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# Family Leave for Researchers at LERU Universities

## LEAGUE OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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# Executive summary

This paper examines the complex and intertwined issues relating to family leave and caring responsibilities and the impact that they have on gender equality in academia. It explores the differing attitudes towards women and men as carers, issues relating to the management of family leave and the potential impact of family leave on research outcomes and women's careers.

While recognising that national (and in some cases regional) legislation and local norms differ by country, the paper explores the commonalities of experience across LERU universities and identifies examples of good practice. It proposes measures that universities can put in place to support researchers and minimise negative impacts, drawing on the experience of LERU universities and other actors in higher education.

Above all, the paper seeks to emphasise that becoming a parent is a positive and normal life event – around four in five people will become parents during their working lives. Putting in place policies and procedures to support parents to achieve a healthy work-life balance will not only address the issues that this paper identifies but also help our universities become attractive employers, and have a positive impact on recruitment, retention and productivity.

## **Differing attitudes towards women and men as parents and carers**

A combination of unsupportive policy frameworks and deep-seated cultural norms result in women frequently carrying a greater burden of caring responsibilities than men. Academia is no less affected by gendered social norms than other sectors. Academic success, particularly at research-intensive universities, is often measured in terms of productivity, external recognition and success in gaining grant income, which drives a long-hours culture. This is detrimental to anyone who wants a life outside of work, but particularly impacts on parents and carers.

However, motherhood is often seen as a barrier to success in academia in a way that fatherhood is not. There is a common perception that women who chose to have children are 'not committed' to their career, and therefore that being a mother and having an academic career are incompatible. Such perceptions lead to self-doubt and concern among women as well as to 'bias acceptance' – women choosing to leave academia because they anticipate discrimination and a lack of support. They can also lead to bias (whether implicit or otherwise) in our universities among those recruiting and employing researchers.

The paper outlines steps that universities can take to break down stereotypes around family leave and caring responsibilities, promote the positive aspects of parenthood, minimise bias and build institutions where combining work and family is normalised for all.

## **Management of family leave**

Problems can arise due to misunderstandings and unintentional poor management of family leave. Expectant parents and their managers alike may be unaware of their rights and entitlements, confused by the rules of funding bodies and unsure about who to ask for support.

Researchers on fixed-term contracts are in an especially vulnerable situation when they go on family leave, particularly if their contract is due to end during or shortly after the leave period. A frequently expressed anxiety is that researchers on fixed-term contracts 'miss out' on time by taking family leave, and that this makes it difficult for them to demonstrate productivity and secure a new post.

These are areas where universities should take steps to ensure that processes run as smoothly as possible and to mitigate negative impacts. However, there is no 'one size fits all' approach and universities should take a flexible approach to managing family leave (within the boundaries of their national legislation) and work hard to respect the needs and concerns of each individual.

## **Management of research and workload**

Negative attitudes towards family leave – and maternity leave in particular – can be caused by fears about the potential impact of an absence from the workplace on a team's ability to complete a research project to schedule. However, despite the risks, universities do not systematically employ a temporary replacement or extend the contract of the staff member going on leave. Decisions about covering the work of a researcher during family leave are based on many factors but are often influenced by financial considerations: a large majority of LERU (and other) universities incur additional costs, above those of a single salary, if they backfill the duties of a member of staff during family leave. While some research funders recognise these additional costs and make extra funding available, many still do not.

## **Minimising impact on careers**

Staff taking family leave are often fearful of the impact that their absence will have on their career. The paper explores some of those concerns, and the ways in which they can be addressed, including being mindful not to exclude men from support measures and thus reinforce stereotypes around caring; provision of support on return to work; measures to maintain visibility, including support for conference attendance; making allowances for reduced outputs in recruitment and promotion processes; supporting a range of career paths; and facilitating flexible and part-time working.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Family leave for researchers is a complex issue, which has been shown to potentially impact researchers' careers in significant ways. Despite national and institutional differences, LERU universities have discovered common challenges and have identified various ways in which organisations can support researchers going on family leave. In addition to the good practice illustrated in the paper, it is possible to formulate the following recommendations.

### **Universities should:**

1. Ensure that clear information about rights and entitlements in relation to family leave and pay is easily available and regularly communicated to all staff, including at induction, and that managers have access to training and specialist HR support to manage family leave positively and effectively.
2. Ensure that discussions and agreements between expectant parents and their supervisors are properly documented, and that a plan for the return from leave is documented and signed before leave commences.
3. Put in place and publicise policies and schemes that demonstrate the institution's support for staff to combine work and family, and which minimise the impact of family leave on career progression.
4. Ensure that the costs of implementing support measures such as contract extensions and teaching cover are built into budgets and that decisions about the provision of such support are decoupled from financial considerations so as to be fair and transparent.
5. Review recruitment and promotions procedures to eliminate bias:
  - Take steps to ensure that decisions are not influenced by a candidate's actual or perceived family status.
  - Take account of career breaks when assessing productivity and focus on the quality rather than the quantity of research.
6. Counteract the stereotype of women as caregivers through measures such as encouraging men to take parental leave and promoting flexible working for both men and women, thinking about images (on websites, etc.) and language, publishing case studies of male carers.

7. Publicise positive role models to encourage a healthy work-life balance and alternative career paths, and show that it is possible to have a successful academic career and a family.
8. Ensure that managers and leaders encourage discussion of work-life balance, and challenge negative stereotypes about the impact of caring on careers.
9. Ensure that all staff have regular, documented and signed appraisal interviews before and on return from leave, and that job descriptions are in place, to avoid misunderstandings about performance, and to facilitate a smooth return to work.
10. Support networking and peer support mechanisms for parents and carers.
11. Offer appropriate part-time and flexible working options for all staff.
12. Take steps to minimise expectations of a long-hours culture.

We also urge all research funders to recognise that failing to make additional funding available to cover the additional costs of family leave has a detrimental effect on gender equality.

### **Glossary of terms used in this paper**

- Family leave: Used to refer collectively to the different forms of leave associated with the birth or adoption of a child.
- Maternity leave: Leave from work for mothers or primary adopters in the period immediately preceding and following the birth or adoption of a child.
- Parental leave: A period of leave to care for children in their first years of life.
- Paternity leave: A period of leave available to fathers or recognised second parents usually immediately after the birth or adoption of a child.
- Shared parental leave: A family leave entitlement in the UK, which allows the mother or primary adopter to end their maternity or adoption leave early and share the remaining leave and pay entitlement with their partner.
- Statutory entitlement: The legal minimum entitlement.

