

Applying for research access to Finnish Centre for Pensions register data

The data compiled by the Finnish Centre for Pensions (ETK) in its Pensions Register and Earnings Register - data on pensions and data on pension-insured employment, respectively - are available for research use. Individual-level data are confidential, but can be accessed for research purposes under freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation. The research must be scientifically grounded and have a detailed research plan. As a rule, the register data are not made available for commercial purposes.

Description of data content

The **Pensions Register** contains information about old-age pensions, disability pensions, part-time pensions and other pension benefits paid in the form of earnings-related pensions. The **Earnings Register** contains information about the individual's work career that gives entitlement to an earnings-related pension: periods of employment and self-employment, and unpaid periods due to unemployment, training and education, parenthood, etc.

The [privacy notices of Finnish Centre for Pensions register data](#) (in Finnish) are posted on the ETK website.

Further information and advice

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Research permit application

Applications for a research permit shall include a research plan which describes the need for individual-level personal data and explains why the research cannot be conducted without these data. If individual-level data are not required, the necessary information will be provided in the form of aggregate-level statistical data, and no permit application procedure will be needed. Privacy protection is also ensured for statistical datasets.

Free-format research permit applications submitted to ETK shall include the following information:

- title of the research, name of research organisation, principal investigator and PI's signature, up-to-date list of research team, research plan,
- name of registrar (university, research institute or individual researcher),
- description of the register data required,
- description of how the data will be linked with other datasets,
- how the data will be protected against unauthorised use (data protection),
- where the research or research articles will be published,

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- how and when the research data will be destroyed or archived.

It is recommended that permits granted by other registrars are attached to the application if they are required to conduct the research. These include permits and authorisations issued by an ethics committee, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) or Statistics Finland).

Address for application submission

Applications for a permit to use ETK register data for research purposes shall be submitted to the ETK planning department:

Finnish Centre for Pensions
Planning Department
Statistics Manager
00065 ELÄKETURVAKESKUS

Applications shall be signed and e-mailed in .pdf format to [tutkimusaineistot\(at\)etk.fi](mailto:tutkimusaineistot(at)etk.fi) or sent to the postal address above. ETK does not have a registrar's office for applications submissions.

Research permits

Research permits granted by ETK

Research permits for the use of Pensions Register and Earnings Register data compiled from private and public sector pension providers are granted by ETK. Permits are granted for a fixed term and pertain to data that are necessary for implementing the research plan.

The permit decision is sent to the applicant by e-mail (in .pdf format). The permit conditions specify the period of validity of the permit and any restrictions concerning data use. The researchers are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement before the data is made available.

Findata to issue data permit decisions from 1 April 2020

Permits to access ETK register data for research purposes are issued by [Findata](#) if the research combines social and health data from several different authorities, or if the data required are held by private social and health care service providers or stored in the Kanta service. In these cases data requests and permit applications shall be compiled in accordance with Findata guidelines.

Findata will be rolled out in phases:

- a help desk will be launched on 1 Nov 2019,
- data permits for development and innovation purposes will be issued from 1 Jan 2020, and
- for purposes of scientific research from 1 April 2020,
- process applications related to medical record data in the Kanta services from 1 Jan 2021,

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- the analysis of data at individual level is only permitted in environments that meet the requirements of the regulation from 1 May 2022.

If the permit application is processed by Findata, the same authority will also provide an estimate of the costs of the permit decision and data extraction. ETK advisory services are generally free of charge unless they involve extensive configuration of data extraction.

Costs

ETK will charge the direct professional staff and IT costs for the permit decision and for register data extraction. Both the clerical costs associated with processing the application and the costs of data extraction are usually included in the same invoice. An estimate is given in advance of the work.

The cost of a new research permit is based on FTE pricing when the estimated professional staff input is a full FTE day (in 2022 the cost of a research permit is 790 euros and a decision to extend data access 395 euros). Prices for an amendment of an earlier decision or a decision to expand the research team are determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on other associated manpower costs.

The costs of research services, research data configuration, finalising the data record descriptions and data extraction are based on actual working hours and invoicing is based on the costs of FTEs. IT costs are added to professional staff costs. The estimated cost of an individual dataset in 2022 is around 1,000 euros (790 euros/7.5 h and IT costs).

If the dataset is small and only includes statistical data (no individual-level personal data), it may be provided free of charge.

Handling time

Permit applications are processed at ETK without delay. As a rule the permit process takes one month on average. Careful preparation of the application documents prior to submission will help to ensure timely processing.

Once the permit decision has been issued, delivery of the research data will take one month on average. Data extraction from the Pensions Register and Earnings Register will be undertaken by the ETK Planning Department in accordance with the provisions of the permit.

However, if documents are missing or if the research requires decisions and data extractions by several registrars, the whole process may take from one month to a full year.

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The analysis of data at individual level is only permitted in environments that meet the requirements of the regulation from 1 May 2022

According to the Act on Secondary Use, the analysis of data at individual level is only permitted in [environments](#) that meet the requirements of the regulation as of 1 May 2022. The requirements require the same level of information security as is required for Findata's own operating environment. This regulation applies to all purposes laid down in the Act on Secondary Use for which a data permit is required under the Act on Secondary Use. These purposes include scientific research, statistics, education and the planning and reporting duty of an authority.

If an individual controller has made a decision on a data permit concerning data included in their own registers, they must disclose the data to a secure environment referred to in the Act on Secondary Use as well. According to the law the above rule is not followed in case of Finnish Centre for Pensions.

Legislation

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC \(General Data Protection Regulation\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act \(1050/2018\)](#)
- [Act on the Openness of Government Activities \(621/1999\)](#)
- [Laki sosiaali- ja terveystietojen toissijaisesta käytöstä \(552/2019 finlex.fi in finnish\) \[Act on the Secondary Use of Social and Health Data\]](#)