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2009–2010
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About the Fund

The European Jewish Fund was founded in February 2006 on the initiative of Viatcheslav Moshe Kantor. The Fund was established with the specific goal of reinforcing Jewish life in Europe.

To achieve this goal, the Fund focuses on young people's connection to Judaism and their communities by supporting programs aimed at building Jewish identity and Jewish pride, especially by reconnecting young people with their rich Jewish past. Consequently, the Fund supports programs to educate young people about Jewish achievements in all aspects of life, including culture, science and medicine, presenting these achievements as a source of pride and self-respect. One such initiative is the Jewish Positioning System, or JPS, a program focused on researching and publicizing the achievements and contributions of Jews around Europe in all the above-mentioned fields.

The Fund is also committed to addressing assimilation, anti-Semitism and racism as serious threats to Jewish life in Europe.

Without a doubt, assimilation is a growing existential threat to European Jewry. The threat must be addressed in a serious manner with programs aimed at reconnecting people with Jewish life.

Anti-Semitism is once again a critical problem for Jews in Europe. In several countries the mounting danger of anti-Semitism is causing fear that that Europe’s future may repeat its tragic past. The Fund is especially committed to counteracting this threat by strengthening Holocaust remembrance and education. The educational programmes supported by the Fund go beyond teaching historical facts to emphasize the lessons that must be learned from the darkest time in European history. A major program supported by the Fund in this regard is the “Let My People Live” international forum. These forums are used as a key tool for addressing anti-Semitism and the loss of historical memory.

The Fund also seeks to address contemporary challenges to European Jewry such as the Iranian nuclear programme. Because Jews are aware that the Iranian threat poses a danger to the entire world, the Fund has initiated an expert conference to present world leaders with a practical roadmap on handling the dangerous situation.

The Fund is a unique platform that enables sponsors and community leaders to come together and analyze the needs, problems and threats facing European Jewry, and to suggest programs to address those issues.

The Fund is divided into two chambers, the Chamber of Community Leaders, or Executive Council, and the Chamber of Sponsors, or Board of Governors.

Openness is a fundamental principle of the Fund’s operations, and its roundtable is a place where all members can speak openly and participate as equals.

The Fund supports communal projects, regional and pan-European programs, and also initiates programs of its own in an effort to address its priorities or other subjects concerning a specific community or European Jewry as a whole.
The European Jewish Fund Leadership Program at PAIDEIA
Stilfsen Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Stockholm

The European Jewish Fund Leadership Program at Paideia educates civil society activists and professionals for the renewal of Jewish life and culture in Europe, a vision that underpins the aims of the European Jewish Fund and Paideia alike.

Since the inauguration of the program in 2008, over 100 professionals and social innovators from 28 different countries have been trained through the EJF-Paideia cooperation. The vast majority of former participants are deeply engaged in European Jewish life - as heads of communities, educational directors, fundraisers, artists, government advisors, Limmud organizers, Moishe House residents, Hillel directors and heads of Jewish studies departments among many other things.

On an aggregate level, a recent survey by The Pears Foundation, ROI Community and Jumpstart shows just how quickly the European Jewish NGO start-up sector has developed in Europe, more than doubling in numbers in the past 5 years. Estimates put the number of new initiatives (younger than ten years) currently in operation in Europe at between 220 and 260 new initiatives, reaching around 250,000 people.

Over 1/3 of all responding initiatives have gone through Paideia, making it by far the most frequently quoted program, with nearly twice as many respondents as the runner-up.

The Program

The European Jewish Fund Leadership Program at Paideia combines an in-depth and comprehensive education in the texts that constitute the bedrock of Jewish civilisation, traditional study methodology (Hevruta), an academic approach to interpretation and applied project development, making it a unique program in Jewish studies. It provides the participants with the knowledge and the tools they need to become driving forces in strengthening Jewish community life throughout Europe.

The program typically brings together participants from 12-15 different European countries, who work for civil society institutions, in the educational sphere, in the arts or who themselves direct projects of social innovation. It prepares young leaders to become the engines of a European Jewish renaissance through engagement in the interactive study of Jewish textual sources and applied leadership development.

Jewish Professional Track (One-Year Program)

Paideia Jewish Professional Track is a one-year program designed for fellows pursuing Jewish community work as educators and organizational leaders. The program prepares fellows for a service career in Jewish life by providing them with Jewish substance, administrative skills training and applied management experience, helping them to hone the skills they will need to succeed as Jewish community professionals after they return to their home countries.

The Paideia Project-Incubator (Summer Program)

The Project Incubator is a ten-day interactive summer workshop where activists from all over Europe gather to develop and concretize projects for Jewish culture in Europe. Innovative artistic, cultural, educational and community-centred projects are created, developed and implemented as new initiatives. Program participants range from artists to journalists, Jewish educators to academicians.

Paideia fellows meet with Arie Zuckerman, EJF Secretary General
The intensive program consists of textual studies, project-development workshops, interaction with foundation representatives and personal tutoring. Following the workshop, personal tutoring is given throughout the year in response to the needs and requests of the participants.

With the generous support of the European Jewish Fund, as a part of the EJF Leadership Program at Paideia, the Project-Incubator took place in Stockholm between August 3rd and 12th, 2010.

**Project Development Lectures and Seminars** on topics such as Resource Development, Proposal Writing, Project Components and Evaluation, CSR and Businesses Community Involvement, Branding and Marketing  
**Workshops** on topics such as Vision and values, Leadership Precepts and Practices and Budgeting  
**Networking session and peer group discussions**, to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices  
**Jewish studies sessions**, on Leadership in Jewish Sources  
**Individual tutoring**, where each participant is designated a personal tutor to work intensively with over the course of the program.

The final two days provides the participants the opportunity of receiving feedback and advice on their ideas from representatives of various different foundations and organizations working in the European Jewish context – through pitching their project in front of a panel, by getting to know how the foundations work, in individual conversations with the representatives and through conference calls. Participating foundations included representatives from the European Jewish Fund, The Pears Foundation, the Jewish Community of Stockholm, the Claes Groschinsky Memorial Foundation, UJA-New York Federation, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation / Bernard Osher Philanthropies, Jay Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora and The Rothschild Foundation Europe.

For the participants to successfully implement the tools they have acquired during the Project Incubator, the projects are tutored continuously throughout the ensuing year by the Incubator staff and by local tutors.

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**Summary of the EJF Selected projects**

**Israel Up Close Reporting on European Jewry**

**Israel Television’s National Public Broadcasting Authority (IBA)**

IBA, Israel Television’s national public broadcasting authority, believes it’s important to not only report the news but also to showcase events affecting Jewish communities throughout the world and to help strengthen ties between Jews in the Diaspora and Israel. In some cases, like in Sweden, such a service is needed to bring the plight of the Jewish community to world attention. Jews in Sweden today are threatened by the new anti-Semitism and Islamic extremism. The documentary on Swedish Jewry, co-produced by IBA News and the European Jewish Fund, was widely distributed throughout the world and was screened for lawmakers in the Swedish parliament, causing much soul-searching before the recent Swedish elections.

In other cases, IBA highlights the efforts of small Jewish communities to promote continuity and education while seeking to rebuild themselves. Last year we reported on the Jews in Germany, the fastest growing Jewish community in Europe. We also did feature reports on the first-ever Festival of Yiddish Culture in Romania, and the highly successful Jewish Art Forum in Belarus, projects supported by the European Jewish Fund.

IBA News has over a hundred thousand viewers in Israel and is seen by millions worldwide via satellite, internet, cable networks and commercial television stations. The biggest distributor by far is the Lesea Broadcasting Network which delivers IBA News twice a day to twenty-two million homes in the United States, and Lesea also makes IBA News available to millions of viewers in Asia and the Middle East.
Strengthening Jewish Identity through the History of the Holocaust in the FSU
Yad Vashem – The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority

Goals and Objectives

During the many years of the Soviet regime, the history of the Holocaust was absolutely ignored and therefore, was virtually unknown to those who emigrated from the Soviet Union and is still relatively unfamiliar to those currently residing in the FSU.

