



Questions and answers regarding maternity and paternity leave

María Pazos Morán
PLENT-Spain (PPIINA)

1. Why should parental leave be equal and non-transferable for all people regardless of their sex?

Because we want to eliminate gender-specific roles and achieve a society of free people:

The birth of a baby is a crucial moment in life. If we want an egalitarian society, it is essential that we break away from differing behaviours that at present indoctrinate people in inequality and in domination from birth. The best school for equality is an environment in which all adult people can care for others and be economically independent. This is a necessary condition for freedom, although it is not the only one.

Currently, in spite of specific statements to the contrary, in practice public authorities (by means of their legal norms) perpetuate the idea that women must concentrate primarily on caring for others, while men must concentrate primarily on paid work, a belief which affects all women, whether or not they are mothers. The current paternity leave, which is shorter than maternity leave, is a model of kindness but not equality, because it doesn't directly tackle the sexual division of labour. Equal and non-transferable parental leave is not only necessary for fathers, mothers and babies, but also to advocate for the elimination of assigned gender roles. A government which does not articulate its objectives for equality in regard to parental leave cannot say that it is truly in favour of equality.

Even though this might seem to be a simple claim of a Social Security right, the fact is it has not been achieved anywhere in the world. Why? Precisely because it attacks the very roots of the division of labour, which is the fundamental basis of patriarchy. Nowadays few people would advocate that mothers should miss more days at work than fathers, or that fathers should get involved in less care than mothers. On the contrary, persons from all spheres declare themselves in favour of effective equality in parental leave and tell us that this reform is 'a matter of justice', that it is 'sensible' or even that 'it goes without saying'. This apparently simple claim, precisely because of its simple design and application, its low budgetary cost and the obvious nature of its effect on gender roles in all the spheres, shows the inconsistency between a theoretically egalitarian discourse and real political will. The lack of arguments against it confers it an enormous heuristic power and turns it into a test to determine if a government is really in favour of equality.

The familiar and always relevant feminist demand for economic independence for all women is not the only important issue, but it is the 'sine-qua-non' condition necessary in determining the course of one's own life. In a society where maternity predetermines a different sort of life from paternity, all women are seen foremost as potential mothers, even if they don't have the slightest intention of actually becoming mothers, and are penalized for it. To imagine a society of earning/caring people

in complete equality is like imagining a society in which only individual differences exist but there are no sexual differences. A society in which people are not reduced to the role of being mothers, workers, carers, masculine, feminine, married, single, native, immigrant... To imagine such a society is possible. To imagine and to struggle for it is to already experience it in a certain way, and for that it on its own has a great transforming power for men and for women, because what's personal is political and what's political is personal. Let's be realistic, to demand what's apparently impossible is to make it possible!

Because we want equality between men and women in the labour market:

For companies, parental leave creates extra salary costs. If these expenses (obligations) were the same for men and for women, the companies would have to organize themselves to do without both their male and female workers in the same way/amount. Though now it is women who carry the label of being "less available". While maternity leave entitlements continue to be greater than those for paternity, the companies will resist hiring women or will place them in precarious positions where it is easier to replace them.

In times of full male employment this effect is mitigated, since companies are forced to resort to the female labour force to fill qualified jobs (but, compensate these major unwaged costs with lower salaries). But at times of high male unemployment and industrial uncertainty, why are employers going to make use of a labour force of high risk if they have another less high risk readily available to substitute it?

Current attempts to protect women's (and not men's) positions through prohibiting dismissals (from the onset of the pregnancy until after taking leave) do nothing more than aggravate this effect, especially when the reforms of the labour market are making the workforce in general more and more flexible (flexicurity). To ironclad women's contracts in this way backfires on them if they don't also ironclad men's contracts in the same way.

Because mothers pay a high price for their withdrawal from the workforce:

Maternity leave is only 'the beginning of the route'. In a society where fathers don't assume 50% of the caring and where there are no suitable public child-care, women find themselves being forced to prolong their leave with leaves of absence, or by moving to part time work or abandoning the workforce all together. Women who have devoted some years to domestic work have very little possibility of finding a good quality job when they rejoin the workforce, especially after a certain age. Since they lack Social Security contributions, they are not entitled to unemployment benefits or to contributory pensions on the Social Security scheme. They are thus condemned to either depend economically on their husbands or to a life of precarious employment, unemployment and poverty.

