



Juggling work and childcare during COVID-19: How EU Member States supported working families in 2020

Annual thematic report from the European Platform for Investing in Children



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Juggling work and childcare during COVID-19: How EU Member States supported working families in 2020

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Executive summary

This report outlines existing evidence about the experiences of working parents and families in Europe during the COVID-19 outbreaks in 2020 and reviews the policies set out by 10 selected EU Member States (MSs) in response to these challenges.

Since its outbreak in Europe at the start of 2020, COVID-19 has significantly affected the lives of all EU citizens, including children and their families. With widespread closure of early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings⁽¹⁾ and schools,⁽²⁾ working parents faced particular social and economic consequences through the need to balance work with increased childcare.

This report by the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC) aims to explore policies introduced by 10 MSs that aimed to support working parents in light of COVID-19 in 2020. The report explores policies and practices that were established or adapted in order to support families with working parents during COVID-19 and takes stock of their common features and impact.

The 10 EU MSs reviewed in more detail in this report are Austria, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia and Sweden.⁽³⁾



Within the 10 MSs reviewed in more detail, often family leave provision was adapted to support working parents during school and care closures

Family leave is defined as any leave provision that is granted to a parent in relation to caring for their child.

Many MSs introduced some form of extraordinary leave to allow parents to look after their children during periods of school and ECEC closure. How this leave was organised varied from country to country. It tended, however, to be paid and encompassed a wide span of working parents (including those working in the public and private sector, at home and outside the house, as well as those who were self-employed). Such leave tended to be treated as a family allowance (meaning that only one parent could take leave at a time).

In addition, a small number of those MSs reviewed in more depth (including Ireland and Italy) promoted the right for teleworking for working parents. In light of emerging evidence that pregnant women may be at higher risk of complications from COVID-19, Sweden and Austria made amendments to how maternity leave was organised and could be taken.



Amongst widespread closure of childcare facilities, MSs prioritised care for children of 'essential workers' and supported ECEC providers

When ECEC was closed, some MSs,⁽⁴⁾ made exceptions to ensure that children of 'essential workers' or with special educational needs were provided with childcare. Eligibility usually depended on the role of the working parents, with differing definitions between MSs, and class sizes were often capped. How this childcare was organised also varied by MS (sometimes it was organised by the childcare providers, local governments or national governments).

A few MSs provided financial support to ECEC providers. This included (partially or fully) subsidising the wages of ECEC staff (in France and Ireland) with the aim of avoiding future staff shortages and providing funds to help settings meet new hygienic rules when re-opening (for example, in France and Italy).



A few MSs adapted financial support structures for working families to increase support during COVID-19

During COVID-19, some of the MSs reviewed made changes to existing financial support structures with the aim of supporting families with children during the COVID-19 crisis. This included changing eligibility for existing child or other benefits to allow more families to receive support (Austria, Germany), increasing payments for families universally (Czechia, Germany), creating new benefits or support (Austria), or subsidising child support payments that were delayed in payment due to financial difficulties (Sweden).



Other support included more widespread summer school programmes and providing guidance for working parents

In some MSs (for example, France, Germany, Italy and Slovakia), the government provided or funded summer school programmes. This brought additional childcare to working parents.

Some MSs also provided some resources to support parents in navigating remote learning and working, while maintaining good mental health and parenting (for example, France, Slovakia and Ireland).



Few MSs have planned or conducted evaluations of these policies (according to publicly available information) – meaning the effect of these approaches is unclear

MSs used a range of measures to support working families during COVID-19 in 2020: often adapting pre-existing support while also creating new measures when needed. Policies were often adapted or refined as time went on within MSs. Yet, we found little evidence regarding whether assessments and evaluations of the policies had been planned or had taken place. This means that conclusions regarding the effects of different approaches cannot be drawn. Evaluations of such policies would allow better understanding of ‘what works’ when supporting working parents and their families during COVID-19 and in other challenges.

European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC)

This report was written as part of the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC). Established in 2013, as part of the implementation of the 2013 European Commission (EC) Recommendation, ‘Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, EPIC monitors key and innovative developments in child and family policy across the European Union (EU).

1. COVID-19 brought disruption to families across the EU27

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe significantly affected the lives of all EU citizens, including children and their families in 2020.

Along with the social and economic consequences brought about by the outbreak of the pandemic, the widespread closure of early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and schools and the need to look after and educate children at home, while balancing work and other commitments, introduced particular challenges for working parents. Several Member States (MSs) introduced various policies and practices with the aim of supporting both parents and children to continue education and employment during 2020.

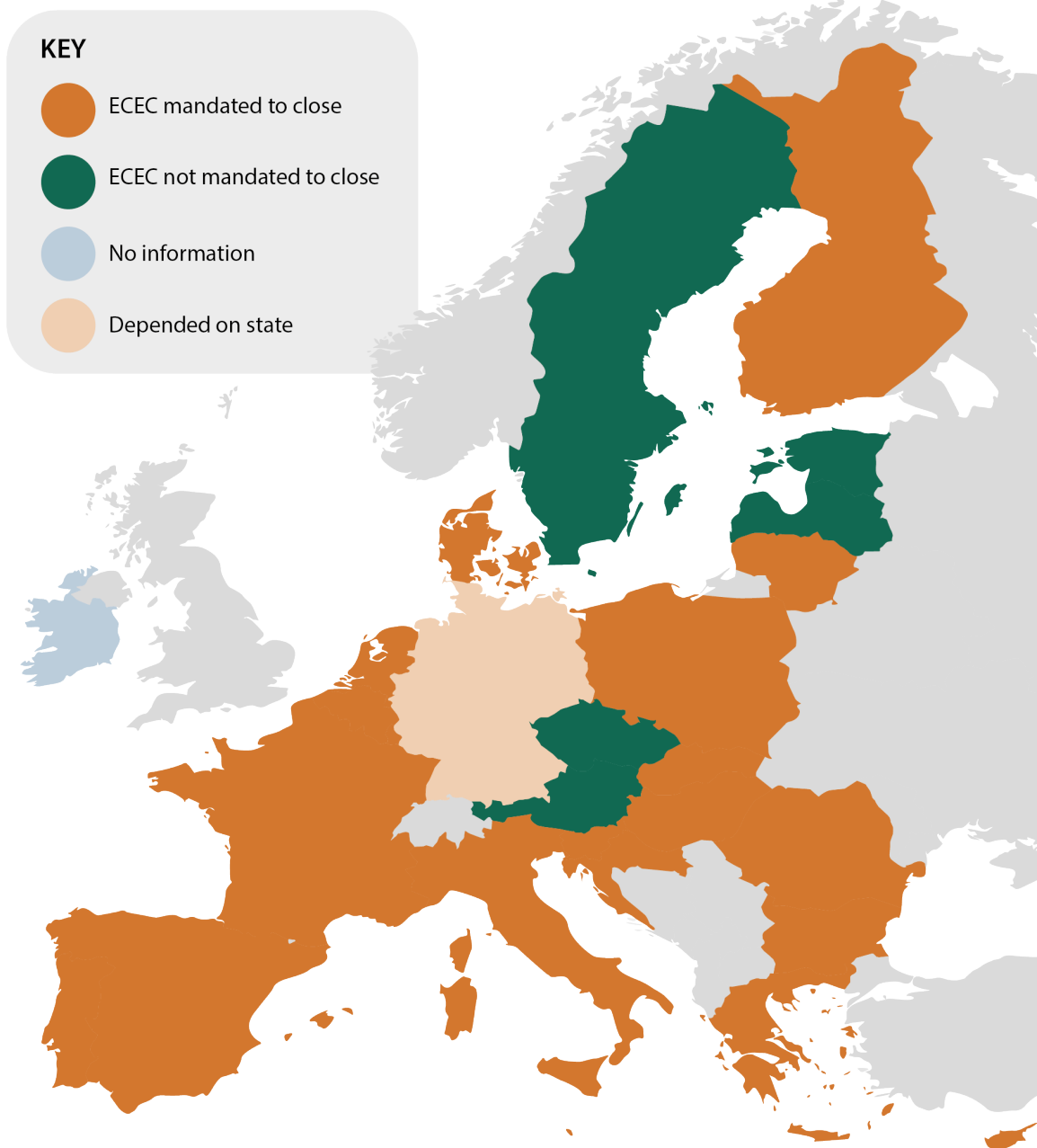
Over the past year, there have been various attempts at the EU level to measure and record the policies and practice put in place. This chapter outlines the existing evidence from international and EU level sources about the way in which these challenges were experienced and the policies put in place to address them across the EU27.

1.1. There were widespread temporary closures of school and care facilities across the EU27

The outbreak of COVID-19 led to the widespread temporary closure of schools and care facilities across the EU. The OECD reports that over 90% of the world's students were affected by school closures.⁽⁵⁾

