

Extend paternity leave and enshrine it in law, says French petition ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A group of high-profile French men have signed a petition demanding the right to longer paternity leave to enable them to better support their partners. The petition, so far signed by nearly 58,000 people and addressed to the president, Emmanuel Macron, and two of his ministers, calls for the "derisory" 11 days leave awarded new fathers to be extended to six weeks and made obligatory.

It says this measure should be enshrined in law to stop recalcitrant employers bullying men into returning quickly to work.

More than 40 prominent figures in France - including the economist Thomas Piketty, the writer Frédéric Beigbeder, the Charlie Hebdo contributors Renald Luzier (the cartoonist Luz) and Patrick Pelloux, the former French international footballer Vikash Dhorasoo, and the rapper Oxmo Puccino - are among the signatories.

"Today in France our paternity leave is limited to 11 consecutive days," the petition reads. "In practice this means that in less than two weeks, the second parent leaves ... and goes back to work ... no matter if the birth was traumatising, no matter if the child is still in an incubator, no matter whether the mother is in a fit state of care for the child or not. This departure is often traumatic for both parents."

Serge Hefez, a psychiatrist and father of three children, who signed the petition, said the six-week paternity leave had to be made obligatory. "If not, those who want to take it will be considered traitors to their company ... men who are playing the system," he told France Info radio. "This is a question of society and equality ... we have to become new men."

In January a French economic thinktank urged the government to oblige fathers to take paid paternity leave, or to extend it to up to six weeks.

The OFCE (French Observatory of Economic Conditions) said the move would lead to greater equality in the workplace. However, the report said that even when paternity leave was available many men did choose not to take it.

France has some of the most generous parental leave allowances in the world, but much of it is unpaid and fathers told researchers they feared damaging their careers by taking long periods off work. Fathers are currently allowed 11 days paid leave and a total of 18 days for a multiple birth.

French mothers can take maternity leave of six weeks before a birth and 10 weeks after, a total of 16 weeks, which rises to 26 weeks if they have more than one child. This maternity leave is obligatory, though the number of pre- and post-natal weeks can be negotiated.

The paid leave is financed by the French social security and is based upon the parents' salaries.

In 2014 France's socialist government extended the time fathers could take off work to spend with their children by introducing the concept of "shared parental leave" to encourage more men to stay at home. This followed studies showing that of 540,000 parents who took advantage of the parental leave allowances each year only 18,000 were men.

Research by INSEE, the government body responsible for research and statistics, found that only 2% of men surveyed had taken up the option of unpaid parental leave in 2013. Many of them spoke of fears concerning the effect on their careers and chances of promotion, and others said they were afraid of losing their jobs.

A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in May 2016 found that 45% of French fathers did not use their full paternity benefits even when it involved paid leave, with respondents saying they were "not interested".

The petition, which is also on Facebook, has been sent to the president and ministers for equality, health and work, who are women.

-reprinted from The Guardian

Region: Europe ^[3]

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Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/11/extend-paternity-leave-and-enshrine-it-law-says-french-petition>

Links

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