

Social security of parents when providing childcare

Abstract

The thesis “Social security of parents when providing childcare” deals with the topic of current legislation of social security which aims to help the parents to effectively reconcile their personal and working life during the period of early childcare (approximately up to three years of age). The aim of the thesis is to analyse and assess current social security laws and their application and practical impact on the parents providing childcare. The thesis focuses on the social benefits of parental allowance, maternity allowance, and also on maternity grant and paternity benefit, as well as on the provisions of the Labour Code concerning the protection of the parent as employee. In terms of reconciliation of private and working life, the thesis also discusses the situation of the childcare services.

The aim of the thesis is not to introduce all of the aspects of the social benefits or theoretical analysis of legal provision but rather practical analysis of insufficient or dysfunctional provisions or concepts of the social security law that prevent our society from faster evolution towards modern and flexible parenthood.

The results of the analysis raise contradictory feelings. An enormous amount of resources as well as attention is paid to the system by the state; the legal regulation often changes (and in many respects in a good way), the system is generous and above European standards. Nevertheless, the state policies do not have the desired results: parents still take very long parental leave and a rather small percentage returns to work earlier, the number of flexible or part-time jobs is low, men's involvement in childcare is almost non-existent and mothers continue to face inequality in the labour market. In many respects, the way the legal frame is set is essentially good (parental leave available to both parents, fathers can receive maternity allowance) and recent changes are positive (restrictions on working while receiving parental allowance were removed, the paternity benefit was introduced).

We can therefore conclude that the tendency in legislation is on a good track, the state, however, has to refrain from half-hearted, "cautious" solutions – first of all, it needs to present the parents with as much space and flexibility as possible in order for them to be able to provide for themselves during the period of early childcare independently by work and according to their preferences. The state must not be afraid to accept unpopular decisions and revoke the blanket payment of parental allowance, thus help the system financially and direct the payment of benefits more on those really in need.

And above all, the state must look at the bigger picture, not only at the terms or amounts of the individual social benefits. It must reflect on the actual needs and expectations of the parents (flexibility in receiving benefits, more independence from the state in terms of reconciliation of personal and working life) and through the fundamental impacts on parents and the whole society that state social policy has (employment of parents, women poverty, unequal position on the labour market, etc.).

Key words: social security, childcare, parenthood