

# Korea Mulling French-Style Child Support [KR] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Korea is considering a French-style policy to boost the low birthrate that would see the government shoulder pregnancy-related medical costs before and after birth and most childcare expenses, Welfare and Family Affairs Minister Jeon Jae-hee said Thursday.

"We're reviewing the successful French model, which increased the birthrate with active and intensive support from the government to the extent that people could still make a living after giving birth," Jeon told the Chosun Ilbo. In 1993, France's fertility rate hit a historic low of 1.66 children per woman aged between 15 and 49.

But thanks to a series of policies, it now has the highest fertility rate in Europe with 1.98 as of 2007. The biggest strength of the French model lies in the massive financial support given to mothers. The entire cost from pregnancy to giving birth is covered by the government.

...

[French] households with a child under three that earn less than 48,000 euro per year are given a subsidy of 172 euro a month. Families with two or more children are given a monthly stipend between 120 and 430 euro until the children are 20 years old.

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According to the calculation of the Welfare Ministry under Jeon's order, the government needs W19.3 trillion (US\$1=W,1385) every year in order to carry out the French model reform, which well exceeds the budget allotted to the ministry for a whole year.

"Given the dire economic situation, I don't think we can put it on the table this year," Jeon said. "But we absolutely need this for the future." In 2007, Korea's birthrate was 1.2, the second lowest in the world after Hong Kong among the 156 countries surveyed. The 2008 figures, which will be released at the end of this month, are even lower and there are fears that it could drop to below 1 next year.

- reprinted from The Chosun Ilbo

**Region:** Asia <sup>[2]</sup>

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**Tags:** funding <sup>[5]</sup>

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