## Introduction

1. The 'leakage' of women from academia is a well-documented phenomenon and has long been a cause for concern for LERU. In Europe and elsewhere a significantly larger number of women than men do not reach higher academic and leadership positions when compared to entrants in the profession. In the EU-28 in 2016, women constituted 48% of students and graduates at doctoral level but only 24% of grade A academic staff and 22% of heads of institutions in the higher education sector (European Commission, 2019).
2. In its 2012 paper, *Women, research and universities: excellence without bias*, LERU argued that the loss of female talent from the pipeline undermines the quality of research, and represents an unacceptable loss for academia, the economy and society. The paper highlighted that there are many reasons why women may leave academia, and that the biases they face are often small, but that the accumulation of small differences can have a significant effect on career progression over time: 'many mole hills become a mountain'. The issues faced by women in academia were further explored in *Implicit bias in academia: A challenge to the meritocratic principle and to women's careers* (LERU, 2018b)
3. This paper builds on these previous LERU publications by examining in more detail the impact that becoming a parent can have on gender equality in academia. In discussions within our universities and in the literature, maternity leave and caring responsibilities are frequently cited as causes of women leaving academia and as contributing to the low proportion of women in senior roles. In particular, it is often noted that the postdoctoral stage, when researchers are at a vulnerable point in their careers, coincides with a time when researchers might consider starting a family. Paternity leave and fatherhood, however, are not commonly cited as being a barrier to career progression although both women and men may take periods of family leave, and both may have caring responsibilities. Indeed, some studies have shown that men with children may be the most successful group in advancing their careers (e.g. Ginter & Khan, 2006).
4. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the impact of family leave on women's careers and the differing attitudes towards women and men as caregivers. While recognising that national (and in some cases regional) legislation and local norms differ by country, the paper explores the commonalities of experience across LERU universities and identifies examples of good practice. It proposes measures that universities can put in place to support researchers, drawing on the experience of LERU universities and other actors in higher education.
5. The issues relating to family leave and caring responsibilities are complex and intertwined. However, we have identified that in the context of academic careers a period of family leave has two main, related impacts: on an individual's career and on the research itself. This paper explores both areas and makes recommendations on how to minimise any negative impacts. In doing so it highlights some of the particular difficulties faced by staff on fixed-term and/or externally funded research contracts.
6. Above all, the paper seeks to emphasise that becoming a parent is a positive and normal life event – around four in five people will become parents during their working lives. Putting in place policies and procedures to support parents to achieve a healthy work-life balance will not only address the issues that this paper identifies but also help our universities become attractive employers, and have a positive impact on recruitment, retention and productivity.

### Scope of the paper

7. The topic of family leave is extremely broad and from the outset we made some deliberate decisions about what the paper would and would not seek to address:
  - The paper focuses on the period associated with the birth or adoption of a child, although it is recognised that caring responsibilities at later stages have an ongoing impact on working parents.
  - The paper does not attempt to address specific issues and complexities for doctoral researchers, due to their different status (as student or employee)

in different European countries. Nonetheless, many of the problems discussed apply equally to them and universities are encouraged to consider which recommendations should also apply to this group, particularly to those with an employment contract.

- The paper does not seek to address issues which may be specific to certain disciplines, such as difficulties associated with conducting fieldwork. However, we would note that researchers who work in disciplines where there is a risk of exposure to harmful chemicals, radiation or bacteria can experience significant disruption to their work from the early stages of pregnancy and may require additional support to maintain their careers.
8. The paper talks in general terms about the different issues faced by women and men but it does not assume that issues relating to family leave apply solely to two-parent, heterosexual families. As noted in the glossary, maternity leave and paternity leave are not sex-specific entitlements<sup>1</sup>. Nor does the paper differentiate between the birth or adoption of a child, except where discussing issues specifically related to pregnancy.

### Statutory family leave provision in different European countries

9. In this paper we use the term ‘family leave’ to refer collectively to the different forms of paid and unpaid leave **directly associated with the birth or adoption of a child**: adoption leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave (in the UK only) and parental leave<sup>2</sup>.
10. Family leave is regulated at the national as well as at the EU level. With regard to the latter, the Work-Life Balance (WLB) Directive has been developed within the broader ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’ framework, presented by the European Commission in 2016. The WLB Directive, adopted in June 2019, includes EU minimum standards on paternity and parental leave, as well as other measures. Specifically, it introduces the right to a minimum of ten working days of paid paternity leave for fathers or second parents around the time of the birth and strengthens the existing right to four

months’ parental leave, by making two out of the four months non-transferable from one parent to another, and compensated at a level to be set by Member States.<sup>3</sup> A minimum entitlement to 14 weeks’ maternity leave already exists under previous EU legislation.

11. A summary of national or ‘statutory’ legislation in relation to family leave and pay is given in an appendix to this paper. Statutory family leave and pay entitlements vary greatly by country, with particular differences in:
- The total duration of maternity leave, the length of any obligatory leave period and the amount of leave entitlement which must be taken before the birth or adoption of a child;
  - The amount of family leave (usually parental leave) that can be shared between parents and incentives for fathers to take leave;
  - The opportunity to take family leave on a part-time basis; and
  - The levels of statutory pay during family leave and the extent to which employers make up any difference between statutory pay and an employee’s full salary.

12. Despite these different national contexts, discussions among LERU universities have shown that the management of family leave for researchers is a common area of difficulty and concern.

### Differing attitudes towards women and men as parents and carers

13. Although it is often suggested that childbearing contributes to the so-called ‘leaky pipeline’, evidence suggests that it is ongoing caring responsibilities rather than pregnancy that have the strongest impact on women’s careers (Ahmad, 2016). A combination of unsupportive policy frameworks and deep-seated cultural norms results in women frequently carrying a greater burden of caring responsibilities than men.
14. It is still the case that in the majority of countries the opportunities for sharing family leave equitably are limited. The European Commission (2017) notes that

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Italy, where same-sex parents are not entitled to paternity pay.

<sup>2</sup> Parental leave is a broad entitlement to leave for the purposes of caring for a child and can often also be taken in later years.

<sup>3</sup> EU Member States must transpose the Directive into national legislation within three years of its adoption. While it represents welcome progress, the Directive is also criticised for not going far enough.

'existing policies have not brought equal opportunities that allow fathers and mothers to work and care together for the welfare of children and society at large'. This has contributed to an average employment rate that is 8.8% lower among women with a child under the age of six than among women without young children. Research by Kleven *et al* (2018) in Denmark shows that the unequal distribution of childcare responsibilities is the primary contributing factor to unequal pay between women and men. Research across a number of countries, including Denmark, Sweden, the UK and the USA, has shown that 'views on appropriate gender roles remain conservative': both women and men share strong beliefs that women with preschool and school-aged children should work part-time or not at all (Kleven *et al*, 2018).

15. Academia is no less affected by gendered social norms than other sectors. In a survey of senior leaders at British universities, 61% of women had 'significant other responsibilities' outside work, compared with 21% of men. Just over half of the women reported that childcare responsibilities, to different degrees, had been a 'constraint' to their career development compared to less than a third of men (Manfredi *et al*, 2014).
16. Conversely, men often feel less able than women to take extended leave following the birth or adoption of a child, or to work flexibly around childcare (although in a small number of countries parental leave is designed to accommodate part-time working), either through concerns about loss of income, or because it is not the norm to do so. Prevailing attitudes towards caring – including 'maternal gatekeeping', where women themselves restrict shared parenting – can prevent men from having the involvement with their family that they might like.

An internal report to the Board of Trinity College Dublin (December 2017) in relation to Family-friendly Working Practices highlighted gendered differences in the taking of family leave.

Following the introduction of paternity leave in 2009, an internal report to the University of Strasbourg Congress (May 2011) noted that in the first two years only 46 fathers out of 101 eligible male academics requested paternity leave. Four of the 46 fathers took paternity leave as unpaid leave, the others having asked for the allowed financial compensation.

