

Ireland

Distinctive Features: A very poor, traditional country now facing new policy possibilities after economic take-off. Low but now increasing female labor force participation. Social expenditures heavily means-tested.

Maternity / Parental Leave

Benefit	Maternity: cash benefit and job-protected leave; Parental: job-protected
Eligibility Criteria	leave
Duration of Leave	Maternity: universal for working women; Parental: universal for any parent.
Compensation Rate	Maternity: 14 weeks; Parental: 14 weeks at any time until child is 5 Maternity: 70% wage replacement (with guaranteed minimum and maximum) Parental: unpaid

Early Childhood Education and Care

Age Group Served	0 – 5
Eligibility Criteria	Working parents; dependent on supply
Fees	Income-related parent fees
Locus of Care	Centers, preschools, family day care homes
Funding Strategies	Govt., parent fees
Access/Coverage (%)	Ages 0 – 3 (2%); age 4 (54%), age 5 (99%); age 3-6 (55%)

Family and Child Allowances

Benefit & Eligibility	Universal cash benefit for all residents with one or more children until age 18 ¹
Benefit Level	Flat rate; vary with ordinal position of child. Means-tested supplement for lone-parent families (low).

Child and Family Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions/Relief	Tax concessions for widows/widowers, caring for a disabled child, and lone parents
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Other Child-Conditioned Income Transfers

Benefits	Survivor's benefits; dependent-child supplements to old-age benefits and unemployment insurance; means-tested orphan's pension. Family income supplement for low-pay families with children.
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Child and Adolescent Health

Access to Coverage	Population entitled to free (low income) or subsidized health care; universal care for infants and for school-aged children through free school health service.
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Housing Benefits

Benefit	Income-tested rent supplements and tax benefits
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School-Age Children Policies

Compulsory School	6 – 16
School Hours	Ages 4 – 12: 9:00 – 2:00; Ages 13 – 18: 9:00 – 4:00

Youth Policies

Distinctive Features	Increasing number of governmental youth initiatives to reduce high truancy and drop-out rates.
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¹ There are also means-tested cash benefits for lone parents and low-income working families.