

**Jewish life in Poland:
Achievements, challenges and priorities
since the collapse of communism**

Konstanty Gebert and Helena Datner

The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)** is a London-based independent research organization, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in Britain and across Europe by conducting research and developing policy in partnership with those best placed to influence Jewish life.

Authors

Konstanty Gebert is an international reporter and columnist at *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's biggest daily, and an active member of the country's Jewish community. He was a pro-democracy activist and organizer of the Jewish Flying University in the 1970s, and worked as an underground journalist in 1980s while Poland was under martial law. He is the founder of the Polish Jewish intellectual bi-monthly *Midrasz* and a board member of the Taube Centre for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland. He is the author of ten books, including some on post-war Polish Jewry. His essays have appeared in two dozen collective works in Poland and abroad, and his articles in many newspapers around the world.

Helena Datner has a PhD in sociology and is an expert in modern Polish Jewish history, antisemitism and the contemporary Polish Jewish community. She served as head of the JDC-sponsored Jewish Culture Educational Centre in Warsaw for over ten years, and was chairperson of the Warsaw Jewish community from 1999-2000. She now works at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and is responsible for the post-war gallery of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which is currently being built.

Series editor

Jonathan Boyd is Executive Director of JPR / Institute for Jewish Policy Research and a specialist in the study of contemporary Jewry.

Project director

Lena Stanley-Clamp is the commissioning editor of this JPR series of reports. She is also the founding Director of the European Association for Jewish Culture.

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Editor's introduction

Since the fall of communism over twenty years ago, East-Central Europe has experienced tremendous political, economic and social change, and the Jews living there have inevitably been affected by the developments that have taken place. The advent of democracy, the integration into the European Union, the rise of populism, major demographic shifts and the global recession have all had an impact on Jewish communities throughout Europe. All these factors combined call for the rigorous identification and up-to-date analysis of the changing needs and challenges facing the Jewish communities in East-Central Europe today.

With this in mind, we are publishing this report as the second in a series examining how Jewish communal life has evolved and developed in East-Central Europe since the collapse of communism. This particular report focuses on Poland; the first one looked at Hungary, and the other two reports, scheduled to be published in 2012, will look at Jewish life in the Ukraine and Germany.

The project has its origins in two organizations: the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) and the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe (RFHE). JPR, a London-based research institute, consultancy and think-tank that specializes in contemporary Jewish affairs, has stood at the forefront of Jewish community research in the UK for several decades. Its work focuses primarily on Jews in Britain, but the Institute has a longstanding interest in Jewish life throughout Europe, and its publications include *Jewish Restitution and Compensation Claims in Eastern Europe and the Former USSR* (1993), *A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe* (1996), *Mapping Jewish culture in Europe today: a pilot project* (2002), *Jews and Jewry in contemporary Hungary: results of a sociological survey* (2004), and *Voices for the Res Publica: The common good in Europe* (2006-9). JPR has also had a longstanding interest in Jewish culture in Europe, and was a co-founder of the European Association for Jewish Culture, with which it retains close ties.

RFHE is a key funder of contemporary Jewish activity across Europe, and has supported a range of educational, cultural, heritage and community-based initiatives in over forty European countries

during the past decade. The Rothschild family has a long tradition of philanthropy going back to the eighteenth century, and from the very beginning, it has been concerned with ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups across Europe, health care, housing and education. Today, under its Chairman Sir Victor Blank and Executive Director Sally Berkovic, the focus of its activities is academic Jewish studies and Jewish heritage.

Both organizations – JPR and RFHE – had reached the conclusion independently of one another that the time was ripe for a review of East-Central European Jewish life, and over the course of several discussions, elected to partner on this project. Our shared purpose is to paint a series of portraits of Jewish life in different countries within the region in order to allow both community insiders and outsiders to reflect on each community's achievements, challenges and priorities. JPR developed the initial project proposal which, in turn, was shaped and finessed by RFHE. Throughout the process, JPR has taken full responsibility for research matters, and RFHE has provided funding and been a consistent source of advice and support. I am particularly grateful to my colleagues at JPR, Lena Stanley-Clamp and Judith Russell, for their help with the project. Lena Stanley-Clamp has served with distinction as project director throughout the course of the initiative, commissioning its authors and editing the draft report. Judith Russell has been centrally involved in the final stages of publication.

In recruiting researchers to undertake the work, we looked for individuals with excellent qualitative research credentials, experience in the field, and the capacity to understand and analyze the particular idiosyncracies of Jewish life in a sophisticated, independent and sensitive manner. In the particular case of Poland, we recruited Konstanty Gebert, an international reporter and columnist at *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the country's biggest daily paper, and an active member of the Jewish community. Gebert was a democratic opposition activist in the seventies, when he was also an organizer of the Jewish Flying University, and an underground journalist in the eighties when Poland was under martial law. He is the founder of the Polish Jewish intellectual bi-monthly *Midrasz*, and a board

member of the Taube Centre for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland. He has taught in Poland, Israel and the United States. He has written ten books, including some on post-war Polish Jewry; his essays have appeared in two dozen collective works in Poland and abroad, and his articles in many newspapers around the world.

He was assisted in the research by Helena Datner who holds a PhD in sociology and has studied for many years the contemporary and 19th century history of Polish Jews, as well as modern antisemitism, and published extensively on these topics. For over ten years she was head of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, also known as 'the Joint')-sponsored Educational Centre of Jewish Culture in Warsaw. In 1999-2000 she was chairperson of the Warsaw Jewish community. She is currently responsible for the post-war galleries at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which is being built, and works in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

Konstanty Gebert and Helena Datner, along with the researchers involved in the other country reports in this series, were asked to address four key questions:

- i What were the major milestones and developments over the past twenty years in the community?
- ii Which philanthropic investments (local, national, regional or pan-European) over the same period are notable, either because of the significant impact they have had, or because they failed to achieve their desired outcome?
- iii What are the central challenges facing the community today?
- iv What initiatives and investments are most needed in order to strengthen the community in the future on the local, national, regional and pan-European level?

The researchers were further asked to examine each question with reference to the most pertinent areas of Jewish life, namely:

- Jewish religious life;
- Jewish education (formal and informal);

- Jewish cultural development;
- academic Jewish studies;
- preservation of Jewish heritage;
- young adult (18-30) engagement;
- leadership development;
- innovation and social entrepreneurship;
- funding and philanthropy;
- welfare (children and the elderly);
- combating antisemitism;
- Israel education, advocacy and *aliyah* [emigration to Israel].

Finally, the researchers were asked to bring into their analysis any existing demographic data, any relevant social issues within the community, and the broader political context considered necessary to help the reader to best understand the community.

The research for the Poland report was conducted between May and November 2010. Qualitative methods were used: 12 one-to-one interviews and a focus group discussion were carried out, lasting for between one and three hours. In order to be eligible, interviewees needed to hold a significant role in Jewish institutional and community life, have knowledge of several of the central issues listed above, and be, in the view of the researchers, highly likely to remain decision-makers in Jewish communal life for the foreseeable future. In the analysis, we have sought to represent the fundamental viewpoints and differences of opinion we heard, as well as the suggestions for alternative ways forward which were proposed by the interviewees. Though a sustained attempt was made to ensure that participants (who remain anonymous in accordance with the methodology adopted for this project) represented a broad variety of viewpoints, the general picture emerging from their remarks does not aspire to be fully representative. It reflects a typology of opinions and perceptions prevalent within the community at the time of polling.

The inclusion of the numerous quotations that punctuate the report should not be misinterpreted as our endorsement of any particular views, but rather simply as illustrations of perspectives

we believed worthy of inclusion in a report like this. Whilst it might have added insight to attribute each quotation to a particular source, we deliberately kept all of them anonymous in order to allow respondents greater freedom to speak openly and with candour. We hope and believe that the result of our work is a rich and insightful portrait of Polish Jewish life that captures multiple perspectives, but nevertheless points to a clear set of recommendations concerning how the contemporary community might best respond to the wide range of challenges it faces.

Together with the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe, we hope that this report, alongside the others in the series, will provide a guide to all those wishing to understand, develop

or invest in the future of Jewish life in Europe. It is aimed at community development professionals, national and international donors and foundations, community leaders, researchers, academics, and ultimately, the communities themselves. We plan to disseminate the reports widely in order to raise awareness of the issues that exist, and our hope and intention is that all of the reports in the series will serve to help all supportive and interested parties to discover new and thoughtful insights about each community, develop new and creative policy ideas for each community, and ultimately, make new and effective investments in each community.

Jonathan Boyd
Executive Director, JPR

1 Introduction: the burden of the past

For Poland's Jews, as, indeed, for all inhabitants of Central Europe, the Second World War really ended only in 1989, with the fall of communism. The Soviet-imposed system, though initially responsive to some Jewish concerns, soon turned hostile to most Jewish aspirations to preserve their own separate identity, and occasionally lapsed into overt antisemitism. Such was the case in Poland in 1968, when the last State-sponsored antisemitic campaign in Europe forced some 15,000 Jews to leave the country. On the other hand, however, the communists were ideologically opposed to the traditional standard-bearers of antisemitism: the extreme nationalist right, and by keeping them at bay, provided the Jewish community with a basic sense of security. The deal the authorities offered was as follows: be docile and we will protect you. It did not seem the worst possible offer for the generation which survived both Hitler and Stalin. Younger Jews, born after the war, usually rejected it, either by refusing to become involved in any form of Jewish life, or – a clearly minority option, and available only from the late 70s onwards – by trying to recreate some kind of Jewish life outside of the official structures tolerated by the communist state. When that state crumbled, however, and a new, democratic Polish state began to emerge, the future of its Jewish citizens was far from clear. It was not certain that they would find a place in the emerging new Poland, nor that they would want, or be able, to claim one. But the official structures that had been in place in the Jewish community since the war were not without merit, even if widely criticized.

