



ISS SERVICES A/S

WHY WE HIRE REFUGEES, A COMPANY PERSPECTIVE

AUTHOR: Simon Sami Dalsø, Regional Manager, CSR and Job Development, ISS Facility Services A/S

Presented at the workshop on the role of the private sector in economic integration of refugees (Paris, June 11-12, 2019)

ISS (the global leader in services such as cleaning, catering, security etc.) has been engaged with promoting refugee employment for more than 20 years and has made it a priority to support people on the edge of the labor market. More specifically, ISS offers a job development program for refugees, matching their talent with vacancies at ISS or other companies. This provides ISS with an early recruitment access to a great amount of very motivated people, whilst offering a service which is in high demand amongst municipalities and companies alike. 56 per cent of all refugees completing the integration-process has ended the course with an education enrollment, a fulltime- or a wage subsidized job. In addition to helping others on the edge of the labor market, offering this opportunity to refugees has made it possible for ISS to positively contribute to the Danish society with an overall economic gain of more than € 5.41 million. In the wake of the recent refugee-crisis, the demand for ISS' services in promoting refugee employment has increased significantly. As an initiative that positively contributes both to the Danish society and to ISS, ISS is eager to continue the programs.

The ISS refugee program was developed to:

- increase the talent pool available to ISS,
- positively contribute to Danish society by improving employment rates
- reduce the number of people dependent on social service
- provide refugees with increased life-quality through greater confidence, independence and integration.

Beyond these benefits, the ISS refugee program is also of great importance to the company's diversity. With more than 100 nationalities, ISS can proud itself to be a truly diverse company, a trait that has proven to increase company productivity and consequently be of benefit to all actors involved.

Furthermore, in providing the ISS refugee program, ISS is contributing to the wider community through the mapping and pairing of refugee capabilities with other Danish companies. The overall goal is for the refugees to get a job, by quickly mapping and pairing their competencies with relevant companies.

The overall results for refugees are remarkably stronger than for other

Global partners:



groups of people at the edge of the labor market receiving assistance from the ISS programs. In estimating what lies behind this strong performance one key-indicator stands out: motivation. Eager to leave the past behind and get a new start in a different country, refugees are highly motivated to engage with and make the most of the ISS program.

ISS is quite unique in being the biggest service provider in Denmark, while also having an internal consultancy, the CSR and Job Development department, whose primary task is to support people on the edge of the labor market in their search for employment. The set-up is generally referred to as the ISS-Model.

The in-house consultancy's sole direct client is the Danish municipalities. Since starting the initiative 20 years ago, ISS has increased the number of municipal partners, currently working with 20 out of the 98 Danish municipalities.

Partnering with the municipalities each refugee entering the ISS job development program are assigned an ISS-consultant. Through the tailor-made ISS clarification process the challenges and capabilities of each refugee is mapped, taking into consideration earlier education, work experience and the wishes of the refugee. This is one of the key ingredients in the success of the ISS job development program for refugees. The refugee and consultant perform 1-4 weekly conversations within a four-week period, with the overall goal of mapping the refugee talent and matching this talent with a company-internship.

The challenges in this process is often the language barrier. When necessary the meetings between refugee and ISS-

consultant are completed with the presence of an interpreter. Additionally, as a part of the program refugees are assigned a Danish course enabling them to build a basis for communication on the job. Moreover, if the refugee is matched with a job within the ISS organization, the existing diversity of ISS enables a further match with an ISS native-speaking employee. The employee is assigned as a mentor to the refugee to ease integration and communication on the job.

An additional challenge is to accommodate the independent needs of the refugee. Overall for about 20 per cent the sole problem is unemployment. The remaining 80 per cent may have other issues and needs as a result of their current situation. This is primarily covered through the preliminary conversations, enabling the ISS-consultant to find a relevant internship-match that can accommodate these needs.

Based on this approach, more than 90 per cent of the refugees entering the program will secure an internship. The internships are typically of a 13-week duration. During this period the refugee and consultant have a number of close follow-ups and conversations on how things are progressing for the refugee. The conversations cover topics ranging from job-satisfaction and whether there is an overall sense of the internship leading towards a full-time or potentially a flex-job, with the municipality stepping in to subsidize the refugee salary.

The key lessons learned for integrating the refugees in the work-force is trust and communication. It is key that the refugee

Global partners:



and ISS-consultant remain in contact throughout the period, that the internships are tailored to the refugee needs and that any potential obstacles to smooth communication are mediated and tackled as quickly as possible in the process.

The key outcomes have been that 56 per cent of the refugees completing the program has landed a job or started an education, easing the economic burden on the Danish society and positively contributing to the integration of refugees into Danish society. Furthermore, it has given ISS a positive reputation as an “integration motor”, as landing a job is one of the most important parameters in successful integration.

The insights gained from the ISS program has also tuned the Danish societal attention to the importance of a quick facilitation of contact between refugee and companies in want of talent. This has proven to be of the utmost importance to increase the refugee job probability.

For ISS as a company the initiative has also resulted in an extremely loyal workforce. Having the necessary patience to assist the refugees in finding their place in Danish society – and potentially within the ISS organization – has led to an invaluable loyalty towards ISS both as a company and as a brand.

Having been in existence for more than 20 years, ISS is sure to continue its work to support people on the edge of the labor market. Furthermore, ISS is eager to expand the cooperation with more municipalities.

The most enduring challenge for ISS is to keep the success rate of refugee-

employment growing. With only a little more than half of all refugee participants landing a job, there is still room for doing even better.

This being said, it is ISS’s most earnest recommendation that other responsible companies reach out to refugees and with patience assist them in finding their way into society. The loyalty, commitment and diverse workforce, you as a company will gain in return is good not only for society but for your business as well.

Global partners:



Global partners:





Biography of Author:

Simon Sami Dalsø

Regional Manager CSR & Job Development, ISS Facility Services A/S

Since 2011 Simon has worked within the field of public private collaboration, public outsourcing and Public Private Partnerships (PPP). Since 2016 as a practitioner being Head of Public Tenders and Regional Head of CSR & Job Development in ISS Facility Services A/S. As Regional Head of CSR & Job Development Simon works closely with Danish municipalities on integrating refugees into the Danish Labour Market by developing programmes addressing the needs of companies with the qualifications and experience of the refugees settled in Denmark. Simon holds a MSc in Economics from The University of Copenhagen and The National University of Ireland with a specialization in Macroeconomics and Development Economics

Global partners:

