

Proposal for creation of MODEL HOSTEL «WELCOMMON»: A hug without borders



ATHENS, 2016

1) URGENT NEED

Following the recent closure of the northern borders, **tens of thousands of refugees have been blocked inside Greece**, in addition to those who were in Greece already. Unfortunately the **Greek Government** fails to cover even their basic needs in most of the cases. Tragically, the **Greek Ministry of National Defence** has undertaken the role of the coordinator in the management of the refugee crisis. Refugees need to rely increasingly on **NGOs** and **solidarity networks**. Therefore **there is an urgent need to increase the capacity to provide shelter and support structures to the refugees**.

2) INNOVATIVE APPROACH

A substantive issue is the support structures to be able to help refugees not only in matters of housing, but also in their **self-organization** and **integration**, at least for as long as they remain in the country. **Social economy / social entrepreneurship and voluntary participation** can play an important role in this direction, especially in the creation of well advanced structures and capabilities with the participation of refugees and solidarity and support NGOs, as well in focusing not only on their **needs** but also on their **skills, capacities and knowledge**, encouraging entrepreneurship and promoting knowledge and innovation. Therefore, we seek the creation of this model hostel based on the **social entrepreneurship and social innovation** that corresponds to such a perspective, through the development of **cooperation among four NGOs** with different experience and strong expertise on these issues, and also by building on the existing **good practices at European level** (e.g. Cooperative Ruah and Caritas gave, “Open Borders” - National Land Survey and Borlänge Sweden, Magdas Hotel Wien, RefugeesWelcome, CONNECT Germany etc).

3) COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

The model hostel **WELCOMMON** (welcome in common) **considers the welcoming of refugees a common cause for all of us, including refugees themselves**. It constitutes a comprehensive proposal to address the refugee issue, a warm hug without borders, which covers **for free and immediately** all the basic needs of refugees arriving in our country, with their own **active participation**, aiming not only to their housing, but also to their **empowerment** and **integration**, providing comprehensive and adequate **infrastructure** and **services** of quality level, applying **best practices** with respect for the **dignity** of refugees. There is particular emphasis on supporting structures including through **social entrepreneurship** but also the participation of refugees in the operation of the hostel, so that they operate for the benefit of both **refugees** and **Greek society** since they aim to the smooth **integration** of refugees, their **participation** in the provision of quality services adapted to their needs, but also to the **promotion of their abilities and skills** that will contribute to **strengthening social cohesion, economy and social innovation**, as experience from similar efforts in other countries has shown.

- ✓ **Reception, information & interpretation:** It is done on a 24-hour basis, every day of the year, in all the languages of the incoming populations. Particular attention is given to the most vulnerable population groups, e.g. unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, victims of torture or trafficking, the sick, the disabled, etc. It includes the explanation and the written acceptance of the internal regulation for the operation of the hostel (including both reception and departure of the beneficiaries once the maximum period of stay has been reached). There is also a registration system, including ID and origin.
- ✓ **Medical care & psycho-social support:** It includes medical check before the placement of the refugee in the hostel, providing primary health care and psychosocial support, and referral to appropriate structures if they need treatment or disposal of pharmaceuticals. The examination is done in a suitable and equipped section in the building by doctors of the same sex, with respect to the cultural & religious practices of the refugees.
- ✓ **Accommodation:** it is provided in safety (e.g. security in the entrance) and according to the specificities of the beneficiaries and with special attention to the vulnerable cases (e.g. special rooms for unaccompanied minors, accessible rooms for persons with disabilities). An appropriate multi-storey building is selected and not prefabricated constructions, within the urban fabric not to favor the marginalization of the guest population, and with easy access to public transportation. The use of the building is environmentally friendly and there is wide reuse and processing of objects and materials, as well as waste recycling. Refugees are trained and participate in the socially and environmentally responsible use of the place and are organized for the maintenance and cleanliness of the accommodation on everyday level. Persons with appropriate knowledge and ability assist in maintenance and repair, while the interested persons can acquire knowledge and skills as assistants in similar works, in order to be able to find job or establish a social enterprise.
- ✓ **Transportation:** A main criterion for the selection of the hosting building is the accessibility to the main public transport system. If and when required transportation arrangements are provided (e.g. between the referral location and the hostel).
- ✓ **Meals:** Minimum 3 meals per day are provided. Cooking and feeding is done at suitable sections in the building (kitchens and dining rooms respectively), taking into account the nutritional needs and particularities of the guest population, by age, habits, religion and the state of their health. The operation of both the kitchens and the dining rooms is done in collaboration with the guest population itself, with rotating shifts so that everyone contributes. Participants who have already, or acquire appropriate skills are facilitated to contact restaurants and other businesses in the context of finding job or are supported for the creation of social or individual enterprise (information on existing programs, financial tools, meeting with locals who may be looking for partners for the creation of such an enterprise, etc.). Moreover, multicultural dining areas and areas supplying daily necessities at affordable prices operate for the wider public (social restaurant and mini market) as social enterprises. The income contributes to the financial sustainability of the “WELCOMMON”.