Because if society truly supports co-responsibility in child care, Social Security must give men the possibility of taking on their part:

Co-responsibility is already a generally stated objective, but the fact is that egalitarian men still don't have the possibility of taking on their proportional part even if they wanted to. Today, the Social Security system snatches away that contributory benefit from men, in spite of the fact that they have contributed to Social Security as much, or more, than the mothers. In fact, it is the only benefit where Social Security explicitly discriminates on the basis of people's sex. How can this phenomenon be explained? It is true that mothers need time to recover from giving birth, but there is no reason why the father shouldn't be entitled to the same time off as the mother, even if he uses all his time to care, and yet there are important reasons for men to be able to take the same amount of time off from work as women.

Because boys and girls deserve the caring of their fathers as much as of their mothers:

Nowadays we know how important love and education are from zero years, as we also know the importance of men being initiated in sensibility and in caring. Moreover, if the mothers feel that they are supported by their partners (regardless of their sex) and don't have to renounce other aspects of their lives, that balance will be to the advantage of the whole family's happiness and well-being.

2. But, why should parental leave be non-transferable?

According to the Social Security rules, each person accumulates entitlements that later provide financial benefits when situations such as sickness, retirement or unemployment prevent them from working. All these benefits are personal and non-transferable. For example, if a person doesn't want to retire, he or she can continue working, but cannot transfer his or her pension to another person. In the same way, if someone has been getting unemployment benefits and while doing so gets another job, his or her unemployment benefit is interrupted before it runs out, but he or she cannot pass it on to another unemployed person in his or her family, no matter how much that person needs it. Curiously, this rule of individuality is exclusively broken when it relates to time for child care.

In Sweden maternity leave was eliminated in 1974, and it was replaced by an equal leave for each parent, but for the first time in the history of Social Security, it was established that either parent could transfer any part of his or her leave to the other parent (the result was that the majority of men transferred their part to "their" women but not the other way around). In Spain, for the last few years, the mother can transfer 10 weeks of her maternity leave to the father. In many countries, as in Germany, "parental" leave is being set up, which theoretically can be enjoyed indiscriminately by either of the two parents. Why this exception? Simply because that way parental leave looks like egalitarian without actually being so, as this policy does not change the unbalanced take up between both parents.

The inequality between parental leave shows so clearly the gendered division of work that "The Legislator" has found a way to hide it. This way, using the excuse of "freedom to choose", the responsibility for the decision is transferred to the mothers, leading to the prevalence of the idea that if women take it all it is because they want to. In reality this is the old recourse of domination that consists of ignoring the pressures to which people are subjected, blaming them for giving in to those pressures as well as fighting against them.

The existing empirical evidence shows, in an overwhelming way, that men only take the non-transferable leave (with rare exceptions), and that they systematically transfer to women the joint or transferable part. This is the case to such a point that the non-transferable parts established for both parents (for example in Sweden or in Germany where it is currently two months), are called "Daddy months", because that's the part that fathers take, leaving the remaining time to the mothers. It is also paradoxical that, even though it has been established that women have less power when it comes to decision-making at all levels, the decision to systematically monopolize the time of joint leave is attributed to mothers, as if the fathers had no say or vote as part of the couple.

Joint or transferable leave: a major trap

The institution of joint or transferable leave is currently the major trap hindering the advance towards equality in this field. In fact, if Germany in its recent reforms had established twelve months for mothers and two for fathers, it would have met with great opposition. So, what it did

was to set up twelve months of parental leave that could be divided “freely” between the two parents, and this can be extended to fourteen months if each of them take at least two months. One didn’t have to wait for the publication of the first statistics to see how couples have shared this time and for everybody to start talking about the two Daddy months and the twelve mothers’ months.

3. But, what if men take the leave but don’t look after the babies? (A lot of people say: “they’ll go on holidays”)

The available statistics show that men look after their offspring (in general) during parental leave, but:

1. Even if they didn’t participate in the caring, equal and non-transferable leave would be still profitable if only because men and women would take time off from work in exactly the same proportion. The equality in take up of leave is a sine-non-qua condition to achieve equality in the workforce.
2. Even if they were a minority, egalitarian men should have a right to their leave, which is a contributory Social Security benefit. The equality in the leaves is a sine-qua-non condition for men to be able to assume co-responsibility for parenting.

