

Bosnia and Herzegovina⁷⁷

Nikolina Obradović (Independent Expert)

April 2026

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a decentralised state made of two asymmetrically organised entities and the Brčko District of BiH (a self-governing administrative unit in north-eastern BiH). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) entity is decentralised and made of ten cantons, encompassing the local authorities. Republic Srpska (RS) entity is centralised with only two levels of government – the entity and local authorities. Brčko District (BD) is a local authority independent from entities, where the state legislation applies directly.

The state-level government does not have any direct competencies with regard to social protection and social inclusion policies. These are within the competence of the RS entity, Brčko District and in the FBiH entity under the shared competence of the entity and cantonal governments. Hence, each entity and BD have an independent system of social protection. Leave policies in the country are regulated by entities and BD general labour legislation. Child and family benefits in the FBiH are regulated by the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children at the entity level, and cantonal laws on social assistance. In the FBiH, maternity benefits are financed from cantonal budgets, while the child benefit is financed from the entity budget. In RS, child and family benefits are financed through the RS Fund for Child Protection, which is part of the social insurance system. In BD, child and family benefits are financed from the budget.

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review (also available individually on the [Leave Network website](#)). To contact authors of country notes, see the [members](#) page on the Leave Network website.

⁷⁷ Please cite as Obradović, N. (2025) 'Bosnia and Herzegovina country note', in Dobrotić, I., Arnalds, A.A., Kaufmann, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*porodiljsko odsustvo*) (responsibility of the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, RS Ministry of Labour and War Veteran Protection and BD Department for Health and Other Services)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 1 calendar year without interruptions in both entities and BD: leave starts 28 days before the expected delivery date in FBiH and RS, or at the latest ten days before the expected delivery date in BD.
- It is obligatory to take 42 calendar days of Maternity leave in the FBiH and BD and 60 calendar days of Maternity leave in RS, without interruption and counting from the delivery date.

Payment, funding and taxation

- Maternity benefits are regulated at the level of the RS entity, the cantonal level in FBiH, and the level of BD. Table 1 gives an overview of Maternity benefits in the RS, BD and FBiH cantons.

Table 1		
Entity / Canton	Replacement rate	Upper limit
Republic Srpska entity	100 per cent of the beneficiary's average registered gross wage in the last 18 months	None
Brčko District	100 per cent of the beneficiary's average registered net wage in the last 12 months	None
<i>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) cantons</i>		
Una-Sana Canton	50 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings (or average net earnings in the canton) in the six months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than 50 per cent of the net average wage in the canton for the previous year	None
Posavina Canton	80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than the minimum net wage. All social insurance contributions must be paid at least for the last 6 months before using the benefit	80 per cent of the average net salary in the FBiH in the previous year
Tuzla Canton	90 per cent of the beneficiary's average earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts, or 55 per	Average net salary in the FBiH entity in 2021, which is KM996 [€509.24] ⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Conversion of currency undertaken for 20 July 2026, using <https://www.xe.com/>.

	cent of the average net salary in the canton	
Zenica-Doboj Canton	KM1,000 [€511.29] monthly. In the event that the canton does not have sufficient funds, it is 80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the 6 months before the leave starts	Average net salary in the canton
Bosnia-Podrinje Canton	80 per cent of the beneficiary's average net earnings in the six months before the leave starts. For those that were in employment for less than six months, it is 60 per cent of the average net salary in the canton	2½ times average salaries paid in the Canton in previous year
Central Bosnia Canton	50 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the six months before the leave starts. It cannot be lower than 55 per cent of the minimum net salary in the FBiH in the previous year	It cannot be higher than the average net salary in the FBiH in the previous year
Herzegovina – Neretva Canton	40 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the six months before the leave starts	Average net salary in the FBiH
Western Herzegovina Canton	The first half of Maternity leave is paid at the level of 70 per cent of the beneficiary's net average earnings in the nine months before the leave starts	None
Sarajevo Canton	For beneficiaries with at least 12 or 6 months of insurance, it is respectively 60 per cent or 30 per cent of the the minimum wage in the FBiH, which in 2026 is KM 1,027 [€525.09]	None (for the employer)
Canton 10	100 per cent of the beneficiary's net salary in the month before the leave starts (it cannot be lower than the minimum salary), under the condition that the mother has at least one month of insurance before commencing the Maternity leave	Average net salary in the FBiH

- Unemployed mothers have the right to a Maternity allowance. Table 2 summarises the benefit amounts and main eligibility criteria in the FBiH, RS and BD.

Table 2		
Entity / Canton	Eligibility criteria	Duration and amount of Maternity allowance
FBiH entity (the benefit is paid by cantons)	Mother has to be registered as unemployed or in full-time education, and have residency status in the canton	55 per cent of the minimum salary in the FBiH per month for 12 months. The current amount of benefit is KM565 [€288.87], monthly
<i>Overview of additional maternity allowances in the FBiH cantons</i>		

Una-Sana Canton	The canton implements the FBiH law directly	No additional benefit
Posavina	At least three years of residence before applying for the benefit	No additional benefit
Tuzla	Residence in the canton of at least 6 months	The additional benefit amounts as a difference between the average wage in the FBiH from 2021 (in the amount of KM996 [€509.24]) and the amount of FBiH maternity allowance (KM565 [€288.87]). Hence, the additional benefit for 2025 is KM431 [€220.36] monthly
Zenica-Doboj	Residence of at least 6 months in the canton	KM1,000 [€511.29] monthly for 12 months
Bosnia-Podrinje	No additional conditionality	The benefit amounts to the average net wage paid in the FBiH in the preceeding year
Central Bosnia	The canton implements the FBiH law directly. No additional conditionality	No additional benefit
Herzegovina-Neretva	No additional conditionality	No additional benefit
Western-Herzegovina	The canton implements the FBiH law. No additional conditionality.	No additional benefit
Canton Sarajevo	Residence in the canton of at least 1 year	The FBiH benefit is topped up to the amount of average salary in the FBiH entity. Paid for 12 months (counting from the day of birth)
Canton 10	Residence in the canton of at least 3 years	No additional benefit
Republic Srpska entity	The mother or the father must have residence status in the RS of at least 1 year. The mother has to be registered as unemployed at the time of childbirth	KM406 [€207.58] per month for 12 months. For multiple births, third and any subsequent child, the benefit is paid for 18 months
Brčko District	The mother has to be registered as unemployed at least 6 months before childbirth. The beneficiary must have at least two years of registered residence in the Brčko District	50 per cent of the average net salary in BD for 12 months. For twins, the benefit is paid for 18 months

- During Maternity leave, women in registered employment maintain their pension insurance. Employers are expected to continue paying payroll contributions, including the payments for pensions and disability insurance for women on Maternity leave. In the RS, employers are refunded full gross salary (including expenses for social insurance contributions) by the RS Fund for Child Protection. Only in some cantons in the FBiH, the employers receive a refund of paid social insurance contributions. The self-employed are expected to pay social contributions and taxes (in the RS, they are refunded); otherwise, they will not maintain their pension insurance. In the RS, women may retire one year earlier for each child born. General conditions for an old age pension are 15 years of insurance and 65 years of

age. This means that women that gave birth to one child may retire aged 64 and with 14 years of insurance.

- In the FBiH, Maternity benefits are funded by cantons from general taxes. In RS, the benefits are funded by the RS Fund for Child Protection, financed from payroll contributions. In BD, the benefits are funded from general taxes.

Flexibility in use

- None.

Eligibility (e.g., related to employment or family circumstances)

- Maternity benefits are provided for all categories of socially insured employees and self-employed, for whom the employment contract and employment status envisage the payment of the full social contributions. However, Maternity benefits are provided only to those who can prove the payment of contributions for a period of at least one year before commencing the Maternity leave (Canton 10 is an exception, where the requirement is only one month of employment). In addition, in the RS, an employer must not have any outstanding obligations towards the Tax Authority.
- For Maternity allowances aimed at unemployed women, eligibility criteria are listed in the table above.
- The right to Maternity leave of same-sex couples is not regulated. The right can be used by one female partner if she is in employment and paying full payroll social insurance contributions (she would be treated as a single mother).

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single parent); or delegation of leave to a person other than the mother

- In the FBiH, RS, and BD, if a mother gives birth to a stillborn child or if a child dies before the end of Maternity leave, the mother has the right to prolonged leave; the length is prescribed by a medical doctor and cannot be less than 45 days, counting from the day of birth or death. During this period, the mother receives financial compensation as for Maternity leave.
- If the parent taking leave dies or cannot exercise the right for any other justified reason, leave can be transferred to the other parent.
- In RS and BD, Maternity leave is extended to 18 months in the case of the birth of twins, third or any subsequent child. In addition, in BD, extended Maternity leave of 18 months is also stipulated for women with disabilities; if both parents work, this extended Maternity leave can be used by fathers with disabilities.
- If both parents work and if the mother approves (i.e., transfer her right), the father can use Maternity leave upon expiry of the first 42 days of leave after childbirth in the FBiH and BD, and of the first 60 days of leave in RS. The father may also exercise the right to Maternity leave from the start if the mother leaves the child, dies or is prevented from using that right for other justified reasons (e.g., serving a prison sentence, serious illness).

