

The UVUC program

In 2015–2016 Sweden saw a peak in immigration. Since then, migration and integration have been top issues on the political agenda. About 116,000 came to Sweden*. Many came from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan. From 2017 onwards immigration to Sweden has dropped. One reason for the decline in asylum applications after the peak immigration year of 2015 is changes in Swedish migration laws. Since 2015, the Swedish government has taken some measures to limit immigration, to be able to provide for those already in the country. The number of asylum seekers has dropped from around 25 000 people in 2017 to around 21 000 people in 2018 and 2019 and to around 11 000 people in 2020**.

The initiative of Tikitut-Community based tourism

Tikitut-Community based tourism - is situated in one of the outskirts areas of Gothenburg. The east Gothenburg combines urban landscape and beautiful natural environment. It is also an area of great ethnic diversity as well as it had the highest net-migration rate in Gothenburg – 2800 migrants in 4 years. The net income is below the average of Gothenburg and the unemployment rate is higher.

Tikitut Community based tourism offers unique experiences and learning opportunities for residents and visitors, which encourage meetings and bring together people who can offer different portraits of the society in which they live. In this sense, it provides good conditions for integrating new residents into the society. Moreover, the tourist activity is in full development in Gothenburg with a commitment and significant investments of the municipality in the field, especially in the perspective of the events of the 400 years of the city in 2021. It is an activity that creates jobs, directly in tourism and in all associated activities

It is on the basis of these findings that Tikitut Community based tourism implemented the UVUC project in 2015. The aim was to create a meeting and employment platform for non-employed young adults and for newcomers (refugees) under the age of 25. Due to the large arrival of refugees in Sweden and in Gothenburg in the year of 2016, the groups were finally made up of only young refugees, recruited on a voluntary basis in partnership with the Employment Agency as a part of its establishment program.

UVUC – Young adults and community-based tourism was launched in 2015. The aim was to increase the employability of long-term unemployed young adults by giving them knowledge and competence on sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, entrepreneurship and development of sustainable attractions. However, 2015 was also the year when many refugees reached Sweden. We experienced that UVUC with its diverse group of teachers, practical elements and the real meeting with people living in Gothenburg attracted newcomers. Very soon newcomers became the core group of the project.

When working together with newcomers the team understood how Tikitut Community based tourism as a tourist organisation can open up sustainable tourism to become a tool for inclusion, for understanding the new home and practicing the new language.

* <https://sweden.se/migration/#2015>

** <https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Statistik/Asyl.html>

How does an UVUC path runs ?

The UVUC program runs parallel to the Swedish language courses (SFI) which all adult immigrants and refugees in Sweden are offered. SFI courses usually focus on Swedish grammar offering little time for the participants to practice their oral speaking skills. UVUC, on the other hand, focus on practical language training, organizing real-life meetings with Swedish speakers for the participants to practice speaking Swedish as much as possible. The program uses sustainable tourism as a tool for inclusion, for practicing the new language and understanding the new society and its culture (customs, norms and values).

The main objective is to assure a comprehensive accompaniment of the participants, integrating adult learning methods and taking in account the different intertwined learning processes of the beneficiaries.

The aims to achieve are to make participants:

- get planning process knowledge and skills (e.g. project planning, product development),
- increase their civic knowledge,
- learn and practice hosting,
- acquire increased confidence for communicating with people (from Gothenburg),
- improve their language skills.

The accompaniment runs during 4 months, 4 hours in the afternoon, with ten to fifteen participants, trainers from Tikitut Community based tourism and various invited tutors and lecturers from relevant organisations.

It's built in blocks that build up on each other to create a confident learning environment and an atmosphere for intertwined learning conditions

The blocks involve:

- get to know each other and dare to talk to each other
- get to know your skills and competences
- Get to know the new country and find connections to your heritage
- Get to know tools, to use them. Plan and implement an activity for guests

Every block blends in training workshops with oral presentations, study visits on the different topics of sustainable tourism and hosting and to practice Swedish,

The Learning progression

The different activities are all run collectively and integrally in Swedish each afternoon of a week. They are organised and scheduled in order to follow a progression of the beneficiaries regarding their practice and mastering of the Swedish language.

During the first month of the device the beneficiaries get to know the project, the Tikitut Community based tourism team and each other through:

- Communication exercises that mainly help them to write, speak, exchange in Swedish and to develop their vocabulary,
- Lectures that each beneficiary prepares as home exercises, repeats and presents in the classroom through collaboration exercises and with the help of glossaries.

The group also starts doing some study visits at different partners organisations (museums, events). At this stage, these visits have the primary objective to make the beneficiaries practice Swedish and take their place in conversations.

At the end of the first month the beneficiaries start to write their CV and motivation letter . This work-related training is then scheduled several times during the rest of the path.

During the second month of the path, the group starts getting acquainted with the Swedish cultural and natural heritage and the program introduces activities that are more explicitly aimed at strengthening the socialization of the beneficiaries.

They start increasing contact with other people as external persons are invited to speak on different subjects related to the cultural and natural heritage, to lead and guide excursions in the local environment or visits of institutions like, for example, the museum of natural history

The group starts also with practical activities – so called « Tikitut expériences ». It might be, at the beginning, to prepare coffee and go at some place in the city with a coffee can in a backpack so that the beneficiaries offer coffee and start exchanges with passersby.

But the specific “Tikitut -experience” is to organize dinners with meals chosen by the beneficiaries themselves - which might be meals from the newcomers country or just their favourite dish - for clients/partners/visitors of Tikitut Community based tourism. Monitored by the Tikitut Community based tourism team, the group is involved from start to implementation i.e. in planning, making, serving and eating the dinner with the guests.

During the third month the path make the participants acquainted with the concept and practice of sustainable tourism by scheduling speakers on the subject and diverse appropriate study visits. The programme introduces “Thinking/ cogitation” i.e. collective story telling sessions in the classroom when the beneficiaries tell what they have understood and experimented of the achieved activities (visits, lectures, dinners, ...).

During the last month of the course, participants are introduced to project management methods and can work on the development of a product, such as an exhibition.

While the beneficiaries progress in mastering the Swedish language and in their self-confidence and esteem, the different activities increase in complexity and can more explicitly combine the objective of language training with those of professional and socio-cultural integration. But it’s important to note that the different activities *from the start* refer to the postures and the practices specific to the tourism sector occupations and that, in their form and/or the subjects addressed, they all contribute to a progressive social and cultural integration.