Overview of Benefit Programmes


1997
### SII 1997

**Pension beneficiaries**

- 1,111,800

**Old age pension**

- 773,600

**Disability pension**

- 263,300

**Unemployment pension**

- 32,500

**Survivors’ pension**

- 39,600

**Other pension**

- 2,800

**Recipients of disability benefits**

- 57,600

**Child disability allowance**

- 46,000

**Disability allowance**

- 11,600

**Health insurance beneficiaries**

- Sickness allowance
  - 271,800

- Parenthood allowance
  - 141,800

- Refunds of general health services expenses
  - 3,641,400

**Recipients of rehabilitation benefits**

- Rehabilitation services
  - 67,600

- Rehabilitation allowance
  - 45,400

**Recipients of basic unemployment allowance or labour market support**

- 205,200

**Basic unemployment allowance**

- 23,900

**Labour market support**

- 181,300

**Recipients of labour market training allowances**

- 7,500

**Family allowance recipients (no. of children)**

- 1,090,100

**Recipients of child day care subsidies (no. of families)**

- 83,900

**Households receiving general housing allowance**

- 184,600

**Recipients of financial aid for students**

- 303,300

**Recipients of school transportation subsidy**

- 37,200

---

1) at year-end

**Total expenditure (FIM million)**

- 54,093

**Total benefit expenditure (FIM million)**

- 52,466

**Pension benefits**

- 17,901

**Disability benefits**

- 579

**Health insurance benefits**

- 10,575

**Rehabilitation benefits**

- 1,062

**Unemployment benefits**

- 6,140

**Maternity grants and family allowances**

- 8,440

**Child day care subsidies**

- 2,061

**General housing allowances**

- 2,122

**Benefits for students**

- 3,464

**Other benefits**

- 121

**Income (FIM million)**

- 52,907

**Insured population**

- 7,994

**Employers**

- 11,887

**State**

- 27,914

**Municipalities**

- 2,200

**Other**

- 2,912

**Total benefit expenditure in proportion to**

- total wage and salary bill (%)
  - 21.6%

- GDP (%)
  - 8.4%

**Total benefit expenditure (excl benefits for students)**

- % of social welfare expenditure
  - 26.2%

**Branch offices (at year-end)**

- 360

---

**Benefit expenditure (FIM million)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Finland</th>
<th>West Finland</th>
<th>East Finland</th>
<th>South-West Finland</th>
<th>South Finland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pension benefits and disability benefits</td>
<td>2,276</td>
<td>3,130</td>
<td>3,336</td>
<td>4,149</td>
<td>5,575</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health insurance benefits: Total</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>1,412</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>2,190</td>
<td>3,706</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual rehabilitation benefits</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>320</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>2,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity grants, family allowances and child day care subsidies</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>1,428</td>
<td>2,204</td>
<td>3,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General housing allowances</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Population at year-end**

- 652,300

- 705,400

- 743,000

- 1,149,800

- 1,899,200
Overview of Benefit Programmes

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finnish social security and the Social Insurance Institution (SII)</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Pension Insurance (NPI)</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SII's disability benefits</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Health Insurance (NHI)</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SII-provided rehabilitation benefits</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SII's unemployment-related benefits</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The maternity grant, family allowance and child day care subsidy schemes</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General housing allowance</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits for students</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscript's allowance</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SII finance and administration</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyses by region, type of disease and occupation</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English summary

1 Finnish social security and the Social Insurance Institution (SII)

1.1 General
Social policy, social security. Social policy is shaped by society and the prevailing social standards. According to a widely accepted definition, social policy is a means of providing for all citizens a reasonable standard of life and living. Aside from social security, social policy can be understood to encompass aspects relating to labour, health, housing, alcohol, and education policies. Social security benefits can take the form of either cash benefits (income maintenance) or services.

The aim of social security is to provide, for individuals as well as families, an income security against a number of risks and hardships, including those related to health, work disability and functional incapacity, old age, death of a breadwinner, family and children, unemployment, housing and social exclusion.

The development, targeting and financing of social policy may be examined by means of social expenditure calculations, which show the yearly expenditures on social and health security benefits based on law or labour market agreement. (Of the SII benefits, student financial aid and school transportation subsidy have not been included in the calculations.)

The social security programmes of the SII. The Social Insurance Institution is one of the bodies carrying out Finnish social security. It is a public agency operating under parliamentary supervision.

The SII is responsible for implementing social security programmes that give protection, in a variety of life situations, to everyone living in Finland, including National Pension Insurance, National Health Insurance, rehabilitation benefits, basic unemployment protection, income maintenance benefits for families with children, general housing allowances, student financial aid and school transportation subsidies. In addition, the SII administers various disability benefit programmes, and the National Conscripts’ Allowance Scheme.

The SII has a nationwide network of offices, 360 in all, to carry out its duties.

The first section of the Summary is aimed at giving a picture of the SII’s social security provision as part of a larger whole.

1.2 Pension provision

Pension schemes
Total pension cover. The Finnish pension system changed from the beginning of 1996. Previously a universal basic pension, the national pension was re-defined as a benefit guaranteeing a minimum pension level for pension recipients. Survivors’ pensions were not affected by this change.

The Finnish pension system consists of two statutory pension schemes providing employment pensions and national pensions, respectively. Together, these two schemes make up the retirement income security system which provides pensions in respect of old age, incapacity for work, long-term unemployment and death of the provider. There are a number of additional laws that provide for pension security in specific contingencies.

In this Yearbook, the term “employment pension” is used to refer to the pensions paid to wage and salary earners, civil servants, and self-employed persons. Employment pensions can be granted to persons with past earnings from dependent or independent employment. National pensions are paid in proportion to any other pension income to which the recipient may be entitled. In practice, it is only granted to those who either do not qualify for any other type of pension or whose pension income is small. All residents of Finland are guaranteed a total retirement income that is at least equal to the full national pension.

National pension cover. The national pension is intended to secure the basic livelihood of pensioners whose other pension income is small or non-existent.
National old age, disability and unemployment pensions can include a pension-tested component and various other components. Starting from 1997, a national pension may consist entirely of various formerly supplementary components (e.g. housing allowance, care allowance and front-veterans’ supplement).

National survivors’ pensions are paid in the form of spouses’ and orphans’ pensions, which can include a basic amount, an additional amount and a housing allowance (not available with orphans’ pensions). Both national pensions and national survivors’ pensions are paid out by the SII.

Employment pension cover. The purpose of the employment pensions is to enable the pensioners to maintain their accustomed standard of living. The amount of the pension is linked to the length of the pensioner’s employment history and the amount of previous earnings. Employment pension accrues separately from each employment relationship and period of self-employment. The resultant pensions are adjusted to cover altogether 60–66% of the recipient’s previous earnings.

The employment pensions system is comprised of several public- and private-sector pension schemes. They are defined in Acts of Parliament providing for pensions for employees in general (Employees’ Pensions Act, or TEL), temporary employees (LEL), the self-employed (YEL), farmers (MYEL), seamen (MEL), freelance employees (TaEL), state employees (VEL), local government employees (KVTEL), and employees of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland (KiEL). Also included under employment pensions are various pensions paid by the state and local governments on the basis of earlier pension provisions as well as pensions paid by a number of public institutions.

The pensions paid under the employment pensions legislation include old age, disability, unemployment, part-time and survivors’ pensions.

Voluntary pension cover is considered to include all supplementary pensions registered according to Article 11 of TEL as well as unregistered supplementary pensions paid by pension foundations and funds, all of which are aimed at providing a higher pension cover.

The employment pension system is implemented by the employment pension institutions (private-sector pensions), and by the State Treasury and the Local Government Pensions Institution (public-sector pensions). The Central Pension Security Institute is a central organization of the employment pension institutions.

Special pension cover. Special pensions for agricultural entrepreneurs are intended to secure the livelihood of farmers who give up farming. These pensions are defined in the following Acts of Parliament: Act respecting Farm Closure Subsidy (LUTUL), Change-of-Generations Pensions Act (SPVEL), Farm Closure Pensions Act (LUEL), and Act respecting Farm Closure Compensation (LUKL). New pension awards are made according to the Act respecting Farm Closure Subsidy.

Further pension cover under the Accident Insurance, Motor Insurance, Military Injuries, and Military Accidents Acts as well as other comparable retirement benefits (life annuities, assistance pensions) are aimed at protecting the recipient’s livelihood in the event of the specific contingencies which they cover.

Financing

The SII’s pension expenditure was in 1997 financed with contributions from employers to the National Pension Insurance, state subsidies, VAT revenues and contributions levied from motor and accident insurers.

The pensions for regular and temporary employees as well as those for freelance employees are financed by both the employers and the insured, the farmers’ and change-of-generations pensions by the farmers and the state, and the farm closure compensations and pensions by the state alone. Farm closure subsidies are financed by the state and the European Union. Self-employed persons’ pensions are financed by the insured and the state, seamen’s pensions by the insured, the shipowners, and the state. The state, local government and church employees’ pensions are paid out of the relevant public funds, though the insured also contribute.

Accident insurance cover is financed by the employers, while farmers’ accident insurance is financed by farmers, the state, and the SII. Motor insurance cover is financed by vehicle owners. The military injuries and accidents compensations are paid by the state.

The financing of the SII’s pension schemes is based on the pay-as-you-go principle (meaning that pension benefits are financed with current revenues). Nearly all of the public- and private-sector employment pensions are partly funded.

Statistics

Each pension institution is responsible for compiling statistics on the pensions it provides. As a single individual may receive a pension under several different Acts, the SII and the Central Pension Security Institute also compile joint statistics on the total number of pensioners and their total pension income from various sources. These joint statistics cover SII-pro-
vided pensions, employment pensions (TEL, LEL, YEL, MYEL, TaEL, MEL, VEL, VPEL, KVTEL), state and local government employees’ old-age pensions, church employees’ pensions, and the employee pensions of the Bank of Finland, the Social Insurance Institution, and the Province of Åland, as well as special farmers’ pensions (LUTUL, SPVEL, LUEL, LUKL). National pensions consisting entirely of a housing allowance, care allowance or front-veterans’ supplement are not counted in the joint statistics as national pensions, as they are in the SII’s own statistics. For pensioners with an employment pension, the expenditure on them is included in employment pensions. Further, the joint statistics do not cover voluntary pension cover. Pension benefits paid under the Accident Insurance, Motor Insurance, Military Injuries and Military Accidents Acts are included in the data on total pension income provided that they are paid to pensioners simultaneously receiving a national or employment pension.

