

‘Indoor Climate 2002’ education and information campaign

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ABSTRACT

The adverse health effects and costs of IAQ problems could be reduced significantly with proper use and maintenance of buildings and early detection and remediation of problems. Dissemination of information is the key to these savings. Therefore, the Finnish ministries responsible for IAQ decided to launch an education and information campaign ‘Indoor Climate 2002’. The activities were coordinated by the Finnish Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate (FiSIAQ). Representatives of all the target groups were invited to join the work, and over 60 expert and consumer organizations responded positively. These organizations took up indoor climate issues in their activities during the campaign year by producing informative material, arranging events, giving advice and organizing education.

The main results of the campaign were:

- Dissemination of information through mass media and professional journals increased the number of media hits on indoor climate by 38%.
- Fifteen local indoor climate events with 1900 participants.
- Nationwide net of 160 information stands.
- Production and distribution of informative material: 10 leaflets, 130 000 copies.
- Local networks of municipal experts in 83 (out of 450) communities.
- Over 7000 telephone and Internet enquiries answered.
- Web service www.sisailma2002.net.
- Production of educational material and organization of professional education.
- Participation in events and trade fairs.
- Linking all interested organizations and their activities to the campaign.

The results of the campaign were good and the objectives were for the most part fulfilled.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMPAIGN

Indoor climate issues have been studied in Finland for over 20 years. Research has found solutions for preventing and remediating the most severe problems. On the other hand, it has also shown the significance and widespreadness of the problems. In Finland, it has been estimated that poor indoor air quality causes as high costs to the national economy as the heating of buildings.

The adverse health effects and costs of IAQ problems could be reduced significantly with proper use and maintenance of buildings and early detection and remediation of problems. Dissemination of information is the issue. Therefore, the ministries responsible for IAQ decided to launch an education and information campaign ‘Indoor Climate 2002’. The objectives of the campaign were:

- To improve consumers’ understanding of the health effects of indoor climate and their possibilities to improve it.
- To increase the knowledge and sense of responsibility of building owners and key management and maintenance personnel in solving indoor climate problems.

- To increase the level of know-how of construction professionals in indoor climate issues.
- To increase the knowledge of health care professionals in diagnosing symptoms and illnesses caused by poor indoor climate.
- To supply information and tools for guidance and control of indoor climate to municipal decision-makers and authorities.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The campaign was initiated and planned by Allergy and Asthma Federation, Asumisterveysliitto AsTe, Finnish Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate, and Pulmonary Association Heli. In addition to these organizations, representatives of all the target groups were invited to join the work. Over 60 expert and consumer organizations responded positively. These organizations took up indoor climate issues in their activities during the campaign year by producing informative material, arranging events, giving advice and organizing education. The activities were coordinated by Finnish Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate. The Campaign was financed by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Environment and the participating organizations.

The following activities were carried out with financial support from the ministries:

- Dissemination of information through mass media and professional journals.
- Local indoor climate events.
- Nationwide net of information stands.
- Production of informative material
- Local networks of municipal experts.
- Web service www.sisailma2002.net.
- Production of educational material and organization of professional education.
- Participation in events and trade fairs.
- Linking all interested organizations and their activities to the campaign.
- Planning of future cooperation.

MASS MEDIA COVERAGE

The objective of dissemination of information through the mass media was to give the consumers and professionals in the building and real estate industry information about the importance of good IAQ and possibilities to improve it. The main messages of the campaign were:

- Indoor climate has an effect on everyone's life, quality of life and health.
- Indoor climate has a great effect on work productivity.
- Good maintenance of real estate pays back.
- There is information available on the effects, factors, improvement and remedies of indoor climate.

The campaign produced and delivered press bulletins and articles, gave news tips, organized press conferences and seminars for journalists. The participating organizations also increased their IAQ-related media activities.

The campaign achieved good visibility in the media and there was a significant increase in the number and circulation of IAQ-related articles (Figure 1). The number of IAQ-related articles in the media was 38% higher in year 2002 compared to 2001 and 2000. The share of TV, radio and Internet also increased during the campaign. The coverage was nationwide.