The Jewish Socio-Cultural Association (Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów, TSKŻ), which was set up in 1950 to replace all the other Jewish secular organizations, used to be the Party's 'conveyor belt' to the Jewish 'toiling masses', even if not always a servile one. Proudly Yiddishist and militantly anti-religious, it combined an opportunistic compliance with the demands of the state with the cultivation of a genuine pre-war tradition of Jewish radicalism and Yiddishism. This legacy, however, had with time become a parody of itself: a young Jewish activist in the city of Wrocław, when he asked in the 1980s why Jewish traditions were not being observed within the organization, was told: "We

did celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution, didn't we?" On the other hand, a Yiddish literary tradition was maintained, and authors continued to write in Yiddish until the 1980s. Most importantly, the TSKŻ institutions, from local clubs to summer camps, had provided the post-war generation with a genuine Jewish milieu – one which had ended with the antisemitic campaign of 1968. In the period that followed this major fault line in the history of the Jewish community, TSKŻ clubs spread out over Poland, and particularly its Warsaw headquarters which also houses the Yiddish-language State Jewish Theatre, were the only places where Jews could speak and read Yiddish, take off the protective garb of assimilation and breathe – just slightly – more freely. It was then, and remains, the largest Jewish organization.¹

The Union of Congregations of the Mosaic Faith (Związek Kongregacji Wyznania Mojżeszowego, ZKWM) was the second largest, and resented the TSKŻ's privileged access to the communist authorities and its anti-religious leanings. Officially constituted after the Second World War – the government having refused to recognize the continuity of religious congregations set up by survivors – it did not even own the synagogues its members prayed in: they had been nationalized, together with other "German and abandoned property" by a government decree in 1945. The Union's main task was to provide for its members' religious needs – this was difficult, since even importing *matzot* [unleavened bread for Passover] often involved sensitive negotiations in government offices – and to provide the ageing membership with basic welfare, thanks to aid coming essentially from the JDC. While there was something of a generational rotation within TSKŻ, this was not the case in ZKWM since most of the children and grandchildren of the religious Jews were either abroad, or had assimilated, unable to withstand the obvious hostility of State authorities, and the hardly friendlier attitude of the Church and of society at large. Of course, as elsewhere, assimilation was driven by a number

1 It has 2,700 members at the time of writing. Note: all organizational membership data in this report are based on information provided by the organizations.

of factors, not only by fear. Throughout the communist period, and certainly after 1968, it was simply not possible to lead a normal Jewish religious life in Poland: kosher food was almost unavailable, there were no rabbis and marriage prospects within the community were almost nil. Furthermore, religious Jews were simply much more visible than non-observant ones, and therefore more exposed to antisemitism. For all those reasons, religious Jews tended to leave. Due to the combined impact of assimilation and emigration, the ranks of religious Jews shrank, and their average age grew. Today, the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations (Związek Gmin Wyznaniowych Żydowskich w Polsce, ZGWŻ), the successor to the ZKWM, has some 1,250 members.

Apart from the above organizations, the Jewish community also had two major institutions: the Jewish Historical Institute and the State Jewish Theatre. The Institute, built around the archives of the Warsaw Ghetto collected by Emanuel Ringelblum, had been a serious institution of learning till 1968. The Theatre, which performed in Yiddish, had been a major theatre until then. Although both had suffered substantially as a result of the antisemitic campaign, they remained at least shell institutions and constituted reference points for much of Jewish activity.

Finally, in the late 1970s a group of young “Poles of Jewish origin” – for lack of a better term – set up an unofficial organization called the Jewish Flying University (Żydowski Uniwersytet Latający, ŻUL). Meeting in private apartments, participants discussed general Jewish issues and their personal identity concerns. Though not underground, the ŻUL was nonetheless unofficial and, as such, viewed with suspicion by the state authorities and by the sanctioned Jewish community. It was to contribute significantly to the Jewish renewal after 1989.

1989 was, of course, a fundamental breakthrough for Poland. The country recovered its independence and was able to live under a free and democratic regime. After the breakthrough that year, three more organizations joined the expanding spectrum of organized Jewish life. The Association of Jewish War Veterans, which currently has about 1,000 members, is a generation-specific organization protecting the

rights and interests of its members. Similarly, the Association of the Children of the Holocaust caters for people who survived the *Shoah* as children – all of them in hiding under adoptive Polish identities, quite a few of whom converted to Catholicism. This last association, apart from acting for the social welfare of its members, also became a very important forum for the discussion of the extremely traumatic events of their childhood. The third organization that joined the fray was the somewhat grandly named Polish Union of Jewish Students, which attracted some 200 members. It later dissolved due to financial difficulties and was recreated as the All-Polish Jewish Youth Organization (ZOOM). The setting up of these organizations clearly indicated that the Jewish community was more diverse than it was originally thought.

This was soon confirmed by changes within the religious community itself. From mid-1989 onwards there was again a daily *minyan* [a quorum of ten adult males required for certain religious obligations] at Warsaw Nożyk Shul, and, for the first time in fifty years, a Jewish wedding was celebrated that year at the synagogue between a Polish convert and an American Jew. Then the first *bar mitzvah* in thirty years indicated that basic communal functions were being carried out again, signifying a return to normalcy. At the same time, cooperation between the secular TSKŻ and the religious community started to grow, while the setting up of the – largely ineffectual – Coordinating Commission of Jewish Organizations and Institutions in Poland indicated that, finally, there was something to coordinate. Shimon Peres’ visit in late 1989 highlighted for the first time since the breaking of relations in 1967 the importance of Israel, both for Poland and especially for the Polish Jewish community. The same year saw the creation of the Centre for the Study of Jewish History and Culture in Poland at Warsaw University, a turning point in the development of Jewish studies.

However, probably the most important development was the setting up in late 1988 of the small private Jewish kindergarten. The kindergarten, sponsored after a short time by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in New York, was to develop into an elementary school, eventually also expanding into a junior high, the first Jewish school in Poland after the Jewish educational

system was closed down by the state authorities in 1968. Today the Lauder school in Warsaw has almost 300 students – even if in many classes most of them are not Jewish – and is perhaps the single most important institution in the Jewish community in Poland.

Throughout the 1990s, the community continued to grow, although many of the main events were largely symbolic, such as the ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It should, however, be stressed that in the same year as the anniversary of the liberation of the camp was observed, the Warsaw Nożyk synagogue had its first *bat mitzvah* since 1939, clearly indicating that the community was looking forward, and not only to the past. As it would turn out, 1997 was to be a crucial year. A law on the relationship between the Polish state and the Jewish religious community, negotiated for four years in Parliament, was finally passed. It not only provided a framework for the functioning of the Jewish religious community in Poland, but also involved the restitution of communal property. This would, in time, provide a source of income enabling the community to largely emancipate itself from charitable donations, which had previously constituted the main part of its budget. However, at the same time, it would exacerbate conflicts between different groups within the Jewish community, as only the established, and largely, if nominally, Orthodox ZGWŻ was the beneficiary of the restitution law. The position of the ZGWŻ thus became dominant in the community, generating resentment. The passage of the law also provoked a bitter conflict between the ZGWŻ and international Jewish organizations, which did not consider the ZGWŻ – or indeed any Jewish organization in Poland – a legitimate heir to pre-war Polish Jewry. This second conflict eventually ended with a compromise settlement, which made both the ZGWŻ and the Claims Conference partners in communal property restitution.

In the same year of 1997, a plot of land was allocated for the construction of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews – an institution which is still in development at the time of writing. The Museum, which will clearly become a fundamental element of the Jewish intellectual and cultural landscape, was evolving in a very characteristic

way even then. Then chairman of the ZGWŻ, Paweł Wildstein, wrote at that time: “Jewish culture is being created not only by Jews, but also by people not connected to Judaism, but who discovered in Jewish culture either universal or particular values, and without whom this culture would be impoverished.” Even more important than the Museum was the proliferation of various non-Jewish initiatives, usually at the local level, aiming at the preservation of what was left of the legacy of Polish Jewry. This indication that interest in things Jewish was not limited to Jews alone, and that consequently, Jewish culture would develop in interaction with non-Jewish participants, was a very clear-sighted analysis of things to come.

Alongside those optimistic developments of 1997 – another of which was the setting up of the separate Jewish community in Warsaw (before then Warsaw Jews belonged to the Union of the Jewish Communities, but did not have an organization of their own) – there was an attempt to fire-bomb the Nożyk synagogue in Warsaw. This was indicative of an antisemitism that was already widespread in the country earlier in the decade, and which was poisoning the country’s social and political climate. This antisemitism was visible both in the political rhetoric of the time, and in public opinion polls. A 1993 poll showed that only 15% of Poles felt friendly towards Jews, with 51% feeling unfriendly. The survey, repeated each year, indicated, however, that friendly feelings grew, while unfriendly feelings declined, if not consistently or in correlation. In 2008, for the first time, the number of those feeling friendly (34%) was higher than those feeling unfriendly (32%). Other polls, however, indicate a more worrying perspective: in a survey published by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 2005, 56% agreed that “Jews have too much influence in the world” – the highest response of all the European countries polled. In other words, even if attitudes had improved, some basic antisemitic stereotypes remained unchanged.

Two years later, in 1999, Beit Warszawa, a Reform congregation, was set up in Warsaw. Four years later it became affiliated to the Union of Progressive Judaism. Beit Warszawa continues to be active in Warsaw, regardless of internal organizational conflicts which had badly shaken the Reform community. It provides an alternative

source of Jewish spirituality to the Orthodox community and has over 200 affiliates. Another smaller Reform community, Beit Kraków, was set up in the city of Kraków. At the other end of the Jewish spiritual spectrum, a Chabad Lubavitch synagogue opened in Warsaw in 2005. Chabad Lubavitch, previously not active in Poland, now also runs a *yeshiva* [institute for the study of traditional Jewish texts], in which students from North America and Israel study in Poland for a term.

It is impossible to assess accurately the size of the Jewish community in Poland, as it is impossible to define who is a Jew. In the last national census in 2002, 1,137 people declared their “ethnicity” as Jewish. This is a surprisingly low number, given the fact that the combined membership of different Jewish organizations surpasses it. This indicates both the flawed nature of the census and the very unclear criteria under which individuals identify themselves as Jewish, or not. It is likely that individuals possessing a strong Jewish identity – most notably the elderly – did self-identify as ethnically Jewish. However, it is important to note two shortcomings in the census question: first, that it required respondents to select ‘Jewish’ over and above ‘Polish’ as there was no possibility of ticking both categories; and second, that many people who do identify as Jewish, may consider this to be a religious or cultural identity rather than an ethnic one.

Indeed, if Jews were defined differently from the way they are in the census, the result would almost certainly be very different. Some light was shed on this by a survey conducted in the late 1990s under the auspices of JDC. Applying a snowball method, and supplemented by Claims Conference beneficiaries data, the number of Jews was ascertained at 4,500. The territorial distribution was similar to that of the 2002 census, and the age distribution was as follows: over 65 years: 51%; 41-65 year-olds: 34%; 26-40 year-olds: 10%; under 20 years: 5%. These results are an estimate only, based solely on participants’ beliefs and knowledge about who, among the people they knew at the time, was Jewish.

By way of comparison, it may be significant to note that 30,957 individuals declared to be of Ukrainian ethnicity, while the Ukrainian population is in fact assessed at 300,000-400,000.

According to census data, Jews are among the most aged, but at the same time best educated of the national minorities: 80% have secondary, and over 50% higher education (42% and 10%, respectively, for the general population). Most Jews (40%) reside in the Mazovia region, which, in practice, means Warsaw; 20% live in Lower Silesia (Wrocław and surrounding areas); 9% in Upper Silesia; and 6% in the Łódź voivodship.² The position of Warsaw as the main centre of Jewish life started to develop after the wave of emigration in 1956-57, and became fixed after the wave of emigration following March 1968.