1.3 Disability benefits

The disability benefits are aimed at helping persons with disabilities manage better in their lives. They can take the form of cash benefits or services.

Financial benefits. The disability benefits paid by the Social Insurance Institution are intended to compensate the recipients for the handicap and financial strain imposed by the disability. Depending on the recipients’ circumstances, the SII can pay child disability allowance, disability allowance (for recipients of working age), or pensioners care allowance.

Under the Employment Accident Insurance Act, the Third-Party Motor Insurance Act and the Military Injuries Act, persons with disabilities are eligible for injury or helplessness supplement. Further, under the Act on Services for the Disabled, they have a right to local authority benefits awarded towards the expenses arising from the disability. The municipalities may also provide a home care allowance for persons with disabilities (payable to family members).

Services. Under the Act on Services for the Disabled, municipalities are required to arrange services for the disabled, who can also make use of home help, housing services, services for the mentally disabled, as well as rehabilitation services provided by various bodies, among them the SII.

1.4 Health security

Health care. By means of health care, society aims at systematically promoting and maintaining the good health of the population. As a health-promoting mea-

sure, public funds are used to provide health services and to compensate people for the costs arising from the use of the services. Public health services are free or subsidized with public moneys.

In this Yearbook, health care is considered to encompass hospital care, ambulatory care, provision of medication as well as medical equipment and aids, environmental health, health care administration, public investments, and the transportation expenses reimbursed by National Health Insurance. Health care is primarily financed by the state, municipalities, National Health Insurance, and private households.

National Health Insurance provides reimbursement for the costs of out-patient care in connection with illness, pregnancy and childbirth. The costs include doctors’ and dentists’ fees, prescribed medication, the examinations and treatment ordered by a physician at a private institution, as well as transportation costs arising from the treatment of the illness. In addition, National Health Insurance provides part of the funds for occupational and student health care.

Public health care expenditure comprises the financial contributions of the state, municipalities and National Health Insurance to the health services. Besides these contributions, the total health care expenditure includes also the private contributions to health care (eg, the health expenses of private households).

Income maintenance during illness. National Health Insurance provides compensation, in the form of a sickness allowance, for loss of income due to incapacity for work. Further, it provides a compensation for loss of income to the parents of a sick child during the treatment and rehabilitation of the child. In respect of farmers, the sickness allowance is also paid for part of the waiting period. The Employment Accident Insurance Act, the Third-Party Motor Insurance Act and the Military Injuries Act require that daily allowance be paid during illness to persons covered under these acts. According to special provisions, compensations may be paid for loss of income due to certain injuries or damages. Private insurances can provide an additional income security for times of illness.

Under the Contracts of Employment Act, employers provide full pay during the initial period of illness, during which the sickness allowance is not yet payable. Collective bargaining agreements often prescribe longer periods of continued pay during illness.

1.5 Unemployment benefits

Unemployed jobseekers are covered for, besides unemployment pension, basic unemployment al-


ance and earnings-related unemployment allowance as well as labour market support. Persons on leave from their regular job can qualify for a special job alternation compensation. Financial assistance is also available to unemployed persons who undergo labour market training or conduct self-motivated studies. People made redundant may be eligible for redundancy pay, which can be supplemented by a training allowance, payable to those getting employment-oriented training. In the case of bankruptcy of an employer, any outstanding wages and salaries are covered by the state. Employers as well as unemployed persons are supported through a number of measures with a view to promoting employment. They include the labour market support payments to employers that the SII has made since 1 January 1998.

**General benefits**

**Unemployment allowance and labour market support.** Unemployment allowance is payable under two different schemes, the basic unemployment allowances scheme, which is implemented by the SII, and the earnings-related unemployment allowances scheme, which is implemented by the trade union funds. The SII is also responsible for the payment of labour market support to those who are not eligible for unemployment allowance.

The SII-administered basic unemployment benefits are designed to ensure a minimum standard of living during unemployment (further details on p. 268). The earnings-related allowance is paid to unemployed fund members who fulfil specified membership and employment conditions. The calculation basis of the benefit is previous earnings, and it is payable for a maximum of 500 days. If the recipient finds employment and works long enough to again satisfy the employment condition, the full 500-day entitlement is restored. An unemployed person whose earnings-related unemployment allowance has been discontinued can claim labour market support.

The basic unemployment allowances and the labour market support benefits are paid for out of general taxation; the earnings-related unemployment allowances scheme out of contributions from the government, the employers, wage and salary earners, and fund members.

**Job alternation compensation.** Job alternation compensations are paid to workers employed full-time (or from 1 January 1998, 75% of full-time) who go on leave for a specified period and whose employer hires an unemployed person as a replacement. After the leave, they can return to their regular job or some other comparable position. The compensations are paid by both unemployment funds (to fund members) and the SII. They are financed in the same way as unemployment allowances.

**Training-related benefits**

**Labour market training allowance.** Like unemployment allowance, job alternation compensation and support for self-motivated learning, the training allowance is payable under two schemes. Members of trade union funds are eligible for earnings-related training allowance, non-members for basic training allowance. The SII also pays labour market support to those who, though in training, do not qualify for the training allowance. Both training allowance and labour market support can include a maintenance and/or accommodation allowance.

The basic training allowances are financed by the state, the earnings-related allowances by the state, the employers, employees and unemployment fund members. Further financing for benefits paid during labour market training is provided by the European Social Fund.

**Support for self-motivated learning.** Since 1 August 1997, those of the long-term unemployed who have a long work history can get financial assistance with self-motivated studies or training that improves their skills and employability. Both earnings-related and basic benefits are available, paid by the unemployment funds and the SII, respectively. The system is financed by the state.

1.6 Income maintenance benefits to families with children

Families with children are eligible for a number of different benefits. To help with the support and care of a child, the following benefits are available: maternity grant, parenthood allowance, child day care subsidies, family allowance, orphans pension, child maintenance allowance, child increases payable in association with various social insurance benefits, as well as benefits from voluntary life assurances.

The maternity grant represents a compensation for costs arising from childbirth. The birth of a child entitles the parents to a parenthood allowance (maternity, paternity, or parental allowance) paid by National Health Insurance. Some collective bargaining agreements require that employers continue to pay wages to workers during part of the maternity (or parenthood) leave.

The child day care subsidies are aimed at making it easier to arrange day care for a child under school-age after the parenthood allowance period is over. It
is payable as either home care allowance or private day care allowance. It is intended as an alternative to municipal day care. Some municipalities provide supplements to the statutory benefits. In addition to paying out the statutory benefits, the SII has agreements with some municipalities to pay out the municipal supplements as well.

Family allowance is payable for each child under 17. Child maintenance allowance is payable if the person who has been ordered to provide child support has failed to do this or if the court has not established maintenance liability.

The welfare of families with children is also promoted through several benefits relating to housing, illness and disability of a child.

1.7 Support for housing

Housing is supported by society through financial arrangements and the provision of various services. For the purchase or fundamental improvement of a dwelling, loans or interest subsidy for loans can be granted. Financial aid is available also towards repair and renovation expenses. Part of the interest paid on house loans is tax deductible.

Cash benefits are a form of direct support intended to reduce the housing costs of low-income households. They comprise a general housing allowance as well as a housing allowance payable to pension recipients, a housing supplement for students, cash housing assistance payable as part of the conscript’s allowance, and an accommodation allowance for persons undergoing labour market training. These benefits are all administered by the Social Insurance Institution (with the exception of the earnings-related part of the last-named benefit).

Various types of housing services as well as institutional and family care are provided for people who need special care and assistance in their daily lives (e.g. elderly and disabled people, intoxicant abusers).

1.8 Income security paid to students

Society supports the income security of students in a number of ways. Student financial aid paid by the State is the most common form of study aid for full-time, independent students.

A vocational training allowance can be paid through the redundancy payment scheme to a person in an employment or civil service relationship who takes unpaid leave during a period of training (also available to persons on job alternation leave in the form of a “partial” allowance), and training supplement to the redundancy payment to persons who have lost their jobs. There is a separate study grant system for agricultural entrepreneurs.

Adult education arranged by the labour authorities is intended mainly for the unemployed. Income support during labour market training can take the form of a training allowance from an unemployment fund (earnings-related support), a training allowance or labour market support from the SII (basic support).

Since August 1997, the long-term unemployed have been eligible for financial support for self-motivated learning and study, which is granted by unemployment funds and the SII. While in training, unemployed persons can get labour market training allowance (basic or earnings-related) or labour market support. These benefits are state financed. (Starting from August 1998, the scheme providing financial support for self-motivated learning will be extended to cover more of the unemployed.)

Since July 1997, the Social Insurance Institution has paid a school transportation subsidy for students of upper secondary schools and vocational institutes. The subsidy subsidizes students’ daily trips to and from school. It is financed by the state.

Orphan’s pension is paid in the form of a national survivors’ pension to a 18–20 year old orphan student. Rehabilitation grants are paid from several sources (e.g. the SII) to the disabled who take training to maintain or improve their working capacities.

2 National Pension Insurance

The National Pension Insurance legislation comprises the National Pensions Act, the Pensioners Housing Allowance Act, the Survivors Pensions Act, the Front-Veterans Pensions Act, the Act on Front-Veterans Supplement payable outside Finland, as well as various enactments that are associated with this legislation.

Certain exceptions to the above Acts result from the application of EU provisions and international social security agreements.

Basic award criteria

National pensions legislation. All residents of Finland are eligible for the national pension. Residence in Finland is defined in the Act respecting the Residence-Based Social Security Legislation. Citizens of Finland are entitled to a national pension if they have lived in Finland for at least three years after reaching the age of 16. Citizens of other countries qualify after a residence of five years.
If a recipient of a national pension or survivor’s pension moves outside Finland, the payment of the pension is continued for one year, provided that the pension had been awarded at least one year before the move. The pension can be paid beyond this one-year limit if the recipient had immediately preceding the start of pension payment lived in Finland for ten years or if the residence outside Finland is essential due to an illness from which the recipient or his or her close relative suffers.

Surviving spouses and orphans living in Finland are entitled to national survivors’ pension, provided that the deceased was living in Finland when the death occurred. The residence requirements applied to the deceased and the surviving spouse are identical to those which must be satisfied to qualify for a national old age, disability and unemployment pension. Orphans are not subject to any residence requirements.

Refugees and stateless persons living in Finland enjoy the same rights as nationals of Finland regarding the implementation of the National Pensions Act and the Survivors Pensions Act.

