



Providing for Shifting Jewish Needs Throughout Europe

2020 Year End Report



Prepared for the XXXXX Endowment Fund
December 2021



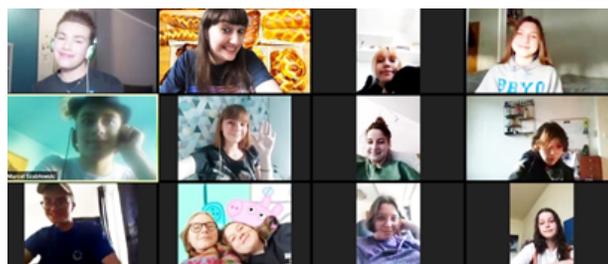
Silver Linings of a Tough Year

To say that 2020 was unique is an understatement. The coronavirus pandemic created a global crisis that shut down countries, sparked anxiety and challenged us in unprecedented ways. Across Europe, Jewish communities struggled as calls for help grew along with the spread of the pandemic. Community members lost jobs, food prices rose, and health concerns and economic stress left both staff and clients fearful. We pivoted, evaluated, and generated new ways to meet the wide-ranging needs of children, families, seniors, and leaders in our diverse communities.

The XXXXXXXX Endowment Fund pivoted too, again demonstrating your family's dedication to Jewish life by generously providing an additional \$100,000 to meet pandemic-related hardship. Your kindness mitigated the isolation, helplessness, and desperation felt by vulnerable Jews in Europe where COVID-19 caused loss of life and devastated the continent's economy.

JDC's years of building self-sustainable communities helped us to adapt our work in Europe to ensure continuity and increase care. We leveraged professional and volunteer networks, and locally tailored expertise. Our pre-existing knowledge of the region enabled JDC to quickly disseminate recommendations online in German, Hebrew, Italian, and Russian which became a key response tool. We established the JDC Europe COVID Humanitarian Relief Program, maintained ongoing contact throughout the region, and saw a high level of action.

Thanks to you, Europe's Jewish communities quickly adopted new initiatives. Holiday celebrations, camp programs, and leadership training went virtual, bringing unexpected benefits. Residents in areas far from Jewish centers joined online, significantly increasing participation. Community members volunteered in droves, building even greater unity.



Through your dedication and partnership, we endured, becoming stronger than ever. A silver lining.

"I've never felt more connected to my community. When we were in person, we took so much for granted, but now we understand that community requires something from each of us," said Julia Dandolova, CEO of Shalom, the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria. *"We didn't crack. We came together. I couldn't be prouder."*

That connection starts with you and gives our Jewish communities hope knowing that you understand their needs, share their values and priorities, and safeguard their survival. This report highlights how your involvement inspired, energized, and ensured our fortitude and survival despite the difficulties we faced. Silver linings indeed.





Community Development

Shalom, the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria Programs

Despite the hardships of 2020, support from the Morrison portion of the XXXXXX Endowment Fund empowered Jewish leadership in Sofia, Bulgaria, to evaluate and create new solutions. More volunteers came forth than ever before and, for the first time, Jews in far-flung locations like Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Burgas and Varna could participate via online programming. A few highlights:

Limmud, planned for early May in person, shifted to several online seminars. On the first day, more than 500 people tuned into the Zoom, participating in 14 different lectures and programs.

The **Passover matzah program** traditionally involves community members picking up matzah packages at the synagogue, but that became impossible during lockdown. With one week's notice, we organized matzah delivery to more than 300 homes in the city. An enormous number of volunteers showed up, ready to mobilize for the community.

Since opening in 2019 with 75 students, the **Ronald S. Lauder Community Day School** (RSL) has grown to 108 K-6 students serving families active in the Jewish community. RSL is the only private Jewish day school in Bulgaria for this age group. A middle school and high school are being added. The RSL adapted to COVID challenges despite staff just starting to work together with little experience teaching at a Jewish school. While other area schools struggled to find a single online platform for teachers and students, RSL transitioned to a fully live online environment over one weekend. School was held online for most of the year. Close contact was maintained with parents to tweak the process as needed including lending 15 laptops to families lacking enough devices for home-schooling and working from home.