It is estimated that the total membership of the different Jewish organizations in Poland is approximately 8,000, although that number, like all others, has also been challenged. Furthermore, some 15,000 people are “Jewishly active,” one way or another. This may involve, for example, sending children to the Jewish summer camp, subscribing to a Jewish publication or going to synagogue once a year for the High Holidays. Finally, according to some observers, probably another 15,000 people self-identify, but are not in any way publicly active as Jews. Those numbers, however, only constitute rough estimates. Even if taken at face value, they would indicate that Jews constitute 0.1% of the Polish population – as compared to 10% before the Second World War. Furthermore, a large number of Polish Jews have a dual identity, both Polish and Jewish. This is due not only to a legacy of fear, but is indeed an essential component of their identity.

2 G. Gudaszewski, Demograficzno- społeczna charakterystyka obywateli polskich deklarujących “narodowość niepolską” w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym 2002, (Socio-demographic profile of Polish citizens declaring non-Polish nationality) in: Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego 2002, (National minorities in Poland in the light of the National Census 2002) L. Adamczuk, S. Kodyński (Eds), Scholar, Warszawa 2006

2 The crucial impact of Jewish philanthropy from abroad

Two Jewish philanthropic organizations which are active in Poland clearly stand out in the words of the participants of the survey: JDC (“The Joint”) and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. “The Joint made us who we are” said one participant, referring to the communist period and immediately after, when JDC supported not only the Jewish institutions, but individual Jews as well. Its activity was not only limited to welfare, but also involved the financing of camps and seminars, important for the institutional continuity of Polish Jewry. Today, JDC has withdrawn from direct contributions to individuals and families, but it sponsors Limmud, a hugely popular educational programme which, in its third year in 2010, had several hundred Jews participating in seminars and discussions, and at least twice as many turned away because of lack of space.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation appeared in Poland in the late 1980s and immediately established a relationship with the members of the Jewish Flying University in Warsaw. The Jewish kindergarten, initially set up by two Jewish families in Warsaw, received direct sponsorship from the Foundation. The Foundation also started running summer camps for Jews. The Foundation’s programmes in Poland were run under Orthodox supervision, and whilst this dovetailed with the religious needs of a minority within the independent Jewish milieu in Warsaw, it was a minority that, at the time, played a critical leadership role. As a result, the Lauder Foundation was able to shape and mould the public image of Polish Jewry in the early 1990s. “The school was set up thanks to the Lauder Foundation” commented a survey participant active in Jewish education. “No other foundations were interested in education.” This is certainly the case as far as formal education is concerned, although JDC actively supported informal Jewish education. “The Lauder Foundation was very important and influential in the years between 1989 till 1997” commented another respondent. “The dollar was really strong and the Lauder Foundation therefore had a lot to say. In fact it could decide

about everything. It could decide who could educate the educators, who got invited, what courses were being offered.” Of course, had the 1989 breakthrough not happened, these and other Jewish philanthropic organizations would not have had the impact they have had.

In recent years, JDC has cut back its activities in Poland, and the Lauder Foundation has withdrawn almost entirely, except for funding for the Lauder Morasha School in Warsaw. However, other Jewish organizations have become active, in particular the Taube Foundation, which sponsors events such as the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, supports institutions including the Jewish Historical Institute and, in general, invests in programmes aimed at furthering Polish-Jewish understanding. However, at present the impact of other Jewish organizations from abroad is much less significant than twenty years ago. The 1997 law on relations between the Polish state and the Jewish religious communities, which has enabled the process of restitution of communal property, has given the religious Jewish community – its beneficiary as determined by law – the possibility to become somewhat self-funding. This has substantially changed the situation of Polish Jewry, also in respect to sponsors abroad. The Polish state also plays a role, by supporting Jewish publications and cultural initiatives, as part of a consistent policy of support for national minorities.

The Taube Foundation is also one of the main donors to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the single biggest project of Jewish interest in Poland. The Museum, an NGO which is a joint venture of the Polish state, the city of Warsaw and the Jewish Historical Institute association, is expected to open in 2013; it will be devoted to presenting the history of Jews in Poland both as a part of Polish and of Jewish history. It will not concentrate on the Shoah – though obviously the war years will be a very important element of the exhibition – but on the spectacular achievements of Polish Jewry in the 700 years which preceded it, and also on post-war

efforts at reconstruction. Using an innovative multi-media presentation technique instead of the usual exhibits in glass cases, it is expected to draw hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Launched with an initial grant of 20 million Polish zlotys from the government, it has since relied on foreign philanthropy, mainly Jewish, for its funding. Though some Polish Jews express concern that the Museum will deplete philanthropic resources which would have been available for other Jewish projects in Poland, most agree that its expected impact makes this risk well worth taking.

Focus group participants complained that sponsors tended to continue supporting initiatives which may have become outdated over time. One commented: “The first camps in Rychwałd [organized by the Lauder Foundation

from the early 90s onwards] had a very open formula. They resembled Limmud very much. At any given moment there could be perhaps seven different lectures – say, three secular ones and four religious ones – given by very different people, from Israel and the United States, usually at a very high level. And I later observed the marked deterioration of the entire concept of an open community. That climate has been lost, for sure.” The Lauder camps, once open to all, no longer respond to emerging community needs. In addition, younger community members complained that their aspirations were not being sufficiently addressed: they noted, for example, that the project of setting up a coffee shop which would promote Jewish culture was apparently turned down by a potential sponsor on the grounds that it was “not Jewish enough”.

3 The Jewish community: a nebulous existence

The most salient feature of how most survey participants view the last twenty years of Jewish life in Poland is just how their perceptions differ from person to person. It is as if there were no master narrative, and each individual's story depended upon his or her perspective, family background, town of origin, situation in life, generational group and gender. In fact, as one of the participants commented: "I see this as a series of different histories. I certainly do not see it as one history. And this is both because of the fact we are so scattered and because of the very different histories of the people to whom I refer here. And I think this is a key issue. I do not have the feeling that a community exists. I have a feeling that there are [only] circles of friends who understand each other well. [And] these are not big circles."

The feeling that there is no community was voiced by a number of the survey participants. Given this feeling, it is hardly surprising that most participants, when identifying the roots of their Jewish identity, spoke of their personal family histories. "I feel an obligation. I have the feeling that my family should not have survived for nothing, that I should be proud that I'm Jewish and therefore my idea is to collect and retain people of Jewish origin within the community." Another participant made more direct reference to her own circumstances. "Of course, like most of us, I married a Pole, a Catholic who could tolerate the fact that there would be no marriage in church, but could not bear the fact that the children would not be baptized and would not go to religion classes. I wanted to make sure that my own children would not find themselves in the same situation [when they marry]."

A minority of survey participants had a different family background. "More or less around 1990," said one, "as I had a small child and I wanted to raise it Jewish, I realized that this could not take place in the same way as I had been educated. That is, it would not take place amongst people who spoke Yiddish, who read Yiddish, who would send their children to the Jewish summer camp." This milieu had disappeared, and the Jews still around were almost all assimilated.

Whatever the reason – out of a sense of commitment, because of the memory of the *Shoah*, out of the wish to avoid the trauma of enforced assimilation, or the desire to reproduce, at least to an extent, the experience of raising one's children Jewish within a Jewish environment – survey participants were highly motivated to join Jewish institutions to look for some kind of Jewish future for their children. At the same time, many 'Poles of Jewish origin,' deciding that after the end of communism it was now safe to try and find out what the story of that origin was, were looking for an environment in which to explore their identity.

"The question", commented an Orthodox survey participant, was "can these bones live? In other words: can you create a community? In many Jewish communities around the world there are people discovering they are Jewish, but then they might go and see the normative centre. Here there was no normative centre."

Furthermore the existing Jewish institutions were ill-suited to meeting the new and growing demand, and this continued well into the 1990s. A young survey participant described her experience upon moving to Kraków in the late 1990s: "When I arrived in Kraków I encountered Czulent [an informal Jewish youth group, somewhat similar to ŻUL, set up in Warsaw in the late 1970s under communism] but the community was still very much closed to newcomers. There was no JCC and the TSKŻ was also very closed. They just had their members. They were providing activities for their members and nothing more." This experience of not being able to relate to the established Jewish institutions was mentioned by several of the survey and focus group participants.

Focus group participants indicated that the existing institutions were, on the one hand, not responsive enough to the needs of the small but clearly visible Orthodox community in Warsaw, Łódź and possibly elsewhere, but also, on the other hand, that there was a need to blend Jewish initiatives with general ones, such as schools or coffee shops, or else extend the range of the Jewish initiatives. The Kraków JCC and Limmud

were cited as successful examples of the latter, and were seen as compatible with the specialized needs of the religious community. It would seem

that a successful approach would combine a strengthening of the hard core and an extension of the broad periphery at the same time.

4 Religious life

A normative centre was emerging in Warsaw around the combined activities of the Lauder Foundation, the religious community and young and middle-aged professionals who went through the ŻUL experience. This new centre propagated a Conservative, and later modern Orthodox vision of Judaism that was attractive to many, but over the years its appeal proved to be limited. One survey participant captured this when describing her initial enthusiasm and subsequent ambiguity about the new phenomenon of religious Judaism. “I realized that in the fervour of studying Judaism and its religious dimension, I had somewhat neglected the secular aspect of it and have myself contributed to the perception of Jews in contemporary Poland being somewhat one-sided. And now I think more about showing that Judaism is diverse. That Judaism is a culture, a civilization which is not limited to the Orthodox current only. If we keep to Orthodoxy, people will start to leak out from Poland, [i.e. emigrate] because they will be afraid, because it will be difficult for them [here]. And we will lose the few that we still have. But in the 1990s it seemed to me that secular Judaism had exhausted its potential here and also became compromised as a result of the communist experience.”

Similar feelings were voiced by almost all survey participants, and the issue seems to have continued right up to the present. A participant involved in formal Jewish education remarked that the Orthodox rabbi who now teaches at her school “wants to create a *yeshiva* there. This is too religious for the needs of the students and their parents.” Another participant intimately involved with the Jewish religious community described her experience as follows: “The goal was to rebuild Jewish life on a religious foundation and to give every Jew – defining ‘Jew’ as widely as possible – the possibility of functioning within Jewish institutions. This has been accomplished to a large measure, but after some ten years, at the turn of the century, I started to feel a certain dissatisfaction, frustration even, because I realized that even if those conditions were met, we would not be able to attract everybody. And furthermore, when everything was ready and available, it would no longer be so interesting and people would prefer to look for other challenges. The goal was to recreate life, not just as re-

enactment or a commemoration, but as something we do ourselves. This, as I said, has been largely accomplished.”

Another participant also involved with the Jewish religious community was more sharply critical. “It is a negative aspect of the situation that people feel that the representatives of the Jews are rabbis and only rabbis. That’s a pity because it very strongly limits the vision of who we are, who the Jews are.” Another participant, just as involved as the previous one in the life of the Jewish community, disagreed. “The attempt to create a strong Jewish community in Poland has not ended with a huge success. This does not mean that there will be no religious Jews, but the truth is that most people who decided to be religious left Poland, or they gave up a religious life and its Orthodox form because we were not able to structure this. There are not enough people who want to keep *Shabbat* [the Jewish Sabbath]. There are problems with kosher food. There are problems with finding a Jewish partner in Poland. There is a huge problem in raising children and with the school.”

