

Finland's universal basic income trial for unemployed reduces stress levels, says official

The pilot scheme is 'indirectly benefiting people's mental health' says Marjukka Turunen of Finland's social insurance agency



Two thousand people receive 560 euros every month as part of the trial - Getty

Citizens receiving a basic monthly income as part of a radical Finnish pilot scheme have seen a reduction in their stress levels, an official leading the trial has said.

The first of its kind in Europe, the scheme sees 2,000 people receive 560 euros (£473) every month for two years. Recipients do not have to report whether they are seeking employment or how they are spending the money, which is deducted from any benefits

they are already receiving.

Marjukka Turunen, head of *KELA*, the legal unit at Finland's social insurance agency, said as well as cutting bureaucracy, reducing costs and tackling poverty, the scheme was having an indirectly positive effect on people's mental health.

*"There was this one woman who said: 'I was afraid every time the phone would ring, that unemployment services are calling to offer me a job,'" Ms Turunen told US-based broadcaster *Kera News*.*

The woman was not able to work because she was caring for elderly parents.

She added:

"This experiment really has an indirect impact, also, on the stress levels [of people] and the mental health and so on."

Under the pilot, if a participant finds work, they will continued to receive the stipend, easing claimants' fears they will lose out by finding employment.

The problem of refusing work because people feel better off on benefits is particularly acute under Finland's generous and complex social security system.

The trial is part of measures introduced by the centre-right government to tackle Finland's unemployment problem.

More than eight per cent, or around 213,000 Finns were out of work in November, a figure unchanged from the previous year.

The average private sector income in Finland is 3,500 euro (£2,958) per month, according to government data.

In April, it was announced that [Canada's largest province, Ontario, was trialling a similar universal basic income scheme](#).

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne said the scheme was needed to address “*new challenges*” presented by the modern world.

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