4. And what if men don’t want it?

In the first place, men do want it. In the majority of countries, men and women are overwhelmingly in favour of an egalitarian family (see for instance <http://pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/>. In Spain (CIS Opinion poll, March, 2010, at http://datos.cis.es/pdf/Es2831mar_A.pdf), for 80% of the population the ideal family is “*a family where the two members in the couple have a paid job with a similar dedication and both share the domestic chores and the caring of their sons or daughters if they have them*”). Given that, in general terms, citizens are not aware of international experiences regarding the effects of one or another public policy, it is up to the public powers to inform the population adequately and to adopt the right measures.

Besides, statistics show that non-transferable paternity leave has a high level of support in all countries where it has been implemented. In Spain, before its existence, 83% of the population was already in favour of it (CIS Opinion poll, March 2006), and this proportion has increased to 89% (CIS Opinion poll, March 2010). In Iceland, where a non-transferable paternity leave of 3 months was introduced between 2000 and 2003, it has now become a generally accepted social norm; to the point that the father who doesn’t take the leave to care for his offspring is not well regarded. In Sweden, the first non-transferable month (in 1994), as well as the second non-transferable month (in 2004), were well received by a great majority of the population.

Secondly, apart from contradicting reality, the argument that fathers don’t want it is unheard of: If they have a baby, they will have to care for him or her, haven’t they? It is a crime to abandon a baby. In fact, the police hunt and detain the mothers of newborn babies who have been abandoned. What happens is that, at the same time and amazingly enough, men currently not only are not hunted for abandoning their babies but, on top of that, Social Security does not allow them to reconcile their caring responsibility with their employment obligations. Babies have the right to be taken care of by their dads!

5. Aren't 16 weeks of maternity leave (as in Spain and France) too little? Should maternity leave be increased now?

The Platform for Equal & Non-Transferable Parental Leave (PLENT) is opposed to any extension of the maternity leave until complete equality is reached between maternity and paternity leave. Once parental leave becomes equal, non-transferable, with the same obligatory portion and is paid 100%, leave for all parents could be extended in unison to whatever length society considers convenient and possible. Currently, it is true that four months is little for the baby, and this is one of the major reasons why it is urgent for fathers to have their leave; this would substantially increase the total time in which babies would benefit from the care of their parents (from the current 16 + 2 to 16 + 16 weeks). In any case, everything is to be improved but, before anything, there's one self evident and urgent objective: equality.

6. But, what if the babies need their mums more than their dads?

This belief doesn't correspond to the available evidence. On the contrary, it is well known that the absence of a father causes a lot of suffering. Dads can care for children just the same as mothers. The proof lies in the fact that many do. Numerous Swedish testimonies and opinion polls show that, when couples have shared 50% of the leave and care from the time of the birth of their sons/daughters, the children do not make a distinction between the parents and demand caring from both in the same way. Now, instead, babies are educated in the difference (they see that dads don't take part in the caring), and that indoctrination is continued in the educational system (gender differential toys are very important in transmitting inequality) and in many other public policies. All of that leads to the establishment of gender roles that bring so many bad consequences for people and society. In this way, when they have children, women assume the child care because they have been educated into a caring role since childhood, while men do not assume it because they have not been educated for it. To break away from this vicious circle, it is important to start right from when the baby is born (and of course to continue with equality in the educational system at all levels).

7. But, won't it be bad for boys and girls to go to nursery schools at such an early age?

At it is stated above (question 5), if both mother and father had four months of equal and non-transferable leave, together with the two months of holidays, ten months would be covered in total, a very appropriate age to begin childhood education. Nevertheless, if this period is considered too short, fathers' and mothers' leaves could be increased at the same time, but never increasing the mothers leave before arriving to equality, as this would increase the problem of 'path dependency' explained in question 18)

In any case, it is interesting how the assumptions regarding what's appropriate are conditioned by the social norm (and at the same time by the institutional environment). To cite some examples, in Sweden public child-care from the age of 1 is considered a childhood right (which coincides with an institutional environment of an extended parental leave and the universal right to childhood education. In the USA many boys and girls enter external-to-the family child-care at the age of 4 months (short parental leave and private child-care services that are subsidized through tax allowances). In Germany, however, it is considered wrong for children to go to external child-care before they turn 3 years of age (mother's low rate of activity, long parental leave and scarcity of public child-care services). In France external child-care is accepted from 5 months of age (good public child-care system, relatively short parental paid leave).