Finally, the return to Orthodoxy created resentment amongst the older generation of Jews who maintained their secular Jewish identity throughout the communist period and were unhappy to see the centre of gravity move towards Jewish religious activities after 1989. “I have to say it out loud: I don’t like conversion the way it is taking place. This hurts me a great deal. A few years ago I went to synagogue, not being religious, but I thought that in my generation I was the only one who had been going for forty years. And then I looked around and I no longer felt at home. I have to admit that maybe those people know how to pray. I was standing with a friend and we were talking. What do Jews do in synagogue? They go and talk. And then we received a dressing down.” The fact, that “new” Jews, i.e. people who had not been previously active in the community, or sometimes converts, play an important role in current community life is also resented by some.

One solution to those problems was the setting up of non-Orthodox Jewish religious life, as was the case with the creation of Beit Warszawa. A participant connected with this Jewish movement stressed that “within Jewish life there is the

practice of Judaism *à la carte* – Judaism by choice.” This approach has been particularly attractive to people who either did not, or could not appreciate more Orthodox Jewish religious services, but also to many non-*halachic* Jews – from, or in, mixed marriages, embodying the entire spectrum of the post-communist Polish Jewish experience. And yet some participants did not feel at home at Beit Warszawa. In the words of one of them “from the very beginning I was aware that ideologically I belong there and at the same time I didn’t want to go there emotionally, intuitively.” The reason that person did not want to go to Reform services was that the religiosity her parents had moved away from had nonetheless been Orthodox; Reform felt alien to the descendants of the formerly Orthodox, and now assimilated Polish Jews.

Some focus group participants were sceptical about the prospects for Reform Judaism in Poland, as, according to them, most Jews aspire to a secular life. “For me and for many other members of my generation” said a young adult participant in the survey, “the declaration that one is Jewish is at the same time a declaration of atheism. In this Catholic country, it means that I identify with Jewish identity, meaning I am against the Church and all religion. In this sense I personally do not need Reform Judaism.”

Others, however, maintained that the problem lies in the absence of a Reform tradition in Poland, and the need to strengthen it through the educational work of well-trained Reform rabbis. “I think” said a survey participant, “that Reform Judaism is of course needed, but if it is difficult to bring people to it, this is because we are a very secularized community. Reform came late, and now needs time to educate future members. This will take time, for until now the decision to go Reform was very polarizing, as the Reform community was kept outside [the regular community].”

Another possible solution to the problem may be to broaden the religious community to include all kinds of Jewish religious, or even secular orientations. In fact, one participant said that she would prefer the community’s official name to be the Religious-Secular Jewish Community, embodying the paradox in the official name. Such attempts, however, even if endorsed by some community officers, usually clash eventually with the religious sensitivities of both the Orthodox and the Reform, and the situation remains inconclusive. It should also be noted that Chabad-Lubavitch, long absent from Poland because of a ruling by the Rebbe, established a presence in Warsaw several years ago and has attracted some members of the Orthodox congregation.

5 Jewish education

For Jewish parents, the availability or lack of Jewish education was a fundamental component of their relations with the Jewish community. Formal education flourishes in Warsaw where the Lauder kindergarten grew into an elementary and junior high school. Outside Warsaw, a small school exists in the city of Wrocław (formerly Breslau). There are simply not enough young Jews in other cities to make the functioning of formal education institutions viable. Even the Warsaw school has many non-Jewish students, the proportion varying from year to year. Still, the lack of those institutions is felt very strongly. “I would pay any kind of money to send my daughter to a Jewish kindergarten. To a kindergarten, to a school, so that she could meet Jews” commented a participant from Kraków, where no such Jewish institution exists. Another participant proposed a possible solution to the problem. “The best thing would be to create a good, a very good Jewish high school in Warsaw or in Kraków. A boarding school, so that kids all over the country could go there and be educated.” No such project exists at the time of writing.

Several focus group participants believed that a general boarding school with a strong Jewish component in its curriculum could be an answer. They argued that such an institution should teach about other religions as well, not only Judaism, without differentiating between Jewish and non-Jewish children, and teach them all true tolerance. They acknowledged, however, that such an initiative would be unlikely to satisfy the needs of religious parents.

The Pardes Association, whose main activity is publishing and which was originally supported by the Lauder Foundation, has since diversified its donor base, and has made a huge impact through publishing bilingual editions of fundamental Jewish texts, from the Chumash and the Siddur, to contemporary Orthodox commentaries. They also run an internet yeshiva and are involved in other innovative methods of Jewish education.

Jewish informal education has been somewhat slow in taking off. Although regular classes on Jewish themes exist in Warsaw and Kraków – the topics ranging from the study of Hebrew and Yiddish, through debates on the recent history

of Israel, to systematic Talmudic study – they do not attract large audiences. These programmes are mainly addressed at adults, although a Sunday school does exist in Warsaw, and there is a similar programme in the Kraków JCC. One possible reason for this might be that they are “too Jewish” for a public which still has vague notions about Judaism. The success of the Kraków JCC, a Jewish centre which offers a mix of activities, from general interest to specifically Jewish ones, might confirm this assessment. Another relevant factor, this time stemming from within the Jewish community especially outside of Warsaw, was until recently a widespread, and rather unjustified, fear of public exposure.

Some focus group participants complained that sponsors were unwilling to support initiatives which could prove successful under Polish conditions, namely the promotion of Jewish themes in an environment ostensibly geared to the wider public, such as a Jewish coffee shop.

A participant described the reaction to her publishing an announcement in the press about Purim celebrations. “When I prepared Purim and gave an announcement to the press, I then had to call to pull the announcement because I got comments about why we were making so much noise about it. That was only about five years ago. I often hear the words: do not be provocative. But even stating in public that one is Jewish was regarded as provocative. The community is traumatized, closed, doesn’t allow anybody in, is fearful.” However, this is not a universal feeling by far. In the overwhelming majority of cases, Jewish activities are publicly announced without attracting any adverse reactions. Nevertheless, trauma, or at least the memory of the time when feeling traumatized was justified, still exists and to a certain extent shapes the way the Jewish community functions publicly.

Youth groups, such as Czulent in Kraków or ZOOM in Warsaw, recreate to an extent the debates characteristic of informal Jewish education in the waning years of the communist regime, but their attractiveness is limited to those already involved; to an extent, they are preaching to the converted. One huge counter-example, however, is Limmud, sponsored and

organized by JDC. It brings in literally hundreds of Jews from all walks of life for a weekend of an extremely intensive educational experience. Parallel Orthodox and Reform services are held, and classes and seminars are offered in everything from Maimonidean thought to radical Jewish feminism, debates about Israeli power struggles and about the history of the Jews in Poland. The event is highly public, hugely popular and provides what is most needed, apparently, in terms of informal education, but more broadly in terms of Jewish identity: a wide pallet of choices from which anybody can select the kind of intellectual Jewish identity they feel closest to. Focus group participants stressed the success of Limmud and the Kraków JCC, both of which function along such lines. A survey participant commented, “Contrary to what one might think, the religious also very much need the JCC. Life is not only around the synagogue, the synagogue today is not what it used to be before the war. It is not a meeting place, it is not a social space, even though it should be. Maybe the JCC will fill that gap. I am a religious person

and I very much need the synagogue, but the JCC too.”

The success of Limmud paradoxically confirmed, to an extent, the validity of the rather radical diagnosis made by one of the survey participants. “The real Polish Jew is somebody who had a Jewish grandfather or grandmother. He or she is usually a university graduate, employed in the professions and rather intellectual, quite often gay or lesbian. Usually somebody who knows very little about the Jewish milieu or never had any contact with it. The real Jew in Poland today is looking for some kind of contact point with the milieu, or with Jewish knowledge, to enable him to better understand his grandfather, and the relevance this grandfather has for him.” Initiatives such as Limmud seem geared to this vision of the contemporary Polish Jew, even if the vision is at odds with the perception that much of the community has of itself. Expressed slightly differently, informal Jewish education in Poland ought to be situated within the context of a highly assimilated community.

6 Jewish culture

According to the same survey respondent, “Polish-Jewish dialogue continues and it really constitutes the essence of Jewish identity in Poland”, “Whoever says it doesn’t is simply lying.” If this is the case, the cultural initiatives in which Jews and non-Jews alike participate in manifestations of Jewish culture should be a very important component of Jewish informal education as well. This is an important issue, not least because Jewish culture in Poland functions in a paradoxical way. It is often a ‘re-enactment’: whether it is through the publication of Polish translations of classics of Jewish literature, mainly read by the general reader, or whether it is an attempt to recreate a Jewish past, such as Jewish cultural festivals which flourish not only in the big centres of Kraków or Warsaw, but also in many small towns which had a Jewish population before the war.

It should be remembered, however, that it is a matter for serious debate whether the cultural production of Jewish themes and concepts, by mainly non-Jews for mainly non-Jews, is still in any sense relevant to a discussion of Jewish culture, or whether it, in fact, constitutes a separate, autonomous phenomenon. This also includes non-Jewish interest in things Jewish, seen in academic research, art and in minor Jewish cultural festivals. Jewish cultural festivals attract very mixed reviews. Certainly the Kraków Festival maintains a very high artistic level and, although it is organized by non-Jews largely for non-Jews, the overwhelming majority of the performers are Jewish, and they produce Jewish culture – music, theatre, film and discussions – of the highest quality. The Kraków Festival certainly plays a role in promoting Jewish culture and Jewish literacy in general. One of the survey participants said, “I remember walking down the street in Kraków during the Festival and overhearing the conversation of two people commenting on a performance of a *chazan* [cantor] who had been singing at one of the Festival events. They did it very knowledgeably, analyzing the fine points of his performance and the way he accented the words, although from their conversation it was very clear that, on a day-to-day basis, they had nothing to do with the Jewish community.”

At the other end of the spectrum an academic participant said: “I feel very removed from all

the festivals that take place because they are celebrations of some kind, and I prefer everyday life. The festival generates very stereotypical behaviours. I think this is very difficult, very sensitive: not to lose the good will potential by telling someone that the Jew does not necessarily have to wear a frockcoat and sidelocks. I simplify of course.” In other words, the proliferating Jewish cultural festivals tend to reinforce traditional, stereotypical representations of the Jew, hardly adequate for the diversity of the pre-war Jewish community, let alone the very assimilated Jewish community of today. However, this perception may not be entirely accurate. “I always say”, commented a survey participant active in Jewish culture, “that the festivals are not limited to *shtetl* [traditional Jewish village] culture. I still remember that, during the second festival [of Jewish culture in Warsaw in 2005] my favourite newspaper wrote that this was a folk art show. I was hurt, for that was the day Schönberg’s ‘A Survivor from Warsaw’ was performed at the festival.”

