



12 measures to meet the #ParentalChallenge

Let's insure the basics

To take part in the Parental Challenge, I, as HRD/CEO of my company, pledge to implement the following measures:

Measure #1

Allow all my confirmed employees on permanent contracts to benefit from measures related to parenthood, without any seniority requirement.

The problem we want to solve

The law and collective agreements sometimes require a minimum length of service in order to benefit from certain rights in the company. For example, some collective agreements require a minimum of 1 year of service to be able to benefit from salary maintenance in the event of maternity leave. Yet, as soon as an employee is confirmed to his or her position on a permanent contract, he or she is a full-fledged member of the company. It seems unfair to deprive an employee, with whom a

long-term collaboration is taking root, of rights granted to his or her colleagues. In addition to redressing a form of injustice, changing this would help lay the foundations of a trusting and lasting collaboration.

How can this be put into practice

- Remove any condition of minimum service terms and extend access to parenthood-related measures to all employees confirmed on full-time contracts.
- ... And, doing so regardless of the type of measures concerned (from the Labor Code, your collective agreement, or additional measures implemented by your company).
- **Optional:** If you wish, you can go even further by extending this measure to all categories of employees, even during the trial period.

Measure #2

Enforce the law¹ and communicate their rights to all my employees.

The problem we want to solve

More than half of employees say they are unaware of their rights related to parenthood². And the minimum legal framework is often not respected: for example, 55% of women say they have not benefited from the mandatory medical check-up upon returning from maternity³ leave.

How can this be put into practice

By listing the rights of your employees related to parenthood on the medium of your choice (intranet, paper guide, posters, etc.), whether they derive from:

- the law (Labor Code),
- measures of your respective collective agreement,
- additional measures taken by your company.

Measure #3

Better support for long leaves (maternity, adoption, second parent, parental) related to parenthood.

The problem we want to solve

More than 1 in 3 French people have been discriminated against when returning from long-term leave⁴.

The anticipation of leave, the leave itself, and return to work are key moments for employees.

¹ See "What the Law Says" at the end of this document.

² Study conducted among 37,000 employees by CSEP and the BVA Institute (2018)

³ Survey conducted by Issence (2021) among 700 women returning from maternity leave

⁴ Defender of Rights, *Barometer of 2020, Perception of Discrimination in Employment*.

They are returning to a company and a position that have both changed during their absence, and they have to find a new balance between their new parental life and their work. It is essential to help them get through this period as calmly as possible.

How can this be put into practice

- Before the leave:
 - If possible, provide for a replacement during the employee's absence and involve the employee in the selection of the replacement.
 - Take into account the time required for the handover of the employee's workload.
 - Plan a pre-leave meeting between the manager and the employee (explain the typical schedule for the week of return, review achievements, objectives, possible salary increases, etc.).
- During the leave:
 - The golden rule is to never solicit an employee on leave.
- Upon return :
 - Have a reference person, ideally the manager, available to welcome the employee on the day of return.
 - Schedule the return interview between the manager and the

employee (legal obligation).

- Plan the re-boarding and, in particular, a moment of conviviality (even online) with the entire team and meetings with employees who have joined the company since the employee's departure on leave.

Measure #4

Protect the confidentiality of my employees so that they can assert their rights and benefit from the measures without having to confide about their personal lives.

The problem we want to solve

Among the employees who know their rights, many of them still refuse to assert them, not wishing to confide in their company about what they are going through, especially during stages with an uncertain outcome. This may be, for example, a PMA or adoption process that may not be successful, or the first trimester of pregnancy, which is the most likely trimester to result in a miscarriage.

How can this be put into practice

- By providing your employees with the contact information of a single person (in the HR department or employee representative, for example) who will receive requests for absences or requests for adjustments to working hours or location, etc.
- Clearly explaining to employees that they do not need, if they do not wish, to tell their manager the reasons for their absences or job accommodations, but only to inform him or her of justified absences.
- By making it clear to managers that they do not have to demand reasons for a work adjustment or absence. They can, however, check with the HR department to ensure that absences are justified.
- Reminding HR of their duty of confidentiality, and reminding employees that

HR is bound to confidentiality.

- Implementing the same process for all relevant cases, excluding parenthood (e.g., in the case of follow-up for a serious and/or long-term illness) in order to ensure confidentiality.

Measure #5

Authorize and pay the absences of employees applying for adoption in the case of compulsory meetings that take place during working hours (e.g., informational meetings and meetings required for psychosocial evaluation of applicants).

The problem we want to solve

The adoption applicants' journey is likely to require certain absences from work (particularly for the psychosocial evaluation they must undergo). Given that leaves of absence are granted during the MAR (Medically Assisted Reproduction) process and during pregnancy, and in order to encourage support for all parenthood processes, it seems fair to grant the same types of rights to employees seeking to adopt.

How can this be put into practice

Of course, you can ask employees to show you justification for their absence.

⁵ The number of absences varies, but it can be up to five, and around a few hours each.

Measure #6

Equip our managers to better support and welcome parenthood and raise their awareness of discrimination.

The problem we want to solve

The manager has a key role in supporting employees' parenthood. However, nearly a third of women say that they felt that their manager⁶ was disturbed by the announcement of their pregnancy.

Whether it is a poor reaction to the announcement, a lack of preparation for parental leave, or poor onboarding upon return from leave, all of these shortcomings and pitfalls break the bond of trust between employees and the company and are sometimes the cause of a desire to change jobs, lowered motivation and/or commitment, feelings of exclusion, and even burnout.

The best way for the company to avoid this is to prepare its managers to be up to the task by increasing their skills in this role, which is part of their mission.

