

Report for the Gesellschaft für christlich-juedische Zusammenarbeit

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First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for an amazing experience and for the wonderful hospitality of Wolfgang Maresch and Renate Bagel, and of Christana Stengel, Caroline Hummel, and Christiane Stoll.

During my stay I had the pleasure of meeting the wonderful Blickle family, who heard some of the stories and experiences that I had accumulated during my visit, and expressed their support.

For two weeks I worked at the BSZ Leonberg school. I visited a variety of classes, with students who have different levels of English. I noticed there was a variety of languages, cultures and backgrounds. Because of the variety, I had the chance to teach various types of lessons, adapted to every possible class profile that I came across. The lesson plans dealt with challenges of shared existence in the State of Israel, the diversity of cultures with which the Leo Baeck Education Center works, the absorption of the Ethiopian immigrant community in Haifa etc. I presented several unique programs that are used within the framework of the LBEC's agenda and vision, such as an Arab-Jewish summer camp, the Youth Plays And Sings Cultures, the Eyn Hayam walking track, the bar mitzvah project, the Shared Youth Through Basketball community, and so on.

The students were exposed to statistical data on the population of Israel and Haifa, in addition to a more in-depth encounter with the narrative of myself as a person who was born in Haifa and who passed through the 'regular' trajectory of many Israelis: finishing high school, military service in the IDF, academic studies. I was surprised to discover that, as opposed to the high tuition for academic studies in Israel (which make those studies inaccessible to some), academic studies in Germany are free and accessible for everyone. We had fascinating discussions about the pluralism at Leo Baeck, about the difference between the various religious currents in Israel, about the connection between Leo Baeck and the Reform Judaism movement, and about Jewish customs and rituals.

From what I learnt, the ways in which people relate to professional studies and to their importance are different in Germany and Israel. In Israel, students who join professional study tracks are mostly those who have difficulties studying within a formal, standard framework. At the school where I studied, professional studies are inseparably integrated within the other study options. They are dealt with very professionally, and after three years students receive a certificate and are allowed to work in their field.

Many students were surprised by the fact that service in the IDF takes two years and is mandatory. In Germany, military service is one of many options for voluntary communal service, one year after teenagers finish high school. In that year, many teenagers who finished high school volunteer in order to test whether their chosen field of expertise suits them. Apart from a very small number of students who

volunteer during their high school studies, mainly in the field of giving first aid, voluntary service among youth is not well known or common in Germany.

(about Germany) 18-19-year-old youngsters volunteer for a year after they finish high school, in order to acquire skills and get work experience. They work in hospitals, schools, special need centers, animal shelters, ambulances etc. You can also join the army for a year as a volunteer, after that you can become a professional soldier, study in the army. Students in the same field of voluntary service meet 6 times during the year. The highest level of studies takes 13 years. Out of 150 students who finish 13 years of learning in Leonberg, two or less choose to volunteer for the army.

When I presented the subject of social involvement and commitment at the Leo Baeck Education Center, which already starts in 7th grade, and of the variety of projects that are initiated by the teenagers, this was a big surprise (for the German students).

One of the classes where I taught was an immigrant class. You could see a variety of backgrounds and cultures within the same class. I was surprised to find out that Muslim students don't use the Arabic language at all at school, neither in the classroom nor among themselves. There was a lot of excitement in the class when we practiced writing our names in Hebrew, English and Arabic, and those students taught everybody else how to write in Arabic. They were excited and surprised when they found out that there is a similarity between some of the letters in Arabic and Hebrew. In this class, students were also very interested and curious regarding the shared existence activities, and about the Ethiopian immigrants and their absorption in Israel.

Within the framework of my stay, I observed a chemistry lab lesson. It was interesting to see the students' concentration and group work.

All students that I taught were exposed to the Hebrew language in a variety of experiential ways. They learnt to write their names, and to say some basic words and phrases. The excitement and curiosity, when writing their names, was great.

One of the special experiences was to teach a Hebrew lesson to a class of special needs students in the school. That was a moving experience for me, for the staff and for the students.

I also attended a practicum class of plaster design, after I had taught that class three times already. The interaction was very positive.

As part of my stay I also visited two youth centers in Stuttgart. To my surprise, when I asked the students at school before my visits to the centers if they know those centers, there was not one youngster or teacher who knew about them. During my visits, I understood that mainly immigrant children and children of families that are assisted by welfare authorities are the ones who take part in the activities of the youth centers, and not students who fall under the profile of the school that I had visited.

Also, to my surprise, none of the staff members who participated in the exchange program did not know the youth centers before. I had the chance to visit the centers because I asked to visit them.

