

## **Brief Information about The Finnish Multiple Births Association and some details about social benefits (family allowances), about Finland and statistics about multiples**

### **The Finnish Multiple Births Association**

Finnish Multiple Births Association (Suomen Monikkoperheet ry)

Finland has had local multiple family associations for parents of multiples for 30 years. The holding organisation Finnish Multiple Births Association was founded in 1995. Finnish Multiple Births Association is a holding organisation for all local associations for parents of multiples. The head office is located in Mid-Finland, in Jyväskylä, with good connections from all the major cities in Finland.

### **THE MAIN GOALS OF FINNISH MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATION**

- to give multiple families equal position with families that get one child at a time
- to increase knowledge about multiple pregnancies, about multiples in general and raising twins or triplets
- to act as an expert in matters concerning multiples
- to support local associations in their work
- to support multiple families

### **THE WORKING IDEA OF FINNISH MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATION**

- to influence politicians and public servants in matters that are related to the social security of multiple families
- to give statements to politicians and public servants
- to act as an expert in producing material and in the media
- to collaborate in matters concerning families with children
- to publish Finnish booklets and the magazine about multiples
- to give advice by telephone to families and professionals
- to give information, guidance and training to local multiple associations

### **THE RESOURCES AND FINANCING OF FINNISH MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATION**

The staff resources of the association:

- two (three in year 2008) paid full-time workers
- about 50 volunteers (board members, writers of the magazine)

Financial resources:

- public financing by Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY), 70 % of the whole financing
- profits from sales of t-shirts and booklets
- membership fees from local associations

Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY, Raha-automaattiyhdistys) raises funds through gaming operations to support Finnish health and welfare organizations. RAY has an exclusive right in Finland to operate slot machines and casino table games, and to run a casino.

## LOCAL MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATIONS

At the moment Finnish Multiple Births Association has 14 local member associations in different parts of Finland. These local associations have together about 2100 families as members.

They organize different activities, such as

- happenings for the whole family
- peer support
- lending information booklets
- monthly meetings
- lectures given by experts
- small-scale training for families expecting twins or triplets

Local multiple births associations are run by volunteers. They offer peer support and information for the families. The activities organized by the local associations are financed mainly by membership fees paid by the families.

## SOCIAL POLICY IN FINLAND

The differences in income between different population groups are mainly balanced through social benefits, not through taxes. In Finland women work full-time almost as often as men do and family politics is based on the model of two supporters in the family, not on the model of one supporter. In Finland as in other countries, the families with multiples have a bigger financial stress than if the children were born one at a time. We have still a lot to do in Finland before the authorities understand the special needs of these families.

The families with multiples use the same social services as families with single-born children use. The social benefits that are based on an illness or a disability are luckily child specific like the family allowance which is paid to all families.

However, those family allowances that are paid as compensation for the parent who is absent from work (for example on maternal leave), are weaker for the families with multiples than for the families with single-born children. These benefits do not duplicate according to the number of children.

**Table 1:**

The length of family leave according to the number of children born, working days

	One child	Twins	Triplets	Quadruplets
Maternity and parental leave	263	263 + 60	263 + 120	263 + 180
Paternal leave	18 + 12	18 + 12	18 + 12	18 + 12
Child home care allowance	until the child is 3 years	until the children are 3 years	until the children are 3 years	until the children are 3 years

The maternal grant for one child is 140 euro, for twins 420 euro and for triplets 840 euro. Even though the sum is totally insufficient, it compensates some of the financial stress the families have. A Finnish speciality is, that you can change the grant partially for a maternity bag, which contains a high-quality package of clothes and linens for the baby. It is similar for all children born a specific year.

The goal of Finnish Multiple Births Association is to get the social benefits more equal for parents of multiples. Another goal is that families with multiples would better get communal workers to help families at home with daily tasks.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT FINLAND

Finland has

- about 5 million inhabitants
- a Nordic welfare state model

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MULTIPLE RESEARCH IN FINLAND

- Information about twins has been collected for over 30 years
- The population register dates from the 17th century
- To do research is easy because the population is homogeneous according to language, culture, sociality and religion
- Molecular researchers, gene researchers and twin researchers have worked in close collaboration with each other for much longer than anywhere else

## STATISTICS ABOUT MULTIPLES

The multiples that are born in Finland are almost always twins. Triplets are very rare. The following table presents the development of multiple births in numbers and the appearance of twins in percentage.

**Table 2:** Deliveries by plurality and twinning rate per 1000 maternities. Finland all deliveries 1987-2005

Year	1	2 (per 1000 maternities)	3	4
1987	58721	666 (11,34)	9	1
1988	62108	692 (11,4)	14	0
1989	62217	671 (10,78)	14	0
1990	64176	760 (11,84)	25	0
1991	63993	778 (12,16)	25	2
1992	65 113	868 (13,33)	34	0
1993	63227	880 (13,92)	21	2
1994	63178	930 (14,72)	33	1
1995	61296	875 (14,27)	27	0
1996	58774	944 (16,06)	22	0
1997	57407	920 (16,03)	16	0
1998	55081	958 (17,39)	14	0
1999	55769	919 (16,48)	16	0
2000	54948	898 (16,34)	9	0
2001	54284	843 (15,53)	9	0
2002	53860	827 (15,35)	11	0
2003	54951	830 (15,10)	7	0
2004	56013	849 (15,16)	16	0
2005	56111	845 (15,06)	7	0

Reference: Stakes. Birth statistics 1987-2005

There has been a clear decline in the twinning rate in Finland after year 1998. A decline in triplet rates appears to have started earlier than the decline of twinning in Finland. A policy of elective single embryo transfer has become adopted into use gradually since 1987. Finnish consensus policy from 2000 onwards is that two-embryo transfer is carried out for specific reasons only. These policy and treatment changes probably account for most of the decline in the twinning rate observed since the late 1990s. (Kaprio J. & Marttila R., 2005)

In 2005 1.5 % of all births in Finland were twin births. The appearance of twin births has settled during the 21st century. In Finland it is permitted to freeze embryos. About 20 % of all multiple births in Finland begin through artificial insemination. The following table presents the rate of multiple pregnancies started by in-vitro fertilisation of all multiple pregnancies.

**Table 3:** Proportion of multiple pregnancy deliveries after IVF (in vitro fertilisation) treatment. Finland multiple deliveries, 1992-2004.

Year	n (all multiple deliveries)	n (IVF)	% IVF
1992	950	100	11 %
1993	933	133	14 %
1994	912	132	14 %
1995	944	195	21 %
1996	950	263	28 %
1997	949	274	29 %
1998	943	263	28 %
1999	956	249	26 %
2000	855	205	24 %
2001	833	204	24 %
2002	834	175	21 %
2003	851	168	20 %
2004	865	173	20 %

Reference: Stakes.Birth statistics and IVF-statistics 1992-2004

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