



WELCOMMON is a model center for housing and promoting the social inclusion of refugees and vulnerable groups, combining hospitality with multifaceted activities of social integration. It is located at 4 Kapodistriou St., in the Athens neighborhood of Exarhia, and is a cooperative scheme between the social enterprise [Wind of Renewal Social Cooperative “Wind of Renewal”](#) (in greek: “Anemos Ananeosis”) and the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency ([EATA](#)), in the framework of the relocation program of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The WELCOMMON building was overhauled in August and September 2016 and welcomed its first guests in October 2016. It will host about 150 refugees by the end of 2016, while the number will rise to 250 in 2017.

WELCOMMON’s final shape is the product of an initiative by Wind of Renewal, with contributions by the Greek Forum of Immigrants, the Greek Forum of Refugees, ANASA cultural center and the communities of immigrants and refugees. It combines social innovation with experience gained from different models and good paradigms – particularly in the areas of local government, social entrepreneurship and civil society, as well as with the direct experience possessed by the other three agencies, which originate in and constitute part of the refugee and immigrant communities.

WELCOMMON’s goal is the provision of shelter to and the social integration of refugees, in close collaboration with the local community. It is a facility designed not just **for** the refugees, but meant to function **with** the refugees, and with benefits accruing to the local community.

The building housing WELCOMMON (a former clinic) is in the center of Athens, is accessible by urban transport and meets all the appropriate specifications for the safe accommodation of guests (fire extinguishing systems, safe balconies and staircase, accessibility for handicapped individuals, 24-hour entrance security, etc.).

Guests are selected by the UN High Commission for Refugees, in the framework of its relocation program and with priority given to vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, families with children, the elderly and so on.

One of our goals is to create an Environmental Education Kit, translated in at least two languages (Arabic and Greek). The kit will contain presentations, photos, short videos and interactive games. The Kit will be designed:

- by two staff members of Welcommon who are well experienced in environmental issues, as they have been working for more than 20 years in environmental NGOs, and
- by one staff member of Welcommon who is an educator, highly experienced in informal education of young refugees
- with assistance from environmental NGOs.



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The aim of the Kit is to:

- present information on main environmental issues (e.g. waste, energy, endangered species)
- give ideas on what everyone can do in their daily life to protect the environment (e.g. waste prevention, energy saving, etc.)
- motivate youngsters
- help youngsters learn about daily habits of European citizens.

WELCOMMON offers:

Accommodation for 150-200 refugees for a maximum of 6 months, in **66 rooms** and additional facilities for gatherings, tutorials, artistic activities etc.

Cover for basic needs: Food, in line with the guests' nutritional requirements and habits (e.g., age, state of health, religion), clothing.

Psychosocial support is provided by 3 social workers and 1 psychologist.

Primary health care by a nurse, with respect for the cultural and religious sensitivities of the refugees. We are in the process of setting up a network of Arabic-speaking volunteer doctors of various specializations.

Legal services for guests applying for asylum and persons needing international protection, in the framework of the asylum-processing procedures.

Social inclusion, through cooperation with organizations and services based in Greece and the relocation countries.

Informal education / creative activities for adults and children: language, music and painting classes etc.

In the near future WELCOMMON aims to:

Offer opportunities for employment, by tapping the skills and aptitudes of the guests, through their participation in the running of the organization and in collaboration with other organizations and agencies.

Create a database with the curricula vitae of refugees –both inside and outside- the facility so as to facilitate their employment in businesses seeking specific qualifications and skills.

Set up social enterprises with the participation of Greeks and refugees/ immigrants, in the following areas:

- Repair and reuse of clothing and footwear -which will create jobs for both refugees and the local population- and sale of clothing at reasonable prices.
- Renting of various products, such as baby items (cots, cradles and carriers), items for handicapped people, special equipment for the chronically ill (oxygen apparatuses, special beds, wheelchairs etc.) at reasonable rates.
- Multiethnic restaurant or/and grocery store.



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WELCOMMON presently employs 28 professionals in the following areas:

Administration / Management / Secretarial support

Reception

Interpretation / cultural mediation

Security

Social and psychosocial support

Legal aid

Primary health care

Building maintenance

Human resources

WELCOMMON's operation is supported by **volunteers** from various countries such as Greece, Germany, Spain, France, and Ukraine that belong to two categories:

- Trainees or apprentices (practical training in vocations related to task in hand or academic research), and
- Solidarity volunteers with various skills (language teaching, child management, do-it-yourself, music, dance, painting).



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