

# Social security benefits available from Kela in 2010

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 Kela's website at [www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi) or the Guide to Benefits, or contact a Kela office.

## Moving to or from Finland

*Benefit guides: Moving to Finland, Moving from Finland*

If you intend to move to Finland permanently, you will normally be covered by the Finnish social security system and will qualify for Kela benefits as soon as you move to Finland.

The following are regarded as indications of 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 intend to move abroad for less than a year, you will retain your coverage under the Finnish social security system for the duration of your stay. If you intend to stay abroad for more than a year, your social security coverage in Finland will usually end with effect from the date of your move.

If you move to another EU/EEA country or Switzerland for the purpose of working there, 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.

## Health

### Kela card

Everyone who lives permanently in Finland or is otherwise covered by the Finnish health insurance system gets a personal Kela card. You can use it to prove your entitlement to health insurance benefits. 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. If you are 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.

Please note that the European Health Insurance Card 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.

### Reimbursements for dental expenses

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

### Reimbursements for medicines

Kela provides reimbursements for prescription drugs at three rates: 42%, 72% and 100%.

The reimbursement is normally deducted from the price of the drugs right at the pharmacy, provided 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 from Kela.

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.

In addition, Kela offers access on a discretionary basis to vocational and medical rehabilitation under an annual appropriation by Parliament, for example in the form of family-based rehabilitation of children and psychotherapy services for adults.

### Access to education for young persons

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.

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## Integration assistance paid to several thousand immigrants

Kela paid immigration assistance to 14,400 immigrants last year. Nearly 13,000 immigrants participated in labour market training or other measure of active labour market policy.

Assistance was paid for a total of more than two million days. Kela pays immigrants and refugees integration assistance at a rate equal to that of the Labour Market Subsidy. The full rate is €25.63 per day (subject to tax). Integration assistance can be claimed from the employment office, which draws up a personal integration plan with the claimant.

intervention, or at a rehabilitation or adaptation training course.

Like the Sickness Allowance, 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.

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

## Work and Study

### 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 interest 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

The purpose of the Conscript's Allowance is to provide economic security to the spouse and children of persons performing conscript service. Conscripts themselves are eligible for financial assistance with housing costs, interest payments on student loans and child maintenance payments due during the service.

### 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, each with different eligibility criteria. 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. The employment office may also grant a Mobility Allowance.

### 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

### Basic retirement security

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 actually 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.

### Special assistance for immigrants

Elderly or disabled immigrants are eligible for special assistance if they have not lived in Finland long enough to qualify for a full national pension.

The full special assistance is equal to a full national pension. However, it is offset by the disposable income of the applicant and by part of his or her spouse's income.

### Front-veterans' supplements

Kela pays the men and women who served in Finnish wars a tax-free front-veterans' supplement and – if they receive a national pension – an additional front-veterans' supplement.

Persons having engaged in minefield clearance are entitled to a supplement equal to the 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.

The Orphan's Pension available from Kela can consist of a basic amount (not offset by other income) and an additional amount (offset by any other survivor pensions or annuities that the recipient is paid).