Since April 2010 the Yad Vashem project has been supported by the European Jewish Fund (EJF), and focuses on strengthening Jewish identity among Russian-speaking Jewish Communities through learning the lessons of the Holocaust and the heroism of the era. The Holocaust is a key issue that touches every Jew, even for those who never experienced it within their own families. The history of this tragedy, with all the sorrow it brings with it, teaches us about the broader perspective of Judaism, and of tolerance. This helps strengthen Jewish identity and a sense of belonging to the Jewish people. Inherent in the study of the Holocaust is not only the horror of destruction, genocide and ruthless persecution, but also Jewish life, Jewish communities, and the Jewish creativity that preceded it.

The Yad Vashem project aims at the extensive dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust in the Russian language within the framework of formal and informal educational as well as cultural programs and activities. The Yad Vashem Archive, its’ Research Institute and Publications Division, the unique International School for Holocaust Studies, the Museum and the Righteous among the Nations Department are all integral parts of this project.

The project is comprised of several components: the Yad Vashem Archive, the largest of its kind in the world, the International Institute for Holocaust Research and the Publications Department, the International School for Holocaust Studies, the only one of its kind, the Righteous among the Nations Department and other departments in Yad Vashem.

The Major Activities in 2010-2011:
• 159,650 archival documents were purchased
• Center for the Research Center on the Holocaust in the FSU was created
• The Righteous Among the Nations: All relevant data from the various areas (except Lithuania) were entered. 120 stories have been translated, 40 new stories have been written.
• “On Line” Course has been launched for 47 participants
• The Web Site in Russian was upgraded: 140 new photographs have been added; 46 written testimonies and new documents have been introduced; 59 video testimonies have been entered
• An online educational program has been developed: A program was written on the topic of “The ways of rescuing the FSU Jews and returning them to life at the end of the Holocaust and WWII.” Subjects of the programs for the forthcoming year of activity have been determined and writing of the on-line course has been completed.
• Development of programs, educational materials
The EJF Art Forum
“Jewish Shtetl Revival”
Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities

The Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities with the support of the European Jewish Fund carried out the fourth Jewish Shtetl Revival International Children Art Forum in Belarus. The Project discussed further the ideas of the previous three Art Forums, which successfully took place in 2007, 2008 and 2009. This year, Art Forum’s participants included twenty-three teenagers from the European Jewish communities in eight countries, including Bulgaria, Belarus, Estonia, Israel, Lithuania, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine.

Creative young people, aged 14 to 18, came together to travel and study history of the Jewish culture and art. Inspired by the historical Jewish places they have visited, they created works in various art forms, including painting, drawing, crafts, photography, fashion and literature. The Project is aimed at encouraging young Jews in Europe to make first step towards the study of the Jewish art and improve their skills, as well as at promoting friendship between young people in the European Jewish communities, including their creative efforts, enhancing interest to the Jewish art and developing their creative thinking.

The Project itinerary included visiting Mir and Smilovichi, a town where Chaim Soutine was born and grew up. During their visit to Vitebsk, the Project participants were greatly impressed by visiting the house of Marc Chagall and by seeing the works of Yuri Pen, Chagall’s first teacher.

Special emphasis was given to artistic perception of the Holocaust. The participants visited monuments in Gorodeya and Minsk, and the monument in Krasny Bereg to the children who were killed in WWII, made of children’s post-war drawings.

In the course of the Project, the participants made presentations about Jewish art in their native countries. An album with the participants’ works is issued after each Art Forum. The Project encourages personal development of the participants and, using unique education method based on the past and present Jewish culture and art in Belarus, the development of modern art in their Jewish communities.

LEADEL
Internet Forum for Young European Jews

Today’s global world demands that we standardize everything in life: eat the same food, enjoy the same shows, share the same ideals, be the same as everyone else. The creators of the special EJF project Leadel.NET have a vision of standing up to global assimilation. The project identified the internet and video content as two tools for increasing effectiveness in targeting educated, secular young Jews.

Leadel.NET went live in September 2008 and is establishing itself as a media brand, with video content delivered on the project’s website and a number of third-party websites. The Leadel.NET team produces weekly content that attracts 1,500 viewers per month. The expected outcome for this project is the strengthening of both Jewish pride and social/professional ties among young Jews around the world.

Leadel.NET connects Israeli government ministers and the Jewish community in Europe via live webcam for presentations and question and answer sessions. This will afford Jews in Europe a direct connection to the figures that shape Israeli policy today. The first Israeli minister to connect with Europe on Leadel.NET was Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, Minister of Information and Diaspora.

Leadel Link – New members and the guest network are looking to find a niche that seems not yet been reached. Classic media consumption constitutes an audience for a particular guest with little or no interaction. In contrast, most social networking sites connect audience members with each other but not with the individuals presented in the media. The innovation behind Leadel Link is to enable this audience to not only watch the content they find interesting, but to network with the guests they admire, thus strengthening their ties to other, perhaps more established, Jewish professionals.

Leadel Live – In an effort to further relations with European Jewish communities, Leadel is set to launch Leadel Live, a series of live events using the model of a virtual town hall. Each month one aspect of Leadel activities will be presented through the website.

Leadel’s main projects of 2010 included an ongoing library of video spotlights (approaching its two-hundredth video!), live events and “Shevet Achim” meetings. During 2010 Leadel brought over half a million visitors to our Website with another quarter of a million reads, views, and attendees whom were exposed to Leadel content and programming through various media methods. Additionally, the Leadel staff ventured out of the Web and was invited as experts and presenters at international conventions spanning Israel, Bulgaria and the GA in the U.S. lecturing and providing services within New Media Production, Israel Advocacy, Jewish identity and Leadership Training areas.
The “Shevet Achim” Project is jointly run by the Israeli Government and the European Jewish Fund.

“Shevet Achim” was initiated a year and a half ago, by Minister Yuli Edelstein and the ministry of Diaspora affairs and is implemented together with the Foreign Ministry and the Israeli Embassies in Europe with support of the European Jewish Fund.

Each month, the program introduces a Minister of the Israeli Government or a senior Israeli public figure to the representatives of a particular European Jewish community. The Jewish community participating that month is hooked up to the Israeli Minister through a Video Conference.

The purpose of this program is to reach and strengthen the ties with all Jews in the Diaspora by learning more about Jewish life in the European countries participating.

As known, European Jewry faces difficult challenges in trying to preserve Jewish life and the strong connection between Jews and our Heritage. This difficulty is sometimes compounded when individuals find themselves constrained to defend the actions of the State of Israel against hostile and vicious propaganda frequently fueled by the media.

Over the year 2010 several Israeli Ministers as Yuli Edelstein, Moshe Bogi Yéilon, Michael Eitan, Yossi Peled and Sofa Landver among others, hosted communities from all around Europe. They “visited” in London, Bulgaria, Moldova, Hungary, Italy, Ukraine and Lithuania and met community members along with the Jewish leadership of several cities.

The initiating and organizing staff believes that these meetings strengthen the participating communities’ spirit and enhance their ability to face these challenges. The communities have the unusual and very personal opportunity to learn firsthand what the Israelis feel and think and to ask questions which are troubling them. Through these meetings both sides–Israel and the Diaspora–learn how to cooperate better and work together to achieve the shared goals.

The new and wondrous technology available today gives a tremendous opportunity to keep in touch and to share information and impressions between one end of the world and the other. It is clear that one should mobilize this technology and to take advantage of this opportunity.

One of the ways to do so is by making these discussions available to any one wishing to view these new and interesting encounters on the internet. One needs only connect to www.Leadel.net/live

At the beginning of each meeting the minister shares his views and values along with other information he finds relevant to the event with all participants, before answering the questions they prepared.

After over a years experience, it is clear that there are several issues that are raised by all communities such as anti-Semitism, the part and duty of Jews in the Diaspora - mainly about joint efforts in “hasbara”, how the Israeli Government can contribute to the education and well being of Jews in the Diaspora, what Jewish communities should or could do to help the State of Israel and to help combat the growing feelings of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel, and to what extent should Israeli interests and concerns dictate the agenda and policies of the Diaspora Jewish communities.

The initiators feel that now after over a year that the project has been active, there is room to elevate the platform that has been set and take the project forward an additional step. The communities’ reactions and feedback emphasized and highlighted this feeling. There is a real striving for pursuing the initial connections that have been established at the first meetings.

