



Study on parental leave in the EU: eligibility, policy synergies and encouraging shared care

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Who are we?

THE ONLY EU Agency
focusing on gender
equality



Provides KNOWLEDGE
AND EXPERTISE to address
gender inequalities



Supports EVIDENCE-
BASED
policy-making



European Institute for
Gender Equality

An EU Agency



Our vision

Making equality
between women
and men a reality
for all Europeans
and beyond



Our main focus areas



Outline

1. EIGE's previous work on parental leave.
2. New 2026 study on parental leave in the EU: eligibility, policy synergies and encouraging shared care.
 - Methodology for estimating parental leave (non)–eligibility.
 - Assessing synergies/gaps between parental leave and ECEC.
 - Identifying policy elements that promote shared caregiving.

EIGE and the Work–life Balance Directive

2018: First EU–wide parental–leave eligibility study; synergies/gaps with ECEC.

2019: Work–Life Balance Directive; second eligibility study; Gender Equality Index on WLB



EIGE and the Work–life Balance Directive

Policy impact – two indicators included in the monitoring framework of the WLB Directive

Indicator 1: Share of women and men (20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave.

Indicator 2: Reasons for ineligibility among women and men (20–49).



2026 – new study on parental leave in the EU

Three key research objectives:

1. Estimate the share of (potential) working parents **eligible for parental leave** and reasons for (non-)eligibility.
2. Identify **synergies and gaps** between parental-leave policies and ECEC.
3. Assess policy design elements and measures that **promote men's take-up of leave and shared caregiving**.



Methodology of parental-leave eligibility estimations

Step 1: Identify each Member State's statutory parental leave

Annual reviews on leave policies by the International Network on Leave Policies and research – one of the key sources

Step 2: Apply eligibility rules through micro-level simulations using EU-LFS and EU-SILC data



Parental leave policy: selection criterion for identification

Principle for identifying the target statutory parental leave policy in each country:

- Must be **available to both parents** (**‘gender neutral’**) from the point of entry
- **Excludes maternity leave**, which is specifically for mothers
- **Excludes paternity leave**, which is specifically for fathers or second parents



Conceptual approach to methodology

Reference population – men and women aged 20–49, defined as ‘**potential parents**’.

Multi-Dimensional & Intersectional Approach

– Focus on gender differences, but also considers other factors (e.g. age, migrant status, education etc.)



Dimensions of eligibility considered

Employment-related conditions

- Type of employment (self-employed and other non-standard workers)
- Length of service (tenure)
- Economic sector

Family/household conditions (relationship to the child)

- Same-sex couples

Citizenship and residency conditions

- Non-citizens/migrants
- Refugees and asylum seekers



Eligibility conditions in Member States (2017)

14 countries restricted access to employees with **short working duration**

BE, BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, LT, LU, HU, MT, PT, RO, LV

