

# Social security benefits available from Kela in 2012

Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, looks after basic security for all persons resident in Finland through the different stages of their lives. For details about the benefits, see [www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi) or Benefit guides, or contact a Kela office.

## Moving to or from Finland

**Benefit guide:**  
*Moving to or away from Finland*

If you move to Finland permanently, you will normally be covered by the Finnish social security system and will qualify for Kela benefits. These are regarded as a permanent move: return migration, employment lasting at least 2 years, or marriage to a person permanently residing in Finland.

Persons moving to Finland on a permanent basis must apply for coverage under the Finnish social security system by filing the Kela form Y77.

If you move to Finland temporarily, you will normally not be entitled to social security benefits from Kela.

If you move abroad for less than a year, you will retain your coverage under the Finnish social security system. If you stay abroad for more than a year, your social security coverage in Finland usually ends.

If you move to another EU/EEA country or Switzerland to work, you will normally be covered by the social security system of your country of employment.

You must notify Kela if you move abroad or if you move back to Finland. Certain Kela benefits are not payable abroad. There are special rules for certain groups such as posted workers, civil servants, students and family members as well as persons moving between the Nordic countries or countries that have a social security agreement with Finland.

■ Kela provides reimbursements for prescription drugs at three rates: 42%, 72% and 100%. The reimbursement is normally deducted from the price of the drugs at the pharmacy when you present your Kela card.

### Compensations for travel expenses

■ Kela pays part of the cost of your treatment or rehabilitation related trips. The compensation may be deducted directly from the fare, provided you give an authorization to the taxi operator.

### Sickness Allowance

■ Anyone who is between 16 and 67 years of age and incapacitated for work by reason of illness is eligible for a Sickness Allowance from Kela. It is taxable income. If an incapacitated employee is entitled to sick pay from his or her employer, the Sickness Allowance is paid to the employer.

The amount of the Sickness Allowance is typically calculated by reference to taxed earnings or to earnings over the last 6 months. On average, it is equal to about 60% of earnings. Persons with no or low income can get a minimum sickness allowance.

Partial Sickness Allowance is available to persons who are incapacitated for work and entitled to a Sickness Allowance. Recipients must switch temporarily from full-time to part-time work status.

### Rehabilitation

■ Kela has a responsibility to provide access to rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities to support their vocational

integration, and to offer medical rehabilitation for severely disabled persons under 65 years. Psychotherapy services for adults are also available through Kela.

Young persons between 16 and 19 years who have functional impairments may be referred to vocational rehabilitation and to education in order to ward off a transition to disability pension. They can be paid a Rehabilitation Allowance.

### Rehabilitation Allowance

■ Rehabilitation Allowance can be paid to 16 to 67-year-olds who participate on a full-time basis in rehabilitation offered by Kela, health authorities or occupational health providers. The purpose of the rehabilitation must be to help them remain active in working life or to enter or return to the labour market.

The Rehabilitation Allowance is normally paid at a rate equal to that of the Sickness Allowance.

Persons participating in rehabilitation may also be eligible for a means-tested, tax-free maintenance allowance. Finally, means-tested rehabilitation assistance may be paid during job training or low-wage employment.

### Disability and care allowances

■ Children under 16 can be paid Disability Allowance if they have an illness or injury that creates a need for care and rehabilitation that lasts at least 6 months and imposes particular strain and requires a greater commitment from their family than the care of non-disabled children of the same age.

Persons aged 16 years or older can be paid Disability Allowance if their functional status is diminished for a period of at least 12 months and they are not drawing a pension on account of disability or old age. These allowances are exempt from tax.

Pensioners' Care Allowance is available to persons whose func-



## Taking an extended trip abroad?

Finns are avid travellers, with more and more taking trips of even several months for example to stay with relatives abroad. Extended holiday travel is usually not a problem in terms of coverage under the Finnish social security system, but it may affect eligibility for specific benefits. You should notify Kela if you will be staying abroad for longer than a short vacation.

The obligation to notify applies to anyone receiving a benefit from Kela. Any changes that might affect one's eligibility for benefits should be notified. But how to distinguish between short and extended stays abroad?

According to Suvi Rasimus, a lawyer at Kela, a general rule that applies for employees is that any trip that takes longer than one's regular annual leave counts as an extended stay abroad.