During these meetings, both sides have been honored with the presence of senior figures of almost all communities together with Israeli officials stationed in every country.

This program with no doubt benefits each participating community and creates an appealing and personal channel for a more meaningful relationship with the Israeli people and its elected government, and know that there is a real desire to cooperate with the Israeli government on strengthening Jewish Identity and other educational projects.

At this point, the goal is to deepen the existing dialog with every Jewish community in Europe and to continue and involve each of the cabinet ministers in this important initiative.
LIMMUD Learning Festival
LIMMUD IN GERMANY

Is a completely volunteer-based, nationwide Jewish learning festival, in which participants create the event. Limmud in Germany (www.limmud.de) was modeled on the successful Limmud in the UK (www.limmud.org).

The concept is revolutionary in post-war Germany: at Limmud, Jews who might not meet in every life, because of political, religious, cultural or ethnic differences, come together in a spirit of openness and solidarity. One can keep his individual Jewish identity while seeing himself as part of a family.

The multi-day festival in 2010 was held May 13-16 at former youth retreat in Werbellinsee, outside Berlin. About 400 participants spent the long weekend together, attending some 140 sessions on themes related to Jewish history, Israel, current events, Jewish learning, Jewish culture, art and philosophy and much more.

Limmud.de provided simultaneous translation into Russian, English and German for many sessions. One of our goals is to bring Jews in Germany from German-speaking and Russian-speaking backgrounds into contact, in order to encourage integration while celebrating unique cultural characteristics.

The vast majority of sessions were offered by the participants themselves. Many sources of Jewish learning are “right around the corner.” Anyone who registers is welcome to present a workshop, performance, lecture or other presentation.

In addition, participants organized Sabbath and other prayer services themselves; there were orthodox, conservative and progressive services for those interested in taking part.

Limmud.de is now in the process of organizing Limmud Day events in various cities.

Limmud.de hope to become a part of the Jewish educational landscape in Germany, supporting and being nourished by existing programs across the country.

The fourth annual Limmud.de nationwide festival is scheduled for June 2-5, 2011.
Rights for Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, GREAT BRITAIN

The issue of refugees within the context of the Middle East invariably referred to Palestinian refugees, not Jews displaced from Arab countries. Neither the mass violations of human rights nor the displacement of Jews from Arab countries have ever been adequately addressed by the international community.

These Jews were victims of the Arab world’s struggle against the creation of the State of Israel. Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries worsened dramatically. Coinciding with every Arab-Israeli conflict, a consistent, wide-spread pattern of persecution and mass violations of human rights against Jewish minorities developed in most Arab countries.

With the support of the EJF, Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC) organized a series of programs in two locations – in Strasbourg during a session of the European Union, and in Rome.

On June 16, 2009, the first hearing of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Chamber of Deputies addressed the subject of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

During his testimony at the Hearing, Canadian Member of Parliament and former Justice Minister, the Honourable Irwin Cotler stated that “The time has come to return Jewish refugees from Arab countries to the Middle East narrative from which they have been expunged these past sixty years.” He added, “This is not just a case of justice delayed, but justice denied.”

The hearing followed the much-anticipated foreign policy speech given by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on June 14, 2009, wherein he reminded the world of the “hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who left their homes and belongings in Arab countries.”

In the words of Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress, “The forgotten story of the forced exodus of Jewish refugees from Arab states must be on the agenda during any Middle East peace talks. Many of these refugees built new homes in European communities. We therefore call upon the European institutions and upon European governments to raise their voices and demand that historical justice be served. We commend the Italian Parliament for addressing this issue in a serious manner and encourage other states in Europe to do so as well.”

The message that Jewish refugees are now a core issue in the Middle-East peace process was recently reinforced by Israel’s new ambassador to the United States. In an interview with Reuters on June 16, 2009, Ambassador Michael Oren contended that “The refugee issue, both the Palestinian refugee issue, as well as the Jewish refugee issue – the Jews who were forced out of Arab lands – those are core issues.”

OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT TOOk PLACE:

Select number of high level meetings: with senior political leaders, government officials, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others who are involved in representing the EU or their respective country in Middle East affairs;

Media Coverage: generating media interest and coverage through the public gearing; press conferences with newsworthy speakers and announcements; interviews/personal testimonies; press packages;
The Dangers of the increasing extremism in the 21st century

European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS)

The EUJS was founded in 1978 in Grenoble, France. Formerly known as the European Section of the World Union of Jewish Students, the formation of EUJS solidified a strong and independent Jewish student leadership in Europe. In 1982, EUJS opened its office in Brussels, Belgium, from where it continues to operate.

EUJS is an umbrella organisation for 34 national Jewish student unions in Europe and the FSU, representing over 200,000 Jewish students. Cognizant of the religious, linguistic and cultural diversity that make up the European Jewish community, EUJS strives to present a variety of perspectives through its leadership training programs, educational seminars, and international conferences, all tailor-made to the needs of its students. Throughout its history, EUJS has placed itself at the cutting edge of inter-cultural and inter-religious programming, as well as programming related to genocide education, advocacy, and Jewish continuity in Europe.

EUJS is one of the largest international student organizations worldwide and the first Jewish Youth NGO to obtain the special Consultative Status to the ECOSOC of the United Nations. Its annual programming includes the Summer University, international, inter-religious, inter-generational seminars, study sessions at the European Youth Centre, and cutting edge work that puts it at the forefront of the European context.

This year in the light of the recent European Elections and the growing right wing extremism EUJS organized a seminar focusing on the threat extremism posed for us as Jewish citizens but also for other minorities. Extremism poses a threat to human rights, individual freedoms and mutual respect and influences daily the lives of millions of European citizens. As a Jewish organization and a European minority we have through our history been a constant subject to extremism, an issue that touches thousands of European citizens on a daily basis through anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. This project aimed at creating awareness around this situation, to outline ideas, purposes and perspectives in order to combat all forms of discrimination.

The Yiddishervelt Festival

The Federation of Jewish Communities in ROMANIA

The Yiddishervelt Festival is a Festival of the Yiddish language and culture, which was held in Bucharest, September 2-5, 2010.

Following the very successful EuroJudaica 2007 Festival, in Sibiu, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM) decided to develop another cultural project, one dedicated to the “World of Yiddish”.

Thus, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, with the generous support of the European Jewish Fund, the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony and the Department for Interethnic Relations, organized the first edition of the Festival of Yiddish Language and Culture, on September 2-5, 2010. This period was chosen in order to coincide with the European Day of Jewish Culture.

The purpose of the project was to promote and preserve the Yiddish language and culture – as a part of the Romanian and European linguistic and cultural diversity.
By having integrated many components of the Yiddish language and culture, both traditional and contemporary, the larger audience was offered a most varied image of the Jewish world.

This was accomplished due to the following events:
Press conference (with audience) – the presentation of the Festival’s schedule and its purposes (the written and audio-visual media was present there, as well as about 80 spectators); Panels and lectures (most of all, the audience included specialists from the academic and cultural environment, as well as university and high-school students; Documentary film projections; Yiddish Experience – an alternative show of theater and music (Maia Morgenstern); Concerts of traditional music and dance.

This project entailed an intercultural dialogue, since mutual influences between European cultures of our time were underlined, as well as the role of the Jews in spreading this inter-dependence.

The variety of events and activities of the festival attracted several types of audience: inhabitants of Bucharest, most of them young (university and high-school students), an academic audience, professionals of culture and education, members of other ethnic minorities from Romania, representatives of Jewish communities from Europe, etc.

Due to this festival, the larger audience had access to various possibilities of expressing the Yiddish language and culture. This also encouraged the acknowledgement of the mutual influences between the Yiddish and Romanian culture, and developed an interest of the audience for the Yiddish literature, theater and music. The Festival pointed out the contribution of the Yiddish culture to the development of the Romanian and universal cultural patrimony, as well as its influences, as an expression of a way of life in certain areas of Romania, where Yiddish speakers could be found in great numbers.

HADRACHA Seminars
The Jewish Community of TURKEY

The goal of the Turkish Jewish Community was to create an initiative giving the community’s young people a special opportunity to explore and develop their identity while absorbing various aspects of Judaism, such as history, religion, culture, literature, poetry and philosophy.

