

Four weeks paternity leave: a father's report

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This spring, the University of Basel extended paternity leave to four weeks. The Diversity & Inclusion office had a conversation with the first father to make use of these four weeks.

Christian Schori works at the Biozentrum in the Proteomics Core Facility. He is a biologist with a PhD, now working as a proteomics data scientist and this spring he became a father for the third time. Therefore, he has experienced the evolution of paternity leave over the last few years: With his first child, he was granted one day of paternity leave by his employer at the time. With his second child, at a different job, he was granted two weeks and now at the University of Basel four weeks.

From his experience, two weeks is the bare minimum. He did take two weeks off after the birth of his first child, too. However, it was as unpaid leave. He would welcome parental leave as it is known in Germany. At the same time, he is aware of the different societal and political conditions in Switzerland. That makes him all the more appreciative of what the University of Basel offers.

Why is paternity leave needed?

With four weeks of paternity leave, the university positions itself as a family-friendly employer. It shows that both parents benefit from family-friendly offers. The extended paternity leave lays the foundations for equal family work. Christian Schori emphasizes how valuable it is for a family when the father gets to spend time at home after the birth of a child. It's not only about the organizational aspects and supporting the mother, but also about being able to bond with the child. If that bond isn't there, it would be easier to fall back into old gender roles, where the woman reduces her workload and the man works full-time. «Which can happen faster than you think, anyway», says Schori. It's a constant negotiation in everyday family life.

Four weeks: too short or too long?

Four weeks of paternity leave is a positive sign from the perspective of parents-to-be. In the team, however, it may cause mixed reactions: An employee is absent, the work still needs to be done. In response to the question of how understanding his superior and his colleagues were, Christian Schori laughs: «I believe we're the group with the most children in the entire Biozentrum». He was not worried at all that his colleagues would react negatively to the announcement of his third child. And as expected, they didn't. They have no problems with the organization of work if someone is away for four weeks, Schori explains. Other team members take over tasks at short notice or they're postponed. Four weeks is a time span that can be managed, he says. He also emphasizes that he sees this open and supportive approach as a vote of confidence and thus feels very motivated at his workplace.

Everyday life during paternity leave

When asked if he has any advice for fathers-to-be, Christian Schori is hesitant at first. The situation is different for everyone, you can't make generalized statements. After a moment's thought, he says: «Go for it!». One's own needs will be neglected but the birth of a child leads to a big slowing down in everyday life, especially for first-time fathers. At the same time, Schori describes his everyday life during his third paternity leave as very intense: «I tried to support my wife, get to know the baby and be there for the older children. It was about making the older two feel safe and welcoming the newest member of the family.» Because it was important to him that his wife and the newborn had some peace at home, too, Schori made a lot of trips with the other two kids. And after putting them to bed in the evening, there were still some household chores left to do. Christian Schori says with four weeks you can fully commit to what is happening and come together as a family.

Christian Schori is convinced that paternity leave will be extended in the future. Four weeks, however, seem to be fitting for current circumstances. The university, he says, plays a leading role in comparison to the legal requirements and four weeks are practically feasible, as his example shows.

💡 A paid absence is granted not only for male partners of the mothers, but all genders. And also employees who are adopting have parental leave.



«I'm glad that we are granted more than the legally required two weeks of paternity leave here. It is very nice that the special needs of young families are taken into account.»

more information

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[Family-friendly University of Basel](#)

💡 The University of Basel has been certified as family-friendly by the «audit familiengerechte hochschule». It is also a member of the «Familie in der Hochschule» network and has signed the corresponding [Charter](#).