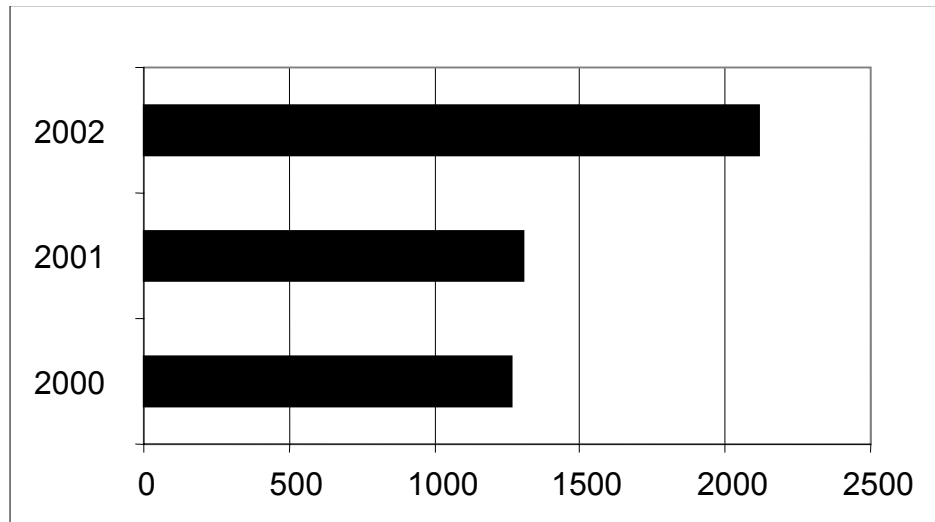


Figure 1 The number of indoor climate related media hits in Finnish newspapers, journals, TV and radio in 2000–2002.

LOCAL INDOOR CLIMATE EVENTS

An important part of the campaign was the seminar tour visiting 15 cities in Finland. The events gave building owners, maintenance personnel and occupants information on the prevention, investigation and remediation of indoor climate problems. Each event consisted of a press conference to local media, an afternoon seminar to building owners, managers and municipal authorities and an evening info meeting for homeowners and tenants.

Altogether over 1100 participants attended the local seminars aimed at real estate professionals, and about 800 people took part in the seminars aimed especially at the general public.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

The educational material produced by the participating organizations was used in the local indoor climate events and distributed through the campaign web server www.sisailma2002.net. The following material was made available:

- Living in a healthy home.
- The criteria for good indoor climate.
- Healthy indoor climate with good energy efficiency.
- Educational material for the principal designer.
- How to recognize and treat a patient with indoor climate problem?

INFORMATION STANDS

A network of over 160 information stands was created during the campaign. The stands are operated by local volunteers, and the premises include libraries, health care centres, municipal offices and private premises (e.g. pharmacies and shops). The stands contain informative brochures and leaflets on indoor climate issues for consumers, housebuilders and refurbishers. The material is produced by the participating organizations with financial support from the campaign.

The following informative material is available at the information stands:

- Campaign brochure (4 pp., 10 000 pcs).
- Where to get help in indoor climate and mould problems—guide (12 pp., 30 000 pcs, available on the web).

- Checklist for apartment buyers or renters (1 p., available on the web).
- Allergy refurbishment and cleaning (8 pp.).
- Indoor climate guide (24 pp., 50 000 pcs).
- The ABC of a healthy home (8 pp., 30 000 pcs).
- Ventilation in a healthy home (12 pp., 30 000 pcs).
- Checklist for ventilation (2 pp., 29 000 pcs).
- Housebuilder's checklist for indoor climate (2 pp., 15 000).
- Is there Radon in your home? (2 pp.).
- A healthy and clean home (12 pp., 20 000 pcs).
- The A&O of good housebuilding.
- Information stand—poster (400 pcs).

Over 130 000 brochures were distributed via the information stands during the campaign.

LOCAL NETWORKS OF MUNICIPAL EXPERTS

The ca. 450 municipalities in Finland are responsible for, among other things, health care services, building control and health inspection. Municipalities are also important real estate owners (day care centres, schools, dwellings, offices, etc.). The premises also suffer from indoor air quality problems.

Networks of local authorities and other municipally employed experts have proven to be an effective means of solving local indoor air issues. Meetings and discussions with experts from various fields help in providing the public services and maintaining healthiness of the municipally owned buildings. Each group agrees on local procedures to handle the local IAQ problems and to disseminate information. As of today, there are 80 local indoor air groups, and more will be set up.

CONCLUSIONS

The Indoor Air 2002 Training and Information Campaign consisted of jointly performed campaign projects combined with the IAQ-related activities of the participating organizations representing different target groups. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Ministry of the Environment financed the coordination and the campaign projects. The year 2002 was named as the 'Indoor Air Year'.

