Mediation in administrative and legal disputes in Ukraine: a European perspective

Медіація в адміністративно-правових спорах в Україні: європейська перспектива

Received: September 30, 2023  Accepted: October 29, 2023

Written by:
Vladyslav Teremetskyi
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2667-5167
Kseniia Tokarieva
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5705-5211
Maryna Myronenko
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7936-5242
Inna Mishchuk
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1491-161X
Yuliia Melnychuk
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1569-1986

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the foreign and Ukrainian experience in the development of the institution of mediation in administrative and legal disputes. Research methods are analysis, synthesis, generalization, analogy, comparative law, analysis of court practice, and others. The article examines the requirements for a professional mediator as an element of the effectiveness of mediation in administrative-legal disputes and the European experience of normative-legal consolidation of the organization of mediation in administrative-legal disputes. The authors analyze the possibility of involving a notary as a qualified lawyer and mediator, especially in public legal disputes. The study provides examples of successful mediation implementation practices in the United States and European Union countries. In addition, the authors emphasized the need for institutional mediation to resolve administrative-legal

Anotaція

Метою статті є дослідження зарубіжного та українського досвіду розвитку інституту медіації в адміністративно-правових спорах. Методами дослідження є: аналіз, синтез, узагальнення, аналогії, порівняння, аналіз судової практики тощо. У статті розглянуто вмоги до професійного медіатора як елемента ефективності медіації в адміністративно-правових спорах та європейський досвід нормативно-правового закріплення організації медіації в адміністративно-правових спорах. Авторами проаналізовано можливість залучення нотаріуса як кваліфікованого юриста у ролі медіатора, особливо у сфері публічно-правових спорів. У дослідженні надано приклади успішної практики впровадження медіації в США та країнах Європейського Союзу. Крім того, авторами наголошено на необхідності інституційної медіації задля вирішення
disputes, taking into account their complexity, using France’s experience to improve public-legal relations in Ukraine. It has been emphasized that mediation helps to reduce the burden on the judicial system, ensures a faster and more efficient resolution of administrative cases, and helps preserve the relationship between the parties, building trust between the state and the citizen.

**Key words:** mediation, legal aid, administrative-legal dispute, subject of authority, public-legal relations, notary, institutional mediation.

**Introduction**

As it is known, the term mediation refers to a negotiation process between several parties to a disputed legal relationship under the guidance of a neutral, impartial, and independent mediator with the aim of resolving the conflict and settling the dispute. Ukraine’s modern administrative and legal space faces various challenges and problems that require a competent and effective solution. Considering ways to improve the judicial system of Ukraine, domestic scientists today emphasize the relevance of additional means of ensuring access to justice, which became significantly more difficult during the war and in the conditions of a potential reduction in state spending on financial and technical support of the judiciary (Teremetskyi et al., 2023, p. 40).

One of the possible strategies for resolving such conflicts is using mediation as a tool for dialogue and conflict resolution. It is important to note that the effectiveness of mediation has already received recognition in the countries of the European Union, where the use of mediation is actively recommended as the primary method of alternative dispute resolution both at the pretrial resolution stage and during the trial (Turchak, 2017, p.176). Implementing mediation in administrative and legal disputes in Ukraine complies with European norms and recommendations, particularly Recommendation (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2001). An important stage in establishing mediation was the adoption of Guidelines No. 15 by the European Commission on the effectiveness of justice for better implementation of the Recommendation (Council of Europe, 2007). The specified normative legal acts significantly contributed to the normative legal support of the mediation process in administrative cases in Ukraine as well.

Additionally, an essential step in the development of mediation was the signing of the Singapore Convention (Singapore Convention on Mediation Website, 2021), which regulates the procedures for executing mediation agreements in international commercial disputes. By their nature, public legal disputes are a complex category since one of the parties is an entity endowed with mighty powers. Therefore, there is an objective difficulty in applying mediation procedures in these cases. In this context, the concept of "mediability", which has a broad and narrow interpretation, is relevant. In a narrow sense, mediability is defined as the mediator's assessment of the suitability of a specific dispute for resolution using mediation methods. In a broad sense, the term means an assessment of the general suitability of categories of disputes for resolution through mediation procedures, which is determined by the legal culture of a society or legislation (Tokarieva, 2021, p. 194). Mediability must be considered a critical aspect in determining suitability for mediation settlement of public legal disputes.

