

**International  
Citizen Hub**  
Lund



# 5 years success

2015 – 2019

More than  
**1,700**  
internationals  
connected to  
the hub



## International Citizen Hub Lund 2015 – 2019

International Citizen Hub Lund is a leading talent attraction and retention organization in southern Sweden.

It all started with a historic decision to build the materials research facility European Spallation Source (ESS) in Lund, agreed by the European Research Ministers in 2009. And at the same time construction of MAX IV would begin in 2010.

In order to accomplish this challenge, it meant recruiting expertise that did not exist in Sweden; therefore southern Sweden needed to be an attractive destination to work and live.

Attractiveness is key for sustainable and economic growth locally and regionally, thereby supporting international talent and their families in southern Sweden is an essential commitment in order to be an attractive destination.

It is not only essential to be attractive but also to retain the incoming talent which is costly if a recruitment fails. The major factor for a failed recruitment is the family or partner not being able to fit in a foreign environment.

In order for Skåne to prosper on a global platform with its top notch research, creative innovation and cutting-edge technology; international talent becomes a key component in furthering the development in Skåne, Sweden and globally.

### **Founded in 2015**

International Citizen Hub Lund was founded in 2015 with the aim of helping ESS, Lund University and companies to retain the international talent they recruited by creating social and professional networks for the accompanying family members.

The initiative soon accelerated as the need for support of internationals grew throughout Skåne due to the increased recruitment of highly-skilled employees and world-class researchers which are the foundation of Nordic competitiveness and one main reason for the high level of R&D concentration in the region.

At this point Region Skåne's financial contribution has been instrumental in helping International

Citizen Hub Lund offer more support to a wider geographical area and further development with other partners.

This in turn leads to Skåne being an attractive and welcoming region for researchers, highly-skilled competence and as an added value; their partners who are also highly skilled can contribute to regional growth.

Presently, Skåne has the only physical well-established organization working in Sweden to attract and support international talent and their accompanying family members on this scale.

"If the family does not want to follow along, then the person with the expertise you are looking for will not come either. It is therefore very important to take care of those who follow along," says Lisa Andersson, Talent Attraction Developer at International Citizen Hub Lund.

Moreover, the hub is an attractive organization for Swedish cities and regions to visit and learn from. The model has even drawn attention internationally from counterparts of similar organizations such as Estonia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands and Norway.

### **Support and collaboration**

The City of Lund is the principal financier and organizer of International Citizen Hub Lund. The hub is supported by and collaborates closely with both Region Skåne and the City of Malmö, enabling more internationals in the region to benefit from the services provided.

From the beginning, communication and cooperation with authorities in the region have been important for the development of International Citizen Hub Lund and to the services internationals receive. Today, there still exists a strong relationship with Invest in Skåne, Øresunddirekt, Arbetsförmedlingen/ EURES, Migrationsverket, Skatteverket and Försäkringskassan, to mention a few.

# International Citizen Hub Lund's Primary Services

International Citizen Hub provides a number of services to meet the need of the newcomer to Sweden. Our focus are on four main areas:

## **Kick-Start program for spouses and partners**

The program is offered free of charge divided into two groups every spring and fall, in order to meet the challenge of navigating the Swedish job market and delivering the competence southern Sweden is seeking.

## **Events with expert speakers**

The events are always in English with speakers from their respective areas of expertise and free of charge. This is to insure we provide the latest information and cater to the needs of the international community.

## **Drop-in meeting service every Thursday**

Internationals are welcome to come by with any questions they may have or just drop by to connect with the organization upon arrival to the area.

## **World-wide communication**

An easy-navigated website in English, monthly newsletter, active and frequently visited Facebook page and Ambassador network are the many ways we reach out to the international community as well as companies and universities in the area.

## **WHO WE ARE**

The City of Lund established International Citizen Hub Lund in October 2015, acting as the principal financier and organizer.

The hub is supported by and collaborates closely with both Region Skåne and the City of Malmö, enabling more internationals in the region to benefit from the services provided.

## **WHAT WE DO**

We provide useful information, arrange relevant activities and offer a warm environment in which to meet.