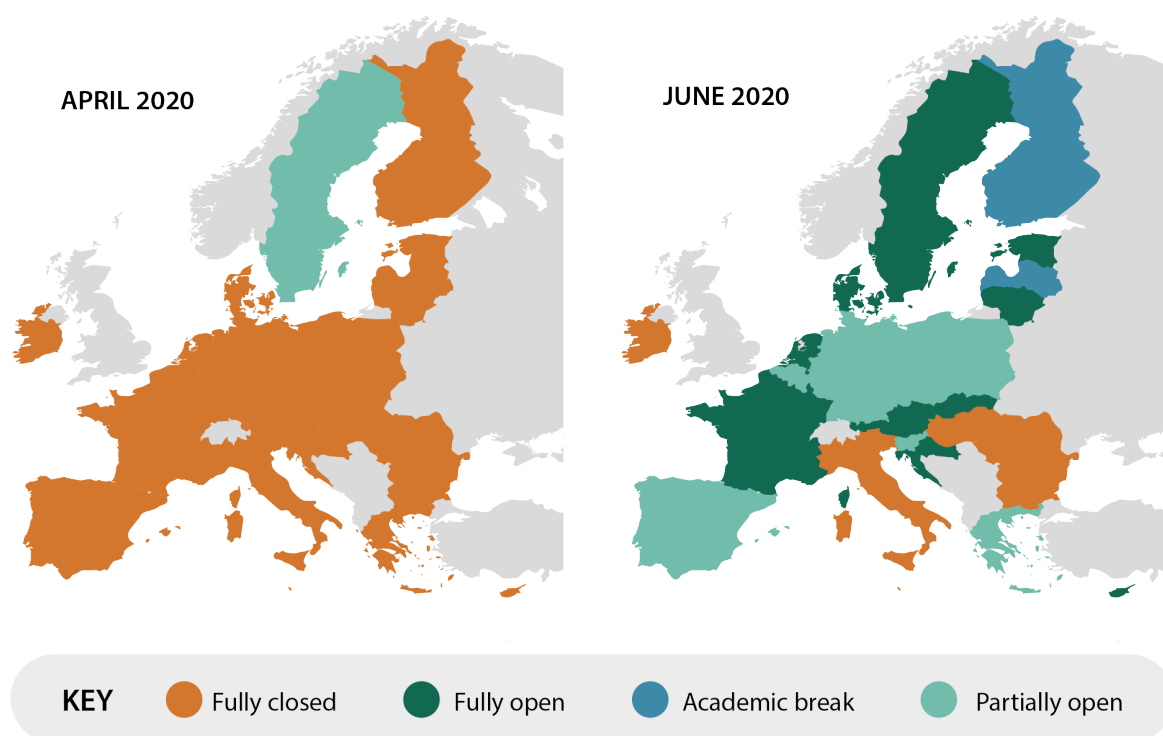
Within Europe, the International Network on Leave Policies and Research found that it was 'extremely common' that ECEC settings and schools were mandated to close at least between February and June 2020. According to data collected by their country experts in June 2020, twenty MSs required childhood education and care (ECEC) settings to close during February-June 2020.⁽⁶⁾ Data shows that all but one MS closed schools due to COVID-19 in April 2020 (with ongoing changes throughout the school year).⁽⁷⁾ The periods of closures varied between MSs, with occasional variation within MSs as well (Germany and Slovenia had closures depending on regions).⁽⁸⁾ Further information can be seen in the figures below.

Figure 1: According to the International Network on Leave Policies and Research, ECEC settings closed throughout much of EU27 during April-June 2020



Source: Leave Policy Responses to COVID-19: a cross country comparison, by International Network on Leave Policies and Research. ⁽⁹⁾

Figure 2: There were many school closures across MSs in April and June 2020



Source: Table assembled using data from April 2020 and June 2020 from <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#schoolclosures>. Please note that schools in Denmark were partially open from 15 April 2020 and that schools in Sweden were fully open from 6 June 2020. Note: Enrolment figures based on latest UNESCO Institute for Statistics data.

In the wake of school closures, many children were supported to learn at home, often via online learning. The European Commission's (EC's) staff working document on the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-27) reported that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of online and distance learning increased at all levels of education – but particularly at ECEC, primary and secondary levels.¹⁰ Data collected in the Eurofound *Living, Working and COVID-19* e-survey in July 2020 shows that 88% of surveyed parents reported receiving some materials or instructions for self-study (either online or downloaded) as part of their child's remote learning – suggesting a high proportion of remote learning throughout the EU.⁽¹¹⁾

There is emerging evidence that closures of settings and schools has exacerbated existing social inequality. The access to online learning has been far from equal and children from disadvantaged families were less likely to have access to suitable facilities for home learning. Data from the OECD in 2018, for example, shows that across OECD countries only 78% of children from the lowest socio-economic status had this access to the internet and a computer.⁽¹²⁾

Data analysed by the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training (NESET) from two MSs (Sweden and Croatia) and three regions (Flanders in Belgium, Berlin in Germany and Emilia-Romagna in Italy) suggests that, while there are limited data available about accessibility of ECEC during COVID-19, the outbreak of COVID-19 had a particularly negative effect on the attendance of socially disadvantaged families at ECEC (when this reopened). This led to the introduction of some policy measures in some studied countries to support access: including priority status for disadvantaged families (Berlin and Flanders), fee reductions for some families (Croatia) and outreach initiatives (Italy).⁽¹³⁾

1.2. Parents from the EU27 reported a worse work-life balance than non-parents during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

These school and ECEC closures created additional childcare needs for working parents, including those working remotely and those working outside the household.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data collected by Eurofound in their *Living, Working and COVID-19* e-survey in April⁽¹⁵⁾ and July 2020 tells us that parents with children reported more challenges in maintaining a good work-life balance than men and women their age without children. Respondents with small children were more likely to feel that their job prevented them from giving time to their family than those without children (34% of those with children under 12, compared to 16% of those with no children at all). Respondents aged 35-49 reported struggling with their work-life balance more than other age groups. The analysis suggests this was because they were more likely to have children and therefore more likely to be affected by lockdowns.⁽¹⁶⁾

This survey also suggests that mothers with small children were more likely than women without children to report that they found it hard to concentrate on their job because of family (29% versus 7% of those with no children) and that family prevented them spending time on their jobs (26% versus 5% of those with no children). These proportions were also higher than those reported by fathers with small children (11% of whom found it hard to concentrate on their job because of family, and 7% of whom found that family prevented them giving time to their job). This suggests a gender difference in work life balance experiences during COVID-19.⁽¹⁷⁾

While the analysis does not explicitly ask about the impact of school closures on respondents, data analysis suggests that those with children under 17 who worked from home reported more work-life imbalance than those who worked at locations where their children were not present. Across both genders, 22% of those with children working at home reported that it was hard to concentrate on the job because of their family, compared to 8% of those working outside of the home.⁽¹⁸⁾

Some evidence from Eurofound also suggests that single parent families were particularly affected. Single parents reported spending 48 hours per week caring for and educating their children by July 2020, compared to 30 hours for those living with a partner or spouse. This figure rose to 77 hours a week for female single parents with children under 12.⁽¹⁹⁾

1.3. Many countries adapted family leave to ensure that parents were able to take time off to care for their children

According to data collected by the Leave Network⁽²⁰⁾ and by Eurofound,⁽²¹⁾ many MSs made changes to leave available for working parents and carers as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Data suggests that most MSs introduced 'special' leave of some sort for parents or those looking after a child, while others made no changes but may have had existing leave compensated. Further information can be found in the table below.

Table 1: How different MSs adapted family leave during COVID-19 in 2020 (according to the International Network of Leave Policies and Eurofound)

Type of leave introduced	Member States
--------------------------	---------------

Special leave for parents was introduced to allow them to care for their children during COVID-19	Austria, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden ⁽²²⁾ and Slovakia ⁽²³⁾
Special leave arrangements were made for parents who were unable to work at home	Malta, Slovenia ⁽²⁴⁾ Portugal and Poland ⁽²⁵⁾
Parental leave (or equivalent) was extended	Hungary, Germany, Latvia and Slovakia ⁽²⁶⁾
Keyworkers were permitted to interrupt their parental leave in order to return to work, with the possibility of returning to parental leave at a later date	Belgium and Luxembourg ⁽²⁷⁾
Right to request reduction in working hours granted to parents	Belgium and Spain ⁽²⁸⁾
Changes were made to how leave arrangements were calculated in the future (to avoid disadvantaging those unable to work during COVID-19)	Bulgaria and Hungary ⁽²⁹⁾
No changes to family leave were made (existing leave entitlements may have been used)	Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France and Spain ⁽³⁰⁾
No information available	Ireland ⁽³¹⁾

Source: Leave Network⁽³²⁾, Eurofound⁽³³⁾

1.4. A few countries adapted the social assistance available to working parents

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak introduced financial difficulties for many families in 2020 and is widely acknowledged to contribute further to existing social inequality. According to the 'Risks that matter' survey, across 25 OECD countries, 15% of households with children had their working hours reduced, while 16% of households with children had at least one member of who took paid or unpaid leave.⁽³⁴⁾

A number of MSs accompanied policies addressing family leave and childcare with changes or developments to benefits and social assistance available to families, as seen in the figure below.

Table 2: Different MSs took different paths to support families financially during COVID-19 in 2020

Country	Adaptation of social benefits and assistance during COVID-19	New childcare allowances for COVID19	Provision of school meals at home to at least some families
Austria		In September 2020, families received a single benefit of €360 per child as well as the usual family allowance ⁽³⁵⁾	
Bulgaria	In May 2020, parents of children aged 14 years of age can also apply for a one-time allowance of BGN 375 ⁽³⁶⁾	Additional childcare allowance was made available for parents taking unpaid leave of BGN 375 (approximately €200) ⁽³⁷⁾	
Estonia		Extra benefits were paid to parents raising a child with special needs or a disability who stopped working during COVID-19 (approximately 70% of the average income of previous calendar year with a minimum of €540 and a maximum of €1,050 per month) ⁽³⁸⁾	Some municipalities organised free meal delivery for schoolchildren (in some municipalities, this was open to all children, whereas others stipulated different conditions) ⁽³⁹⁾
Finland		A special, temporary childcare benefit was introduced for parents to cover the loss of earnings if they took an unpaid leave from work in order to take care of their children at home during COVID-19. This was paid to parents taking care of children who would normally would be in school, care or ECEC. The benefit level was the same as the minimum parental benefit (€723.50 per month) and was paid between 16 March to 13 May 2020 ⁽⁴⁰⁾	
Germany	Income replacement for parents of children aged up to 12 years old or of children with disabilities who are unable to work due to a closure of childcare centres, schools, or facilities people with disabilities. This replacement pays 67% of the lost earnings, up to a maximum amount of €2,016 per month ⁽⁴¹⁾	A <i>Notfall-Kinderzuschlag</i> (emergency child supplement) was introduced in March 2020 that altered the usual child supplement paid to families with lower income to ensure that it took into income of the previous month (rather than of the previous six months). This was designed to support parents experiencing short-term income loss due to the outbreak of COVID-19	

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		The government introduced a 'family bonus' of €300 per child in June 2020 that was paid to all parents as a universal payment. As the payment was calculated against the tax allowances for children, higher income families did not profit from this ⁽⁴²⁾	
Italy		In Italy, a 'babysitting voucher' was available that parents could use to pay for childcare services during close of ECEC and schools. This amounted to €600 ⁽⁴³⁾	
Latvia	In Latvia, social assistance that was provided to those unable to work between March and June 2020 was supplemented (by €50 per month per child) if the household included children There was an increase in the childcare allowance benefit (from just under €43 per month to €171 per month) between March and June 2020 ⁽⁴⁴⁾		Municipalities organised hot lunches for some children in primary or elementary school (with some areas prioritising those in poverty and those from large families) ⁽⁴⁵⁾
Malta		Parents who are in-work benefits (with dependent children aged under 23) were additionally entitled to a one-off benefit of €250 ⁽⁴⁶⁾	
Poland		A care allowance was provided to parents of children aged 8 and under (or 16 and under if the child has disabilities) who are taking care of their children at home instead of ECEC and schools. The allowance replaces 80% of normal earnings (based on calculations for insurance purposes) and was paid until July 2020 ⁽⁴⁷⁾	
Sweden			Some pupils with 'exceptional needs' could collect lunch from their school depending on individual arrangements with the school ⁽⁴⁸⁾
No changes were recorded in either source for Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia or Spain.			

