



EUROPEAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES
INTEGRATION NETWORK

ELAINE

Theme: *Integration through entrepreneurship
and employment programs.*

Summary of the first conference

Kristianstad & Hässleholm, Sweden

14-15 April 2016



SKÅNE **NORDOST** 



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Introduction

On April 14-15, the ELAINE conference was arranged in the municipalities of Kristianstad and Hässleholm, Sweden. The purpose of this conference was the exchange of good examples and “best practices” in dealing with the contemporary challenge of integration in five different European countries – Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, The Netherlands and Spain. The conference is the first out of five conferences to be arranged, as part of a project funded by the *Europe for Citizens*-program. The theme of this particular conference was *integration through entrepreneurship and employment programs*.

Approximately 100 participants from a variety of local, regional, national and international organizations from the public, private and voluntary sector attended the two-day conference.

Conference day 1 – Kristianstad – 14/4-2016

09.00-09.15.

The conference was opened by an introductory speech held by Malin Wildt-Persson, head of development for the sub-region of North East Skåne.

09.15-09.45.

The first presentation was made by Christina Koch, from the Swedish Employment Public Service, *Arbetsförmedlingen*, in Malmö. Koch began with a brief presentation of the relevant actors and organizations in dealing with the matter of immigration, which includes the department of labor, the department of justice, the national migration service, the regions and the municipalities.

The administrative regional offices, *Länsstyrelserna*, have a strategic responsibility in mapping the long term available housing options for asylum seekers. The national social security agency, *Försäkringskassan*, is the agency responsible for social security payments for asylum seekers.

A significant challenge identified by Koch is the housing situation. In Sweden, the freedom of choosing housing outside the ones provided by the authorities is supported in the EBO-law (EgetBoende-lagen, translated into own-housing-law). This is, in terms of integration into the Swedish society, manifested in growing segregation in some city areas because asylum seekers often choose to stay with and reside with relatives or people of same nation of origin in socio-economic weak areas. This challenge becomes even more difficult given the current general shortage of housing, where the pace of building is not proportionate to the growing population.

A great part of the asylum seekers coming to Sweden reside in Malmö (which is most often the first municipality that asylum seekers come to when entering Swedish borders). The city of Malmö has a long history of multicultural population, currently hosting people from all countries in the world except 14. In total, roughly 165 000 asylum seekers came to Sweden during 2015, which is the highest per capita in EU.

Koch continued with presenting the different phases of integration, starting with the introduction:

- Information about responsibilities and rights
- Mapping of knowledge and professional skills
- Initiation of the validation process
- Matching the profile with a suitable housing option
- Results in an individual introduction plan

The introduction plan:

- Includes activities that facilitate an introduction to the labor market
- Close cooperation with client and external partners
- Minimum is SFI (Swedish for immigrants), societal knowledge and preparations for employment
- Occurs during a 24 month period
- The activities occurs at an equivalent of a full time job

Payments/benefits during the introduction

- A right for the individual
- Equal for all participants
- Requires active participation in the introduction plan for a maximum of 24 months
- 30 Euros a day, five days a week
- Arbetsförmedlingen administrates the payments that are provided by Försäkringskassan
- Additional payment for housing (requires that the participant is included as the renter of the house/apartment in the contract, which is very unusual)
- Each month, the participants are required to state the number of hours of participation, and the payments are based on this.

Assistance in finding housing by Arbetsförmedlingen

- Help to move where there are jobs
- Help is provided to the person seeking employment and his/her family
- Asylum seekers living in the housing provided by the migration service are prioritized
- Close cooperation with all Swedish municipalities
- The national migration service takes over this responsibility as of January 2017

9.45-10.15

Fredrik Zeybrandt & Marie Egestad from the organization for municipalities in the Gothenburg region presented an integration project.