The front-veteran’s supplement and the additional front-veteran’s supplement can be awarded to recognized veterans. The former can also be awarded to persons living outside Finland provided that they receive a Finnish national pension. Under a separate Act of Parliament, the front-veteran’s supplement can be paid also to recognized veterans living outside Finland who do not receive a Finnish national pension.

Effects of EU provisions and international social security agreements. Certain provisions of the Finnish pensions legislation, based on the residence principle, are cancelled or modified by the EU provisions or social security agreements ratified by Finland. The EU provisions apply to workers within the European Economic Area as well as to their family members. The Nordic Convention on Social Security applies to citizens of Nordic countries living in the European Economic Area but not covered by the EU provisions. Bilateral agreements provide reciprocal access to the pension benefits of the other signatory country.

Benefits

National Pension Insurance provides benefits in the following main categories:

**Old age pension** is payable to insured people over 65. There is also provision for early and late retirement, on an actuarily adjusted pension. Retirement on a reduced pension is possible at 60.

**Disability pension** is payable to insured people between 16 and 65 who on account of disease, defect, or injury are unable to maintain themselves by their regular work or any other kind of work which, considering their age, occupation, education and place of residence, would be suitable for them. The pension can be granted either indefinitely or for a specified period, in which case it is referred to as a “rehabilitation subsidy”.

A special type of disability pension, the individual early retirement pension, is payable to people aged 58 to 64 (or 55 to 64 if born in 1939 or earlier) whose capacity for work has been permanently reduced. The determining factors here are type of disease, ageing, length of service, deterioration of health, and working conditions. This individual early retirement pension is awarded on less strict award criteria than the ordinary disability pension.

**Unemployment pension** may be paid to insured men and women between 60 and 65 who have been unemployed a long time and have been employed at least five years during the previous 15 years and are entitled to an earnings-related pension that includes an amount representing hypothetical accrual of benefit after the pension contingency.

**Survivor’s pension** is payable to widows and widowers under 65, provided that the deceased was under 65 at the time of marriage (spouse’s pension), and to orphans (orphan’s pension).

**Spouse’s pension** is payable to widow(er)s, irrespective of age, if he/she has or has had a child with the deceased. It is also payable if the widow(er) was over 50 at the time of death of the spouse, the marriage had lasted for at least five years and had been contracted before the widow(er) had turned 50. However, women born before 1 July 1950 are eligible for spouse’s pension on easier terms. Spouse’s initial pension is payable for the first six months following the death of the spouse, and thereafter the widow(er) is entitled to a continuing pension. When a widow(er) aged 50 or over remarries, the spouses pension is not discontinued.

**Orphan’s pension** is payable to all half- and full-orphans under 18 as well as those between 18 and 21 who on account of studies or vocational training cannot maintain themselves. Entitlement can be derived through a parent, an adoptive parent, or any other person who has assumed responsibility for the child. Full-orphans are entitled to two separate pensions, one through each parent.

**Front-veteran’s supplement payable outside Finland.** This benefit is payable to recognized veterans who live outside Finland and do not receive a Finnish national pension. The supplement is paid semi-annually.
Benefit components and rates

With effect from 1 January 1996, the national pension, previously a universal basic pension, became a pension benefit aimed at securing the basic livelihood of its recipients. National pension is paid only to persons whose employment pension is small or non-existent.

National pensions are now tested against any other pensions paid to the recipient. Pension testing is being phased in. The basic amounts of pensions granted on 1 January 1996 or thereafter are pension tested. Of pensions that began before 1 January 1996, those comprised exclusively of a basic amount were cut from the beginning of 1996, while those including an additional amount remained unchanged.

With effect from 1 January 1997, the basic and additional amounts were merged into a pension-tested national pension. Eligibility for it is determined in the same way as for the additional amount and pension-tested basic amount in 1996. The "cut" national pensions are being phased out and will be discontinued by February 2001.

National old age, disability and unemployment pensions can take the form of

– a "cut" or pension-tested national pension that may be supplemented by various additional components such as housing allowance, pensioner’s care allowance, increase for spouse or children, and front-veteran’s supplement or additional supplement, which are payable under the Front-Veterans Pensions Act;
– a housing allowance, pensioner’s care allowance or front-veteran’s supplement paid independently of any other pension components.

National survivors’ pensions (for surviving spouses and orphans) can comprise a basic amount and an additional amount. Surviving spouses can get a housing allowance as well (see Table A).

Flat-rate components

The following pension components are flat-rate: the cut national pension, the pensioner’s care allowance, the front-veteran’s supplement, the child increase, and the basic amounts of spouses’ and orphans’ pensions, as well as the spouse’s initial pension.

National pensions not including an additional amount were on 1 January 1996 subjected to a cut which reduced the basic amount of the pension. The basic amounts will be cut further on a yearly basis and will cease altogether by February 2001. The 1997 rate of the cut national pension is FIM311 a month.

The pensioner’s care allowance is payable to

– persons aged 65 or over or
– persons aged under 65 who receive disability pension either as a national pension or a (full) employment pension.

Payment of the allowance also requires that the recipient’s functional status is impaired due to an illness or injury. It is awarded as compensation for home care, services or special expenses. It is graduated in three payment categories according to the amount of the expenses and the need of assistance. At year-end 1997, the smaller allowance totalled FIM278 a month, the larger allowance FIM691 a month, and the special allowance FIM1,382 a month.

The front-veteran’s supplement – payable to recognized veterans of the 1939–45 and 1918 wars – was FIM217 a month.

The spouse increase was payable at the rate of FIM324 a month. Since 1 January 1996, new spouse increases are no longer being awarded. The existing benefits will be reduced yearly starting from 1 January 1997 and are to be discontinued by the beginning of 2001.

Table A: Spouses’ benefits under the Survivors Pensions Act: components by type of benefit and qualifying condition as at year-end 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Additional amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s initial pension</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes (flat-rate part always payable; the rest means-tested)</td>
<td>yes (low income; size of housing expenses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing pension for spouses with dependent children</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes (low income)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing pension for spouses w/o children</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The child increase (payable to national pension beneficiaries with children under 16) was FIM262 a month. Since 1 January 1996, new child increases are no longer being awarded. The existing benefits will be reduced yearly starting from 1 January 1998 and are to be discontinued by the end of 2001.

The flat-rate part of the spouse’s initial pension was payable to single recipients at the rate of FIM1,245 a month (with area supplement, FIM1,351).

The orphan’s pension basic amount was FIM264 a month.

Income-related components

The income-related components include the pension-tested national pension, housing allowance, additional front-veteran’s supplement, and the additional amounts of orphan’s pensions and spouses’ initial and continuing pensions. The rate of all these components decreases in proportion as the claimant’s annual income from other sources exceeds a fixed maximum. The recognised annual income (there are a number of disregards), the level at which the recognised annual income begins to affect the rate of these components, and the rate of the decrease are therefore the significant factors.

Different disregards apply to different benefit components. It is harder to qualify for housing allowance and the additional amount of the spouse’s pension than for the pension-tested part of the national pension, which is affected only by the recipient’s other pensions (even if they come from outside Finland).

Pensioner’s housing allowance is payable to persons who are living in Finland and

– are aged 65 or more or
– are between ages 16 and 64 and receive
  – a disability, unemployment or spouse’s pension from the SII
  – under the employment pension legislation, an unemployment pension or (full) disability pension
  – under the Accident Insurance, Motor Insurance or Military Injuries Acts, a statutory disability pension or other compensation payable in respect of full work disability or
  – a similar benefit from abroad.

The orphan’s pension additional amount is affected by other pension benefits for survivors that the child may have.

Additional front-veteran’s supplement is payable to those front-veteran’s supplement recipients who also receive a national pension. It is equal to 25% of the part of the national pension exceeding FIM449 a month (in 1997).

The rate of the income-related components depends also on the claimant’s district of residence, dependants, marital status, and – where the housing allowance is concerned – location of the dwelling and dwelling expenses.

Other factors affecting the amount of the pension

Retirement before/after normal pensionable age.
The national pension is payable at a modified rate to those receiving early old age pension or deferred old age pension (each month by which retirement is brought forward decreases the pension by 0.5%, each month by which retirement is postponed past age 65 increases it by 1%).

Institutional care. The housing allowance is not payable during care in a state-subsidized institution that lasts more than nine months. The national pension is payable at a reduced rate after three months in such an institution, except if the beneficiary (an old age, disability or unemployment pensioner) receives housing allowance, in which case the reduction coincides with the discontinuation of the housing allowance.

Adjustment of pension to the length of the recipient’s residence in Finland. Pensions payable under national pension legislation are adjusted to the length of the recipient’s residence in Finland after 1 January 1994 (with the exception of the pensioner’s housing allowance and the front-veterans’ supplements). However, pensions awarded before this provision came into force are not adjusted.

Old age pension is adjusted if the claimant has lived less than 40 years in Finland after having reached the age of 16. The factor of adjustment is calculated by dividing the length of the residence in Finland by 40 years.

Other national pensions and the spouse’s pension are adjusted if the claimant (or the deceased) lived in Finland less than 80% of the time between age 16 and the start of pension. The factor of adjustment is derived by dividing the length of the residence in Finland by 80% of the time between age 16 and the start of pension.

Employees within the EU/EEA who have been insured in another EU/EEA country besides Finland will have their pensions calculated according to the EU provisions.

Indexation

The national pension components are adjusted yearly to changes in the cost-of-living index. The income and
property limits for the pension components are also indexed. Index adjustments are normally carried out on 1 January.

The benefits were raised by 0.6% in 1997 and by 1.7% in 1998.

Pensioners’ care allowances were not adjusted to index changes from 1996 to 1998. Index adjustment of spouse and child increases, which are to be phased out, was discontinued from the beginning of 1996.

Taxation

The national pensions, the basic and additional amounts of spouses’ pensions paid under a 1990 Act of Parliament, and all orphans’ pensions are taxable income. The rest of the SII pension benefits are tax-free. Tax relief is granted for pension income.

Statistical principles

The pension statistics in this Yearbook analyse, besides pensions in payment, also pension-in-payment changes (new and discontinued pensions).

The amount of pensions in payment refers to the pensions that are in payment (at the statistics compilation date) shown at their annualized value. The amount of pensions paid during a year refers, on the other hand, to the cumulative value in FIM of pensions paid during various months, including retroactive payments.

In 1996, it became possible for a person’s right to a national pension to be acknowledged even though no national pension (basic amount) was actually paid because of other pension income. Such cases have not been counted as national pensions for statistical purposes.

Starting with 1997, national pensions can consist exclusively of a pensioner’s housing allowance, pensioner’s care allowance or a front-veteran’s supplement. In the SII statistics, recipients of such pensions are counted as national pension beneficiaries.