During the adoption of the legislation on mediation in Ukraine, one of the controversial issues was the possibility of using mediation in public legal disputes where the authorities are one of the parties. Separate draft laws provided for the limitation of the use of mediation only in private-law spheres, which meant the prohibition of solving public-law conflicts through mediation.

After the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Mediation" (Law of Ukraine No. 1875-IX, 2021, article 3) and the introduction of relevant changes to the Code of Administrative Procedure of Ukraine (Code of Ukraine № 2747-IV, 2023), the specified issue has received a legal basis, and
discussions on mediability have been completed. Therefore, the Law "On Mediation" is currently in force in Ukraine, which defines a wide range of the use of mediation in various spheres. The effect of its provisions extends to social relations related to mediation to prevent the occurrence of conflicts (disputes) in the future or to settle various types of conflicts, including civil, family, labor, economic, and administrative, as well as cases related to administrative offenses and criminal proceedings to reconcile the victim with the suspect (accused) (Law of Ukraine No. 1875-IX, 2021, article 3).

Despite such a broad scope of application, the legislation allows for further regulatory consolidation of the features of mediation procedures in specific categories of conflicts (disputes), which, to a certain extent, indicates different degrees of mediability of certain types of disputes. In addition, even before the adoption of the mentioned legal act, the Opinion of the Main Scientific and Expert Department of the Parliament of Ukraine regarding the draft Law "On Mediation" No. 2425а-l of 2013 indicated the impracticality of using mediation in disputes where the state, territorial community, their bodies, state and communal enterprises, as well as in cases of administrative offenses were one of the parties to the dispute (Conclusion on the Draft Law of Ukraine No. 3504, 2020).

Considering the above, the article aims to analyze the possibilities and prospects of using mediation in resolving administrative and legal conflicts in Ukraine. The country's modern administrative and legal space is filled with numerous challenges, and mediation is an essential tool for resolving conflicts and ensuring dialogue between the authorities and citizens. A vital lever for this direction is the recognition of the effectiveness of mediation in the EU and support for its use as an alternative method of dispute resolution.

**Literature Review**

The study of mediation in administrative law disputes includes an analysis of various aspects of this topic with the help of multiple sources that examine the mediation procedures and their role in resolving conflicts in the field of administrative law.

In the article "Legal status and acquisition of qualifications of a mediator. Legal comparative analysis of regulatory acts in Spain and Poland" by M. Dąbrowski, W. Broński, M. Concepción, Rayón Ballestero examines the issue of the legal status and qualification procedure of mediators in Spain and Poland (Dąbrowski et al., 2023). This study provides an opportunity to compare the regulatory acts of the specified countries and to understand the peculiarities of their approach to the formation of professionals in the mediation field, including administrative law.

K. Tokarieva's dissertation "Administrative-legal Regulation of Mediation: Current State and Development Trends" details the legal regulation of mediation in public-law disputes in Ukraine (Tokarieva, 2021). Analyzing the current state and development trends of this type of alternative dispute resolution, the author considers international experience and the influence of legislation on mediation in Ukraine.

In their work, A. Kalisz and A. Serhiieieva consider the issue of mediation in administrative law in Poland and Ukraine (Kalisz & Serhieieva, 2023). Comparing the experience of these two countries, scientists identify standard and distinctive features of judicial-administrative mediation.

K. Kułak-Krzysiak and P. Śwital reveal mediation as a tool of state management in resolving administrative conflicts (Kułak-Krzysiak & Śwital, 2023). The authors analyze the role of mediation in the interaction between state bodies and citizens in administrative disputes.

The work of J. Klaus Hopt and F. Steffek includes a comprehensive analysis of the principles and regulation of mediation from a comparative perspective (Hopt & Steffek, 2013). Researchers examine various aspects of mediation procedures and their impact on dispute resolution.

V. Kondratenko examines mediation's organizational, legal, and procedural aspects in Ukraine's administrative proceedings (Kondratenko & Kovalenko, 2023).

Therefore, the general approach to the study of mediation in administrative and legal disputes considers international and Ukrainian experience, providing comprehensive ideas about the problems of implementing extrajudicial procedures in legal conflicts with subjects of authority.