The Adult education in the Gothenburg region

- Coordination of language learning in 13 municipalities since 2003
- Matching needs from local and regional labor market
- What knowledge/ professional skills will be needed tomorrow?
- Close cooperation with local and regional employers and Arbetsförmedlingen
- A great variety of courses over the years – roughly 700
- 15-16 000 participants since 2003

The adult education in the Gothenburg region – focus on integration

- Regional political goal: better and faster integration of immigrants to the labor market
- A predecessor to this project was executed in the years 2011-2013, but with unsatisfactory results
- In 2013, this version of the project was initiated

Language learning with native language included

- Started in three occupational areas:
 - Health care
 - The industry
 - Hotel & restaurant sector
- Findings
 - Education and language skills from the nation of origin plays a lesser role → This project provide the opportunity to learn a new profession
 - The question was: What is your goal with this education? → Most of the participants answered *to get a job*, but a significant part also said *finding a job in a new area*
- Results
 - On average, 75 % of the participants got a part-or full time job
 - Higher skills in Swedish and fewer participants jumping off the project
 - The education requires active participation and devoted teachers
- Next steps in the project
 - New professional areas: Drivers, mechanics, bricklayers, garden workers, nannies and so on.
 - Continue the development of new courses depending on the needs of the labor market

Example: The municipality of Lerum

- A pilot project was initiated in the spring of 2013, in the area of health care
- Grades and levels in language skills
- 2 year long education to become an assistant nurse

- Structure
 - Fulltime studies → daily between 9-16 (as opposed to the usual amount of 15 hours per week provided in SFI)
 - 50 % is language learning, while the other 50 % is professional learning in health care
 - Individually adjusted to the students' needs
 - Native language learning

- Results
 - Motivated and satisfied students
 - Good grades
 - Fast learning – more efficient than SFI
 - Few cancels
 - All students were employed after completed education

- Reasons for good results
 - Information campaigns before the educations started with clear instructions
 - Clear goals that motivate the education
 - More comprehensive accession process → important to see if the students had the proper prerequisites for the education (motivation, goals, knowledge, will)
 - Native language learning
 - Combination of learning a language and learning a professional skill
 - Devoted teachers

- What did the students think?
 - “SFI became boring. You lose the motivation to study. In this education I was more motivated. The combination of language and professional learning was important and gave me more hope about a possible job in the near future.”

10.15-10.45

FIKA

10.45-11.15

Alán Ali from Fryshuset in Malmö presented their solution to integrating youth. Fryshuset is a local gathering place for youth that otherwise would potentially turn to criminality.

- Background:

There was a lot of street fights around the area of Kungsträdgården in Stockholm. Lugna gatan, (Safe street), which is an organization that through voluntary participants walk the streets at night to provide a sense of security, contacted the most active street fighting youth. Lugna gatan was arranging an alcohol-and drug free party, and saw this as an opportunity to put the wild youths in the right side of the law by giving them to opportunity to act as security guards at the party.

An additional development in Sweden during the 1990's was the growing white supremacist movement. When all other doors were shut for skinheads, Fryshuset opened theirs. Threats of canceling state support followed, because Fryshuset presumably "supported the white supremacist movement". The actual idea or foundation of Fryshuset was in this matter that skinheads were youths too, with similar needs of integrating into society. The success lied in the fact that skinheads had to engage with and frequently meet people of other origins and cultures.

The work of Fryshuset lead to a range of projects that aimed to decrease the violent thinking structure among youth, and increasing the acceptance for the multicultural society. The focus of Fryshuset also comprises the work against honor related violence and the radicalization of youth.

In addition to these projects, Fryshuset also focuses on giving social support for single mothers and their children. The idea is that families living on government support should also have the possibility too experience and do things.

Fryshuset also has a range of projects that aim to increase the working capacity of youth, which takes place in close cooperation with Arbetsförmedlingen and businesses like IKEA. Through this project, youths that are detached from the labor market get the chance to go to interviews. This project depends on the society's needs, which is updated frequently. Fryshuset has around 500 employees all over the country, and is about to go international as of the opening of a new office in Copenhagen.

11.15–12.00

A panel discussion was held by Johan Hammarqvist, and the guests were Hannes Van Lunteren (Krinova Science Park), Darja Smisovsky (ALMI IFS). Moderator: Johan Hammarqvist. This activity started off with a brief presentation of the participants and their organization.