Regional or local variations in leave policy

- For regional difference see Tables 1 and 2 above.

Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)

- None reported.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- One of the parents (including adoptive or foster parents and legal guardians) has the right not to work until the child turns 3 years of age. During that time, the parent's rights and obligations regarding their employment are suspended, and the right to compulsory health insurance is maintained. This leave period is unpaid, so contributions for pension insurance are not paid during that period, but the employer should pay healthcare contributions for the employee.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- In the FBiH entity, employed/self-employed foster and adoptive parents have the same Maternity leave rights as biological parents, except for the right to a paid break for breastfeeding during working hours. The law in the FBiH does not give the right to fathers to use Maternity leave in case of adoption or foster care.

Time off for the care of dependants

- The FBiH Labour Law stipulates up to 7 days of leave in 1 calendar year paid by the employer in case of **marriage, spouse giving birth, sickness or death of the immediate family or household member, and voluntary blood donations**. In the RS and BD, this type of leave cannot be longer than 5 working days, except in the RS where it can be longer in the event of the death of a close family member (it is not stipulated how long). This type of leave has to be approved by the employer.
- In BD, the parent (including adoptive parent or foster care parent) of a child with a malignant disease or severe other disease has the right to be absent from work during the **health care treatments**. The right is granted based on medical documentation. During this period, the parent receives a full salary (Article 83a).
- Laws on health insurance stipulate the right to sickness benefits for the care of the family member.
 - In the RS, 15 days of leave per year can be approved for the **care of a child aged below 15 years**. For a child older than 15 years, a spouse and a parent, the leave can be a maximum of seven days in one calendar

year. If a family member below the age of 18 years has a difficult health condition (such as cerebral difficulties, malignant disease or similar), the leave can be longer but cannot exceed four months in one calendar year. Leave of 15 or 7 working days is funded by the employer, while for leave of four months the employer is refunded three months of salaries by the RS Health Insurance Fund.

- In BD, insured persons have the right to leave and corresponding salary compensation (paid in the amount of 80 per cent of previous earnings) for the **care of child or spouse**:
 - 15 days in one calendar year for the care of child aged below 15, and four months maximum for all diseases;
 - seven days in one calendar year for the care of a family member aged 15 and above (i.e., child and spouse), and two months maximum for all diseases.
- In the FBiH, the employer pays the salary compensation, which is fully refunded by the cantonal health insurance fund (procedure and rules regarding this benefit in the FBiH are defined by bylaw legislation adopted by cantonal health insurance funds and vary across cantons).

Specific provision for (breast) feeding

- An employed mother who returns to work before the child turns 1 year has the right to two daily breaks for breastfeeding. The FBiH law does not specify the length of time for breastfeeding; but in RS, the specified time for breastfeeding is 60 minutes in addition to the standard break time, while the BD law stipulates two periods of 60 minutes per day. The time used for daily breaks for breastfeeding is counted in the regular working hours and is paid at 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working for carers

- In the FBiH, after ending Maternity leave and until the child turns 1 year, the mother has the right to work part-time. In the case of twins, 3rd and any subsequent child, the mother has the right to work part-time until the child reaches 2 years of age (if the cantonal legislation does not stipulate longer leave). The father can also use this right if the mother works full-time. Parent working part-time is paid only for the actual hours worked (i.e., there is no compensation for non-worked hours).
- At the end of Maternity leave, one of the parents (in BD and RS this could also be an adoptive parent) of a child in need of special care due to a severe degree of developmental difficulties has the right to work part-time (half of the full working hours) until the child reaches 3 years of age. In the FBiH and BD, this right can be used only by a single parent or when both parents are employed and under the condition that the child is not placed in institutional care. In addition, the FBiH Law stipulates that parents have the right to financial compensation for the hours they are not working, in accordance with special legislation (however, this provision is ineffective because the right remains unregulated and parents working part-time are paid only by their employer for the actual hours working). In RS and BD, the parent receives compensation for the loss of salary, which covers the difference between the earned part-time salary (paid by the employer) and the parent's full salary (i.e., the salary they would have if working full-time). In BD, this

compensation is financed from the BD budget, while in RS by the RS Fund for Child Protection.

- In BD, the parent (including adoptive parent and foster care parent) of a child with mental developmental difficulties and in the RS with general psychophysical difficulties, who are not placed in institutional care, has the right to work part-time. This provision can be used based on a recommendation given by the medical doctor. In addition, the parent has the right to salary compensation (up to the amount they would have if working full time), paid from the BD budget. In the RS, the compensation is paid by the RS Fond for Child Protection.

