

“Ways of increasing the generosity of family-related leaves in Georgia”

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Abstract

Since January 2023, the upper threshold of the allowance for maternity, parental and adoption leaves has doubled from 1000 GEL to 2000 GEL. The Labour Code of Georgia does not offer paternity leave (taken by fathers), which is provided in EU countries. In public service, the allowance amounts to the full salary of the civil servant. Such a large gap between civil service and the rest of organizations/institutions is not a fair approach. To improve the health and socio-economic conditions of families with a child, it is essential to significantly increase the generosity of the allowance for family-related leaves (maternity, paternity and parental leave) in the private sector. The review of academic literature showed a positive relationship between the increase in maternity/parental leave length/remuneration and improvements in the mental and physical health of mother and child. The study found that the significant increase in maternity benefit rate, as well as an increase in parental benefit and an introduction of paternity leave/benefit, is financially feasible, given the recent economic growth rate in Georgia and its projected growth for the coming years.

Keywords: work-life balance, maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, labour rights.

Introduction

In September 2013, the Parliament of Georgia amended the Labour Code (LC), increasing the upper threshold of the allowance for an employee who takes leave for pregnancy and childbirth or adoption from 600 GEL to 1000 GEL (Amendments to the Labour Code of Georgia, 2013). Also, the length of both paid and unpaid parts of the leave has grown. However, during the following years, until the end of 2022, the amount of the allowance has not increased. In 2014, the allowance rate was higher than the subsistence minimum, while in 2022, it was much lower due to inflation. Since January 2023, the allowance has doubled to a maximum of 2000 GEL. The allowance is compensated from the state budget (general taxes). Employer and employee may agree on extra pay for said periods of leave. In public service, the allowance amounts to the full salary of the civil servant (Law of Georgia on Public Service, 2015). Such a large gap between civil service and the rest of organizations/institutions is not a fair approach.

According to the September 2020 amendment in the LC, parental leave can be shared between mother and father, while maternity leave is an exclusive right of the mother, although the father has a right to take the days of the leave, which has not been used by the mother. Before these amendments, the father had a right to take maternity and parental leave and receive the allowance only if the mother had deceased. An employee is granted a paid maternity leave of 126 days, and in

case of complications during childbirth or the birth of twins - 143 days. An employee is granted parental leave of 604 days (in case of complications during childbirth or the birth of twins - 587 days), 57 days of which is paid. An employee who has adopted an infant under the age of 12 months is granted 550 days of adoption leave from the birth of the child, 90 days of which is paid.

The substantial increase in maternity and parental benefits is essential due to the high national poverty rate among children in Georgia - 20.4%, which is higher than the total poverty rate in the country – 15.6% (Geostat, 2023a).

The LC does not offer paternity leave, which is provided in EU countries. Paternity leave is taken only by fathers, and the length of it should be no less than 2 weeks pursuant to the EU Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance.

The research examines provisions concerning: a) Maternity leave – is taken by pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth or who are breastfeeding; b) Paternity leave - is taken by fathers; c) Parental leave - is taken by parents on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child to take care of that child; d) Adequate allowance for the leave.

The research assesses the relevance, feasibility and costs of increasing maternity and parental benefit rate and introduction of paternity allowance in Georgia.

Literature review

Recently, several studies were conducted concerning improvements in maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions in Georgia: Kashakashvili (2017) reviews international legal acts and national provisions of Western countries and compares them with Georgian legislation. Babych, Mzhavanadze, Keshelava (2021) implemented a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to study the prospects and organize a policy dialogue towards the possible ratification of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Both studies recommend the introduction of EU law and ILO standards into Georgian legislation in terms of protection of maternity and ensuring work-life balance for both parents.

From the perspective of analyzing various countries' policies on length and remuneration of maternity, paternity and parental leave, the following institutions' reports are important: The United States Social Security Administration (2018), The World Bank (Gotcheva, 2019), OECD (2021), an annual review of leave policies produced by the International Network on Leave Policies and Research (Kosłowski, Blum, Dobrotić, et al., 2022), European Parliamentary Research Service (Kern & Lecerf, 2023).

