

## **Report of the participation at the *International Conference on Migration*, Beit Berl College, March 2019**

At the International Conference on Migration at Beit Berl College, the topic of migration and integration has been discussed broadly by focusing on political, historical, social, educational, religious, psychological and judicial aspects.

The conference started with a tour to the multicultural Ostrovsky High School in Ra'anana. It is supposed to be Israel's only school that provides a special education for children with migration background. In special classes, they get support in learning Hebrew by language training, easier tasks and tests. Six students from Russia, Turkey, the United States and Hungary presented their personal migration story and explained, in which regards the school facilitated the integration process in the Israeli society.



As keynote speakers, the College invited the Israeli artist Zoya Cherkassky. Within her presented paintings on oil, she showed the story of immigration from the USSR to Israel in the 1990s. The artist immigrated to Israel with her family as part of the big wave of Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union. Her paintings fascinated me, as they dealt with various stereotypes and stigmas that arise from the cultural encounter of immigrants with the local population in Israel.

After the keynote speaker, the organisers opened the conference officially. Amos Hofmann, member of the Institute of International Relation, mentioned that only about 50 out of 88 abstract proposals were accepted and therefore outlined the honour to be able to present at the conference. The panels started and I had my presentation in the afternoon.

The chosen focus on gender and migration remained underrepresented within the conference, as there were just three speakers researching on this topic. The following questions after the presentation showed the interest of the participants in the presented results.

The second day the panels were held from 8:30 to 17:30. In the afternoon section, I decided to take part at the workshop provided by the researchers of the University Innsbruck: Dirk Rupnow, Barbara Herzog-Punzenberger, Claudius Ströhle and Christiane Hintermann of the University of Vienna.



The third day, the College organised a tour to South Tel Aviv's Migrant communities. In the Center for Migrant Workers and Refugees "Mesila", we learned about mostly African refugees to Israel. Even though many of them faced violence in their countries of origin, also in Israel they are confronted with discrimination in society. As mainly women are affected by violence, abuse, social isolation and discrimination, after that we visited the African Refugee Women's Collective "Kuchinate". It was very similar to some of the organisations I had been doing research on for my diploma thesis, where I investigated on female migrant self-organisations in North Tyrol (Austria) and South Tyrol (Italy). That is why I started an interesting conversation with one of the leaders of the organisation, an Italian nun from the Como Lake.



The conference ended with a tour to Jerusalem and its multicultural neighbourhoods. To mention one of the many interesting facts about the city explained by our tour guide, it is divided into four quarters: the Jewish, Muslim, Christian and the Armenian one.

Concluding I would like to underline, that the participation at the conference was very enriching. Not only due to my research, but also in social and cultural aspects. It showed that the importance of the topic of migration and all its related aspects is growing and there is still a lot of work to do.

*Report and pictures by Laura V.*