In order to realize this vision, Hadracha Seminars were organized twice a year for up to 120 participants – out of which the Hadracha is group selected. These seminars are a living laboratory for the young people of the community, the future generations that are going to serve the community and keep this project going. The other main goal of this project is to remind young people that Jewish identity is a holistic entity with religious, musical, literary, intellectual and philosophical components.

With the generous help of the EJF, the creators of the Hadracha Seminars hope to fill the void of information in the field of Jewish education and advance one step towards intellectuality. The lecturers are on a wide variety of topics and are hand-picked with a wide perspective. In addition to the group’s main goals, the Turkish Jewish Community is also planning to add personal improvement programs to highlight young people’s leadership qualities.
Jewish Education and Youth

The Jewish Community of Lisboa, PORTUGAL

The Jewish Community of Lisbon (CIL) is the heir to one of Europe’s oldest and most symbolical Sephardic Jewish Communities. It was founded during the Middle Ages and was abolished by the Inquisition in the 15th century. The community was re-established in the early 1800s.

Since then, it has remained a small, struggling community, only enlarged during World War II due to the influx of European Jews on their way to emigration throughout the world. During the second half of the 20th century the Jewish Community of Lisbon suffered serious attrition due to progressive assimilation, aging, and emigration.

The main goal of the Jewish Education and Youth project, supported by the EJF for the second year, is to create a dynamic Jewish educational program with an emphasis on young people in the community in order to build and develop their Jewish identity and prevent further assimilation.

The informal education provided by Organized Youth Movement (Dor Chadash) is based on the classical model of educational self-governance used in many countries. This principle involves education through peers (madrichim) and personal example, thus guaranteeing continuity and stimulating new generations through systematic informal educational activities.

Activity content is focused on subjects such as Judaism and Jewish identity, contemporary Judaism, Jewish religion and culture, Zionism, socializing in community life, general culture, recreation and entertainment.

These activities also have the cooperation, support and guidance of the Formal Education department (Moré) and the Rabbi.

The children are organized by age groups, with specific activities for each group.

Formal education groups were also organized, with classes held in a formal classroom environment in the Synagogue Library and main office.
CHIBUR

The Mosaiske Trossamfund (Mosaic Community), NORWAY

There are two active Jewish Communities in Norway, located in Oslo and Trondheim, but only 40% percent of the country’s Jewish population are members of these communities. The factors of assimilation, a diverse and hard-to-travel landscape and a small population scattered over a large territory with dispersed community centres in small towns all complicate strong community building and maintaining traditions and cultural life.

The Chibur project was established to help Jews in Norway find their way to the Jewish community, connect them to each other and fulfil their cultural and traditional needs. With support of the European Jewish Fund the project successfully runs for two years.

The projects makes it easier to contact Jews who live far from Jewish community centres, inform about them Jewish community activities, map the needs people may have concerning their Jewish life, and create various programs that will be appropriate for as many community members as possible. The Chibur project also offers gatherings and celebrations around the country outside established community centres, organizing seminars, Bnei Akiva meetings and Summer Camp, sponsoring the high cost of travel and offering hostelling solutions for those who wish to join in Jewish activities in other cities, and offering special programs for Israeli members of the community, such as Israeli cultural events and gatherings.

The Chibur project has established an Internet Cheder program, which gives distant members of the Jewish community a convenient way to participate in Jewish studies.

The Gathering of European Jewish and Muslim Leaders

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU), under the leadership of Rabbi Marc Schneier (president) and Russell Simmons (chairman), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting racial harmony and strengthening inter-group relations. Since 2007, FFEU has spearheaded groundbreaking programs in Muslim Jewish relations including the annual Weekend of Twinning of Mosques and Synagogues across North America and Europe. FFEU was founded in 1989 and has offices in New York City.

On Monday, December 6th, over 50 leaders of Muslim
and Jewish communities from across Europe joined together in Brussels for the first Gathering of European Muslim and Jewish Leaders to discuss initiatives for better relations between the two communities. Senior representatives of both faiths from Austria, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States attended the one-day gathering. The meeting was co-organized by The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, the World Jewish Congress and the European Jewish Congress.

At the opening session Iman Dr. Abduljalil Sajid from Britain offered prayers, in which he also mentioned the victims of the recent forest fire in Israel as well as the floods in Pakistan. Later in the day, a delegation met with the president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, who supported the group’s efforts. The conference concluded with a Diplomatic Dinner attended by ambassadors posted in Brussels.

The first Gathering of European Muslim and Jewish leaders successfully joined together the community leaders. Throughout the day, the Muslim and Jewish leaders urged better protection of religious minorities in Europe and vowed to establish closer ties. They all agreed that both the Muslim and Jewish communities must focus more on what unites them than what separates them.

At the conclusion of the conference, attendees agreed to finalize a common declaration in the coming weeks. The declaration will call for closer cooperation between the two communities in Europe and ways to ensure that Jews and Muslims are able to practice their respective faiths fully and unimpeded by intrusive, discriminatory and unfair governmental regulations. The declaration will urge cooperative efforts to succor the poor and homeless of all backgrounds, to help protect new immigrants who are threatened by hatred and xenophobia, to heal the environment and to bring together Muslim and Jewish youth for joint programming. In addition, the declaration will denounce all forms of violence in the name of any religion or ideology.

THE KANTOR CENTER for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry

The Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, inaugurated in May 2010 at the Tel Aviv University, provides an academic framework for inter-disciplinary research of European Jewry beginning from the end of the Second World War and up to present day.

The Center will provide a platform to the various research requirements of researchers, students, governmental and civil service personnel, professionals, activists and the public at large, both in Israel and abroad. The Center will initiate, encourage and coordinate research projects, conferences, seminars and publications in the following areas:

• examining historical demographic processes and their ramifications on issues such as identity, education, the family unit and communal organization;
• legislation and enforcement, promoting minority rights and prohibition of discrimination, racism, hate crimes and hate speech, and anti-Semitism (particularly Holocaust Denial);
• Mutual contacts between Jewish communities and their leaders and the local societies, and other minority and religious groups, in the political and cultural context.
• Preserving the national memory and communal legacy, and its implications on the present-day.

The Center’s website will reflect its activities and shall provide a wide ranging platform for materials on Contemporary European Jewry research.
“Towards Reconciliation. Experiences, Techniques and Opportunities for Europe” international conference

European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR)

Two powerful words, tolerance and reconciliation, took a further step forward in their quest toward pertinent consolidation at the end of a two-day international conference on October 24-25, 2010, in Dubrovnik, Croatia titled “Towards Reconciliation. Experiences, Techniques and Opportunities for Europe” initiated by the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR) and European Jewish Fund, as well as the German-based Bertelsmann Stiftung and Robert Bosch Stiftung. The gathering brought together current and former heads of European nations, senior ministers, high-ranking politicians, human rights officials, religious and lay leaders in order to collect European experience in reconciliation, and offer this experience to the Balkan nations.

Among the conference participants who discussed their experiences and how to build reconciliation, were President of the Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipović; President of the Republic of Montenegro Bakir Izetbegović; former President of Cyprus George Vassiliou; Former Prime Minister of Italy Giuliano Amato and Former Prime Minister of Norway Kjell Magne Bondevik.

With racism and xenophobia on the rise in parts of Europe and conflict never far away, this conference offered distinctive approaches to reconcile adversaries on the European continent and beyond.

The European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR) is a non-governmental organisation that focuses on monitoring tolerance in Europe and preparing practical recommendations to improve interethnic relations and intercultural communication.

The ECTR consists of prominent former European heads of state, political and public leaders, scientists, Nobel Prize laureates and individuals who have gained global recognition for their outstanding achievements in the humanitarian sphere and the promotion of tolerance. Co-Chaired by former President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski and President of the European Jewish Congress and Chairman of the European Jewish Fund Dr. Moshe Kantor, members of the ECTR include Jose María Aznar, former Prime Minister of Spain, Vaclav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic and Gérán Persson, former Prime Minister of Sweden.
Experts from the US, Russia and the EU Have Discussed in Washington the Prospects of Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The International Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe has held a conference in Washington, D.C., on September 20-21. An impressive list of prominent politicians, leading world experts in arms control, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, materials and delivery vehicles, including current and former administration advisors, have discussed the prospects of further strategic nuclear arms and tactical nuclear arms reductions, cooperation in the area of anti-ballistic missile defense, results of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and the status and settling the Iran and North Korea nuclear crises.

