

## THE CHANGING SCENE FOR EUROPEAN JEWRY: Report of the European Conference of Jewish Communal Service, October 2002

The regional Conference for Europe of Jewish Communal Service was attended by sixty participants from eight European countries: France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Sweden, and Belgium. Israel and the United States were represented as well. Most sessions took place at the Strasbourg Congress Hall but the closing plenary was symbolically held at the Council of Europe building where the participants were welcomed, in the name of the Council, by its director of external relations. Simultaneous translation in English and French was provided.

The Conference addressed many of the issues to be discussed at the next World Conference of Jewish Communal Service quadrennial meeting, to be held in Jerusalem in November, 2003. It specially focused on topics at the core of the European Conference's session at the quadrennial, which will be devoted to a changing Europe, the new challenges of accelerated changes, and the role of community workers in that context.

At the opening session, Anthony Lerman, director of the United Kingdom Hanadiv Charitable Foundation (see his article in this issue), and David Saada, director of the French Fonds Social Juif Unifié, gave two different and hence stimulating insights on the relations between Jews and their Jewish and non-Jewish environments. Lerman argued that more networking between Jewish

communities and institutions is a need that should and could be answered with determination, whereas Saada expressed his concern about the relations between Jews and their non-Jewish environment as manifested by new anti-Semitism and suspicions of communitarianism.

The participants then split into three workshops: (1) the development of relationships and common programs of the Jewish communities in Europe in the fields of aging, health, education, and teaching, and the potential offered by new technologies; (2) the demographic and sociological changes within the different communities, particularly those linked to migrations inside Europe; and (3) shared experiences and new perspectives in the domains of training, education, culture, and heritage.

The Conference took place in an especially warm and friendly climate; the organization by the management of the ORT school in Strasbourg of the Conference highly contributed to the success of the meeting, not to talk of the brilliant presentation by Ted Comet on "how the Americans see the European Jews" where Ted demonstrated his incredible capacity to mix English, Hebrew, and French and be fully understood by all his listeners.

*Respectfully Submitted*  
*Nelly Hansson, Reporter*