



Enjoying the Best of Both Worlds: How Amir Ohanouna became part of Israel's hi-tech sector while staying at home in Arad



photos by Dennis Zinn

23 year-old Amir Ohanouna was born and raised in Arad in the Negev. Ever since he was a child, he knew that he wanted work in Israel's booming hi-tech industry and be part of the digital revolution that was taking place in the country. The way to achieving his goal was clear, because hundreds of youngsters from the Negev had trodden that path in the past. "I knew I needed good matriculation grades and a science-related university degree in order to secure an initial job opening at a start-up company in Tel-Aviv or Herzliya," Amir said. "After that, everyone said that even the sky is not the limit."

Amir said that he had always been very self-confident about achieving his goals. "Immediately after completing my compulsory army service as a commander in the Paratroopers Brigade, I sent application forms to the country's major universities. It was at that point, to my great despair, that it suddenly became clear what that meant. I was buying a one-way ticket out of Arad, the city I loved, and leaving my family and friends behind, probably for good. I had seen this happen over and over again in the past to other people from Arad, Dimona, and Yerucham, who moved to the center of the country to pursue their careers. Young people don't come back home after their studies because





there are no jobs here to come back to. As sad as that was, I knew I had no other choice. Then, to my complete surprise and joy, I saw a KKL-JNF ad inviting people to register for a four-year course that awards a B.Sc. degree in computer science and computer programming, and the studies would take place in Arad. The ad said that they will teach you everything you need to know and even give you a two-year employment contract after your graduation. Wow! To stay at home and enjoy the best of both worlds? What could be better than that?"

The KKL-JNF initiative was launched in 2019 and is called "The KKL-JNF Tech-Rad Bynet Venture in Arad". The goal is to boost population growth in the Negev by creating local hi-tech employment and study opportunities. The venture is a collaboration between KKL-JNF, the Arad Municipality and the Rad-Bynet group, which is a global leader in voice and data communications technologies.

Amir said that at the time, many of his friends were skeptical that anything would come out of this new venture. "Ironically, they said it sounds too good to be true. I nevertheless applied and I'm thrilled that I did. I was accepted for the four-year course, which takes place right here in this quiet and peaceful campus. The main focus of our studies is computer science and software development. Cybersecurity is also high on the agenda."



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The KKL Tech-Rad Bynet Venture in Arad is part of KKL-JNF Project 2040, the goal of which is to attract approximately one-and-a-half million people to the Negev and Galilee over the next twenty years. According to KKL-JNF World Chairman Daniel Atar, the goal will be achieved by creating new industrial zones and educational facilities in these regions. “We have begun this project in order to attract both people and companies to Israel’s periphery. We aim to turn the Negev and the Galilee into hi-tech and cyber-tech power zones.”

Amir was happy to note that some of his once skeptical friends are closely following his progress, and now they are eagerly waiting for the next round of applications to be announced.