3 SII’s disability benefits

The disability benefits are governed by the Child Disability Allowances Act and the Disability Allowances Act.

Basic award criteria. The child disability allowance is payable to children resident in Finland. Residence in Finland is also a condition for receiving the disability allowance.

Benefits. The child disability allowance is payable to children under 16 with a disability or a long-term illness. The allowance is awarded to alleviate the strain caused by the treatment of the child and is graduated in three payment categories.

The smaller allowance (rate at year-end 1997: FIM414 a month) is paid to children whose treatment causes an added financial or other strain. The larger allowance (FIM967) is awarded in cases where the strain is considerable, and the special allowance (FIM1,796) in the event that the treatment of the child imposes an extreme strain.

The disability allowance is aimed at making it easier for disabled persons of working age who are not in receipt of a pension to manage in their daily lives and to cope with their work and studies.

Persons between 16 and 64 whose ability to function has been reduced on account of an illness or injury are entitled to the allowance. It is intended to provide a compensation for the handicap, need of assistance and special expenses caused by the illness or injury and, in the same way as the child disability allowance, is graduated in three payment categories (see above). It is also disbursed at the same rate as the child disability allowance. There are a number of benefits and pensions which preclude the payment of the disability allowance.

The child disability allowance and the disability allowance cannot be awarded to persons who are being treated or looked after at an institution operating mainly on public funds. The payment of the allowances is discontinued after the institutional care has lasted three months.

The child disability and disability allowances are exempt from tax. They are normally adjusted to annual changes in the cost-of-living index. However, no adjustments were made in 1996, 1997 or 1998.

4 National Health Insurance (NHI)

The National Health Insurance Scheme covers the following benefits: sickness allowances, parenthood allowances, special care allowances, refunds of medical expenses as well as occupational and student health services.

4.1 Medical care and income security benefits

Basic award criteria

National health insurance legislation. NHI covers all residents of Finland. Residence in Finland, and consequently also eligibility for benefits under NHI, is defined by the Act respecting the Residence-Based Social Security Legislation.
In order to qualify for the parenthood allowance, claimants must have been living in Finland for at least 180 days immediately before the due date.

The cost of medical care provided outside Finland (not including travel costs) is covered by NHI if there was an immediate need for medical attention and the costs cannot be recovered from the host country’s health system. The cost of actively seeking treatment abroad is not refunded.

**EU provisions and international social security agreements.** Application of the EU provisions and the social security agreements ratified by Finland (those which encompass medical care) results in certain exceptions to the general residence-based health security provisions. Citizens of EU/EEA countries insured under the national health insurance scheme of a Member State are entitled to receive emergency medical treatment during a temporary stay in Finland at the same price as persons resident and insured in Finland. Also persons covered by certain other social security agreements are entitled to equal treatment during a temporary stay in Finland.

**Benefits**

**Sickness and parenthood allowances**

The sickness daily allowance system was changed extensively from the beginning of 1996. Sickness allowances can now primarily be seen as compensation for income lost due to illness, whereas before they provided a source of income to all residents during a period of incapacity, regardless of previous earnings.

The sickness and parenthood allowances are both income maintenance benefits payable on account of temporary incapacity for work caused by an illness and of childbirth and child care, respectively. Also adoptive parents are entitled to the latter benefit, which is payable as maternity, paternity or parental allowance.

**Sickness allowance.** The sickness allowance represents a compensation for loss of income during a period of incapacity for work. It is paid to employed and self-employed persons aged 16–64 who are prevented from carrying out their regular job or a comparable gainful activity, for a maximum of 300 workdays. All workdays for which the allowance has been paid during the two years immediately preceding the onset of the work incapacity generally count towards this maximum. A waiting period, during which the allowance is not paid, comprises the day on which the illness begins plus the following nine workdays.

**Parenthood allowance.** The parenthood allowance is payable for 263 working days. For the first 105 days, it is paid to the mother ("maternity allowance"); for the next 158 days it can be paid alternatively to the mother or the father ("parental allowance"). Further, fathers are eligible for a "paternity allowance," which is payable

- for 6–12 workdays at any time during the maternity allowance period
- for 6 workdays in the maternity or parental allowance period.

Also a cohabiting father qualifies. Entitlement to the benefit begins on the 155th day of pregnancy, and the recipient can choose to have payment started 30–50 working days before the estimated time of birth.

**The amount of the allowance.** The amount of the sickness and parenthood allowances depends on the taxable income of the recipient. As of 1997, the allowance is equal to 70% of annual earnings up to FIM132,280. On earnings exceeding this limit, the allowance will be less than 70% of earnings. There is no maximum limit. (Prior to the calculation of the allowance, 4.5% representing the employees' employment pension and unemployment insurance contributions is according to 1997 rules deducted from the earnings.) The parenthood allowance is never paid at a rate below a specified minimum amount. In 1997, this amount was FIM60 per day.

The purpose of the sickness allowance is to provide compensation for lost income. It is not paid when annual earnings are less than a specified amount (FIM5,080 as of 1997). Persons with small or no earnings can qualify for a means-tested allowance, if the incapacity for work (caused by an illness) lasts more than 60 days without interruption. The means-tested allowance is calculated according to the same income rules as the labour market support (see p. 270).

The allowances are normally adjusted to changes in the TEL employment pension index once a year. On 1 January 1997, the allowances were raised by 1.8%, and on 1 January 1998, by 1.9%. However, these increases did not apply to the means-tested sickness allowances or to the minimum-rate parenthood allowances. The allowances are subject to tax.

**Special care allowance**

The special care allowance is paid for children under 16 to a parent whose presence is considered medically necessary during in- or outpatient treatment, subsequent home care, or a statutory adaptation training or rehabilitation course, provided also that the parent is prevented from working and thus without a salary. The allowance is calculated in the
same way as the sickness allowance but always paid at a rate of at least FIM60 per day. It is taxable income.

Other compensations for loss of income

Persons who under the Act on Communicable Diseases have been debarred from their place of work are, besides a sickness allowance, entitled also to a compensation for loss of earnings paid out of NHI moneys. Organ/tissue donors are entitled to a sickness allowance during the time they are incapacitated for work (also during the waiting period).

If an employer pays an employee a wage or salary, or a special bonus, during the employee’s annual leave, and the employee has received parenthood allowance during the time he or she was not at work, the employer can claim compensation for this expense from NHI.

Refunds of medical expenses

Besides providing income maintenance benefits, NHI covers its members for medical expenses in connection with illness, pregnancy and confinement.

Covered are drugs prescribed by a doctor or dentist as well as prescribed pharmaceutical nutrients and ointment bases used for the treatment of respectively severe diseases and long-term skin conditions (OTC drugs excluded), all non-covered medicine costs in excess of FIM3,185 (1997) a year, private-sector examinations and treatments performed or prescribed by a doctor, as well as transportation services and overnight stops necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of illness.

Further, NHI covers scheme members born in 1956 or later for all private-sector services provided or prescribed by a dentist, with the exception of orthodontic and prosthodontic procedures. Normally NHI covers dental services only when they are necessary for the treatment of a non-dental disease. Front-veterans are under a special law entitled to refunds of dental costs. Starting from 1 October 1997, persons born in 1955 or before are once in each period of three calendar years entitled to a refund for the cost of a single instance of examination or preventive treatment performed by a dentist.

In the case that the annual travelling expenses not covered by NHI exceed the annual deductible (FIM900 in 1997), NHI will refund the exceeding part in full (the so-called additional refund). The NHI refunds are determined in different ways. Some require that the patient first pay a specified deductible. A certain percentage of the costs exceeding the deductible are then returned to the patient. Also, doctors’ and dentists’ fees as well as examination and treatment charges are refunded according to a fixed scale of charges defined by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health. If the actual fee exceeds the fixed charge, the refund is calculated on the basis of the fixed charge.

When NHI-covered services are furnished by the private sector, NHI pays

- 50% of all medicine costs in excess of a fixed minimum per purchase (FIM50 in 1997) or, more rarely, nearly all medicine costs (scheme members suffering from certain specified conditions qualify for a 75% or 100% refund of costs exceeding FIM25);
- 60% of that part of doctors’ and dentists’ charges which does not exceed the charge specified for these services
  - for persons born in 1956 or later, 75% of dentists charges arising from oral or dental examination or preventive treatment
  - for persons born in 1955 or before, 75% of the cost of a single instance of dental examination or preventive treatment
  - for front-veterans, 100% of the charges for oral or dental examination and treatment and the clinical part of prosthodontic treatment given by a dentist or a dental technician, and 60% of the costs of other dental services for veterans;
- 75% of that part of examination and treatment charges which falls between a fixed minimum (FIM70) and the charge specified for these services per prescription and
- all transportation costs in excess of a fixed minimum (FIM45) per single journey.

As for overnight stops, NHI will pay all costs not exceeding FIM120 a day.

Aggregate of benefits

NHI is generally liable when a benefit in respect of incapacity for work is payable under both NHI and an occupational scheme. Where, on the other hand, such a benefit is payable under both NHI and employment accident insurance, or both NHI and third-party motor insurance, NHI is the subsidiary scheme.

When a scheme member receives sick- or maternity-leave pay from his employer, that part of his sickness or parenthood allowance under NHI which does not exceed this employer contribution is paid to the employer. The employer is also entitled to compensation from NHI for any wage or salary paid while the employee was on parenthood allowance.
When a scheme member receives earnings-related unemployment allowance during incapacity for work, that part of his sickness allowance under NHI which does not exceed this allowance is paid to his unemployment fund.

Sickness allowance and refund of medical expenses are paid to the Finnish Patient Insurance Association when the patient has received compensation from the association during the disability period or for the medical expenses in question.

If a municipal social service board finances NHI-covered services, the refund under NHI is paid to the board and not the insured person.

Payment of benefits

Scheme members who belong to an employee sickness fund receive their NHI benefits through the fund's branches. The rest receive their benefits through the SII's branches.

A scheme member buying covered medicines and drugs need not make a claim for his NHI refund. Under an agreement concluded with the SII, the pharmacy will make the claim and charge him only the remaining costs.

Statistical principles

Sources. The data on National Health Insurance refunds are obtained from the central payment records for the individual benefits. The statistics on illness and occupation are based on a 6.6% sample of the insured population.

Number of refunds. For medical services the number of deductible items is given. This means, for medicines, the number of visits to the pharmacist; for doctors' and dentists' services, the number of calls or prescription transactions outside the doctor's office; for examinations and treatments, the number of doctors' or dentists' orders; and for transportation services, the number of single journeys.

