



Good Practice - WELCOMMON HOSTEL

WP 2

Activity 1 (Good Practice)

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Good Practice Card

Name/ title of practice:	WELCOMMON Hostel – Sustainable Hospitality for Social Inclusion
Location:	Athens, Greece (urban centre, Exarchia neighbourhood)
Size and scale of organization:	<p>A micro social cooperative with fewer than ten core staff members, supported by local and international volunteers.</p> <p>The WELCOMMON Hostel operates in a seven-floor building with 65 rooms and a total capacity of about 139 guests.</p> <p>Two floors are dedicated to sustainable hospitality, while the remaining five floors function as spaces for education, cultural activities, and community empowerment initiatives.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <p>https://www.alfhellas.gr/en/networks/wind-renewal</p> <p>https://anemosananeosis.gr/en/main-page-en-2/</p> <p>https://welcommonhostel.gr/</p> <p>https://www.diesis.coop/ecosystem/anemos-ananeosis-wind-of-renewal/</p> <p>https://anemosananeosis.gr/en/welcommon-hostel-impact3/</p>
Industry/Sector:	Social enterprise in hospitality and tourism, intersecting with social services and green economy sectors
Contact info (for follow up, if available):	Anemos Ananeosis – Wind of Renewal, Kapodistriou 4, Athens; contact person Nikos Chrysogelos; email and phone listed on Anemos Ananeosis website: https://www.diesis.coop/ecosystem/anemos-ananeosis-wind-of-renewal/
Additional details:	Since 2018, WELCOMMON Hostel has operated on two floors dedicated to sustainable tourism and five floors functioning as a social innovation and empowerment centre .



	<p>Empowerment is achieved through targeted programs and inclusive guest engagement:</p> <p>The hostel hosts training workshops, language and digital courses, green skills sessions, and social entrepreneurship labs for refugees, migrants, young people, and unemployed residents.</p> <p>Guests are invited to participate in community activities such as cultural events, exhibitions, or volunteer initiatives, fostering dialogue between travellers and local communities.</p> <p>In this way, WELCOMMON combines affordable eco-friendly lodging with education, inclusion, and intercultural exchange, creating a model of hospitality that benefits both visitors and vulnerable local groups.</p>
<p>Sources of information/References:</p>	<p>Official WELCOMMON Hostel website: https://welcommonhostel.gr/</p> <p>https://welcommonhostel.gr/social/</p> <p>Anna Lindh Foundation profile of Wind of Renewal: https://www.alfhellas.gr/en/networks/wind-renewal</p> <p>Cooperative City feature article on WELCOMMON: https://cooperativecity.org/welcommon-hostel-sustainable-tourism-and-social-cultural-activities-for-the-promotion-of-social-innovation/</p>