17. The literature suggests that career progression in academia is based around the model of an 'ideal academic' who has unlimited time to devote to work (Thornton, 2013). Academic success, particularly at research-intensive universities, is often measured in terms of productivity (as measured by journal publications, citations, patents, etc.), visibility and external recognition, and success in gaining grant income, which drives a long-hours culture. This is detrimental to anyone who wants a life outside of work, but particularly impacts on parents and carers.
18. However, motherhood is often seen as a barrier to success in academia in a way that fatherhood is not. There is a common perception that women who chose to have children are 'not committed' to their careers, and therefore that being a mother and having an academic career are incompatible, although research shows that female scientists, whether or not they have children, attach just as much importance to their work as men (van Arensbergen, van der Weijden & van den Besselaar, 2012). This same perception does not seem to be true for men. Indeed, some studies suggest that men are viewed as being more committed to their work after having children (Turco, 2010 cited in Ahmad, 2016).
19. There is considerable evidence that such perceptions lead to self-doubt and concern among women. Case studies collected by the UK's Russell Group Equality Forum (RGEF) in 2013 showed that female researchers can experience considerable anxiety about whether and when to start a family. This is reinforced by recent research at University College Cork in Ireland, which showed the emotional impact that maternity leave has on women (Maxwell, 2018).

*'Women in the department often feel guilty about going on maternity leave because of its effect on the research programme, even though the PI makes efforts to support women in combining research careers with family commitments.'*

20. Although it is not easy to overcome social norms, universities can take steps to break down stereotypes around family leave and caring responsibilities, promote the positive aspects of parenthood, and build institutions where combining work and family is normalised for all. It is in everyone's interests for them to do so. Not only will it increase the likelihood of retaining women in academic careers but, as the European Commission

(2017) notes, 'employees with a sound work-life balance will be more motivated and productive, which will create less absenteeism, and so lead to higher productivity and competitiveness'. It will also contribute towards maintaining a positive and inclusive work environment.

21. Some women with young children make an active – and perfectly valid – choice to take on a traditional caring role and not focus on their careers. However, the loss of women from academia is also in part due to 'bias acceptance' – women choose to leave academia because they anticipate discrimination and a lack of support (Ahmad, 2016). This highlights the importance of universities putting in place measures to demonstrate their support for staff with families.

In 2014, the University of Oxford introduced its Returning Carers' Fund, a scheme that makes small grants to support women and men returning from periods of leave for caring purposes to re-establish their research. An evaluation of the fund has shown a wide range of tangible outcomes in terms of career progression, for example successful grant applications and publications, but also – and perhaps more importantly – the value of the fund in terms of signalling that the University is serious about supporting women's careers:

*'The fund has given me the sense that the University recognises that caring responsibilities are an essential part of life for many of its faculty members, but that these duties also take a toll on research productivity. It has been hugely encouraging to receive this award at a crucial stage in my career.'* Female academic, University of Oxford  
[edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/returning-carers-fund](http://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/returning-carers-fund)

22. Other measures include promoting family leave and flexible working for all, thinking about the images and language used on websites and in promotional materials to ensure that these do not reinforce gender stereotypes, publishing case studies of male carers, and publicising positive role models to show that it is possible for all staff to have a successful research career and a family. Senior leaders can play an important role in creating a positive institutional culture.

*'Our head of department does school drop-offs and pick-ups for his daughter and, in senior meetings, he can be on his phone, saying 'Hang on, this is my daughter's school...'. And because he does it, everybody can.'* Female academic, University of Oxford

The Royal Society's Parent Carer Scientist project celebrates the diversity of work-life patterns of 150 scientists across the UK, with the aim of increasing the visibility of people combining a career in science with a family life.  
<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/parent-carer-scientist/>

The University of Zurich has, since 2016, been a signatory to the 'Charta Family Life and Academia', a charter outlining an institution's commitments to supporting members of the academic community to balance family responsibilities and the demands of studies, teaching, research and other academic activities.  
[www.familie-in-der-hochschule.de](http://www.familie-in-der-hochschule.de)

23. Research by van Engen *et al* (2015) in Dutch universities shows that women and men use a variety of strategies to combine work and family but rarely share their concerns and frustrations with others, despite these being commonplace, with the result that parents uphold existing norms. They argue that 'by creating an organisational culture that allows for openly discussing the combination of careers and care... universities can support men and women in meeting their demands from both domains.' In other words, universities should create fora for parents to share ideas, support each other and challenge prevailing norms and ways of doing things. Such networks can also provide institutions with important feedback on whether policies are being implemented effectively.

The Parents and Carers Together (PACT) Network at University College London is a social network that aims to support staff members who are balancing ongoing caring responsibilities with work. It aims to provide a supportive environment for expressing difficulties, asking for help, dealing with issues and getting informal advice. It also seeks to raise awareness of UCL policies that support parents and carers and open up discussion about the issues facing parents and carers working in academia.

[www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/committees-and-social-networks/parents-and-carers-together](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/committees-and-social-networks/parents-and-carers-together)

24. There is also anecdotal evidence in our universities of bias (implicit or otherwise) among those recruiting and employing researchers, and belief among female researchers that they will experience bias. For example, the University of Strasbourg has found that some pregnant women do not apply for posts because they believe that their pregnancy will lead to bias against them at interview. Universities should be vigilant that negative perceptions about motherhood do not lead to discrimination and bias during recruitment and promotions procedures, and should monitor discussions to ensure that decisions are not influenced by a candidate's actual or perceived family status.

### Management of family leave

25. The arrival of a child is a normal life event, and should be a positive one. However, experience at our institutions shows that problems can arise due to misunderstandings and unintentional poor management of family leave, leading to unnecessary stress and resentment. Expectant parents and their managers alike may be unaware of their rights and entitlements, confused by the rules of funding bodies, and unsure about who to ask for support.
26. One reason for this is that there can be relatively low frequency of family leave within individual teams, so that managers are often dealing with it for the first time and working things out as they go along. The international nature of the workforce at research-intensive universities may also be a contributing factor: individuals may not be familiar with the (sometimes complex) national legislation in their host country, and bring different cultural expectations about the duration of family leave. For example, an American group leader at a British or Nordic university

might be surprised to hear that a researcher wishes to – and is able to – take a year's leave.

27. To help the process run as smoothly as possible, universities should ensure that they have robust policies and procedures in place, and provide both employees and managers with clear information and guidance, as well as specialist HR support. Guidance should cover the practical and legal aspects of managing leave (for example, the notifications that must be given and any forms that should be completed), and also give advice on how to ensure a smooth return to work after leave, and any steps that can be taken to minimise the impact of leave on the individual's career, if this is a concern.

The University of Edinburgh has developed a toolkit for maternity and shared parental leave to support staff and their managers in planning family leave.

[www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-guidance/leave-absence/maternity-toolkit](http://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-guidance/leave-absence/maternity-toolkit)

Based on the results of the employee satisfaction survey at KU Leuven, each department discussed workload, work-life balance, stress and resilience issues. Following on from this, workshops for professors were organised to stimulate a more open culture, share good practice, create a framework for mutual support and advise the board of the faculty on a faculty management plan that includes a clear vision of the impact of leave on academic careers, and the procedures and support measures available.

The University of Zurich's leadership training was designed to include a component encouraging openness towards family leave.

28. It is also our experience that informal discussions may give rise to misunderstanding at a later date unless they are clearly documented.

The University of Zurich developed a planning tool – the Memorandum of Conversation of Parenthood – to ensure that discussions and agreements between expectant parents and their

supervisors are properly documented, to prevent misunderstandings on return from leave.

[www.families.uzh.ch/en/kind/nachwuchs/nachwuchs\\_mitarbeitende.html](http://www.families.uzh.ch/en/kind/nachwuchs/nachwuchs_mitarbeitende.html)

29. Researchers on fixed-term contracts are in an especially vulnerable situation when they go on family leave, particularly if their contract is due to end during or shortly after the leave period. A frequently expressed anxiety is that researchers on fixed-term contracts 'miss out' on time by taking family leave, and that this makes it difficult for them to demonstrate productivity and secure a new post. Universities should take steps wherever possible to mitigate against this, for example by extending contracts by a period equivalent to the duration of family leave or providing support to enable continuity of employment. However, it is recognised that this will not always be possible.