Van Niel et al. (2020) reviewed recent studies on the possible effects of paid maternity leave on the mental and physical health of mothers and children. Findings suggest that longer paid maternity leave is associated with beneficial effects on the mental and physical health of mothers and children, including a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

The literature review by Navarro-Rosenblatt and Garmendia (2018) showed a positive relationship between maternity leave length and breastfeeding duration.

Nandi et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature on paid leave and socioeconomic and health outcomes. The review concluded that increases in paid parental leave were consistently associated with better infant and child health, particularly in terms of lower mortality rates. Paid paternity leave policies of adequate length and generosity have induced fathers to take additional time off from work following the birth of a child.

Winegarden and Bracy (1995), Ruhm (2000), Shim, J. (2016) using aggregate data from OECD countries and Heymann, Raub and Earle (2011) using relevant data in 141 countries provided evidence that an increase in the duration of maternity/parental leave decreased the infant mortality rate. Tanaka's 2005 study (as cited in Nandi et al., 2018) indicated that an increase in paid leave had the largest impact on post-neonatal mortality; Increasing the generosity of leave policies also decreased infant mortality rates and low birth weight. Khan (2020) examined the effects of paid family leave expansions on neonatal mortality rates, infant mortality rates, under-five mortality rates, and measles immunization rates in 35 OECD countries during the time period of 1990 to 2016. Using an event study design, an approximately 1.9–5.2 percent decrease in infant, neonatal, and under-five mortality rates has been found following the adoption of paid maternity leave.

Berger, Hill and Waldfogel (2005) explored links between mothers' returns to work within 12 weeks of giving birth and health and developmental outcomes for their children in the USA. The study concluded that longer maternity leave had a positive impact on the mental and physical health of mothers and children and the initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

Avendano et al. (2015) examined whether maternity leave policies have an effect on women's mental health in later life. findings suggest that a more generous maternity leave during the birth of a first child reduces mothers' depression score in later life

One of the objectives of the research conducted by Hawkins et al. (2007) was to examine the relationship of the type of maternity leave pay to breastfeeding for at least 4 months in the UK. An increase in generosity of leave pay resulted in longer duration of breastfeeding.

Skafida (2012) explored how employment and maternity leave relate to breastfeeding duration among mothers in Scotland. Mothers who took longer maternity leave breastfed for longer. mothers who took the leave over a shorter period of time had a higher risk of earlier breastfeeding cessation.

Strang and Broeks (2017) examined maternity and parental leave provision across European Union countries and its potential impact on breastfeeding. The examined evidence shows that it is not only the length of maternity leave that has an impact on breastfeeding rates but also the level of remuneration, with higher pay resulting in a higher likelihood of leave uptake and a longer duration of leave, which is positive for breastfeeding.

Methodology

During the research, academic literature, documents, and secondary data were analyzed. Documents and secondary data were collected from the following sources: the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), state agencies, and international organizations.

The review of academic literature focuses on the impact of an increase in maternity and parental leave length and the benefit rate on the mental and physical health of mothers and children, including a decrease in infant mortality and initiation and duration of breastfeeding. The review is helpful in determining the necessity of allocation of additional budget resources to increase the maternity and parental leave remuneration rate.

The research assesses the relevance, feasibility and costs of increasing maternity and parental benefit rate and introduction of paternity allowance in Georgia. The assessment is based on the data from Geostat, Social Service Agency, the Ministry of Finance of Georgia, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The following indicators are analyzed: birth rate; poverty rate; inflation rate; labour force statistics; subsistence minimum; Georgian GDP growth rate in comparison with other countries in the region; tax revenues of the budget; average monthly nominal wage.

To design efficient and feasible maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions, it is essential to study international legal acts, as well as the experience of other countries and compare them with Georgian labour law. To fulfil this task, the following materials concerning length and remuneration of maternity, paternity and parental leave were reviewed: a) EU Directives and ILO's International Labour Standards; b) Information from websites of several countries' state agencies on relevant regulations of these countries; c) following institutions' reports analyzing various countries' policies/best practices: The United States Social Security Administration (2018), The World Bank (Gotcheva, 2019), OECD (2021), International Network on Leave Policies and Research (Koslowski, Blum, Dobrotić, et al., 2022), European Parliamentary Research Service (Kern & Lecerf, 2023).