With certain benefits, even a shorter stay will affect. Unemployed jobseekers should be especially careful when travelling abroad, as payment of unemployment benefits ends after 6 days of foreign travel.

According to the website of the Employment and Economic Development Offices, unemployed jobseekers may stay abroad for up to six days during a year. This count includes days for which they receive unemployment benefit. Several short trips abroad may also be enough to reach the maximum limit.

tional status is estimated to be diminished for at least 12 months because of illness or injury.

### Interpretation services for the disabled

■ Kela provides interpretation services for free to persons with a hearing, combined hearing/vision, or speech impairment. Applicants must be in need of interpretation for purposes of work, education, communication or recreation.

### Dietary Grant

■ Kela pays a tax-free Dietary Grant to persons aged 16 years or over who have coeliac disease.

## Home and Family

**Benefit guide:**  
*Home and Family*

### Maternity Grant

■ Expecting mothers are entitled to a Maternity Grant. Mothers may choose between a tax-free EUR 140 cash benefit and a maternity package containing baby clothing and child care items.

Adoptive parents are also eligible.

### Financial assistance with international adoption

■ Parents adopting a child under 18 years from abroad are entitled to an Adoption Grant, a lump-sum benefit that is free from tax. Its amount depends on the country of adoption.

Maternity, Paternity and Parental Allowances

■ Mothers and fathers can take a leave from their job on account of child birth or child care. While on leave, they are entitled to a Maternity, Paternity or Parental Allowance from Kela.

Paternity and Parental Allowance can also be paid to the

parents of a child adopted before age 7.

Maternity, Paternity and Parental Allowances are usually calculated by reference to taxed income from employment or self-employment. They are subject to tax. Persons with no or low income can get a minimum allowance.

### Child Benefit

■ Kela pays parents a tax-free Child Benefit until their child is 17 years old.

### Child day care subsidies

■ Children are entitled to day care starting from when the payment of Maternity, Paternity and Parental Allowances ends to when they start school. The parents may choose between a place with a municipal day care provider and assistance from Kela in the form of a Child Home Care Allowance or a Private Day-Care Allowance.

### Special Care Allowance

■ Special Care Allowance can be paid to the mother or father of a severely ill under 16-year-old child if he or she participates in the treatment or rehabilitation of their child either in a hospital or outpatient clinic, at home as part of a hospital or outpatient intervention, or at a rehabilitation or adaptation training course.

The amount of the Special Care Allowance is linked to the recipient's earnings. Persons with no or low income are eligible for a minimum allowance.

### Assistance with housing costs

■ Persons on a low income can be paid General Housing Allowance, Pensioners' Housing Allowance, Housing Assistance for Conscript or a Housing Supplement for Students to offset some of their housing costs.

### Child Maintenance Allowance

■ You can get Child Maintenance Allowance from Kela if a parent with maintenance responsibilities has not paid child

support or child support has been set at an amount lower than the Child Maintenance Allowance due to financial difficulties or you have adopted the child as a single parent or the paternity of a child has not been confirmed.

## Work and Study

**Benefit guides:**  
*Studying, Unemployment*

### Financial aid for students

■ Financial aid for students is available in the form of a Study Grant for persons aged 17 years or over, Housing Supplement for students without dependants who live in rented accommodation, government guarantees for student loans, and student loan interest assistance.

Non-citizens of Finland can get financial aid for studies in Finland if they live in Finland on a permanent basis for a purpose other than studying. If you move to Finland solely for study purposes, you cannot get Finnish student financial aid.

### School Transport Subsidy

■ Full-time students of upper secondary schools and institutes of vocational education with a long commute to school are eligible for compensation for the cost of travel between home and school.

### Conscript's Allowance

■ Conscript's Allowance provides economic security to the spouse and children of per-

sons performing conscript service. Conscripts may be eligible for financial assistance with eg housing costs.

### Job Alternation Compensation

■ Employees with an employment history of at least 10 years can make arrangements with their employer to go on a job alternation leave. The employer agrees to hire a replacement who is registered as unemployed with the employment office. The employee is entitled to a job alternation compensation.

### Basic unemployment security

■ Unemployed job seekers between 17 and 64 years are eligible for Basic Unemployment Allowance and Labour Market Subsidy. The benefits paid in respect of unemployment can also be adjusted to part-time or incidental work.