The University of Copenhagen, KU Leuven, and German, Italian and Spanish universities automatically extend fixed-term contracts by a period equivalent to the duration of family leave. LMU Munich provides additional financial support for departments to do so.

30. An additional complication is that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to family leave. Universities should take a flexible approach to managing family leave (within the boundaries of their national legislation) and work hard to respect the needs and concerns of each individual. For example, while some women may feel strongly that they wish to take a short period of maternity leave to minimise the impact on their careers, and should be supported to do so (after any mandatory leave period), others should not feel pressured to do the same.
31. Support on return from family leave is just as important as preparation for leave and universities should have in place good processes to ensure a smooth reintegration into the workplace, and a positive working environment. This might include a reinduction process to catch up on any changes in the workplace during the leave period, and a handover period if someone has been covering their work.
32. Importantly, managers should not make assumptions about individual needs and wishes, and should be careful not to reinforce gendered stereotypes. For example, they should be consistent with all staff in discussing reduced hours or flexible working to facilitate caring. Managers

can sometimes unintentionally disadvantage women's careers whilst thinking that they are acting in their best interests, for example in attempting to protect them from additional workload on their return from family leave. Female academics have noted that they have 'to work harder to convince and persuade their managers that they want and need more responsibility, which they see being given automatically to their male colleagues' (Greenfield *et al* (2002), cited in Bevan and Learmouth).

### Management of research and workload

33. Negative attitudes towards family leave – and maternity leave in particular – can be caused by fears about the potential impact of an absence from the workplace on the research project itself. Family leave can be viewed as 'inconvenient', as putting pressure on other colleagues, if they are asked to take on extra work, and as potentially damaging to research outcomes. As outlined above, this may have a negative emotional impact on individuals and may result in bias in recruitment practices. Yet despite the risks to both the outcomes of the research project, and gender balance in research and academic roles, few universities systematically mitigate the impact of family leave by employing a temporary replacement or, in the case of fixed-term postholders, extending the contract of the staff member going on leave. Decisions are generally devolved to department level and made on an ad hoc basis. This lack of transparency leads to uncertainty and to inequitable treatment of staff across institutions.

Heidelberg University has a programme to fund research continuity for (up to) six months during the absence of a researcher around the arrival of a child, based on documented scientific need.

34. In the case of grant holders with responsibility for other research staff, if they are not able to maintain the direction of their research whilst they are on leave, any negative impact on research outputs will affect both their own career and that of the members of their research group. Established academic staff may also be affected by, for example, the absence of arrangements for the supervision of doctoral researchers and cover for teaching. The literature frequently cites examples of women returning from maternity leave to find that they have a double load of teaching and administrative duties, which squeezes out their research.

At the University of Strasbourg, one department used an available Temporary Teaching and Research Officer position (ATEN, Attaché Temporaire d'Enseignement et de Recherche) to cover the research of an academic taking a year's maternity leave following the birth of twins.

35. Maxwell *et al* (2018) argue that universities should have supportive, formal institutional policies and practices in place. Their research at University College Cork showed that where there are only informal practices in place, women are left to negotiate maternity cover for themselves, which can create resentment among colleagues. When they are dependent on the goodwill and support of those around them to maintain their teaching and research, they can feel obliged to continue working during leave.
36. Decisions about whether and how to cover the work of a researcher during family leave are based on many factors but are often influenced by financial considerations. As can be seen in the appendix, the levels of statutory pay during family leave often fall below an employee's usual salary level and many universities offer enhanced pay to staff taking family leave. In some cases, this is a legal requirement or has come out of a collective bargaining agreement. In other contexts, it is a voluntary measure, intended to improve employee retention. The consequence is that a large majority of LERU universities incur additional costs, above those of a single salary, if they backfill the duties of a member of staff during family leave.
37. We would recommend that all universities put in place guidance on how to make decisions about covering work during an absence for family leave (recognising that each situation is different, and that a single approach is not possible), make it clear that decisions should be based on documented academic needs, and deliberately decouple the decision-making process from financial considerations.

The University of Oxford's Framework for the Management of Family Leave sets out a process for departments to follow to reach decisions about how to cover work during an absence for family leave. It attempts to ensure consistency in the decision-making process and to separate this from financial considerations.  
[hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/framework-family-leave-researchers-and-academics](http://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/framework-family-leave-researchers-and-academics)

38. The appendix captures additional provisions made by those bodies which we consider to be the primary mechanism for distribution of government research funding. The main research funders in Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK recognise the additional costs incurred during family leave and make extra funding available, e.g. to support the recruitment of a cover post or to extend the contract of the individual going on leave. In Germany, funders are legally obliged to do so and extend fixed-term research contracts. However, research-intensive universities attract funding from a wide range of bodies, including charitable trusts and industry, and such funders frequently do not make any allowances for family leave.

The UK's Wellcome Trust provides generous additional support for family leave, stating: 'We recognise the challenges our researchers face when managing a research career with other responsibilities, such as family commitments or health-related matters. Consequently, we will supplement grants by the actual costs incurred by the employing institution in meeting an individual's salary while on maternity, paternity, adoption or sick leave (less any recoverable statutory pay). The official end date of the grant may also be extended for the period equivalent to the leave taken. In addition, for all grantholders, irrespective of whether Wellcome pays their salary, we will consider requests for supplements to cover additional direct research costs (such as research staff and expenses) that may be incurred due to the grantholder taking maternity, paternity, adoption or sick leave.'

39. At the European level, the lack of additional funding under the current funding programme Horizon 2020 would seem to be contradictory to the EU's stated objective of promoting gender balance in research teams. Its stance contrasts with the approach taken by major national funders in most of the affected countries (cf. paragraph 38).
40. We urge all research funders to recognise that failing to make additional funding available to reduce the potential impact of family leave on research outcomes has a detrimental effect on gender equality. We particularly ask the EU to take a lead in this respect.

### Minimising impact on careers

41. Staff taking family leave are often fearful of the impact that their absence will have on their career. This section explores some of those concerns, and the ways in which they can be addressed. As a first step, universities should be mindful not to exclude men from support measures, or to reinforce stereotypes around caring. Labelling initiatives as 'support for parents and carers' rather than 'maternity support' can be helpful, even if the majority of those taking up the support are women.

### Providing support on return to work

42. The highly competitive nature of some disciplines and/or the fast pace of change can make it difficult to take time out of the workplace, and those going on family leave may need support to 'get back up to speed' on their return. Managers should not assume that staff returning from family leave will simply pick up where they left off, but should arrange reinduction sessions and appropriate training. It can also take time to readjust to the workplace and new family responsibilities, and individuals may find that their priorities and feelings about work have changed. Quite often, women, in particular, express that they struggle to regain confidence on their return to work.
43. Therefore, universities should consider providing both practical and emotional support for returning carers and new parents. New parents may find it particularly helpful to talk to others with similar experiences via buddying schemes or parents' networks.

The University of Edinburgh offers a 'Returning Parents' Coaching Programme' to support all staff who are new parents to transition back to work confidently and effectively.

The University of Oxford runs workshops for staff returning from family leave and a 'new parents' networking tea'.