Based on the results of the analysis, the main findings and recommendations are formulated in the following chapters.

Maternity benefits

In 13 EU Member States, the maternity allowance amounts to 100% of the salary. The minimum rate of the allowance throughout the EU is 70% of the salary (Kern & Lecerf, 2023; Estonian Social Insurance Board, 2023; OECD, 2021).

In 12 Member States, the duration of maternity leave is longer than in Georgia; in 10 – it is shorter, while in 5 – it is the same. The longest period of paid maternity leave is in Bulgaria – 410 days (Kern & Lecerf, 2023; OECD, 2021).

There is a different approach among the EU countries in setting eligibility criteria. In some Member States minimum period of employment is required, e.g. in Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia, 12 months of social insurance contributions in the 24 months preceding the leave are required from women employees. In some countries (e.g. Estonia, Poland, Germany, Austria), all insured women employees are entitled to the mentioned allowance (Estonian Social Insurance Board, 2023; OECD, 2021).

According to the European Social Charter, the right to compensation may be subject to entitlement conditions such as a minimum period of employment or contribution. However, such conditions shall not be excessive. In particular, qualifying periods should allow for some interruptions in the employment record (European Committee of Social Rights, 2015).

The Maternity Protection Convention provides that each member shall ensure that the conditions to qualify for cash benefits can be satisfied by a large majority of employed women, “where a woman does not meet the conditions to qualify for cash benefits she shall be entitled to adequate benefits out of social assistance funds, subject to the means test required for such assistance”.

Georgian legislation provides such assistance: each member of a deprived family is entitled to subsistence benefit, between 30 and 60 GEL depending on the level of social-economic conditions of the family, while a child under the age of 16, in addition to the mentioned benefit, can receive child supplement of 200 GEL. Currently, up to 29% of all children under 16 are receiving child supplement¹.

In Georgia, the right to maternity and parental leave is not subject to a length of employment qualification, and it should stay so because otherwise, it will worsen the protection level already given by the labour law and decrease the number of beneficiaries.

According to the Convention (article 6(8)), maternity benefits shall be provided through compulsory social insurance or public funds, or in a manner determined by national law and practice. An employer shall not be individually liable for the direct cost of any such monetary benefit to a woman employed by him or her without that employer's specific agreement except where it is agreed by the government and the representative organizations of employers and workers (social partners).

The allowance in EU countries is financed through compulsory social insurance. Contributions are paid by an employer, in some countries – by an employee as well. Social insurance fund also pays pensions, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit etc (Social Security Administration, 2018; OECD, 2021). There are very few exceptions: e.g., in Malta, maternity benefit is paid directly by the employer during 14 weeks (OECD, 2021; Gotcheva, 2019), while in Denmark, the benefit is compensated by the budget through general taxes (Social Security Administration, 2018).

In Georgia, it is not desirable to place on an employer the burden of paying maternity and parental benefit directly to an employee because:

- 1) It contradicts International Labour Standards (see article 6(8) of the Convention);
- 2) It will increase employers' labour costs considerably, and as a result: a) employees will be less willing to hire women, which will make it harder for women to find a suitable job; b) employees' motivation to give women a promotion will decrease, as higher salary would mean higher maternity benefit.

Georgia does not have social insurance system, because during the last 15 years, Georgia has pursued a liberal tax policy: social tax in Georgia stood at 20% when it was abolished in 2008; instead, income tax increased from 12 to 20%, but overall, tax burden decreased significantly. So today, the tax burden is much lower in Georgia than in EU and OECD countries (Urotadze, 2018). In addition, GDP per capita in Georgia is one of the lowest in Europe (Trading Economics, 2023). Hence, the

¹ The average monthly number of beneficiaries for the first 6 months of 2023 is 233 000 (Social Service Agency, 2023), while the number of children under 16 in Georgia is 817 000 (Geostat, 2023b).

budget resources in Georgia are much more limited than in developed countries; this factor also needs to be considered when deciding on the scale of increase in maternity and parental benefits.