Antenatal appointments and care

- A pregnant worker has a right to paid leave – equivalent to 1 working day – to attend pre-natal examinations and other health examinations related to pregnancy. Pregnant workers are obliged to announce the intention to use this right to the employer in a timely manner.

Other provisions of leave

- **Death of a member of the immediate family or household.** This matter is regulated under umbrella provisions of paid leave for personal reasons under Article 53 of the Law on Labour of the FBiH, Article 89 of the Law on Labour of the RS, and Article 68 of the Labour Law of BD. These provisions stipulate that an employee is entitled to paid leave for up to 7 working days in the FBiH and up to 5 working days in RS and BD within 1 calendar year. Such leave may also be granted in the event of marriage, the birth of a child, serious illness, or in other similar circumstances, in accordance with the applicable collective agreement, internal regulations, and employment contract. In all cases, the use of such leave is subject to approval by the employer.
- The legislation in RS further provides that the duration of leave may be extended only in the case of the death of a member of the immediate family.
- For the purposes of these provisions, members of the immediate family include: a spouse or cohabiting partner; a child (born in or out of wedlock, adopted, a stepchild, or a child without parental care taken into custody); father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, and adoptive parent; as well as grandparents (on both the paternal and maternal side) and siblings, provided that siblings live in the same household.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Bosnia and Herzegovina is just under 12 months, paid at a full rate in some areas. The leave policy and early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy are not coordinated. Neither entity nor canton in the FBiH guarantees universal access to ECEC services. Also, these services are not free of charge for parents.

ECEC facilities in the country are organised in accordance with children's age: nurseries for children under the age of three, and kindergartens for children aged three to six years. However, access to and affordability of ECEC in the country is a

severe challenge due to the lack of available facilities and the cost of services⁷⁹. A significant number of children cannot enter ECEC due to a lack of places, primarily in public institutions in larger urban centres. In the school year 2025/2026, there were 9,964 children waiting for placement in a preschool institution, and this number increased by 14.4% compared to the previous school year.⁸⁰

The latest national statistics for the year 2025/2026 report altogether 48,246 children from birth to 6 years attending some form of ECEC institution, which is an increase of 5.4 per cent compared to the previous pedagogical year.⁸¹ This is 23.5 per cent of all children of this age (13 per cent of all children under 3 years and 31 per cent of all 3 to 6 year olds).

According to the Framework Law on Early Childhood Education and Care BiH,⁸² it is obligatory for children aged 5 years to attend a preparatory preschool programme (PPP); however, the implementation of the law is devolved to lower levels of the government, i.e., cantons in the FBiH, RS and BD, resulting in an unequal provision of these services and different degrees of coverage. It is important to note that the PPP programme included only 150 (in some places up to 300) teaching hours, organised for two or three teaching hours per day, few days a week. Therefore the PPP cannot be considered as a care solution for children of working parents.

No information for ECEC attendance levels in 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review.

3. Changes in policy since April 2025 (including proposals currently under discussion)

No changes reported.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

There is no publicly available recent information regarding uptake of leave in the entities.

The latest data on annual uptake of leave in the RS is from 2025. In 2025, the RS Fund for Child Protection⁸³ approved a total of 5,255 new beneficiaries of financial compensations during Maternity leave, out of which 59 were fathers. In 2025, the

⁷⁹ For more details, see Nikolina Obradović (2021). Bosnia and Herzegovina's Family Policy Challenges in Meeting the European Union's Standards and Recommendations in *Croatian Journal of Social Policy*, (3) 2021.

⁸⁰ Agency for Statistics of BiH, First Release, Demography and Social Statistics (2026) *Pre-School Education Upbringing and Education in the School Year 2025/2026 (preliminary data)*. Available at: https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Saopštenja/2026/EDU_07_2025_Y2_0_BS.pdf

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Official Gazette of BiH, no. 88/07.

⁸³ Information is on file with the author. It was received on 27 March 2026.

average monthly number of the Maternity allowance for unemployed mothers beneficiaries in the RS was 3,708 of which 3 were fathers.

According to information for the year 2020 provided by the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy,⁸⁴ which collects information from responsible cantonal ministries, financial compensation during Maternity leave was used by 8,091 beneficiaries, while 4,708 beneficiaries used the Maternity allowance. There is no information about the number of fathers using maternity benefits.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

No statutory entitlement.

⁸⁴ Information is on file with the author. It was received on 21 March 2022.