

The VERSO-programme



ORGANIZATION*

Finnish Mediation Forum Association programme

COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

In Finland, the VERSO-programme is nationwide. In other countries - in cooperation with various Organisations.

FIELD OF WORK

Restorative mediation, education, volunteering, conflict resolution, community commitment

THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

Education community.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

In kindergartens, schools and educational institutions, mediation takes place partly as a voluntary peer activity for students and as part of the daily work of the staff as each unit has linked its activities to their daily lives. The VERSO programme supports the implementation and maintenance of mediation activities through training, materials, digital materials, podcasts, video and social media channels, and seminars and events. In addition, regional mentor groups take care of the regional maintenance and development of activities, taking into account regional wishes and challenges. Similarly, regional projects (e.g., Lape, security projects, anti-bullying projects, youth violence projects, etc.) co-operate and promote the establishment of mediation activities in the education and training field in the region.

MAIN GOALS

In kindergartens, schools and educational institutions, mediation takes place partly as a voluntary peer activity for students and as part of the daily work of the staff as each unit has linked its activities to their daily lives. The restorative approach strengthens a culture of conciliatory action, and restorative mediation provides an alternative method of resolving conflicts between children and students and between teachers and students in everyday activities. Mediation is a clear operating model through which school staff members and students trained as mediators help the parties themselves to find a solution to their conflict. The parties are allowed to share their views on what has happened, describe their feelings and consider different solutions. Following the model, the Organisation proceed to an agreement, the implementation of which will be monitored. Mediation addresses harassment as early as possible.

<https://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/>

IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

The VERSO programme brings restorative encounter/meeting methods to everyday activities for professionals in early childhood education and teaching, as well as for children, pupils and students. The restorative approach and culture of mediation brought by the VERSO programme has had a number of effects on the well-being of the educational community. The main findings are that peer mediation and adult-led mediation led to more than 90% of mediation solutions that have been found to prevail through follow-ups. Mediation has resolved confrontations, increased tolerance and strengthened accountability, despite differing views. On the other hand, the project has strengthened the community and the individual's attachment to their community, instead of exclusion.

COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Municipalities and early childhood education and training units, kindergartens, schools and educational institutions

SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)

As previously stated, linking mediation activities to community peacebuilding and conflict management programmes, structures and practices ensures the sustainability of activities and also produces the benefits demonstrated through mediation. However, there are no guarantees as funding is applied for annually.

TRANSFERABILITY

The programme is well known in other countries, and the Organisation has, for example, started similar programmes in Uganda, Russia, Qatar, Albania, etc., in cooperation with local experts in the field of education. There are some critical issues that should be considered when implementing Mediation to different kinds of communities, and that is why trainings are needed, though the Organisation has developed good materials (guides, videos, podcasts, evaluation forms, e-learning courses etc.) for mediators to sustain their skill for Mediation.