Noam, a native of Sofia, and his wife, have long participated in Jewish community events and holiday celebrations with their children who attended Gan Balagan Jewish daycare, Jewgathon summer camp, and are now both students at the RSL School. Noam turned a COVID-19 slump in his tourism business into an opportunity, teaching Hebrew online to community members, and now teaches at RSL. Thanks to you, Bulgaria's Jewish community is anchored by local leaders and activists like Noam, many of them alumni of JDC-supported youth activities and leadership programs. These men and women grew up in the community and are now taking the reins of Jewish life.



"Knowing there is strong support from such a faraway place, from people who believe in us, motivates me to be more active, implementing my own ideas and sharing my own experience," Noam says.

The Shalom Jewish community also continued supporting non-sectarian projects in Bulgaria. Based on the Jewish value of tikkun olam —the Jewish community worked on a **campaign to combat intolerance** toward the developmentally disabled, who are largely sidelined in Bulgaria. The campaign helps people understand that different is also "normal" and educates them about communicating with the disabled. In addition, the continued support of the Shalom Jewish community has advanced the Listen Up Foundation which advocates for **full inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing people**. The Jewish community raised funds for workshops to familiarize leaders of the deaf community in Bulgaria with the rights guaranteed by a new hearing-impaired law.

One Jewish leader reflects on JDC's role in the Bulgarian Jewish community: *"Every part of life requires good communication, but it's particularly true in communal work, where you interact with different people. I've learned that lesson in my own Jewish community, here in Sofia, Bulgaria. We needed someone to teach us how to make our dreams a reality. That was and still is JDC's role for our Bulgarian Jewish community: to listen, to mentor, and make us stronger —like the best kind of big brother or big sister."*



Maxim Delchev, director of education for Shalom, The Organization of Jews in Bulgaria, and liaison between the Ronald S. Lauder School and broader Bulgarian Jewish community.

JCC Warsaw Programs - Poland

Thanks to the XXXXXXX Endowment Fund, JCC Warsaw leaders were able to rise to the challenge of the pandemic, brainstorming innovative ways to help their constituency. Staff called community members to check in and assess needs. As a result, JCC Warsaw initiated a **crisis database** for its members and others in the community. If someone needed assistance, the JCC enlisted a volunteer to help. More than 150 volunteers signed up demonstrating the commitment of the local Jewish community to one another.

Community members **collected and refurbished used computers** to donate to children in need as part of a "free your junk" recycling campaign. One recipient, Sylwia, a young, single mother and her pre-teen daughter, were stuck at home with no computer and felt even more isolated.

"When someone from JCC Warsaw called to ask how I was and if I needed anything, I burst into tears. Just to hear that someone cares in this dark time touched me very deeply." More than simply reaching out, JCC Warsaw helped Sylwia obtain two secondhand laptops and taught her to use Zoom, through which Sylwia and her daughter joined JCC activities. "We are very grateful. I hope I can also be helpful to the community in the future," Sylwia tearfully told JCC staff over Zoom.

JCC Warsaw members were especially interested in **events that kept them connected to Jewish ritual**. The Shabbat for Dummies sessions, Zoom Seder and Shabbat packages that the JCC distributed during lockdown were all extremely popular and appreciated. JCC Warsaw organized activities that connected community members – even from afar – such as a challah exchange program in which families signed up to bake challah (at the JCC's Zoom sessions) for other families, leaving these delicious Shabbat treats at the recipient family's door.



The hosts of virtual community candle lighting

Virtual Hanukah Celebrations included "**Sweating out Sufganiyot**" morning Zoom workouts, with each day of Hannukah featuring a different type of exercise, and **Community Candle lighting** with community members hosting each night on Zoom.