The main partners in the campaign (Allergy and Asthma Federation, Asumisterveysliitto AsTe, Pulmonary Association Heli, and Finnish Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate) were all very committed to the project right from the beginning and had indoor air as the main theme of their local organizations in 2002. The main partners also had a close cooperation related to the practical implementation of the campaign, e.g. in communication, publishing and delivering brochures as well as at different exhibitions in the form of a shared stand. In fact, during the last few years this cooperation has become an essential factor in the work for good indoor air. In addition to the main partners, over 60 other partners representing the main target groups and information and training producers took part in the campaign. These activities and the cooperation were the basis for the success of the campaign. The operational model that was used at least doubled the impact of the public funding as the partners of the campaign used their own resources to obtain the goals set for the campaign.

The most important tasks in the Indoor Air Year 2002 Campaign included:

- media communication;
- indoor air information stands;

- local seminars;
- activation of local indoor air groups.

The goals set were fulfilled in all these campaign tasks. By means of media communication, indoor air issues gained 38% more publicity in 2002 than in 2000 or 2001. The net of the indoor air information stands covers the whole country, and almost 130.000 brochures on indoor air were delivered through the stands during the campaign. Altogether over 1100 professionals in the real estate sector and ca. 800 occupants participated in the local events. Indoor air groups formed by local experts have proved to be a good means to improve decision making on indoor air problems at the municipal level. As of today, there are 83 indoor air groups, and more will be set up.

The Indoor Air 2002 Training and Information Campaign succeeded in its goal to reach the consumers, the owners of real estates and the professionals on real estate management. The measures of the campaign increased the awareness of the significance of indoor air as well as set up tools for ensuring good indoor air and for preventing and remedying the problems. Also, professionals on construction and health care sectors were reached, but the target of improving knowledge by training was not met completely.

As a result of the campaign, improved awareness on the significance of indoor air on health has also made society pay more and more attention to the issue. In the programme of the new Finnish government, one of the issues is to decrease harmful implications caused by houses with mould problems and to ensure the healthiness of school buildings. Increasing interest in the work of local indoor air groups is a good example of the growing importance in the local decision-making process.

By means of cooperation of the different partners, the Indoor Air 2002 Campaign has been able to increase the awareness of consumers and professionals on indoor air issues and to create working channels for distributing information. Considering the extent of indoor air problems, the effect of a single campaign year remains low if the continuity of the work is not ensured and the level of the information delivered expanded.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Internationally considered, Finnish research on indoor air is of high level, but more knowledge is required so that patient care as well as constructing and repairing of buildings can be correctly instructed. More effort has to be put on the work to find out the causal relation between indoor air exposures and health effects so that medical doctors get enough information on the treatment and guidance of patients.

In addition, professionals on construction need more information on the significance of indoor air on the comfort and productivity of the users of buildings. Good indoor air is one of the main goals in constructing, and indoor air issues have to be considered always when constructing, using or maintaining a building, and when construction or real estate issues are developed. It is especially important to take into account indoor air requirements when developing the quality of constructing, energy efficiency or ecology of buildings.

With regard to the real estate itself and national economy, it is most beneficial to repair the damages of buildings before any indoor air problems occur. This work has to be advanced by ensuring that indoor air factors are taken into account when using the estate. More information is needed on correct repairing methods and sufficient extent of repairing. It is also worth supporting financially the work in preventing and removing health problems.

According to the statement by the World Health Organization, everyone has the right to healthy indoor air. It should be possible for citizens to positively channel their concern on health of their own or of their children to improve the quality of constructing and real estate maintenance. Questions on indoor air could be dealt with, e.g., in the government's political

programme in which the development of the work of boards, executive committees and other organizations with elected officials are handled so that citizens could better influence the process of handling issues related to them. Functional models similar to indoor air groups at local levels should be developed and also applied in the private sector.

The operational model of the Indoor Air Year 2002 proved the usefulness of cooperation of ministries and associations. The network created should be maintained also after the campaign. Therefore, regular contacts between different target groups and partners should be maintained, e.g., in the form of an indoor air council or a forum. To enable a long-term operation, a 10-year national indoor air programme should be prepared and carried out so that different partners could better plan their work and reserve the resources needed.

The main concrete results of the campaign that will be utilized in the future are:

- the network of the indoor air information stands;
- the brochures produced;
- www.sisailma.info web service;
- the operational model of the local indoor air groups.

The most urgent issue in making the most use of the results of the campaign is to ensure the continuity of the indoor air information stands. The web service www.sisailma.info is a good and neutral way to guide citizens to find information they need. To become more prevalent, the operational model of the local indoor air groups needs regular communication with the decision-makers at local levels and office-holders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finland) and Ministry of the Environment (Finland) for their financial support, and all the participating organizations and individuals for their effort and support for the campaign.