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FOSTERING THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS INTO LABOUR MARKET IN BALTIC COUNTRIES: OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As European countries face huge challenges seeking to support immigrants and asylum seekers' socio-economic inclusion, some innovative means of fostering their integration into labour markets as a factor of economic self-sufficiency, should be developed in the cooperation of research, education and business sectors. The aim of the article is to disclose the relevance of the digital entrepreneurship as a new competence of immigrants and asylum seekers' with respect to their needs for successful integration into the socio-economic situation of a host country. The empirical evidence received proves that Baltic countries are highly interested in the effective ways of the integration of immigrants and asylum seekers into labour market. As the development of ICT prompts new ways for business development (one of the ways is digital entrepreneurship), the educational programmes for target groups of adults should appear in order to fill in the gap in knowledge and skills. However, at present, there are no specific programmes for immigrants and asylum seekers in the field of digital entrepreneurship in partner countries.

Key words: Immigrants and asylum seekers, Digital entrepreneurship, Integration into labour market.

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Балтық елдеріндегі еңбек нарығында пана іздеген тұлғалар мен иммигранттар интеграциясына жәрдемдесу: сандық кәсіпкерліктің мүмкіндіктері

Европа елдері иммигранттар және пана іздеген тұлғалардың әлеуметтік-экономикалық интеграциясын қолдауды қажет ететін үлкен проблемалармен бетпе-бет келіп отыр. Инновациялық жолдар еңбек нарығында экономикалық өзін-өзі қамтамасыз ете алу факторы ретінде олардың интеграциясына жәрдемдесуі және зерттеу, білім беру және бизнес секторларымен ынтымақтастықта дамытылуы керек. Мақаланың мақсаты – сандық кәсіпкерліктің өзектілігін қажеттілігі қабылдаушы мемлекеттің әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайына сәтті интеграция болып табылатын пана іздеушілер мен иммигранттардың жаңа құзыреттілігі ретінде ашу. Табылған эмпирикалық деректер Балтық елдерінің еңбек нарығында пана іздеушілер мен иммигранттардың интеграциясының тиімді жолдарында қызығушылық білдіретінін дәлелдейді. ИКТ дамуы бизнес дамуының жаңа жолдарын көрсететіндіктен (сандық кәсіпкерлік бір жолы болып табылады), ересектер бағдарланған тобына арналған білім беру бағдарламалары олардың білімі мен шеберліктерін жетілдіру үшін әзірленуі керек. Алайда қазіргі кезде серіктес-мемлекеттерде сандық кәсіпкерлік саласында пана іздеушілер мен иммигранттарға арналған арнайы бағдарламалар жоқ.

Түйін сөздер: иммигранттар мен пана іздеушілер, сандық кәсіпкерлік, еңбек нарығындағы интеграция.

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Содействие интеграции иммигрантов и лиц, ищущих убежища на рынке труда в Балтийских странах: возможности цифрового предпринимательства

Европейские страны сталкиваются с огромными проблемами, требующими поддержки социально-экономической интеграции иммигрантов и лиц, ищущих убежища. Инновационные способы должны содействовать их интеграции в рынки труда в качестве фактора экономической самообеспеченности и разрабатываться в сотрудничестве с исследованиями, образованием и секторами бизнеса. Цель статьи – раскрыть актуальность цифрового предпринимательства как новой компетенции иммигрантов и просителей убежища, потребность которых заключается в успешной интеграции в социально-экономическое состояние принимающей страны. Полученные эмпирические данные доказывают, что страны Балтии заинтересованы в эффективных способах интеграции иммигрантов и просителей убежища на рынке труда. Поскольку развитие ИКТ подсказывает новые пути развития бизнеса (одним из способов является цифровое предпринимательство), образовательные программы для целевых групп взрослых должны разрабатываться, чтобы заполнить пробел в их знаниях и навыках. Однако в настоящее время нет конкретных программ для иммигрантов и просителей убежища в области цифрового предпринимательства в странах-партнерах.