In December, JCC Warsaw organized a **sandwich-making effort for the homeless**. The JCC provided supplies and members, working from home, packed sandwiches and soups, which JCC staff delivered to a local homeless advocacy group.

Despite challenges posed by COVID-19, JCC Warsaw pulled off its traditional **Purim fundraiser**. Instead of an in-person craft fair, the event took the form of a crowdfunding campaign, with



special gifts for donors. The campaign raised money for a struggling family in Eastern Poland, allowing them to replace their septic tank and procure a laptop so the children could keep up with their schooling. The JCC also hosted a virtual Purim party and a costume contest for kids.

For Passover, JCC Warsaw organized a **subsidized matzah sale**, helping community members access this holiday staple. Other Passover events included a **Zoom seder and a Facebook Live cooking class** featuring potato pizza and kosher for Passover chocolate cake.

The pandemic actually helped the **JCC expand its reach** – Jews from across Poland and Polish emigres joined the online activities – and the JCC forged a **new partnership** with the Lauder-Morasha High School in Warsaw which organized joint online poetry marathons that reached up to 100 people via livestream with over 2,000 watching the recordings.

JCC Director Agata Rakowiecka explained that the challenges of the pandemic helped crystallize the JCC's role. To Agata, the **JCC is a catalyst of Jewish connections** – inspiring Jewish life not only at the JCC building, but also in homes throughout Poland.

"Situations like this are a test, where you find out if the community you built is genuine," Agata says. "In hard times, we were still able to bring people together and help them feel like a community. We were where they wanted to be."

Pan European Leadership Training Seminars

Inspiring Jewish Community Lay and Professional Leaders

Early on in the coronavirus lockdowns, it became evident that community leaders would need targeted training and support to empower them to navigate this crisis. The high-quality guidance and peer networking opportunities our leaders required moved to an online format, allowing broader networks of lay leaders and professionals to help each other.

Your support of the **YESOD** initiative trained informal Jewish educators to continue reaching target populations online. This strategy was critical after in-person summer camps, Jewish Community Centers, and other community spaces – such an important Jewish educational platform – were cancelled or closed. YESOD's Community of Practice (CoP) empowered 45 Jewish camp directors, educators, and decision makers from 15 countries to share best practices and problem-solving ideas. As they mourned the loss of in-person camp, leaders reimagined Jewish camping for this unusual summer. YESOD offered professional skills-building seminars on "Being an Employer in 2020 & Beyond" and other topics. An organizational consulting expert offered practical pandemic guidance on staffing and human resources.

The **Leatid** leadership training program and its partner ECJC offered tailored online leadership development seminars for community lay leaders and professionals focusing on working with

your board during the crisis; defining operating principles for distance management; and sustained volunteer engagement.



Thanks to you, the pandemic did not cancel Leatid's **4th Summit of European Jewish Leaders**. Leatid and the Joint planned the first ever e-Summit of European Jewish leaders, held November 21-23. More than 200 leaders joined the virtual event to discuss and share challenges, opportunities and solutions facing their respective communities.

Naftoli Surovtsev, 33, values the

opportunity to network with Jewish professionals from diverse backgrounds. The skills and knowledge he has gained through the Joint's leadership training – especially YESOD - have greatly improved his capacity to fulfill his many challenging roles. As one of two paid Jewish professionals in the resort city of Baden Baden, Germany, Naftoli became a Jewish educator, religious leader, fundraiser and public relations coordinator.



"We are united around a common goal of becoming better professionals. We learn so much from each other," Naftoli said. "I used to try to do everything myself. Now I understand that the essence of leadership is to empower others, to build a team. I launched a volunteer initiative, and we now have 12 volunteers who help run community activities."

Junction: Cultivating Jewish Leaders Across Europe

This past year was far from typical for the Jewish networking group, **Junction**, as COVID-19 blocked its central activities: the annual conference in December and events throughout the year that unite and connect young Jewish adults in Europe and inspire them to become community leaders and innovators. Nevertheless, you made it possible for Junction to hold regular virtual activities — classes, discussions, resilience training and holiday celebrations — that engaged young adults and enabled them to stay connected with peers. The meetings and ongoing support of this close, online community were especially welcomed by young adults grappling with months of isolation due to lockdowns.



