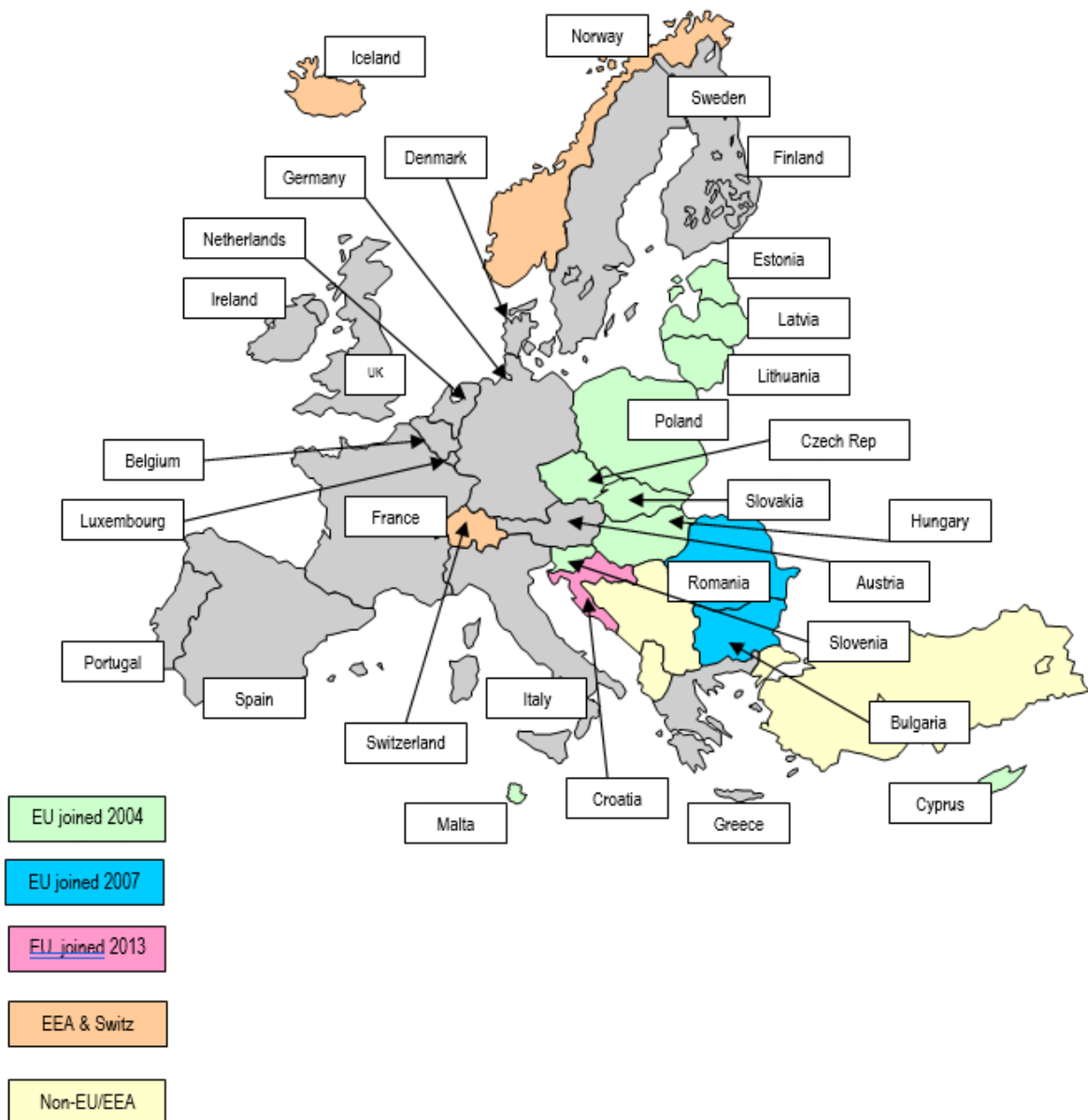


Council of European Dentists

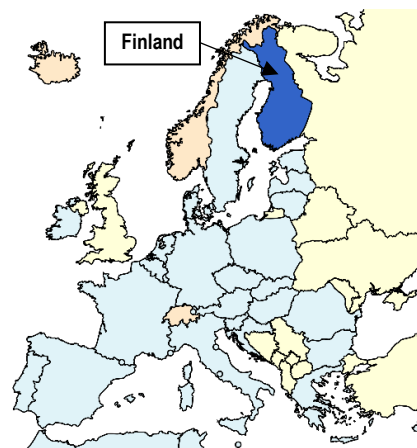
MANUAL OF DENTAL PRACTICE 2026

Finland





Finland



Date of last revision: 15 January 2026

In the EU/EEA since	1995
Population (2025)	5 635 971
GDP PPP per capita (2024)	40 885
Currency	Euro € (EUR)
Official languages	Finnish 95% Swedish 5%
The 21 wellbeing services counties and the City of Helsinki are responsible for providing public oral health services for the entire population. Oral health care for children under 18 is free of charge. Adults pay for the use of services. Services for higher education students are organized and provided by the foundation-based Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS). The use of private sector services is supported through Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela). Among the adult population, slightly less than half use private sector services and slightly more than half use public sector services. Half of all dental practitioners practice in public clinics.	
Number of dentists (active)	≈ 4 500
(Active) dentist to population ratio (per 100 000)	79.8
Members of Dental Association	7 300
Dental specialists and dental auxiliaries practice widely. Continuing education for dentists remains voluntary and unregulated.	

Government and healthcare in Finland

Finland is a Parliamentary Republic, with a Prime Minister and President. Executive power is divided between the central government in Helsinki, regional and local governments located in the 19 provinces (*maakunta*), and 309 municipalities.

16 municipalities are located in the Åland Islands, the autonomous region of Finland.

The national parliament hosts 200 members, elected under a system of proportional representation.

In January 2023, Finland underwent a significant social and health institutional reform, which led to a substantial restructuring of the healthcare system. This reform has led to a more centralised system. It transferred the responsibility for the management and provision of public healthcare services, previously held by municipalities, to 21 Well-being Service Counties (WSC), as well as the city of Helsinki and the HUS group (the hospital district of Helsinki and Uusimaa).

WSCs, as self-governing bodies through elected councils, are responsible for the provision of primary and secondary health care as well as for the setting of healthcare service fees.