How can this be put into practice

By implementing **at least one** of these actions:

- Send all your managers your policy guide and make sure they have read it.
- Organize at least 1 training session (examples: Welcoming the Announcement, Identifying and Monitoring Psychosocial Risks and Signals of Depression/Parental Burnout, Accompanying Pregnancy at Work, Preparing for the Departure and Return from Leave, Preparing and Conducting the Return Interview, etc.)
- Set up groups to share best practices among managers.

⁶ Study conducted among 37,000 employees by CSEP and the BVA Institute (2018).

Measure #7

Offer all employees who are parents, and whose positions allow them to do so, 100% teleworking in the key moments before and after parenthood.

The problem we want to solve

Pregnancy, the MAR process, miscarriage, and the day-to-day management of parenthood require at times that employees be able to work from home. In these varied contexts, employees would greatly benefit from increased flexibility, particularly through teleworking.

This would allow them to:

- save transportation time when their personal schedules are particularly challenging,
- work from home in difficult moments, sometimes coupled with physical symptoms that are difficult to bear (during MAR processes, pregnancy, after a miscarriage, after second parent leave in order to be present to support the new mother who has to combine convalescence and newborn care).

How can this be put into practice

By implementing supportive measures to account for:

- certain stages of the MAR process,
- days following a miscarriage,
- pregnancy of employees,
- needs that go beyond normal parenting leave,
- the period of adaptation of new childcare arrangements, etc.

Action #8

Establish working hours that do not exclude any employee.

The problem we want to solve

77% of women and 68% of men feel that parenthood is insufficiently taken into account in the organization of work time and places. The situation where this is most apparent according to both women and men is the **planning of meetings**⁷.

Meetings that are held too early or too late exclude all parents because not everyone can afford (or wants) to have a babysitter. And this *keeps* women away from the decision-making process, because in most cases they are still responsible for parenting tasks.

How can this be put into practice

- **At a minimum:** Schedule meetings between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (end of the meeting) in order to not exclude parent employees from important meetings and decision making.
- **Optional:** If possible, shorten meeting times even more (e.g., 9:30a.m. - 5:30p.m.) and avoid meetings during lunch breaks.

⁷ Study conducted among 37,000 employees by CSEP and the BVA Institute (2018).

Measure #9

Offer a 3-day paid bereavement leave for miscarriage, for both biological and second parents.

The problem we want to solve

In 1 out of 4 cases, pregnancy ends during the first trimester⁸. This is a tragedy for women who thought they were carrying life, and for partners who also thought he/she was becoming a parent.

In addition, miscarriage is often accompanied by severe physical pain related to the "expulsion" of the embryo, and can sometimes require medical intervention. All of this represents a significant physical ordeal.

Since miscarriage most often occurs in the first trimester of pregnancy (which people rarely announce for this very reason, but also for fear of discrimination), it often goes unnoticed in the workplace. Yet, it is a mourning that it is important to recognize and address.

⁸ Martine Lochouarn, "La fausse couche concerne une femme sur quatre", LeFigaro.fr, December 12, 2013.

How can this be put into practice

- Leave should be offered to employees. However, it is important that the employee chooses to take the leave.
- In addition, consider offering the possibility to telework. (Measure #7).

Measure #10

Encourage the involvement of second parents from

the very beginning of their parenthood.

The problem we want to solve

78% of fathers and only 47% of executives have taken advantage of the old paternity leave policy in full⁹ (since it was extended, it is likely to be even less). It is necessary to encourage all second parents to take their leave in full, including executives who have a duty to set an example. The first reason reported by fathers who did not take their leave in full was that they felt their presence was required at work because of a specific context (e.g., reorganization, absence of employees, etc.).

How can this be put into practice

- By making it a clear objective for managers not to solicit an employee – especially second parents – during their leave.
- By explicitly encouraging second parents to take their full 28 days of leave (ask managers to take it as an example, use internal communication to encourage it).
- By allowing the second parent to attend all 7 mandatory pregnancy check-ups, and paying for this time, as is the case for the mother.

⁹ Study conducted among 37,000 employees by CSEP and the BVA Institute (2018).

Action #11

Financially support maternity, second parent and adoption leave and alleviate the administrative burden.

The problem we want to solve

All parents have increased financial needs when a child arrives (equipping the apartment, having their child cared for when they return to work, etc.). A decrease in salary during this period may prevent them from taking their leave. Moreover,

the second reason cited by fathers who did not take their full paternity leave was that it was not financially¹⁰ attractive.

The fact that wages are split into two payments, one from the employer and one from Social Security (which sometimes takes a long time to receive), can also put employees in difficult financial situations.

How can this be put into practice

- Maintaining 100% salary for the duration of parental leave.
- By implementing salary subrogation (the fact that the company pays 100% of the salary directly to the employees and takes responsibility for recovering the daily allowances from the Social Security system).

Measure #12

Provide at least 5 days of paid "sick child" leave.

The problem we want to solve

Children build their immune systems in their early years and are therefore frequently ill. If parents are forced to request days of paid leave to care for their sick child, this means less time for them to really rest and come back to work in great shape.

¹⁰ Study conducted among 37,000 employees by CSEP and the BVA Institute (2018).

How can this be put into practice

- Grant at least 5 days per year of "sick child" leave.
- This is optional, but we encourage you not to ask for proof. Parents do not routinely go to the doctor for an illness, but still need to attend to their child.
- This is also optional, but we encourage you to offer the right to this leave for childcare-related issues (closing of daycare in case of COVID, sick child minder, etc.).