Source: Leave Network and Eurofound COVID-19 policy responses⁽⁴⁹⁾

2. Focus of report

This report focuses on 10 MSs to further understand the support available to working families. As explored in Section 1, across EU MSs, working parents faced particular challenges during COVID-19 in 2020. While MSs adopted a range of measures to address the needs of families during COVID-19, detailed information at the EU level about how these policies work is still needed.

2.1. EU policy context: the European Platform For Investing in Children (EPIC)

Established in 2013, as part of the implementation of the 2013 EC Recommendation, 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', EPIC monitors key and innovative developments in child and family policy across the European Union (EU).

The 2013 Recommendation sets out principles on how MSs can support positive well-being and outcomes for children and families. These principles are structured across three main pillars: access to adequate resources, access to affordable quality services, and children's right to participation.

EPIC also considers the principles set out by the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), proclaimed in 2017.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This Pillar sets out 20 key principles against which MSs can benchmark their social policies. Three of those principles relate directly to children and families, including:

- Principle 1: The right to quality and inclusive education;
- Principle 9: The right of parents and carers to work-life balance;
- Principle 11: The right to affordable quality early childhood education and care.

Drawing on areas identified in the 2013 Recommendation and the EPSR, this report takes stock of policy responses put in place to support working parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2. Case study approach and scope

2.2.1. We selected 10 MSs as case studies and reviewed information about their policies and practices to support working parents

This report focuses specifically on 10 MSs as case studies, in order to consider the policies in more depth.

We selected those MSs with the intention of providing a diverse representation of MSs. In order to do this, we looked at the states' population size, geographical position, year of accession to the EU, and number of households that were families (see Table 6 for further information). We then checked the shortlisted countries against data provided by the Leave

Network on changes to family leave, changes to social assistance and the closure of ECEC and schools. This was to ensure that the shortlisted MSs represented a broad range of practice.

The 10 EU countries in the focus of this report are Austria, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia and Sweden. Within Germany, we focussed both on federal policies and those of three *Länder*: Bavaria, North Rhine Westphalia and Thuringia.

Our report focuses on measures that were meant to support working parents during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. We recognise that while there were similarities in the responses of each MS, different MSs were affected to different extents, took different approaches, reacted at different times, and operated with different priorities. As a result, it is reasonable to expect that the experiences and needs of working parents within the EU likely varied across the year and across MSs. It is outside the scope of the report to examine the particular context within each MS in such detail. Instead, we aim to provide information on the measures taken in particular MSs in order to facilitate this contextualisation at a later stage.

The data in this report were gathered by researchers using a targeted search for relevant policies, laws, or funding packages that were introduced after the COVID-19 outbreak in the EU in 2020. Researchers were asked to review relevant ministry websites and sources and draw upon the International Network on Leave, the OECD, Eurofound, information on family benefits maintained by the EC, and news items produced by the EPIC (see Annex B for further information). Information was included in a data extraction template and analysed thematically for this report.

A detailed overview of the methodology used in this document is presented in Annex A.

2.2.2. We focused on three types of support provided to working parents

Through our background literature review, we identified three main categories of policies that were established or adapted in order to support families with working parents during COVID-19:

- **Family leave:** Alterations or additions that were made to existing family leave in order to support families during periods of school and ECEC closure and teleworking.
- **Access to childcare:** Provisions made to provide childcare for families with working parents during periods of school and ECEC closure.
- **Financial support for working parents:** Changes made to existing family benefits, tax credits, subsidies or other financial support in order to support working parents experiencing a loss of income during COVID-19.⁽⁵¹⁾

2.2.3. We looked for information on the evaluation of policies introduced

We also looked for information on evaluations of the measures taken to support families to better understand effectiveness.

Currently, however, there is limited information on evaluations in the public domain. It is more common to find studies that discuss reach of the policies (in other words, the number of people reached with the policies). When evaluation data are available these are included throughout the report, where the policy is discussed.

2.3. Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 presents developments in leave provisions under COVID-19;
- Chapter 1 discusses responses in relation to access to childcare during the pandemic;
- Chapter 5 explores provisions of financial support for working parents;
- Chapter 5 reviews any other types of policies introduced to support working parents in the 10 MSs;
- Chapter 1 presents the overarching findings and draws recommendations.

3. Family leave during COVID-19

This section examines measures related to the family leave provisions undertaken by the 10 case study MSs that were intended to support working parents during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

For the purposes of this report, family leave is defined as **any leave provision that is granted to a parent in relation to caring for their child**. Such leave provisions typically entitle parents to take time off from work so they can care for their children (maternity, paternity or parental leave) or when their child or other family dependant is sick (carers' leave). While the entitlement to leave during the child's first months is guaranteed in all MSs,⁽⁵²⁾ the length and conditions of the leave entitlement generally vary from country to country across the EU.⁽⁵³⁾ Flexible working arrangements that allow parents to combine work with family responsibilities has been a feature of EU policy for the past decade. The 2010/18 Directive (active between 2010 and 2018) entitled all parents returning from parental leave to flexible working arrangements, while the 2019 'Work-Life Balance Directive' (which entered into force on 1 August 2019) extended this right to all parents of children younger than eight.^{(54), (55)}

Measures to support parents in these situations included some changes to the normal provision of family leave, including the creation of extraordinary leave and other measures to encourage homeworking specifically for parents

3.1. Extraordinary leave for working parents to look after their children during school closures

One of the most widespread approaches to support the caring needs of families amongst the reviewed MSs was to provide extraordinary family leave to support working parents who needed to look after their children during periods of school and ECEC closure. An overview of this kind of leave in the 10 case study MSs can be found in Table 1.

Table 3: Overview of emergency leave for working parents who need to look after children in light of school and ECEC closure

Country	Title of leave	Compensation for parent during leave	Maximum age of child	Funded by	Maximum time leave can be taken	Time in place
Austria ⁽⁵⁶⁾	Emergency childcare leave (<i>Sonderbetreuungszeit</i>)	100%	14	Federal government funds 1/3 of the costs, employer funds 2/3 of the cost	Three weeks	March 2020
Cyprus ⁽⁵⁷⁾	Special leave for childcare (<i>Ειδικής Άδειας για Φροντίδα Παιδιών</i>) provision	Up to 60% of first €1,000 of salary and up to 40% of second €1,000 of salary, not exceeding €1,000 per month	15	Funded by the government	Up to four weeks	March 2020 (and revised in May 2020)
Czechia ⁽⁵⁸⁾	Paid leave for caregivers (<i>ošetřovné</i>)	60% of salary (minimum €15 per day)	10	Administered by national government	No time limit to support given	October 2020
France (pre May 2020) ⁽⁵⁹⁾	Paid leave (<i>arrêt de travail indemnisé</i>)	90%	16	Funded by employer	30 days	March – 1 May 2020
France (post May 2020) ⁽⁶⁰⁾	Extension of paid sick leave to those with children at home	70% of gross salary (100% if earning minimum wage)	16	Paid by public social insurance	30 days	1 May 2020
Germany ⁽⁶¹⁾	Financial reimbursement	Up to 67% of salary (with a monthly cap)	12	Parent reimbursed by federal government	Six weeks	March 2020

Greece ⁽⁶²⁾	Leave for a special purpose (<i>Άδεια ειδικού σκοπού</i>)	100%	Approximately 14/15 (public sector only)	State pays for 1/3 cost and employers pay for 2/3 of the cost	No maximum, but one in four days of leave is taken from annual leave allowance	November 2020
Italy ⁽⁶³⁾	Special leave	50% of salary	14	Funded by employer	Fifteen days (until July 2020) and then 30 days (after July 2020)	March 2020
Slovakia ⁽⁶⁴⁾	Paid 'pandemic' leave (<i>pandemické ošetrovné</i>)	Based on net income, approximately 70% of income for net user	11	Administered by national government	No time limit to support given	March 2020
Sweden ⁽⁶⁵⁾	Leave to look after a sick leave extended to those looking after children at home	90% of allowance received to look after sick child	12	Administered by government	No time limit to support given	April 2020

3.1.1. Overview of extraordinary leave provisions

In most instances (Austria,⁽⁶⁶⁾ Cyprus,⁽⁶⁷⁾ Greece,⁽⁶⁸⁾ Italy⁽⁶⁹⁾ and Slovakia⁽⁷⁰⁾), **new types of leave** were created to allow working parents to take leave to look after their children. In Greece, for example, a 'leave for special purposes' (*Άδεια ειδικού σκοπού*) was created that could be taken by working parents of children aged 15 and under who were enrolled at schools that were closed.⁽⁷¹⁾ Greece also introduced an additional 14 day leave for parents with children who were infected with COVID-19 (*Άδεια των γονέων λόγω νόσησης των τέκνων από τον κορωνοϊό COVID -19*).⁽⁷²⁾ Similarly, in Slovakia a 'pandemic leave' (*pandemické ošetrovné*)⁽⁷³⁾ was created, for which working parents of children aged 11 or younger who were enrolled at schools or centres that were temporarily closed were eligible from March 2020 onwards.⁽⁷⁴⁾

In other countries, national ministries **extended existing leave policies**. In Sweden and Czechia, leave that was already in place to allow parents to look after unwell children (*tillfällig föräldrapenning* in Sweden⁽⁷⁵⁾ and *ošetřovné*⁽⁷⁶⁾ in Czechia⁽⁷⁷⁾) was extended to be taken by parents of children who were enrolled at schools and centres that closed due to COVID-19 policies or outbreaks. In France, sick leave was extended for the same purpose.⁽⁷⁸⁾ In Germany, the policy addressed the issue of reimbursement for parents who had had to miss work, rather than considering an explicit family leave.⁽⁷⁹⁾

In all cases, parents taking the leave were **paid an allowance or benefits** during the period of leave. This was usually a percentage of the total salary: ranging from 50% of the salary in Italy⁽⁸⁰⁾ to 100% in Austria⁽⁸¹⁾ and Greece,⁽⁸²⁾ with varying regulations around calculations and monthly or daily caps (see Table 1 for more information).

