



Home Port – Youth for Social Cohesion

Fellows:

Yoni Tshuna | CEO of "Matzmichim", the Israeli Violence Reduction Organization.

The organization conducts hundreds of workshops, classroom interventions, and training sessions, to provide teachers and students with tools for coping with violence and to create a safer school environment.

Shoshi Shpigel | National Supervisor of social education in the social–communal department, teens and students

Dr. Merav Even–Cohen Solomon | Director of "Shdemot" center at "Oranim" College. "Shdemot" is a leadership center for development of local communities in Israel, providing a sense of belonging and connection to the community members.

"The fourth and most challenging element is the establishment of a common and shared Israeliness. Despite the challenges posed by the new and emerging Israeli social landscape, we must know: the nascent Israeli mosaic is not a decree, but a great opportunity filled with cultural richness, inspiration, humanity and sensitivity. The new Israeli order must not decline us into segregation and separation (the Tribes Speech, President Rivlin, 2015)

Perhaps more than anything else, Israel is in need of people with the capacity to connect and create connections. People who can instill calm, respect, and fairness, and gently but determinedly diffuse sensitive and conflict social situations that can otherwise lead to pain and suffering.

Such individuals possess the talent for creating cohesion, and can be identified in various social situations when they make use of their gifts to "make peace and create bonds." We define such individuals as having high levels of CQ (Cohesive Quotient).

It is assumed that high levels of CQ can be identified in children at early ages, but it needs to be nurtured, developed, legitimized, and enhanced over time. Young adults who possess the talent for cohesion could "pilot" Israel in the coming decades. They could navigate Israeli society safely to its shared home port, with recognition and respect for others on its mast, and a shared sense of responsibility as the wind in its sails.

The "Home Port" program is simple yet unique. Targeting 9th grade graduates for a full year as part of the Ministry of Education's Community Engagement program, the program aims to increase students' inborn talents for cohesion (CQ) in their natural and home environments. We'll focus on one of Israel's socially diverse cities and we'll use a screening questionnaire to identify up to 60 cohesive talented adolescents.

The program's content and methodology will be defined by the young participants themselves, utilizing their personal capabilities and experiences. Nevertheless, the program will be monitored at all times by an external professional as well as by a team of school teachers.

The Home Port program will be attractive, innovative and inviting. Its concept will be based on modern, up-to-date experience and research, will make use of new innovative communication technologies, and will promote the development of local community–based cohesion–producing initiatives.

The young participants will be encouraged to sharpen and express their own personal identities while given the chance to explore similar or overlapping experiences, views, and ideas shared by members of different social groups (by ethnicity, religion, nationality, or faith). In this way, the Home Port program will cultivate an ideal environment for immediate and direct experiences, as well as a training ground for acquiring tools via peer learning.

Furthermore, the Home Port program will be backed by academic action research and evaluation which will help shape its cohesion model and its principles. During the program, participants will take part in developing the cohesion model, which will then be freely distributed among other formal and informal educational programs and frameworks.

The pilot for this program was formulated by highly skilled individuals with vast academic knowledge and experience with developing and implementing social educational youth programs aimed at creating cohesion and building social resilience.