Municipalities have however maintained public health responsibilities regarding environmental health and health protection. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Interior also still hold centralised responsibilities for planning and developing health policies as well as guiding WSCs' budgetary and financial decisions.

All citizens and legal residents of Finland are entitled to subsidised public health care through their municipality of residence, delivered by WSCs. Most treatment costs are covered, with patients paying only user fees. However, in oral healthcare, these user fees are significantly higher than in other healthcare services.

		Year	Source
% GDP spent on all healthcare	9.66	2022	World Bank
% of this spent by government	80%	2021	OECD
% of private dental care costs reimbursed by WSCs (excluding administrative charges)	12%	2023	OECD

In Finland, WSCs, responsible for the provision of healthcare services, are largely funded through general state taxation. The funding of the WSCs is mainly based on government funding, which is determined according to statutory criteria such as population size and service needs. The funding is non-earmarked, meaning that the WSCs themselves can decide how to allocate it to the performance of their statutory duties.

Public dental services are delivered by WSCs (named *suun terveydenhuolto*) and include basic dental treatments such as oral and dental health advice, basic examinations and treatments (fillings, extractions, removal of plaque and gum care). WSCs may also refer patients to dental specialists, as necessary.

The National Health Insurance scheme (*sairausvakuutus*), run by Kela, the social insurance agency (or the *Kansaneläkelaitos*) contributes to cover for some private healthcare costs, prescribed medicine and healthcare associated travel costs. All permanent residents are entitled to a Kela health insurance card. Finnish residents can therefore choose to use private dental services (approximately 10-15% of costs excluding administrative fees). This excludes cosmetic dentistry and

prosthodontic services. Some private hygienist and dental specialist care is also covered by Kela. The reimbursement of treatments by a dental hygienist is currently conditional to a referral from a dentist.