The **time period** for which parents could take this leave varied between countries. In some countries, leave was specified for a certain time period (ranging from three weeks in Austria⁽⁸³⁾ to six weeks in Germany⁽⁸⁴⁾) while in Sweden,⁽⁸⁵⁾ Slovakia⁽⁸⁶⁾ and Czechia,⁽⁸⁷⁾ ⁽⁸⁸⁾ there was no time limit set. In Greece, while no time limit was put in place, one in every four days of 'leave for a special purpose' was taken from the parent's annual leave.⁽⁸⁹⁾ As an alternative for Greek workers with children under the age of 15, their working days could be reduced by 25% without a corresponding reduction in salary during periods of school and ECEC closures. Employees would then be required to work these hours after schools and ECEC re-opened, without receiving overtime pay.⁽⁹⁰⁾

To date and to our knowledge, only France has published reviews of its policies to support working parents through its paid subsidy schemes (see

Box 1).

Box 1 Evaluations of various COVID-19 support mechanisms were ongoing in France but data was not yet available ('chômage partiel'/'activité partielle')

Following the implementation of measures in France that allowed working parents with children affected by school closure or self-isolation measures to take paid sick leave,⁽⁹¹⁾ two evaluations have been carried out:

1. In June 2020, the French government began an evaluation focused on management of the sanitary crisis in France and the health, economic, social, and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. The evaluation⁽⁹²⁾ involved qualitative and quantitative analysis and comparison with OECD countries. Data was gathered from consultations with country experts, international research institutes and organisations. An interim report⁽⁹³⁾ (*rapport d'étape*) was released in October 2020, which indicated that, although the measures taken were not able to prevent

certain inequalities, the preliminary findings in terms of economic and social impact were generally satisfactory. The final report was due to be released in December 2020 but was not yet publicly available at the time of writing.

2. In September 2020, the national union for people working in industry and commerce (*Union Nationale Interprofessionnelle pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce*) published a study focusing on the financial support provided to parents who were unable to work due to childcare duties.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The study focused on the impact of the unemployment subsidy scheme (*activité partielle*)⁽⁹⁵⁾ and showed that by June 2020, approximately 700,000 people out of the 4.5 million employees accessing the funds were using it for childcare or vulnerability reasons. The available data, however, did not allow the evaluators to distinguish between those using the subsidy scheme for childcare purposes from others reasons for accessing the scheme.

3.1.2. Eligibility for extraordinary leave provisions

Eligibility for leave was generally open to parents who were **employed by public or private bodies**, with variations in some countries. For example, in Greece, leave was primarily provided for public sector workers with children under the age of 14 or 15 years. It could be taken by the partner of a public sector worker who worked in the private sector, if evidence was offered to the employer that the public sector partner had not taken leave. In Ireland, a policy providing paid leave for public sector workers who had a partner who worked in healthcare was announced, in an attempt to address the lack of childcare accessible by essential workers by encouraging the non-healthcare parent worker to remain at home to care for the children.⁽⁹⁶⁾ It is, however, unclear whether this policy was put into place.⁽⁹⁷⁾

While some policies explicitly included **self-employed workers** (France, Czechia, Italy and Slovakia⁽⁹⁸⁾), it was not always clear from other policies whether self-employed persons were included or not. In addition, the extent of compensation was occasionally be less for self-employed workers. In Czechia, self-employed parents were eligible to receive a fixed daily rate of CZK 400 (around EUR 16 per day).⁽⁹⁹⁾ The minimum daily rate that could be received by working parents with an employee status (who received 60% of their daily income).

Eligibility in terms of the **location of work** was not always clear in the policies examined. In two MSs, parents could take leave only when they were unable to telework or work remotely (Cyprus⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ and France⁽¹⁰¹⁾). Yet, in other countries (Czechia,⁽¹⁰²⁾ Germany,⁽¹⁰³⁾ Greece,⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Italy,⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Slovakia⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ and Sweden⁽¹⁰⁷⁾), leave policies did not discuss whether policies were open for all working parents or only for those who could not work at home. According to the *Living and Working during COVID-19* e-survey, only 34% of EU respondents worked exclusively from home in July 2020.^{(108), (109)}

The **age of a child** was also one of the eligibility criteria governing which parents could take leave. The maximum age varied across MSs: ranging from 10 in Czechia⁽¹¹⁰⁾ to 16 in France. There was little variation in reimbursement or leave arrangements for those with children of different ages – with the exception that, in Italy, leave was unpaid for parents of children aged between 14 and 16.

In some countries, the age range was extended in the case of **children with disabilities** (Cyprus,⁽¹¹¹⁾ Slovakia⁽¹¹²⁾ and Sweden). In other countries, parents of children with disabilities of any age were eligible to take the same leave (Austria,⁽¹¹³⁾ Czechia⁽¹¹⁴⁾ and Greece⁽¹¹⁵⁾).

In most countries, **leave was considered a family, rather than an individual, allowance**, meaning that the right was shared between both parents. In Cyprus⁽¹¹⁶⁾, France or

Slovakia,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ leave could only be taken by one parent from each family. In Czechia,⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Greece⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and Italy,⁽¹²⁰⁾ however, leave could be shared between parents but could not be taken simultaneously. In Cyprus⁽¹²¹⁾ and Italy,⁽¹²²⁾ leave could not be taken if a working parent had a partner who did not work and could care for children.

In some instances, policies explicitly addressed certain types of families. In Cyprus, **single parents** were entitled to higher reimbursement. Instead of receiving up to 60% of the first EUR 1,000 of the salary and up to 40% of the second EUR 1,000 of a salary, single-parent households could receive up to 70% and 50% respectively, resulting with a monthly cap of EUR 1,200 rather than EUR 1,000.⁽¹²³⁾ In Greece, policies specified that the special leave was granted to the parent who had custody (unless parents jointly decided otherwise).⁽¹²⁴⁾

In Germany and Slovakia policies explicitly included **foster families** in the leave arrangements. In Germany, foster parents were also eligible for federal government reimbursements of work missed due to taking leave to look after children,⁽¹²⁵⁾ while in Slovakia foster families were eligible for paid pandemic leave (*pandemické ošetrovné*) in the same way as other families.⁽¹²⁶⁾

3.2. Other measures to encourage working from home among parents and expectant mothers

Two MSs reviewed in more detail (Ireland and Italy) also put in place various measures to **encourage and support parents to work remotely from home**. In Italy, all working parents with children under 14 years old were granted the right to work from home beginning in May 2020, even when such individual agreement on flexible working arrangements did not exist between workers and their employers.⁽¹²⁷⁾ The right to flexible working did not apply to households where the other parent received other types of COVID-related income support or where the other parent was unemployed. In September 2020, the measure was further extended to parents of children up to 16 years old.⁽¹²⁸⁾ To the best of our knowledge, Ireland was the one MS examined that did not provide any special leave entitlements to working parents. Yet, both the national health services and the Irish government encouraged all employers to adopt and promote flexible working arrangements for workers where possible, particularly for employees with caring responsibilities.^{(129), (130)} Suggestions for implementing this included taking provisions such as temporarily assigning workers to other roles that could be completed at home and adjusting working hours.

Emerging evidence about the impact of COVID-19 throughout 2020 indicated that pregnant women may be at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19.⁽¹³¹⁾ In response to this, at least two MSs investigated in more detail made **temporary amendments to family leave affecting pregnant women**. In Austria and Sweden, amendments to maternity leave and pregnancy leave were made to allow pregnant women working in roles that involved contact with other people to take maternity leave early (in Austria) or to receive an additional benefit (in Sweden). In Austria, eligible women could take maternity leave from the fourteenth week of pregnancy or to carry out their work remotely. Employers were able to claim back money from the federal government if maternity leave taken in this way incurred additional costs for them.⁽¹³²⁾ In Sweden, pregnant women were allowed to take leave and be reimbursed for 80% of their income, if it was impossible for them to work due to health and safety concerns.⁽¹³³⁾

3.3. Conclusion

Almost all of the 10 case study MSs introduced some form of extraordinary leave to allow parents to look after their children during periods of school and ECEC closure. While the

organisation of this leave varied, it tended to be paid, to encompass a wide span of working parents (including those working publicly, privately, or self-employed and those working at home and outside the house) and was treated as a family allowance (meaning that only one parent could take leave at a time). A few MSs introduced other policies aimed at promoting or encouraging teleworking for working parents or for expectant mothers.

4. Childcare provisions during COVID-19

This section looks at measures that were put in place in the 10 case study MSs to provide childcare with the aim of addressing and alleviating the disruptions caused by closures of ECEC settings and schools in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In this report, early childhood and education care (ECEC) is defined as any facility that organises provision of care or education to children since their birth age until their elementary school age. Early childhood and education care typically covers any state-funded or private, centre or family-day care pre-school provisions.⁽¹³⁴⁾

In 2020, the EU-wide closures of schools, kindergartens, and nurseries during COVID-19 lockdowns made it impossible to keep formal education and ECEC provision running. Many of the MSs reviewed here took steps to support working parents by providing some childcare.

Some governments focused on providing childcare for children of essential or key workers, through keeping some childcare provisions open or launching other schemes to fill the gap. Other support focused on ECEC or childcare provisions themselves, with some MSs introducing special financial support to protect infrastructure from economic impacts of the closures.