The Luxembourg Forum is the largest expert institution of that kind, comprising leading world experts on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control from the USA, Russia and Europe. It was created in 2007 and since then has held similar meetings in Vienna, Moscow, Geneva, and Rome.

The Luxembourg Forum was established to counteract growing threats to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and erosion of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as well as to promote international peace and security through new approaches and by presenting practical recommendations to decision-makers on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control critical issues.

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The president and founder of the Forum, Dr. Moshe Kantor, stressed the importance of such a meeting. “We are on the verge of a chain of events that could potentially change the current world order,” said Kantor. “If Iran is allowed to acquire nuclear weapons it will force other nations in the region to seek nuclear weapons, signal the end of the NPT, allow rogue regimes and terrorist entities to acquire a nuclear deterrent and hold the international community to ransom. These are all extremely grave scenarios.”

The forum has also discussed the recently signed Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty agreed between the U.S. and Russia and how to build on this important accord. High-ranking members of the American administration have further discussed the prospects of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament from the perspective of the U.S. foreign policy. At the end of the conference a memorandum containing the outcome of the meetings, observations and recommendations was circulated to heads of leading powers and major international IGOs.

The list of participants included Rose Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of State and former Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation and National Security of the U.S. Department of Energy, Sam Nunn, Co-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, former Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the U.S. Senate; Vladimir Dvorkin, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, International Luxembourg Forum, and former Director of the 4th Major Institute of the Russian Ministry of Defense; Igor Ivanov, Professor of the MGIMO, former Foreign Minister of Russian Federation, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.
EUROPEAN JEWISH FUND
Fund’s Activists

Moshe Vlatcheslav Kantor
Chairman
Member Governor

Arie Zuckerman
Secretary General

EJF Executive Council Members

Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia & Montenegro
Aleksandar Necak
President

Riga Jewish Community, Latvia
Alex Rutman
President
Jewish Congress of Moldova
Alexander Bilinkis
President

The Jewish Community of Slovenia Judovska Skupno
Alexander Caran
President

Jewish Community of Estonia
Alla Yakobson
Chairman

The Jewish Community of Cyprus
Ami Yeshurun
President

Jewish Community of Norway
Anne Sender
President

Riga Jewish Community, Latvia
Arkady Suharenko
President

Jewish Community of Macedonia
Bjanka Subotik
Honorary President

Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania
Aurel Vainer
President

Jewish Community of Tyrol and Vorarlberg
Dr. Esther Fritch
President

Jewish Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Jakob Finci
President

Union of Belarusian Jewish Organizations and Communities of Belarus
Leonid Levin
President

Federation of Jewish Communities in Czech Republic
Jiri Danicek
President
Federation of Jewish Communities in Czech Republic
Tomas Kraus
President

Jewish Community of Lisbon
Jose Oulman Carp
President

Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities
Herbert Winter
President

The Official Council of Jewish Communities in Sweden
Lena Posner-Korosi
President

Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations
Maurice Sosnowski
President

The Shalom Organization of Jews in Bulgaria
Maxim Benvenisty
President

The Jewish Community of Luxembourg
Michel Bulz
President

Coordinating Committee of the Jewish Communities in the Republic of Croatia
Ognjen Kraus
President

Russia
Pinchas Goldschmidt
Chief Rabbi of Moscow

Federation of Jewish Communities in Slovakia
Pavel Frankl
President

Union of Jewish Communities in Poland
Piotr Kadlicik
President

The Jewish Community of Turkey
Sami Herman
President
PAIDEIA LAUNCHES
5th Project-Incubator

Jewish Philanthropy
August 4, 2010

Twenty-seven innovators and social entrepreneurs from twelve European countries and
Israel are being welcomed today by Paideia for its 5th annual Project-Incubator, a two-week
intensive boot camp for projects dedicated to advancing European Jewish culture in action.

Since 2006, the Project-Incubator has empowered and educated leaders of more than 80
projects in 26 European countries and Israel, from cultural centers to kindergartens, from
theatrical productions to environmental campaigns.

2010 resident initiatives include “Traces of Messiah,” a traveling musical and dramatic pro-
duction at Poland’s Midrash Theatre led by Agata Nowak and Rabbi Tanya Segal; Jeneration,
which facilitates experimentation and personal growth for UK Jews in their 20s and 30s, led
by Jude Williams; a Moderne Judishe Kochbuch (Modern Jewish Cookbook) compiled by
Sabrina Small, a California transplant to Berlin; and The Venice Center for International Jew-
ish Studies, directed by Shaul Bassi. Additional projects come from Belarus, Czech Republic,
Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

“They Project-Incubator is a tremendous opportunity to move things from theory to
practice, by people who are both knowl-
edgeable and devoted,” said Lena Posner-
Korosi, a board member of the European
Jewish Fund, which supports the incuba-
tor through its EJF Leadership Program
at Paideia. “One of the challenges of
European Jewry today is to get young Jews
involved in Jewish life and education by
various means. The incubator is a very
effective way to encourage this, channel
great ideas, and convey our broader insti-
tutional commitment to this work.”

Participants look forward to strengthening
their projects through training in business

Jewish Community of Lithuania
Simonas Alperavičius
Chairman

The Jewish Community of Denmark
Finn Schwarz
President

Jewish Confederation of Ukraine
Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich
Chief Rabbi

The Jewish Community of United Kingdom
Vivian Wineman
President
planning and studying Jewish culture. “Our project is having its first full production at the end of August,” said Giles Howe, co-writer of SOVIET ZION, a musical set in the Soviet Jewish homeland of Birobidzhan. “We hope to use the Project-Incubator to enrich the Jewish content of the script whilst keeping it accessible to broader audiences.”

“We want to make it commercially viable as a piece of theatre but also educate Jewish people about their history,” added co-writer Katy Lipson. “We’d like to learn from other Incubator participants’ experience of launching independent projects that reach new audiences.”

The Project-Incubator’s 2010 organizational partners include The ROI Community for Young Jewish Innovators, Jumpstart, JHub: The Jewish Social Action Hub and the Pears Foundation. Additional curriculum development support has come from the Pratt Foundation’s Pradler Program. In addition to expert staff from Paideia under the direction of Brachi Lipshitz (ELUL, Israel), core faculty include Joshua Avedon and Shawn Landres (Jumpstart, Los Angeles), Dina Gidron (Tzur Hadassah, Israel), Rani Jaeger (Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem), Beto Maya (ROI Community, Jerusalem), Ofra Palmer Granot (Israel), Amy Philip (Pears Foundation, London), and Rabbi Ute Steyer (Yeshiva University, New York).

“Without much fanfare or attention, Europe has become a center for 21st-century Jewish creativity, just as much as Israel and North America,” said Shawn Landres, co-founder of Jumpstart, which later this year, in partnership with the Pears Foundation and the ROI Community, will release the results of the 2010 Survey of New Jewish Initiatives in Europe. “Our research demonstrates the substantial contribution that Paideia is making to the renewal and revitalization of Jewish creativity, so we’re thrilled to deepen our partnership with Paideia in this vital effort.”

Paideia 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. Its mission is to actively promote the renewal and flourishing of European Jewish cultural and intellectual life, while simultaneously cultural diversity and humanistic values. Funding for the 2010 Project-Incubator comes from the European Jewish Fund, the UJA-Federation of Greater New York, and the Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora.

Young European Jews
Asserting Identity, Against the Odds

Swedish ‘incubator’ project training young leaders, resisting the notion that Jewish life is dying.

The Jewish Week
August 18, 2010
By Gary Rosenblatt
(Excerpt)

Stockholm — When the tall Hungarian woman in the back of the room rose to speak, I could see the passion and flash of anger in her face. She was the first to raise her hand after my talk to 27 young men and women from both Eastern and Western Europe, participants in a 10-day program in the Swedish capital for academics and activists committed to enhancing Jewish life in their native countries.