Ключевые слова: иммигранты и просители убежища, цифровое предпринимательство, интеграция в рынок труда.

Introduction

As countries in Europe and beyond have faced a large influx of immigrants and asylum seekers, social and integration services have to take the immediate response and to provide sufficient support to integrate newcomers into the host society and get them on a path to economic self-sufficiency. The investments in labor market integration policies are especially compelling in countries facing demographic decline and skills shortages. Baltic countries face unbalance in their labour markets. On the one hand, there is unemployment (Estonia – 7.0%, Latvia – 9%, Lithuania – 7.5%, Eurostat 2017). On the other hand, many industries, in particular in the field of ICT, experience a shortage of skilled workforce. Another tendency is that immigrants in these countries continue to face great difficulties in finding employment, and are also more likely to be found working on short-term, low-paid jobs which fail to fulfil their skills potential, moreover, entrepreneurial capabilities of immigrants are not sufficiently developed (Eurofund, 2017).

Given the fact that immigrants and asylum seekers' employment potential in European countries is rather low (report of Migration Policy Institute, 2017) the new ways of integration should be developed especially those of fostering entrepreneurial competence. Advances in digitisation and developments in ICTs create opportunities for new types of entrepreneurial activities. One such type of entrepre-

neurial activity is digital entrepreneurship, defined as a new business creation opportunity generated by ICTs – internet, mobile technology, social computing and digital platforms. Digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become in future one of the opportunities in promoting the successful integration of immigrants and asylum seekers into labour market. Therefore, by supporting the development of entrepreneurship as an integral part of adult education, and by modelling new methods of combining new digital technologies, entrepreneurship education in Baltic countries it is intended to help both immigrants and asylum seekers to acquire relevant competence for successful integration into labour markets.

The aim of the article is to disclose the relevance of the digital entrepreneurship as a new competence of immigrants and asylum seekers' with respect to their needs for successful integration into the socio-economic situation of a host country.

Theoretical Analysis

Advances in digitisation and developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) is changing the international business landscape, transforming business practices and creating opportunities for new types of entrepreneurial activities. One such type of entrepreneurial activity is digital entrepreneurship, defined as a new business creation opportunity generated by ICTs – internet,

mobile technology, social computing and digital platforms (Davidson; Vaast, 2010).

Digital entrepreneurship is defined as a practice of pursuing «new venture opportunities presented by new media and internet technologies» (Davidson, Vaast, 2010). It is similar to traditional entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit. The most obvious example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses. Entrepreneurial spirit is characterized by innovation and risk-taking, and is an essential part of a nation's ability to succeed in an ever changing and increasingly competitive global marketplace. It involves recognizing and seizing opportunities, transforming those opportunities into marketable goods or services, assuming risk, and realizing rewards, and may occur in a variety of settings, including new and old ventures, non profit institutions, and the public sector (Man et al, 2002). Digital entrepreneurship – is a subcategory of entrepreneurship that leverages new technologies in novel ways such as the Internet Communications Technology. A digital entrepreneur is an individual who uses the Internet as a tool to create commercial opportunities, disseminate information, and collaborate with clients and partners (Nuthall, 2006). In the sense that «digital ventures aim at generating a financial profit and are directly inscribed into the economic realm, such as creation of a new company or commercialization of an innovation» (Davidson, Vaast, 2010). In digital entrepreneurship «some or all of the entrepreneurial venture takes place digitally instead of in more traditional formats» (Hair et al, 2012). Digital enterprises are different from traditional entrepreneurial ventures because they have different business models and can pursue their products, marketing and distribution activities using digital platforms.