4.1. Childcare for essential workers and vulnerable families

The most common measure rolled out by the MSs reviewed here was to allow a small number of facilities to stay open for children of key workers, despite the widespread closures. Data gathered indicates that this happened in Czechia,⁽¹³⁵⁾ France,⁽¹³⁶⁾ some regions in Germany,^{(137), (138), (139)} and Ireland.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

Eligibility for childcare access often depended on the **role of the working parent**. In some MSs, policies allowed limited operation of their ECEC services for people working in healthcare (Czechia, France, some German states, Ireland and Sweden), in social care (Czechia, France and Germany), or public safety (Czechia and Thuringia in Germany), and education (North-Rhine Westphalia in Germany). Some MSs defined the role more broadly, with officials responsible for managing the national COVID-19 crisis response eligible in France and people in occupations considered as socially important eligible in Sweden. Furthermore, in France, childcare arrangements were provided to children of key workers free of charge during the lockdown.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

How provisional childcare and schooling arrangements were **organised** also differed between countries, where information was available.⁽¹⁴²⁾ While in Czechia, the responsibility was given to local authorities to select a number of schools that would remain open for children of essential workers,⁽¹⁴³⁾ in German states, individual pre-school and school facilities organised how the emergency care was set up.^{(144), (145), (146)} In contrast, in France, the decision regarding which ECEC services would provide provisional care to children of essential workers during the first lockdown was made at the national level.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Similarly, prioritisation of who could use settings was decided at the national level in consultation with registered childminder organisations (*les organisations d'assistants maternels*), childcare centre federations and elected representatives (*associations d'élus*).⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

The **class sizes** of the provisional emergency childcare were usually capped, depending on the country. For example, in Czechia and Thuringia in Germany^{(149), (150)} the maximum number of children in 1 class could be 15, in France, this was 10.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ The **maximum age** at which children could attend childcare facilities in Czechia was 10,⁽¹⁵²⁾ whereas in Thuringia in Germany, the age limit was 12.⁽¹⁵³⁾

As restrictions began loosening after the first lockdown in France and ECEC infrastructure gradually started opening, particular attention was paid to meeting the childcare needs of teachers, **single-parent** households or couples where both parents worked and at least one was unable to work from home. While all children were welcome, staff were advised to prioritise children from these groups.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ In Sweden, children with special needs were allowed to physically attend pre-schools and schools during times of closure.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾

4.2. Other measures to support families with childcare

Other measures to support parents working in key sectors were introduced in Italy and France, which often prioritised 'essential workers' (those working in essential roles or industries during COVID-19).

- Support for essential workers in **Ireland** included the launch of a temporary childcare scheme that aimed to provide childcare directly in homes of essential workers.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Relying on the voluntary participation of childcare services, this initiative was designed to provide childcare for up to 5,000 families in Ireland. Financed largely by the government, with individual contributions (of up to EUR 90 a week), the initiative was cancelled soon after its introduction due to low uptake on the part of childcare providers.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾
- In March 2020, Working parents in **Italy** were provided with resources to purchase childcare services.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ Each family received a one-off total of EUR 600 per child during the period of closure to pay for these services, with parents working in the health sector receiving EUR 1,000. Following the onset of the second wave in September 2020, this allowance was revised to provide vouchers of (respectively) EUR 1,200 and EUR 2,000 to be used over two months.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

France temporarily abolished fees that parents normally have to pay to hold spaces in ECEC services for their children during their non-attendance. From March 2020, parents were not charged for their children's places if, upon the re-opening of ECEC settings, children did not return to care immediately.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ In addition, parents were not charged fees if their child was not able to attend because parents were isolating due to a positive COVID test or contact tracing, or if the centre was shut due to the absence of employees (*activité partielle*).⁽¹⁶¹⁾

4.3. Financial support for ECEC services

Some case study MSs took special measures to support the ECEC infrastructure during the periods of closure, by providing special financial assistance regardless of whether the ECEC services in question were state-funded or private. These measures typically aimed at subsidizing the wages and other costs of ECEC staff (France⁽¹⁶²⁾ and Ireland⁽¹⁶³⁾) or covering additional costs related to the disease, such as purchase of hygienic protection equipment (France⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ and Italy⁽¹⁶⁵⁾).

4.3.1. Subsidies for ECEC providers to cover staff salaries and costs

Within the EU, staff costs are usually one of the higher expenses in ECEC provision, especially in those MSs with low child-staff ratios.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Measures supporting ECEC provisions therefore focused on covering these costs in Ireland and France.

In both France and Ireland, the governments provided **financial subsidies** to ECEC providers or staff in order to cover the wages of staff when ECEC centres were closed. In Ireland, the government reimbursed childcare employers for 100% of staff costs.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ In France, a partial unemployment subsidy scheme (*chômage partiel/activité partielle*) was established that paid childminders 80% of their salaries during COVID-19 restrictions.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Furthermore, both public and private ECEC providers in France received subsidies from the state during the periods of lower attendance by children,⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ while providers received a retention-top up in Ireland (in order to support staff to remain in the sector).⁽¹⁷¹⁾

Additional support and funding continued over 2020 to support ECEC provisions in the **process of re-opening**. In Ireland, a new funding package (EUR 75 million) was developed to support the re-opening of its ECEC infrastructure, with the goal of helping ECEC providers during the re-opening phase when fewer children were expected to attend childcare, resulting in reduced income to the providers.⁽¹⁷²⁾ In France, the eligibility requirements for the subsidies were gradually extended throughout the year and the income replacement for the cost of children that could not attend the services due to COVID-related reasons continued,⁽¹⁷³⁾ even when ECEC providers re-opened.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾

4.3.2. Support to ensure hygienic protections in ECEC

In both France and Italy, national funding was made available to help ECEC centres bear the **costs associated with securing hygienic protections** against the disease. French ECEC services that remained open throughout the pandemic received a daily allowance per child to cover the cost of additional hygiene measures.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ In Italy, ECEC services were allocated financing for measures to reduce the epidemiological risk under the 'COVID-19 Epidemiological Emergency Fund' (*Fondo per l'emergenza epidemiologica da Covid-19*).⁽¹⁷⁶⁾

4.4. Conclusion

In around half of the case study MSs reviewed in detail in this report, provision was made to ensure that children of 'essential workers' were provided with childcare. In some MSs this extended to vulnerable children. A few MSs also provided support and subsidies to ECEC services, including staff subsidies and funds to help them meet new hygienic rules, during periods of closure and in re-opening.

5. Financial support for families during COVID-19

This section focuses on measures taken by the 10 case study MSs to directly financially support working parents during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020.

The majority of MSs in the EU (and of those reviewed in more detail) have child benefit and financial support structures in place to support parents and families. Some countries pay benefits or allowances directly to families in regular instalments, while others provide tax credits or tax breaks for families.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ **Child benefits** refers to regular payments to families, while child benefit **hardship funds** are usually offered as a one-off payment that requires a separate application.

During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, some of the case study MSs took advantage of these existing support structures to support families with children. These measures predominantly focus on child benefits and child benefit hardship funds, as well as policies related to tax benefits and other government assistance for working parents.

5.1. Changes to thresholds for accessing family benefits

Several of the case study MSs decided to lower the threshold for accessing child benefits during the COVID-19 outbreak. This allowed working parents who experienced financial hardship throughout the pandemic to access benefits, for which they may not have qualified before. An overview of the changes in threshold can be found in Table 4.

In Germany and Austria, the governments made changes to **hardship funds** to accommodate families who were experiencing a sudden decrease in family income. Germany changed how the existing child benefit hardship fund (*Kinderzuschlag*) was assessed.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall assessment of family wealth was based on the value of property and other assets owned by the parents. This was changed to focus on the income, allowing parents who experienced a severe drop of disposable income because of the lockdown to access hardship funds, even if they owned property or other investments.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ In Austria, a new hardship fund was created (*Coronafamilienhärtefond*). This was made available to both parents receiving the monthly child benefit and those who experienced a loss of income because of the pandemic. Funding applications were assessed based on the income of the family and the amount received varied based on household size and income of the family.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Also in Austria,⁽¹⁸¹⁾ **requirements for accessing the monthly child benefit were altered** to ensure that parents of children aged 18-24 who had their full time education interrupted were still able to receive the benefit.

Table 4: Overview of the changes of threshold in child and youth benefits.

Country	Benefit name	Eligibility	Threshold prior to the pandemic	Threshold during the pandemic	Time Frame
Austria	<i>Familienbeihilfe</i> (monthly benefit)	Parents with children under 24	Parents of young people between 18-24 only qualify if they are in full time education or doing an apprenticeship	Parents with children between 18-24 whose full-time education or apprenticeship was delayed or interrupted due to COVID-19 continued to receive payments	Since April 2020
Austria	<i>Coronafamilienhärtefond</i> (hardship fund)	Parents receiving <i>Familienbeihilfe</i> who have experienced a significant loss in income due to COVID-19	Prior to COVID-19 a similar hardship fund called <i>Familienhärteausgleich</i> for families who experienced severe financial need through no fault of their own	Families where at least one parent lost their job or was put on furlough because of COVID-19 and for self-employed parents who experienced severe financial loss due to COVID-19	Since April 2020
Czechia	<i>Přídavek na dítě</i> (monthly child benefit)	At least one employed parent, dependent child up to 26 under	270% of the national living wage (<i>životni minimum</i>) ⁽¹⁸²⁾	360% of the national living wage (<i>životni minimum</i>)	Decided December 2020, in force April 2021
Germany	<i>Kinderzuschlag</i> (hardship fund)	Tax paying parents with children under 25 who are dependent on them and/ or in full time education	Thorough assessment of a family's wealth (including income, property owned, investments and other assets) to determine eligibility	Focus of the assessment shifted more to emphasis on the income of parents while other assets were considered of less importance	From 31 March 2020

5.2. Increases in child benefit

To support parents financially during the pandemic, two case study MSs (Czechia and Germany) chose to **increase the monthly payment of the governmental child benefit**.⁽¹⁸³⁾ In Czechia, the regular monthly benefit (*Přídavek na dítě*) was increased for the first time since 2008, with payments increasing for children of all age groups.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ In Germany, child benefit (*Kindergeldzuschlag*) payments were increased only in specific months (by EUR 200 per child in September 2020 and by EUR 100 in October 2020).⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Germany also decided at the end of 2020 to continue this policy of occasionally increased payments in 2021.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Further information on amounts can be seen in Table 5.

The main distinction between the monthly child benefit in Czechia and Germany, is that in Czechia the monthly benefit is depending on family income while in Germany the monthly benefit is paid to every tax paying family in Germany. The universal nature of the additional payments (*Kindergeldzuschlag*) allowed the benefit to reach all tax paying families in Germany. This meant that families who experienced a loss in income but did not qualify for hardship funds received additional support. Families did not need to apply for these additional payments, as they were automatic. In Czechia, the government seemed to try to reach more people by raising the threshold to access the child benefit (*Přídavek na dítě*). This increased the number of families who could apply for the child benefit (see section 4.2).