The analyzed works indicate a great scientific interest in mediation as a socio-legal phenomenon and allow us to single out the best
European practices for its introduction into the national system of Ukraine.

Methodology

The object of the study is social relations that arise in the process of regulatory and legal settlement and the use of mediation in administrative and legal disputes as an effective means of resolving conflicts between administrative bodies and private individuals.

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process in which a neutral third party helps disputing parties negotiate a mutually acceptable solution.

The research analyzes legal acts related to mediation in the administrative and legal spheres. In particular, it includes the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine "On Mediation", the UN Convention on International Settlement Agreements as a result of mediation, recommendations of the European Union on the better use of mediation, as well as similar legal acts of other countries where mediation has already been implemented in the administrative - legal practice.

The research uses general scientific and unique methods of scientific knowledge related to the research subject.

General scientific methods include analysis, synthesis, analogy, and generalization. The analysis allows you to consider individual research components and identify their characteristics and relationships. Synthesis allows the combination of the received data into a single system, drawing conclusions and generalizations. Analogy allows us to conclude the similarity of legal systems based on similar features. Generalization and a systematic approach contribute to the understanding of the subject as a complex structure where all elements interact with each other.

Particular methods include various types of scientific analysis: comparative legal analysis, analysis of judicial practice, and documentary analysis. Legal analysis allows you to investigate the legal framework that regulates the use of mediation in administrative and legal spheres. Comparative analysis contributes to studying the practice of using mediation in different countries and identifying standard and distinctive features. The analysis of judicial practice involves the study of specific cases of mediation to resolve administrative and legal conflicts. Documentary analysis includes the study of scientific publications, articles, legislative acts, dissertations, and other documents containing information about mediation in administrative and legal spheres.

The combination of these methods allows for a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of mediation in the administrative and legal sphere, taking into account international and Ukrainian experience.

Results and Discussion

Requirements for a professional mediator as an element of the effectiveness of mediation in administrative and legal disputes.

The implementation of mediation in administrative proceedings is successfully practiced in many European countries. It is important to note that European mediation models do not have a universal character and are conceptual guidelines for further improvement of mediation practice in Ukraine. However, adjustments and adaptations can achieve optimal results considering the specific features and legal realities of Ukrainian administrative justice.

Thus, alternative methods of resolving administrative disputes have long been established in the judicial systems of countries such as Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Norway, and others (Melnychuk, 2022, p. 78).

Ukrainian legislation, namely Clause 2 of Part 1 of Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Mediation", defines a mediator as a specially trained, neutral, independent, and impartial natural person who carries out the mediation procedure (Law of Ukraine No. 1875-IX, 2021, article 1). According to 3(b) of Directive 2008/52/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, the term "mediator" defines any third person invited to conduct the mediation procedure in a practical, impartial, and competent manner. This term applies regardless of the religion or profession of such third party in the Member State concerned and the method by which he was appointed or invited to mediate (Official Journal of the European Union, 2008).

Considering the complexity of administrative and legal disputes, during the mediation, more attention is paid to legal aspects than to emotional ones, and the issue of requirements for the professional level of a mediator is relevant.
The United States has different requirements for mediators, depending on the specific state and scope of mediation. For example, to be listed on the Arkansas Mediator Registry, you must complete a mediation training program of at least 40 hours within five years of applying for certification. Additionally, educational requirements include a graduate degree at the master's level or higher or a juris doctorate (Online Master of Legal Studies Website, 2021). Courts and mediation centers may also set additional requirements for the mediator's experience depending on the circumstances of the dispute. Most states require a certain number of completed mediation cases or hours of mediation activities under the supervision of a mediator mentor. In addition, some states require a law degree to be recognized as a mediator, and in some cases, especially family mediators, a bachelor's degree may be required. For example, in New Jersey, common criteria include 40 hours of basic mediation training, five hours of mentoring, and a bachelor's degree. In particular, the criteria for admission to the judicial list of mediators may differ significantly depending on the region and type of mediation.

Modern practice in the USA shows that mediation and other alternative methods of conflict resolution have become an integral part of the legal system. Mediation is so widespread that more than 90% of disputes are resolved with its help. More than 2,000 law firms have committed to providing mediation services, and companies routinely include clauses in their contracts and employment agreements requiring a mediation process before settling a dispute in court (Apalkova, 2021, p.18).