- Darja Smisovsky – ALMI business partner & invest
 - Has 40 operative offices all over Sweden, with 450 employees

- Provides business counseling, credits and education
 - Works broadly, including immigrants and newcomers with the application of contextual understanding of the business cultures in a variety of countries.
 - Communicates in 10 languages in southern Sweden
 - Is involved in the entire process – from business idea to financing, marketing, development and additional needs that businesses may have
 - ISF, part of ALMI, was founded in 1996 with the aim of increasing support for immigrant entrepreneurs
 - Has been involved with and support 75 000 business owned by immigrants
- Hannes Van Lunteren – Krinova Science Park
 - Krinova is an incubator based in Kristianstad that works with development and innovation, including bringing businesses from idea to operative organization.
 - Team of international competences.
 - Has launched a project where people representing different culinary cultures come together and cook with the aim of developing new businesses that handle food in some way
- **Panel discussion**
 - Kristina Koch has felt that businesses have found international and skilled staff, but that still may not be suitable for employment due to the lack of integration at the social level in society. Arbetsförmedlingen has launched a cooperation with university of economics at Lund for creating more internships. The businesses are though becoming more comfortable with employing international staff.
 - Darja Smisovsky adds that the language is a very important resource needed for running a business in Sweden. 1/5 of all businesses are run by a person with another first language.
 - Alán Ali mentions that language skills in Swedish is important, but adds that multilingualism must be recognized as a valid and important resource that employers should take into account. Society changes, and new contexts and backgrounds play a more important role on the labor market. Integration, not assimilation.
 - Malin Wild-Persson states that they are currently looking at alternatives in integration, where skills must be matched with the labor market. The goal is that 100 companies are going to see people with different backgrounds as a resource for the companies' development.
 - Fredrik Zeybrandt says that it is not always clear how the matching is going to work, but that it is rather a dynamic process in which every individual must be treated separately with regards to individual skills, prerequisites and goals.
 - Koch adds that an equal service is important, so that you get the same possibilities and support by Arbetsförmedlingen in all parts of Sweden. In addition, Arbetsförmedlingen is openly engaged in partnerships with different businesses and non-profit organizations that actively work with integration. The educational

background is also pivotal for immigrants' chances of integration on the labor market, which means that educational forums also must work active with the matter.

- Alán adds that the bureaucracy in Sweden limits the immigrants' possibilities of exercising their professional skills in Sweden, regardless of the fact that the level of competence may be similar here than it is in the country of origin.
- Koch agrees with Alán that we do have a long and slow bureaucracy in Sweden, which in turn limits the introduction to the labor market. It is important to raise awareness and the discussion nationally.
- Darja mentions that newcomers logically are in need of more help and support in order to start their business in Sweden. Education about the business climate in Sweden is required, which may include everything from social patterns and codes to the practical regulations that are applied in this country.
- Hannes states that the idea of his project was first of all to look at competence and educational background of the participants. In this project, you look at needs (for example matching knowledge of food to the need of creating a foodtruck business). IKEA is also a good example, and it is not a matter of if they want to have a multicultural staff, but rather that they are expected too due to their position on the global market.
- Fredrik mentions that within 10-15 years, we will have to recruit massively in the public sector (especially in the health care area)
- Malin adds that a change is needed in the businesses' and municipalities' normative thinking in this challenge.
- Koch mentions that there is a tendency today to believe that all newcomers and immigrants have a low educational level, which is a clear misperception. There are lots of examples of doctors that are signed in at government employment programs (usually, doctors are not out of jobs)
- Alán adds that we must open our eyes and see the possibilities instead of impossibilities in this challenge
- Darja says that a common opinion or belief is that newcomers only facilitate a cost for the state. Her experience of working with immigrants is that most of them want to develop, change and provide rather than "living of government support". A significant part of newcomers see businesses as a chance of creating their own employment, rather than getting stuck in public employment programs that do not match their potential.
- Hannes adds that we should see this as a long term challenge rather than a long term problem
- Koch mentions that there is a problem today with discrimination on the labor market
- Hannes mentions that instead of subsidizing employments for the sake of employment, it is far more important to put a person on a specific task to work with a specific need of a business.
- Fredrik states that his project builds on previous experiences of what works and what does not. The politicians in the Gothenburg region have a tendency of wanting to try new things, where some things work and others do not. The thing that matters is the will to try new methods and models, which provided the prerequisites for running a project like that of the adult education.
- Koch mentions that Sweden has started to adapt to methods in the USA, where cooperation between the public and private/voluntary sector is more common.