8. But why should those women that may want to stay at home to look after their babies be prevented from doing so?

Nobody wants to prevent it. We respect individual freedom, but the public sector must not promote a model of economic dependence which leads to the defencelessness and vulnerability of women at all levels. If they choose it, let it be without incentives.

9. Why not try for fathers to take leaves of absence or work part time, etc?

Because it doesn't work. All the measures that have been tried in this regard have failed, not even bizarre (and unjust) measures like paying more to men than to women for making use of these policy provisions. In Spain some of these experiments have been performed in several regions, and none of them have been effective.

Men, in general, do not welcome any measure that deprives them of their whole salary or that can be transferred to women. It is normal that men may not want to be in a situation of economic dependence or to lose their place in quality employment. What this is about is that women shouldn't have to do this either. To achieve this, the only solution is to end the two separate channels that are now on offer: one for men, with continuous work placements throughout their lives, and another for women with precarious work placements and loss of economic independence.

10. If the leave of all parents, whether mothers or fathers, are made to equal that which mothers now have, in Spain fathers would have 6 obligatory weeks followed by 10 voluntary ones (but non-transferable). Why force men to take those first six weeks? Wouldn't this be "imposing equality by force"? Wouldn't it be better for the 16 weeks to be voluntary, although of course non-transferable?

It is not about forcing fathers to take leave; it is about protecting their rights against the business sector, just as it is now done with women (and nobody thinks they are being forced to). The social rights to be protected become obligatory (cannot be forfeited) to avoid employer pressure (i.e. holidays, maximum working hours, or the first six weeks of maternity leave in Spain). A number of obligatory weeks of maternity leave is a peculiarity of some countries which will be very useful if extended to the fathers in order to protect them from employer pressures, since it is foreseeable that this pressure will be greater than that which could be exerted on mothers. So, the obligatory weeks are as convenient for men as for women.

Some people think that mothers should have that obligatory time to protect their health (she has to recover after giving birth). If it was true that mothers are incapacitated for six weeks, all the more reason to make sure that the father has the right to be able to look after the mother, the baby and the rest of the family. This is not always the case, but what is necessary is to protect the rights, of the mother to be able to recover and care as well as the right of the father to look after her, the baby and the rest of the family.

In reality, the fact that the obligatory time is seen as normal for the mothers and not for the fathers is very illustrative of the difference in gender roles and of the little importance given to the right of men to take part in child care.

11. Then, why don't we demand, in Spain, that all the fathers' leave be obligatory, instead of just 6 of the 16 weeks? Why leave the other 10 weeks entitled to men "unprotected"?

PLENT-Spain asks for six weeks of the father's leave to be compulsory only because mother's leave has this feature. We consider that the most urgent reform, - just, easily explainable and assumable -, is complete equality. In this sense, if the mothers didn't have six obligatory weeks in Spain we wouldn't also be asking them for the fathers in this first stage. Once parental leave is equal, non-transferable, with the same obligatory portion and paid 100%, other reforms could then be studied (as long as these characteristics are maintained), but this is not the case that concerns us now.

12. But wouldn't it be better to change men's attitudes first (and women's)?

Attitudes have already changed. As stated before (see question number 4), almost everywhere most people are in favour of the egalitarian family. In any case, public policies have a great power to change behaviours. In Spain we have seen this in many cases: smoking, driving, same sex marriages... Society must be prepared for the change; but once the legal change takes place, this has a great multiplier effect to achieve a change in people's attitudes.

13. But will there be a sufficient social demand for this change?

It's true that there are no rallies or demonstrations in the streets calling for equal and non-transferable parental leave. Nor has there been any for many other policy changes (for example, the establishment of a progressive personal income tax, Social Security; or more recently the banning of smoking in public places, the successful changes in driving regulations or marriages between same sex couples). Nevertheless, opinion polls show that the Spanish population wants to change into a model of society of people who are carers/providers on equal terms. As in many other changes that have taken place in this area, it is the public powers that have the responsibility to interpret the needs of the population; in order to translate them into legislative changes that can effectively lead to the changes that society demands. Only when the State does not fulfil its function, it becomes necessary to resort to street rallies and demonstrations.