44. Teaching relief or similar schemes to allow academics to focus on their research can be both a very practical way of ensuring that research does not lose momentum, and have a demonstrable effect on the well-being of staff. At the University of Strasbourg, where the university

financially compensates departments for academics returning from family leave to be relieved of teaching duties, there has been a significant reduction in sick leave among this group of staff.

At Trinity College Dublin academics returning from family leave can apply to be relieved of teaching duties for a semester, to allow them to focus on research.

At the University of Strasbourg all academics returning from family leave can apply for a reduction in teaching. For women returning from maternity leave, this can be applied at a fractional rate over a two-year period if they wish. In addition, under national legislation, an academic returning from a period of family leave is eligible to apply for a sabbatical of six months – usually a qualifying period of three years would be required.

The Faculty of Science at Utrecht University has a policy to give female scientists the opportunity to do full-time research for a period of four to six months after return from maternity leave.

Imperial College London's Elsie Widdowson Fellowship scheme enables the department, division, school or institute to relieve the academic of teaching or administrative duties in order to concentrate fully on research on return from leave.

The University of Copenhagen has introduced funds, administered by faculties, to provide associate and assistant professors, regardless of sex, with grants, for activities to ensure that they make a good start on teaching and research after returning from leave, for example travel grants for a research placement, assistance with a research project, the purchase of special equipment or materials.

45. Before they go on family leave, all staff should discuss with their manager and document a plan for re-establishing their research, with clear goals and deadlines, to stop research from getting pushed out on their return. Similarly, setting clear goals and objectives for the return to work period, and arranging regular one-to-one meetings to discuss progress, can help to ensure that research stays on track.

*'I am convinced that I was more productive in my research than I otherwise would have been because I had identified a clear plan of action for my research on my return.'* Female academic, University of Oxford

The University of Copenhagen requires agreements to be made (i.e. at appraisal interviews) before the end of leave between local management and professors/associate professors on how the upcoming period after leave is to be used.

At Heidelberg University, it is expected that all parents have a documented planning session with the department head or PI and an equal opportunities officer before they go on leave to discuss their research and career plans.

46. Managers and leaders, such as heads of department, have an important role to play in setting the tone, and making it acceptable for returning carers to ask for support. However, as each individual will have their own priorities and concerns, managers should encourage staff to identify what support best suits their circumstances.
47. Importantly, managers should be careful not to make assumptions about what returners want and need, for example reduced hours and/or responsibilities, and should make the same accommodations, where requested, regardless of sex. Managers can sometimes withhold opportunities while thinking that they are acting in the returner's best interests.

*'Before I went on maternity leave, I was asked by a number of colleagues whether I would be returning to work on a part-time basis. There seemed to be an assumption that I would want to spend time at home caring for my son, and that my career would no longer be important to me.'* Female researcher, University of Oxford

### Maintaining visibility

48. Maintaining visibility in the international academic community is extremely important for progression in a research career. This might involve attending conferences, participating in international research collaborations, and sitting on external committees and boards. Taking family leave limits such opportunities, and women may experience travel limitations during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding. Universities can minimise the impact on visibility by supporting researchers in an academic's research group to attend conferences and present research results on their behalf if they are unable to travel, support the individual's research collaborators to visit the institution, and provide support for parents to attend conferences whilst their children are young, e.g. by covering additional childcare costs or paying for a family member to accompany a breastfeeding mother.

Heidelberg University offers financial support to cover travel expenses for researchers with children to attend conferences or documented research consultations (including airfare and day care).

49. When universities are themselves organising conferences, they should consider offering childcare facilities and ensure that suitable family accommodation is available.
50. Visibility and networking within an institution is also important, and universities should ensure that committee meetings and seminar series are scheduled so as not to exclude those with caring responsibilities. Where evening events are unavoidable, for example due to the availability of an external speaker or suitable venue, universities can take steps such as the provision of pop-up nurseries, and the live streaming or recording of talks.

### Making allowances for reduced outputs

51. Career progression in academia depends on research evaluation and outputs. Parents often say that their publications slow during family leave and on return to work, and that caring responsibilities reduce productivity because they can no longer work the extremely long hours expected in academia. This lower (although still reasonable) productivity relative to peers can subsequently disadvantage those with

caring responsibilities when it comes to recruitment and promotion decisions.

52. Although universities and research funders increasingly say that they take caring responsibilities into account in recruitment and promotion, it is not always clear what this means and how it will be done. Academics may therefore be reluctant to take advantage of such allowances due to fears that it will count against them if they declare a career break. Indeed, in some national contexts there is a strict division between work and personal life, and academics would refuse to mention career breaks on their CV. Universities should publish clear and easy-to-find guidance on allowing for career breaks, and make it clear how they will avoid unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion processes. They should also take steps, where necessary, to make it more culturally acceptable to talk about the impact of career breaks on career progression.

The University of Barcelona takes periods of maternity leave into account in assessing the engagement with research of all its teaching and research staff (Approved by the Governing Council, May 8, 2012).

Trinity College Dublin's academic promotions policy makes provision for 'Special (additional) circumstances'.

Heidelberg University 'subtracts' two years of career for each child (available to only one parent, usually the mother).

The UK's Medical Research Council (MRC) has removed criteria based on years of postdoctoral experience, and has issued clear guidance on how to take account of career breaks and flexible working in assessing grant and fellowship applications. [www.mrc.ac.uk/skills-careers/additional-career-support/flexible-working-policies](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/skills-careers/additional-career-support/flexible-working-policies)

53. Universities should also carefully consider their use of metrics in research evaluation (LERU, 2012b), particularly in relation to assessment during recruitment and promotion exercises. It is well documented that such metrics are often biased against women and give a greater weight to quantity over quality (see, for example, Wilsdon *et al*, 2015). LERU (collectively) and several of its member universities (individually) have signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).<sup>4</sup> Recently, LERU has, in the context of the transition to open science, called for universities to develop bibliometrics policies grounded in the principles of the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (LERU, 2018b).<sup>5</sup> Many LERU universities are making efforts to develop more balanced, innovative approaches to evaluation. Researcher recruitment and promotion exercises should be equally fair, as well as 'open, transparent and merit-based' (EC, 2015) for all researchers.

KU Leuven's evaluation committees use a biosketch in the selection and promotion process. The applicant describes career progress, strategic positioning and their most important achievements in a personal way. This biosketch complements the metrics available and highlights positive work and life choices in such a way that applicants with a diversity of career paths, including family and other leave, practical experience and experience in industry, are evaluated on their merits and not on the fact that they deviate from the traditional career path.

### Funding calls

54. Funding calls are typically only made once a year and deadlines for applying for funding may be missed whilst a researcher is on family leave. Funders should give consideration to the timing of calls, and consider how they might be managed so as not to exclude those who are absent from the workplace.

4 See <https://sfdora.org> – which asks signatory institutions to 'be explicit about the criteria used to reach hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, clearly highlighting, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published' and 'for the purposes of research assessment, consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications, and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.'

5 See <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org> – the first principle states that quantitative evaluation should support qualitative, expert assessment.

## Counteracting negative attitudes towards performance

55. As discussed above, attitudes towards women and men as carers tend to differ, and women may experience negative attitudes towards their performance or concerning their commitment to work on their return from leave. Such situations can be avoided by ensuring that existing HR frameworks and instruments are used effectively. For example, researchers should have an up-to-date job description in place before they go on leave, and appraisals should take place regularly, be documented and be signed by both parties, so that any evaluation of performance is objective and based on agreed goals and past achievements.

