

## Give'ism: the warm welcome society

### CHANGE! Good practice factsheet

Image/photo of good practice/initiative



**Description** of the good practice /initiative: history, activities, number of involved people, territorial scope, current scale, future plans, impact and benefits (**Max. 400 words**)

The Warm Welcome Society wish to create a stronger social fundament for new citizens by welcoming them inside matching spare time communities, quickly making them find out where 'they belong'. We hope that, this is done by extending the routines around receiving new citizens.

The purpose of the Warm Welcome Society is primarily to give all new citizens the best possible start to their new life as citizens of Aarhus. We know how important it is to create a good social foundation, where you can share and grow your interests when you move to a new city. If you begin a study or a job, these needs are of course also met by your new fellow students or colleagues and all the activities which take place in and around the school / workplace. But with the Warm Welcome Society we want to help you complement this network, by showing you more of the wide variety of interest-based communities that exists in Aarhus and are all waiting to give you a warm welcome.

In a 2016-2018 experiment, we have already gathered 80 great city communities together with the municipality of Aarhus, together with universities and academies, the business life and plenty of voluntary citizen hosts in one big welcome committee. From October 2016 new citizens are invited to a welcome gathering based on their free time passions. On his/her chosen evening each person meet 30-35 other new citizens with mutual interest. After the great unexpected welcome gathering facilitated by citizen hosts, the group is invited to visit the communities of their greatest interest in the following weeks. In total the goal is facilitating

3000 out of 18000 new citizens per year on 88 welcome gatherings and 600 exploration meetings in the communities. After the experiment, the even bigger goal is to share the experiences and the exact concept with mutual cities nationally and internationally.

**Brief description of how the specific local public service has been challenged (with figures, if possible)**

Normal procedure in the city of Aarhus is, that the municipality hand over a welcome booklet and invites for huge events like study fairs and welcome concerts together with the student associations. Universities and academies have their own social events. But new citizens never get the feeling that *your city* gives you a warm welcome.

**Role of the municipality** within the process (e.g. how the municipality facilitates or coordinates the process to systematise/upscale a civic initiative)

The Aarhus Municipality committee for citizenship has been prioritizing time to co-create the concept together with the founders from the GIVE'ISM NGO, making sure that it fits the citizen challenges.

Later in the process the department for Citizen Services have been joining in with giving space at fairs and welcome concert, which has been used for handing out flowers and welcome gathering invitations for new students with a positive, welcoming and creative approach.

The municipality have full supported and paid the idea of letting the mayor be the sender of an invitation letter to all 18000 new citizens per year. In total, that creates a contribution of 140.000 kr. (9,3%) out of a total budget of 1.500.000 for the experiment, that has a big co financing by volunteers, and by universities and academies that hopes to **reduce loneliness** and **dropout**.

**Key attributes (success factors) enabling (municipal) staff to implement the project successfully**

By joining this project the municipality of Aarhus hopes to increase the amount on time spend on citizen's voluntary work because of the increased number of memberships in voluntary communities.

Furthermore they wish to make students want to stay and work in the city after finished studies, because of the better social fundament. Also, they hope to give the city an even better image for people who consider moving to Aarhus

We believe that this is a chance for the municipality of Aarhus to experience citizens taking responsibilities that would normally be seen as municipality responsibilities. Hopefully this will contribute to bringing the citizens and the municipality closer together in a collaboration working on solving the city's challenges in the future and creating a new perspective on active civil societies and citizenship in both participants and the municipality of Aarhus.

**Links** to website for further information on the good practice/initiative and recommendation to a specific partner

<http://www.varmvelkomstaarhus.dk/en/welcome/>