

Excellence in Practice 2018

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GOLDEpiqueus with Hanken
& SSE Executive Education

Integration Program Business Lead

The Hanken & SSE Integration Program Business Lead® is a fast-track for unemployed educated immigrants and refugees into business life. The programme is offered in collaboration with the largest Social Impact Bond in Europe.

Finland received over 30,000 asylum seekers in 2015. Among them were educated professionals with substantial language skills. However, even with a higher education, language barriers, difficulties comparing matriculations and for some negative encounters in society, integration into working life can be very difficult. Would not a swift integration into Finnish working life benefit everyone involved, the individual, Finnish business and society at large?

In 2015 Europe was flooded with refugees from crisis areas in the Middle East. In Europe alone, the number of asylum seekers more than doubled from the previous year to 1.3 million. In Finland the number of asylum seekers grew tenfold from 3,000 in 2014 to 32,000 in 2015.

For a small and relatively homogenous country that had not previously been exposed to this kind of influx of people, it had an impact that most parts of the Finnish society were not prepared for. For comparison, in 1990 less than 30,000 foreigners lived in Finland. The current number of foreigners living in Finland is more than 240,000.

Building the leaders of tomorrow

As a provider of executive education and leadership development, Hanken & SSE saw a need to do something about the talent that was piling up and going to waste at Finnish reception centres. We decided to fast-track integration with the objective of removing obstacles for educated asylum seekers engaging in Finnish business life or to even set up businesses themselves.

From an idea born in November 2015 we aimed

to go to programme launch in less than six months. We designed an integration programme together with two partners, Hanken School of Economics and mobile learning service provider Funzi.

The programme was designed as a form of micro-MBA, covering basic business topics in four live modules. An online learning track supported the learning and the participants also received career mentoring in groups and a two-month internship period in a company in Finland.

For funding, we launched a crowdfunding campaign, offering an opportunity for businesses in Finland to support the initiative. The aim of the initiative was twofold: 1) helping to change the lives of participating asylum seekers; and 2) offering an opportunity for companies to deepen their corporate culture, leadership, talent base and build diversity as well as sending a signal to their communities.

Companies could contribute to the programme fee or offer an internship position within their organisation, or both. We were overwhelmed by the immense interest this initiative raised, 40 companies came on board. Over the years that the programme has been running, there has also been a lot of interest from governmental bodies and municipalities in Finland and EU, who has seen that the programme is unique.

All of Europe is suffering from an ageing population and eventually will be faced with a shortage of labour, talent and people to take care of different functions in society. At the same time there are more refugees in the world than ever before, so a fast integration and a possibility for people to start working, being of use to the receiving society and providing for themselves instead of living on benefits, would be in the interest of all stakeholders – refugees, local business life and society.

1.3m

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32k

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Partnerships – our winning formula

To pull off a new programme that differed quite radically from the business model of Hanken & SSE's other programmes, we relied on many stakeholders for support. This was the winning formula – being the driver and co-ordinator of a network of partners and stakeholders as well as our role as a remover of obstacles in a rather regulated and bureaucratic immigration environment.

At the start, the programme was largely run on goodwill from our partner companies, volunteer resources and organisations. We partnered to develop learning material for the mobile learning service, to be able to offer career mentoring, and to finance and offer internship positions for all participants. More than 40 companies were involved in the 2016 programme. We also had support by various organisations to help us find the right candidates that fit the programme criteria of having an academic degree, relevant work experience and sufficient language skills.

To be able to continue to run the highly successful programme, we needed a different business model in 2017. The new setup was to get funding and support from a unique social impact bond Epiqus Kotouttaminen I or Integration-SIB, managed by our partner Epiqus and commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, backed by The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Sitra (a Finnish development fund).

Through the Integration-SIB fund, Epiqus provides finance for social sector organisations and social enterprises and catalyses private capital to the programme's service providers with a goal of helping the social inclusion of refugees and migrants in Finland.

"Our partnership with Epiqus supports fast integration and enables work for educated immigrants and refugees who are unemployed. This is the foundation for the integration programme Business Lead®, which is also a great



300

Integration-SIB has helped nearly 300 immigrants to find a job in Finland and Business Lead is an integral part of Integration-SIB's offering to educated immigrants.

40+

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showcase of public-private partnership through a Social Impact Bond (SIB),” Marc Hinnenberg, CEO of Hanken & SSE Executive Education, said.

Since 2017 Epiqus has been marketing the programme and recruiting candidates in collaboration with us and the unemployment office. Epiqus is promoting the programme through social media, integration training providers, employment offices and immigrant associations. Epiqus is also responsible for application processing, pre-screening of candidates and collaboration with the employment offices. Integration-SIB has helped nearly 300 immigrants to find a job in Finland and Business Lead is an integral part of Integration-SIB’s offering to educated immigrants.

Impact for various stakeholders

The impact of the programme has been twofold. First, educated asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants have been fast-tracked into Finnish business life and have had a chance to prove themselves professionally at a Finnish internationally operating company, thus also building their Finnish network and references.

We had 37/39 fully graduated in 2016 and 35/36 fully graduated in 2017. To our current knowledge, around 40% of Business Lead participants found a place to work/study immediately after the 2016 programme and nearly 30% found a place to work after the 2017 programme.

Second, receiving companies have gained an intercultural experience, they might never have had a chance to gain. In addition to being part of something meaningful, they have increased their diversity and for some companies, this has led to new business ideas that would not have happened otherwise.

Third, there are surely positive effects on all of society for immigrants and asylum seekers to not get marginalised and live on social benefits but get to live normal, safe and meaningful lives after having experienced sometimes very traumatic events.

The way forward

The programme has also reached outside Finland and been presented at the European Commission as a best practice case for successful integration that can be spread to other EU member countries. We were invited to speak at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights Forum 2016 in Vienna on the business case for better refugee and migrant integration contributing to Europe’s growth. In 2017 we also took part in founding discussions of the Business Refugee Action Network (BRAN) in London.

Further plans exist to spread the concept as a tool for fast-track integration of educated refugees and immigrants Europe wide.

#BusinessLeadImpact

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