9 Member States deny access to **self-employed**

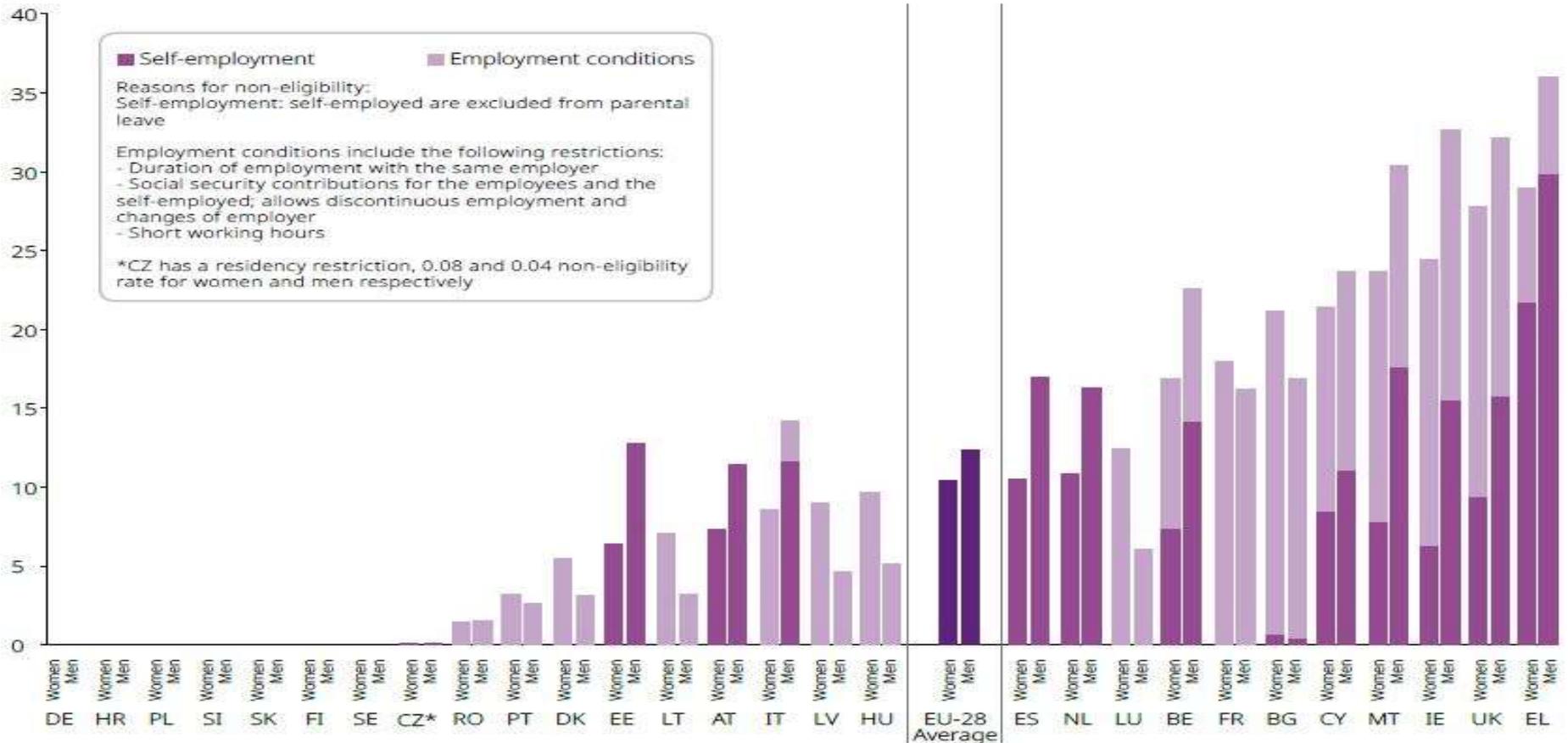
AT, BE, EE, EL, ES, IE, MT, NL, CY

At least 11 Member States exclude **same-sex couples**

EL, CY, LV, LT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, IT, HU

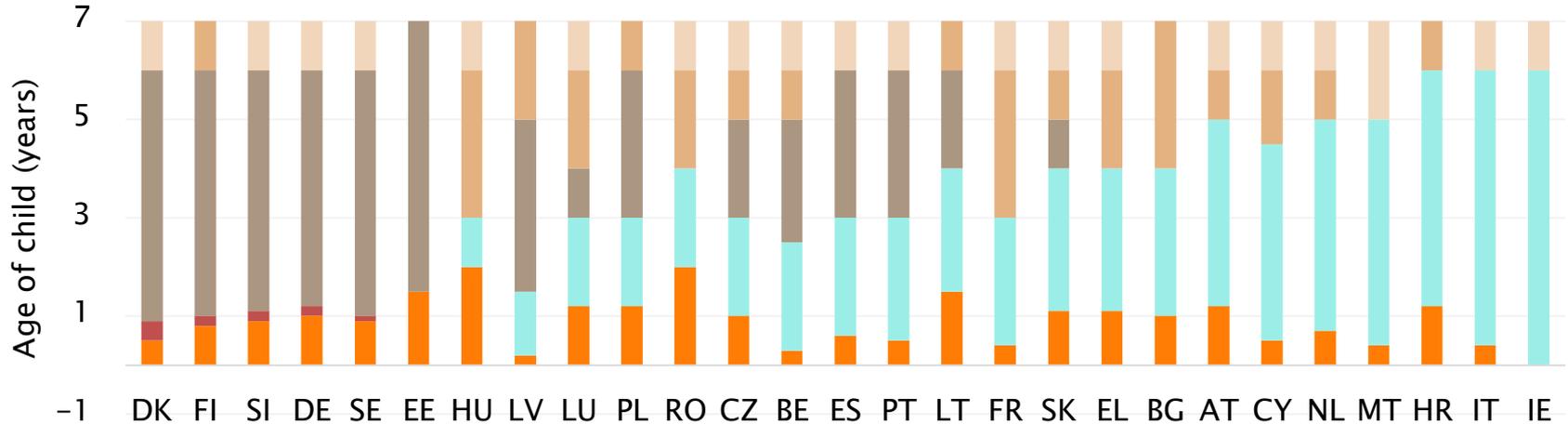


Results: 10 % of women and 12 % of men in employment are not eligible for parental leave (2017)



Synergies and gaps between parental leave and ECEC

Gap between childcare leave and ECEC place guarantee (2025)



Well-paid child care leave

ECEC gap

Compulsory ECEC

Legal entitlement+ child care (overlap)

Legal entitlement

Compulsory primary education

Parental leave policy design elements that encourage shared caregiving

- Non-transferable parental leave quota
- Bonus or ‘partnership months’
- Pay during parental leave above well-paid threshold
- Flexibility of use (timing, format)
- Legal protection for leave takers

Collection of examples of **other policy measures** promoting shared participation in childcare



Gender Equality Index 2026 report

Separate thematic focus on parental leave policies:

- Updated eligibility estimations.
- Analysis of synergies/gaps with ECEC.
- Analysis of parental leave policy design elements that encourage shared caregiving.
- Presentation of other policy measures promoting shared participation in childcare.

To be released in Autumn 2026.



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