The American mediation model has a unique value within our research framework. It contains exciting elements that can serve as an example for the further development of the Ukrainian model of mediation in the administrative process. In particular, the mediation procedure introduced by the court is carried out by specialized services or other administrative bodies at the level of municipalities. Mediators working in these services carry out the process of reconciliation based on the analysis of psychological and legal aspects of the relationship between the parties. In the most complex conflicts, mediators can completely regulate the interaction between the parties or organize it only in the presence of lawyers.

In Hungary, the requirements for mediators include a higher education, a minimum of five years of professional experience, successful completion of specialized training for mediators, no criminal record, and no restrictions on mediation activities. Registration of mediators and mediation centers is carried out by the Ministry of Justice of Hungary (Fihun, 2021, pp. 22-23).

On the other hand, in Ukraine, the legislation stipulates several critical requirements for a mediator. First, a mediator can be someone who has undergone basic training in Ukraine or abroad. The second important point is excluding persons with a criminal record, limited civil capacity, or incapacity. Also, the parties to the dispute, including subjects of power, can set additional requirements for mediators, considering each case's specifics. In addition, associations of mediators and entities organizing mediation may impose additional requirements for the persons they register on their lists.

Thus, the requirements for mediators in each country are determined to ensure a high professional level and reliability of the mediation process. Each national legal system produces its approaches and criteria for determining the person who can act as a mediator and the requirements for him.

It should be noted that the success of the mediation process largely depends on the competence and professionalism of the mediator. Therefore, it is advisable to consider the possibility of involving a notary in the role of a mediator. As an experienced lawyer, a notary has excellent potential in simplifying the mediation process and ensuring reliability and objectivity in resolving disputes, especially in the context of public-law relations. Such a specialist also enjoys the trust of citizens, which is an essential aspect of successful mediation.

In our opinion, in public legal disputes, the notary-mediated should become a key figure who plays a vital role in resolving conflicts between administrative bodies and private individuals. This approach is particularly relevant since administrative cases in which authorities are one of the parties can be particularly complex and require competent mediation activities.

The notary mediator has a legal education and considerable experience in the legal field, allowing him to act as an objective mediator in resolving administrative disputes. In addition, notaries have a high degree of trust in the eyes of citizens, as their duties include providing legal services and certification of legal acts. Such functions make them ideal mediators in
situations where one of the parties is a government body with a qualified legal service. A notary mediator can build bridges of communication and reconciliation between administrative bodies and private individuals thanks to his professional skills and neutrality.

European experience of regulatory consolidation of the organization of mediation in administrative and legal disputes.

Mediation in Ukraine extends to various fields of application and has already found its legislative consolidation. A similar approach is enshrined in law in Poland. There, administrative mediation is enshrined in legislation in both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Thus, the use of mediation is possible both between the parties to the conflict (horizontal dimension) and between the parties and the public body before which the case is being considered and which is a participant in the legal process (vertical dimension) (Kalisz & Serhieieva, 2023, p.133). In Poland, there are mediation centers and organizations that provide mediation services and facilitate mediation procedures in cases related to administrative matters. These organizations usually involve qualified mediators who specialize in administrative matters.

In Belgian law, the Mediation Act 2005 covers all types of mediation, including administrative and legal disputes. Public organizations may conclude mediation agreements in accordance with the requirements of the law or decrees of the Council of Ministers. The issue of the participation of government officials in the mediation procedure is discussed, and the authority for this is granted by internal regulations (Federal Justice Public Service, 2005).

One of the forms of mediation in public legal disputes in Belgium is the use of special ombudspersons, such as the Public Services Ombudsman, the Public Authority Ombudsman, the Insurance Ombudsman, and others. A citizen unilaterally initiates this type of mediation through an appeal to the Ombudsman. It is important to note that the Ombudsman does not have the power to overturn an administrative decision but can send a negative report with recommendations to a higher authority, namely the Minister (Vandenhende et al., 2016, p.3).

In general, mediation can be used in cases of administrative sanctions for minors. The Law on Municipal Entities provides that municipalities may use mediation to resolve issues of violation of municipal regulations that may result in administrative sanctions. In a successful mediation, the competent administrative body has the right to mitigate the sanction (Official Web Site of Valia - Wallex, 2018).