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*“In order for a company to grow, it is vital to find people with the right skills who can contribute to company growth and development. We know that focusing on the family is one of the most crucial factors when recruiting international talent, especially the spouse or partner who are highly skilled themselves”*

Lisa Andersson, Talent Attraction Developer,  
International Citizen Hub Lund





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*“I read about the International Citizen Hub Lund when I was still in Barcelona, and I went there the very first week I was in Lund.*

*I hadn't even settled here (I was only accompanying my husband during his first days at his new job, and I was planning to join him a few months later), but I went to a Thursday drop-in session. I didn't know what to expect, and I was feeling shy and insecure, but I happened to find two nice and kind women, who welcomed me with a big smile, cookies and a cup of coffee.”*

Núria Vila Masclans, Spain

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*“After few weeks of being regular at International Citizen Hub Lund, I was able to understand various aspects of Sweden and its culture by learning the language.*

*This helped me to appreciate cultural differences and made it easier to cope with new ideas and communicate with native speakers. Thus, it helped me to gain a network of nice people for life.”*

Immanuel Valpapuram, India



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*“So here is my first advice to the newcomers that plan a long stay here – if you have the option to live without working or studying for a certain period of time, just go to the most intensive course for a few months, make ‘deep dive’ and learn the Swedish language. It will be way more effective.”*

Svetla Tileva, Bulgaria



**Read the full stories here:**

<https://internationalcitizenhub.com/ambassadors/our-internationals/>



## Kick-Start program – a talent pool

The main challenge most of the family members have is finding a job. Many of the partners / spouses are highly educated and experienced professionals that have left their careers behind and are ready to contribute to Sweden's economic growth.

### 100 "kick-starters" annually

To face that challenge International Citizen Hub Lund has put together a Kick-Start program for spouses and partners.

The pilot program was launched in 2016 with 16 participants. The program was an immediate success among internationals and already in 2017 the number of participants increased to 96.

Today the program consists of more than 100 participants annually. The program is offered free of charge. It is divided into two groups every spring and fall, in order to meet the need of navigating the Swedish job market and delivering the competence southern Sweden is seeking. The demand is high and the program is much appreciated.

### Learning new skills make a big difference

The program consists of ten sessions that provide practical tools when searching for jobs in Sweden. Each session consists of a theme, led by experts in their respective fields as well as internationals sharing their own tips.

New arrivals are taught vital skills in navigating the Swedish job market such as writing a CV, interview tips, workplace culture and even starting their own company.

The opportunity to learn these skills within a coaching environment such as the Kick-Start program makes a big difference to a large number of spouses and partners, and their families.

The participants are very satisfied with the content of the program according to the evaluations collected after every session.

As a result of the program, several internationals have found their way into local companies, academia and even starting new companies within the region.

### Talent pool for companies

The Kick-Start program has developed into a talent pool for companies in the region, which is a great benefit for all parties.

Over 50 nationalities are represented within the Kick-Start program which means that Swedish companies have access to an international pool of competence, from which they can capitalize on.

Furthermore if the internationals decide to move back, or on to another country, they become ambassadors who share their positive experience of living in Lund, as well as the region.

## Top 5 employers promoting the Kick-Start program to partners / spouses

About 60 organizations and companies in the region promote the Kick-Start program to partners and spouses of their employees.

The top 5 employers promoting the program since the start in 2016 are:

- Lund University
- IKEA
- Tetra Pak
- European Spallation Source
- Massive Entertainment

## Top 5 employers recruiting from Kick-Start program

When asking the Kick-Start alumni for an update on where they found employment in December 2019 the results are as follows.

The top 5 employers are:

- Started my own business
- City of Malmö
- IKEA / City of Lund
- Tetra Pak
- Boozt

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*”Participating in the Kick-Start Program was a stepping-stone towards a career development and professional experience in Sweden.*

*As an international coming to Lund a few years ago, I can say I found in Ekska Huset the perfect environment to increase my network and develop new skills.”*

Francisco Rostirolla, Italy



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*”In my case the breaking point was when I understood the meaning of the most important advise I’ve never received: “forget the role, focus on your skills and background, those are the most important points in your CV”.*

*That point of view changed everything in my job search, I passed from a state when I only received responses like “thanks for your application but...no”, to being asked from time to time to schedule an interview.”*