Be that as it may, much of the debate on contemporary Jewish culture in Poland takes place between those very clearly opposed viewpoints. One maintains that festivals are a good thing because they promote Jewish culture; the other states that the culture they promote reinforces stereotypical perceptions of Jews – and this irrespective of the fact that Jewish culture obviously cannot be reduced to festivals alone. It is relevant to note that few members of the Jewish community are recognized artists or writers, and that Jews who are active within Polish culture, and there are many, are doing it without maintaining a close relationship with the organized Jewish community. It is almost as if, in the very apt words of Ruth Ellen Gruber, Poland had become “virtually Jewish”, a place where Jewish culture is no longer Jewish property, but rather an open field in which anybody can use the props and as they see fit.³

One exception to that general rule is the Jewish State Theatre – the only institution of its kind in the world, a permanent state-funded theatre

3 Ruth Ellen Gruber: *Virtually Jewish. Reinventing Jewish culture in Europe*. University of California Press 2002.

which performs plays in their original Yiddish. It is very closely connected with the TSKŻ, the biggest Jewish organization, and remains an important cultural institution of the Jewish community. However, opinions about its quality vary. It is routinely criticized in the general press for presenting a stereotypical and artistically poor vision of Jews. Similar criticisms are voiced by a segment of the Jewish community itself. The theatre, of course, disagrees with these opinions, maintaining that it presents a very varied picture of the Jews and invites young directors to produce plays – ranging from the classical Yiddish repertoire to contemporary variations on Jewish

themes. Be that as it may, it was very telling that only one survey participant, herself connected with the Theatre, spontaneously mentioned it as an important element of the Jewish cultural scene today.

Some focus group participants stressed that Jewish culture means not only the secular Yiddish culture, remembered today with nostalgia by some, but also historical and contemporary Jewish philosophy and literature. They maintained that these types of Jewish culture should be taught everywhere, from coffee shops to universities.

7 Jewish studies

The growth of academic Jewish studies in Poland is undoubtedly a success story, even if Jews are very rarely involved directly. “In 1990, when free Poland was beginning, there was very little academic research on Jews, but gradually a sizeable group of young people emerged. They were mainly non-Jews, well-educated, and wanted to do this research at a high level. Some of them are doing top-notch research indeed. And a number of academic centres in different cities outside of Warsaw and Kraków – such as Wrocław and Lublin – have appeared” said a survey participant. “For some ten years now”, he said, “it has no longer been possible to do research on the Holocaust without taking into consideration what Polish researchers are doing. And this is the way it should be.”

This development, however, is essentially a non-Jewish one. “The academic situation with regards to research on Jews is very good. But regarding the presence of Jews in academia there is not much to say. Of course, there have always been Jews in academia, some of them ‘outed’ themselves once they retired, others started to publicly speak and write of their Jewish origins or war-time experiences. But this doesn’t change the situation that from the perspective of Jewish studies that is not very relevant.” The situation is not much better in terms of Jewish student activity. “I don’t think that any Jewish organization is visible or active among the students. Maybe there is one out there, but I don’t know anything about it.”

This, however, is not very important *per se*. “I think there are few people who do research on Jewish issues because they are Jewish themselves,” commented a Jewish academic who participated in the survey. This general feeling that academic Jewish studies in Poland is developing successfully can be verified empirically at conferences and in publications. The share of the papers produced by young researchers in Poland is growing systematically, and indeed it seems logical to expect that much of the research on the history of Polish Jews will return to Poland, which still has huge and unexplored archives and collections on the subject. This is one of the reasons why so many non-Jewish Polish historians study Hebrew or Yiddish, in order to access sources of Polish history that hitherto have not been explored.

To build on this development, however, according to a highly-regarded academic participant in this survey, it will still be necessary to create an advanced institute of Jewish studies at one of the Polish universities, directed by a leading academic who would have to be found abroad. “Someone,” the respondent remarked, “at the same time capable of directing a research team. The best young people should be employed there, so that over the years, through their work, a significant centre would take shape. This is entirely imaginable.”

8 Jewish heritage

In terms of the preservation of the Jewish heritage, participants pointed to different and scattered initiatives which, together, indicate that the material legacy of Polish Jewry, destroyed during the war and then severely neglected in the entire post-communist period, is now finally being given some of the attention it desperately needs. “The main development” commented one participant, “is a series of initiatives concerning cemeteries. I know that they are being neglected, destroyed, sometimes look very bad, but there are people involved in saving them and through this they sometimes reach their Jewish roots. There are internet pages dedicated to the issue.” In particular a programme called “Restoring Memory”, run by the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage in Poland, was singled out as an important development. It targets schools and teachers, training them to educate young people to be sensitive towards the Jewish heritage of the towns and cities in which they live.

It is interesting to note that programmes aimed at the preservation of the Jewish heritage target non-Jews almost without exception – responding to an abiding interest in things Jewish from society at large, including NGOs - much more than they target Jews. The reason for this is simple: very few Jews remained in Poland, whereas the surviving material legacy of Polish Jewry, even after the depredations of the century, is still huge and in a bad state of disrepair. One example of a very successful attempt to preserve heritage are the activities undertaken by the Shalom Foundation, a private Jewish foundation in Poland. It caught the public’s eye when in the early 1990s it organized a huge photo exhibition called “... And I still see their faces”, presenting Jewish family pictures, almost all of them hitherto unknown. The Foundation had launched an appeal to the public for people to donate Jewish family pictures inherited from their parents, or which somehow came into their possession. Literally thousands of pictures were submitted and the exhibition created a huge impact when it opened in the early 1990s. For non-Jewish Poland it was the first major attempt to reconnect and re-imagine its Jewish past. The exhibition is still touring abroad, and its impact in Poland still reverberates.

Another very important initiative of the Shalom Foundation is an annual contest for school and college students to present papers on Jewish topics. The best papers are rewarded with a trip to Israel. Thousands of people participate, almost all of them non-Jews. And through their participation they deepen their knowledge of Poland’s Jewish history and help promote it.

Nevertheless, the issue of the material legacy is still a sensitive one. Not only has individual Jewish property still not been restituted, but there are very divergent opinions about the impact of the 1997 law on the restitution of communal property. “I’m very sorry to say that my opinion [on this] is different from that of many people I encounter,” said one survey participant. “I think the Polish state did not do enough in that respect. I think that a more systematic solution should have been chosen. I think that it is very bad that Poland just reacts to criticism and does not attempt to find a solution itself.” Systematic solutions, however, are lacking even in the most obvious case of the cemeteries. There are some 1,400 Jewish cemeteries on Polish territory today, most of them abandoned and neglected. Successful attempts at preservation and renovation have typically involved the local authorities, the Jewish community, and Jewish funders from abroad, who are often descended from people who had lived in that particular location. “I think,” commented one survey participant, “that there should be a legal obligation for local authorities to determine the boundaries of the cemeteries according to existing documentation [in order to preserve the cemeteries from further deterioration]. This should not involve the Jewish community but should be an element of the maintenance of urban space. And it should take the form of an act of Parliament or some other high level act.”

Heritage does not only consist of physical monuments and theoretical knowledge. It also means real people and the interaction between them. Very often survey participants indicated that the key reason for their involvement in the Jewish community was a sense of obligation and connection with previous generations, a connection that had often been lost over time.

“I do not remember,” remarked one respondent “when I went to services at the synagogue for the first time. What I do know is that once I went there, although I couldn’t understand a thing about what was going on, the very atmosphere of the place: me sitting on the back bench and looking at those old people who every now and then would turn back and look at us as if they were checking if we were really there, if we would leave halfway through – this was worth all the bad experiences I had had earlier. And after services those old people approached me and asked: ‘Will you come next Saturday?’ I know that when I was leaving I only nodded in

reply because had I spoken, I would have started to cry.”

A focus group participant observed, “The generation of traditional Polish Jews, who were raised in the religion and in the language, is, alas, disappearing, but a new quality appears: young and middle-aged people, aware that they are of Jewish extraction. However, they are no longer familiar with the Jewish traditions that their parents knew from their homes. Therefore the existing Jewish organizations cannot be copies of the pre-war *kehillah* [Jewish community]. They have to be different, right?”

9 Young adults

Even though Jewish life has developed and flourished in the last twenty years, the younger participants of the survey still spoke about experiences somewhat similar to those that were characteristic of the older generation. “When the Czulent association was founded,” said a participant active in that organization, “everybody was supposed to bring a Jew he or she knew to a meeting. This meant people who knew they had Jewish origins and did not know what to do with them, who had joined neither the religious community, nor the TSKŻ. People who came from assimilated Polish families, some of them baptized, some of them practising Catholicism, going to church. Suddenly they had the opportunity to learn something without commitment. I think this was the best possible way.” An older participant confirms this: “This has not changed at all. The same problems we discussed in ŻUL thirty years ago are still current for young people. The younger generation has, of course, a different situation, but it also has identity problems or problems in expressing their Jewishness, its meaning and implications. Apparently such is our Jewish condition.”

One thing, however, has changed and changed fundamentally: according to survey participants, Jewishness is no longer an issue of concern. People are not persecuted for expressing it. On the contrary, as one participant said: “It seems it is kind of fashionable to be Jewish.” There is a multitude of Jewish organizations, initiatives, institutions and yet young people do not flock massively to them. Although the median age of participants at Jewish events – be they religious services, secular parties, intellectual public discussions or Jewish cultural festivals – has markedly dropped, young people are not very visible at Jewish events and institutions. It is hard to assess the cause. Possibly it is still too early for the Lauder Morasha Jewish School, whose graduates are now studying at universities, to have had its impact. In a couple of years, once they graduate, they will hopefully return to

Jewish institutions and rejuvenate them, though some observers are rather sceptical about this. It might be that the institutions themselves – again, whether religious or secular – are simply not attractive enough to young people. They often look shabby, especially against the backdrop of the very impressive developments in Poland over the last twenty years.

Focus group participants expressed the view that young people did not attend Jewish events, preferring activities that were more peripheral than mainstream, which might indicate a weakness in their Jewish identity. One possible solution, if sponsors could be found, would be to grant scholarships for young Jewish students from the provinces, which would oblige them to devote some of their time after graduation to their Jewish communities.

But this relative absence of young people could also reflect more practical issues. “An important element in the way that the ZOOM functions,” said a survey participant, “was that the organization was playing the match-maker. This means young people are aware that if you do not get involved [in Jewish activities] through friends or through couples, the chances that somebody would remain within the Jewish milieu are small. This is true not only of the ZOOM, this was true of the PUSZ, this is probably also true about the religious community. Jewish couples are formed there. And I think this is very important. Because within a couple each partner can motivate the other one to be Jewish – more or less.” In other words, it would appear that young people gravitate towards some kind of more serious Jewish commitment – whether religious or secular – when stimulated by the shared interest of more than one person. The couple is an excellent environment for the mutual strengthening of this kind of affiliation. Otherwise, young people might visit the Jewish community but eventually they disappear and become re-absorbed within the wider non-Jewish environment.

