

Israel

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1 The Foundation of the National Section

Youth Aliyah was a leading youth agency in Israel originally specialising in residential care with a large nationwide residential network. In 1955, several years after the creation of FICE, Israel joined FICE becoming the first National Section outside Europe. It was accepted that Youth Aliyah would represent Israel in FICE and serve as Israel's National Section. At the time Israel wasn't the only country to use this model. In France one big organization, ANCE, served as the French National Section, as was the case with ANCE Luxembourg and Germany (IGfH).

However, in 1996 Youth Aliyah ceased to exist as an independent body and therefore could not continue to represent the entire field of residential care in Israel. A very small fragment of it continued to exist and continued to take part in FICE activities until 2004. However, the whole profession of residential educators in Israel did not accept this situation and in 1997 a new Israeli National Section was created, *Israeli Residential Education & Care Association (IRECA)*. This new National Section was accepted by FICE as an associate member at the Federal Council in Florence in 1997 and accepted as a full member at the Jubilee FICE Congress in Paris in June 1998. For several years there were two Israeli sections present at Federal Council meetings but since 2005 there has again been only one National Section (IRECA) representing Israel in FICE.

2 Organisation and finance of the national section

The National FICE section has no paid staff or any organisational infrastructure. The main agency for residential education and care in the Ministry of Education provides administrative services to the FICE National Section free of charge and also supplies a certain amount of the yearly budget. The main financial resources come from membership fees.

3 Membership

The board of FICE Israel decided to encourage membership of institutions. Therefore an institution that joins the national section pays an institutional fee that enables its entire staff to be considered as members. In 2006 we had 65

residential institutions that paid their annual fees. With an average of 30 staff members in each we reach almost 2,000 residential workers who are members.

4 Activities

1. Encouraging Israeli residential educators to take active part in FICE activities, namely, congresses, seminars, the PEP programme etc.
2. Organising exchange study visits in collaboration with other FICE national sections. Each program of professional visits includes also one day of a more theoretical seminar on a topic decided upon together with our FICE partners. During recent last years we have organised such projects with the national sections of the Netherlands, Denmark, Romania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Germany and France.
3. An annual meeting of FICE Israel members organised in the form of a one day seminar on a relevant topic. The most recent was related to children's rights in our residential institutions.
4. Professional changes that have emerged out of exchanges are feasible in several areas of which the most important is the push towards the professionalisation of the direct residential care workers. In the past there was a negative attitude towards such professionalisation which could only be changed through the exposure of decision makers in residential programmes to the situation in other countries. Their positive impressions of the high professional level of direct care workers in many European countries led to a change in policy in Israel. Another area was the transformation of group homes with a large number of adolescents into family type units. These changes were directly connected with the study visits of Israeli Directors of residential programmes who were highly impressed by models they saw in practice in other FICE countries which they later tried to implement in Israel.

5 Future

We plan to try and increase, as much as possible, the number of residential direct care workers or programme directors exposed to residential programmes in other countries which can only be done using the FICE network and national sections' activities.

6 Special Features

The biggest success of FICE Israel is that it has become the only platform where residential staff members from different types of programmes can meet together. It includes Jewish and Arab residential workers, religious and institutions, boarding schools under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education together with treatment oriented residential programmes under the supervision

of the Welfare Ministry. All these workers have a lot in common. The activities of the new Israeli National Section are their only opportunity to meet and discuss their common preoccupations and professional dilemmas.