Raquel Gimeno Esteve, Spain





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*“I was lucky to join the Kick-Start Program, I think that was a life changing moment for me. It’s not only about knowledge and networking. For me it’s more about the constant support and empowerment from coordinators.*

*The hub has a really welcoming and positive atmosphere. That’s the place where I can always get advice and guidance. I’m grateful to the people that run this project, warmly and deeply appreciate their kindness and professionalism.”*

Julia Sergeeva, Russia

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*“Take the time to read up on cultural etiquette and you’ll make the transition from tourist to local a lot easier on yourself.*

*The best way is to register in the “Folkbiblioteken” (public libraries), which is free of cost, and then you are open to an ocean of books. Some books are on Swedish Culture and are in the English or simple Swedish language as well.”*

Priyank Modi, India



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*“Another important aspect for me to settle down is to be able to bring positive energy to my surroundings. We are not isolated, we need to be caring of each other.*

*I became a volunteer for EOS Local Discoveries since March 2019. We are a small group organizing hiking trips every other Sunday (March - December) by public transport around Skåne.”*

Yingdi Chen, China



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## Events for information and networking

Information and networking is key when you are new to Sweden. That's why International Citizen Hub Lund arranges more than 100 events and activities per year including the sessions of the Kick-Start program. The events cover a variety of subjects relevant for international employees, their spouses, partners and families.

International Citizen Hub Lund believes that arranging a lot of events is one of the best ways to provide information, as well as exposing newcomers to a vast network of other internationals and speakers in their areas of expertise.

### 50 events with 1,000 participants

In 2015, the first season consisted of 10 events with about 12 participants per event. As the response was very positive, International Citizen Hub Lund followed up with providing over 40-60 open events per year attracting 600-1,000 participants annually.

About 50 events were arranged in 2019 and attracted more than 1,000 international participants living in the region.

The number of participants per event is kept to a max of 40, which offers a more intimate atmosphere to mingle with people before or after an event takes place.

### Expert speakers

The events are always in English with speakers from their respective areas of expertise and free of charge. This is to provide the latest information and cater to the needs of the international community.

The fact that International Citizen Hub Lund is a part of the City of Lund which is an authority facilitates the collaboration with other authorities – let's say speaking the same language and having a similar framework.

### Connecting people

Flexibility to change and developing events is an important aspect of planning in order to create the most suitable events for the target group. And most importantly during the events the International Citizen Hub Lund staff is able to connect with the internationals as well as connecting them with people and companies in Swedish society.



### Top 3 event subjects

The events of International Citizen Hub Lund covers a variety of subjects.

Here is a list of the most popular event subjects during the years:

#### 2015

- LinkedIn
- Lund University
- Arbetsförmedlingen

#### 2016

- Working in the Öresund region
- Arbetsförmedlingen / EURES
- Swedish Health care

#### 2017

- What are my rights in Sweden?
- Driving in Sweden
- Banking & Real estate

#### 2018

- International schools
- Banking & Real estate
- Tax system in Sweden

#### 2019

- Buying a house/apartment
- The Swedish pension system
- Introduction to the Swedish job market

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*”Our expats and their families have found International Citizen Hub Lund a valuable resource.*

*ICHL arranges activities that target the needs and interests our expats have whilst providing a friendly platform for networking within the international and Swedish community.*

*The hub provides a warm atmosphere where our expats are met with respect, openness and a helpful hand.”*

Agneta Carlekrantz, HR Officer,  
European Spallation Source ERIC (ESS)



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*”International Citizen Hub Lund is a welcoming resource for our employees and their families.*

*The events are customised for the target group’s needs. ICHL also provides a warm and friendly meeting place where you not only get to know others in the international community, but also the people who help provide answers to questions and concerns about life here in Sweden.*

*ICHL makes it easier for people to find their bearings and thrive – a real asset for us who want to attract and retain international employees.”*

Åsa Thormählen, International HR Officer,  
Lund University





## Appreciated drop-in service

The opportunity to meet with the staff during drop-in is an appreciated service at International Citizen Hub Lund.

### Drop-in every Thursday

The drop-in service is provided every Thursday morning between 9:00-12:00. It takes place in a warm, friendly environment where the staff takes the time to listen.