Following the reform of the private oral healthcare reimbursement system, reimbursements for services provided by dental hygienists may be granted without a referral from a dentist. As of 1 May 2025, patients may visit a dental hygienist twice a year without a referral and remain eligible for reimbursement under the national health insurance scheme.

Kela also offers voluntary health insurance. However, these insurance schemes do not provide coverage for dental care. The agency is self-regulating, under the supervision of the Finnish parliament and has its own budget.

Students enrolled in vocational schools and upper secondary schools receive dental care through their local WSC. Students following higher university education (including universities of applied sciences) are entitled to a separate scheme and have access to dental care through dedicated clinics run by the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS). This includes preventative care services and oral health examinations carried out by a dentist and regular screenings by a dental hygienist, as well as fillings, root canal treatments and extractions. About three quarters of the population receive oral healthcare regularly (in any two-year period) and oral basic examinations are advised to be undertaken every 1-3 years.

About 36% of dental care is state-funded (half by the municipalities, half by central government) and 56% is paid for directly by households. 7% of the balance is paid by KELA and 1% by employers. Voluntary health insurance is marginal.

Education, Training and Registration

Undergraduate Education and Training

To enter dental school applicants must have completed the Finnish matriculation examination or another equivalent secondary school qualification that provides eligibility for higher education. Applicants must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the language of the program. Admission is based either on the joint entrance examination or on certificate-based selection for those with top grades from the matriculation examination. The undergraduate course lasts for 5.5 years (330 ECTS credits).

There are four dental schools in Finland: these are located in the University of Eastern Finland in Kuopio, the University of Helsinki, University of Oulu and University of Turku. Dental schools are part of the Medicine Faculties.

The Finnish Licentiate of Odontology degree is structured into a preclinical and a clinical phase. The preclinical phase (two years) provides a strong foundation in biomedical sciences and general medicine, with many courses shared with medical students, while also introducing dentistry-specific subjects. The clinical phase focuses on the main fields of dentistry and combines theoretical coursework with simulation training and finally work carried out in Faculties' teaching clinics under supervision. Dental students must then carry out a mandatory 6-month vocational clinical training placement within wellbeing services counties after the 5th year of study and before graduation.

Year of data	2025
Number of schools	4
Student intake	195
Number of graduates a year	175
Gender balance (% of female students)	74
Duration of studies	5 years and 6 months*
*including 6 months of mandatory clinical placement	

Quality assurance for the dental schools is provided by the Ministry of Education. At the completion of studies, students are awarded the Licentiate of Dentistry (LicDent).

Registration

Dental graduates must have completed all exams and carried out the compulsory vocational 6 months training before applying for registration as independent practitioner. Registration and the delivery of a licence to practice is carried out by Valvira, the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health.

Valvira is the competent authority responsible for managing registration as well as the oversight of dental diplomas and practice quality assurance.

It operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

There is no annual re-registration fee.

Cost of registration* completed degree in Finland	160 €
Cost of registration* from the EU/EEA area	710 €
Cost of registration* from outside the EU/EEA	2 080 €
*No yearly membership fee	

Dentists are not required to register to the Finnish Dental Association to practice independently.

Vocational Training (VT)

Vocational training is mandatory since 2014, extending the length of studies to 5.5 years. The six-month vocational training is carried out in primary care units within the wellbeing services counties. The training is conducted under the supervision of a designated dentist, following an objectives plan prepared by the university, and its purpose is to ensure readiness for independent clinical practice.

Students receive a monthly salary of approximately €5,500.

Additional information on the legalization process for degrees obtained outside Finland please consult <https://valvira.fi/en/rights-to-practise/planning-to-work-in-the-social-welfare-and-health-care-field>

Language requirements

There are no formal linguistic tests in order to register for EU graduates, although healthcare professionals must have sufficient oral and written language proficiency in Swedish or Finnish to allow them to practice independently.