Table 5: Changes in child benefit during COVID19 in Czechia and Germany

Country	How did the allowance change
Czechia	<p>For children aged six and under, the monthly benefit for working parents changed from CZK 800 to CZK 930 each month (from approximately €31 to €36)</p> <p>For children aged between 6 and 15, the monthly benefit for working parents changed from CZK 910 to CZK 1070 each month (from approximately €36 to €42)</p> <p>For young people aged between 15 and 26, the monthly benefit for working parents changed from CZK 1000 to CZK 1180 each month (from approximately €39 to €46)⁽¹⁸⁷⁾</p>
Germany	<p>The usual monthly payment made was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — €219 for both the first and second child within a family — €225 for the third child within a family — €250 for the fourth and any other child within a family <p>The additional payments made per child during 2020 (see above) amounted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — €200 per child (regardless of birth position) in the first payment (September 2020) — €100 per child (regardless of birth position) in the second payment (October 2020)⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

5.3. Other financial support for parents

Some governments of the selected MSs also used existing structures for taxation and social security to support working parents financially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

This included reducing tax or social security payments. For example, in Germany,⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ support was given to parents themselves, with single parents' tax-free income limit increased from EUR 1,908 to EUR 4,008 in order to allow for a larger disposable income. This policy was introduced for the financial year of 2020 but will be continued throughout the financial years of 2021 and 2022.

The Swedish government also introduced a policy allowing parents to defer child support payments to a later date if they were suffering with financial difficulties, with the payment instead provided by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency as a loan.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾

These policies aimed to alleviate the financial pressure for parents during this difficult time.

5.4. Conclusion

As the pandemic had detrimental consequences not only to the society's health, but also financial wellbeing,⁽¹⁹¹⁾ extra measures to financially support families who experienced income loss have been a frequent policy response across the case study MSs. To assist families during the pandemic, MSs that we reviewed in detail often adapted conditions of various existing child or other benefits to make them accessible to more families, increased the payments, or even introduced new types of financial support.

6. Other types of support

We found that there were also other types of support provided in some case study MSs that aimed or partially aimed to support working parents, even if less common across the reviewed countries. These are explored in this section.

6.1. Summer programmes and schools

In some EU MSs reviewed in more detail, the government provided or funded summer school programmes.

From the data gathered, it appears that these programmes were mostly created for the benefit of children whose education was severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions throughout the school year. Yet, summer school programmes also had a significant benefit for working parents, by providing childcare. In some regions of Germany (for example, Bavaria⁽¹⁹²⁾ and Thuringia⁽¹⁹³⁾), summer programmes were introduced explicitly to support working parents in their care responsibilities over the summer period. While similar provisions were also introduced in France, Italy and Slovakia, it is unclear whether supporting working parents was an explicit aim of the programmes.

In France, Germany (Bavaria and Thuringia) and Italy, governments **expanded pre-existing summer school programmes** by making more funding available and increasing their numbers and capacity. In France,⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ the Open School (*École ouverte*) expanded their eligibility requirements: prior to COVID-19, this programme was open only to schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Yet, in 2020, the programme also focused on areas that had been particularly impacted by COVID-19 and students in vocational training (*les lycées professionnels*) who were not able to finish their training on time due to delays induced by COVID-19. In Bavaria,⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ the regional government provided additional financial support to existing summer programmes in order to help programmes to accommodate more children. In Italy,⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ the government allocated EUR 135 million to local municipalities in order to support the provision of summer school programmes for children between the ages of 3 and 14. These programmes included both summer schools (focusing on academic learning) and summer camps (with a less academic focus).

In addition, some regions of Germany and Slovakia **extended school provision over summer**. In Bavaria⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ and Thuringia,⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ the regional ministries in charge of education made schools open over the summer to students requiring educational support or to parents who needed to work as they had used their annual leave or worked as key workers. These programmes had limited spaces and were allocated to those parents with the most urgent need in support for childcare. In Slovakia,⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ the government provided EUR 500,000 to educational centres for the provision of summer school programmes for children in primary school level. Each educational centre could apply for a maximum of EUR 2,600 and the programmes were intended to run for five days, with the goal of helping children to catch up on learning.

6.2. Remote learning support tools for parents

In some MSs, some resources were provided to parents in order to support them in navigating remote learning and working simultaneously.

In Slovakia, France and Ireland, the ministries in charge of education provided **resources to parents** focusing on how to support children in remote learning and on support available for parents. In Slovakia, a helpline providing advice and resources, with an accompanying website was launched in March 2020.⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Ireland and France, resources also focussed on supporting parents. In Ireland, resources on parenting advice, wellbeing, information on additional support and general information on parenting throughout COVID-19 were made available.⁽²⁰¹⁾ While the creation of these tools was not specifically addressed to working parents, the platform was intended to support ‘busy parents’.⁽²⁰²⁾ In France, home schooling guides, parenting guides and resources for professionals and future parents were also provided via an online platform ‘*Enfance et COVID*’ launched in April 2020.⁽²⁰³⁾ An initiative launched by the ministry with responsibility for children in Ireland (Golden Hour) was created to support working parents in balance demands of teleworking and parenting during the pandemic. At the time of writing, this was one of the few initiatives in this report that had been subject to some evaluation (see Box 2).

Box 2: The Golden Hour was an initiative supporting staff to spend an hour each day playing with their children

The Golden Hour was an initiative by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in France for their staff, who were teleworking, to spend an hour daily, between 12 - 1pm with their children. In this time no meetings or work should be scheduled or done. It was meant to allow parents to spend more quality time with their children.

The Golden Hour initiative has been studied by the Research and Evaluation Unit,⁽²⁰⁴⁾ and involved two surveys, one conducted mid-May and one at the end of May 2020, followed by six one-to-one interviews with staff of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Findings indicated that around two-thirds of parents agreed the initiative had helped them balance work life and childcare. Staff seemed to have faced minimal disruption to accommodate the initiative, and the main challenges in balancing the workload with the participation to the pilot were mainly encountered at the senior manager level as meetings continued to be scheduled in this time.

7. Conclusions

Working parents and their families have faced unprecedented social and economic consequences as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Confinement to homes combined with school and ECEC setting closures and teleworking, reduction of work hours or even employment loss have created unprecedented challenges. While not restricted to working families, numerous studies suggest the negative impact of COVID-19 has disproportionately affected working families, particularly when compared to families without children.

Acknowledging the need to support working families, MSs reviewed in case studies have responded by introducing a number of measures as a result of COVID-19 that were intended to support parents in navigating professional, educational and childcare responsibilities. This report has aimed to review the support offered to working families across 10 MSs – selected to represent a wide range of countries that make up the European Union.

7.1. MSs used a range of measures to support working families during the COVID-19 pandemic

By far the most common response to support working parents during COVID-19 amongst the case study MSs was the use of family leave. These policies either extended existing leave in new ways or were additional leave provisions created to allow working parents to take leave to look after their children as a result of school closures. In most countries, the leave entitlements involved some restrictions. Typically, leave was designed to be shared between parents (in other words, rather than being an individual allowance) and leave could not be taken if a working parent had a partner that did not work and could care for children. As well as family leave support, a few MSs reviewed also put in place various measures to encourage and support parents or expectant parents to work flexibly or remotely from home.

Ensuring access to childcare for children of essential workers and children with special needs was a key part of many responses to the closure of ECEC settings and schools. Many case study MSs maintained some limited activity of ECEC services and schools during the COVID-19 pandemic for these children. While, for the most part, childcare provisions were offered in schools or ECEC settings, other models were trialled. These included a short-lived pilot in Ireland that provided childcare in the homes of essential healthcare workers and the provision of a budget for working parents in Italy that enabled them to purchase childcare services. France and Ireland further introduced special financial support to protect their ECEC infrastructure from the economic impacts of the closures, targeting both ECEC centres and individual childcare workers.

Case study MSs also provided extra financial support to working parents, particularly those facing job loss or reduced income as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. This included increasing the amount or frequency of payments to families in receipt of child benefits or allowances (such as in Czechia and Germany), or by extending thresholds for eligibility of tax credits or hardship funds (in Austria, Czechia, Germany and Sweden).

While support provided via summer school programmes and remote learning support tools tended to focus on providing educational provision for children, some operating in a few case study MSs focused explicitly on providing childcare or support for working parents, including through summer camps in German regions of Bavaria and Thuringia and online support and parenting guidance provided in France and Ireland.

7.2. MSs used both pre-existing support systems and newly created measures to support working families

Amongst the 10 case study MSs, a mix of strategies were used to support working families upon the outbreak of COVID-19 and the ensuing societal responses. Many reviewed MSs used and adapted existing structures to support families. Changes to existing family leave policies, such as expanding sick leave or existing carers' leave to encompass working parents who had childcare responsibilities, were commonly employed. Eligibility for other benefits or offers were often expanded, including through the lowering of eligibility criteria for financial support in a number of countries and the expansion of summer school programme offers to more children in France and Italy.

At the same time, new measures were created to respond to the specific needs of working families during the pandemic. This is particularly true of the approaches used to support access to childcare, with ECEC settings and schools being subject to new mandates to remain open for essential workers and families with vulnerable children. Some countries created new and specific types of family leave, rather than adapting existing types of leave, or put new funding mechanisms in place to support ECEC settings to remain in business. In addition, Ireland and Slovakia responded by creating new resources aimed at supporting parents with home-schooling responsibilities.

7.3. MSs each adopted their own diverse approach to support working families

Our review indicates that there was significant variety in how case study MSs organised their resources to support working families during the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. While some approaches have proven more common (such as the extension of family leave), there remained a great deal of variation in how these policies were operationalised. For example, eligibility for family leave varied across countries depending on the age of their children, ranging from 10 in Czechia to 16 in France.

7.4. Evaluations are needed to better understand the impact of the measures introduced to support working parents and their families during COVID-19

One of the key aims of this report was to include information and outline lessons learnt from evaluations of the measures taken to support working families during the outbreak of COVID-19. These insights could offer transferable lessons on: (1) what works best and in what context; (2) how well families felt supported during the COVID-19 outbreak; (3) what additional measures might be put in place to even better respond to children and parental needs; and (4) how learning across MSs might be shared.

We found that policies were often adapted or refined as time went on within case study MSs. Germany, for example, has extended its increased child benefit and tax-free limits into 2021 and 2022, while Italy and France both refined the eligibility requirements and organisation of their extraordinary family leave over the course of 2020, in response to the changing needs and situations.

