

Living Israel NGO K - Estonia

Introduction

Living Israel NGO (Living Israel Kongregatsioon MTÜ) is a faith-based facility located in Tallinn, Estonia. Founded in 2014, the facility offers housing, addiction recovery, and reintegration support primarily for individuals leaving prison (particularly those granted early release) as well as for others struggling with addiction. Residents may enter the program at various stages: at the beginning or end of their sentence, or after release as part of their ongoing sobriety journey.

The facility is operated by the Estonian branch of the international Living Israel network, a Christian missionary organization with roots in Israel and active communities across several countries. This Tallinn facility was initially established by Israeli missionaries Ljova Mordahhajev and Vadim Koiffman, who laid the foundation before entrusting the day-to-day leadership to local staff.

Operating as a closed facility, Living Israel maintains a structured and disciplined environment designed to support recovery and prevent relapse. Through a formal agreement with the Estonian prison system, the facility provides early-release prisoners with accommodation, spiritual and psychological counseling, and access to structured reintegration programs. These include participation in the 12-step addiction recovery model, Christian Victorious Living, and Inner Healing sessions.

Scale

Living Israel NGO has a maximum capacity of 15, which makes it a small-scale facility.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

The facility is intended for adult men and women who are struggling with addiction. Admission to the program requires a commitment to sobriety and a willingness to adhere to the center's house rules and structured

environment. The facility does not accept individuals solely seeking shelter, those under the influence at the time of arrival, or individuals with serious mental health disorders that would prevent participation in the structured program. The placement is initiated through direct contact: the prospective resident, often currently in a different detention facility, contacts the center and receives an interview. If necessary after acceptance, staff will arrange transportation from the prison.

Residents typically stay between six months and two years, depending on their progress and individual circumstances. The facility is supported by three to four volunteer staff members and a permanent staff member. They all help the facility by supporting the residents in their day-to-day activities and ensuring a baseline security level.

Forms of security:

The facility combines static, procedural, and relational security to ensure a safe and structured environment. Static security is maintained through 24/7 on-site staff presence and camera surveillance, however there are no locked exterior or interior doors. Depending on individual cases, the facility may also apply additional measures such as electronic ankle monitors, drug tests, and searches, particularly when mandated by court decisions. There are no perimeter fences, and staff and residents do not wear uniforms.

Procedural security is built into the facility's daily operations and rules. For the first three months, residents are not permitted to use personal phones, and television and radio are prohibited. Alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and romantic relationships are strictly forbidden, and violations, especially verbal abuse or persistent rule-breaking, can result in dismissal from the program. Relational security is also a defining feature of the facility. Many staff members, including the volunteers, have previously gone through the program themselves or have direct experience with incarceration. This shared background enables them to build trust with current residents and foster a supportive, empathetic environment. Residents feel a high level of trust with staff, but if they break the mandatory rules more than twice, they will be removed from the center.

Activities:

The daily program at Living Israel NGO is highly structured, especially during the first three months of residency. This initial stabilization period is designed to help participants establish healthy routines and focus on recovery

without external distractions. During this time, residents are only permitted to leave the facility for work and must return by 19:00.

All residents follow a consistent weekday schedule, beginning with a wake-up and preparation period between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m., followed by breakfast and a morning group training or counselling session. Work, which is mandatory, takes place both inside and outside the facility, split into morning and afternoon blocks, with a short lunch break in between. In the afternoon, residents have a blend of independent and structured activity time, which includes joint evening activities and personal free time.

Daily chores, such as cleaning and housekeeping, are part of the program and help residents develop practical life skills. One resident in the program serves as the designated cook for the facility throughout her/his stay. Residents are aided in finding external employment, and financial management support is provided early on to build budgeting and savings skills. Education is also a key focus, with mandatory daily lessons encouraging self-development and intellectual growth. Residents also have access to a gym, a pool table, a sauna, and a recreation room with board games. Additional support is provided through a range of therapeutic and spiritual programs, including pastoral care, psychological counselling, and sessions with mentors who have lived experience.

Sport and recreational activities are offered both on-site and externally. Every Sunday, residents have the opportunity to play football at the nearby A. Le Coq Arena, and sometimes they go to Keila Wellness Center to swim or use the wellness center. As they progress through the program, their autonomy increases: after three months, they may begin to use mobile phones, receive visitors, and attend appointments such as those with the unemployment office or social worker. After six months, depending on behavior, they may also be granted home visits during scheduled day-leave periods.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Living Israel NGO is located in the Nõmme district of Tallinn, Estonia, a peaceful suburb of the capital. It is characterized by family homes and nature, with not many industrial buildings or stores. This was actually the first building that Living Israel's missionaries acquired in Tallinn, even before the Männiku district facility. The property was selected for its size, affordability, and tranquil atmosphere. It is somewhat removed from more densely populated areas, though still within city limits and accessible through a bus stop.

The house has a warm and homely feel. The common hall features a fireplace, numerous sofas, a television, and is decorated with plants and colorful paintings, making the space both vibrant and cozy. Shared spaces include bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen, a dining room with a large communal table, and several dedicated common rooms used for educational workshops, leisure activities, and spiritual reflection. The garden outside includes woodsheds and walking paths lined with pine trees, providing residents access to fresh air and nature. A chapel located within the building offers a space for solitude and spiritual connection.

Interaction with the community:

Although Living Israel NGO is a closed facility and the building's location limits spontaneous interaction with the public, the facility actively fosters integration through structured partnerships and community service. Residents regularly engage in structured work through collaborations with various construction and demolition companies across Tallinn, facilitated by probation services and supported by the municipality. The center also maintains close relationships with psychiatric hospitals, local prisons, and the umbrella organization Avatud Lootuse Fond, which coordinates Christian rehabilitation centers throughout the region.

Community integration also happens through outreach. Residents participate in football tournaments, offering a recreational and social outlet that fosters connection. On weekends, they conduct evangelism and charity outreach at Tallinn's central market, distributing food and clothing to people experiencing homelessness. They also share their lived experiences as part of Christian community events, including testimony and educational sessions at other rehabilitation centers and churches, such as Oleviste Church.

Living Israel NGO is additionally linked to a social enterprise (its affiliated food bank) which provides ongoing food support to both individuals and other charitable organizations.

Living Israel NGO

Founded: 2014

Capacity: 15

Autonomy level: Restricted
level of autonomy

Nearest Town: Tallinn
(Estonia)

Nature of interaction:
Visited by NGO Village of
Hope (February 2025)

Publicity/ read more

- About Living Israel NGO:

Living Israel. (n.d.). *Living Israel – Bringing Hope to the Streets*. Living Israel. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://livingisrael.org/>