Number of compensations. For sickness and parenthood allowances, the number of spells begun, beneficiaries, installments paid, and compensation days is given.

Sickness allowance is not payable for the first nine days of illness, not including Sundays and the day on which incapacity for work began.

NHI is generally liable when a benefit in respect of incapacity for work is payable under both NHI and an occupational scheme. Where, on the other hand, such a benefit is payable under both NHI and certain other schemes (e.g. employment accident insurance, third-party motor insurance), NHI is the subsidiary scheme. Because of this, only part of the sickness allowance days for which benefit was payable under more than one scheme are included.

Expenditure on benefits. The SII statistics analyse both the amount of NHI refunds and the insured person's expenses before the NHI refund.

4.2 Occupational and student health services

The scheme subsidizing the provision of occupational health services was reformed on 1 January 1995. The main objective of the reform was to promote workplace services with a focus on prevention and the maintenance of work capacity and functional ability.

Employer-provided occupational health services. Employers are required by law to provide occupational health services to their employees with a view to preventing work-related health hazards. In addition to the statutory services, employers can opt to provide their workers with wider access to health services.

Under the Health Insurance Act, employers are entitled to a reimbursement of the necessary and reasonable costs of arranging occupational health services. There is maximum per-employee limit for the reimbursement, and up to 50% of the total costs approved by the SII are reimbursable. The reimbursements are paid once per accounting period based on a claim submitted by the employer.

There are two reimbursement classes. The costs of statutory occupational health services belong to reimbursement class I, while optional general practitioner-level services are included in class II. The maximum per-employee reimbursements applicable in 1995 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reimbursement (class)</th>
<th>Cost Limit (FIM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher reimbursements can be granted for special reasons (e.g. small number of covered workers).

The occupational health services can be offered through the employer's own occupational health unit or one operated jointly by several employers. In addition, they can be purchased from another employer or the municipal health centre, an organization licensed to provide occupational health services, or some other health care professional.

Occupational health services for entrepreneurs and the self-employed. Entrepreneurs and other self-employed persons are entitled to a reimbursement of the necessary and reasonable costs of any occupational health services they choose to purchase for themselves. The reimbursements cover services included within the definition of statutory occupational health services (reimbursement class I). Up to 50% of recognized costs are reimbursed.

Student health services. A certain part of the National Health Insurance funds go to the Finnish Student Health Service as reimbursement for the cost of health services it provides to university and college students.
5 SII-provided rehabilitation benefits

The rehabilitation activities of the Social Insurance Institution are governed by three acts, pertaining respectively to the rehabilitation services which the SII is required and authorized to provide, the cooperation between rehabilitation organizations, and the rehabilitation allowances.

Individual rehabilitation

Rehabilitation provided and reimbursable by the SII can be awarded persons insured under the National Pensions Act and the Health Insurance Act.

The SII is required by law to provide vocational rehabilitation for persons with impaired functional capacity and medical rehabilitation of persons with severe disabilities. The state budget includes a special allocation that the SII can use to arrange other vocational and medical rehabilitation.

Vocational rehabilitation for persons with impaired functional capacity. If a person’s capacity to work and financial self-sufficiency significantly decline due to an illness or injury, he or she must be given the chance to obtain

- essential vocational training in order to maintain or improve his or her capacity to work (eg rehabilitation examinations and work testing, training aimed at maintaining work capacity, and basic education, further education and retraining)
- assistance with running a business or self-employment
- basic training if it is a requirement for starting vocational training or
- for persons with severe disabilities, expensive and technically advanced aids necessary to help with work and study.

Medical rehabilitation of persons with severe disabilities. A severely disabled person must be given the chance to obtain extensive or elaborate out- or inpatient services which go beyond curative treatment and which are necessary in order to maintain or improve the client’s functional and work capacity. The client must be noninstitutionalised and in receipt of either the higher-rate or special-rate child disability allowance or disability allowance or, in connection with an disability pension, the higher-rate or special-rate pensioners’ care allowance.

Other vocational and medical rehabilitation. The SII can also provide, at its own discretion, other vocational and medical rehabilitation services than those described above. Such services are eg early rehabilitation measures geared to the requirements of a particular occupation, institutional rehabilitation services, adaptation training and psychotherapy.

An amount equalling at least four percent of the NHI contributions paid by the insured must each year be allocated for this type of rehabilitation services. Further resources for the purpose are allocated in the State budget. These funds can be used for, besides individual rehabilitation services, prevention, research in the field of rehabilitation and, when required, for the activities of the rehabilitation institutions supported by the SII.

Compensation of travel costs. Rehabilitation clients can get a refund for any necessary and reasonable expenses they incur while travelling to and from the rehabilitation site. All expenses exceeding a deductible of FIM45 per one-way trip (as of 1997) are covered.

Rehabilitation allowance

Persons who are permanently resident in Finland are eligible for the rehabilitation allowance. The allowance can, on certain conditions, also be paid during rehabilitation abroad.

The rehabilitation allowance is paid in connection with rehabilitation services arranged by the Social Insurance Institution, or the primary health care, social services or occupational health care sector.

The rehabilitation allowance is payable to rehabilitation clients aged between 16 and 64 for the duration of a rehabilitation programme which prevents them from working. It is only paid if the object of rehabilitation is the client’s remaining in, or entry/re-entry into employment.

For the duration of the recipient’s participation in a rehabilitation programme, the rehabilitation allowance is paid for each workday. It is not paid during the waiting period. The length of the waiting period depends on the type and duration of the rehabilitation programme.

In the majority of cases, the rate of the rehabilitation allowance is determined in the same way as the sickness allowance. The allowance is taxable income. The rate of the allowance is generally adjusted on a yearly basis. At the start of 1997, the allowance was raised by 1.8% (in line with the TEL employment pension index), and on 1 January 1998, by 1.9%. The means-tested rehabilitation allowances were not increased in either year.
Rehabilitation Services Unit
A rehabilitation service facility located in Turku provides various types of rehabilitation services both for internal and outside use as well as carries out client surveys for the Social Insurance Institution’s Research and Development Centre.

6 SII’s unemployment-related benefits

6.1 General benefits

The main unemployment-related benefits are the unemployment allowance, the labour market support, and the unemployment pension (discussed with other pensions). The unemployment allowance is payable as either a basic allowance, administered by the SII, or an earnings-related allowance. A job alternation scheme was introduced on an experimental basis from the beginning of 1996. It provides for job alternation compensations that are paid by both unemployment funds and the SII. Since 1 January 1998, labour market support can be paid directly to employers, either by itself or in combination with the subsidies granted by the employment authorities to create job opportunities for the long-term unemployed.

The basic unemployment allowance is governed by the Unemployment Allowances Act, which grants basic unemployment protection to all residents of Finland (also EU/EEA citizens working in Finland). The EU regulations and various bilateral agreements on social security contain further provisions relating to unemployment protection.

The labour market support is governed by a separate Act of Parliament. It is payable to residents of Finland only.

The job alternation compensations are governed by a separate Act.

Basic unemployment allowance

Eligibility. The basic unemployment allowance is payable to unemployed persons aged 17–64 who have registered with an employment office, are seeking full-time employment, and satisfy the so-called employment condition. Further, recipients must be fit for work and available for employment.

The employment condition is considered to be satisfied if the applicant has been employed for at least 10 months in the previous 2 years. Self-employed persons are considered to satisfy the condition if, during the 4 years preceding unemployment, they have run their own business for at least 2 years on a more or less full-time basis.

Periods of employment completed in other EU/EEA countries are also fully credited but usually not until the person concerned has worked in Finland for at least four weeks.

The basic unemployment allowance is paid to unemployed persons who do not belong to a trade union unemployment fund for a maximum of 500 days of unemployment. The full 500-day entitlement is restored if the recipient again satisfies the employment condition (i.e. is employed for at least 10 months within a period of 2 years). Unemployed persons who are aged 57 or more upon exhausting their right to the allowance get an automatic extension to the age of 60.

Payment of the basic unemployment allowance begins once the unemployed person has been registered with an employment office as seeking employment for seven days.

Amount of the basic unemployment allowance.
The full basic unemployment allowance was at year-end 1997 payable at a rate of FIM118 per day. It is increased for dependent children. At the end of 1997, the child increase was, for one child, FIM24, for two children, FIM35, and for three or more children, FIM45 per day. The allowance is payable for up to five days per week.

Basic unemployment allowances are not means-tested. The allowance can only be reduced by the recipient’s own earned income and certain social benefits paid to the recipient. The amount of the social benefits is deducted from the full allowance.

The basic unemployment allowance is taxable income. The rates of the allowance are adjusted in line with significant changes in general earnings levels. No adjustment was carried out in either 1996 or 1997. On 1 January 1998, the basic unemployment allowance was raised by FIM2. From 1999 onwards, the yearly adjustments will be linked to changes in the cost-of-living index.

Labour market support

In addition to securing the livelihood of the recipients, the cash labour market support benefit is aimed at promoting the recipients’ re-entry to the labour market by means of labour policy measures.

Eligibility. Cash labour market support is payable to unemployed persons who have received basic or earnings-related allowance for the maximum period allowed (500 days) or are not entitled to unemploy-
First-time entrants to the labour market must complete a five-month waiting period, except if they have recently graduated from a vocationally oriented educational institute. No limits apply as to the maximum length of payment.

**Amount of the labour market support.** The cash labour market support is equal in amount to the basic unemployment allowance (with the exception of the increases for children), but unlike the allowance *means tested*. However, means testing is waived

– during the first 180 days for persons having exhausted their eligibility for unemployment allowance
– for recipients aged 55 or more who, at the time they become unemployed, satisfy the employment condition and
– during any period in which the recipients participate in measures supporting their integration into
the labour market that have been arranged by an employment authority.

First-time entrants to the labour market who live with their parents get 60% of the regular amount of the benefit. However, during participation in a labour policy measure, the labour market support is paid at the unreduced rate.

The means test is applied to the recipients' own income and (as at year-end 1997) their spouse's income exceeding FIM300 a month. The full labour market support was at year-end 1997 paid if the combined monthly income of the recipient and his or her spouse was less than FIM5,040 (or in the case of single recipients, FIM1,500). This amount was raised by FIM630 for each dependent child.

The means test is applied to the recipients' own income and (as at year-end 1997) their spouse's income exceeding FIM300 a month. The full labour market support was at year-end 1997 paid if the combined monthly income of the recipient and his or her spouse was less than FIM5,040 (or in the case of single recipients, FIM1,500). This amount was raised by FIM630 for each dependent child.