Good Practice/Content

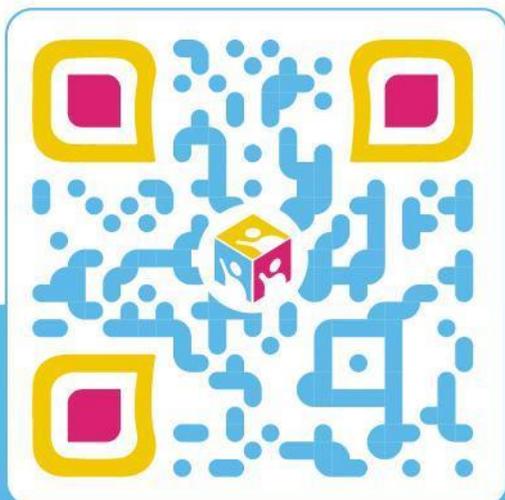
Key focus/bias observed:	The practice addresses social and cultural exclusion of refugees, migrants, unemployed youth, and socially vulnerable groups, intersecting with racial/ethnic and ageism issues.
Description of the <i>Practice</i>:	The WELCOMMON Hostel is a ground-breaking initiative that merges eco-conscious tourism with a social inclusion platform. Hosted within a renovated former hospital building in central Athens, it offers affordable, sustainable lodging to travellers while providing refugees, migrants, and Greek youth with training and employment opportunities. It fosters intercultural exchange and community engagement through events (such as language lessons, cooking workshops, art and music nights) attended by participants from both the local community and travellers. The hostel operates as an open, public accommodation , welcoming both local and international travelers through standard booking channels. There are no restrictions on who can stay or on the duration of stay , beyond regular hostel policies. What makes WELCOMMON unique is that guests directly contribute to its social and educational programs , as part of their lodging fees support training and community activities for refugees, migrants, and unemployed youth. Visitors are also invited—but not obliged—to participate in intercultural events, workshops, or volunteer actions during their stay.
Implementation strategy:	Beginning in 2016 as a refugee shelter, WELCOMMON evolved into a social cooperative hostel by 2018. The cooperative provides on-the-job training in hospitality, café/barista services, reception, intercultural communication, and energy efficiency to refugees and local youth. Volunteers and teachers deliver language classes and cultural workshops, while lessons on sustainable energy and circular economy serve as living demonstrations. Five floors function as a social centre, and the remaining floors serve tourists, enabling revenue that funds the social inclusion work.
Key actors involved:	Stakeholders include WELCOMMON operational staff and cooperative members, refugees and refugees-in-training, Greek unemployed youth, volunteers and educators, travellers and guests, the Municipality of Athens and UNHCR (initial supporters), and networks such as LE MAT Europe and HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL that bolster knowledge exchange and visibility.
Outcomes and metrics of impact:	Since inception, WELCOMMON has housed over 600 refugees (2016–2018) and delivered training to more than 1,500 people. Training has helped dozens progress into employment in tourism or start social micro-enterprises. Energy upgrades (LED lighting and solar panels) have reduced energy consumption by approximately 45%, significantly lowering operational costs. Cultural events and classes have engaged hundreds of locals and travellers. Financial self-sustainability was achieved by 2018, enabling continuation beyond donor support.

	<p>Since becoming a self-sustaining social enterprise in 2018, WELCOMMON has continued to expand its training, community, and sustainability initiatives.</p> <p>Over 2,000 participants have taken part in workshops and non-formal education programs on green jobs, hospitality, and intercultural skills.</p> <p>The hostel has hosted thousands of international guests, whose stays directly fund ongoing inclusion programs. Regular Erasmus+ projects and environmental education actions promote sustainable tourism and social economy awareness.</p> <p>The building remains an urban demonstration site for renewable energy and energy-efficiency upgrades, achieving energy savings of about 45 %.</p> <p>WELCOMMON continues to receive European-level recognition as a model for integrating sustainability, employment, and social inclusion within tourism.</p> <p>Through this period, it has proven that inclusive and climate-responsible hospitality can be both financially viable and socially transformative in an urban European context.</p>
<p>Potential challenges and barriers for implementation:</p>	<p>Transitioning from humanitarian funding to a sustainable social enterprise model required financial resilience and adaptive capacity. Ensuring consistent revenue while maintaining affordable and inclusive services remains challenging. Scaling the model demands strong community engagement, volunteer coordination, and balancing social and commercial objectives.</p>
<p>Blueprint for success - recommendations for replication or adaptation of the Practice:</p>	<p>WELCOMMON's experience suggests that combining a revenue-generating hospitality service with embedded social programs can deliver both financial and social sustainability. Its “with, not for” ethos—where refugees and local people co-create and operate the model—builds agency and inclusion. Embedding the project within broader networks (e.g. social economy associations, Erasmus programs, local authorities) enhances resilience and scaling potential.</p>
<p>Key lessons learned:</p>	<p>Holistic, co-created models that interweave social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and community engagement can be both socially impactful and economically viable. Engaging beneficiaries as active participants builds meaningful integration. Embedding education about climate and social equity strengthens outcomes beyond hospitality. Lastly, flexibility in organizational design allows the initiative to survive transitions in funding and context. Networking and visibility (via awards, partnerships, storytelling) support replication and long-term viability.</p>
<p>Other info/notes:</p>	<p>WELCOMMON Hostel has received multiple European-level recognitions (e.g. finalist for REVES Excellence Award 2017), and acts as a demonstration site for energy transition and circular economy in urban communities.</p>



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