Internationals are welcome to come by with any questions they may have or just drop by to connect with the organization upon the arrival to the area.

For the staff this is also an opportunity to understand the issues that need to be addressed in order to create events that have value.

### 200 visitors from 50 countries

In 2019, almost 200 internationals visited the premises during drop-in, who were either living in Lund or Malmö. However, visitors from other parts of Skåne and even from abroad who were here for a visit to a prospective employer or on vacation, were received too.

India was the country represented with the most visitors to drop-in in 2019, followed by USA and Iran.

### Top 3 questions

The kind of questions and support needed at the drop-in vary a lot, but some questions reoccur. The top three are:

- Where do I find a job?
- How do I learn Swedish?
- Do you have tips on accommodation?

### Recommended by friends and HR

As a lot of internationals appreciate the services provided by International Citizen Hub Lund, they recommend other newcomers to join drop-in and events.

The HR departments of the companies and organizations in the region also recommend the hub to their employees as well as spouses and partners. Some of the employers who suggest our drop-in service are: Lund University, IKEA, Ericsson, Tetra Pak and European Spallation Source.

In general, companies are not able or have the resources to manage the settling in process and the many factors it entails nor do they have the network or knowledge to address the issues of this target group thus making International Citizen Hub Lund a vital service provider.



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*”Despite all good things about the country it was very tough for me to leave my identity behind and trying to settle down here until I came to the International Citizen Hub Lund in a drop-in session.*

*I found a lot of support and I decided to volunteer for their events. I really feel good because I can meet more and more people and can keep myself busy.”*

Shivaani Mehrra, India

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*”One of the most rewarding experiences I’ve faced around here was getting to know the International Citizen Hub Lund. It is not only a place where you can and should feel at home. Is where you experience the support you find yourself in need when your life has this big change.*

*I met wonderful spouses that were here for some time willing to help and newcomers that were discovering all the same things, that you feel you are not that alone as you thought in the beginning.”*

Paula Roese Mesquita, Brazil



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*”I think newcomers who are creatives face additional challenges compared to those who have careers related to tech or sales. You have to find your own way a bit more.*

*So part of my professional journey has been to examine new ideas that I never would’ve considered before, like starting my own business or creating my own cultural attraction. In my down time, I’m illustrating children’s books.”*

Heidi LaGrasta, USA



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# Worldwide communication

A lot of newcomers find International Citizen Hub Lund through recommendations from friends and HR departments of companies and organizations.

Furthermore being active online and creating valuable content for the target group is crucial for attracting and retaining international talent.

## Website visitors from 140 countries

The website of International Citizen Hub Lund provides helpful information for international employees and their families, as well as information about the upcoming events and activities. The stories from other internationals are also a popular section.

In 2019, the website had more than 18,000 new users (according to Google Analytics). Visitors came from almost 140 countries worldwide. The top 5 countries were Sweden, USA, United Kingdom, India and Denmark.

## Monthly newsletter

Once a month International Citizen Hub Lund provides a newsletter with firsthand information about upcoming events, invitations and other relevant information.

In 2017, the newsletter had about 900 readers. By the end of 2019 more than 1,700 internationals are reading the newsletter.



## Social media

Reaching out to internationals through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn is a great way to communicate and keep them updated on what's going on in Lund, Malmö and the region.

International Citizen Hub Lund publishes posts about professional events, as well as Swedish traditions and much more. Among the most popular posts are stories from other internationals and upcoming events at the hub.

In 2017 the number of followers on Facebook were about 1,000. By the end of 2019 the number had increased to 2,400 followers.

## Ambassador network

There are a number of internationals in Lund, Malmö and the region who have been connected to International Citizen Hub Lund for a longer period of time and know well the journey newcomers have just made or about to embark on.

International Citizen Hub Lund is delighted and proud to have a network with ambassadors from almost 40 countries around the world.

The ambassadors are ready to welcome and support newcomers and are also a good support for employers recruiting from a specific country. Getting tips and information from an ambassador helps the employer to be well prepared to give a new employee a great start.



