



Generous payments to parents aim to make Germany more family friendly

Support measures include a special gift from the president for child number seven in any family



Ursula von der Leyen, a mother of seven, introduced Germany's more family-friendly policies. Photograph: Andreas Rentz/Getty Images

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Ever since January 2007, working German couples have been entitled to take 14 months' paid *elternzeit* (parental time) after the birth of each child.

The policy was the central pillar of a reform brought in by Germany's then family minister, Ursula von der Leyen, a mother of seven, in an attempt to make the country more family-friendly.

To qualify for the full stretch, the father must takeoff at least two out of the 14 months, but couples can decide how to share the time between them.

Whoever stays at home is paid 65% of their previous salary, up to a ceiling of €1,800 (£1,560) per month.

Couples earning more than €500,000 between them annually, or single parents with a salary of more than €250,000 a year, do not qualify for the money but are allowed to take the time off.

Mothers also receive a fairly token amount of *mutterschaftsgeld* (maternity money) six weeks before they are due to give birth and for eight weeks after delivery. Until each child is at least 18, mothers receive generous *kindergeld* (child benefit) – €184 for the first and second child, €190 for the third, and €215 for the fourth and all further children.

A German quirk is that if women have seven or more children, the seventh automatically becomes the godchild of the serving president and receives a €500 gift.

Since the rule was introduced in 1949, 76,460 seventh children have become honorary godchildren of the president. However, the birthrate, already the lowest in [Europe](#), is sinking and last year there were just 603.