- ✓ **Legal aid:** Free legal assistance is provided to refugees including information first about their legal status and their rights with interpretation in all the languages of the incoming populations. Furthermore, there is mediation to the competent authorities, referral for asylum applications and other legal acts, and for legal representation, especially of the particularly vulnerable cases.
- ✓ **Clothing, footwear, essentials:** A special section operates in the building where the collection and sorting of clothing & footwear is done and then their classification by type and size, and their disposal to the beneficiaries. At the same time a washing machines section operates, as well as a section of repairs and processing for the rehabilitation and reuse of the worn items. For the wider public a social enterprise operates for the repair and reuse of clothing and footwear, offering jobs to unemployed (either refugees or local population) as well as clothing-footwear at affordable prices. Also, this social enterprise rents to interested citizens at low cost (and free for refugees) children's prams, buggies for the disabled, special equipment for patients with chronic diseases (e.g. oxygen devices, special beds etc.).
- ✓ **Pedagogical, environmental and cultural programs:** Pedagogical and cultural programs are implemented specially designed for refugees, especially children and youth, using education, art and culture as tools for the treatment and the empowerment of refugees, language learning and familiarity with issues of health, social behavior and environmental responsibility. A creative workshop also operates, and the artistic works (if their creators agree) are offered for sale, with 50% of revenues intended for the needs of the creators themselves and 50% for the operation of the hostel.
- ✓ **Connect - connection:** A database operates containing information on agencies and individuals looking for particular disciplines or/and interested in coming in contact with people who have specific skills and abilities. A basic objective is to create a bridge between interested agencies and refugees on specializations, professions, skills and employment opportunities (e.g. culture-arts, health-care, technical professions such as engineers, educational, weaving, repairs, etc.).

4) MANAGEMENT - ADMINISTRATION

A model of **open administration, joint management and cooperation** is adopted among the 4 NGOs which participate in the creation and operation of the WELCOMMON hostel. **Project progress is monitored and evaluated** by regularly collecting and analysing internal and external feedback, evaluation of the hosted population, but also control by external evaluators, both for the quality operation of the hostel and its managerial competence. **Full transparency** with publicizing the management of financial resources and social outcomes (of course respecting the requirements of confidentiality and protection of personal data) is also part of our culture.

5) SPECIALIZED ORGANISATIONS

The **successful implementation** of the plan is based on the well established cooperation and the full exploitation of skills, knowledge, abilities, experience and great expertise in their field of **our four non-governmental organizations and our members**. Working together we will meet overall the multifaceted needs of refugees and empower them in order to overcome their difficulties and continue their lives with hope.

The unique advantage of our coalition is that our **four NGOs** can achieve together - and using the full capacity of their members and associated - all the above-mentioned desired outcomes. They have a long-term experience in the **provision of support and services to refugees and migrants** (all 4 NGOs), they have **good cooperation with other NGOs providing complementing services** (e.g. medical care & psychological support, legal aid), they cover the **widest spectrum of refugee and migrant communities** (Greek Forum of Refugees & Greek Forum of Migrants), and they apply themselves good practices in the **empowerment and integration of refugees and migrants through culture/art** (ANASA Cultural Center) and **social entrepreneurship - training - networking and cooperation** with existing good examples (Social Cooperative “Wind of Renewal”).