In the MSs reviewed, however, we found that there was very limited publicly available information regarding whether assessments and evaluations of the policies had been planned or had taken place, with few data recorded. This could be due to the fact that evaluations have not been released in the public domain, or because evaluations have not

(yet) been commissioned. In any case, the lack of evaluative data means that, at this point, no conclusions regarding the effects of different approaches can be drawn.

Evaluations of the policies would greatly support policymakers' understanding of impact, including a better understanding of the extent to which measures have met their objectives, and whether reach and take up was in line with what was intended. Evaluation may also provide policymakers with a chance to understand the various barriers and enablers to access and take-up of the policies across various groups. This in turn would support policymakers to understand the longer-term effects of their COVID-19 policies on other aspects of family life and work life balance.

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Annex A: Methodology

This section describes the methodology followed for this report.

1. We identified two research questions

This report aims to analyse and summarise policy measures taken by MSs to support working parents during the COVID-19 outbreak. While doing this, we focused specifically on the following principles from the European Pillar of Social Rights:

- Principle 9: The right of parents and carers to work-life balance;
- Principle 11: The right to affordable quality early childhood education and care.

Accordingly, the two research questions driving this analysis were:

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, what support⁽²⁰⁵⁾ have MSs offered to working parents with regard to Principles 9 and 11 of the EPSR?
2. What does the available evidence tell us about (a) the evaluation plans for, and (b) the effects of, these policies (as identified in RQ1)?

2. We selected 10 MSs for review

We intended to study 10 MSs to understand policy developments in more detail. We chose these 10 MSs through purposive sampling. We identified a number of relevant variables including:

- date of accession to the EU: whether the country is an 'old' (pre -2004) or a 'new' EU MS;
- population size (small, medium or large);
- geographical position (Western, Northern, Eastern, Southern or Central).

From this shortlist, we considered further information to reach 10 MSs:

- In cases where more than one MS was suitable, we consulted the Eurostat indicator on the *number of households with adults working full-time and children under the age of six*⁽²⁰⁶⁾ and selected the country with the higher number of households.
- We considered information provided by the Leave Network regarding the closure of ECEC, changes to parental leave, and other measures to support parents. We were confident that the countries selected represented a wide range of the approaches.

As a result, we focussed on the below MSs:

1. Austria (AT)
2. Cyprus (CY)
3. Czechia (CZ)

4. Germany (DE)⁽²⁰⁷⁾
5. Greece (EL)
6. France (FR)
7. Ireland (IE)
8. Italy (IT)
9. Sweden (SE)
10. Slovakia (SK)

Table 6: We selected 10 MSs to ensure a wide spread across a number of variants

MS code	Date of accession to EU ⁽²⁰⁸⁾	Size (population) ⁽²⁰⁹⁾	Region	Number of adults by working status within households, number of children and age of youngest child (1 000) [fst_hhwhacc] ⁽²¹⁰⁾	Did ECEC close?	Did parental leave change?	Were there other measures to support families introduced? ⁽²¹¹⁾	Shortlist
AT	Old	Medium	Central	25.03	N	N	Y	Y
BE	Old	Medium	Western	32.22	Y	N	Y	N
BG	New	Medium	Eastern	25.78	Y	Y	Y	N
CY	New	Small	Southern	34.75	Y	N	Y	Y
CZ	New	Medium	Central	31.36	N	Y	N	Y
DE	Old	Large	Central	22.10	Y	Y	Y	Y
DK	Old	Medium	Northern	29.16	Y	N	Y	N
EE	New	Small	Eastern	30.88	N	N	Y	N
ES	Old	Large	Southern	26.53	Y	N	Y	N
FI	Old	Medium	Northern	32.51	Y	N	Y	N
FR	Old	Large	Western	20.97	Y	N	Y	Y
EL	Old	Medium	Southern	30.18	Y	N	Y	Y
HR	New	Small	Central	32.72	Y	N	N	N

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HU	New	Medium	Eastern	28.76	Y	Y	Y	N
IE	Old	Small	Western	38.65	No info	No info	N	Y
IT	Old	Large	Southern	29.01	Y	N	Y	Y
LT	New	Small	Eastern	28.65	Y	N	Y	N
LU	Old	Small	Western	33.12	Y	Y	Y	N
LV	New	Small	Eastern	28.99	N	Y	Y	N
MT	New	Small	Southern	32.29	Y	N	Y	N
NL	Old	Large	Western	27.41	Y	N	Y	N
PL	New	Large	Eastern	36.26	Y	N	Y	N
PT	Old	Medium	Southern	33.92	Y	N	Y	N
RO	New	Large	Eastern	34.80	Y	N	Y	N
SE	Old	Medium	Northern	22.86	N	Y	Y	Y
SI	New	Small	Central	28.71	Y	N	Y	N
SK	New	Medium	Eastern	34.74	Y	Y	Y	Y

3. National researchers conducted a targeted review of policies in each of the 10 MSs

For each MS, researchers with the relevant language skills conducted a targeted search for relevant policies, legislation and funding packages. Researchers were provided with instructions setting out the information that was of relevance (see Annex B) and a data extraction template (see Annex C) for completion.

Table 7: List of national researchers for this report

Member State	Researcher and affiliation
Austria (AT)	Katrin Feyerabend, RAND Europe
Cyprus (CY)	Konstantina Rentzou, International Step by Step Association
Czechia (CZ)	Linda Kunertova, RAND Europe
Germany (DE)	Katrin Feyerabend, RAND Europe
Greece (EL)	Konstantina Rentzou, International Step by Step Association
France (FR)	Lillian Flemons, RAND Europe
Ireland (IE)	Lillian Flemons, RAND Europe
Italy (IT)	Giulia Lanfredi, RAND Europe
Sweden (SE)	Emily Gloinson, RAND Europe
Slovakia (SK)	Linda Kunertova, RAND Europe

Researchers were asked to look for policies and provisions offered by the government of the MS (also regional governments with the power to provide this support) relating to support provided to working parents in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policies and practices that were included were:

- either directly targeted working parents or where it was evident that working parents would significantly benefit;
- introduced, announced or otherwise agreed within 2020;
- brand new (whether temporary or permanent);
- adaptations (whether temporary or permanent) of existing policies;

- adopted by the national government (or by the devolved regional governments, where relevant in the MS).

Policies and practices that were not included were:

- policies that were intended solely to help children to learn at home;
- policies that more broadly supported parents or families during this period, without consideration of working parents (unless it was evident that working parents would significantly benefit);
- policies on school closures - unless these included a strong component designed to benefit working parents.

Researchers were also asked to gather information on whether these policies and provisions have already been or will be evaluated to monitor their effectiveness.

4. We analysed the data provided and used it to inform the report

Data were collated using a data extraction template (see Annex C) by the national researchers. The authors then analysed the data provided by the national researchers, according to the following categories:

- family leave under COVID-19, including all policies related to changes in or additional maternity, paternity or adoption leave, as well as additional sick leave for parents whose children had to stay home due to COVID-19 and school closures;
- access to childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic, including all policies that provided alternative childcare options during school closures and other childcare options as social distancing and contact limitations were in place;
- financial support for families including all policies relating to child benefits, tax reductions for parents and changes to other benefits supporting parents in employment;
- Other policies that supported working parents throughout the pandemic, such as summer schools and additional resources provided by the government.

These categories form the basis of this report.

Annex B: Instructions for EPIC annual thematic report country researchers

This section includes the instructions given to country researchers for data extraction of this source.

Box 3: Information provided to country researchers for completion of data extraction

What we would like you to do:

We would like you to look at all policies and provisions offered by the government of the Member State (MS) (also regional governments with the power to provide this support) relating to ensure the work-life balance and affordable early childhood education and care. Examples of this could be parental leave, childcare provisions, emergency care provisions or support for working parents who are home-schooling.

- We do not want to include policies and provisions from 2021 (if they were decided upon in 2020, then you can include them but please be clear about date of implementation).
- Policies can be new or new provisions within existing policies that were adapted during COVID-19 (please clarify which is the case).
- Policies should be targeted at working parents or be policies that would mean that working parents would significantly benefit (this includes parents who are on family leave of some sort).
- There will likely be a lot of information about school closures and measures to help children learn at home. We are not interested in this unless the focus is specifically on supporting parents at work on helping their children learn (e.g. paid leave for parents with children learning at home; support hotline for parents with children at home, etc.).
- We are also interested in understanding to what extent MSs have looked at the effect that these policies are having (e.g. if they are helping with the problems identified) or if they have put into place any plans to evaluate the policies.

Potential sources to include:

Information should come, wherever possible, from the national ministry or regional ministry website. Please ensure that the information you find is verified by the government in question. This could be publications by ministries, legislative texts, grey literature and similar. Please do not include information from more informal sources such as blog posts. It may also be helpful to take a brief look for research published in your country looking at these policies.

We have collated a number of sources that may be helpful to consult additionally, including: that may be helpful to look at:

- The International Network on Leave Policies (the 2020 annual review).⁽²¹²⁾
- OECD, 2020, Combatting COVID-19's effect on children.⁽²¹³⁾
- European Commission Your Europe website (including high level information on family benefits in different EU states).⁽²¹⁴⁾
- The EPIC team writes monthly round-ups of relevant child and family policy developments in all MSs.⁽²¹⁵⁾

Annex C: Data extraction template

The table below shows the categories against which information was extracted by the country researchers.

Table 8: Data extraction template used.