Any income exceeding these limits reduced the benefit with 50% or 75% of the excess being deducted from the benefit (depending on whether the recipient has, or does not have, dependants). For example, no labour market support was payable to single persons with a monthly income of FIM4,730 or more.

The amount of the labour market support is further affected by the same social benefits as in the case of the basic unemployment allowance. The benefits are deducted from the full labour market support.

The labour market support is taxable income. The rates and the income-related eligibility requirements are adjusted in line with significant changes in general earnings levels. No adjustment was carried out in 1996 or 1997. On 1 January 1998, the labour market support was raised by FIM2. From 1999 onwards, the yearly adjustments will be linked to changes in the cost-of-living index.

**Job alternation compensation**

Job alternation leave is an arrangement in which an employee who is employed full-time (or, since 1 January 1998, employed 75% of what is considered to be full-time), based on an agreement with his or her employer, goes on leave for a specified period from his or her regular job, and the employer hires an unemployed person as a replacement. The employee on job alternation leave is entitled to a special compensation.

In order to go on a subsidized job alternation leave, employees must have held a job with the same employer for at least a year previously. They are guaranteed the right to return to their regular job or some other comparable job. The job alternation scheme was introduced on an experimental basis, and will continue to the end of 2000.

The leave must be taken in a continuous period of at least 90 but no more than 359 calendar days.

The job alternation compensation is equal to 60% (from 1 January 1998, 70%) of the unemployment allowance which the claimant would receive were he or she unemployed. The full compensation paid by the SII in 1997 amounted to FIM70.80 per day.

The compensation is subject to tax.

**6.2 Training-related benefits**

The aim of labour market training is to improve the chances of people of working-age to maintain or regain their position in the labour market. The main types of training provided are further vocational training and skills upgrading. Those undergoing labour market training are eligible for one of two income security benefits, the training allowance or the labour market support. Both can be supplemented by a maintenance and accommodation allowance.

Both earnings-related and basic training allowances are paid. The earnings-related allowance is for members of unemployment funds. The basic allowance, like the labour market support and the supplemental allowances, is paid by the SII.

Unemployed persons with a long work history are eligible for financial support for self-motivated learning, which makes it possible for them study full-time without suffering any financial loss. The training or studies they choose must be of a kind that improves their vocational skills and employability.

Support for self-motivated learning is payable to the long-term unemployed who participate in a training programme that began between 1 August 1997 and 31 July 1998. The unemployment funds are in charge of payments to their members (earnings-related benefits), while the rest are paid by the SII (basic benefits). The scheme providing financial support for self-motivated learning for the long-term unemployed constitutes the first stage of a new training and educational insurance scheme. In the second stage, the eligibility criteria will be relaxed somewhat to include more of the unemployed, who can get support for training that begins on 1 August 1998 or thereafter.

The long-term unemployed who receive labour market support and are in practical training arranged by the employment authorities can beginning from 1 January 1998 also get a maintenance allowance.

**Labour market training**

**Eligibility.** The basic training allowance and the various supplemental allowances are payable to persons
over the age of 17 who have been accepted for a training course commissioned by employment authorities.

Furthermore, it is required that the employment condition (10 months of employment in the last 2 years or 2 years of self-employment in the last 4 years) was satisfied when employment ended or studies began and that the beneficiary had not been in receipt of unemployment allowance for the maximum time allowed. Persons who do not fulfill these requirements get labour market support during the training course.

The benefits are payable also to foreign nationals attending a training course paid for by Finnish employment authorities. Further, they can be awarded in respect of foreign studies, provided they are financed by a Finnish authority.

**Rates of the benefits.** At its full rate, the basic allowance is equal to the basic unemployment allowance (at year-end 1997, FIM118 per day). Child increases are payable in the same way as with the unemployment allowance.

If a student’s monthly income exceeds FIM750 (year-end 1997 limit), the basic training allowance is reduced by 80% of the amount exceeding the limit.

A maintenance allowance is payable in respect of travel and other recurring expenses incurred while studying, and an accommodation allowance in respect of accommodation costs incurred when studies take place outside the region in which the beneficiary works.

The allowances described above are paid for a maximum of five days per week. The basic allowance is taxable income, the maintenance and accommodation allowance is not. All the allowances are adjusted to changes in the overall wage and salary level as are the basic unemployment allowances.

**Maintenance and accommodation allowance for persons financing their studies with labour market support**

Unemployed persons who undergo labour market training but do not satisfy the employment condition or have depleted their unemployment allowance entitlement, are paid labour market support instead of the training allowance, and are also eligible for a maintenance and accommodation allowance. In the Yearbook, these labour market support payments are included in general unemployment expenditures, while the maintenance and accommodation allowances are counted as training-related unemployment expenditures.

The maintenance allowance is granted in respect of transportation and other regular expenses incurred in the course of the training. The accommodation allowance is paid to students whose school is located outside the area in which they would be expected to seek employment. The allowance is awarded towards the expenses that the student must meet in order to reside in the school’s geographic area.

The maintenance and accommodation allowances were in 1997 both paid at a rate of FIM30 per day for a maximum of 5 days a week. They are available exclusively to persons in receipt of full-rate labour market support, under the same eligibility criteria and at the same rate as they are paid to labour market training beneficiaries. Both allowances are free from tax.

**Support for self-motivated learning for the long-term unemployed**

**Eligibility.** To qualify, claimants must

– have enrolled in a full-time training programme designed to improve their vocational skills and employability and consisting of at least 20 study weeks;

– have been registered as unemployed and seeking employment with the employment office (for at least 12 months within the last 2 years) and

– have a substantial work history (with employment pension credits for at least 12 years out of the previous 18).

Recipients must also be living in Finland.

**Amount.** The support is equal to the unemployment allowance the recipient would get. During the studies, the recipients get either labour market training allowance or labour market support. The SII pays basic training allowance to those who satisfy the employment condition and have at least some of their 500-day entitlement to unemployment allowance left. Those who do not meet these criteria get labour market support.

Like the training allowance and labour market support, the support for self-motivated learning can include an increase for children, but not a maintenance or accommodation allowance. Labour market support paid during self-motivated training or studies is not means tested (i.e., spousal income is not deducted from the benefit) or reduced even if the recipient is living with his or her parents. However, any earnings or benefits the recipient receives during the studies are taken into account, just as they would be in the case of labour market training allowance or labour market support.

Support for self-motivated learning is available for a maximum of 2 years, but not after 31 December 1999.
7 The maternity grant, family allowance and child day care subsidy schemes

7.1 Maternity grant and family allowance

Basic eligibility criteria. Maternity grant can be paid to female residents of Finland. Family allowances are paid in respect of children resident in Finland. Whether a certain individual is considered to be resident in Finland is decided on the basis of the Act respecting the Application of Residence-Based Social Security Legislation. The EU provisions and international social security agreements cause certain exceptions to the eligibility rules for residence-based benefits.

Maternity grant. The aim of the maternity grant is to promote the health and well-being of the mother and child. The grant is payable to women whose pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days and who have undergone a medical examination before the fourth month of pregnancy.

The grant is awarded either as a lump-sum cash benefit or a box containing child care essentials (maternity pack). The 1997 rate of the cash benefit was FIM760. It is free from tax.

Family allowance. The family allowance is intended to help with the cost of providing for a child under age 17. Its rate depends on how many children eligible for family allowance there are in the family. The 1997 rates of the family allowance were:

- for first child: FIM535
- for second child: FIM657
- for third child: FIM779
- for fourth child: FIM901
- for fifth and each additional child: FIM1,023.

The allowance is increased by FIM200 a month (1997) for each child in a single-parent family.

Family allowances are free from tax. The Council of State is authorized to raise family allowance in line with cost-of-living increases but, did not do so in 1996–1998.

7.2 Child day care subsidies

The aim of the child day care subsidies scheme is to assist families with their child care costs. It is intended as an alternative to municipal day care.

The new system is the result of a child day care benefits reform carried out on 1 August 1997. The SII remains responsible for the implementation of the system.

In addition to the benefits prescribed by law, municipalities are free to grant residents additional assistance with their child care costs in the form of the municipal supplement. Some municipalities pay the supplement by themselves while others have an agreement with the SII whereby the SII pays the supplements along with the statutory benefits.

Main eligibility conditions

Child day care subsidies can be granted for children who are living in Finland and whose day care is not arranged by the municipality. Also eligible are children who one year before starting school attend a part-time pre-school class arranged by the municipality, as well as children who start school one year early. Once their eligibility for parenthood allowance has ended, parents can choose between municipal day care and child day care subsidy. Payment of the subsidy ends at the latest on 31 July of the year in which the child starts school.

Types of subsidies available

The child day care subsidies are paid as either a home care allowance or a private day care allowance. A part-time care allowance is also available.

Home care allowance. Payable to families with a child under age 3. Home care allowance is paid also for other children under school age whose day care has been arranged in the same way. The parents can either look after their child themselves or hire a private day care provider. The allowance is available immediately once parenthood allowance has ended and can continue until the child reaches the age of three.

The home care allowance can include a basic allowance and a supplement. The basic allowance is paid separately for each child, while the supplement is paid for one child only and is linked to family income and size. (See Table C.)

The supplement is payable at its maximum rate if the family’s income is below a limit that varies with the size of the family. All taxable earnings and income from investments as well as most tax-exempt income are taken into account. For example, a family of four that at the end of 1997 had a monthly income of FIM10,070 or less would receive the maximum supplement. For a family of two, the corresponding income limit at year-end 1997 was FIM6,890 per month. The income limits starting from which a family of four is no longer eligible for 1) home care supplement and...
2) private day care supplement, are FIM22,722 and FIM20,191 per month, respectively.

Private day care allowance. Payable to the day care provider the parents have chosen to look after their under school-age child. The allowance is paid for each child from the end of the parents’ eligibility for parenthood allowance until the youngest child starts school. If the parents have a child under three, they can choose between home care allowance and private day care allowance.

The private day care allowance is paid directly to the day care provider, which can be either
 – a person or organization licensed to provide child care services or
 – a private individual whom the parents have hired to care for the child.

Private day care allowance can include a basic allowance and a supplement, payable separately for each child under school age. (See Table C.) It is linked to family income and size. The income criteria and limits are the same as those that apply to the home care allowance.

The child day care subsidies are taxable income. The private day care allowance is considered as taxable income of the day care provider. The subsidies are not adjusted annually to index changes.

8 General housing allowance

The general housing allowances scheme is governed by an Act of Parliament and a related decree as well as a Council of State Decision regarding the terms under which the allowance is determined.