Currently, in Georgia, the calculation of maternity and parental benefit is based on gross earnings (employee's earnings before taxes) but shall not exceed 2000 GEL for the whole period of paid leave² (6 months – 126 days of maternity leave and 57 days of parental leave). At the initial stage of the process of increase in the benefit rate, the maximum amount of the benefit should increase from 2000 GEL to 4200 GEL, which is 700 GEL per month. The reason for determining this amount is that the subsistence minimum for the average consumer is 256 GEL (Geostat, 2023c), and for the purpose of determining the level of allowance, this figure should at least be doubled to 512 GEL (which will increase in following years due to inflation³ and gradually approach 700 GEL), as the state should guarantee sufficient benefits to support at least two persons – parent on the leave and a child.

From 2019 to 2022, maternity and parental benefit was paid to 13 300 beneficiaries annually on average, from which mothers constituted more than 99% (in 2021 and 2022). Hence the additional annual cost of the increased benefit for mothers will amount to 29 260 000 GEL (2200 x 13 300).

The increase in the allowance may encourage the take-up of parental leave by fathers. In 2022 only 124 fathers took parental leave (less than 1% of beneficiaries), while in the first 7 months of 2023, this number increased to 173⁴. In Georgia, the practice of uneven distribution of family work between mother and father⁵ may hinder the sharp increase in take-up of parental leave by fathers. Hence, it is difficult to estimate the rate of increase in the use of parental leave by fathers.

An annual review of leave policies produced by the International Network on Leave Policies and Research indicates that a large majority of parental leave days is taken by mothers in EU countries: e.g. in Poland, 99% of parental leave takers were women (Kurowska, Godlewska-Bujok & Michoń, 2022). Around 2% of all recipients were men in the Czech Republic (Kocourkova, 2022). In France, 6.1% of the beneficiaries were men (Boyer & Fagnani, 2022), while in Estonia – 12.8% (Pall, 2022). In Sweden, fathers took 30% of all Parental leave days used in 2021 (Duvander & Lofgren, 2022).

If we assume that fathers' share in beneficiaries will not surpass 10-15% and their number shall increase gradually during the following 3 years, the approximate cost for the budget in 2024 shall amount to 4.2 million GEL: 1000 (beneficiaries) x 4200 = 4 200 000.

The expenditure is assumed to increase in the following 2 years as well:

- 2025: 1500 (beneficiaries) x 4200 = 6 300 000.
- 2026: 2000 (beneficiaries) x 4200 = 8 400 000.

Overall, the increase in the allowance for both - mothers and fathers will cost up to:

- 2024: 33 460 000 GEL (29 260 000 + 4 200 000).

² The employee has to use the paid part of maternity leave and parental leave in sequence, for 183 days (or 200 days in specific cases).

³ Asian Development Bank projects that the inflation rate in Georgia will be 6% in 2023 and 4% in 2024 (Asian Development Bank, 2023)

⁴ Information about the take-up of parental leave by fathers was requested from Social Service Agency and received in 2023.

⁵ The issue is discussed in “Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C183 - Maternity Protection Convention” (Babych, Mzhavanadze, & Keshelava, pg. 30-31, 2021).

- 2025: 35 560 000 GEL (29 260 000 + 6 300 000).
- 2026: 37 660 000 GEL (29 260 000 + 8 400 000).

Protection of self-employed women

It is important to address the issue of protecting self-employed women from losing income during the final stages of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding period. This issue is beyond the scope of the Convention; The Directive 2010/41/EU "on equal treatment between self-employed men and women" establishes the right to maternity allowances for at least 14 weeks for female self-employed workers. In most EU countries, self-employed women are entitled to the same level of maternity benefit as employed women, but in Denmark and the Czech Republic, eligibility criteria is stricter⁶ (OECD, 2021). In several EU countries - Belgium, Netherlands, Greece the level of benefits and/or the payment period is smaller for self-employed women. E.g. in Netherlands the maximum amount of maternity allowance for self-employed women will not exceed the statutory gross minimum wage (€1,955 per month (€92 per day) for persons with full employment), while for employees, it is 100% of the wage up to a maximum of EUR 209.26 per day (OECD, 2021; Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 2023).

