix 1, page 58*).

FINLAND

Maternity Leave

- * The period of 17.5 weeks is equivalent to 105 working days (1 week is calculated as 6 working days). An earnings-related benefit is paid, with the proportion of earnings for which compensation is paid varying according to the level of earnings; the benefit varies from 66% of earnings (for women with low earnings) to 45% (for women with high earnings) (*see Appendix 1, page 51*).

Paternity Leave

- * Fathers may take 6-12 working days at the time of birth, and 6 days during the Parental Leave period, paid as for Maternity Leave. In 1993, 46% of fathers took the period of Paternity Leave at the time of birth. Highly educated fathers aged 25 to 34 years who live in the Helsinki area are most likely to take Paternity Leave (see page 26).

Parental Leave

- * In 1993, only 6% of mothers worked during the Parental Leave period, and only 3% of fathers took Parental Leave (see page 26).
- * A Home Care Allowance is paid to parents taking Child Care Leave (ie. the leave available after Parental Leave) or to parents who do not use publicly funded childcare services. In 1994, the Home Care Allowance consisted of a basic sum of FMK 1958 per month, with an additional sum paid if there is a sibling under 7 years (FMK 392 per month) and an income-related supplement (maximum FMK 1,566 per month). The Home Care Allowance can be used to pay for private childcare, but this is uncommon; in two-thirds of cases where an allowance is paid, a parent stays at home, and in many other cases the parents use relatives or friends to provide childcare.
- * The Home Care Allowance can be supplemented by local authorities; this has happened most often in the Helsinki area, and in this area parents are more likely to take leave until their children are over 2 years. However, the number of local authorities supplementing the basic allowance has fallen from 56 in 1991 to only 10 in 1994.
- * The Home Care Allowance has been available since 1985, and is now widely used; in 1993 it was paid to 87,000 families, over 75% of those entitled. However, on average, the Allowance is usually only used for a relatively short period after the Parental Leave, usually until a child is aged between 12 and 18 months (see page 26 and Appendix 1, page 57).
- * The right for one parent per family to work reduced hours can be taken until a child reaches the age of 4 years and also in the year when the child starts school (see Appendix 1, page 57).

For further information, see Salmi, M. (1994) **The Parental Leave and Day Care Systems in Finland**, Helsinki: National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES).

FRANCE

Parental Leave

- * The payment (*Allocation Parentale d'éducation - APE*) for parents taking Parental Leave has been extended to parents with two children, for children born since July 1995. Previously *APE* was only paid to parents with three or more children. The *APE* payment is now FF 2,929 per month.
- * Parents working part-time (ie. using a part-time Parental Leave) will be entitled to *APE* of FF 1,950 per month if they work less than 19.5 hours a week and FF 1,455 if they work between 19.5 and 32 hours per week.
- * From January 1995, employers with fewer than 100 workers can no longer refuse to

give leave; as a result, Parental Leave will become a legal right for all employees (see page 15 and Appendix 1, page 55).

Leave for family reasons

- * From January 1995, each worker will be entitled to 3 days leave per year to care for a sick child (under 16 years); this is increased to 5 days if there is a child under 12 months or three or more children in the family. A worker with a child with a serious illness, accident or handicap is entitled to work part-time for up to 6 months, renewable for a second 6 month period. This leave is unpaid, unless an employee is covered by a collective agreement which provides for payment (see Appendix 1, page 58).

GERMANY

Parental Leave

- * For children born after the end of 1993, the payment made to parents taking Parental Leave will be income-related for the whole period of leave; previously, a payment of 600 DM was made to all parents during the first 6 months of leave, irrespective of income (see page 15 and Appendix 1, page 54).

SWEDEN

Parental Leave (Child Care Leave)

- * From January 1995, 10 of the 12 months of leave covered by an earnings-related benefit is paid at 80% of earnings. The remaining 2 months is still paid at 90% of earnings, but 1 of these 2 months can only be taken by the mother, while the other month can only be taken by the father.
- * Since July 1994, the 3 months leave paid at SKK 60 a day has been replaced by 24 months paid at a flat rate of SKK 2,000 a month ('child-rearing allowance'); the new Government, however, is proposing to abolish this longer period of leave and return to the former system of 3 months with a flat-rate payment of SKK 60 a day (see Appendix 1, page 57).