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## The Paideia European-Jewish Leadership Program: Graduate Views of Program Contributions and Impacts

Malka Korazim

Esther Katz

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RESEARCH REPORT

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Paideia – the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden was created in 2000 through grants from the Swedish government and the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation as an academic and applied institute of excellence, with the mandate of working for the rebuilding of Jewish life and culture in Europe, and educating for active minority citizenship. It does this through offering an intensive one-year educational program in Jewish Studies directed at future leaders of Jewish life and inter-cultural work. Each year 20-25 participants attend the program, from both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds and a variety of European countries. In addition to the one-year Jewish Studies Program, Paideia has also developed activities for its graduates including alumni conferences, educational weekends and Project-Incubator, a two-week summer program to support projects and social innovation across Europe. Project-Incubator was introduced as a follow-up program for alumni, but has expanded its target group beyond graduates. Since its introduction in 2006, the program has developed over 100 different projects.

After several years of activity, Paideia decided to conduct an evaluation study to provide a systematic overview of the program's contributions and achievements, and identify unmet needs. The evaluation comprised a follow-up study of all graduates from 2002-2009. This report presents the findings of that study.

## 2. Study Goals and Design

The study of graduates addressed five major questions:

1. What are the graduates' social-demographic characteristics and what is their present employment and educational status?
2. To what extent do the graduates continue to be involved in their countries of residence in Jewish-related activities: in Jewish community life and/or in professional life/career?
3. How do graduates perceive the impact of the one-year program on their present involvement in Jewish-related activities?
4. To what extent are there professional contacts among graduates?
5. How do the graduates assess in retrospect the contributions and implementation of the one-year program?

The data were collected from graduates using a self-administrated questionnaire developed by the Myers-JDC Brookdale Institute. The questionnaires were distributed to all graduates by Paideia in February 2010 via the web-based Zoomerang platform for on-line surveys. Of the 168 graduates who completed the one-year program over the period 2002-2009, 111 (66%) responded to the questionnaire.

### 3. Major Findings

#### a. The Characteristics of Graduates:

- ◆ Most were aged 22 to 35
- ◆ They resided in more than 20 countries: 31% in various European post-communist countries, 20% in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), 33% in Sweden, the Netherlands or Germany, 7% in the UK or the U.S., and 9% in Israel
- ◆ The majority (71%) identified as Jewish, 20% as non-Jewish, and another 9% found it "difficult to say."
- ◆ Almost all (93%) had an academic degree. Most of the graduates (46%) reported that they were currently pursuing academic studies. Most were studying either for an MA (18%) or a PhD (21%).
- ◆ The majority (86%) were employed. The variety of professionals included: educators and community workers (32%); university lecturers and researchers (29%); journalists or artists (17%); others included tour guides, schoolteachers, translators, and computer engineers (22%).

#### b. Current Involvement of Graduates in Jewish-Related Activities

- ◆ Two-thirds (66%) reported involvement in activities related to Jewish culture or the Jewish community (24%, as very active and 44%, as active)
- ◆ The majority (78%) reported current volunteering for Jewish related activities (31%, regularly and 47%, occasionally)
- ◆ Half (51%) reported current work in a Jewish organization or in an organization concerned with Jewish issues. There were no differences by year of graduation or religion
- ◆ Similarly, half (51%) reported a current pursuit of Jewish Studies.

#### c. The Impact Attributed to the Program on Involvement in Jewish-Related Activities

- ◆ Two-thirds (66%) reported greater involvement in Jewish community life due to their participation in the program, while 34% reported no change
- ◆ More than half (57%) reported that their participation in the program had impacted on their professional life/career to a very great or great extent
- ◆ Almost half (46%) of the graduates pursuing Jewish Studies indicated that the program had exerted a very great or great impact on this course of action
- ◆ The vast majority of graduates (82%) reported impact in at least one of these three areas.

#### d. Professional Contact among Graduates

- ◆ Some 53% reported professional contact with graduates from their own country
- ◆ The vast majority of graduates (82%) were interested in broadening their professional contacts and 76% believed that Paideia should be more proactive in encouraging this.

#### e. The Assessment of the Contributions and Implementation of the Program

- ◆ To graduates rated as high the contributions of the program in the five areas reflecting the program goals: intellectual enrichment; Jewish identity and views of Jewish tradition;

connection to Israeli culture; community cooperation and involvement, and the development of skills

- ◆ The majority of graduates (79%) rated their overall satisfaction with the Paideia program as high or very high (5-6)
- ◆ Some 42% of the respondents felt that the program had more than met their expectations, while an additional half (50%) reported that all or most of their expectations had been met.

#### **4. Summary**

The study findings showed that graduates view the Paideia program as very successful and feel that it contributed to them to a great extent. It was found that all graduates continue to be involved in Jewish activities in their countries of residence. Most report that the program has had an important impact on their professional-life career, on their pursuit of Jewish Studies and on their involvement in Jewish community activities.

It is interesting that the passage of time since graduation was found to have no impact on the perceived contributions of the program or on the current involvement of graduates in Jewish community life, their professional life/careers and/or their involvement in Jewish Studies. The reported impacts showed no major differences by level of education, religion or occupation. These findings are all the more significant in light of the varied education, religion and occupation of graduates.

It emerges from the reports that although half of the graduates maintain professional contact are with other graduates, they feel a need to expand and promote these. Graduates were overwhelmingly interested in more contact, and Paideia is making a greater effort to promote these.

The study findings were presented to Paideia staff who found them important input for assessing the achievements of the program and identifying possible directions for future development of both the program and the activities of graduates.

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