An employer can require proficiency in Finnish and/or Swedish.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Continuing education is not mandatory, but under Finnish legislation there is a general requirement to keep skills updated. Health care professionals must maintain and improve their professional knowledge and skills required to carry on their professional activity and familiarise themselves with the provisions and regulations concerning them. Employers of health care professionals shall create opportunities for participation of the latter in necessary further training for the profession.

Specialist Training Requirements

Finland recognises 5 dental specialities.

Specialist dentist training is a regulated postgraduate education provided by universities. The duration of training varies between three and five years, depending on the specialty.

Graduates must undertake 2 years of professional practice before entering specialist training. Specialist training is postgraduate professional education, in which the university holds overall responsibility, while the practical training takes place in primary health care, hospitals, and other designated training units

There is training in 6 main specialties:

- Orthodontics – 3 years
- Dental Public Health - 3 years
- Oral Maxillo-Facial Surgery (OMFS) – 5 years
- Clinical Dentistry – 3 years
- Oral Diagnostics – 3 years

Clinical Dentistry is a specialty composed of 4 subspecialties:

- Cariology and endodontics
- Periodontology

- Prosthodontics and dental rehabilitation
- Paediatric dentistry

Oral Diagnostics is a specialty composed of 3 subspecialties:

- Oral radiology
- Oral pathology
- Oral microbiology

Workforce

Dentists

According to the Finnish Dental Association, the number of practising dentists is expected to rise in the coming years, with a current observed rise in the number of students and recent dental graduates.

Many dentists practice in more than one sphere of practice.

Dentists currently practice fifty-fifty in the public and private sectors in Finland, with half of all dentists practising in the public sector and receiving a salary and the other half practising in the private sector receiving payment through fees-for-services.

The Finnish Dental Association is, however, expecting a shortage of dentists practising in certain areas of the public sector. At the same time, regional differences in workforce availability are expected to decrease in the future due to the increase in the number of dentists and the establishment of the WSCs.

Year of data	2022
Total Registered	6 400
In active practice	4 500
Dentist to population ratio (per 100 000 inhab) *	79.8
Percentage female	70%
Foreign-trained dentists	250
*Active dentists only	

Movement of dentists across borders

About 80% of the foreign dentists working in Finland qualified in the EU/EEA and 20% outside the EU/EEA.

In 2013, about 160 Finnish qualified dentists were working abroad.

Quality assurance of care, including patient complaints is managed by the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health or the Consumer Complaints Board, supplemented by a patient ombudsman system. The ombudsperson system provides an expert in patient rights to assist patients with submitting a complaint or objection regarding oral treatment.

Liability insurance for professionals is included in of the Finnish Dental Association's membership fee.

Specialists

There are 5 dental specialties that are recognised under the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health:

- Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- Orthodontics
- Oral Maxillo-Facial Surgery

- Dental Public Health
- Clinical Dentistry
- Oral Diagnostics

According to the Finnish Dental Association, a shortage of dental specialists is currently observed in the public sector, with important existing geographical disparities in the availability of dental specialists across the country.

Year of data	2024
Orthodontists (practising)	150
Dental Public Health specialists (practising)	72
OMFS (practising)	120
Clinical dentistry	262
Oral diagnostics	45

Auxiliaries

The system of use of dental auxiliaries is well developed in Finland and much oral health care is carried out by them, and in particular by dental hygienists under the social security system and WSCs.

4 dental auxiliaries are recognised, including dental chairside assistants, dental technicians, dental hygienists and denturists.

Year of data	2022
Technicians	≈ 500-1 000
Chairside assistants	≈ 4 000
Hygienists	≈ 3 000 -3 500
Denturist	NA

However, there is an important shortage of both dental nurses and dental hygienists across both private and public sectors, according to the Finnish Dental Association, affecting the effective provision of care by dental clinics and dental teams.

Dental Technicians

Dental technician education is provided at universities of applied sciences. Admission is through the national joint application system for higher education. Applicants are required to have completed upper secondary education or another qualification that provides eligibility for higher education. Selection is based on previous academic performance and entrance examinations.

Dental technicians undertake 3.5 years of education and training (or 210 ECTS credits).