I had been invited by the program sponsor, Paideia, the Swedish-based European Institute for Jewish Studies, to describe American Jewish life and attitudes toward European Jewry.

I was direct in my comments to the group, noting that we American Jews don’t tend to think about European Jewry often, and when we do, it is to lament its imminent demise, the victim of an aging, diminishing population, and a sharply disturbing increase in anti-Semitism.

We hear about attacks on synagogues and cemeteries, fear in France of walking in public with a kipa, British concern about Israel-related boycotts, and most recently,
violence against the Jewish residents of Malmo, Sweden, by local Muslims.

The young woman respondent, Anita Bartha, 26, is a graduate student in Jewish studies in Budapest and the coordinator of a Hungarian Jewish youth organization. Like her fellow participants in the program, Paideia’s Project Incubator — an interactive workshop to hone plans for new community-centered initiatives — she is highly educated and deeply involved in Jewish cultural and renewal efforts on the local level.

She didn’t disagree with my observations but said she was “offended” that American Jews have a dismissive attitude toward European Jewry and fail to recognize the variety of small but exciting new programs percolating in communities throughout Europe.

Her comments were met with loud applause from the other participants in the program, several of whom echoed her sentiments and spoke of their own frustrating encounters with American Jewish funders who seem convinced that investing in European Jewry is a lost cause.

I’m afraid their perceptions are on target. And I basically felt the same way before coming to Paideia.

My visits to large, majestic synagogues in the European cities I’ve visited, including Copenhagen and Stockholm on this trip, only reinforced the impression that European Jewry’s long history — at times thriving, too often tragic — was coming to an end.

The elaborate structures, once filled with worshippers, now seem more like museums. Even those still open for prayer barely have a minyan for services, often only with the help of tourists.

But I learned that famed old synagogues are not the primary source of native Jewish life in Europe today. Chabad Lubavitch offers an impressive network of religious and social services, but its rabbis and leaders are for the most part imported from America. If you want to find the sparks of homegrown European talent and activity, speak to the more than 200 fellows and alumni of Paideia, now in its 10th year. The institute’s main program is a full academic year of interactive study of Jewish texts and courses in leadership development, with the goal of educating and training “the best and brightest” young people “who can lead a true renaissance of European Jewish culture,” according to its website.

Among this summer’s participants in Project Incubator — which was conducted in English — were two Russian women planning weekend seminars for Jewish learning in various cities; a Belarus activist who hopes to create a combined Jewish study/vocational training program for young men from disadvantaged families; an Italian architect with a vision of turning the famous Venice Jewish Ghetto into a vibrant center for international Jewish life and culture; and a theatrical couple from England whose dream is to see “Soviet Zion,” their musical production depicting life in Birobidzhan, the Stalin-designated Yiddish homeland in Siberia, into a Broadway show.

The sophistication and scope of the projects varied, but the incubator program boasts an impressive track record. About two-thirds of past proposals have come to fruition within a year, aided by help from the program’s alumni, and funding advice and support from Paideia mentors and a network of funders (including the European Jewish Fund, UJA-Federation of New York and the Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora).

The incubator workshop culminates with the “pitch-a-thon,” where five or six of the most promising presenters have five minutes each to describe their project to a panel of seasoned professionals, including foundation representatives, who offer critiques, suggestions and encouragement.

“Paideia and the leaders it is training are the epicenter of a paradigm shift in Europe,” says Joshua Avedon, co-founder of the Los Angeles-based organization, Jumpstart, which describes itself as a “thinkubator for sustainable Jewish innovation.”

Avedon, a facilitator of Project Incubator, notes that “these new projects clearly show that European Jewish life is a growing force in building a global Jewish culture that is dynamic and future-focused, and rivals the creativity happening in the U.S. and Israel.”

In fact, the preliminary analysis of a survey of new Jewish initiatives — a project of Jumpstart, the London-based Pears Foundation and ROI, a global community of Jewish innovators created by philanthropist Lynn Schusterman — suggests that “European Jewry may be producing more creative new initiatives per capita than North American Jewry, and in countries where one might least expect it,” according to Jumpstart co-founder Shawn Landres.
JEWISH WORLD

Painting Memory

A project for gifted teens from Eastern Europe takes them to Belarus to reclaim and strengthen their Jewish past and identity

Eetta Prince-Gibson Minsk, Belarus

December 7, 2009 | By Eetta Prince-Gibson

E J F i n t h e M e d i a

December 7, 2009 | By Eetta Prince-Gibson

The Jerusalem Report

December 7, 2009 | By Eetta Prince-Gibson
JEWISH WORLD

The city once known as Vitebsk and the city with its modern Jewish heroes and celebrated Jewish characters, provides the inspiration for much of its art. Founded by the Soviet regime because he had left the city, this city has been rehabilitated in post-Soviet Belarus. Its scene on Polotskaya Street, in the Jewish quarter of the city, was destroyed in the war but has been rebuilt. Still with Kitts, pictures and photos about his life.

The group visits his home and the Chagall museum (which contains Chagall’s life, but has no original paintings in its collection). At the Vitebsk Jewish Art Museum, they visit the room dedicated to Igalgon, one of Chagall’s most important masters. As they walk along the streets of the Jewish quarter, they view the synagogue, now a high facade, streets with windows and doors growing in an open-ended tunnel.

Across the street, there is a small, proctor, two-stored wooden house; built around a courtyard, still inhabited. The house is probably about 100 years old. Levinger says, “This is what a house in the old city looked like.”

They excitedly approach. A cat, protecting its newborn kittens, moments, but an elderly woman, poorly dressed against the cold, motions them to come in. They climb the narrow steps to the second floor, which has been subdivided into even smaller separate apartments. The rooms are dingy, but the woman seems proud to show them how clean they are. Then, clearly pleased, she points to a small in the hallway—it has been turned to a wall, next to the door that has been turned into a bathroom. A photo of Igalgon has been pasted to the inner mirror.

Next, the group visits the center, then says, “I can feel Jewish history here. I try to imagine how the Jews lived here, and then I understand more about my own Jewish life.”

The group stops to discuss and then to work on their projects. In the museum, they have a master class with an artist and crafts teacher who shows them how to create traditional Jewish figurines and candlesticks from silver. In the dinner, they paint to the Stones of Piave and learn about the symbolism of fish in Jewish life (and receive a recipe for gefilte fish). In the evening, they meet with Rabbi Babay, an accomplished artist, quiet, unassuming, but ready to share his impressions and ideas.

Throughout, Jews act as comforting mother, knowledge guides and encouraging mentors, and occasional disciplinarians. At night, in a quiet, the teenagers stop from room to room and ask a bit slowly, “Is it important that they have fun, that they enjoy one another? “Meeting other boys and enjoying my time with them helped me build my identity and helped me to be proud of who I am.”

In Vitebsk, Jewish culture, from the tiny Jewish population of approximately 5,000, it is an unattractive office shop, smoking harassed and wearing a hockey jacket. Her dark hair is pulled back loosely and she wears pulling boots. Sibilla, a professional photographer, and a student at the Faculty for Fine Arts in Skopje, has come to the class to photograph the group of five Macedonian teens, but she readily admits that the trip is just as important for her.

“I have always known I have Jewish blood,” she says thoughtfully, “but in a few years, this had set meaning for me. I thought of myself as a Serb, but I saw that my great, great grandmas was Jewish. Was it German peace and was depressed all her life because of her horrible experiences. But we never talked about this in my family. Now, because I have attended some of the Jewish events in my country, I want to know about her. I want to meet my kinsmen. I have traveled throughout the world, and I am finding myself and my loneliness in my art, my photography, my adventures, and my family.”

In Skopje, the automatic regime of President Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnia’s, with a population of one million, seems washed in a time warp. Visited widely is the country’s best destination, and seen by some as the “Medieval government of Stalin.” Izetbegovic assumed the right to seek unlimited terms of a few years ago.

There is almost no private enterprise in Bosnia and only truly independent media, although savvy locals keep up with international news over the Internet. The secret service is still called the SDB. In Skopje, modern office and residential buildings are gradually replacing Soviet concrete, but the collapse atmosphere is everywhere—in the empty seat of the international airport that doesn’t accept foreign change in the remaining buildings of the old, crowded, police patrol, in the inappropriate downtown store in Vitebsk, in the group of women walking around town and their new dresses, their heads covered with scarves, who read the newspapers in the town, a job war, and perhaps all—filmed by SDB informers.