You provided valuable support to Jewish professionals like Blanka Nicevic in adapting their work to the coronavirus crisis. Blanka worked tirelessly to help homebound seniors in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. *“I’m proud that I have been able to help the most vulnerable members of my community during the pandemic. For me, that’s what being Jewish means — helping your community, no matter what.”*



A two-day **Junction Multipliers online conference** brought together 60 multipliers — Junction grantees and other young adults — to discuss their experiences and challenges of introducing and building impactful and sustainable initiatives in their communities. The conference examined pandemic-related changes to organizational dynamics and highlighted lessons for the future from the pandemic era. The online format enabled participants to meet with a group of JDC board members and lay leaders of North American Jewish communities and split into breakout rooms for intimate conversations about their vision for future Jewish life.

You supported Jewish social entrepreneurship across Europe, providing **grants and microgrants** to 17 projects. These ranged from ongoing events aimed at engaging Jewish students and young adults in Finland, Lithuania, Switzerland, France and Germany, to a newly established organization in Vienna dedicated to promoting Yiddish music and culture through concerts, workshops and jam sessions.

Measurement and Evaluation – ICCD

In 2020, the JDC-International Center for Community Development (ICCD) studied trends in Jewish life and the effect of community initiatives thanks to your support. The results help to meet current needs and plan for the future.



In partnership with the XXXXXXX Endowment Fund and JDC-ICCD, the **Zentralrat** umbrella organization of Germany Jewry completed its extensive survey of Jewish community life in Germany, analyzing input from 2,716 respondents. An English translation of the results was released in early 2021. Key takeaways:

- There is a need for more Jewish education directed at different age and target groups, especially unaffiliated Jews
- It is important that Jewish communities offer opportunities for meeting peers
- It is necessary to rethink the inclusion of secular Jewish people in communities, and how open and accommodating the communities are toward other ways of being Jewish
- Community leadership problems deter people from affiliating with the Jewish community

JDC-ICCD continued working with **Tarbut**, a new Jewish learning and leadership initiative for young Jewish adults in Poland and Hungary, to evaluate its seminars and activities. JDC-ICCD is analyzing results.

The **5th JDC European Leaders Survey** questionnaire was finalized. JDC-ICCD aimed to reach 1,000 Jewish leaders across Europe. The survey focused on lessons Jewish communities learned from the pandemic, what leaders expect the future to hold, sustainability and more. JDC-ICCD launched the survey in early 2021 and has publicized the [results](#).

Encouraging Interfaith Dialogue

In 2020, ICCD sought to broaden interreligious tolerance across Europe, and form strategic partnerships with organizations working in interfaith relations. For example:

Coexister's annual leadership training seminar unites young leaders from France and empowers them with knowledge and tools for building responses to prejudice and intolerance. In 2020, restricted by pandemic safety guidelines, Coexister devised a hybrid national event combining in-person and online activity for 30 groups of activists in 10 cities. ICCD was unable to support the expansion of Coexister to Berlin, as plans were delayed due to COVID-19.

JDC-ICCD collaborated with **Faiths Forum for London**, an interfaith organization dedicated to advancing understanding of different faiths by creating networks and projects between religious communities and wider society. The Forum advances leadership, capacity, and resilience in faith communities through training and resources. In November, the organization held an online seminar with high-level participants from various European cities, to discuss religious and racial intolerance stemming from COVID-19.