Dental technicians must register to the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira). Their duties are to prepare dental prosthetic and orthodontic appliances. They must have a prescription from a dentist and are not authorised to work independently. Technicians may, however, work without the supervision of a dentist.

Individual technicians are often salaried and work in commercial laboratories, but also commonly practice in independent offices.

Denturist

In Finland, denturists are operating auxiliaries who can provide complete dentures to the public. Denturists register under the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health.

Denturists train in the same school as hygienists/technicians and undergo entrance examinations. Their training lasts an additional half-year, following the completion of dental technician studies.

They work mostly in their own private practices. Whilst they do receive referrals from dentists, they are operating auxiliaries and can provide complete dentures to external patients. Whilst they cannot provide partial dentures it is reported that they do so, illegally.

Dental Chairside Assistants

Assistants follow 2.5 years vocational training in a secondary education institution (or 180 ECTS credits), by following a basic degree in the field of social and health care and by specialising in oral care. Assistants must register under the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health.

Dental chairside assistants participate and assist the examination and treatment of patients, as well as the management of the practice and treatment space, and the implementation of hygiene and asepsis.

Most dental chairside assistants are employed and receive a salary, but they are also authorised to own a dental practice in Finland, and carry out independent patient work, such as oral health promotion.

Since the ownership of a dental practice is not restricted to licensed dentists in Finland, dental nurses and other qualified individuals may own or operate a dental clinic as entrepreneurs or business owners.

However, the legal responsibility for the medical activities of the clinic rests with a licensed dentist who serves as the Medical Director. This person is accountable for ensuring that all dental treatments comply with applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards. Non-dentist owners may manage administrative and business aspects of the clinic, but they cannot perform professional dental procedures unless they hold the required licensure.

Dental Hygienists

Dental hygienist education is provided at universities of applied sciences as a bachelor's degree program in oral health care. Admission takes place through the national joint application system for higher education. Applicants must have completed upper secondary education or another qualification that provides eligibility for higher education. Selection is based on prior academic performance and entrance examinations. The scope of dental hygienist education is 210 credits, and the duration is 3.5 years. The title is legally protected and needs to be registered by the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health. Dental hygienists carry out 3.5 years of study (or 210 ECTS credits).

Dental hygienists must register under the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira).

Dental hygienists work usually as part of the dental team, although they can work independently and open a dental practice without the supervision of a dentist. The examination, diagnosis and treatment planning is, by Health Care Professionals Act of 1994, restricted to physicians and dentists.

However, dental hygienists may undertake infiltration of local anaesthesia. They take legal responsibility for their work and may accept payment from patients, if they have a practice of their own.

Through Kela, patients may get reimbursement for care provided by dental hygienists under the public health insurance scheme. Recent reforms in 2025 have repealed the obligation for patients to get a referral from a dentist to be granted reimbursement of services from dental hygienists.

Other Useful Information

Main national associations

National dental associations and information centres	
Finnish Dental Association <i>Suomen Hammaslääkäriliitto</i>	Finnish Dental Society Apollonia (Dentists' scientific organisation)
Malminkatu 30 00100 Helsinki Finland Tel: +358 9 622 0250 Fax: +358 9 622 3050 Email: toimisto@hammaslaakariliitto.fi Website: www.hammaslaakariliitto.fi	Bulevardi 30 B 00120 Helsinki Finland Tel: +358 9 680 3120 Email: toimisto@apollonia.fi Email: koulutus@apollonia.fi Website: www.apollonia.fi
The Finnish Dental Society <i>(Odontological Society for Swedish-speaking dentists in Finland)</i>	Finnish Association of Specialist Dental Technicians
Fredrikinkatu 30 A 5 00120 Helsinki Finland Phone: +358 50 350 33 89 (Mon-Thu 12-14:00) Email: kansliet@osf.fi Website: https://www.osf.fi/	Mannerheimintie 52 A 1 00250 Helsinki Finland Phone: +358 50 436 6640 Website: https://www.erikoishammasteknikkoliitto.fi/