In Stuttgart there are 40 youth centers that all belong to the Stuttgart Youth House Society, financed by the state, although it is an independent organization that does not belong to the state. In Stuttgart there is a relatively large amount of youth centers in comparison with other cities in Germany. There are youth centers that belong to the church, and there are those that belong to organizations from the third sector. There is one center that belongs to the state. The only city that can be compared to Stuttgart is Munich. The youth centers in Stuttgart were established in 1950 by the Americans.

In Stuttgart there are 40 social workers who are active in schools and who work for the organization for youth centers.

In Stuttgart there are over 100 social workers. Some of them work for the church and some of them for other organizations.

Before we went on a tour in the youth center I had the chance of visiting the school, right next to the youth center, which works in full partnership with it.

In the school students study in 1st-4th grade, three classes in a year. 20-25 students in each class.

About 30 teachers in the school. Arno Bonn is the only social worker in the school. According to him, he works independently and is not subordinate to the school. Also, he added that until the end of the school year he will know all 300 students. I met Arno during an experiential lesson, on social skills, which he taught to one of the classes in the schoolyard that dealt with social skills.

School ends at 13.00 or 12.00. The parents can choose to leave their children at school until 16.00, without additional payment. They pay only for a meal, 3,5 Euro. About 60-80% use this service. As for accessibility, I noticed only one child in a wheel chair. Only three years ago did they choose one classroom, and accommodations were built.

Next to the school the youth center can be found.

The Café Ratz Yout Center: a youth center that offers healthy food as its central agenda (it serves fruit every day, always for free). The name of the program's agenda: Adventure pedagogy. Erlbnus (?) Pedagogy. In the youth center, they work with the children on social skills and leadership skills.

The center's staff consists of an adult manager and a young staff of guides without an academic grade but with a guide's certificate.

At the second school that I visited, students study in 1st-8th grade classes.

I can also tell about the school, that it has a room that is called cafeteria. They don't sell anything there, but students can eat and drink in the room, and one of the social workers is also there between 13.00-14.00, during the lunch break. Students know that they are there. They talk with him, play with them.

At the school I visited the social group that was led by a social worker. A group of eight 5th-6th grade students who came to the group because of difficulties with social skills. When they were asked if they knew the reason for their presence in the group, all of them knew, except for one. The rules of the group: mutual respect, listening to the group leader, don't fight, don't hurt each other, and raising your finger when you want to talk.

Right next to the school there is the youth center Jugendhaus/Youth Center Stuttgart West GmbH. A center that was established in 1983. It was renovated in 2017 and is maintained by the municipality. Its organization is independent but they receive their funding from the city.

The social worker Andrian has managed the center for the last twelve years.

The center has 5 workers: two in a full time position, one with a 95% position, one 80% and one 50%.

All workers receive a salary from the municipality. The revenues of the center are: a 9000 NIS (not Euro?) budget for materials. Independent revenues, for example: entrance to a summer camp, 75 Euro from each child, from that they pay meals, staff, materials. The center runs a framework of clubs three times a week after school, until 16.00. The children receive lunch, for which they pay 3,5 Euro a day. If they have a card from the welfare department they pay 1 Euro. In addition, they do homework at the center.

Just like at youth centers in Israel, the center has a music room. 18-year-olds with a band have the key, and come to play. Sometimes, on Monday, 4-5 bands play at the center. On Saturday the place and its equipment are rented out for events, for 200 Euro. You have to be at least 29 or 30 (?). In the mornings, the school children come with their homeroom teachers for activities aimed at (developing) leadership and social skills. Each class arrives once or twice a year.

Each activity lasts for 90-120 minutes, with the school's social worker coordinating the dates of arrival with the school principal. Between 10-30 participants arrive each day. The center is open as a youth center every day between 15.00-20.00, without registration up front. In addition to the club that is active there.

A unique project: Elephant. Large vehicles with table games that pass between the different youth centers each day. There are five Elephant vehicles in Stuttgart. The idea of a mobile vehicle with games was started forty years ago. The youth center that I visited has been operating the vehicle for 35 years. Two social workers run the project and travel to the various youth centers, including refugee camps, and there they take out the games.

Another unique project: Playing City. A summer camp, for five days. 150 participants, 8-11-year-old. Built like a city, with elections, a bank, stores. The costs for camp for one child are 70-75 Euro.

There are no community centers in Stuttgart, but special clubs for enrichment activities, such as a soccer club or a dance club. There are no 'tender age' centers for parent-child activities or communal events in the neighborhood. There are a center for child development, kindergartens, private playgrounds, sport clubs etc. I also visited a sport club in a neighboring city (Tübingen). A subscription there costs about 40 Euro a year, and members can enjoy a variety of sports activities. Many activities take place in the school buildings that are adjacent to the club.