## Support for alternative career paths

56. As noted above, women may be influenced to leave academia through anticipation of the difficulties that they will encounter in progressing their career. One element of this is the idea that there is a 'typical', inflexible path that one has to follow to progress in a research career, and that this model expects high levels of productivity over a sustained period of time, thus not accommodating career breaks and caring responsibilities. In reality, interviews with a cross-section of academics are likely to show that many have followed atypical career paths (LERU, 2018a). Therefore, promoting case studies to illustrate the wide variety of routes taken by current academics is a useful strategy.

The University of Oxford's Women in Science website seeks to provide support to women making career decisions, by offering them the opportunity to explore a broad range of experiences shared by other women. It features interviews with 56 women scientists, all working at Oxford, in which they talk about a range of topics. [www.diversityprojects.ox.ac.uk/wis](http://www.diversityprojects.ox.ac.uk/wis)

57. That being said, it can be very difficult to re-establish an academic career following an extensive career break. A number of career re-entry schemes such as the UK's Daphne Jackson Fellowships and the University of Zurich's Suslowa-Postdoc-Fellowship aim to address this. Universities can support such schemes by funding and providing research placements at their institutions.

## Flexible and part-time working

58. Part-time working can help carers maintain an appropriate level of work-life balance. However, part-time working over a prolonged period of time may also slow career progression, particularly at low full-time equivalent hours, and it can be difficult to define part-time academic roles in the context of a long-hours culture. Therefore, universities should seek to offer part-time options wherever possible, and support staff where it is their wish to work reduced hours, but be sure to do so within a full discussion of career aspirations, how to maintain a career trajectory, and how to manage workload appropriately, i.e. to ensure that reduced hours do not result in the same levels of teaching and administrative duties, with no time remaining for research.

59. The flexibility of academia is often pointed to as a positive that supports carers. Academics can often work at home and around caring responsibilities, without necessarily working reduced hours. In many cases universities have an informal culture of flexible working, and the informal nature of arrangements is welcomed, but they should take steps to ensure that everybody is aware of, and able to take advantage of, such arrangements.

At KU Leuven the Career Centre's life@work project focused specifically on managing work-life choices. In order to provide optimum flexibility for a diversity of individual situations, all measures that might be helpful to organise work in more flexible way (e.g. teleworking, all types of leave, sabbaticals) are brought together on a webpage alongside information about workshops and individual coaching. The website also includes information on improving self-management (how to set priorities and focus on what is important), making good arrangements with colleagues and superiors, and discussing the impact on career perspectives.

The Royal Society's Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships offer a recognised first step into an independent research career for outstanding scientists and engineers at an early stage of their research career who require a flexible working pattern due to personal circumstances, such as parenting or caring responsibilities. <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/dorothy-hodgkin-fellowship/>

## Conclusions and recommendations

Family leave for researchers is a complex issue, which has been shown to potentially impact researchers' careers in significant ways. Despite national and institutional differences, LERU universities have discovered common challenges and have identified various ways in which organisations can support researchers going on family leave. In addition to the good practice illustrated in the paper, it is possible to formulate the following recommendations.

### Universities should:

13. Ensure that clear information about rights and entitlements in relation to family leave and pay is easily available and regularly communicated to all staff, including at induction, and that managers have access to training and specialist HR support to manage family leave positively and effectively.
14. Ensure that discussions and agreements between expectant parents and their supervisors are properly documented, and that a plan for the return from leave is documented and signed before leave commences.
15. Put in place and publicise policies and schemes that demonstrate the institution's support for staff to combine work and family, and which minimise the impact of family leave on career progression.
16. Ensure that the costs of implementing support measures such as contract extensions and teaching cover are built into budgets and that decisions about the provision of such support are decoupled from financial considerations so as to be fair and transparent.
17. Review recruitment and promotions procedures to eliminate bias:
  - a. Take steps to ensure that decisions are not influenced by a candidate's actual or perceived family status.
  - b. Take account of career breaks when assessing productivity and focus on the quality rather than the quantity of research.
18. Counteract the stereotype of women as caregivers through measures such as encouraging men to take parental leave

and promoting flexible working for both men and women, thinking about images (on websites, etc.) and language, publishing case studies of male carers.

19. Publicise positive role models to encourage a healthy work-life balance and alternative career paths, and show that it is possible to have a successful academic career and a family.
20. Ensure that managers and leaders encourage discussion of work-life balance, and challenge negative stereotypes about the impact of caring on careers.
21. Ensure that all staff have regular, documented and signed appraisal interviews before and on return from leave, and that job descriptions are in place, to avoid misunderstandings about performance, and to facilitate a smooth return to work.
22. Support networking and peer support mechanisms for parents and carers.
23. Offer appropriate part-time and flexible working options for all staff.
24. Take steps to minimise expectations of a long-hours culture.

The above recommendations are written primarily with universities in mind. However, some elements may also be useful to research funders, governments and other stakeholders. In particular, we urge all research funders to recognise that failing to make additional funding available to cover the additional costs of family leave has a detrimental effect on gender equality.

For the European research framework programme we recommend that Horizon 2020 makes it possible to fund leave cover, if possible in the remaining period of the programme. We also recommend that for the next programme, Horizon Europe, which is due to start in 2021, family leave policies are reviewed in the context of the EU's Work-Life Balance Directive.

## Appendix:

### Summary of statutory family leave entitlements and additional pay provision by universities and research funders

The information contained in this table is correct to the best of our knowledge as of April 2020. It is intended as a summary only and does not provide full details of, for example, eligibility requirements for different forms of leave and pay.

Unless otherwise stated, statutory leave and pay entitlements and additional pay provisions apply equally to the birth and adoption of a child, and to same-sex couples.

The 'additional university pay' column provides details of any supplementary pay offered to employees where statutory pay entitlements are less than 100% of salary. It does not

provide information on additional support offered to new parents, such as contract extensions, subsidised nursery provision and return to work schemes, although many universities do offer such benefits.

The 'additional research funder pay' column indicates provision that funders have made to reimburse universities for any costs incurred in relation to family leave which cannot be reclaimed from the State. The terms and conditions of different funders vary greatly and the table only includes those bodies considered to be the primary mechanism for distribution of government research funding.

	Statutory maternity leave and pay entitlement	Statutory paternity leave and pay entitlement
<b>Belgium</b>	<p>Up to 15 weeks' maternity leave, of which ten weeks are obligatory and at least one week must be taken before the expected due date.</p> <p>An additional two weeks' leave for multiple births.</p> <p>Leave paid at 82% of salary for the first 30 days and then 75% of salary (subject to a maximum).</p>	<p>10 days' paternity leave, to be taken within four months of the birth.</p> <p>Three days' leave at full pay (paid by the employer), seven days at 82% of salary (subject to a maximum).</p>
<b>Denmark</b>	<p>Up to four weeks' pregnancy (pre-birth) and 14 weeks' maternity (post-birth) leave. The first two weeks of maternity leave are obligatory.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to an upper limit).</p>	<p>Two weeks' paternity leave, to be taken within 14 weeks of the birth.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to an upper limit).</p>
<b>Finland</b>	<p>Up to 105 working days<sup>6</sup> maternity leave, at least 30 working days of which must be taken before the expected due date. At least two weeks' leave before and after the birth are obligatory.</p> <p>Rate of maternity allowance varies but is generally 70% of salary.</p>	<p>54 working days' paternity leave, up to 18 days of which can be taken whilst the mother is on maternity leave. The remainder can be used at any time up to the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Rate of paternity allowance varies but is generally 70% of salary.</p>
<b>France</b>	<p>16 weeks' obligatory maternity leave, at least two weeks must be taken before the expected due date.</p> <p>26 weeks' leave for the third child; 34 weeks' leave for twins; 46 weeks for triplets.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to an upper limit).</p>	<p>11 consecutive days, or 18 consecutive days for multiple births, to be taken within four months of the birth.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary.</p>