Unemployment benefits are also available during participation in employment promotion measures such as job training or preparatory training for working life.

Participants in employment promotion measures are eligible for a Maintenance Allowance.

Unemployment benefits may be increased by an additional amount or transition assistance supplement. If you are dismissed for business or production related reasons, you can be paid Basic Unemployment Allowance at a higher rate.

Benefits paid in respect of unemployment can be claimed simultaneously with registration at the employment office.

Basic Unemployment Allowance can be paid for 3 months while the recipient looks for work in another EU/EEA country.

### Travel assistance with out-of-area employment

■ Unemployed persons who find a job outside their principal geographical area of employment can be paid Labour Market Subsidy towards travel costs

for a few months. This is on top of their regular wage.

### Integration assistance for immigrants

■ Kela pays immigrants and refugees integration assistance at a rate equal to that of the Labour Market Subsidy. The integration assistance can be supplemented by municipal income support. Integration assistance can be claimed from the employment office, which draws up a personal integration plan with the claimant.

## Retirement

**Benefit guide:**  
*Pensions and Retirement*

### Basic retirement security

■ Kela provides basic retirement security in the form of national and guarantee pensions. With the guarantee pension, all Finnish pension recipients are assured a minimum monthly pension of EUR 713.73. Persons on a small income can also get a Housing Allowance.

National pensions are paid to persons with no or low income from statutory earnings-related pension insurance.

They are available as Disability Pensions, Unemployment Pensions and Old-Age Pensions. An Early Old-Age Pension paid at an actuarially reduced rate is also available. Kela pays an increase for children under 16 years to recipients of both national and earnings-related pensions.

National pensions are available as Old-Age Pension to recipients aged 65 years and over.

Rehabilitation Subsidy – a fixed-term benefit – is a disability pension aimed at promoting return to work. It is paid at the same rate as the regular Disability Pension.

### Guarantee pensions

■ Kela will pay a guarantee pension to retirees whose total pension income before taxes is less than EUR 707.26 per month. National pension recipients with no earnings-related pension will receive a guarantee pension of EUR 105.10 per month (if living alone) or EUR 173.88 (if living in a couple relationship). Persons drawing national pension on the basis of early retirement will receive less.

Persons who have immigrated to Finland and lived here for at least 3 years are entitled to a guarantee pension if they are 65 years or older or 16 years and are disabled within the meaning of the National Pensions Act.

### Front-veterans' supplements

■ Kela pays the men and women who served in Finnish wars a tax-free front-veterans' supplement and front-veterans' supplement.

### Survivors' pensions for surviving spouses and children

■ Kela pays survivors' pensions under the National Pensions Act to surviving spouses and children living in Finland. They are available as Spouse's Pension for surviving spouses under 65 years and as Orphan's Pension for children under 18. Children who attend school can be paid Orphan's Pension between ages 18 and 20.

The Spouse's Pension available from Kela is in most respects the same as the national pension, but its amount depends not only on the surviving spouse's other pensions but also on other income and assets.

## Health

**Benefit guide:**  
*Health and Rehabilitation*

### Kela card

■ Everyone who lives permanently in Finland or is otherwise covered by the Finnish health insurance system gets a personal Kela card. It is typically used in pharmacies and medical clinics to obtain an on-the-spot reimbursement for prescription drugs or a medical bill.

When you move to Finland, register at a Kela office and complete an application for coverage under the Finnish social security system. When accepted, you will receive your personal Kela card.

### European Health Insurance Card

■ Anyone covered under the Finnish health insurance system can request a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) from Kela. EHIC holders are entitled to medically necessary care during a visit to another EU/EEA country or to Switzerland. The EHIC is valid for two years at a time and is available free of charge. EHIC is not a replacement for your Kela card.

### Reimbursements for medical expenses

■ Kela provides a partial reimbursement for the fees charged by private doctors and for the cost of any examinations and treatments prescribed by a private doctor.

Usually, you will be reimbursed at the treatment site when you present your Kela card. The reimbursement is deducted from the bill. If this is not the case, you can claim reimbursement from Kela afterwards.

■ Kela pays a partial reimbursement for the cost of oral and dental examinations and treatments provided by a private dentist or dental hygienist.