Many of the students that I met were surprised by the place of community centers in Israel in general, and in particular by the position of the community center of Leo Baeck as involved in and responsible for free time and enrichment activities in its community.

I also heard about informal communal meeting places: students in Tübingen know that the stairs are a meeting place on Saturday evening. They bring drinks from home and sit and watch the passers-by. Each of them knows that they will get there on Saturday. Also, I heard about communal initiatives that take place but don't receive any professional conceptualizations, as we are used to in Israel. For example, also in Tübingen, I found a communal shop that was set up by the residents. That is, they are the owners of the store (like shareholders) and use it. It was established because they wanted a store of their own in Tübingen and not just an outside supermarket.

To sum up,

During my stay I had the privilege of meeting warm and welcoming people. Whether they were the staff of the program, or the teachers that welcomed me every morning in the teachers' room. A visit by a person from Israel, who brings messages of daily work dealing with the solution of communal issues, with the promotion of the residents' involvement in their quality of life, is a unique visit, different in content from what they are used to in Stuttgart.

Besides a life style and daily routine that are largely very similar to that of us in Israel (such as school, work, social life), I found it special and praiseworthy to recognize in Israel the intensity and depth that are invested in communal efforts to promote a sense of meaning, belonging and development among the residents.

The visits to the youth centers and the sports club were very meaningful, and I think they should be integrated permanently in the exchange program. The Leo Baeck Education Center is special because it combines formal and informal education, school, leadership and community, in a way that others can learn from and from visits of this kind we can acquire knowledge that can contribute to our activity models. The connection between the elementary schools in the morning and the youth centers that I visited is very strong, and it enables optimal access to services. Educators from the school know that the services given at the youth center and by its team (each youth center has a social worker and guides) are not given within the framework of the school, and they appreciate the added value of how the youth center's team deals with social skills. Educators are present when the class visits the youth center, and usually

they are the ones who ask for those visits, when they recognize a problem that requires treatment in their classes.

When the teacher from Stuttgart visits the Leo Baeck Education Center, I highly recommend combining her visit with meetings with volunteering youth, a visit to the various branches of the community center, and to the various activities of multicultural community work that the community center is leading.

Most of the students expressed interest and curiosity in the contents and messages that were brought before them, which can be seen in the insights that were given in the meetings at the end of the lessons, some of which are presented in this report. In the work shops in which they were asked to share experiences and emotions, or to choose values, you could see that they had a hard time doing so, and that they are not used to workshop activities that are not frontal learning. Also, sharing emotions is unknown to them (based on what I learnt, the subject is also not well known at their homes, not only within the formal education system).

In addition, you could see that they found it easier to write insights, rather than saying them out loud.

I am very enthusiastic about the exchange program, and hope it will continue. The mutual inspiration, the meaningful encounters, getting to know new people, places and contents are experiences for me that without any doubt will stay with me for the rest of my professional life.

Lesson plan (example)

- A video of the Ruth Center, a bar mitzvah video, a video of Youth Sings and Plays Cultures
- A workshop on social involvement among youth
- A short Hebrew lesson
- Collecting feedback and insights

Lesson Plan (example)

- Video of the Leo Baeck Education Center, PPT presentation on Haifa, PPT presentation on the Ethiopian community, PPT presentation on community building
- Workshop on intercultural encounters
- Short Hebrew lesson

A selection of insights collected from students (not translated or edited, originally in English)

New? The importance of community in Israel/ there are many activities and programs for young people.

Suprising? All the different holidays you celebrate.

Important? Voluntary work of students for the community

Wonderful and beautiful place. Surprising? Expensive university/ the language is very interesting

I found it very interesting to hear about the importance of family and community in the Israeli society/ in our society we sadly don't really care about this' coexistence with other religions and integration isn't important to every German. Also learning the Hebrew writing was very interesting

Interesting language

It was really interesting to hear about LEO BAECK EDUCATION school. Your school is a little bit different than ours because of the community program.

I am surprised about that children in LEO BAECK live together so well/ I hope that the different cultures can live together in the future and the war stops

I think that it's really amazing that parents of Jewish and Arab children let them meet and get to know each other even though the conflict between them is still so big

I was surprised by the fact that in many cities Arabs and Jews live separately and that Haifa is a big city where they live more than less together.

I learned very much about Israel that I didn't expect. But it's still very different to Germany. What surprised me the most was the fact that all the people in Israel are interested in living together. Thank you for the experience!

It was very interesting to get to know more about Israel. Also to learn how to write our names in Hebrew was very cool. The most interesting themes were the food and holidays.