More seriously, political opponents and independently minded journalists have been detained and beaten up; some have simply disappeared.

The group walks a fine line here. Lukashenko has sent the community mixed messages—the one hand, the other, he has sentenced several dozen of Holocaust survivors specifically indicted to Jews, but he has also called upon Jewish groups to support the new government’s Jewish institutions.

Yet the Jewish community is experiencing a remarkable reinvention of Jewish culture and society. In April 2002, the community opened its “Jewish Campus,” two large buildings, separated by a multi-purpose courtyard and synagogue. The buildings, modern, light, are surrounded by a fence and security; and only a small sign reveals that these are Jewish institutions.

But inside, the campus is Family and war—slightly, and figuratively speaking, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the “Jews,” to the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) is commonly called, there is something for everyone in the community, from preschool to high school for the young adults, who are often, to cultural programs for the entire community. They also provide extensive welfare and social service to the elderly, who live most elderly institutions, face poverty in the restored economy.

The Jewish community also makes a fine among the many different Jewish organizations that operate in Belgrade. Says Lewin, “We are very proud for the many services that we receive from organizations like the JDC and the Sacred, but we are also very thankful to the European Jewish Fund and to its president, [Russian-Jewish oligarch] Moshe Kantor. The EJF encourages us to create our own progress in our own community. The EJF fixtures us and realizes that we know ourselves best and can create our own progress.”

In the concluding ceremony, the participants present their works and participate in a roundtable, to which the children from the City Art School in Boston, where they learned to make their snow figures, have also been invited. They have worked on their projects, presented to each other, the collage, essays, and pencil and mixed techniques. The group from Macedonia presents an initial idea for a Jewish hostel. The group from Skopje discusses the architecture of the synagogue and Jewish school in Skopje. In Belgrade, a presentor presents a toast of espresso cakes.

Kate Boyarska, 14, from Tel Aviv, Russia (who also taught a Russian-language copy of “How to Marry a Millionaire” and a “Spaghetti Sisters” stories) was up for her experience: “This has been the best and an art I like that I don’t even know about the past so that we can learn to live in the past and the future.”
Holocaust Curriculum Launched in Haifa

Yad Vashem Magazine
July 2010
By Masha Pollak Rozenberg

On 7 May, a new Russian-language community education project on the Holocaust was launched in Haifa. A joint effort of Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies and the Haifa Municipality, the unique project is dedicated to Holocaust study in general and the experience of the Jews in the FSU in particular, and involves both formal and informal educational activities. A range of pedagogical tools integrating many of the arts – theater, music, film, painting and sculpture – will be used extensively. The program will run for three years, with the end of each year of activity marked by a special evening presenting projects completed by the students.

The project, generously financed by the European Jewish Fund (EJF) and the Genesis Philanthropy Group (GPG), was launched at a ceremony at the conclusion of the veterans’ parade marking 65 years since the victory over Nazi Germany (pictured). Some 1,200 parade participants attended the ceremony, as well as Mayor of Haifa Yona Yahav, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, Chairman of the NGO for Immigrant Absorption Shai Fischel, ambassadors and consuls. The crowd also included youth movement members and students at the Haifa Military Boarding School, who all came to express their respect and esteem for the veteran soldiers.

“It is no coincidence that we launch this important new project on the day these veterans helped win a final victory over Nazi Germany,” said Sara Britovsky, GPG Israel Executive Director and Supervisor of EJF programs at Yad Vashem. “The project has the power to draw together different generations and parts of the nation – new immigrants and native-born Israelis – as one.” International School Director Dorit Novak noted that Haifa, one of many towns to absorb new immigrants, was chosen to be the first Israeli city in which to implement the project both because of its large number of immigrants from the CIS and because of the city’s exemplary and committed educational systems.

The author is the Head of the Division for Secondary School Education and Director of the EJF Project at the International School for Holocaust Studies.

Holocaust Curriculum Launched in Haifa
Masha Pollak Rozenberg

Israeli Minister to Swedish Jews: Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism

Yuli Edelstein’s comments come after publication in Swedish paper of IDF organ harvesting article.

September 16, 2009
By Cnaan Liphshiz

Anti-Zionism is a new form of anti-Semitism that can be found in foreign media, Information and Diaspora Minister Yuli Edelstein (Likud) told Swedish Jews Tuesday. The comments were made during a videoconference held following the controversial publication in a Swedish paper of an article claiming Israeli soldiers stole organs from Palestinians.

Edelstein took questions from six Swedish Jews about Israel’s attitude toward anti-Semitism, criticism of its policies, Jewish communities in the Diaspora, immigration and emigration.

Last month’s organ-theft article by the tabloid Aftonbladet – which drew fierce criticism from Israel and Jewish organizations, and which may have led to the cancellation of a planned visit to Israel by Sweden’s foreign minister – did not dominate the discussion, but seemed to have at least shaped some of it.

“Criticism is legitimate as long as it does not border on demonization or denying our right to the land of Israel,” Edelstein told Omri Grinberg, who asked the minister whether he “immediately crosses out as irrelevant to his
purposes” those who oppose “Israel’s ongoing occupation.”

“There are many NGOs that use the right to freedom of speech and work under false pretenses of concern for Israel, when what they are actually doing is causing damage to Israel and exposing it to danger,” Edelstein added.

John Gradowski asked the minister how Israel balances its efforts to draw more Jews to immigrate with its stated goal of strengthening Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

“IIsrael does not believe that it is possible or essential that all Jews live in Israel,” Edelstein responded, also as part of an answer to yet another question on this topic. “There is definitely a need for flourishing communities in the Diaspora that can both feel a connection to the Jewish people.”

Tuesday’s videoconference is part of a project initiated by European Jewish Congress President Moshe Kantor, which aims to foster stronger ties between Diaspora communities and Israel. The project will allow representatives from one Jewish community every month to hold a video-recorded discussion with an Israeli official or opinion-shaper. The videos will be posted online at www.leadel.net.

Arie Zuckerman, Secretary General of the European Jewish Fund, who promoted the project alongside Kantor, told Haaretz that the meeting with the Swedish community had been scheduled before the eruption in the wake of the Aftonbladet article.

“While we remain conscious of the great contributions in many areas of large communities such as the British and the French ones, we are trying here to reach out to smaller, more distant communities such as in Sweden,” he said. The next videoconference will be held in October with Hungarian Jews, and the one following with representatives from the Jewish community in Milan.

Bridging the Gap:
Limmud Association has organized its third-Festival in Germany

Jewish Magazine Diegemeinden
June, 2010
By Von Lutz Lorenz
Yiddish Culture Festival’ 1st edition, in Bucharest
Romanian National News Agency Agerpres September 3, 2010

May 14, 2010
By Cnaan Liphshiz

The Festival of Yiddish Language and Culture - Ydisher Velt, including lectures, theater performances, documentary films and concerts to be shown at the State Jewish Theater, Union Cinema Hall, the Jewish Community Center, Green Hours Club, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (MTR) has been holding its first edition in Bucharest, on Sept 2-5.

Organized by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, supported by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Department for Inter-ethnic Relations and the European Jewish Fund, the Festival marks the 134th anniversary of the Yiddish theater that succeeded going throughout history, despite dramatic events.

Through the Festival’s events, the organizers plan to revive for the audience nowadays, the pre-war atmosphere specific to Central and Eastern Europe, when the Yiddish Culture used to be part of the everyday life, in many Romanian towns and cities.

Yiddish is the language spoken by the Jews living in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the language of the Ashkenazi or the Hasidic language (meaning piety, or the loving kindness), but also that of the beginnings of the Renaissance of the Modern Jewish Culture, a transnational culture, wherein plays, poetry and lyrics have been written.

Among the Festival’s partners, it is worth mentioning Israel’s Embassy in Bucharest, the Austrian Cultural Forum, the State Jewish Theater, The Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the National Film Archives, The Jewish Community of Oradea (western Romania), the Jewish Community of Bucharest, the Jewish Community Center in Bucharest, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Romanian Literature Museum.
Former ambassador casts doubts on EU role in region

May 14, 2010
By Cnaan Lipshiz

The European Union is too unreliable to play a more prominent role in the Middle East peace process, former Israeli ambassador to the U.S. Itamar Rabinovich said on Monday. He was speaking at a Tel Aviv University event before 15 European ambassadors to Israel.

