



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

Striking a Balance: Amending the Law on Labour

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) talked to 400 employers, 1,301 women, and 374 men in Kosovo to better understand the impact of current maternity and paternity leave provisions on women, men, families, employers, and the state. These are our main findings.

Facts

1. Although mothers can take up to 12 months maternity leave, most **return to work after 7 months and are paid only for 6 months**.
2. Statistically, women who stay longer on maternity leave are **less likely** to return to work.
3. Kosovo fathers want **to spend more time with their children than 2-3 days!** This **discrimination** denies fathers the right to participate in caring for their new-born children. Most fathers want to spend at least one month with their new-born child, while **49%** want even more time.
4. Businesses face a financial burden in paying maternity leave.
5. Nearly half of the employers surveyed by KWN said that they consider an employment-seeker's family plans during hiring processes, and many have refused to hire women because of the costs of maternity leave. Women in Kosovo face discrimination in securing employment.
6. Only **21%** of women are active in the labour market. Maternity leave → represents **another reason** for employers not to hire women.
7. Kosovo does not have enough taxpayers and workers for creating a social fund to finance maternity leave, as is done in other countries, including in the region.
8. Kosovo has among the worst health situations for mothers and infants in Europe.

Current System

Mothers can take

12 months of leave =

6 months of leave are covered by the employer, with 70% of her salary.

3 months are covered by the government, with 50% of the average salary in Kosovo.

3 months are unpaid.

Fathers have the right to take 2 to 3 days off after the birth of a child.

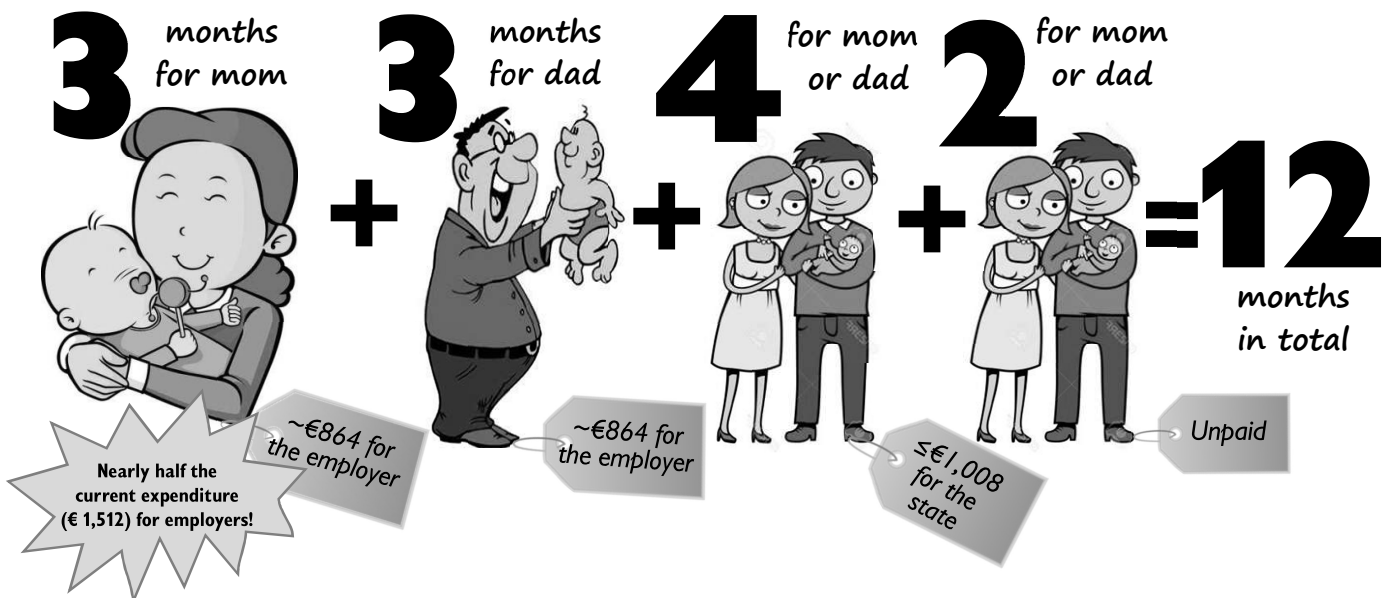


ACTIVE

INACTIVE

Other Important Information

- KWN's research has shown that employers, especially men, do not prefer to hire women.
- Many employers do not know how long maternity and paternity leave is for women and man, according to the Law. Nor do they know that women have additional rights regarding breastfeeding and safe working conditions.
- 62.7% of women and 65.9% of men surveyed by KWN said that employers have asked them during job interviews about their marital status and plans to start a family.
- 40 women surveyed by KWN said that their employers forced them to take pregnancy tests before being hired in order to prove they were not pregnant!
- Some employers said that they do not provide any paternity leave.
- Almost half of the women who have taken maternity leave said that they experienced negative comments from their employer or colleagues when they returned to work.
- Other women stated that after maternity leave they were forced to work overtime, to accept salary cuts, or in some cases, they were not allowed to return to work.



The KWN Alternative

Considering the current situation in Kosovo, KWN proposes an alternative maternity, paternity, and parental leave scheme, as follows:

Employers Guarantee: 3 Months Maternity and Paternity Leave

- Mothers: receive 80% of their regular monthly salary for 3 months from their employers. The leave can begin before birth.
- Fathers: receive 80% of their regular monthly salary from their employers for 3 months. Leave can begin anytime before the first birthday of the child.
- This leave can be taken together, or separately, depending on the decision of the family.
- If this leave is used by both parents at the same time, only 7 months of maternity and paternity leave are fully paid (3 months by the employer + 4 months by the state). If the leave is taken first by one parent, then by the other, the family has 10 months of paid leave (compared to 9 now).

State Guarantees: 4 Months Maternity and/or Paternity Leave

- Mothers: receive 70% of the average salary in Kosovo for up to 4 months.
- Fathers: receive 70% of the average salary in Kosovo for up to 4 months.
- In total, parents have 4 months leave that they share between them, paid by the state.

2 Unpaid Months

- These months can be used by one parent or shared between parents.
- The right of a parent to return to work after this leave is guaranteed.
- If this leave is used, one family can have up to 12 months of maternity and paternity leave, 10 of them paid.

Other Recommendations

This model also requires:

- Better access to affordable, quality child care in Kosovo so that parents can return to work.
- Paid breaks during working hours for breast feeding for women, including during the first six months of leave.
- Ensuring safe working conditions for pregnant women, as well as other rights.

For further information and to read the complete paper, Striking a Balance, visit: www.womensnetwork.org.

Why this model?

- Most women in Kosovo take leave for 6 months. This model enables up to 7 paid months for them, and 2 additional months unpaid.
- This model guarantees fathers paid paternity leave, compared to 2-3 days in the actual system!
- Equal rights for fathers and mothers to take maternity and paternity leave can decrease discrimination against women in employment.
- With this model maternity leave cannot be a reason for employers not hiring women because women and men are treated equally.
- This model improves the living conditions of families, towards safeguarding the health of mother and child.
- This alternative nearly halves the cost to employers, saving them €648 per child!