10 Leadership

Survey participants did not have much to say about developing and improving Jewish leadership. They usually pointed out the obvious fact that, if somebody was personally charismatic, that person performed well in a leadership role. Such a person was responsible, for example, for setting up the very successful Czulent youth association in Kraków. Other charismatic leaders helped re-launch the Jewish community in Wrocław or made possible the development of the Reform community in Warsaw. What is striking, however, is that with the passing of time, over the last twenty years, this kind of charismatic leadership has become increasingly rare. Leadership seems to have passed into the hands of people who owe their positions to normal institutional procedures, and not to some kind of specific personal charisma. This is probably a sign of the maturing of the community, although it also possibly indicates that its attractiveness to potential leaders might be slightly declining. Some observers maintain that weak leadership is a general feature

of Polish social life, while potential leaders do not get involved in minority group activities in general. Survey participants seemed to believe that leadership training programmes were not doing their job. A survey participant was particularly dismissive of them: “This is just to get a nice trip to Israel. No leaders are being formed there.”

However, some focus group participants maintained that leadership training, of the kind that was offered to board members in corporations, would be highly desirable, as leaders apparently had no inkling of what leadership was all about. Focus group participants also said that leaders did not fulfil their roles, and in particular, were not able to pick qualified people and place them in positions of responsibility. “Leaders in [some] religious and secular organizations are in their seventh term of office.” commented a focus group member. “This is highly embarrassing. I hope people will start feeling that way too. That this cannot go on forever.”

11 Welfare

In the post-war period, and especially after 1968, welfare assistance was a fundamental aspect of the functioning of the Jewish community. The funds provided by JDC were disbursed in the form of individual cash payments – small amounts, \$25 a month – that would go to individual recipients, all of them survivors of the Holocaust. This aid, supplemented by food parcels that would arrive once or twice a year, constituted not only a very important element of the family budgets of the survivors and their descendants (the exchange rate of the dollar at that time was very favourable to the beneficiaries) but also created a tangible material basis for the feeling of affiliation with the wider Jewish community. The role of Polish Jewish organizations in the disbursement of that aid was secondary. They would assess needs, write recommendations and endorse applications, but these would then be sent to the headquarters of JDC which would directly disburse the aid.

Around the year 2000, the system changed completely. In an unprecedented move, Polish Jewish organizations set up a Social Welfare Commission in which all the relevant organizations were represented: the TSKŻ, the religious communities, the War Veterans, the Children of the Holocaust. This was, of course, a generation-specific initiative: aid is targeted almost exclusively at Holocaust survivors, so organizations representing younger people were not represented in the Commission. However, the Social Welfare Commission is the only body in which the majority of Polish Jewish organizations is represented, and it is unanimously considered a huge success. Part of its success was due to the appointment of the director of welfare as a result of an open contest – a rarity in Polish Jewish institutions. The new system also requires the individual communities to contribute to the welfare budget from their own funds, thus educating them in self-reliance.

Welfare continues to be disbursed by JDC, using Claims Conference funds that JDC staff administers, but allocation is now being supervised by the Social Welfare Commission. Direct payments have been phased out completely. With the political and economical changes in Poland, foreign currency could no longer be traded at exorbitant rates. “[Some] people no

longer bother to go to the post office to pick up their \$25 payments” says a survey participant connected with the disbursement of social welfare. Instead of direct cash assistance, meals on wheels programmes, medical benefits and other similar initiatives were introduced.

However, as one survey participant said: “What is changing in social welfare is a result of the fact that our welfare is addressed uniquely to Holocaust survivors. These are elderly people; they are dying out. I don’t know how long this will continue.” Very limited funds are available for needy Jews of the post-war generations. Sponsored activities targeting the post-war group include family and youth camps. “This money may run out at any time, especially for families with children who have some problems.” As sources of funding dry up, it remains unclear for how long foreign Jewish charities will be able to play a major role in sponsoring Jewish social welfare in Poland.

At the same time, as the Holocaust generation dwindles, new needs that are emerging are being identified. First of all, there is clearly a greater need for different forms of medical assistance: from nurses’ visits to the house-bound elderly, through subsidized medication and specialized medical help. “If something is extremely well documented, extremely urgent, we do offer support. But this is very rare, and should be more frequent” said a survey participant familiar with the procedures. Another objective would be making more use of volunteers, who have proven to be extremely useful in terms of providing social assistance. Volunteers not only deliver meals on wheels and general care to the elderly or the house-bound. Their presence provides help for the recipients, often living alone, and an opportunity to socialize, thus strengthening bonds between generations. Volunteers, of course, are unpaid, but funding would be needed to provide them with non-financial recompense, such as retreats and seminars in which they could discuss and process their experiences.

Another initiative that has been delayed because of lack of funding is the setting up of a Jewish outpatient clinic, something that, according to a survey participant familiar with welfare issues, would be extremely well received by welfare

recipients. “People would prefer to receive medical assistance from other Jews; especially when psychological or psychiatric issues are involved, you need somebody who understands” she said. For the same reason it might be useful to re-introduce an initiative which used to function in the mid-1990s: the Jewish hotline, a phone number people could call anonymously if they had problems connected with their Jewish identity. A Jewish retirement home is already being planned

and is supported very enthusiastically by much of the community. However, this support does not immediately translate into actual progress. In all probability the project will not succeed without outside funding. Vague plans to set up a Jewish hospital, although important for Orthodox patients because of requirements of *kashrut* [Jewish dietary laws], will probably never materialize since the number of people for whom such an initiative would be crucial is so limited.

12 Israel

Israel was surprisingly absent from the often wide-ranging reflections of the survey participants. The community seems very much focused on itself, and references to Israel – unless provoked by specific questions – tended to be rare. This might be due to a specific aspect of post-war Polish-Jewish history: with the exception of the years from 1949 to 1956 it was always possible to make *aliyah*. In fact, in 1968-1969, it was actively encouraged by the state: Jews were being thrown out of Poland. Therefore, an overwhelming majority of people who felt a markedly strong affiliation with Israel left Poland. But unlike in the Soviet Union, they did not leave behind the (all too true) narrative of the persecuted Zionist movement. This might help explain why the Polish Jewish community is lukewarm to Zionism. Because of its currently small numbers, pressure from Israel to increase *aliyah* has not been very substantial but still, commented a survey participant, “Some people complain that they are being propagandized, that there is too strong a pressure to make *aliyah*. These are people whose Polish identity is strongly rooted. They feel both Polish and Jewish. And they react adversely to suggestions that Poland is not the right place for them.” “Israel,” this participant said, has become “everyday goods”. Although people have friends and occasionally relatives there, still “Israel is close, but not in the way it was in past generations. Most people no longer have the feeling that this is a radiating centre they aspire to join. It is just a country which is cool and that’s about it.”

Another participant disagreed: “A feeling of connection with Israel is growing, which I did not see, say, in the 1990s. This is evident in the way people react to Israeli issues – as if they were their own issues. A hawkish pro-Israeli attitude seems to reflect the opinions of the majority.” For yet another participant it was not the political aspect of the Israeli situation that was the most important. “I feel deeply attracted by Israel, not on the political side, but from [the point of view of] my identity. Israel [is] a social phenomenon which carries in itself identity and meanings which are points of reference in the reconstruction of my own identity.” This would therefore contradict both previous opinions: Israel does carry deep spiritual meanings and not only in the political sense. Perhaps what makes Israel really attractive, regardless of all the qualifications, is that it is, in the words of one participant, “a success story”. Compared with the fact that the main reference point for most Polish Jews is still the devastating experience of the *Shoah*, the Israeli success, even if qualified, must feel attractive.

One of the participants also expressed the feeling that the Israeli Embassy was not active enough in Polish Jewish community affairs, and seemed to be uninterested in what Polish Jews were doing. In general, it would seem, therefore, that Israel is neither a main reference point for contemporary Polish Jews, nor a source of either pride or concern. This would make Poland stand out on the general European map, and will probably change when issues connected with Middle Eastern politics affect Poland as well.

13 Antisemitism

Somewhat unexpectedly, antisemitism was not an issue which was spontaneously addressed by survey or focus group participants, nor do any Jewish institutions specifically monitor it. Two NGOs are active in this field; one is concerned with racism and intolerance in general, the other deals specifically with antisemitism. Occasionally, the issue was mentioned when people were asked what Jewish activities they did. “If there is a debate on antisemitism, I’ll come and listen”, said a survey participant, who was also quite concerned about the future growth of the “new antisemitism”, i.e. an expression of hatred towards the Jewish state rather than the Jewish people. Another participant mentioned “a horrible wave of antisemitism” in Poland in the early 90s – but at the same time expressed irritation with the ‘Poles-are-antisemites’ stereotype she often saw expressed by Jewish visitors from abroad. Yet another activist, involved in education on Jewish themes directed essentially at non-Jews, recalled how a very promising student decided she could not accept the trip to Israel she had won as an award “because my father is an awful antisemite”.

Personal experience of antisemitism seemed very limited: one participant mentioned that his parents left Poland after 1968 “because mother did not feel wanted here”. Yet current political developments did not seem to generate concern. “I don’t know anybody who emigrated because they got worried about Jedwabne” said a survey participant, referring to the emotional debate in 2000 connected with the wartime slaughter of Jews by Poles in the small town bearing that name.

This indifference seems the more remarkable as antisemitism, though far from being the constant threat some outside observers think it to be, is nonetheless quite present in Polish life. Graffiti with stars of David on gallows can be routinely seen scribbled on walls, and the explanation – that this is an expression of hatred by football fans of the opposition team they accuse of being “Jewish” – even if possibly true – is hardly reassuring *per se*. Also, the police and judiciary hardly, if

ever, take action against manifestations of overt hatred of Jews, usually justifying this inaction by claims that such manifestations constitute constitutionally-protected free speech. A typical explanation would find that the statement “Jews should be run out of Poland” constituted protected expression of opinion, and only “Run the Jews out of Poland!” was incitement that should be prosecuted.

However, paradoxically, antisemitism in Poland is probably as widespread as it is skin-deep. While the language of hatred directed at Jews is certainly much more common than in Western Europe, acts of violence are much more rare. One possible explanation is that even those who use this language are, for the most part, no longer actually aware that it is directed against a community that really exists; the “Jews” in that context are just a stand-in for an abstract object of dislike. Furthermore, as polls quoted earlier clearly indicate, even the language of hatred is in retreat, as more people declare friendly rather than unfriendly feelings toward Jews and fewer people believe Jews have “too much influence” over Polish life. Even if this is possibly an expression of political correctness rather than a genuine sea-change in public attitudes, Polish Jews by and large do not seem to consider antisemitism a serious threat: most responded, in an unpublished survey conducted by H. Datner and P. Spiewak in the late 90s, when the problem was much more acute, that they had not personally experienced antisemitism. However, antisemitic content continues to exist. In everyday conversations, public figures and other personalities are often identified as Jewish (even if, most often, they are not), which is supposed to account both for their success, and for the speaker’s low regard of them. Paintings and sculptures of stereotypical Jews carrying money are sold as good luck charms. Football fans routinely use the word “Jew” as an insult against rival teams. And in right-wing circles, the liberals and the left are routinely accused of either representing Jews or being manipulated by them, to sinister ends.