- Alán states that the businesses are now starting to appreciate the strength in NGO:s and their potential to act as powerful tools in integration. Through these organization, you can reach youths in an entire different way that are gliding farther away from the labor market. Everything is not about finding a job, but also finding the right job where the competence among newcomers is put into good use. It is important to find connections in order to reach more groups, for example a Syrian doctor could potentially work with asylum seekers from the Middle East in a given area etc.
- Malin mentions that it is important to break the cultural patterns and limitations that exist, and that there should be more and better cooperation and connections over the cultural and ethnical boundaries.
(The participating panel guests were asked to give two suggestions on developing integration)
- Fredrik's final remark: Work faster, and try new methods and models through projects
- Malin's final remark: Better matching between businesses and asylum seekers/newcomers, more work and less chatting.
- Koch's final remark: It is important to think "outside the box". Sweden has structures and methods that limit, rather than enable. It is important with more cooperation.
- Alán's final remark: The validation process must be much faster so that competence comes to its rightful use. Integrated language learning and professional learning are also important parts.
- Darja's final remark: More contact and networking with Swedish businesses.
- Hanne's final remark: Build broad solutions through broad cooperations, where businesses, NGO:s and incubators take part in creating new methods and models.

12.00-13.00

Lunch

13.00-14.15 & 14.45-16.00

Workshop 1 & 2

In the following, the ideas and conclusions from each workshop will be presented.

1. Housing and living situation

Introduction

This workshop focused on the housing situation. With increasing levels of asylum seekers, it becomes more difficult to provide housing for everyone. A discussion about how to ensure housing for asylum seekers during an already existing housing shortage has intensified. In the most acute situations, authorities have had to prepare for building temporary tent camps and similar simpler installations, as seen in Sweden in the beginning of 2016.

Challenges;

The most apparent challenges, that were also mentioned in the introduction, is the shortage of housing which stems from the fact that not enough housing is being built in relation to the

growing population. Today, the housing market is for socio-economic weaker groups, asylum seekers included, is about finding temporary solution that only works out in the short term perspective. This has in turn lead to the increasing of “multi-living” options in the black market.

An additional challenge in the housing perspective is the discrepancy between housing and job opportunities. The location of the housing option, as provided by the authorities in charge of migration, is not reliant upon job opportunities but rather low costs. This creates or further segregates areas.

Finally, one thing that was brought up throughout the conference by many participants was bureaucracy. The big and complex bureaucratic systems of the attending countries facilitate an obstacle for efficient and fast integration. Bureaucracy prevents flexible housing options that could ultimately be the long term solution for housing of citizens as well as asylum seekers/newcomers. Solving the integration in these countries will very much depend on how flexible politicians and officials are, and this requires a “thinking outside the box”-attitude. The flexibility includes the current regulations, but also alternative partners in building and providing housing.

Possibilities/suggestions;

There is an apparent need for building more houses, and preferably smaller and cheaper (but not simpler standard) housing options. This will require a closer cooperation between municipalities, private businesses and the voluntary sector in ensuring alternative housing as the need is steadily increasing. An additional aspect is the possibility to develop the country side, and creating better geographical connections between the work place and living place.

Another measure that needs to be taken in handling the living situation is tax incentives. The government must have a more active role in pushing for further development of the housing market, either by subsidizing developers or by lowering the taxes on property development. In addition, the government could dismantle a great part of the bureaucracy that currently hinders property development.

2. Vocational training and integrated language learning

Introduction

Perhaps the most important aspect of integration is the introduction to the labor market. With more people in the work force, the recruitment base for businesses becomes larger. But this requires the right competence, and not least the lingual capacity. The combination of learning a profession while simultaneously increasing the language skills increases the chances of employment for newly arrived immigrants.

Challenges;

There must be a better link between language learning and the labor market, as the two are currently often treated as isolated from each other. A great deal of this missing link stems from the shortage of teachers that can provide education in a profession, but also translators and teachers that provide language learning.

A great challenge to this is attitudes, which hinders an efficient integration into the labor market. Cultural differences is not viewed as a valid resource for the businesses, which may breed further discrimination. There is a lack of understanding for contextual differences, such as body language, trauma from war/PTSD.

