

Maternity grant in Finland

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Maternity grant in Finland

- Social security benefit offered by the Finnish government to all women who reside permanently in Finland and are expecting a baby
- The pregnant mother can choose the grant as
 - a maternity package or
 - a tax-free sum of money (170 €)
- 92 % of first-time mothers choose the maternity package
- To get the grant a pregnant mother must visit either a doctor or a maternity and child welfare clinic nurse before the 5th month of pregnancy and then deliver a certificate of that health check to Kela
- Today Kela delivers around 45,000 maternity grants per year, of which about 70% are provided in the form of a maternity package.
 - The total number of receivers and grants is decreasing year by year.

The maternity package

- Contains baby clothes and other necessary items, such as bedding and child-care products
- There are altogether about 40 different items in the box
 - Updated yearly in response to feedback from clients
- The containing items are sourced through a competitive bidding process complying with EU law
- A social security benefit: neither a commercial product nor to be sold or bought.
- The parents are quite happy with the maternity package: according to a research by Kela, the parents gave a school grade in average of 8,7 to the maternity package (2018). The most common grade was 9, which was given by over half of respondents. Less than 7% gave a grade 7 or less.



The most popular products in the package

- The most popular products are:
 1. Towel
 2. Sleeping bag/Blanket
 3. Blanket
 4. Duvet cover
 5. Bodysuits
 6. Muslin squares



History of the Finnish maternity grant

- In the early decades of the 20th century the Finnish infant mortality rate was high, birth rates were low and majority of the population was poor.
- There were challenges for health, such as poor general standard of living and hygiene, tuberculosis and epidemics. In poor conditions there was a shortage of clean clothes for children as well as bedding.
- These matters were faced by the charity organizations who started to lend baskets full of baby clothes and beddings
- A major role for the decrease of infant mortality has played the founding of the Finnish maternity clinics in the 1920's
 - The maternity grant has been only one part of the work as it was encouraging mothers to go to the maternity clinics



History of the maternity grant

- The Finnish maternity package was designed in 1937 to give all children more equal start.
 - The enactment of the Maternity Grants Act was in 1937 and the Act came into force on 1st of January 1938
- The first maternity grants were provided in 1938
 - At first intended for low-income mothers only and paid out by municipal welfare boards
 - Since 1949, the maternity grant has been made available to all mothers
 - The maternity grants scheme has been administered by Kela since 1994
- Thanks to the maternity grant, Finnish mothers gained access to public health services.
 - Finland has long had one of the lowest levels of infant and maternal mortality in the world
- However there is no direct scientific empirical data about the effects of the maternity grant/package by itself decreasing infant mortality rate or about its effects to the public health



First maternity packages



Finnish Labour Museum Werstas



Finnish Labour Museum Werstas

- The box containing the products could be used as a bed for the baby (as can still today)
 - In those days the poorest homes didn't necessarily have a clean place for the baby to sleep
- The first boxes contained pole belts and cloth diapers, bed sheets and towels. The specialty of war era was paper products. In times of scarcity, mothers were given paper and fabric to make clothes for their children.

Procurement process for the maternity package

- The items it contains are sourced through a competitive bidding process complying with EU law
 - The included products are selected in a public tender process conducted in accordance with the Act on Public Contracts and Concessions.
 - The open procurement procedure is used, so the tender is open to all suppliers who wish to participate in the bidding
- The total monetary value of the products selected for the maternity package may not exceed €170 (0% VAT)
- The reveal of each new edition of the maternity package is preceded by more than a year of preparations. The procurement process for 2024 edition of the maternity package began in 2022.
- Packaging and delivery to clients are handled by a company under contract to Kela.

Procurement process for the maternity package

- An advisory council with representatives from a range of organisations selects the products.
 - The advisory council consists of representatives of Kela, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes) and the maternity and child welfare clinic.
- Each product must meet the safety requirements imposed by Finnish and EU law. The products are tested carefully, and the quality of samples is checked.
 - The products are selected with a view to their significance for promoting the health and well-being of the mother and the child.
 - Based on an evaluation of the tendered products, the council proposes which products should be included in the maternity package.
 - The evaluation involves for example washing the products and testing them in practice.

The maternity package 2023

- There are altogether 38 items in the box.
- The clothes feature some bright patterns, but also neutral colours that can be mixed and matched
- In the latest years Kela has put more weight into the sustainable development and to the quality of the products. Of the recent year packages, the quality and price have been weighted respectively at 70% and 30%, rather than the equal weighting they have been given in previous years.
 - Focus to sustainability is an ongoing process and in the future packages there will be more recycled materials used etc.
- Stocks remaining of the previous year's edition must be cleared out first before the distribution of the next year edition can start.
- Maternity package 2024 will be introduced in February.



The maternity package 2023 / 38 products



The maternity package 2022 / 43 products



Thank You!

[More information: Finnish maternity package](#)

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