Youth Camps and Family Retreats

Jewish Camping in the Baltics and Bulgaria: Creating Jewish Spaces

COVID-19 brought the world to a halt, but it couldn't stop Jewish camping! For thousands of children in Europe, Jewish camps are their community, and more than ever, campers needed the togetherness, friendship, and meaning that camping adds to their lives. This year, concern for our campers' safety led to changes to the standard camping program, including suspending Szarvas sleepaway camp for the first time in 30 years. These changes were difficult, but **you ensured that Europe's Jewish children still had a camp experience.** Sleep-away camps became day camps, or moved online. Through ingenuity, intensive planning and flexibility, staff worked hard to maintain the camping tradition. **Thank you for keeping camp's magic alive during this unusual summer.**



Here is an overview of camp programs, including an innovative family Chanukah activity, that took place in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. In Poland and Romania, the second wave of the pandemic brought more stringent restrictions which prevented camp activity during this period.

Instead of a regional Olameinu Camp for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia held local day camps for community children and teens.



Olameinu Days in Latvia

July 13- 24 and July 27 – August 7:

The first session of Olameinu Days sold out in three hours of registration! Campers saw friends and spent a week at the beach, as camp was held in the seaside resort of Jurmala, 16 miles from Riga. The camp hosted two sessions, one for ages 6-12 and the second for 13-

17. The camp's theme was "The Jewish World"; each day highlighted a different global Jewish

community – with related discussions and activities. The teen session featured discussions of spirituality, while the "visit" to America involved a musical game in which participants identified popular American songs.

Estonia's Makom Jewish Day Camp, July 13- August 2, 2020:

"In these times of uncertainty, camp was like a breath of fresh air. It was exactly what I wanted after two months of sitting at home."

– **Makom Camper**

After many weeks in quarantine, both campers and counselors in Estonia were eager to sign up for camp. Meet Daniil, who recently started 12th grade in Tallinn. *"I first heard about Jewish camping from my older sister," Daniil explains, "She convinced our mother to send me to camp when I was eight., I've gone every summer – I went to every Jewish camp I could travel to."*



With international travel off limits, Makom Jewish Day Camp came to Tallinn, with each day centered around a different Jewish community. One day campers learned about Jewish communities in Africa. Another was dedicated to exploring similarities and differences between Ashkenazi and Sefardi communities. *"Every year I leave camp with more Jewish knowledge," says Daniil. "I'm interested in learning about Jewish life in other countries and am inspired to become more involved in local Jewish life."*



Estonia Autumn Camp Days, September 21-23, 2020

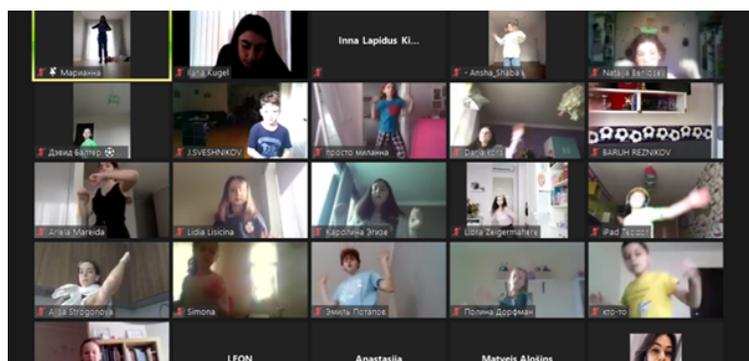
Even after postponing Le’haim camp from spring to fall, an overnight camp would not be possible under pandemic restrictions, so the Jewish community organized Autumn Camp Days instead. Participants were limited to 50 kids over two daily sessions: activities for 7 to 12-year-olds during the day, and themed evening programs for teens. Campers traveled via private transportation and followed strict precautions. Younger participants had hands-on opportunities related

to the theme, “Good Actions: Tikkun Olam, Tzedaka and Mitzvah.” Campers created tzedakah boxes and assembled and decorated Shabbat packages for the Jewish elderly, including Shabbat candles, tea, and a homemade challah. Teens studied Jewish history and traditions in English to practice the language and held a Shabbat dinner with a Jewish role-playing game.

Aviv Camp in Latvia: The Latvian Jewish community held an in-person, two-session camp in October 2020

Aviv Fall Camp, October 19-24, 2020

The constantly changing situation forced organizers to revise camp three times from an overnight to a day camp and then to multiple sessions for smaller groups.