Hungary has an Act that enables administrative authorities to take steps to reach an agreement between interested parties in cases where possible. If such an attempt is successful, the administrative bodies officially record the concluded agreement and include it in their decision (Vétesy, 2022). The mediation process in the system of the specified country is carried out by specially trained probation officers, whom the Central Bureau of Justice coordinates under the Ministry of Justice. Disputes subject to mediation are submitted for consideration by judges, prosecutors, and parties' representatives, especially in cases where the punishment for the committed offense does not include imprisonment for more than five years (Dubovik, 2015, p. 303).

Within the administrative proceedings in Poland, mediation can be used in various cases related to property and legal issues, such as neighborhood conflicts, consolidation of land plots, disputes regarding building conditions and permits, and infrastructure investments. Also, mediation can effectively resolve disputes in concessions, business licensing, environmental protection, agricultural and industrial issues, and tax and customs duties. In addition, it is essential to note that mediation can help resolve social security and other complex conflicts where the parties have diverse but partially similar interests and cases involving personal situations and factual circumstances (Kalisz & Serhieieva, 2023, p.134). Such an approach can simplify complex decision-making procedures in the judicial process.

The opinion of A. Samotuga, who compares Ukraine with France as a European state based on a number of political and legal characteristics, is valid. Both countries are parliamentary-presidential republics with dual executive power and a unitary type of territorial system. However, the researcher places particular emphasis on the organization of local government, where the concept of municipal dualism is used. It provides for the division of powers between local executive bodies and local self-government, which sometimes leads to intertwining their functions (Samotuga, 2022, p. 264). Therefore, considering the similarity of France and Ukraine's political and legal characteristics, it is
essential to view France's experience in mediation.

Among the models of mediation in the world, the most common is the classic private mediation, which is carried out by non-state mediators outside of court proceedings. At the same time, the implementation of judicial and judicial mediation also demonstrates effectiveness, which is confirmed by the experience of most countries of the European Union. (Tokarieva, 2021, p. 394). Individual countries develop their own mediation models that correspond to a particular population's legal traditions and culture. In France, "institutional mediation" is recognized as one of the most successful worldwide, especially in the public and legal spheres. Its introduction includes the creation of mediator institutes to resolve complaints and disputes in public administration and public services. New bodies such as the Mediator of the Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Industry are responsible for mediation in tax disputes and other areas. A specialized body, the Defender of Rights, took over the functions of administrative mediation and orderly mediation (Kavalnė & Saudargaitė, 2011, pp. 254-256). It is also important that mediation is popular among citizens: they want to resolve disputes peacefully with the help of mediators instead of going to court. Mediation services are available and free of charge, and their use has increased over the past five years (Paris, 2022). However, it is crucial to note the resistance of administrative court judges to judicial mediation due to the lack of necessary training and the busyness of the courts.

In Ukraine, a judicial experiment was conducted on implementing "dispute settlement with the participation of a judge" in administrative proceedings (Lazebny, 2019). However, it was not widely recognized due to insufficient clarity and understanding of the procedure by judges and citizens. Despite this, the dispute settlement procedure with the participation of a judge remained in the Code of Administrative Proceedings of Ukraine (CAPU). The CAPU establishes a dispute settlement procedure with the participation of a judge, which includes holding joint meetings with the participation of all parties and closed meetings with each party separately. It is important to note that in administrative proceedings, this procedure cannot be used in some instances outlined in Chapter 11, Section II of the CAPU, except for cases provided for in Article 267 of the Code and typical cases. Also, it cannot be applied in the entry into the case of a third party with independent claims regarding the subject of the dispute (Code of Ukraine № 2747-IV, 2023, chapter 4).

The institutional model of mediation is the most appropriate for the national legal system in Ukraine. The creation of a separate body for mediation or the granting of such powers to officials of other bodies, institutions, and organizations will immediately solve several problems accompanying the actual introduction of mediation. In particular, it will significantly affect the cost and quality of mediation services. The institutional model will allow both the state and the professional self-governance body to better monitor the training and certification of the person performing the mediation.