✓ Greek Forum of Refugees www.refugees.gr

The Greek Forum of Refugees (GFR) is the first and only “second level” grassroots organization in Greece acting as a network of refugee communities, with a mission to operate as a national-scale sustainable network. Its main areas of expertise include the mobilization of refugee communities, advocacy, legal/social research, conducting needs assessments of refugee communities and disseminating the results in different and creative ways, the provision of support to implement activities in order to address these communities' needs, strengthening cooperation between Greek organizations and refugee communities, sharing information with the authorities and other stakeholders, and the organization of various events and conferences. GFR cooperates with stakeholders (NGOs, platforms, UN agencies) working with refugee communities for their rights in Greece (Racist Violence Recording Network, Campaign for Access to Asylum), in Europe (European Council for Refugees and Exiles, European Migration Forum) and internationally (PICUM, International Detention Coalition). GFR has participated in eight European programs and national projects. GFR has a recent cooperation with UNHCR in the project “Information on integration to beneficiaries of international protection through the operation of an One Stop Shop Information Centre” (implemented primarily by the Greek Council of Refugees and funded by UNHCR). Other recent projects include: 1) “Voice of refugees” An advocacy campaign for the social inclusion and the respect of rights of refugees (funded by the Open Society Foundation), 2) “One Stop Shop: empowerment and integration of refugees” (funded by the EEA Grants), 3) “Support and legal services for victims of hate crime” (funded by the EEA Grants), 4) “Social Assistance for the Integration of Refugees” (funded by the European Refugee Fund – National Actions). GFR is well suited to implement this project because it has established direct contact with the refugee population, understands its needs and has already established a frame of support. All staff involved has a long experience in the field, both professional and academic, both in Greece and abroad. Our project team will propose concrete ways to achieve an efficient implementation of projects (management and implementation, methodology, logistics, and its follow-up).

✓ **Greek Forum of Migrants** www.migrant.gr

The Greek Forum of Migrants (GFM) is the only network of immigrant groups in Greece. Has a membership of 40 migrant communities and organizations, representing and strengthening the self-representation of migrants in Greece with the aim of gaining equal inclusion and participation in Greek society. The GFM participates in several European wide networks and initiatives that are devoted to combating racism and xenophobia. Widely recognized throughout rights and advocacy groups throughout Europe, the GFM belongs to European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the European Grassroots Anti-Racist Movement (EGAM), the European Platform for Dialogue on Migration, and the National Representation Against Discrimination, among others. In 2013, the GFM won the ENAR Foundation Award for NGOs for their work with second-generation migrants and for fighting against racial violence. Over the years, GFM has received funding for its initiatives and projects from the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Greek Ministry of Labor, among others. Recent projects include: 1) “Informative campaign at schools with target group students with migrant background & indigenous together with their parents” (funded by the European Integration Fund – Ministry of Interior), 2) “Mixed Youth Centers” (funded by the European Integration Fund – Ministry of Interior), 3) “Local actions for social integration – ANTAIOS” (funded by the Ministry of Labor), 4) “Local actions for social integration «Corporate at the historical center in Athens»” (funded by the Ministry of Labor), 5) “Think differently” (funded by the Open Society Foundation), 6) “Fight hate crime now” (funded by the EEA Grants / ongoing project).

✓ **ANASA Cultural Center** www.anasa.org.gr

The Cultural Center of African Art and Cultures ANASA is an NGO working for the elimination of racism, exclusion and discrimination, the promotion of multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue among peoples, and the empowerment and inclusion, through art and culture, of young people of African origin who were either born in Greece or came as migrants or refugees. The word «anasa» in swahili means «joy of life», and the Cultural Center ANASA offers this joy of life by promoting African arts (music, dance, song, literature, narration, theater, painting and gastronomy), and by implementing pedagogical programs and solidarity actions. ANASA has implemented a number of projects, including recently: 1) “Multicultural Troupe ANASA: A caravan without borders” (funded by EEA Grants / ongoing project implemented in the Greek border islands and Evros), 2) “Crossroad of Arts” in cooperation with NGO PRAKSIS, BEE GROUP S.A. and the Foundation of the Hellenic World (funded by EC and national funds).

✓ **Social Cooperative Wind of Renewal** www.anemosananeosis.gr

“ANEMOS ANANEOSIS” (“WIND OF RENEWAL”) is a social cooperative enhancing social cohesion and accession through social cooperations and innovations that recognise the value, capabilities and skills of every person and promote employment in green, social and cultural sectors. It is a co-organiser of the annual Social Entrepreneurship Forum, with special emphasis on refugees and migrants. Its members have expertise on social entrepreneurship and are very active in the refugees/migrants domain in several aspects, with a rich experience over the years including: 1) cultural mediation/interpretation both on a voluntary basis (with KETHEA) and on a professional basis (with Doctors Without Borders on the Greek border islands), 2) participation in projects about the inclusion of refugees/migrants/asylum seekers (SCI), 3) provision of medical services on



a voluntary basis (in the Ecological Cultural Center of Athens), 4) editorial team of DROMOLOGIA, the first street magazine in Greece including refugees and migrants, and METOIKOS magazine, issued by the Athens/Macedonian News Agency in cooperation with refugees/migrants communities, 5) active participation in NGOs supporting and working with refugees/migrants/asylum seekers both on a voluntary basis (Amnesty International) and on a professional basis (KLIMAKA).