In the article, we follow the «mild digital entrepreneurship» approach provided by Hull et al. (2007). Mild digital entrepreneurship means venturing into the digital economy as a supplement or complement to traditional setting. Digital ventures can use computerized technologies as the main means of communications within their organization, between the organization and their key stakeholders (for example, suppliers and customers), or both (De-Sanctis and Monge, 2009). Entrepreneurial competencies have been identified as a specific group of competencies relevant to the exercise of successful entrepreneurship. Such entrepreneurship is often associated with the development of small and new businesses (Colombo and Grilli, 2005; Nuthall,

2006). Digital entrepreneurship competencies have been defined as the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully using a range of ICT means. There is a general consensus that entrepreneurial competencies are carried by individuals, who begin and transform their businesses.

As stated by research, digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become one of the most effective ways for immigrants and asylum seekers' to integrate into labour markets, because it is not directly related to their qualifications or language skills that usually limits their employment capacity (Eurostat, 2017).

The concept of «integration» with respect to immigrants can take on a number of meanings (Venturini, Villosio, 2002). At one end of the spectrum is the notion of an economic/social convergence between the immigrant and native population with respect to a number of statistical measures, such as the unemployment rate, the employment / population ratio, average earnings, school achievement, etc. At the other end is the much broader notion of integration as assimilation, i.e. acceptance of, and behaviour in accordance with, host country values and beliefs, including similarity of economic and social outcomes. This study will limit itself to integration into the labour market, by which is meant that gradually, over time, immigrants will tend to show the same range of labour market outcomes as the native population. Integration into the labour market does not necessarily guarantee social integration, it is certainly a major step with respect to immigrants' being able to function as autonomous citizens in the host country and with respect to ensuring both acceptance of immigration by the host country population and the sustainability of migration policy over the long term. Labour market integration is arguably the single most important thing that can be done to contribute to the integration of immigrants, in whatever way this term is defined (Lematre, 2007).

There are barriers that derive from the immigrants and asylum seekers' status and from the situation in the local labour market that are common to all immigrants:

- Competition (Venturini, Villosio, 2002),
- Problems deriving from the macro-economic environment: trough of production or crisis in the labor market (Birjandian, 2004),
- Lack of social networks in the host country (Heilbrunn, Kushnirovich, 2008),
- Lack of experience in the host country (Birjandian, 2004),
- Differences in mentality (Birjandian, 2004; Heilbrunn; Kushnirovich, 2007).

- Lack of adequate work because of host country's labour market structure (Kogan, 2007),
- Language problems (Valenzuela, 2000).

The competitiveness of immigrants and asylum seekers in the Baltic countries should be strengthened by combining the development of adult educators' digital competence and entrepreneurship in adult education, and by creating the necessary methods and partnerships between education, business and non-profit sector and development of innovative training programme for adult educators' competence development. By supporting the development of entrepreneurship as an integral part of adult education, and by modelling new methods of combining new digital technologies, entrepreneurship education and involvement of companies, it would be possible to help both immigrants, asylum seekers, educators, trainers, teachers, researchers and entrepreneurs acquire relevant competences and frameworks for cooperation.

Empirical Study

The present part of the contribution demonstrates the design of the empirical study, results of the empirical study and findings of the study.

Design of the Case Study

The empirical study has been carried out in the period between 2017 10 – 2018 01, by project «Adult educators' competence training for development of immigrants and asylum seekers' digital entrepreneurship» (funded for Nordplus Adult programme) team. Project partners from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have carried out the research of labour market needs with regards to integration of immigrants and asylum seekers, and demands for training programmes. The aim of the research was to justify the demand for adult educators' training programme in the development of immigrants and asylum seekers' digital entrepreneurship competence. Each country has surveyed 10 immigrants and/or asylum seekers, and 3 representatives of labour markets' training centers.

Respondents' cultural and educational experience emphasized the significance of each participant's opinion on research question (Luka, Ludborza, Maslo, 2009) within the present empirical study. It should be noted that opinion is determined as individual's view based on awareness and attitudes (Lūka, 2007). The group of research participants was considered to be homogeneous.