There are also practical obstacles – for example the recognition of refugee status for newcomers. Integration efforts cannot be provided unless a person is formally recognized as having the need for protection and therefore the right to hold citizenship in a country. During this process, there is no efficient strategy for how to handle asylum seekers in terms of job or education.

Possibilities/suggestions;

The key is early training and job matching efforts. There must be a more active coordination between municipalities, migration agency and businesses – for example contracts. A mapping of the labor market's long term needs is one suggestion. This provides the general frames for what professions' training should be prioritized and offered to newcomers.

In general, more internships should be a priority in creating a connection to the country's labor market for immigrants. Integration relies on fast ways into societal structures, including the labor market. It is equally important to actively include women that might not have been given the same opportunity to work in their country of origin.

Again, there is a need for regulatory changes. Given the proportions of the current situation, (number of immigrants), there is reason to look over the current structures and seek alternative forms of employment that is targeted at making newcomers self-providing.

Finally, there is a need for a more fair distribution of burden – both in terms of volume between countries but also between regions in the same country. The asylum application process must be shortened, which requires that the responsibility of processing asylum must be spread.

3. Entrepreneurship

Introduction

An important aspect of integration is taking into account the education or work related skills that asylum seekers have acquired in their country of origin. This includes the entrepreneurial skills, acquired from running businesses. Although setting up a business is a potentially good way of participating and integrating into the new society, there may be several obstacles in realizing this.

Challenges;

The information about how to start your own business must be adjusted so it becomes accessible for immigrants. The regulations that sets out the conditions for running a business is too complicated to grasp for someone who does not have the language skills.

Additional obstacles is the lack of credit and the difficulty in receiving bank loans for starting businesses. The prerequisites are not equal between native and foreign born.

Finally, the women must be included in the entrepreneurial sphere. Integration is very much a matter of breaking social structures that hinders people from taking part of society, and an important part of this is how women go from being a “house wife” to an actual participant in society. It is of course important to recognize cultural differences, but equally important is the processes of breaking cultural barriers when these facilitate obstacles.

Possibilities/suggestions;

One important tool for giving more immigrants the opportunity of running their own businesses is information about how to actually achieve this. The information must be adjusted to an understandable level, depending on the individual language skills.

There must be a better coordination between integrational forums that help immigrants to find gaps in markets, and thereby creating businesses that are motivated from a specific need. One suggestion is the creation of a social online business market that would function as a supportive forum for this.

Finally, simpler regulations are needed. As with any challenge, a more flexible system is required in order to meet the demands and number of immigrants in need of integration efforts.

4. Fast-track for academics

Introduction

A significant number of asylum seekers have a higher education in their country of origin. At the same time, there will in the long-term perspective be a shortage of qualified personnel like doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals with a specialized degree. There are obstacles, such as language skills but also the fact that it may be difficult for immigrants to claim that they have a degree when the documents that confirm this are out of reach. Consequently, it is hard to validate their education.

Challenges;

A great challenge for immigrants is that the process in which their education becomes valid in the new country takes far too long, and that the efficiency of this process depends much on where the immigrant currently lives. There is no unitary or standard procedure which could be used in all parts of the new country. One of the reasons for this inefficient process is the lack of teachers.

There is also a lack of coordination between authorities in the validation process.

Possibilities/suggestions;

It is important to acknowledge that the fast-track solution must also be applicable in cases where the immigrant does not have a higher educational background, but perhaps a specific competence that can be practiced.

An important part of the validation is early mapping, where the competences and educational backgrounds are mapped earlier – preferably from the day that the newcomer arrives to the housing provided by the migration services.

Information about fast-track solutions must be adjusted to an understandable level, including different languages. It is a matter of targeting information correctly so it reaches the right groups. This information must also be adjusted to the contextual differences that exists between groups, where knowledge of education and labor market in other countries of origin must be acknowledged.

Finally, a key ingredient is mentorship. By having designated people on the task of guiding and teaching immigrants a profession, or teaching immigrants their profession but in the new country's regulatory context, this creates a better connection to the labor market. This is also a way of preserving the de facto competence that otherwise is "hidden" among newcomers.