What is the Foreign Affairs Network (F.A.N.)?

WHO WE ARE

The Foreign Affairs Network (FAN) was created by B'nai B'rith Europe with the aim to pursue the following goals:

First, to provide B'nai B'rith Europe with a political voice vis-à-vis the national governments in Europe and the European institutions. We would like to be active in particular with regards to European affairs that concern the European-Jewish community and Israel directly. We believe that as Europeans we know best what is happening in Europe and what has to be done. With more than 6,000 members in 29 European countries we are at the pulse of political life on the Continent today. Through our lodges we are represented in almost every major city of Europe. This potential can and has to be used.

Second, to support and to coordinate the political work of individual members within and outside of B'nai B'rith Europe that has been taking place for many years. Our intention is to provide their undertakings with additional weight by enabling them to act as members of a large organization.

Third, to inspire young Jews to become politically active with a view to support Israel and to fight antisemitism and other human rights abuses. It is about empowerment and political work on a local, national and European level. This kind of work is not only exciting and multifaceted but also serves political education. We therefore hope to attract both many younger Brothers and Sisters as well as potential new members.

The areas of political activity of FAN comprise advocacy for the State of Israel and the fight against antisemitism and other human rights abuses. These are two topics that can hardly be separated from one another. Since open antisemitism is often considered as a taboo, antisemitic stereotypes often articulate themselves as a seemingly legitimate criticism of Zionism and Israel, which, however, in many cases is anything else but fair. This phenomenon has made an entry into the centre of society and is thereby now and again reflected in European politics. We would like to counteract such developments by explaining to European decision-makers that the threats which both Jews and Israel are currently facing will sooner or later be relevant to democracy and security in Europe too.

The structure of FAN is a simple one, comprising a director and the membership. All B'nai B'rith members who have an interest in becoming politically active can join FAN. However, even he who is - perhaps not yet - a member of B'nai B'rith can participate in FAN. Membership is not formal: There are no constraints and only a very flat hierarchy. The function of the director is more that of a supporter and coordinator. Members will not have dictated to them how to do their work, but all have the opportunity to obtain counsel and support from the director and from other FAN members. The connection between members allows join action.

FAN members are expected to inform themselves about incidents and developments on their local level which could be of interest and to react to them if necessary. Moreover, they proactively develop activities in support of Israel. They can obtain the director's advice on how to assess certain developments and what best to do and by what means and methods of public affairs. Members can get help in formulating letters to decision-makers and to the media as well as obtain political intervention by the B'nai B'rith leadership depending on the merit of the case.

The director of FAN as well as select experts also visit the lodges in order to inform about political issues and to train members how to work on them.

FAN membership currently spans around 20 countries - from Ukraine to Spain and from Great Britain to Italy - and is growing. A large share are people of the younger generation. Moreover, we also have several non-Jewish friends on board and have partnered with various other Jewish and non-Jewish NGOs and activists from civil society who share our goals.