A major issue for many women and their partners is the short term and long term impact of pregnancy and the birth of a child on work. From navigating maternity and paternity leave, flexible working options, impact on career progression, and maternity discrimination, not all women have a smooth transition from motherhood to returning to work. Many women report changed conditions or a failure to progress upon their return from maternity leave. Combining work and family life can be a challenge.
It’s worthwhile to take the time to learn about your maternal rights at work. In the EU, there are rules protecting the health and safety of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth, and women who are breastfeeding. There are also clear rules on maternity leave and to avoid discrimination in the workplace.

It’s also a good idea to learn about specific protection and rights that may apply to you and your partner in your country, as there may be local variation in how these rules are enforced. A good place to start could be your country's governmental website, your health insurance provider, or local charities dedicated to these issues. You can also go to the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) website to get advice on local laws. This is a network of business advice partner organisations across the EU.

**WORKING WHILE PREGNANT**

Under EU legislation (Directive 92/85/EEC), pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth and women who are breastfeeding are recognised as a specific risk group, and their health and safety are protected.

The rules also cover maternity leave and discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination on grounds of pregnancy is also covered by the legislation on equal treatment in employment and occupation.

All EU countries must ensure the following rules are in place:

1. Women cannot be forced to perform night work during their pregnancy and for a period following childbirth. They should have the possibility of being transferred to daytime work, excused from work or given extended maternity leave.
2. All women are entitled to uninterrupted maternity leave for at least 14 weeks before and/or after delivery (with at least two weeks taken before and/or after delivery). They are entitled to receive payment or an allowance during their leave at a rate at least equivalent to sick pay.
3. Pregnant workers must be able to take time off work to attend antenatal examinations if they take place during working hours, without any loss in pay.
4. Women may not be dismissed for reasons related to their condition from the beginning of their pregnancy to the end of their maternity leave. If a woman is dismissed, the employer must give good grounds in writing. Workers must be protected from the consequences of unlawful dismissal.

5. The continuity of employment rights relating to the employment contract - including the maintenance of a payment to, and/or entitlement to an adequate allowance for such workers - must be ensured.


https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/eu-laws-maternity-rights-and-parental-leave (https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/eu-laws-maternity-rights-and-parental-leave)

**ALL ABOUT PARENTAL LEAVE**


The directive aims to reconcile work and family life and to promote equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market. It sets out minimum requirements on parental leave for both male and female workers, and related employment protection.

**Under the directive:**

1. Male and female workers are individually entitled to parental leave in the birth or adoption of a child, enabling them to take care of the child for at least four months. At least one of the four
months cannot, in principle, be transferred to the other parent, i.e. it is reserved for each parent.

2. Workers are protected from discrimination on the grounds of applying for or taking parental leave.

3. When returning from parental leave, workers must have the right to return to the same job or to an equivalent.

4. Workers also have the right to request changes to their working hours for a set period. In considering such requests, employers must balance the needs of the workers and the company.


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