Family Chanukah Activity: With Bulgaria under lockdown from November 2020 to January 2021, it was not possible to bring children together for Jewish camp. At one point, Bulgaria had the highest rate of COVID deaths in Europe, and many people were in economic distress. The Jewish community reached out to families with “Chanukah in a Box.” Responding to the community’s invitation, 130 families with camp-age children signed up to receive a box with eight packages, for the eight days of Chanukah. Each package contained DIY materials and gifts to help families celebrate Chanukah at home, accompanied by links to online activities with sessions on Chanukah decorations using materials in the box, and cooking Jewish food with a popular star of Bulgarian Master Chef. On the eighth day of Chanukah, an online concert of a much-loved Bulgarian band was streamed live from the Jewish community center after a candle-lighting ceremony.



Children

Instilling Hope in Poland

For decades, Poland has experienced political disruption, economic shifts, and increased anti-Semitism. The pandemic increased the ongoing sense of uncertainty felt by the Polish Jewish community. Rising unemployment and the high cost of living placed a strain on the community’s neediest members and created a growing class of “new poor” unable to make ends meet in the current climate. Ordinarily, Poland’s JCC and summer camps provide a source of respite and support – but government regulations and the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases kept the JCC shuttered and led to the cancellation of all camps.

Despite the sense of isolation and insecurity, 44 children and their families knew they had a shoulder to lean on. Thanks to you, they had enough food on the table, could visit the doctor when needed, and were dressed warmly for winter.

Keeping the Community Together – Even Under Quarantine

For families struggling with the day-to-day challenges of extreme poverty, Jewish camping and communal activities represent an opportunity to socialize, develop a Jewish identity, and to feel



part of a community. With these forums unavailable due to coronavirus, teens, parents, and staff improvised with online programming until they can be together again in person.

Camping - This summer, unfortunately, coronavirus made it impossible to ensure the health and safety of campers and staff in a traditional summer camp environment. Your gift helped to keep the camp magic alive. In July, for example, thanks to a (temporary) ease in restrictions, camp counselors were able to organize a live treasure hunt in Praga, a city neighborhood that was mainly Jewish before the Holocaust.

Warsaw JCC - The JCC continued to organize regular online programming for people of all ages. The children's Moadon (club) met three times a week, while teens attended youth movement meetings. Family activities included a Shabbat study group, Friday challah baking sessions, and weekly Havdala following by a virtual dance party.

Services for Children at Risk in Poland in 2020

Service	Number of Children in Poland
Food Programs	34
Medicine and Medical Programs	35
Emergency Assistance/Utilities	6
Material Support	35
Programs for Children with Disabilities	7



Caring for Needy Jewish Elderly

Welfare for NNV³ in the Baltics and Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, your support for Jewish older adults was critical as they were forced to quarantine. They struggled with loneliness, obtaining medicine and food, and using technology. Your grant empowered the Jewish community of Bulgaria to reach out to older adults to help them stay connected to the community and make sure their needs were met.

Shalom (the organization of Jews in Bulgaria) had to close the canteen in Sofia that provided hot meals for Jewish older adults. Shalom increased the number of **Meals on Wheels** and delivered to 254 older adults in and around Sofia. Volunteers grocery shopped for older adults who could not receiving Meals on Wheels.

During the pandemic, seniors were afraid to go to the doctor. A **medical hotline** was established in partnership with the Bulgaria Clinic. Older adults received consultations online, and when necessary, home visits from doctors in full protective gear. We distributed vitamins, immune boosters, masks, sanitizers, gloves, medications, and oximeters, all difficult to find on the market.

Social programming took place primarily online to keep homebound older adults connected. Shalom provided devices, Zoom and Skype training, exercise classes, art therapy, and discussions on Jewish topics to engage participants. Activity booklets were delivered to older adults unable to use technology. The community collected recipes from members and created a cookbook delivered to people's homes. Other booklets included physical exercises and at-home games. In June, when outdoor, in-person social programming returned, 150 older adults participated in yoga, drama, photography, and dance classes. Participants were thrilled to return to the Day Center and see each other again.

