

Finland

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**"We are human, therefore we dance and sing."
– Malloch & Trevarthen**

Snapshot

Area

338,424 square kilometers; the fifth-largest country in Western Europe

Population

5,259,250 (July 2011 est.)

Official Language

Official languages are Finnish (spoken by 91%) and Swedish (5.4%). Sámi is the mother tongue of about 1,700 people.

Ethnic Groups

Finnish 93.4%, Swedish 5.6%; Russian 0.5%, Estonian 0.3%, Roman (Gypsy) 0.1%, Sami 0.1 % (2006)

Median Age

42.5 years

Children under 5

0-14 years: 16% (male 429,450/
female 414,570)

Sources

The World Factbook
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fin.html>

www.finland.fi

Demographics

In Finland, there are currently about 500 clinically trained music therapists, and approximately half of them are working as full-time clinicians. Most therapists provide services in private practice settings as there are only about 60 official hospital and rehabilitation positions within the Finnish public healthcare system. Music therapy services are provided mostly as in- and outpatient services. Reimbursement for music therapy services comes from the governmental Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA), which covers the costs for specific populations with certain conditions. Funding is provided for a maximum of three years.

Music therapy education is available from introductory courses to the university level. Professional training courses can be taken at Universities of Applied Sciences or at the Eino Roiha Institute. The University of Jyväskylä offers an international Master's program in music therapy as well as post-graduate training on a Ph.D. level. All of the music therapy training programs share similar goals with regard to their basic principles, structure, and content.

The *Finnish Society for Music Therapy* advocates strongly for the widespread practice of music therapy in Finland. Currently, music therapy services are provided to a wide variety of target groups across the fields of healthcare, rehabilitation, and education. Early childhood music therapy has strong traditions in Finland and there are a number of music therapists who also have a background in early childhood music education.

Background Information

There is a growing number of music therapists providing services to young children and their families in Finland. According to an informal survey on the current status of early childhood music therapy in Finland, most music therapists who serve the early childhood population work with children ages 4-5, followed by children 12-24 months. Most commonly, these clients come to therapy with social and developmental delays, though psychiatric issues and communication delays are also common.

Reimbursement for early childhood services is generally provided by KELA and occasionally by healthcare districts and communities. In rare cases, music therapy services are reimbursed by foundations, agencies, or through private pay from families.

Music therapy services are most often provided to the client in one-on-one sessions, and many therapists regularly hold separate meetings with parents. Many therapists work with dyads, including parents and others. Group sessions are rare. It is quite common that the treatment is provided over the course of one year. Short-time treatments are rather unusual. Typically, sessions take place once a week for about 45 minutes, but 30 and 60-minute sessions are also possible.

Common Approaches

Many therapists identify most strongly with psychodynamic and attachment-based theoretical frameworks, although those therapists surveyed also cited using neurological, medical, and eclectic approaches in their work. Behavioral approaches are not widely used in Finland.

Therapists apply singing, instrument play, dance and movement, listening to music, drawing and painting, dramatic play, and instrumental and vocal improvisation in their sessions with young children. The goal of improvisation is mainly to encourage social interactions. In addition, play- and nursing songs, discussions, literature, relaxation exercises and even Vibroacoustic treatment may be incorporated into a music therapy session.

The instruments used with young children include simple percussion instruments (e.g., claves, maracas), drums and melodic instruments (e.g., xylophones), piano, and guitar. Additionally, some therapists incorporate the use of a traditional Finnish string instrument, the "kantele."

Although the actual number of music therapists providing services to young children and their families is unknown, it seems like this is a growing area in Finland, especially as more students are graduating from training programs.

Prominent Publications

- Carlsson, T. (2007). Varhainen vuorovaikutus ja musiikkiterapia [Early interaction and music therapy]. Unpublished Masters thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Huotilainen, M., Putkinen, V., & Tervaniemi, M. (2009). Brain research reveals automatic musical memory functions in children. *The Neurosciences and Music III: Disorders and Plasticity: Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.* 1169, 178-181.
- Marjanen, K. (2009). The belly-button chord. Connections of pre- and postnatal music education with early mother-child interaction. Unpublished Masters thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Teckenberg-Jansson, P., Huotilainen, M., Pölkki, T., Lipsanen, J., & Järvenpää, A. (2011). Rapid effects of neonatal music therapy combined with kangaroo care on prematurely-born infants. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 20(1), 22-42.
- Tuomi, K. (2004). Rakennamme siltaa". Tapaustutkimus vuoden ikäisen, kehityksessä viivästyneen lapsen musiikkiterapiaprosessista kiintymyssuhdeteorian valossa [Creating a bridge: A case study of a developmentally delayed infant's music therapy process in the light of the attachment theory]. Unpublished Masters thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Note

The information in this article is based on an informal survey conducted by the authors with Finnish music therapists during March and April 2011. The survey was distributed via email and at a national music therapy seminar. In addition, some information has been drawn from the *Finnish Society of Music Therapy*.

About the Authors



Kirsi Tuomi, MS is a music therapist and therapy therapist in private practice working mainly as a supervisor for foster parents and professionals within childcare settings. She served as the Executive Manager of the Finnish Society for Music Therapy, teaching courses at the Sibelius-Academy, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.

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Esa Ala-Ruona, Ph.D., is a music therapist and psychotherapist working as a researcher at the Music Therapy Clinic for Research and Training, University of Jyväskylä. He is a trainer and supervisor and coordinates the international master's program of music therapy. Dr. Ala-Ruona served in leading positions at several Finnish music therapy organizations and currently is the Editor-in-Chief for the *Finnish Journal of Music Therapy*.

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