14. And what if the employers are against it?

In Spain, the opposition of employers to paternity leave has been repeatedly alluded to in statements made by the trade unions and the government. However, there hasn't been a single public statement made in this respect by any significant business entity. In fact, in the report presented by the Economic and Social Council (CES) about the Gender Equality Law, the Spanish Confederation of Employer Organizations (CEOE) issued a particular vote, but that vote referred to gender equality plans in the companies, while it didn't cast any votes nor make any statements against paternity leave. Furthermore, we can envisage that employers won't make any statements in the future either, since such a declaration against paternity leave would provide evidence of its option to prioritise quality employment for men as opposed to women's. As the Spanish Chapter of PLENT stated in its letter addressed to the Vice-president Fernandez de la Vega, on February 14th, 2006:

"Why do employers would oppose paternity leave in a much more emphatic way than they oppose the growing possibilities of leave and time off to care for children that women now take up in 99% of the cases? While inequality in parental leave take up persists, business owners will be able to continue designing their personnel structures on male terms, and will continue setting aside only

the precarious jobs for women. Women who have joined the workforce in Spain now find themselves being forced to choose between their professional life and their family life; and in this way employers discriminate against them even if they don't have children. Our system of social protection must be modified to integrate the new reality of the incorporation of women into the paid workforce, but it would be very dangerous if it was modified to shape a dual labour market in which there were jobs for men and jobs for women, consolidating as a result the inequality and economic dependence of women. This is not science fiction, it is what has happened already in those countries that have chosen to facilitate part time work, longer maternity leave and leaves of absence for women, incentives to leave the labour market to care for children or other family members, etc., while they have paid little attention to paternity leave, to public childcare and to the elimination of disincentives to paid work for women.”

If employers have a stand, let them express it; that would be very productive for social debate. In any case, the laws are decided by Parliament. It is true that employers have to organize themselves to go without men. That is why we think the reform should be implemented progressively according to a pre-determined plan. It is also important that the total cost of leave would be covered by the Social Security (as opposed to companies); and support to companies could also be established in other ways.

15. But, will we achieve enough support?

We already have ‘consensus enough’. In Spain, the non-transferable paternity leave has always been an issue where, at any point in time, the government has lagged behind the existing consensus in Parliament. Before the introduction of the two weeks (non-transferable) paternity leave in 2007, all the parliamentary groups had voted in favour of four weeks (although not at the same time); and there were numerous amendments (to the Gender Equality Law) asking for its extension to four weeks. In fact, the reduction to two weeks was reached through a compromise among political parties, in such a way that the amendments were withdrawn before the parliament could vote for them in a plenary session. After the Gender Equality Law, in 2008 the Congress, unanimously, asked the government to accelerate the extension to four weeks. In spite of this, the extension has been postponed until 2011, a decision also reached through a pact between the different groups.

Currently, a large number of personalities from all spheres are in favour of equal and non-transferable parental leave, and none have taken a stand against it. Our experience is that, in general, the resistance to equal parental leave is not explicit, precisely because no political force wants to stand explicitly against the objective of co-responsibility. The objective of equal and non-transferable parental leave has the great virtue of differentiating between the hollow discourse and the real political will. That is why a political debate would be very productive and would help the citizenry see clearly who is really in favour of equality, and who is not.

16. Will it be difficult to design?

In countries with short maternity and paid parental leave (as Spain), the reform is easy to implement: it would be about copping, in an exact way, a right that already exists (that of mothers, in practice), and simply extend it to every parent, fathers and mothers, as well as making it totally non-transferable.

In fact, such a reform would provide an opportunity to adapt the current legislation, simplifying the rules and taking away numerous and serious inconsistencies which currently exist: different and/or obsolete denominations for the same purposes (as ‘breast-feeding hours’), differences between

adoption and birth; the possibility to transfer a Social Security benefit to another person; or what is even more bizarre, to pass on a right that one doesn't have (this is the case of the 10 weeks of the Spanish maternity leave which are transferable to the father: if the working woman has not accumulated 180 days worth of paid dues to Social Security, she has no right to the maternity leave/benefit. However, the other parent can enjoy this leave/benefit if that person has accumulated his or her paid dues to Social Security, but only if the mother decides to do so – since she's the 'owner', but not the 'beneficiary', of that right). These inconsistencies, and many more, are the result of the accumulation of temporary band-aid measures on an obsolete legislation based on gender differences that no longer make sense, neither in practice nor in their language. This way we can get to see absurd cases where a woman has to take *paternity* leave (in same-sex couples). This reform would simplify and would give coherence to the system of parental leave for birth and/or adoption.

In terms of protection of employment and other complementary provisions, it is also about extending to all parents, mothers and fathers, the ones that already exist for mothers.