Your investment in the Jewish community of Bulgaria empowered people of all ages to reach out to older adults in this time of social distancing and make sure that they were cared for and not alone. Young adult volunteers delivered groceries and medicine. Teenagers participated in the **"Adopt a Grandma/Grandpa" program** calling older adults regularly. We sent a **"Neshama Bag"** to all community members over 55. Coloring books, exercise activities, and letters from students at our Jewish school were included. Youngsters wrote to more than 400 elderly Jews, incorporating heartfelt letters, pictures and stories. Older adults gave back to the community by recording stories for Gan Balagan children and Passover stories for families.

³ Non-Nazi Victims are elderly European Jews who are ineligible for restitution-funded support from the Claims Conference.

In the Baltics, high rates of infection occurred among clients, relatives, and staff. Unemployment rose, thereby decreasing the financial support families could provide to their elderly relatives. Professionals at the **Hesed Latvia Welfare Center** and the **Welfare Center in Estonia** developed platforms and techniques to relieve their clients' loneliness and anxiety. Your assistance made the situation bearable for 1,578 seniors through **homecare, food assistance, winter relief, emergency loans, and community socialization activities.**



In both Riga and Tallinn, client requests for homecare services significantly increased as the elderly were on lockdown. By providing homecare workers with protective equipment, homecare services could continue. Irina, 65, was among the new homebound clients in Latvia. At the height of the pandemic, her son, whom she lives with, lost his job. Their monthly income plummeted. Irina could not afford to buy food, receive medical care, or pay for electricity to heat her tiny two-room apartment. Thanks to your support, Irina receives food support, winter relief, and medical services. She also has a homecare worker to assist with personal hygiene and household chores and sit and chat over a cup of tea. Despite her challenges, Irina never lost her optimism. As she says, "A wise person learns to appreciate everything, even the rain." Being a Hesed client has made living by this motto that much easier.

Loneliness and isolation were ongoing challenges in both Latvia and Estonia, so professionals organized **online discussions and Kabbalat Shabbat gatherings.** Volunteers continued to play a vital role in the operations of both centers, regularly visiting elderly in person and by phone, providing technological assistance so that clients could log on to events, and delivering *matzot* for Passover. Case managers also maintained contact with clients.

In Latvia, the Hesed organized **online sessions** with health professionals on hygiene, vaccinations, and nutrition, and classes with the local rabbi brought Jewish history and tradition to the elderly's living rooms. Online psychological counseling sessions helped clients cope with anxiety. Weekly meetings provided elderly clients with tools to prevent depression, manage stress, and cultivate a positive mindset.

In Estonia, Hesed continued to develop online content including for its dedicated [YouTube channel](#) so that elderly could "tune in" to community news, announcements, and cultural and social programs. Online group and individual therapy sessions, recorded for later viewing, and social events were offered.



COVID Humanitarian Relief Fund

Coping with the Coronavirus Pandemic in Europe

2020 was a challenging year for everyone. The pandemic pushed thousands of Jewish families into economic and emotional distress and left those already in need with even greater challenges. Throughout Europe, Jewish communities struggled with reduced communal income as the demand for services grew.

Since the onset of the pandemic, JDC has been in continuous contact with communities across Europe to monitor emerging needs and to offer support. JDC's trademark resilience expertise helped equip communities to navigate this difficult period. JDC also provided emergency financial assistance to individuals in the hopes that timely aid would help prevent families who are not part of the "chronic welfare caseload" from becoming entrenched in poverty or despair.

This rush to action led to the creation of the **COVID Humanitarian Relief Fund** in May 2020: a response to the "new poor" families and elderly who, after losing their income, turned to communities for assistance to purchase basic necessities such as food and medicine.

