Israeli educators in Belfast to hear how cohesion comes from conflict

Four day trip helps colleges and universities promote better co-operation between religious and ethnic sections of society





The innovative four-day residential was designed to help the Israeli higher education sector promote partnership between secular, modern Orthodox and strictly Orthodox Jews, and Israeli Arabs, all of whom study in separate

from a first-of-its-kind tour of Northern Ireland to "learn lessons" about how colleges and universities can bring divided communities together.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin repeatedly refers to these culturallydistinct groups as Israel's "four tribes" and recognises that higher education is the first time many will have come across Israelis from the other "tribes".

In 2016 he said: "Whereas in the past the IDF was the main meeting place

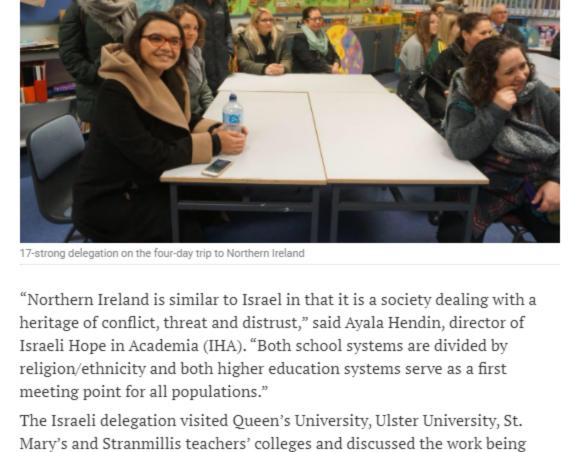
academia has become the first place where Israeli society confronts itself.

for Israelis, with the new Israeli agenda, whether we like it or not,

Academia and the labour market are the gateways to the fulfilment of the Israeli dream."

The 17-strong delegation visiting Belfast last week was part of Israeli Hope in Academia, one of Rivlin's signature initiatives, and participants represented all four society groups and institutions such as the University

of Haifa, Tel Aviv University and Tel Hai College in the Upper Galil, which

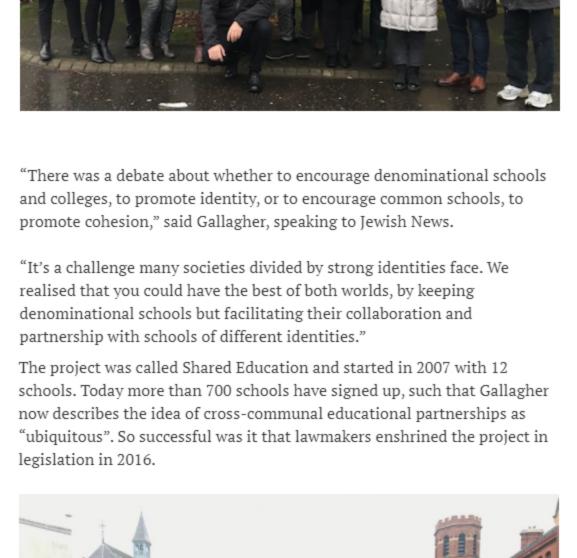


done to promote diversity and inclusion, hosted by Professor Tony Gallagher, Dean of Research at Queen's University.

has received support from UJIA.

communities.

As part of the peace process, he recognised – as Rivlin has – that schools, colleges and universities can drive cultural change in their role as a first meeting point, in Northern Ireland's case between Catholic and Protestant



17-strong delegation on the four-day trip to Northern Ireland

The idea impressed the Israeli visitors, said Hendin. "Prof Gallagher truly inspired us. The idea that it started as a research project and now includes

70 percent of the schools in Northern Ireland is mind blowing."

Gallagher said Israel had similar challenges and opportunities and

ranging from a Catholic college hugely committed to the idea of

explained that the four-day residential allowed "different perspectives,

denominational schools, to a college keen to drive inclusion and diversity, taking part in the annual Pride parade".

Among the delegates was Daphna Biran Singer, chief executive of The Rothschild Partnerships, which supports Rivlin's initiative.

She said there were some key learning points, including how "the need to talk about the conflict has a value... It is done in different arenas even if 20

Biran Singer also said she learned how "language is a central tool for bridging and creating common ground, but also making distinction

years has gone by and it [the conflict] continues".

to writing the next chapter of the Israeli story."

came back optimistic".

through use of words by different groups in society," and that "the ability to get out of the dichotomy point of view and see a wide variety of options is must".

She added that The Rothschild Partnerships was "also working on these issues, and there is a glimmer of hope, but there is still a long way to go. I

society with a focus on the four groups separated in our educational system," she said.

"We are excited to think of the role of higher education – and particularly teacher training programmes – in promoting partnership. We look forward

Hendin agreed. "Now we are back in Israel, we are very much looking forward to continuing our work to promote partnership within Israeli