The exploratory type of the comparative study (Phillips, 2006) was applied within the present

empirical study. The exploratory type of the comparative study aims to generate new hypotheses and questions. The exploratory methodology proceeds (Phillips, 2006):

- 'conceptualisation' in Phase 1,
- detailed description of educational phenomena in the countries to be investigated features in Phase 2,
- the data collection in Phase 3,
- explanation through the development of hypotheses in Phase 4,
- re-consideration of the initial questions and application of the findings to other situations in Phase 5.

The method of data collection was interview in a written form (Mayring, 2004).

The interpretive paradigm was used in the empirical study. The interpretive paradigm aims to understand other cultures, from the inside through the use of ethnographic methods such as informal interviewing and participant observation, and establishment of ethically sound relationships (Mayring, 2004). The interpretive paradigm creates an environment for the development of any individual and helps them to develop their potential (Lūka, 2008, 52). The core of this paradigm is human experience, people's mutual everyday interaction that tends to understand the subjectivity of human experience (Lūka, 2007). The paradigm is aimed at understanding people's activity, how a certain activity is exposed in a certain environment, time, conditions, i.e., how it is exposed in a certain socio-cultural context (Lūka, 2007). Thus, the interpretive paradigm is oriented towards one's conscious activity, and it is future-oriented. Interpretive paradigm is characterized by the researcher's practical interest in the research question. The researcher is the interpreter.

After the answers were received the content analysis has been carried out. Informants' answers of a similar meaning were combined to so called categories. In other words, similar opinions were joined under generalized label. After qualitative research procedure there appeared a possibility to calculate the frequencies of categories that show the distribution of separate opinions in the objective population. Such a calculation empowered to find out dominating and uncommon opinions.

Results of the Case Study

The analysis of immigrants and asylum seekers' interviews.

Having generalized informants' answers the following tendencies were disclosed (see table 1).

Table 1 – Immigrants and asylum seekers' interview results

Question	Lithuania (N=10)	Latvia (N=10)	Estonia (N=10)
What do you consider to be the most important needs of immigrants and asylum seekers with regards to socio-economic situation of a host country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding of the lifestyle of a country (8) - Support in education, employment, healthcare, etc. (7) - Immediate employment (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-cultural adaptation (9) - Integration to labour market (8) - Education (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment (10) - System of benefits and allowances (9) - Healthcare (8) - Support system (8)
Please identify specific barriers faced by immigrants and asylum seekers, who are intending to integrate into labour market, in a host country (except for language barrier)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of informational support (6) - Lack of free work places (4) - Low income work (4) - Lack of relevant training programmes (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low-paid job not related to actual qualification (7) - Lack of support how to integrate into social-economic life (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic downturn (7) - Discrimination against immigrants in layoff (7) - Non-relevant training programmes (4)
What are the most important changes required for immigrants and asylum seekers' successful integration into the labour market in a host country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration support system (9) - System of daily allowances and allocation (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality education and support (8) - Recognition of qualifications (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The system of conversion of foreign educational qualifications (9)
What are the changes immigrants and asylum seekers are not willing to do in a host country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language learning (10) - Obtaining new qualifications (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration into labour market (6) - Entrepreneurship (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country language instructions (8) - Self-directed integration, career planning (5)
How you would describe the integration system into labour market (for legal voluntary immigrants and asylum seekers) in a host country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not satisfactory, there is a lack of assistance and counselling (7) - Does not comply with the needs of immigrants (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not satisfactory, lack of support and mentorship (7) - Lack of mediation between labour market offices and employers (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of preparation to transition to labour market (7) - No assessment if immigrants are ready for insertion into labour markets (4)
Please indicate what specific needs (except for language barrier) immigrants and asylum seekers have in obtaining access to education and training. What specific steps have been taken to address these needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under qualifying the original qualifications (8) - Nobody carries out needs analysis of immigrants and asylum seekers (8) - Possibility to choose the relevant training programme (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of gained education and qualifications (9) - Variety of training programmes in foreign languages (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional counselling (8) - Counselling on career perspectives (5)
Please indicate examples of practices that have proven successful to facilitate the inclusion of immigrants and asylum seekers into the host country's socio-economical system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address the needs of job-seeking immigrants and asylum seekers (9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refugees' support centres that provide assistance in adaptation and integration (10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidance to employers how to work with immigrants and asylum seekers (7)
Which institutional and organizational services would be important for successful integration of immigrants and asylum seekers into labour market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocational counselling (8) - Psychological counselling (5) - Vocational training or re-training (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information about schools, universities, colleges, professional training centres (9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning individual professional activity (7)
How do immigrants and asylum seekers seek for information about host countries labour markets, employers, etc?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mediation between immigrants and employers (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information should be provided by responsible organisations such as migration departments etc. (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social assistance (7)