Aiding families

The pandemic pushed thousands of Jewish families into economic distress and left those struggling with even more challenges.



The Humanitarian Relief Fund has assisted **15 communities** across Europe since May 2020



4,754 people facing financial strife received critical aid



1,744 families had their needs met by JDC in partnership with local Jewish communities

Thanks to your support, to date, the fund has assisted 15 communities in Europe. "I can't thank you enough for this help", shared a beneficiary from Spain. To ensure that this Relief Fund serves the individuals most in need, JDC requests that communities prepare a short situation update with information about those who have turned to them for help. Parameters for assistance can be shared by the communities, emphasizing their local needs. Additionally, JDC has established a Relief Fund Allocations Committee to review all applications, whose responsibility it is to

balance the existing resources and needs of many communities and countries. JDC allocations are then made for two-month periods to ensure that the aid remains dynamic and responds to the evolving local reality. Grantee communities are required to report monthly with detailed information on the distribution of funds. An audit process is put in place to ensure that the support is reaching the families in need.

Thank you for enabling us to serve the needs of hundreds of distressed families and individuals across Europe who suddenly plunged into poverty and insecurity. As a beneficiary from the Baltics said: "God bless all those people who support us in these hard days!".



The table below details the assistance provided since May of 2020 in Europe. Allocations are made per household, knowing that a household represents, on average, 2 people.

JDC Europe Emergency Humanitarian Fund Monthly Overview and Expenses - May-December 2020			
Community	# of households unduplicated	# of individuals unduplicated	May-Dec. 2020 Expenses (\$)
Antwerp, Belgium	100	406	73,580
Athens, Greece	186	376	172,880
Bucharest, Romania	90	188	53,520
Bratislava and Slovakia	5	5	1,300
Budapest, Hungary	456	931	202,500
Istanbul, Turkey	217	490	73,300
Madrid, Spain	29	75	26,280
Milan, Italy	85	200	101,400
Prague and Czech Rep	24	85	12,000
Riga, Latvia	95	194	66,700
Rome, Italy	200	950	160,700
Sarajevo and BIH	50	137	32,000
Small communities in Italy	112	244	102,960
Sofia, Bulgaria	40	111	29,860
Tallinn, Estonia	55	152	40,390
Total	1,744	4,544	1,149,370

Looking forward

Although it is impossible to predict exactly what will happen in the coming year, most projections are for little change in the local economies and additional lockdowns, and there is even a chance for further decline. The situation may well get worse before it improves. Originally conceived as a one-year program, the evolving reality suggests needs will remain high and ongoing for longer than anticipated but also time-limited. This will demand our shared commitment to this cause to help communities' "new poor" families and elderly receive food, medicine, and shelter subsidies. JDC will keep you informed as our understanding evolves.



With Deep Thanks

“The community is my family. I cannot imagine how I would survive without its support. G-d bless everyone who helps disadvantaged people like me.”

-Ljubov, 65, homebound senior in Estonia

As the challenges of 2020 stretched into 2021, the **XXXXXXX Endowment Fund** remained an anchor of support. Providing aid to the vulnerable Jewish communities of Europe during a global pandemic was one of the most challenging situations we have ever faced in the region. **Yet with your additional \$100,000 support, our lifesaving aid did not stop, even for one day.**

JDC’s 106 years of experience working under extreme conditions and extensive, “boots on the ground” understanding of local communities, allowed us to adapt our work to continue care. Your support provided food to the hungry, medicine to the sick, and critical care to homebound, isolated, Jewish seniors. Your generosity helped Europe's most at-risk Jewish children and ensured that Warsaw's Jews had community services to connect and guide them in these difficult times.

We live in a time of great uncertainty, and the coronavirus pandemic has affected every one of us in profound ways. Yet one thing is certain: our work to save Jewish lives and build Jewish life in Europe is more critical than ever. **We could not do this without you.** On behalf of all those who are sustained by your compassion and care, thank you for providing comfort to our Jewish family in Europe when they needed it most.