The scheme is only one of the benefits provided by the SII towards housing costs. There are also provisions for pension recipients, students living alone in a rental dwelling, conscripts and their dependants and persons undergoing labour market training to receive financial assistance with their housing costs.
Eligibility

The general housing allowance is intended to reduce the housing costs of low-income households. A household is considered to comprise all the persons, living in Finland, who on a permanent basis share a dwelling. Persons with a familial relationship with the recipient (married or unmarried spouses, children, parents, grandparents and under-age siblings) are regardless of any other circumstances considered to belong to the household.

General housing allowance is payable in respect of rental, right-of-occupancy and owner-occupied dwellings even if the recipients occupy their dwelling as subtenants or have themselves subleased part of their dwelling. The dwelling must be fit for human habitation and be located in Finland.

The household may include, and the allowance may be claimed by, a foreign resident of Finland with a residence permit valid for at least one year. (The EU provisions or the Act respecting the Implementation of Residence-Based Social Security Legislation do not apply to the general housing allowance.)

The need for housing allowance is determined with reference to the household's housing costs, combined income and taxable assets.

Amount

The housing allowance covers 80% of reasonable housing costs exceeding a basic deductible (the amount which the household must in any case pay itself). The amount of the allowance depends on the location of the dwelling, the size of the household and the household's annual income. The basic deductibles are set yearly by the Council of State. (Starting from 1 January 1998, those households whose income qualifies them for the full housing allowance are exempt from the FIM100 basic deductible. At the same time, the income thresholds for eligibility for the full allowance were increased substantially.)

The allowance is recalculated if the household's monthly income changes significantly (defined as a change of FIM2,000 or more) or if a subtenant moves into or out of the dwelling. It is regularly adjusted once a year.

The general housing allowance is a tax-free benefit.

Housing costs. Housing costs are considered to include rent, maintenance charge or equivalent, and separate heating and water charges. In the case of a detached owner-occupied dwelling, the maintenance costs of the dwelling are determined by means of a fixed scale of standard costs.

In an owner-occupied dwelling, 55% of the interest due on personal loans taken out to purchase or renovate the dwelling is also taken into account as a housing cost. In a state-subsidized owner-occupied dwelling, 80% of the annual payment or fixed interest on the loan is taken into account.

Housing allowance is payable in respect of «reasonable» housing costs. This means that there is a yearly adjusted ceiling on both housing costs and the size of the dwelling. The maximum housing costs are further influenced by the location, age, size and level of equipment of the dwelling.

Income and property. In order to qualify for housing allowance, the regular monthly income of the household members may not exceed an amount determined yearly by the Council of State. Disregards apply for certain social benefits. The combined taxable assets of the household members may not exceed an amount set by the Council of State (in 1997: one-person household – FIM75,000; household with six or more members – FIM150,000). The dwelling occupied by the household is, however, not taken into account.

Starting from 1 January 1998, failing the assets test no longer prevents the household from receiving the housing allowance. Instead, 15% of the assets' excess value is added to the household's income.

9 Benefits for students

9.1 Financial aid

The student financial aid system is intended to secure the livelihood of students. The aid system is provided for in the Act on Student Financial Aid and other related legislation. It is implemented by the Social Insurance Institution (SII).

Basic requirements

For studies in Finland, student financial aid can be granted to Finnish citizens, employed persons from EU/EEA member states and their dependent spouse and children, and others who are not Finnish citizens, provided that they have been resident in Finland for at least two years in a capacity other than that of student and their residence can be considered permanent.

For studies outside Finland, student financial aid can be granted to Finnish citizens and employed persons from EU/EEA member states and their dependent spouse and children, provided that they have been resident in Finland for at least two years prior to the
start of their studies and the residence abroad can be regarded as temporary. Financial help with studies that take place outside Finland is given insofar as the studies correspond to Finnish studies that would be covered by the student financial aid provisions or alternatively form part of a Finnish degree programme.

Right to student financial aid

Student financial aid can be paid to those who study full time, who progress in their studies and who are in need of financial support. The receipt of certain other benefits (e.g. pensions, unemployment allowance and labour market support) can prevent the granting of any student financial aid.

Student financial aid is available for full-time post-comprehensive school studies. The following studies entitle the student to receive financial aid: upper secondary school studies, study for a vocational diploma or vocational studies at a secondary-level educational establishment (also other studies in a folk high school), and studies at universities and other institutes of higher education.

Duration of student financial aid

A student at a higher education establishment can be granted student financial aid for a maximum of 70 months, of which 55 months can be used for one higher university degree (starting from 1 March 1997, continuation of the aid beyond 55 months is possible under special circumstances).

For studies at establishments other than institutes of higher education, financial aid is granted for as long as the studies normally take at the place in question. Student financial aid is normally granted for nine months of the school year.

The study grant for mature students is payable for a maximum of two school years. However, in the case of a licentiate or doctoral degree, the maximum is 12 months.

Types of financial aid

Student financial aid consists of an (ordinary) study grant or study grant for mature students, a housing supplement and a state-guaranteed student loan. Interest subsidy and interest allowance are also paid on student loans granted under earlier student financial aid provisions. The interest allowance alone is available for newer loans.

Ordinary study grant. The amount of study grant depends on the age of the student, the type of accommodation, the student’s family circumstances, the type of educational institution and the student’s financial circumstances. Study grant is not awarded to those receiving family allowance.

The full amounts of study grant for the school year 1997–98 were as follows (some amounts have been revised for the school year 1998–99):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students living with their parents</th>
<th>FIM/month</th>
<th>Students living alone</th>
<th>FIM/month</th>
<th>Students who are married or have maintenance liabilities</th>
<th>FIM/month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– below 19 years of age</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>– below 20 years of age</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>1,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– aged 19 or over</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>– aged 20 or over</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>1,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– married or have maintenance liabilities</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
<td>630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student’s own income, and in certain cases parents’ income, is taken into consideration in determining the need for financial aid. Until 31 December 1997, the students’ own income was averaged over the months for which they received financial aid. Income earned in other months did not affect the study grant.

In the school year 1997–98, the full amount of study grant was payable if the student’s own income did not exceed FIM1,800 per month. Where income exceeded this amount, the study grant was reduced by 10% for every additional FIM300.

The means test rules applied to the study grant (including housing supplement) were changed with effect from 1 January 1998. The student’s own income during the entire calendar year is now taken into account. For each month for which the student receives financial aid, he or she can have up to FIM3,000 in other income, and for each month without aid, up to FIM9,000. A personal annual income limit is calculated for each student based on how many months he or she has spent on and off financial aid in the calendar year.

Parental income can either raise or reduce the study grant. For students under 19 or living at home, study grant can be increased on the basis of the parents’ lack of means. On the other hand, if parental income exceeds the defined level the study
grant for a secondary-level student under 20 will be reduced.

Study grant for mature students. A student aged 30–54 has the right to study grant provided that he or she has not completed any basic vocational training or that at least five years have elapsed since he or she was last a full-time student. If the student already has a higher basic degree, a study grant for mature students will not be awarded to study for a second degree at the same level. Study grant for mature students is awarded only if the claimant has been previously employed for at least one year.

The amount of the study grant for mature students is equal to 25 per cent of the student’s regular taxable earnings before studying, ranging from a minimum of FIM1,540 to a maximum of FIM2,800 per month (school year 1997–98). It is not payable if the student receives a wage, pension or other similar income during the period of study. The maximum permitted amount of other income is FIM2,000 for each month on financial aid.

Housing supplement. The following are entitled to housing supplement:

– single students living alone in rented accommodation, in right-of-occupancy accommodation or in a student dormitory
– students married or with a family and, on account of their studies, living in rented accommodation in a locality separate from that in which their family lives.

In the school year 1997–98, housing supplement was 67% of the monthly rent or charge. A student’s living alone in rented accommodation, in right-of-occupancy accommodation or in a student dormitory.

Until the end of 1997, the full amount of housing supplement was paid if the student’s own average income during the period of financial support was below FIM1,800 per month. For each additional FIM300, the housing supplement was reduced by 10%. Starting from 1 January 1998, the housing supplement is subject to approximately the same means test as the study grant. A personal annual income limit is calculated for each student based on the number of months for which he or she has received study grant and/or housing supplement.

The parents’ income may reduce the level of housing supplement awarded to a secondary-level student under 18.

State guarantee for student loan. A state guarantee is given for a student loan if the student receives an ordinary study grant or study grant for mature students. The amount of state-guaranteed student loan per support month for the school year 1997–98 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>FIM/month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student receiving ordinary study grant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– aged 18 or over</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– below 18</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature student receiving study grant</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student studying abroad</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state guarantee is granted separately for each school year. Applications for the state-guaranteed student loan should be made at a bank. The interest rate and other terms of the loan are agreed between the student and the bank. Although the state guarantee is given for the maximum amount of the loan, it is not necessary to take out the full amount.

Each term, the student loan and correspondingly the state guarantee are increased by the relevant amount of interest on the loan. The student pays the student loan interest with the amortization of the loan after his or her studies are completed.

The bank can demand that the loan be repaid immediately if the student fails to pay the interest or instalments. In the event that the SII has to repay the loan to the bank, the SII is entitled to reclaim the sum from the student.

Interest subsidy and allowance. Interest subsidy and interest allowance can be paid on student loans granted under earlier student financial aid provisions (loans taken by university and higher education students before 1 June 1992 and by others before 1 July 1994).

In the case of interest subsidy, the state pays part of the student loan interest. The subsidy is paid during the study period and for about 1 1/2 years after the completion of studies. During that time, the students themselves pay interest at a variable rate (3.75% in 1997, 3.25% in 1998).

For reasons of unemployment, national service or the receipt of maternity and parental allowance, the interest on old interest-subsidy loans can be paid entirely by the state, and without any repayment obligation (interest allowance).

The interest payable on new market-rate loans, too, can be paid entirely by the state – without any repayment obligation – if the borrower is unemployed, on maternity or parental allowance, or is performing his or her national service (in which case the inter-
Meal subsidy. The SII subsidizes organizations which run student cafeterias providing food for university and higher education students.

Taxation of student financial aid. Ordinary study grant and study grant for mature students are taxable income. Housing supplement is not taxed. However, tax is not deducted from ordinary study grants alone, as they are tax-deductible.

9.2 School transportation subsidy

The purpose of the school transportation subsidy is to help students of upper secondary schools and vocational institutes with the cost of commuting between home and school. The subsidy is also aimed at reducing regional disparities in the level of assistance students can expect for their transportation costs. Effective since 1 July 1997, the school transportation subsidy scheme is implemented by the SII.