Competent authorities

Valvira, the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health <i>Sosiaali- ja terveysalan lupa- ja valvontavirasto or Tillstånds- och tillsynsverket för social- och hälsovården</i>	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
PO Box 265 00531 Helsinki Finland Phone: +358 295 209 111 Fax: +358 295 209 700 Email: kirjaamo@valvira.fi Email addresses for different departments are available here . Website: https://valvira.fi/en/frontpage	Postal address: PO Box 33, FI-00023 Government, Finland Visiting address: Meritullinkatu 8, 00170 Helsinki Phone: +358 295 16001 Fax: +358 2951 63415 Email: registry.stm@gov.fi Website: https://stm.fi/en
The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare <i>Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, THL</i> <i>(Leading research and expert institution)</i>	Kela, The Social Insurance Institution

<p>Postal address: P.O. Box 30 FI-00271 Helsinki, Finland</p> <p>Street address: Mannerheimintie 166 Helsinki, Finland</p> <p>Tel. +358 29 524 6000 E-mail: info@thl.fi Website: www.thl.fi</p>	<p>Nordenskiöldinkatu 12, 00250 Helsinki BOX 450, 00056 KELA Finland</p> <p>Phone (customer service): +358 20 634 2650 Contact webpage: https://www.kela.fi/contact-us</p> <p>Website: https://www.kela.fi/main-page</p>
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<p>Main Professional Journal</p> <p>The Finnish Dental Journal <i>Suomen Hammaslääkärilehti-Finlands</i> (Published by the Finnish Dental Association)</p> <p>Finnish Dental Association Malminkatu 30 00100 Helsinki</p> <p>Email (main Editor): heli.mikkola@hammaslaakariliitto.fi Phone (main Editor): +358 40 839 7151 All contact details are available here.</p> <p>Homepage: www.hammaslaakarilehti.fi</p>

Dental Schools:

Public Universities	
<p>University of Helsinki Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Diseases</p> <p>Faculty of Medicine Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Diseases PO Box 41 (Haartmaninkatu 1) 00014 University of Helsinki Finland Phone: +358 294 1911 Fax: +358 9 1912 7519 E-mail (Head of department): david.rice@helsinki.fi Email (Programme Director): jaana.rautava@helsinki.fi</p> <p>Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Diseases Scientific Research Laboratory Biomedicum PO Box 63 (Haartmaninkatu 8) 00014 University of Helsinki</p> <p>Website: https://www.helsinki.fi/en/faculty-medicine/research/disciplines/departments-oral-and-maxillofacial-diseases Annual number of incoming students: 50</p>	<p>University of Turku Institute of Dentistry</p> <p>Faculty of Medicine Institute of Dentistry Lemminkäisenkatu, 2 20520 Turku, Finland Tel: +358 2 333 81 Fax: +358 2 333 8413 E-mail (Head): timnar@utu.fi Phone (Head): +358 29 450 2574</p> <p>Email (Department Coordinator): joklain@utu.fi Phone (Department Coordinator): +358 29 450 2064</p> <p>Website: https://www.utu.fi/en/med/dentistry Annual number of incoming students: 50</p>
<p>University of Oulu Department of Dentistry</p>	<p>University of Eastern Finland Institute of Dentistry</p>

<p>Faculty of Medicine P.O.Box 5000 FI-90014 University of Oulu Finland</p> <p>Phone: +358 294 480 000 Email: university.of.oulu@oulu.fi Website: https://www.oulu.fi/en/for-students/thesis-and-graduation/licentiate-degree-medicine-and-dentistry</p> <p>Annual number of incoming students:52</p>	<p>Faculty of Medicine Kuopio campus P.O.Box 1627 FI-70211 Kuopio Finland</p> <p>Phone: +358 290 4450 1111 Phone (Head): +358 40 3552442 Phone (Study Administration): +358 40 35 52 207</p> <p>Email (Head): liisa.suominen@uef.fi Email (Study Administration): leena.lampinen@uef.fi Website: www.uef.fi/en/hammas/etusivu</p> <p>Annual number of incoming students:41</p>
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