Self-employed persons are beyond the scope of the LC, as they do not have an employer; thus, they are not entitled to the leave. In order to prevent self-employed pregnant women and young mothers from losing income, it is necessary to impose pregnancy and childcare benefit for at least 3 months (beneficiaries may distribute the 3-month period at their discretion over the pregnancy and postnatal stages). The amount of monthly benefit should depend on the mother's average income for the last several months. To control the costs, it is desirable to set a ceiling on the amount of the benefit. The ceiling should be no less than the subsistence minimum – e.g. 300 GEL subject to indexation to inflation. It is possible to set eligibility criteria – e.g. 6 months of work in the last 12 months, including in the 1 month directly preceding the day of claiming benefit.

Self-employed constitute about 6% of women of reproductive age (15–44 years)⁷. 6% of total births in 2021 was 2.8 thousand. Hence, the annual cost of the benefit will amount to 2.52 million GEL:

$$900 \text{ (total benefit)} \times 2800 \text{ (beneficiaries)} = 2.52 \text{ million GEL.}$$

⁶ Eligibility criteria for maternity benefit in Denmark: employees must have worked at least 160 hours in the four months preceding the paid leave. Self-employed workers must have worked for at least 6 months in the 12 months preceding the leave, including in the 1 month directly preceding the leave.

Eligibility criteria for maternity benefit in Czech Republic: employees must have at least 270 days of contributions during the 2 years preceding leave. Self-employed worker must also have 180 days' contributions during the last year.

⁷ In 2021, the population of women of reproductive age (15–44 years) was 692 thousand (Geostat, 2023b), out of which 38.5 thousand were Self-employed (information about the number of self-employed women by age groups was requested from Geostat and received in 2022).

Parental benefits

Until 2 August 2022, EU law provided a right to four months of unpaid parental leave for each parent, but under the new Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance, two out of the four months shall become paid and non-transferable from one parent to the other. The level of benefits can be decided by the Member States but must be set in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents. These regulations had to be implemented by the Member States by 2 August 2022.

The length of parental leave, as well as the benefit levels differ strongly among the Member States. There are only nine countries in the EU (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia) where the length of parental leave is longer than in Georgia (OECD, 2021). However, the problem in Georgia is the absence of adequate allowance.

In 13 Member States, the benefit level is at least two-thirds of the parent's earnings. The length of payment in these countries varies greatly: e.g. 6 months in Finland; until a child's 2nd birthday in Hungary (OECD, 2021). On the other hand, there were several countries where parental leave was unpaid until recently: Netherlands, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Ireland and Spain (OECD, 2021; Schulze & Gergoric, 2015) - These countries had to introduce paid parental leave by August 2022 to comply with the requirements of the Directive, e.g. Netherlands introduced nine weeks of parental leave for each parent paid at 70% of the employee's daily salary subject to the ceiling (Moltubak, 2022).

Due to high poverty levels among children in Georgia, it is important to increase paid parental leave period; it will encourage the take-up of the leave and enable parents to spend more time with their children. Currently, the allowance is paid for 57 days of the leave; it can be increased by 4 months - 2 months of non-transferrable paid leave for each parent. Initially, the upper limit of the benefit rate for the period of additional 2 months can be set at 250 GEL for the first month and 200 GEL for the following month – 450 GEL in total, which will add about 7 million GEL to the annual budget expenditure:

- 450 x 13 300 mothers = 6 000 000
- 450 x 2 000 fathers = 900 000

The amount should be increased with the growth of the economy and the budget revenue.

Paternity benefits

EU Directive on work-life balance obliges the Member States to impose paternity leave of 10 working days that is to be taken on the birth of the child. The right to paternity leave shall not be made subject to a period of work qualification, while the right to an allowance may be made subject to periods of previous employment, which shall not exceed six months before the birth of the child. The allowance should guarantee an income at least equivalent to the sickness benefit⁸ (subject to the ceiling).

⁸ Is given in the event of a break in the worker's activities on grounds connected with the worker's state of health.

Currently, 10 countries (Belgium, Austria, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovenia, Portugal, Finland, Spain) in the EU have higher standards in terms of the duration of the leave than the directive. The longest duration of the paternity leave is in Spain – 16 weeks and the allowance amounts to 100% of the salary (Kern & Lecerf, 2023).