The analysis of immigrants and asylum seekers' interview answers shows that labour market integration of immigrants and asylum seekers in Baltic countries has a slower start but subsequently «catch up» with other non-economic entry categories.

But, immigrants and asylum seekers do not reach the same level of labour market integration as natives. That might happen due to the following reasons:

- formal qualifications of immigrants and asylum seekers should be recognised by labour market office as well as potential employers. The system of converse of qualifications according to national standards should be developed. The recognition of qualifications can clearly be a significant factor in hiring decisions and in determining remuneration of workers'.

- socio-economic support (vocational counselling, mediation between employers and immigrants and asylum seekers, etc.) should be provided. This presupposes knowledge of the host country language, including knowledge of work practices, local institutions, of cultural norms and behaviours, of how organisations are structured and function, etc. over time, with investment of time and resources. Due to the socio-economic support immigrants can be expected to acquire the needed skills and to show, in principle, a range of labour market outcomes similar to those of the native population.

Labour market training offices could provide the following services: grouping immigrants by educational level, introducing occupation-related instruction and ensuring language instruction and workplace introduction, offering assistance when planning career and mediating between target groups and employers.

The analysis of interviews of representatives of labour market training centres.

Representatives of labour market training centres answered to the following questions:

- Does your institution provide training programmes focused on the development of entrepreneurship of immigrants and asylum seekers?

- Are there any specific programmes in the field of digital entrepreneurship?

- **In your opinion, would these training programmes be relevant for target groups?**

Informants from both Lithuania and Latvia pointed that there are no specific training programmes for these target groups. Training programmes conducted by their training centres usually equip

with certain professional knowledge and skills. Estonian respondents mentioned that there are some training modules for those registered on the labour market focused on entrepreneurship, however these programmes are not specifically developed to respond immigrants and asylums seekers' needs. Informants from all three Baltic countries mentioned that they would be very interested in the development of training programmes in digital entrepreneurship.

Research results clearly show the demand for training programme: in Baltic countries there is no either any training programme for adults that would cover issues of digital entrepreneurship, nor for immigrants and asylum seekers. Though the research data clearly proves the need for this kind of trainings: respondents pointed that they would be highly interested in the digital entrepreneurship opportunities but they lack knowledge on it.

Conclusion

As European countries face huge challenges seeking to support immigrants and asylum seekers' socio-economic inclusion, some innovative means of fostering their integration into labour markets as a factor of economic self-sufficiency, should be developed in the cooperation of research, education and business sectors.

As the development of ICT prompts new ways for business development (one of the ways is digital entrepreneurship), the educational programmes for target groups of adults should appear in order to fill in the gap in knowledge and skills. However, at present, there are no specific programmes for immigrants and asylum seekers in the field of digital entrepreneurship in Baltic countries.

As stated by research, digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become one of the most effective ways for immigrants and asylum seekers' to integrate into labour markets, because it is not directly related to their qualifications or language skills that usually limits their employment capacity.

Research results clearly show the demand for training programme: in Baltic countries there is no either any training programme for adults that would cover issues of digital entrepreneurship, nor for immigrants and asylum seekers. Though the research data clearly proves the need for this kind of trainings: respondents pointed that they would be highly interested in the digital entrepreneurship opportunities but they lack knowledge on it.

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