

The basic problem: Labour market integration of refugees and third country nationals

Many recognized refugees who are of working age, who fled their countries of origin because of prosecution due to their nationality, religion, race, political opinion and membership of a particular social group have serious difficulties in accessing the Hungarian labour market. They do not speak Hungarian, they have no education, or school certificates, they are not get used to the European work ethics and they are therefore very vulnerable. They are not aware of their labour rights, and have little or no information about where or how to find legal employment. Today in Hungary the attitude towards foreigners is hostile, many employers are unaware that this disadvantaged job seeker group has the same rights to work as a Hungarian citizen. On the other hand, employers do not have this information, they face with a general labour shortage, which is one of the biggest obstacles to domestic economic development. These two sides cannot find each other.

Without work and a stable income, successful integration cannot be done. This gave us the idea of our main focus. With our services what we have been running for a year now, we would like to support the ones with new approaches and creative tools who would like to settle permanently in Hungary.

Organizational background

The core activity of our organisation, owned by the NGO Hungarian Maltese Charity Service, is to support and integrate workers who are for various reasons disadvantaged on the labour market through the tools of employment policy.

We work in the labour market integration of people with disabilities, and we have also created and operated production facilities in segregated areas to help the employment of the most disadvantaged, mostly Roma, people living in county sides.

We utilise our expertise with disadvantaged job seekers in our work with refugees and third country nationals. We added for profit HR and target specific social work skills to our experiences and have started a new project in a completely unique setting.

We strongly believe that a foreign national can only be integrated well in the society when they can secure a job. From one side it means a stable and legal income, and a job also gives an opportunity for secondary socialisation through work colleagues, where meaningful relationships are made and information, knowledge is exchanged. This time in Hungary it can be achieved easily for an adult, working-age person through the labour market.

That is why we applied for project funding from the Ministry of Interior, named „Developing and running training programs and services reflecting labour market needs for third-country nationals”. We won the application and were given the opportunity to implement our pilot project named MMIA-2.2.5-2015-0006 „Job for You!”.

As an additional service, native-speaker interpreters support our operations in Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Dari, Somali, Spanish and French. Most of our interpreters are generally foreign nationals or foreigners born abroad, but have acquired Hungarian citizenship over the years and have already been ahead of the integration process.

They could serve as a positive role model for our clients and their services are authentic due to their work achievements, education, language competences.

Novelty: recruiting office for third country nationals

Our goal was to open an office based on co-operation across sectors and economic spheres.

We use our best practices, while we are focusing on our client's needs (who are mostly internationally protected people and third country nationals) while facilitating their access to labour market integration. On the other hand, we provide motivated, prepared, well informed employees who are able to work up to high standards and are able to compete in a market oriented environment.

We received the notification at the beginning of 2016 that we won the application and our project will be funded up to 100%, without own capital until March 2018 in total 49.351.900 HUF.

Our migrant-specific labour market consultancy and recruitment office was opened on the beginning of January 2017. This place is the main implementation site of our activity, it provides place for the general information and basic mentoring tasks, the recruitment and selection as well as for negotiation with employers.

Mentoring, counselling and assisting tasks are provided by social workers (who have many years of experience with migrants). Employer contact, exploration, selection and screening are done by the HR consultant.

We started our work with a completely new concept in the non-profit sector: we aimed to create our staff that can be both effective at social and human resource side. Because of our special knowledge we are able to give up-to-date answers whether it comes from the client's or the employer's side. We can call our service "novelty" because we have two focuses at the same time: the employer partners are important just as much as our job seekers. We have developed a separate service packages for the migrant job seekers and for the employer partners too.

Refugees are entitled to get the same documents such as National Health Insurance Number, tax number, address card, personal ID card as a Hungarian citizen. They enjoy the same rights and access to the job market as Hungarian citizens. However most employers have no information on this topic. Sensitizing and winning the employers from that point is necessary. If a prospective employer shows some interest in cooperation with us, we try to identify specific points for our joint work. Later we continue the information exchange with employers, we offer support and HR consulting services to them, and we keep in touch with hiring managers, who will be the key person to our successful placements later on.

For the successful employment, it is essential that we always follow a well-established employment protocol. In our office only real and legal positions are available, we take part from the beginning (providing information, recruitment, CV writing) through the middle (interviews, preparation, accompaniment, personal assistance) to the end of the process (learning and end of probation).

Our partners

We found our partners mainly through professional contacts and networks which were already exist. Unfortunately the current hostile attitude towards foreigners is so significant that we found it risky to contact employers out of the blue. When we however decided to try,

unfortunately we experienced rejections. Long-term negotiations, sharing information, the dissolution of misconceptions and, in many cases, the discharge of unnecessary emotions were also our task.

The target group was reached through professional networks. Labour market mentoring and intermediation is an activity which is difficult to undertake for other professional organization because of the lack of resources. These integration service providers do a number of other, very important integration works. Where their work is over, our task starts from. If a person has settled living conditions, warm clothes, holds documents, then we can start supporting them finding work. We co-operate with other NGOs who provide support (individual case management, crisis management) services because we can start helping our clients when their basic needs are managed.

Our achievements in numbers

Between 1 January and 31 December 2017, 147 migrant jobseekers registered in our office. From that number 28 persons were successfully employed.

13 of them were still employed until December 2017.

In two occasions the employer ended the work contract, in all other cases the employment ended because our clients found better paid positions (for example one of our clients started as a kitchen helper and shortly he got employed as an interpreter at an international organisation). More than half of our clients enjoy their work. This would be a success even if our clients were Hungarian citizens. The secret of our success is not only the professional HR services, but the continuous mentoring, and the support from the employers and because of the motivation of our clients to work and integrate.

This list is a result of the work of two full time social workers and a part time (4 hours) HR consultant, who are very committed to create value for our clients through our work. Our employers are not committed to employ disadvantaged job seekers only because of CSR but because they feel that they can create value in these new work relationships while employing foreign nationals. The employees get fully integrated, motivated, and committed to their job and to their employer.

By now, new employers started to contact with us and are interested in the new employee group.

Further plans

We work on additional innovative solutions. In the blue collar sector we achieved such service level and success that satisfies both our registered job seekers and employers. We developed our unique recruiting and mentoring system. Now we would like to extend our services for new market segments such as white collar workers, who are highly qualified and who speak various languages. We also would like to focus specifically on the multiple disadvantaged migrant job seekers, such as disabled, mothers with children, single parents who also would like to find employment. It is a challenge to find a valuable employment for refugee or migrant job seekers living with disability that can take their special needs into account. We are also planning to implement a new training programme, which prepares our clients to enter the Hungarian labour market.