The normal competitive environment of mediators from among professional lawyers or officials of a specially created mediation body will make their services available to the public and lower than court fees. To date, the mechanisms for certification of mediators who provided mediation services before the adoption of the current legislation on mediation or who plan to provide such services are still unclear. This causes a certain mistrust among the population, to whom court proceedings appear to be a more traditional and safe way of resolving disputes. Popularization of mediation against the background of affirming in society the value of psychological help and a non-conflict environment through the creation of special institutions for mediation, activation of the development of notary and lawyer mediation will increase the number of professional mediators and therefore will ensure the effective promotion of alternative dispute resolution.

The main risk of establishing an institutional model of mediation in Ukraine is excessive bureaucratization, so the legislator should take into account the flexibility of mediation and its incompatibility with the formalism inherent in the judicial process. In view of this, the legal regulation of the institution in the field of mediation should focus on the training, certification, and ethical professional training of the mediator rather than on direct access to the procedure for citizens.

Conclusions

Administrative and legal issues are often associated with complex legal norms, regulations, and procedures. Controversial issues may require careful study of legislation and court decisions to determine their legal status and
interpretation. In addition, administrative decisions and procedures are related to the activities of executive authorities, local self-government bodies, and civil society institutions. Participants in administrative disputes may face bureaucratic restrictions, extended deadlines, and procedures that complicate the dispute-resolution process. The indicated legal relations relate to fields requiring special expert knowledge, such as tax or land law, which complicates the mediator’s work. At the same time, despite all the complexity of administrative-legal disputes, the financial costs and the prospect of the uncertainty of the outcome of the court proceedings lead to an increasing interest in alternative methods of dispute resolution, such as mediation, since negotiations and agreements require the expenditure of fewer resources.

Implementing mediation in administrative proceedings is a practice that functions successfully in numerous European countries. It should be noted that these European models are not universal in nature but provide a conceptual guideline for further improvement of mediation practice in Ukraine. Considering the legal traditions of Ukrainian administrative proceedings, adjustments and adaptations of foreign experience can be used to achieve optimal results.

Ukrainian legislation defines a mediator as a specially trained, neutral, independent, and impartial natural person who carries out the mediation procedure. Some countries, such as the USA and Hungary, have specific requirements for mediators, including training programs, experience, and education. Emphasis on professional training of mediators is carried out to ensure a high quality of mediation processes.

Mediation in administrative and legal disputes in Ukraine has the potential to become an effective tool for resolving conflicts between administrative bodies and private individuals. Foreign experience shows that an essential factor for the success of the mediation process is the competence and professionalism of the mediator, so it is appropriate to create in Ukraine the practice of mediation in administrative and legal disputes by a notary who has a legal education, significant experience in the field of law and possesses impartiality and neutrality. The formality of administrative-legal relations requires special attention to the observance of the law when reaching an agreed solution between the parties, taking into account the interests and rights of the mediation participants, as well as during the conclusion and implementation of an agreement based on the results of mediation. The mediator must be competent to formulate an agreement due to the mediation, which is by the applicable law, and the balance of interests of all parties to the dispute.

The modern experience of the United States shows that mediation has become an integral part of the legal system, and its wide application testifies to its effectiveness. Mediation is used in various administrative contexts, such as social service cases, disputes between public authorities and citizens, and real estate and land rights. Many states have administrative mediation programs that help reduce the burden on the court system and ensure efficient dispute resolution.

In many countries of the European Union, mediation is also used to resolve administrative disputes. For example, Spain, France, and other countries have administrative mediation programs to facilitate the resolution of disputes between citizens and government agencies. Among the types of disputes resolved using mediation are disputes regarding social services, education, guardianship, immigration issues, land disputes, and others.

France’s experience involves the creation of specialized bodies to resolve complaints and disputes in the field of public administration and public services. Implementing such a system can improve the availability and effectiveness of mediation in administrative cases in Ukraine. Specialized ombudspersons, as in Hungary, can also help resolve administrative-legal disputes in Ukraine. The general trend is that mediation helps to reduce the burden on the judicial system, ensures a more rapid and efficient resolution of administrative cases, and helps to preserve the relationship between the parties, building trust between the state and the citizen. As a rule-of-law tool, mediation also helps reduce costs for participants and simplifies the process of resolving administrative disputes.

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