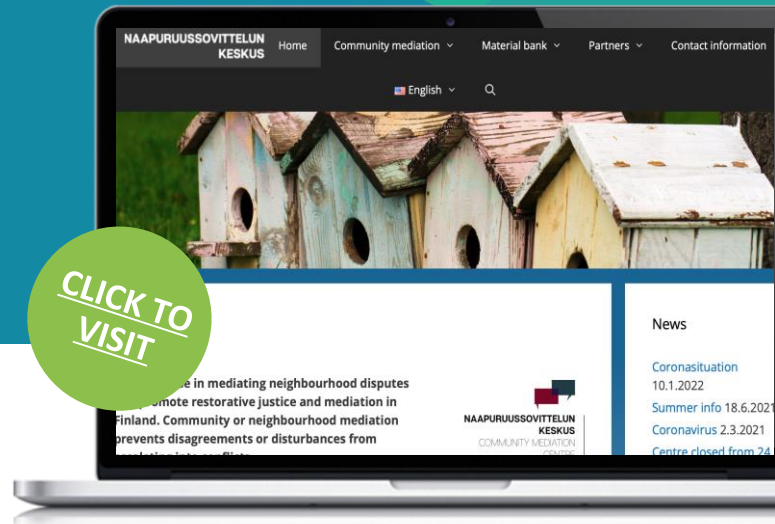


Community Mediation Center



ORGANIZATION*

Finnish Mediation Forum / Neighborhood Mediation Center

COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

Area of operation is the whole of Finland, but community mediation is practically implemented mainly in southern Finland (limited resources)

FIELD OF WORK

Social inclusion of immigrants in the local community, provision of communal and peaceful housing, conflict resolution.

THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

Everyone living in Finland, regardless of ethnic background or type of housing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

The service provides communal and peaceful housing and helps residents resolve their conflicts. One of the most significant needs is to be heard. It promotes common understanding, dispelling prejudices, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The service includes community mediation, mediation, neighbourhood work and education. During 2020, the service has had about 700 individuals and about 20% of the persons covered speak a language other than Finnish or Swedish. Individuals range in age from teenagers to seniors.

MAIN GOALS

The purpose of the mediation service provided by the Neighborhood Mediation Center is to provide communal and peaceful housing and to help residents resolve their conflicts.

IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

- Allowing parties to be heard, which is one of the most significant needs.
- Promoting common understanding, dispelling prejudices, misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- Increasing housing peace and living comfort for those involved in mediation, raising mediation awareness for those involved in housing and training them. Inclusion and increased interaction increase community spirit in residential areas and thus increase social integration.
- Building trust in the mediator. When residents trust the mediator and the mediation process, the dialogue can proceed, the mediation process must be flexible and the measures must be timely.

Getting to the residential area and the personal encounters of the residents are time consuming and the limited resources are a challenge. Good cooperation with the necessary parties must be established. Motivating residents to participate in the mediation process.

Motivating work now has to be done a lot by phone or video, which is more challenging when there is no personal encounter. Participants in the mediation will be followed-up. They will be able to report on their situation a few months after the mediation process. The Center has four hired mediators, 2 women and 2 men, without immigrant background. As a new form of activity, there are voluntary mediators who are so far only used in mediation (not community mediation).

COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Property managers, housing counsellors, social workers, immigration coordinators, the police, the Equality Ombudsman, etc., refer cases to mediation.

SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)

There are no economic guarantees; funding is applied for annually. The programme or action enables people to get to know each other in their local community, to enlarge their networks, and counteract loneliness. Passionate volunteers are the cornerstone of the programme/action as is their will to meet new people and to get to know different lifestyles and ways of living. The action is based on volunteers who are ordinary people and not professionals. What is essential is the volunteer's role as someone walking beside the immigrant mothers.

TRANSFERABILITY

Inclusion and increased interaction increase community spirit in residential areas, thus increasing social integration. Volunteers are trained, receive guidance on a case-by-case basis and in groups. The required skills are e.g., the ability to face diversity and people in conflict as well as negative strong emotions, the ability to limit and identify one's role, the ability to reflect on one's own actions and the ability to be impartial.