Eligible for the school transportation subsidy are Finnish residents who study in a Finnish school. The subsidy is payable to students who either attend an upper secondary school or are in basic vocational training. It is not payable to those in adult education, summer university, or paid practical training with monthly wages exceeding FIM3,000 (1997 limit). Further, the subsidy is not granted to students who have free lodging or do not use public transportation or special school transportation even if they are available for trips to and from school. Finally, students who get assistance with their transportation costs from some other source are also not eligible for the school transportation subsidy.

The one-way trip between home and school must be at least 10 kilometres and the student’s transportation costs more than FIM300 a month. The subsidy covers the difference between the student’s copayment (FIM250 a month) and the actual costs. If the trip exceeds 100 kilometres, no subsidy is available for the kilometres above 100.

The subsidized transportation costs are calculated differently depending on whether the student uses Matkahuolto or VR, some other public transportation, transportation organized by the school, or some other mode of transportation. Public transportation and special school transportation are preferred, and special cause must be shown to have other modes of transportation subsidized.

School transportation subsidy is granted for one school year at a time and is paid for up to 9 months per school year. The minimum period of subsidy is one month. The subsidy is free from tax.

10 Conscript’s allowance

The Conscript’s Allowance Scheme is aimed at securing the livelihood of the dependants of men completing their national military or alternative service and of women performing voluntary armed service and at helping the conscripts themselves with housing costs. In certain situations, it is also possible to pay the interest due on market-rate student loans on behalf of persons performing their national service. (Assistance with the interest due on older, interest-subsidized loans is provided through the regular student financial aid scheme.)

The allowance is granted where it is apparent that performing the national service has made it more difficult for the conscript and his or her family to secure a livelihood and there is also a demonstrated need of financial assistance.

When paid to a dependant, the conscript’s allowance can comprise a basic assistance, a housing assistance and a special assistance. When a conscript receives the allowance in his or her own right, the allowance comprises a cash housing assistance and help with the interest payable on student loans.

The full basic assistance was in 1997 equal to a national pension paid at its maximum rate to a recipient living alone (at year-end 1997, FIM2,532 in municipalities with the highest cost-of-living rating.) The amount of the basic assistance is linked to the number of dependants. The assistance for the first dependant is 100%, for the second dependant 50% and for the third and each additional dependant 30% of the full assistance. Any additional income that the conscripts or their families may have reduces the assistance.

The cash housing assistance covers reasonable housing costs. The special assistance may be granted in respect of specific expenses such as medical care and removals.

The conscript’s allowance is tax-free. Rate adjustments are carried out in accordance with national pension rules, but none were made in 1997 or 1998.

11 SII finance and administration

11.1 Finance

National Pension Insurance. National Pension Insurance benefits are financed mainly by the employ-
ers (through contributions levied on them) and the state (through payments earmarked for specific benefits). Since 1993, a share of value-added tax revenues and special charges levied on motor and accident insurance institutions have been used to finance pension benefits. The yield on the SII’s own investments is also used to fund pension expenditures.

The state financed in their entirety the schemes providing survivors’ pensions, front-veterans’ benefits, general and child disability allowances, and housing allowances for pensioners, as well as 29% of national pensions. (The contribution by municipalities to the pensioners’ housing allowance scheme was in 1997 for the first time paid by the state.)

The contribution rates for employers were throughout 1997 as follows: private sector, 2.40%–4.90%; state and parishes, 3.95%; municipalities and local government utilities, 3.15%, in each case as a percentage of their employees’ PAYE earnings.

National Health Insurance. National Health Insurance is financed with contributions from insured persons and employers and the yield on assets. The money recovered by the NHI fund in cases of non-primary liability is regarded as NHI income too. Wage and salary earners contributed throughout 1997 1.9% of their earnings subject to local government tax (2.35% of earnings exceeding FIM80,000) and pensioners 4.9% of their pension income (5.35% of income exceeding FIM80,000) to NHI. The contribution rates for employers were: private sector, 1.60%; state, 2.85%; municipalities and local government utilities, 1.60%; and parishes, 6.85%, in each case as a percentage of their employees’ PAYE earnings.

The NPI and NHI Funds. Both the National Pension and National Health Insurance Schemes are financed on a pay-as-you-go basis, which means that current contribution revenues are used to finance current benefit expenditures.

Under current law, both the NPI and the NHI fund must at year-end equal at least 8% of the total annual expenditure of NPI and NHI. It is also possible to transfer funds from one fund to another to meet the 8% minimum requirement. If, even after all possible transfers have been made, either of the funds falls short of the minimum requirement, the state will meet the deficit. In addition, the state guarantees the liquidity of the funds.

In 1997, a total of FIM644 million was transferred from the NHI fund to the NPI fund, and the state paid a liquidity guarantee of FIM730 million to the NPI fund.

Rehabilitation benefits. Expenditures arising from the implementation of rehabilitation legislation are financed out of the general revenues of the NHI fund. Four percent of the insured persons’ contributions to national health insurance goes towards the costs of implementing the Act on Rehabilitation Services to be provided by the Social Insurance Institution. Parliament determines each year whether a larger transfer is required.

Other benefit schemes. Financed in their entirety by the state are the schemes providing basic unemployment allowances and labour market support, job alternation compensations, labour market training allowances, maintenance and accommodation allowances for those financing their studies with labour market support, support for self-motivated learning, maternity grants and family allowances, conscripts’ allowances, general housing allowances, student financial aid and school transportation subsidies. The state also finances that part of the survey on farmers’ working conditions and front-veterans’ travelling expenses that NHI does not cover. The child day care subsidies are financed by municipalities.

Staff pension fund. To cover its liability for staff pensions and to pay current benefits, the SII has since 1991 had a staff pension fund, which collects a special contribution from both the national pension insurance and national health insurance funds. Since 1993, employees have also paid their employment pension contributions into the pension fund. Under current law, the fund must cover 19% of pension liabilities. Following an increase in the accumulation rate, the fund reached its specified target level in 1996.

11.2 Organisation and benefit administration

For purposes of benefit administration, Finland is divided into 188 insurance districts, each of which is served by at least one SII office. The SII has a total of 360 customer service locations around Finland. These figures are from 31 December 1997. There are also five regional offices, each of which is responsible for an insurance region.

In the SII’s central administration, benefit administration is the responsibility of the Pension and Income Security, and Health and Income Security Departments (See Table D).

Benefit administration. Nearly all claims determinations are made by the SII’s branches. Decisions on disability pensions, some occupational health care and student financial aid matters are the only ones that are taken centrally.
Claims for disability pension are determined in the Pension and Income Security Department and certain claims for employer-provided occupational health services in the Health and Income Security Department. University and college students’ applications for student financial aid are decided by local financial aid committees (not part of the SII), while applications filed by students in secondary education are determined by the SII’s Centre for Student Financial Aid. In 1997, the SII’s branches were assigned the responsibility for determining applications for student loan interest allowance and financial aid for upper secondary school students.

National Health Insurance matters are handled by the SII’s branches as well as by workplace sickness funds.

The review and appeals process. The review and appeals process differs somewhat depending on which benefit is concerned. The final court of appeal is either the Insurance Court of the Appeal Tribunal. The avenue of appeal is in most cases two-tiered (See Table E). The SII can also rectify earlier decisions thus making an appeal unnecessary.

Analyses by region, type of disease and occupation

Regional analyses

In the present publication, the statistical analyses by region are based on the beneficiary’s place of residence.

Analyses by type of disease

National Pension Insurance, National Health Insurance, disability benefit, and rehabilitation data are analysed also by type of disease. The disease codes are from the tenth revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), in-
The revised classification slightly weakens the comparability between the 1996 figures and the figures for the preceding years also for the disease categories shown in the Yearbook.

On 1 January 1996, the national pensions were made dependent on the recipient's other pension income. This means that only part of all disability pensions are paid out of the National Pension Insurance Scheme and that the SII's statistics no longer give a full picture of disability pension recipiency in Finland. To fill this gap, the SII and the Central Pension Security Institute have since 1996 compiled joint statistics on all disability pension recipients living in Finland as well as the diagnoses on which pension has been granted. This information is shown in Table 7 of the Yearbook.

Data on diseases for newly awarded national disability pensions are available from the SII's own registries. These pensions are paid to individuals who either do not qualify for some other form of pension provision or whose other retirement income is small. Further data on diseases resulting in need of treatment or assistance are obtainable from pensioners' care allowance award records. Further, there are two additional benefits with restricted eligibility: the child disability and general disability allowances, both graduated in three payment categories. The illness cate-
category is determined on the basis of the main diagnosis or, where pensioners’ care allowances are concerned, the disease(s) causing the need of help.

The disease statistics covering all recipients of disability pension living in Finland (Table 7) are primarily based on the diagnosis made for the purposes of the employment pension system. These data are not comparable with other SII disability pension statistics focusing on specific diseases in this Yearbook.

Also in the analyses of National Health Insurance data the illness category is determined on the basis of the main diagnosis.

The diseases conferring entitlement to medicines in the 75% refund category are:

(201) chronic cardiac insufficiency, (202) rheumatoid arthritis and diffuse diseases of connective tissue, (203) chronic bronchial asthma and chronic obstructive diseases of the lung, (204) chronic urethritis until year-end 1993, (205) chronic hypertension, (206) chronic coronary artery disease, (207) chronic arrhythmia, (208) ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease, (211) familial hypercholesterolemia, and (212) gout.

Of the diseases belonging to the 100% refund category, the most important ones are:


Pharmaceutical nutrients belong either to the basic or the 75% refund category.

Analyses by occupation and position

In the present publication, recipients of disability pension whose benefit payments have started recently are analysed also by occupation and position.

The analyses of sickness allowance recipients by occupation and position are from the SII’s standing NHI sample, which includes information about the beneficiary’s occupation.

In the analyses of basic unemployment allowance and labour market support recipients by occupation, manpower services records have been consulted.

In the analyses of recipients of rehabilitation services provided by the SII by occupation SII records have been consulted (all claimants for SII rehabilitation services over 16 are required to give information about their occupation).

The codes used in this Yearbook stem from the Nordic yrkesklassificering (the Nordic classification of occupations), slightly modified by the SII. It has been in use since 1988.

Occupation is classified according to a three-digit code, the first two digits indicating a person’s occupation and the third his or her position.

The SII records the claimant’s last occupation in employment (anybody who has worked for at least three hours a day four months a year has been put down as employed; anybody who has not worked for five years, as non-employed). The manpower services generally consult the job-seeker’s employment or training record.