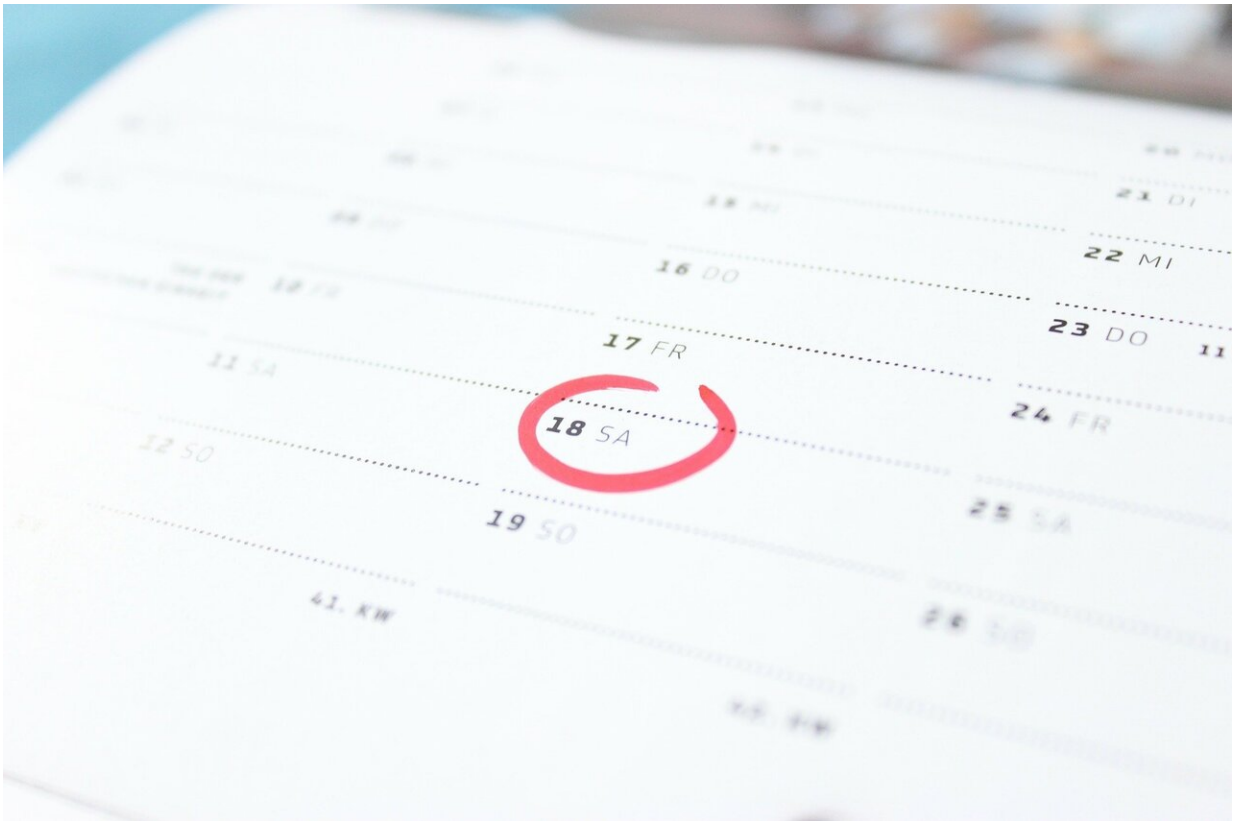


Spain MPs back Europe's first paid 'menstrual leave'

December 15 2022



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Spanish lawmakers on Thursday voted through a bill granting paid medical leave to women who suffer from severe period pain, becoming the first European country to advance such legislation.

Spain's left-wing government said the legislation—which passed its first reading by 190 votes in favour to 154 against and five abstentions—was aimed at breaking a taboo on the subject.

Menstrual leave is currently offered only in a small number of countries across the globe, among them Japan, Indonesia and Zambia.

It will now go to the Senate, and if changed, will return to the lower house for another vote before becoming law.

The legislation entitles workers experiencing period pain to as much time off as they need, with the state social security system—not employers—picking up the tab for the [sick leave](#).

As with paid leave for other health reasons, a doctor must approve the temporary medical incapacity.

Equality Minister Irene Montero hailed the move as a step forward in addressing a health problem that has been largely swept under the carpet until now.

"We are recognising menstrual issues as part of the right to health and we are fighting against both the stigma and the silence," she said.

Montero belongs to the hard-left Podemos, the junior partner in Spain's Socialist-led coalition, which has been the [driving force](#) behind the law.

Although the initial draft said women would have access to sick leave "without limit", there was no mention of that in the text passed on Thursday.

About a third of women who menstruate suffer from [severe pain](#), according to the Spanish Gynaecology and Obstetrics Society.

However, the proposal has created divisions among both politicians and unions, with the UGT, one of Spain's largest trade unions, warning it could stigmatise women in the workplace and favour the recruitment of men.

The bill also bolsters access to abortion services in [public hospitals](#), a right which remains fraught with difficulties in a country with a strong Catholic tradition.

It also ends the requirement for minors of 16 and 17 to obtain [parental consent](#) before having an abortion.

Spain has taken a leading role in advancing women's rights, passing Europe's first law against [domestic violence](#) in 2004, and its current cabinet boasts more women than men.

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