14 Philanthropy

Almost all survey participants were very much aware of the fact that the revival of Jewish life in Poland after 1989 would not have been possible without two Jewish charities: JDC, which supported the existing institutions and provided welfare and educational opportunities (e.g. the Education Centre in Warsaw) to individuals throughout the post-war years, whenever it was permitted to operate and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, whose crucial intervention in the 1990s had shaped the revival. The Lauder Foundation's association with Orthodox circles favoured the Polish Orthodox community – something which some non-Orthodox participants now resent – but even they recognize that the impact of that support spread throughout the community.

Since then, these two institutions have very much limited their activities in Poland, while others, such as the Taube Foundation, the Claims Conference, the Dutch Humanitarian Fund and the Rothschild Foundation have undertaken to support different initiatives. Also, the Jewish communities themselves, thanks to income generated from property restitution, have been able to fund their day-to-day activities, at least in part. Still, the impact of foreign charities remains crucial. “All activities which necessitate grants,” said a survey participant “need and will continue to need support. Support within Poland is still too small, as we have no foundations which support Jewish life and culture. On the other hand, if we had a billionaire who would like to support some activities, as in Russia, then there would be a danger that we would be too dependent on him.” In fact, one Polish foundation – the Shalom Foundation, the main sponsor of the “Singer's Warsaw” annual Jewish culture festival and of the Jewish knowledge school contests – does operate, but is not big enough to have a major impact.

The impact of the Lauder foundation cannot be overstated. “They created Polish Jewish life” said one participant. “They did three great things” said another. “One: gave money. Two: let us know that we weren't alone, that we actually belonged to something larger. That the Jewish People was not just an abstract, but they actually cared. And three: broke the taboo that you can't help Jews

living in Poland.” In the early 1990s, the Polish Jewish revival was viewed with suspicion in Jewish circles abroad, as something inauthentic which challenged the image of Poland as simply a Jewish cemetery. Twenty years later, this memory still rankles.

In current giving, it is often difficult to find a donor interested in the particular activity which needs funding: donor organizations are becoming highly specialized. And yet, commented a survey participant, “the big challenge is to stop quarrelling about separate things and understand it's one thing. They're all interrelated and we should not separate things, not try to split apart the different elements of *Yiddishkeit* [Jewishness, or Jewish way of life].” Another participant recalled how a major donor refused to fund the production of a documentary film about elderly community members – ‘Eight stories.’ “That's ok, we found European funds for that” he said, demonstrating a new-found sophistication in fundraising. After this survey was carried out, the film received much critical acclaim at the New York Jewish Film Festival.

This experience is characteristic of a community which, compared to the early 1990s, now has a much clearer understanding of its own needs. “The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture [active since the turn of the century] appeared when we already knew what we wanted,” said another participant. “This is a very big qualitative difference.” In other words, the grantor-grantee relationship is now much more dynamic, and has to include the grantee's own expertise. “I have no idea”, said a survey participant, otherwise very involved with funding initiatives, when asked to assess the impact of Jewish charities from abroad. “It's good that they are there. I can't tell how they operate, or who pays for this.” This comment is almost certainly disingenuous, and reflects the speaker's unhappiness with not being considered a major player herself – but is also indicative of a new assertiveness among potential recipients. “What we have always liked about our relationship with Taube” said a participant, “is that we are treated as partners, that this is not a formal grantor-grantee relationship, but one dependent on needs and assessments of what works.”

Another survey participant believed the Polish Jewish community itself could do more to support the initiatives it needs. “If it were taught financial responsibility and made to realize this is physically possible, it would then prove to itself that it still has a future” he says. Such opinions, however, are rare. Most believe that support from abroad is still indispensable. Among projects in desperate need of funding are all kinds of educational initiatives, from Jewish schools and boarding schools, through adult education

programmes to be run by talented Orthodox or Reform rabbis, to initiatives targeting young adults. Other specific initiatives mentioned include welfare programmes and institutions, a high-level academic Jewish studies centre, and the preservation of the material legacy, especially Poland’s 1,400 Jewish cemeteries. It is striking, however, that a Jewish retirement home is still in the planning phase, although this is of immediate interest not only to the survivors’ generation, but by now to the next one as well.

15 Conclusions

Twenty years after the fall of communism, the Polish Jewish community finds itself in a rather paradoxical situation. Even though the community is very small in number and insignificant at the national level, Jews still attract a great deal of political attention, and due to internal diversity, it is not possible to draw a single coherent picture of its current situation. Its very revival is something of a miracle, it finds itself today internally torn between the attractiveness of Orthodoxy, which was strongly supported in the past by both the community's own spiritual leadership and external funding, but nevertheless represents a minority within the community, and the needs of the majority of Poland's Jews. Their Jewish identities still ill-defined, they tend to look towards Reform and secular models of Jewishness, yet struggle to find enough of real substance there.

Jewish education is clearly a priority, and a model seems to have developed which simultaneously allows for the study of religion without making it compulsory. The existing two schools, however, can meet the needs of only a minority of Jewish parents, while at the same time attract many non-Jewish ones. At the same time, as the *Shoah* generation dies out, existing welfare models adapt – although not necessarily quickly enough – to new needs, but medical and social care for survivors and their immediate descendants will remain a priority for some years to come.

This last paradox is indicative of the single most defining aspect of the contemporary Polish Jewish community – that it functions

within a broader Polish-Jewish context. Though antisemitism might still be a concern, even if not necessarily to Polish Jews themselves, non-Jewish interest in, and sympathy for, things Jewish is a constant, determining and positive element of the contemporary situation. Jewish culture, therefore, is being produced and performed largely for non-Jewish audiences, with all the concomitant ambiguities, but nevertheless clearly strengthens the bond between Jews and Poland, which is a very welcome development. This is also seen in increased non-Jewish concern for the preservation of the Jewish material legacy, a task too huge for the community to undertake on its own. Yet concern can be expressed at the impact of all this on the perpetuation of Jewish identity, especially as Israel does not loom as large to Polish Jews as it does to Jews in many other European countries.

Although the community is self-supporting to an extent thanks to income from communal property restitution guaranteed by law, the role of foreign Jewish donors is still crucial. Despite the fact that they can no longer shape Jewish life as they did in the early 1990s, and that they now have to deal with a much more sophisticated and self-aware community, they can, through targeted interventions, improve the situation of Polish Jews and, to an extent, influence the direction of communal development. This remains true of both core and peripheral initiatives: strengthening the religious community is as important as supporting programmes targeting those Jews whose Jewish identification may seem weak or marginal.

16 Recommendations

Regardless of debates about how many Jews there are in Poland, the community remains a small one, both in absolute and relative numbers, especially compared with Russia, Ukraine and Hungary. This automatically makes any programmes in Poland more expensive in terms of amount spent per potential beneficiary. Such assessments might discourage Jewish charities from investing in programmes in Poland, in the belief that money can be spent elsewhere in a more cost-effective manner.

Such an opinion, although understandable, would be misleading. Because of the importance of Polish Jewish heritage for world Jewry, and because of the remarkably positive reaction of the Polish state and most of civil society to Jewish interests and concerns, programmes conducted in Poland have a very high multiplier effect. They impact directly both on the world community of Jews of Polish origin, and on Jewish and non-Jewish Poles alike. In the first case, they help descendants of Polish Jews to appreciate and cherish their heritage, the material basis of which, to the extent that it survives, is located mainly within present Polish borders. Therefore, programmes aimed at the preservation and study of that heritage, from cemeteries and synagogues, the Second World War sites such as death camps, to archival, museum and library collections, are of great importance.

In the second case, it should be stressed that the impressive rebirth of the Jewish community in Poland, though originally centred around Orthodox religious functions, has by now gone beyond it. Especially for the younger generation, Jewish culture and its interaction with the wider culture seem to be a powerful factor of

identification. Therefore, programmes supporting the development of Jewish culture should be regarded as just as important as those developing Jewish education, and in both cases, allowances should be made for ways of expressing and cultivating Jewishness, which might deviate from what might be considered normative. Equally, the development of non-Orthodox forms of Judaism should be supported.

Having said that, it seems safe to predict that the development of a deep identification with Jewishness will often involve religious commitment, and that the Orthodox community, if clearly a minority within the larger community of Polish Jews, will still remain a central pillar of that community, in Poland as elsewhere. The same, however, might not necessarily be true of the commitment to Zionism, which is markedly weaker in Poland than elsewhere in the region, for reasons outlined above. Religious education remains central, but the periphery should be strengthened as well – from community centres, through Jewish studies, Limmud and similar programmes, to more unconventional initiatives such as Jewish coffee shops. An especially urgent need is the establishment of a Jewish old-age home: the proposed Warsaw initiative has still not taken off the ground.

Finally, the positive impact of Jewish revival on Polish society at large, and the positive reaction it largely elicits, should not be considered just a windfall, but should indeed be actively pursued. Given the country's position in the region and in the European Union, the attitude of Poland to its Jewish minority and to Israel is, and will continue to be, of importance.

