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# European Center for Jewish Students – ECJS-2013

**Name of program**

European Center for Jewish Students – ECJS

**Year of activity**

2013

**Name of the report's writer**

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**Status of program**

Over the year 2013, ECJS has continued its programs which are popular among our demographic of European Jews ages 18-35. These students and young professionals depend on ECJS activities for the opportunity to be part of the European Jewish community. Most of these participants had little to no involvement in Jewish life on a regular basis prior to their involvement with ECJS. We have created a close knit network between these young adults and have bridged the gap of physical distance with the emotional closeness of an extended family. The main ECJS achievements in 2013 include European conventions, writing of a European Travel-size Torah, and local Jewish life activities.

**Main achievements during the last year of activity**

New Year's 2013 in Barcelona, Spain

December 28- January 1

5 day event

Participants in hotel 348

Total participants that attended the event: Shabbat, parties etc 450

Purim in Amsterdam, Netherlands

February 22-25

4 day event

Participants In hotel 369

Total participants that attended the event: Shabbat, Purim meal, megillah, parties etc 700

Summer in Berlin, Germany

July 25-28

4 day event

Participants In hotel 242

Total participants that attended the event: Shabbat, parties etc 300

Annual Brussels event

November 15-17

3 day event

Participants In hotel 184

Total participants that attended the event: Shabbat, inauguration, parties etc 700

European Conventions – each follows a city trip/conference model which ECJS has established through years of experience; ECJS organizes plans and tailors each event to the local city and to the specific time of year. Each event includes a traditional Shabbat, lectures on contemporary Jewish issues, and touring of the local city with an emphasis on the Jewish history and historical sites.

## **Evaluation**

Hosting Jewish events which are popular and attract European students and young professionals is no easy feat among our target group. ECJS has succeeded in creating an atmosphere that combines a homey, welcoming feeling within large and diverse groups. Events have an abundance of unity, friendship and pride. The balance of fun outings, tours, and parties together with Jewish traditions, education, and culture are part of what makes the events so popular. Attendees are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the program, but there is no pressure to do so. This facilitates internal development and exploration of Jewish values.

Many couples who met through ECJS events in 2013 are engaged or married. Results are displayed through positive feedback from participants. After participants attend their 1st ECJS event there is a major increase of Jewish friends on facebook. Turnover at events is approximately a third to half new participants. New participants are constantly needed to replace those who have met their significant other, moved out of Europe and those who have passed our age limit.

We still believe that there is a strong need for funding participants from Eastern Europe, broken homes and in need of financial assistance to enable them to attend ECJS events. If

funding permits, we need to focus on individuals who are currently prohibited financially from participating in ECJS activities.

## **Others**

### **Other Activities:**

- Local events including Shabbat services and meals, Jewish festival celebrations including: Shavuot cheese-cake party and 10 Commandments, a Simchat Torah buffet celebration, Sukkot 'Pizza in the Hut' party, Chanukah candle-lighting, sufganiot decorating and sivon game with gifts. Judaic classes. Approximately 500 people participate in these events over the course of the year.
- Jewish festival packages including distributing chanukiot for Chanukah, mishloach manot for Purim and matzah and Pesach. Approximately 1500 people benefit from these activities.
- Assist in locating local synagogues, organizations, services and meals for people traveling all over Europe. Approximately 500 people benefit from these activities.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

Due to the success and popularity of ECJS events, we do not suggest making any changes to the organization of the programs. Unfortunately, we are currently limited to the number of programs we are able to hold per year due to limits in financial backing.

More follow up needed with get-togethers between events in various locations. We will launch a European Mezuzah Project which will allow our demographic the opportunity of showing their Jewish pride by keeping this mitzvah. A free mezuzah will be sent to the local Rabbi which will give the student and Rabbi an opportunity to get to know one another as the beginning of a relationship between the two.

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