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*”I watch, listen to and analyze myself and others in this integration process of ”re-installation” from our native social worlds/systems to the Swedish one, with all the accompanying all typical “program crashes and conflicts”, and I think that in adult age, migration is an unforgettable adventure.”*

Svitlana Odynets, Ukraine

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*”Lund is actually a city of opportunities, offering a lot for learning and development, especially for the accompanying family members who can benefit from many such opportunities, often for free of charge.*

*Thus, my son currently studies for free in an international school in Lund which has an International Baccalaureate program, a high quality international educational program.”*

Ruhiyya Isayeva, Azerbaijan



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*”International Citizen Hub Lund has opened up not just one, but many doors of opportunities for me. All the ideas I once had and left as a dream are now becoming a reality.*

*Now I have actively started an NGO for supporting underprivileged children in my country. I have also started to work on my business idea related to art and design, which has always been my hobby.”*

Maryam Latifian, Iran



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# Financing

The City of Lund is the principal financier and organizer of International Citizen Hub Lund.

The hub is supported by and collaborates closely with both Region Skåne and the City of Malmö, enabling more internationals in the region to benefit from the services provided.

## City of Lund

In 2015, City of Lund established the organization for supporting and welcoming international talent to Lund. Over the following years up to 2020, the organization has developed its services to match the need and increase of visitors that enter International Citizen Hub Lund. Whether it be by attending an event, drop-in, sending their many questions by e-mail or even a phone call, it was apparent that this increase during 2016 would demand more financial assistance in order to open the doors wider to the many internationals in the region.

## Region Skåne

In 2016, an agreement was signed between City of Lund and Region Skåne to strengthen International Citizen Hub in Lund. And again in 2017, which made it possible to create more events that could target the issues that internationals were facing and allow a greater number of spouses and partners to receive assistance. This also gave rise to the pilot Kick-Start program that is one of International

Citizen Hub's tools for helping internationals navigate the Swedish job market. In 2017, the Kick-Start program went from a pilot program to a well-established and sought after program; with a dual function of getting international spouses and partners into the Swedish job market and for companies to access competence that would otherwise go unnoticed. In 2018, Region Skåne had entered into a three-year agreement with the municipality of Lund to reinforce the continual demand for International Citizen Hub Lund's services. This commitment runs during 2018-2020.

## City of Malmö

In 2017, a collaboration agreement was signed between the City of Malmö and City of Lund. The reason for this financial support was to allow spouses and partners of recruited talent to Malmö companies access to the Kick-Start program. The program generated the opportunity for Malmö companies to find talent but also solved the problem in getting international spouses and partners into the workplace. Since 2017, the City of Malmö has financially contributed annually with the specific goal of insuring places in the Kick-start program for the spouses and partners of international recruitment.

# Staff

In 2015, International Citizen Hub started with one full-time employee. However, after the organization and services gradually developed so has the number of staff members who are needed to meet the demand. Today, there are three qualified staff members with many years of experience and department manager.

## Volunteers

During 2019, a pool of volunteers have also been engaged in the organization. These 10 volunteers have actively supported events and drop-ins by welcoming and guiding other internationals, as well as helping with preparation and practicalities of the events and activities. The volunteers are mainly partners and spouses of international employees recruited to the area and find this to be a way in giving back to International Citizen Hub for the valuable support they have received.



**COFFEE:**  
**3,500**  
cups served  
per year

**COOKIES:**  
**4,000**  
eaten per year



## Keys to success

- investing in long-term relationships with the international community and being responsive to their needs
- providing events with speakers from their respective areas of expertise
- organizing events and activities in a warm, inspiring international environment
- maintaining crucial relationships with companies and organizations, especially within the HR departments

## Future plans

At the beginning of 2020, we conducted a wide survey to measure if the needs of internationals were being met. The outcome confirmed that many of our services gave the result that was intended and a few areas that require more attention, which will be the focus in 2021.

### Conclusion

The organization has found and developed its structure over the years as the demand for the service grows steadily, both inside and outside

Lund. The current organization has the expertise and staffing to maintain current quality and service.

However, we see a steady growing demand from international talent, their families and companies throughout Skåne which applies to our entire range of services.

Therefore, Region of Skåne and the City of Malmö are extremely important strategic partners in the endeavor of attracting and retaining international talent to Skåne.





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