17 Address book of Jewish and Jewish-interest organizations and institutions in Poland

Ambasada Izraela
Israeli Embassy
Krzywickiego 24, 02-078 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)597 0500
www.warsaw.mfa.gov.il

Beit Kraków, Postępową Społeczność Żydowska
Beit Kraków, Jewish Progressive Community
ul. Meiselsa 4
31-063 Kraków
E-mail: office@beitkrakow.pl
Tel (+48) 510091703
www.beitkrakow.pl

Centrum Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego Badania i Nauczania Dziejów i Kultury Żydów w Polsce im. Mordechaja Anielewicza
Warsaw University's Mordechai Anielewicz Centre for the Study and Research of the History and Culture of Jews in Poland
Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)552 4529
www.ca.uw.edu.pl

Centrum Badań Holokaustu Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
Jagiellonian University Holocaust Research Centre
Jodłowa 13, Przegorzały, 30-252 Kraków
cbh@uj.edu.pl

Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów Polskiej Akademii Nauk
Holocaust Research Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences
Pałac Staszica pok. 120, Nowy Świat 72, 00-330 Warszawa
www.holocaustresearch.pl

Centrum Społeczności Żydowskiej w Krakowie
Jewish Community Centre in Kraków
Miodowa 24, 31-055 Kraków
Tel +(48-12) 3705770
www.jcckrakow.org

Centrum Żydowskie w Oświęcimiu
Auschwitz Jewish Centre
Plac Ks. J. Skarbka 5, 32-600 Oświęcim
Tel +(48-33) 844 70 02
www.ajcf.pl

Chabad Lubawicz Polska
Chabad Lubavitch of Poland
Słomińskiego 19 Suite 508, 00-195 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)637 5352
www.chabad.org.pl

Festiwal Kultury Żydowskiej w Krakowie
Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków
Józefa 36, 31-056 Kraków
Tel +(48-12)431 1517
www.jewishfestival.pl

Forum Dialogu Między Narodami
Forum for Dialogue Among Nations
Chmielna15/9, 00-021 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)827 2207
www.dialog.org.pl

Fundacja Beit Warszawa
Beit Warszawa Foundation
Wiertnicza 113, 02-952 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)885 2638
www.beit.org.pl

Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce
Taube Centre Foundation for Jewish Cultural Renewal in Poland
Tłomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warszawa
Tel +(48)790 202 242
benefacere@vp.pl

Fundacja i Centrum im. Profesora Mojżesza Schorra
Professor Moses Schorr Foundation and Centre
Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 3496
www.schorr.edu.pl

Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego w Polsce*Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland*Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22) 436 60 00
www.fodz.pl**Fundacja Shalom***Shalom Foundation*Pl. Grzybowski 12/16, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel (+48 22) 620 30 36, 620 30 37, 620 30 38
www.shalom.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Bielsku-Białej**
*Jewish Community in Bielsko-Biała*3-go Maja 7, skr.poczt. 180, 43-300 Bielsko-Biała
Tel+(48-33)812 2438
gwz@bb.onet.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska we Wrocławiu**
*Jewish Community in Wrocław*Włodkowica 7, 50-072 Wrocław
Tel +(48-71)343 6401
wroclaw@jewish.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Gdańsku**
*Jewish Community in Gdańsk*Partyzantów 7, 80-254 Gdańsk
Tel +(48-58) 344 06 02
gdansk@jewish.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Katowicach**
*Jewish Community in Katowice*3 maja 16, 40-096 Katowice
Tel +(48-32)253 7742
gwzkatowice@poczta.onet.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Krakowie**
*Jewish Community in Kraków*Skawińska 2, 31-066 Kraków
Tel: +(48-12) 429 57 35, 430 54 11
krakow@jewish.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Legnicy**
*Jewish Community in Legnica*Chojnowska 12, 59-220 Legnica
Tel +(48-76)862 2730**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Łodzi**
*Jewish Community in Łódź*Pomorska 18, 91-416 Łódź
Tel: +(48-42)632 0427
www.jewishcommunity.org.pl
www.jewishlodz.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Szczecinie**
*Jewish Community in Szczecin*Niemcewicza 2, 71-553 Szczecin
Tel +(48-91)422-19-05
gwzszczecin@jewish.org.pl**Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Warszawie**
*Jewish Community in Warsaw*Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)652 2005
warszawa@jewish.org.pl**American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
Office for Poland**Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)652 1754
www.jdc.org**Katedra Judaistyki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego**
*Chair of Jewish Studies, Jagiellonian University*Józefa 19, 31-056 Kraków
Tel +(48-12)427 5918
katedra.judaistyki@uj.edu.pl**Komisja Pomocy Społecznej przy ZGWŻ**
*Social Welfare Commission*Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 4324 x. 124
warszawa@jewish.org.pl

Lubelska Filia Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Warszawie
Lublin Branch of the Warsaw Jewish Religious Community
Lubartowska 85, 20-146 Lublin
Tel +(48-81)747 0992
lublin@jewish.org.pl

Midrasz – Dwumiesięcznik żydowski
Midrasz Jewish Bimonthly
Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)654 3156
www.midrasz.pl

Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich
Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Warecka 4/6, 00-040 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)471 0300
www.jewishmuseum.org.pl

Muzeum Żydowskie Galicja
Galicja Jewish Museum
Dajwór 18, 31-052 Kraków
Tel +(48-12)421 6842
www.galicjajewishmuseum.org

Poznańska Filia Związku Gmin Wyznaniowych Żydowskich
Poznań Branch of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities
Stawna 10, 61-759 Poznań
Tel +(48-61)855 2118
poznan@jewish.org.pl

Przedszkole i szkoła Lauder-Morasha
Lauder-Morasha kindergarten and school
Wawelberga 10, 01-188 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)862 1096, 862 6330
www.lauder-morasha.edu.pl

Sochnut
Jewish Agency
Plac Bankowy 2/1914, 00-095 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 0553
sochnut@o2.pl

Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holocaustu w Polsce
Association of the Children of the Holocaust in Poland
Plac Grzybowski 12/16, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 8245
www.dzieciholocaustu.org.pl

Stowarzyszenie Pardes
Pardes Association
Zabłocie 43, 30-701 Kraków
Tel +(48)608 558 050
www.pardes.pl

Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej
Association of Jewish World War II Veterans and Victims
Twarda 6, 00-1-4 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 6211
kombatanci@jewish.org.pl

Studium Kultury i Języków Żydowskich Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
Wrocław University Centre for the Culture and Languages of the Jews
Plac Nankiera 15, 50-140 Wrocław
Tel +(48-71)375 2017
judaistyka@uni.wroc.pl

Szkoła Lauder-Etz Chaim
Lauder-Etz Chaim School
Żelazna 57, 53 - 429 Wrocław
Tel +(48-71)332 4121
lauder.etzchaim@gmail.com

Teatr Żydowski im. Estery Racheli i Idy Kamińskich
Ester Rachel and Ida Kamińska Jewish Theatre
Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 6281
www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl

Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce
Jewish Socio-Cultural Association in Poland
Plac Grzybowski 12/16, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 0554
www.tskz.pl

Zakład Historii i Kultury Żydów Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej
Maria Curie Skłodowska University Institute for Jewish History and Culture
Plac Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej 4, 20-031 Lublin
Tel +(48-81)537 5090
jewishstudies@klio.umcs.lublin.pl

**Związek Gmin Wyznaniowych Żydowskich w
Polsce**
Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland
Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)620 0676
zgwz@jewish.org.pl

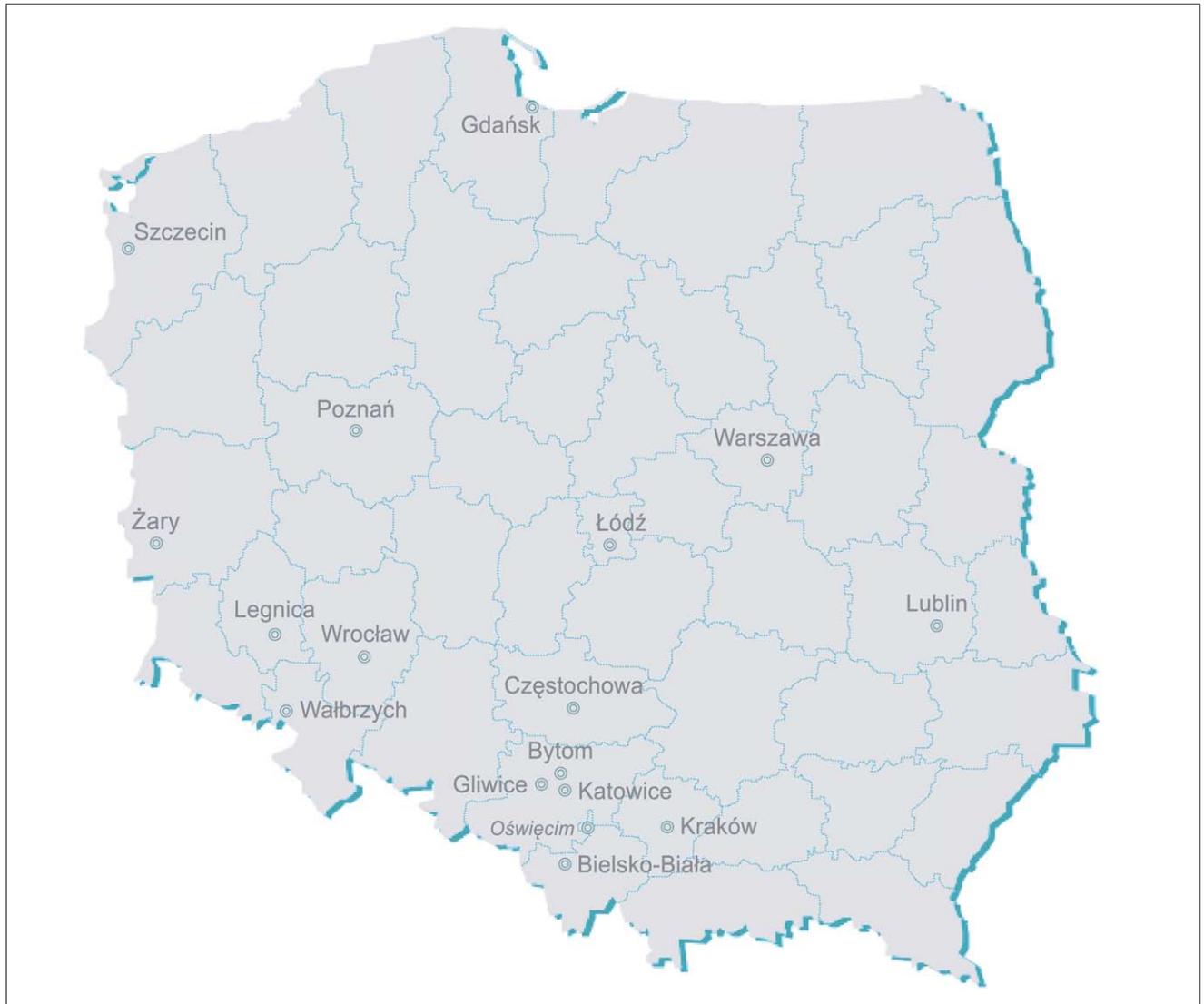
**Żydowska Ogólnopolska Organizacja
Młodzieżowa**
Jewish All-Polish Youth Organization
Twarda 6, 00-104 Warszawa
www.zoom.edu.pl

Żydowskie Stowarzyszenie Czulent
Jewish Association Czulent
Dietla 34/6, 31-039 Kraków
www.czulent.pl

Żydowski Instytut Historyczny
Jewish Historical Institute
Tłomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warszawa
Tel +(48-22)827 9221
www.jhi.pl

Appendix

The map of the Jewish communities affiliated to the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations in Poland



Source: Dariusz Jazdzik (<http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Joystick>)

This report is the second in the JPR series *Jewish life in East-Central Europe since the collapse of communism*.

Other reports in this series

Jewish life in Hungary: achievements, challenges and priorities since the collapse of communism

Jewish life in Germany (forthcoming)

Jewish life in the Ukraine (forthcoming)

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4th Floor, 7-8 Market Place London W1W 8AG

tel +44 (0)20 7436 1553

fax +44 (0)20 7436 7262

e-mail jpr@jpr.org.uk

website www.jpr.org.uk

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