

Swiss federal government against tax funded paternity leave ^[1]

Recently, Switzerland's Federal Council voiced its opposition to an initiative to create universal paid leave for the fathers of newborns, according to the newspaper Le Matin

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EXCERPTS

The initiative, which aims to introduce 20 days of paid paternity leave, and collected the required number of signatures to go ahead in 2017, has encountered further resistance in Bern. The CHF 230 million cost of the plan would be funded by an increase in social taxes paid on salaries.

Currently Switzerland has universal paid maternity leave but nothing similar for new fathers.

Last week, the Federal Council gave two main reasons for opposing the plan.

Firstly, it favours parental leave, a neutral system which allows mums and dads to split paid leave between them as they choose, rather than paternity leave, a use-it-or-lose-it benefit specifically for fathers, something viewed by some as socially coercive and unfair. In February, the federal commission for family issues (COFF) also concluded that parental leave was preferable to paternity leave.

Secondly, the Federal Council thinks the money would be better spent on childcare. It argues that the same money spent on creating more nursery places would do more to help parents juggle work and parenting than would payments to fathers to briefly take time off to care for their children after they are born.

Rejection by the Federal Council was not unexpected. Last year it advised parliament to reject the paternity leave plan, proposing 4 weeks of parental leave instead.

In addition, in 2016 a proposal for 2 weeks of paid paternity leave was narrowly rejected by parliament by 97 votes to 90 with 5 abstentions.

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