6 In Finland, all forms of leave are calculated at a rate of six working days to the week.

Statutory parental leave and pay entitlement	Additional university pay (where applicable)	Additional research funder pay (where applicable)
<p>Four months' leave per parent per child, paid at a flat rate.</p> <p>Leave can be taken flexibly, including in one-month blocks and/or on a part-time basis.</p> <p>Available up to the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p>	<p><b>KU Leuven</b> Enhanced salary (100%) during maternity and paternity leave.</p>	<p><b>Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)</b> An additional year of funding is awarded for periods of absence longer than three months.</p>
<p>Total leave entitlement of 32 weeks per parent per child.</p> <p>Paid leave of 32 weeks per family, which can be shared between parents. Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to an upper limit).</p> <p>The period of paid leave can be extended by eight or 14 weeks, with a reduced rate of parental allowance paid over a longer period.</p> <p>Between eight and 13 weeks' leave may be deferred for use up to the child's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p><b>Independent Research Fund</b> Not applicable</p>
<p>Up to 158 working days' paid leave after maternity leave has ended, which can be shared between parents.</p> <p>Up to 233 working days' paid leave in the case of adoption.</p> <p>An additional 60 days for multiple births.</p> <p>Rate of parental allowance varies but is generally 70% of salary.</p> <p>Unpaid childcare leave after parental leave has ended up to the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.</p>	<p><b>Helsinki</b> Enhanced salary (100%) for the first 72 days of maternity leave and six days of paternity leave.</p> <p>Partial childcare leave (reduced hours and pay) can be taken up to the end of the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> year at school.</p>	<p><b>Academy of Finland</b> Indirect employee costs, which include salary costs relating to family leave, are allocated to a project with a dedicated coefficient. A project may be granted extra time for the project and the use of funding on the basis of a researcher's family leave.</p>
<p>Full- or part-time parental leave can be taken by both parents after maternity leave has ended.</p> <p>Childcare allowance is paid at a flat rate, which varies according to the number of children and the number of hours worked.</p> <p>Each parent can claim up to six months' benefits for the first child; for subsequent children, benefits can be claimed up to the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, but with a maximum period of 24 months per parent.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p><b>Agence Nationale de la Recherche</b> Not applicable</p>

## Family Leave for Researchers at LERU Universities

	Statutory maternity leave and pay entitlement	Statutory paternity leave and pay entitlement
<b>Germany</b>	<p>Up to 14 weeks' maternity leave, six weeks before the expected due date and eight weeks after; eight weeks' leave after the birth are obligatory.</p> <p>Up to 18 weeks for premature and multiple births.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary: the State pays a maternity allowance of up to €13 a day and employers must pay the difference between the maternity allowance and an employee's full salary.</p>	No statutory entitlement
<b>Ireland</b>	<p>Up to 42 weeks' maternity leave, which must begin at least two weeks before the expected due date.</p> <p>26 weeks paid at a flat rate (€245 per week), the remaining 16 weeks are unpaid.</p> <p>Up to 40 weeks' adoption leave, 24 weeks paid at a flat rate, the remainder unpaid.</p>	Two weeks' paternity leave paid at a flat rate (€245 per week), to be taken within 26 weeks of the birth.
	In addition to maternity and paternity leave, two weeks' parent's leave per parent, paid at a flat rate (€245 per week), to be taken within a year of the child's birth or adoption.	
<b>Italy</b>	<p>20 weeks' obligatory maternity leave, to begin at least four weeks before the expected due date.</p> <p>An additional 12 weeks for multiple births.</p> <p>Leave paid at 80% of salary (100% of salary for public sector workers).</p>	<p>Five days' obligatory paternity leave, to be taken within five months of the birth.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary.</p> <p>Same-sex parents not eligible.</p> <p>In the case of public sector workers, legislation has been introduced but not yet fully implemented.</p>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<p>Up to 16 weeks' maternity leave; obligatory leave four weeks before and six weeks after the expected due date.</p> <p>After the obligatory period, the remaining leave can be used flexibly over a maximum of 36 weeks.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to a maximum).</p>	<p>One weeks' paid leave, to be taken within four weeks of the birth.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary, by the employer.</p>
	<p>Six weeks' leave for each parent when a child is placed for adoption.</p> <p>Leave can be used flexibly over a period of 26 weeks (four weeks before the child is placed and 22 weeks after).</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary (subject to a maximum).</p> <p>From 1 July 2020, additional unpaid 'birth leave' of a maximum of 5 x normal weekly working hours per parent per child within six months of the birth.</p>	

Statutory parental leave and pay entitlement	Additional university pay (where applicable)	Additional research funder pay (where applicable)
<p>Two benefits schemes available, which can also be combined.</p> <p>Scheme one provides up to 12 months (including eight weeks of maternity leave) of full- or part-time (up to 30 hours per week) leave following the birth, paid at around 67% of income (subject to a maximum).</p> <p>The leave entitlement can be shared and if both parents take at least two months' leave, an additional two months' paid leave is available.</p> <p>Scheme two allows both parents to work part-time (up to 30 hours per week) for up to 24 months after the birth, with benefits paid at around 67% of the difference between full- and part-time salary.</p> <p>If both parents work part-time for at least four months, an additional four months' benefits are available.</p>	<p>All employers must pay the difference between the maternity allowance and an employee's full salary.</p>	<p>All research funders pay the full costs of maternity leave.</p>
<p>Up to 22 weeks' unpaid parental leave per parent per child (will increase to 26 weeks from 1 September 2020), available up to the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Leave can be taken in one continuous period or in two separate blocks of a minimum of six weeks. By agreement with the employer parental leave can be separated into periods of days or even hours.</p>	<p><b>Trinity College Dublin</b> Enhanced maternity pay at 100% of salary for 26 weeks.</p>	<p><b>Health Research Board</b> Additional funding for maternity, paternity and parent's leave up 100% of salary for staff on salary awards, falling within the duration of their award. Award extensions may also be applied for.</p> <p><b>Science Foundation Ireland</b> Provides a maternity/adoption leave supplement for all SFI award holders and employees on SFI-funded contracts.</p> <p>For SFI award holders whose salary is paid by the host institution (e.g. academic staff), SFI provides a supplement to cover the hiring of additional staff to support the administration of the project in the award holder's absence (up to 30 weeks).</p> <p><b>Irish Research Council</b> Expanded family leave policy under consultation but anticipate additional funding towards the full postdoctoral salary for the duration of statutory entitlement.</p>
<p>Parental leave of six months per parent per child.</p> <p>Maximum leave of 10 months per family, increasing to 11 months if the father takes leave of at least three months.</p> <p>Available up to the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Paid at 30% of salary up to the child's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday; depending on income between the child's 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> birthday; unpaid leave thereafter.</p> <p>Public sector employees receive 100% of salary for the first 30 days.</p> <p>Daily leave: on return to work, employees (public and private sector) are entitled to two hours' nursing leave per day until the child's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. This may be transferred between parents.</p>	<p><b>Milan</b> Employers must pay the additional costs of enhanced maternity and parental leave for public sector employees, i.e. 20% of pay for maternity leave and the first 30 days of parental leave at 100% of pay.</p> <p>Enhanced maternity leave is also extended to postdoctoral researchers, including those on externally funded contracts.</p>	<p><b>Ministry for Research and Universities</b> No additional funding but a project may be granted extra time for the project and the use of funding on the basis of a researcher's maternity leave.</p>
<p>Unpaid parental leave of 26 x normal weekly working hours per parent per child.</p> <p>Leave can be taken flexibly, in agreement with the employer.</p> <p>Available up to the child's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p>	<p>Dutch universities pay the first 13 x normal weekly working hours of parental leave at 62.5% of salary per child.</p> <p><b>Amsterdam</b> Additional 'birth leave' will be paid at a maximum of 70% of salary.</p>	<p><b>Dutch Research Council (NWO)</b> Not applicable in the case of maternity leave.</p>