“While the European Union wants to increase its role, it may be unwilling to follow through with armed intervention — which may be necessary in our environment,” Rabinovich said at the inauguration of the university’s Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry.

Rabinovich — who headed Yitchak Rabin’s team of negotiators with Syria — noted ethnic cleansing in the Balkans during the 1990s. “Europe made resolutions that the Holocaust must never be repeated, but it was. It took the American cavalry [to stop it] because European societies are hesitant to send soldiers to be killed.”

This leads Israeli leaders, according to Rabinovich, to “wonder whether the EU will show up in the moment of truth, or whether it will be a voice in the distance.” At the same time, Israeli politicians and scholars are “too U.S.-oriented and this needs to change,” Rabinovich concluded.

Professor Dina Porat, who will head the center and who chaired the discussion, invited the European ambassadors in attendance — including Spanish Ambassador Alvaro Iranzo who is president of the European Union in Israel — to respond, but none did.

David Kriss, press and information manager of the delegation of the European Union to Israel, also declined to comment on Rabinovich’s assertions when queried by Haaretz.

European Jewish Congress President Dr. Moshe Kantor, who founded the new center in the framework of Tel Aviv University’s annual meeting of the board of governors, said the new body will prepare the ground for promoting coordinated EU legislation on anti-Semitism.

Arie Zuckerman of the European Jewish Congress said the new center will have an initial annual budget of $250,000 and a staff of some 15 researchers. “It will be primarily an academic body, but it will also lend itself to political issues.”

“Germany,” Zuckerman went on to say, “has good legislation on incitement because of its past.” He noted the case of the Netherlands – which has no law against Holocaust denial – as evidence for the need for further legislation.

“Last month, a Dutch Arab group which posted Holocaust-denying caricatures on its website was acquitted of incitement charges,” he said. “This example, along with a range of physical and verbal abuses against minorities in Europe, shows that the center has its work cut out for it in promoting legislation.”
What lessons can be learned from European conflicts?

October 27, 2010
By Yonah Mandel

Croatian conference brings together European leaders to talk tolerance and reconciliation and apply lessons to Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

DUBROVNIK – Tolerance and reconciliation. These powerful words, loaded with meaning and endless room for debate and interpretation, took a further step forward in their quest toward pertinent consolidation at the end of a two-day conference on Monday in Dubrovnik, Croatia titled “Towards Reconciliation. Experiences, Techniques and Opportunities for Europe.” Initiated by the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR) as well as the German-based Bertelsmann Stiftung and Robert Bosch Stiftung, the gathering brought together current and former heads of European nations to “collect European experience in reconciliation, and offer them to the Balkan nations,” as Aleksander Kwasniewski, former President of Poland and chairman of ECTR said in his opening remarks. Panels and speeches on the theory and practice of reconciliation and tolerance in relation to religious dialogue, the media, legislation, memory and forgiveness and civil society, to name a few, were what the hundreds of participants engaged in from the beautiful Croatian city overlooking the Adriatic sea.

The idiom stating that “the trouble of many is half of comfort,” taken from the Book of Mitzvot, could be relevant to Israeli ears weary of hearing of the troubles with the Palestinians; there is nearly no European country that hasn’t problems with its neighbors, or minorities, and those issues were raised over the two-day conference by distinguished speakers, such as George Vassiliou, former president of the Republic of Cyprus, Kjell Magne Bondevik, former prime minister of Norway; former federal chancellor of Austria Wolfgang Schüssel, and Kwasniewski, to name a few. Not to mention the closing panel of the event, comprised of Ivo Josipovic, president of the Republic of Croatia, President of Montenegro Filip Vujanovic, and Bakir Izetbegovic, designated member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sarajevo, who spoke of the measures taken by their states to promote dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation, not always easy goals for their still-hurting states, laden with unresolved sentiment toward their neighbors and minorities.

This coalition of prominent public European figures and lawmakers, gathered under the auspices of the ECTR to seek ways to influence tolerance promotion in Europe and fight all forms of racial, ethnic, religious and cultural discrimination, is actually the result of the demand of the General Assembly of the European Jewish Congress to form such a body, “and completely correspondent to my own vision of our dire need for a very wide coalition of all forces fighting and promoting our values of coexistence, in the Diaspora and the State of Israel with other states and nations,” Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress as well as founder and co-chairman of the ECTR, said on Monday.

“That’s why the idea was to establish something with every top reputable in politics – former presidents, prime ministers, who can be organized and coordinated by some NGO with goals corresponding to ours. That’s why we established the ECTR,” which first met two years ago, Kantor said.
“Our main goal is to speak about the Mideast problems, and those that exist in the Diaspora,” Kantor said, adding that it is at times easier to find solutions in settings similar to those of the original trouble-zone. “That’s why we decided to have the discussions on the base of Balkan conflict. The rules of the creation of the conflict are the same,” with a fluctuating balance of ethnic, religious and territorial components. “People are the same everywhere,” he asserted.

“The Jews in the Diaspora and Israel are not the most tolerant nation in the world, and [the European model of legislation] should be a good study for educating the Jews ourselves...We ask tolerance for us, but do we guarantee tolerance for others? We are obliged to give tolerance, including within our communities, our society.”

“Tolerance and reconciliation should not be respected as just an intention,” the businessman said, noting the politicians, philosophers, and legislators attending. “Establishing the dialogue is the result,” he said, “But it should not stop here.”

“Dialogues are very important for creating the ideology. Negotiations, talks, media discussions, education are very important. But finally, what will our children inherit from us? More discussions, more return to the same values?” Kantor elaborated.

“No, if we are thinking of future generations, we should produce something visible for them. The decisions on questions. And the only thing mankind has established to that end is legislation. Then we come to practicing it. And then to modify legislation and practicing it, we should again switch on to the next stage of ideological discussions. This wheel should constantly be moving ahead.”

Kantor also mentioned the ECTR’s intent to issue a letter to President of the European Commission Jos Manuel Barroso, demanding the establishment of a University of Global Security and Secured Tolerance, an institution that would be the base for future European legislation as a mandatory research and education center for European Union functionaries, and hopefully legislators. “It should not be a Jewish initiative or that of an NGO,” but rather come from the commission, he argued.

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**Russia, U.S. Should Resume Joint Missile Defense Exercises - Analysts**

*Interfax-AVN*  
**September 22, 2010**

Joint use of the information component in missile defense would enable the U.S. and Russia to make coordinated decisions preventing crises in the international nuclear nonproliferation regime, in the view of a number of Russian analysts taking part in a conference of the International Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe taking place in Washington on September 20-21.

“In addressing complicated missile defense issues, it would make sense to take into account and revive a positive record of cooperation in this area that the two countries had gained prior to 2008,” International Luxembourg Forum President Viatcheslav Kantor said. Russia and the U.S. should resume joint missile defense exercises and take steps to integrate their information systems, he said.

Col. Gen. Viktor Yesin, a former chief of staff of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces (RVSN), shares this view. “Russia and the U.S. could reach an agreement on a common missile defense information and intelligence component,” he said.

Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, who earlier headed the Russian Defense Ministry’s 4th Research Institute, also said at the same forum that Russia, the U.S., and European countries could use their information systems, which would significantly increase their efficiency.

“The main result of this cooperation would be that we have finally established allied relations that would enable us to make more coordinated decisions on opposing crises in the nuclear proliferation regime, like the Iran and North Korea ones,” he said.

Russian-U.S. cooperation on missile defense would help the two countries “end the state of mutual nuclear deterrence, which is among the factors preventing us from becoming full-scale partners and even allies,” Dvorkin said.

Russia and NATO have conducted four joint theater missile defense command-post exercises. They took place at the Joint National Integration Center in the U.S. in 2004, at De Peel air base in the Netherlands in 2005, at the Russian Defense Ministry’s research center in Moscow in 2006, and at the IABG Center for Simulation, Integration, and Testing in Germany in January 2008.