Information requested	Data source 1	Data source 2	etc
Coder initials			
Name of Member State			
Region within Member State (if applicable)			
Information on Policy			
Category of policy (Dropdown menu: Leave Arrangements, Income Support, Childcare Provisions, Other)			
Description of policy			
Reference (if applicable)			
Link to information (if there are any documents you have downloaded or found, please save in your country file)			
Key features of policy; what			
Key features of policy: who			
Key features of policy: how			
Key features of policy: when			
Other relevant information			
Information on evaluation			
Evaluation plan in place?			
Evaluation - what and who?			
Evaluation - when?			
References for evaluation			
Results of evaluation (if applicable)			
Information on effects			
Information on effects available?			
What are the effects			
References for effects			

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- ¹ Twenty-one Member States (MSs) saw the closure of many ECEC settings at least once in 2020. ECEC remained fully open only in Austria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia and Sweden with no information available in Ireland. Data gathered by Koslowski et al. (2020).
- ² By the end of March 2020, all but one EU MSs had closed schools, with widespread disruption throughout the rest of the school year. For more information, see Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister and Crosier (2020).
- ³ For more information on how these countries were selected, please see the main report and annexes.
- ⁴ Czechia, Germany, France, Ireland and Sweden.
- ⁵ OECD (2020a), UNESCO (2020).
- ⁶ The International Network on Leave Policies and Research did not collect information about the situation in Ireland. For more information, see International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁷ UNESCO (2021).
- ⁸ UNESCO (2021).
- ⁹ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ¹⁰ Eurofound (2021).
- ¹¹ Data taken from Eurofound (2021, Fig. 4).
- ¹² OECD (2020a, Fig. 8).
- ¹³ Van Laere et al. (2021).
- ¹⁴ EIGE (2020).
- ¹⁵ Eurofound (2020b).
- ¹⁶ Eurofound (2020b).
- ¹⁷ Eurofound (2020b).
- ¹⁸ Eurofound (2020b).
- ¹⁹ Eurofound (2021).
- ²⁰ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ²¹ Eurofound (2020a).
- ²² Leavenetwork (2020).
- ²³ Eurofound (2020a).
- ²⁴ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ²⁵ Eurofound (2020a).
- ²⁶ Leavenetwork (2020).

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- ²⁷ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ²⁸ Eurofound (2020a).
- ²⁹ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³⁰ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³¹ Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³² Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³³ Eurofound (2020a).
- ³⁴ Riding et al. (2021).
- ³⁵ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ³⁶ Eurofound (2020a), Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³⁷ Eurofound (2020a), Leavenetwork (2020).
- ³⁸ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ³⁹ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁰ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴¹ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴² International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴³ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁴ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁵ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁶ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁷ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁸ International Network on Leave Policies and Research (2020).
- ⁴⁹ Eurofound (2020a), Leavenetwork (2020).
- ⁵⁰ European Commission (2017).
- ⁵¹ Financial support is different to paid leave as it is purely related to direct child benefits, tax reductions and other adjustments to existing government support paid directly to families. Paid leave, on the other hand, includes paid sick leave and additional annual leave policies and is usually distributed by governments via employers and is not directly paid by governments to working parents.
- ⁵² Eur-Lex (2019).
- ⁵³ For more information on variation in family leave across MSs, please see European Commission (2018), Koslowski et al. (2020).
- ⁵⁴ Eur-Lex (2010).

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- ⁵⁵ Eur-Lex (2019).
- ⁵⁶ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020a).
- ⁵⁷ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ⁵⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ⁵⁹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020g).
- ⁶⁰ OECD (2020b).
- ⁶¹ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020a).
- ⁶² Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ⁶³ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020a, 2020d).
- ⁶⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c), Social Insurance (2021).
- ⁶⁵ Försäkringskassan (2021a).
- ⁶⁶ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020a).
- ⁶⁷ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ⁶⁸ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ⁶⁹ National Institute of Social Security (2020).
- ⁷⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ⁷¹ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ⁷² Kodiko (2020).
- ⁷³ To our knowledge, there was no clear publicly available evidence whether leave provisions also applied to foster families in other MSs.
- ⁷⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ⁷⁵ Försäkringskassan (2021a).
- ⁷⁶ European Commission (2021a).
- ⁷⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ⁷⁸ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020g), OECD (2020b).
- ⁷⁹ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020a).
- ⁸⁰ National Institute of Social Security (2020b).
- ⁸¹ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020a).
- ⁸² Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ⁸³ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020a).
- ⁸⁴ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020a).
- ⁸⁵ Försäkringskassan (2021a).

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- ⁸⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ⁸⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b)
- ⁸⁸ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ⁸⁹ Kodiko (2020).
- ⁹⁰ Ministry of Interior (2020), Insurance Daily (2020).
- ⁹¹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020g).
- ⁹² Pittet et al. (2021).
- ⁹³ Pittet et al. (2020).
- ⁹⁴ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020c).
- ⁹⁵ Unédic (2020).
- ⁹⁶ The Union of healthcare workers criticised this policy development on the basis that it did not provide for healthcare workers who were single parents, had healthcare workers for partners, or had partners who were not in the public sector. See INMO (2020).
- ⁹⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020a).
- ⁹⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ⁹⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ¹⁰¹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020g).
- ¹⁰² Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ¹⁰³ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020a).
- ¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020a, 2020d).
- ¹⁰⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ¹⁰⁷ Försäkringskassan (2021a).
- ¹⁰⁸ According to the third round *Living and Working during COVID-19* e-survey, the proportion of people working only from home has decreased to 24% by spring 2021.
- ¹⁰⁹ Eurofound (2020b).
- ¹¹⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ¹¹¹ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ¹¹² Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ¹¹³ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020a).
- ¹¹⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ¹¹⁵ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).

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- ¹¹⁶ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ¹¹⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ¹¹⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020b).
- ¹¹⁹ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ¹²⁰ National Institute of Social Security (2020b).
- ¹²¹ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ¹²² National Institute of Social Security (2020b).
- ¹²³ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (2020).
- ¹²⁴ Ministry of Digital Governance (2020).
- ¹²⁵ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020a).
- ¹²⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020c).
- ¹²⁷ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020c).
- ¹²⁸ National Institute of Social Security (2020a).
- ¹²⁹ Office of the National Director of Human Resources (2020).
- ¹³⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020a).
- ¹³¹ WHO (2021).
- ¹³² Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020c).
- ¹³³ Forsakringskassen (2021b).
- ¹³⁴ European Commission (n.d.a).
- ¹³⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020d).
- ¹³⁶ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020e)
- ¹³⁷ Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (2020).
- ¹³⁸ Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Affairs (2020).
- ¹³⁹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁴¹ Ministry of Employment and Solidarity (2020).
- ¹⁴² The available evidence was unclear on how Ireland and Sweden approached organisation of their provisional childcare for key workers and other needy families.
- ¹⁴³ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020d).
- ¹⁴⁴ Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (2020).
- ¹⁴⁵ Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Affairs (2020).

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- ¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁴⁷ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020e).
- ¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020f) .
- ¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020d).
- ¹⁵⁰ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁵¹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020g).
- ¹⁵² Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020d).
- ¹⁵³ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020f).
- ¹⁵⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020b).
- ¹⁵⁶ Houses of the Oireachtas (2020).
- ¹⁵⁷ Houses of the Oireachtas (2020).
- ¹⁵⁸ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020a).
- ¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020b).
- ¹⁶⁰ Caf de la Savoie (2020).
- ¹⁶¹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020f).
- ¹⁶² Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020b).
- ¹⁶³ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020b).
- ¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020a).
- ¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020b).
- ¹⁶⁶ European Commission (2021b).
- ¹⁶⁷ With 70% coming from Revenue and 30% from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
- ¹⁶⁸ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020b).
- ¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020d).
- ¹⁷⁰ CAF (2020).
- ¹⁷¹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020b).
- ¹⁷² Revenue (2020).
- ¹⁷³ These included: places not being filled due to parents being on the unemployment subsidy scheme (*activité partielle*) or special leave (*autorisation speciale d'absence*), families isolating due to positive COVID tests or issued to stay at home due to contact tracing, and centres shut due to the absence of vulnerable employees on the unemployment subsidy scheme.

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- ¹⁷⁴ CAF (2020).
- ¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Solidarity and Health (2020a).
- ¹⁷⁶ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2020b).
- ¹⁷⁷ For more information for each European Union Member State, see European Union (2020).
- ¹⁷⁸ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs (2021a).
- ¹⁷⁹ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs (2021a).
- ¹⁸⁰ Federal Chancellery (2021).
- ¹⁸¹ Bundesgesetzblatt, Austria (2020b).
- ¹⁸² The national living wage (zivotni minimum) was set at CZK 2,490 (approximately EUR 98). The new threshold was set to those earning less than CZK 8,466.
- ¹⁸³ This type of benefit is a regular direct payment from governments to parents who meet each country's eligibility criteria. By using existing structures, governments systematically reached working parents across their countries.
- ¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020a).
- ¹⁸⁵ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020b).
- ¹⁸⁶ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020b).
- ¹⁸⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2020a).
- ¹⁸⁸ Bundesgesetzblatt, Germany (2020b).
- ¹⁸⁹ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs (2021b).
- ¹⁹⁰ Forsakringskassen (2021b).
- ¹⁹¹ Eurochild (2020).
- ¹⁹² Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture (2020).
- ¹⁹³ State government of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁹⁴ Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (2020).
- ¹⁹⁵ Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture (2020).
- ¹⁹⁶ Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family (2020).
- ¹⁹⁷ Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture (2020).
- ¹⁹⁸ State government of the Free State of Thuringia (2020).
- ¹⁹⁹ Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports (2020a).
- ²⁰⁰ Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports (2020b).
- ²⁰¹ European Commission (2020).
- ²⁰² European Commission (2020).
- ²⁰³ National Observatory for Child Protection (2020).

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- ²⁰⁴ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020a).
- ²⁰⁵ Examples of ‘support’ might measures such as: laws, policies, and funding packages.
- ²⁰⁶ Eurostat, Number of adults by working status within households, number of children and age of youngest child (1 000) [lfst_hhwhacc] Last update: 20-04-2020, last accessed on 30. Nov. 2020. Available at:
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hhwhacc&lang=en
- ²⁰⁷ Due to the volume of policies in Germany, this report provides an overview of federal policies of the German government and in additional policies of the Länder governments of Bavaria, North Rhine- Westphalia and Thuringia. North Rhine- Westphalia was chosen as the most populated region in Germany and Bavaria and Thuringia were selected as the two Länder who were among the most impacted by COVID-19 in terms of high infection rates per populations and related strict measures.
- ²⁰⁸ Information gathered from European Commission (n.d.b).
- ²⁰⁹ Using information on the population for EU27, see Eurostat (2021), the team designated each MS into ‘small’, ‘medium’ and ‘large’ depending on their relative population sizes. The nine smallest populations were categorised as ‘small’, the next nine as ‘medium’ and the final nine as ‘large’. The team then sense checked the categorisation to ensure that they reflected the variation in size (for example, shifting BE and CZ to the medium category).
- ²¹⁰ Eurostat (2020).
- ²¹¹ Information on ECEC closure, parental leave and other measures to support families are data gathered by Koslowski et al. (2020).
- ²¹² Leavenetwork (2020).
- ²¹³ OECD (2020a).
- ²¹⁴ European Union (2020).
- ²¹⁵ European Commission (n.d.c).

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