## Family Leave for Researchers at LERU Universities

	Statutory maternity leave and pay entitlement	Statutory paternity leave and pay entitlement
<b>Spain</b>	<p>Up to 16 weeks' maternity leave, of which six weeks are obligatory and must be taken immediately after the birth. The remaining ten weeks may be taken at any time within a year of the birth and/or taken part-time.</p> <p>An additional week's leave for multiple births, subsequent children and disabled children.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary.</p>	<p>8 weeks' leave (to increase to 16 weeks by 2021), of which two weeks must be taken immediately following the birth. The remaining ten weeks may be taken at any time within a year of the birth and/or taken part-time.</p> <p>An additional week's leave for multiple births, subsequent children and disabled children.</p> <p>Leave paid at 100% of salary.</p>
<b>Sweden</b>	<p>Parental leave is the main form of family leave.</p> <p>Up to 14 weeks' paid pregnancy leave can, in certain circumstances, be taken from 60 days before the expected due date.</p> <p>Two weeks' obligatory maternity leave.</p> <p>Leave paid at 77.6% of salary.</p>	<p>10 days' paternity leave to be taken within 60 days of the birth or adoption of a child.</p> <p>Leave paid at 77.6% of salary.</p>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<p>14 weeks' (16 weeks in Geneva) maternity leave from the date of the birth, of which eight weeks are obligatory.</p> <p>Leave paid at 80% of salary subject to a maximum.</p> <p>No statutory entitlement to adoption leave.</p>	<p>No statutory entitlement</p>
<b>UK</b>	<p>Up to 52 weeks' maternity leave, of which two weeks are obligatory.</p> <p>Leave paid at 90% of salary for the first six weeks, followed by 33 weeks at a flat rate (currently £148.68 (€180.00) per week); the remaining period of leave is unpaid.</p>	<p>2 weeks' leave to be taken within 56 days, paid at a flat rate.</p>
	<p>Shared parental leave (SPL) allows mothers to end their maternity leave early and transfer some or all of the remaining leave to their partner. SPL is paid at the same rate as maternity leave.</p>	

### Related resources

International Network on Leave Policies and Research, Country Reports:  
[www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/country-reports/](http://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/country-reports/)

At A Glance – EU Maternity and Paternity Leave:  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635586/EPRS\\_ATA\(2019\)635586\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635586/EPRS_ATA(2019)635586_EN.pdf)

Statutory parental leave and pay entitlement	Additional university pay (where applicable)	Additional research funder pay (where applicable)
<p>Up to three years' unpaid leave per parent per child available until the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Each parent is entitled to an hour's nursing leave per day up to the child's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. Up to 20 working days of nursing leave can be accumulated and used to extend the period of maternity or paternity leave.</p>	<p><b>Barcelona</b> In Catalan universities all employees can reduce their working hours by a third with a 20% reduction in earnings or by a half with a 40% reduction in earnings to care for a child under the age of six.</p>	<p>Not known</p>
<p>Parents can share 480 days (16 months) of paid parental leave, which can be taken by the month, week or day. There is an additional 180 days' leave for multiple births.</p> <p>For 390 days, parents are entitled to nearly 80% of their pay (subject to a maximum). The remaining 90 days are paid at a flat rate (€20).</p> <p>90 days of leave are allocated specifically to each parent and cannot be transferred to the other. Parents who share the transferable leave allowance get a tax-free daily bonus for a maximum of 270 days.</p> <p>120 days' temporary parental leave per child per year to care for a sick child, from the date the child is 8 months old until the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. Paid at 77.6% of salary.</p>	<p><b>Lund</b> Enhanced salary for 360 days per child. The parental benefit supplement constitutes 10% of the salary on salaries up to a ceiling of 10 times the base amount and 90% of the part of the salary that exceeds that ceiling.</p> <p>10 days' enhanced pay per year for temporary parental leave to care for a sick child.</p>	<p><b>Swedish Research Council; Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare; Swedish Research Council Formas; Vinnova; Swedish Environmental Protection Agency</b> It is possible to apply for costs for enhanced parental pay when applying for most grants.</p>
<p>No statutory entitlement</p>	<p><b>UNIGE</b> 20 weeks' maternity leave at full pay; 10 days' paid paternity leave and an additional 10 days' unpaid leave.</p> <p>Two years' unpaid leave can be requested by either parent.</p> <p>Employees can request a temporary reduction of working hours for family reasons.</p> <p><b>UZH</b> 16 weeks' maternity leave at full pay and the right to request additional unpaid leave.</p> <p>5 days' paternity leave and the right to request an additional one month's unpaid leave to be taken within the first year.</p>	<p><b>Swiss National Science Foundation</b> Pays maternity leave at statutory rate. Funds either a maternity replacement post, or project extension to match the time 'lost' during maternity leave.</p> <p>Pays leave up to nine months after the end of the grant if the child is born shortly before or after the end of the grant.</p>
<p>18 weeks' unpaid leave per parent per child; a maximum of four weeks' leave to be taken each year, up to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p>	<p>Enhanced maternity and shared parental leave paid by most employers.</p> <p><b>Oxford</b> 26 weeks at full pay, 13 weeks at flat rate.</p> <p><b>Cambridge and Imperial</b> 18 weeks at full pay, 21 weeks at flat rate.</p> <p><b>Edinburgh and UCL</b> 18 weeks at full pay, 21 weeks at flat rate or 9 weeks at full pay, 18 weeks at half pay, 12 weeks at flat rate.</p>	<p><b>UK Research and Innovation</b> Reimburses the additional costs of maternity (and other) leave at the end of the grant period for all researchers employed 100% on the grant.</p> <p>Allows grant funds to be used to recruit a maternity cover post or to extend the grant by a period equivalent to the amount of leave taken.</p>

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### Founded in 2002, LERU advocates:

- education through an awareness of the frontiers of human understanding;
- the creation of new knowledge through basic research, which is the ultimate source of innovation in society;
- and the promotion of research across a broad front in partnership with industry and society at large.

The purpose of the League is to advocate these values, to influence policy in Europe and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience.

## Facts and figures

- Collectively LERU universities represent more than **750,000 students**
- Each year about **16,000 doctoral degrees** are awarded at LERU universities
- Across the LERU members there are an estimated **1200 start-up and spin-out** companies across Europe
- In 2016 the LERU universities received **1.1 billion euro** in contract and collaborative research income
- LERU universities contribute approximately **1.3 million jobs** and **99.8 billion Gross Value Added** to the European economy
- On average more than **20% of ERC grants** are awarded to researchers at LERU universities
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