

Central Finland Multicultural Forum

Time: Thursday 12 February 2026, 5:00–7:00 p.m.

Location: Gradia Viitaniemi, Council Hall (hybrid)

Organisers: Wellbeing Services County of Central Finland and City of Jyväskylä

1. Opening of the meeting

Service Director Nina Peränen from the Wellbeing Services County of Central Finland opened the meeting. Approximately 20 participants were present on site and around 10 joined remotely. The theme of the meeting was chosen at the previous session to be wellbeing.

2. Promoting wellbeing in the City of Jyväskylä and the Wellbeing Services County of Central Finland

Development Manager Iiris Asunmaa from the City of Jyväskylä presented the city's role in promoting residents' wellbeing, as well as the ongoing update of the wellbeing programme. Service Director Nina Peränen presented the promotion of wellbeing and the wellbeing planning work from the perspective of the wellbeing services county.

Group discussions were held on factors affecting the wellbeing and sense of belonging of immigrants and foreign-language speakers. The perspectives raised in the discussions will be used in the wellbeing work of both the city and the wellbeing services county.

Key points raised in the discussions included that learning the language is a prerequisite for integration and employment, but access to language courses in Jyväskylä and Central Finland is perceived as challenging. Clear communication and plain Finnish in services were requested. Without language skills, communities often form around one's own language group. Meeting and getting to know other immigrants as well as Finnish-speaking/local residents—through events and the multicultural forum, for example—was seen as important in preventing loneliness and racism. Residential segregation based on income level and language was perceived as problematic.

It was also highlighted that it is important to recognize that immigrants come from diverse backgrounds and may lack networks and support. The trust capital that the 3rd sector organizations have within target groups could be better utilized in cooperation with authorities. Wellbeing is also influenced by the way authorities treat residents from different backgrounds openly and respectfully. Being heard and encouraged to participate is important for wellbeing. Companies, workplaces, educational institutions, and associations play a significant role in strengthening constructive dialogue. Respectful discussion in political decision-making was also considered particularly important. The financial situation

of organisations (associations) supporting integration and multiculturalism is very challenging.

3. Next meeting

The next meeting is planned for 15 April 2026. The discussion will continue on themes of wellbeing and internationality. Further topics requested include cooperation with educational institutions and addressing challenges related to the recognition and accreditation of international qualifications.

4. Closing of the meeting

Service Director Nina Peränen closed the meeting.

Meeting notes written in Finnish by Iiris Asunmaa.

Notes were translated into English by ChatGPT and translation checked by Annika Sibomana.