Considering the limited budget resources in Georgia, at an initial stage, it would be reasonable to introduce unpaid paternity leave of 2 weeks and then impose an allowance and increase the rate gradually:

- a) 150 GEL for at least one week;
- b) 150 GEL per week for 2 weeks;
- c) Further increase of the benefit (as the economy and the budget revenue grows), which will eventually enable a worker to maintain an adequate standard of living relative to the income before taking the leave.

In Georgia, the employment rate is higher among men than women – 51.7% and 35.4%, respectively (Geostat, 2023d). However, if we take only those with employment relationship (i.e. exclude self-employed persons, as they are not entitled to leave under the LC), then the number will be a little higher for women compared to men – 441 000 and 430 000 respectively (Geostat, 2023d). Therefore, the number of new beneficiaries may not be more than in the case of maternity leave – approximately 13 000. Thus, the overall annual budget expenditure will amount to:

- 2 million GEL when paying 150 GEL for one week;
- 4 million GEL when paying 150 GEL per week for 2 weeks.

Total cost of changes in the leave policy

In total, the significant increase of the maternity benefit rate, as well as the increase of parental benefit and introduction of paternity allowance, will cost up to:

- **43 million GEL for 2024:** 33.5 mln (maternity and parental benefit rate increase) + 7 mln (increase of the duration of paid parental leave by 4 months) + 2.5 mln (benefit for self-employed women)
- **47.2 million GEL for 2025:** 35.6 mln (maternity and parental benefit rate increase) + 7 mln (increase of the duration of paid parental leave by 4 months) + 2.5 mln (benefit for self-employed women) + 2 mln (introduction of paternity benefit).
- **51.2 million GEL for 2026:** 37.7 mln (maternity and parental benefit rate increase) + 7 mln (increase of the duration of paid parental leave by 4 months) + 2.5 mln (benefit for self-employed women) + 4 mln (introduction of paternity benefit).

The following indicators are important to determine the feasibility of these changes in Georgian labour law:

1) GDP growth rate - The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development projects Georgia's GDP growth to be 5% in 2023 and 5.3% in 2024. Georgia is a leader in projected GDP growth rate among Central and Eastern European countries (The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2023).

2) In Georgia, tax revenues of the budget increased by 22% (2.4 billion GEL) in 2021 and by 30% (4 billion GEL) in 2022 and are expected to grow by 8-10% annually in 2023-2025 (1.6-1.7 Billion GEL per year) (Ministry of Finance of Georgia, 2023).

These figures suggest that the changes in the family related leave regulations in Georgia proposed by the research are financially feasible.

Conclusion

The review of academic literature showed a positive relationship between the increase in maternity/parental leave length/remuneration and improvements in the mental and physical health of mother and child, including a decrease in infant mortality rate and an increase in initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

In the research, the following recommendations to increase the generosity of maternity, paternity and parental leave policies in Georgia are presented:

- The upper threshold of maternity benefit should increase to 4200 GEL - 700 GEL per month, a little higher than the subsistence minimum for 2 persons as the state should guarantee sufficient benefits to support a parent on the leave and a child.

- Self-employed persons are not entitled to leave in Georgia. In order to prevent self-employed pregnant women and young mothers from losing income, it is necessary to impose pregnancy and childcare benefit for at least 3 months. The upper threshold for the allowance should be no less than the subsistence minimum – e.g. 300 GEL subject to indexation to inflation.

- Currently, parental allowance is paid for 57 days. It can be increased by 4 months - 2 months of non-transferrable paid leave for each parent. Initially, the upper limit of the benefit rate can be set at 250 GEL for the first month and 200 GEL for the following month – 450 GEL in total.

- The LC does not offer paternity leave, which is provided in EU countries. Initially, it would be reasonable to introduce unpaid paternity leave of 2 weeks and then impose an allowance and increase the rate gradually (with the growth of the economy and the budget revenue), which will eventually enable a worker to maintain an adequate standard of living relative to the income before taking the leave.

The research indicated that the significant increase in maternity benefit rate, as well as an increase in parental benefit and an introduction of paternity leave/benefit, is financially feasible, given the recent economic growth rate in Georgia and its projected growth for the coming years.

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