17. Won't it be too expensive? Will the economy be able to afford it?

Since 2005, PLENT-Spain has argued against budgetary objections¹. The budgetary argument hides implicit resistances but does not correspond to reality. Firstly, very frequently the cost is overrated. Secondly, these arguments appear when paternity leave is taken into consideration, but not when it comes to increasing maternity leave, or when dealing with the subsidisation of part time work or absence of leave to care for children and others. When the Gender Equality Law was being debated, in 2006, some people argued that it was impossible to establish four weeks of paternity leave for financial reasons. Nonetheless, afterwards, when we were already in the depths of the financial crisis, much more expensive measures were established, as the Baby Bonus, which in addition has no proven effect on fertility.

At present the current crisis is always cited, but it is precisely that situation of crisis what makes this reform more urgent, like all effective measures for complete equality, to change the model of production:

- To avoid the current wastefulness of women's human capital and the caring capital of men, as well as the gender segregation of the labour market. Eliminating these inefficiencies would greatly increase the country's productivity and competitiveness.
- To tackle the crisis of caring: in a situation in which there are more and more elderly people to be cared for, and there are less people of an age to care for others, society cannot allow 50% of the population to not get involved in caring.
- To restore birth-rates up to acceptable levels: it is necessary to help families so that they can have the children they want (and which according to surveys are on average 2.1 children for each woman, precisely the ideal birth-rate); and help women so that they don't find themselves being forced to choose between quality employment and maternity (because that's one of the reasons why women delay their decision to have children). Equality in parental leave, together with making childhood education universal from 0 years, is a crucial measure to contain this demographic crisis.
- The current crisis aggravates all the problems related to the inequality of parental leave and makes a solution even more urgent: during times of economic crisis, birth-rates tend to

¹ See the cost estimations and the responses to the Government figures. These documents are available in Spanish on our web page: www.igualeseinstransferibles.org

decrease even more; families need more support since they have less resources; female employment is at higher risk when there's an excess in the male workforce on offer.

Moreover, equal parental leave is cost-effective as a medium/long term solution. To change the current model in order to create an egalitarian family will produce an increase in public revenue and a decrease in public expenditure: the emerging of the housewife's sector (which is in part domestic work and in part a genuine informal economy) into the regular economy will improve efficiency and increase the size of the service sector, and with that it will increase tax-revenue. On the other hand, a massive incorporation of men into caring chores will reduce the necessity of services, and with that (potential) public expenditure for these services will also decrease.

18. But, if it is that obvious, why there is not any country where they have arrived that far?

Precisely because, as it is discussed at the beginning of this document, the imbalance between mothers' and fathers' leaves is one of the main pillars of Patriarchy. Recognizing that women and men should care exactly in the same amount would deeply change gender roles, which at its turn would lead to many other changes.

Besides, in this and other aspects of social policy, path dependency is extremely relevant: The international experience shows that the advance towards equal and non-transferable parental leave is somehow easier in countries where they haven't yet established leave for the mothers that is too long (or transferable, which is practically the same). That is one of the reasons why the country which has gone the furthest in this field is Iceland, while Sweden is currently closer to Germany, even though both countries correspond in other issues to a very different model of society: Germany is a symbol of the '*male breadwinner/dependent spouse*' gender regime, while Sweden is oriented towards "*individual earner/carer*" society (See Moss et al, 2009: *The Politics of leave policies*).

In any case, in all countries the reasons for equal and non-transferable parental leave are clear but the patriarchal resistances are enormous. Each country should find its own 'roadmap' to real and total equality.

19. But it's not the only thing that has to be done.

No, it's not the only thing. Many other measures are necessary. Nevertheless, this one is: easy to understand, well received by the population, easy to implement, emblematic of the push forward for co-responsibility, directly the responsibility of the Government and Parliament, and it's not expensive compared to other measures...

The push forward for equal and non-transferable parental leave represents an integrating feminism of equality (as opposed to difference feminism), that overcomes the old stages of feminism (and of public policies) still rooted in sexual difference. It challenges at the very heart of the matter, those very out of date assumptions about gender roles and the very foundations of patriarchy. Feminists and men for equality are, for the first time, united in demanding a right that separates us from other demagogic stands in other male sectors and allows us to outline the evidence, before women and men, the profitability of the push forward towards complete equality, for a society in which each person may be free regardless of previous conditioning and social norms.