

# MATANEL FOUNDATION

## ACTIVITY REPORT

**Program:** *Straus-Amiel Institute's Conference for Rabbis in Europe*  
**Year:** 2023

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole report will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: Straus-Amiel Institute's Conference for Rabbis in Europe

Year of activity: 2023

Name of the report's writer: Rabbi Eliahu Birnbaum

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<https://www.otsamiel.org.il/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Straus.Amiel>

Number of active participants in the program:

86 adults, 14 children

Estimated number of impacted participants:

47 communities throughout Europe were represented. The actual number of beneficiaries of the emissaries' work is in the thousands.

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

The conference took place in Lausanne, Switzerland between March 14<sup>th</sup> – March 16<sup>th</sup>, where rabbis, educators and professional community leaders from throughout Europe came together for three days of learning, discussion, brainstorming and bonding. It was an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas, revel in successes, learn from challenges and dilemmas facing European communities across the continent, and enjoy spending time with fellow leaders in the Jewish world.

The program included TED-style talks on the future of the Jewish world in Europe and sessions on the war in Europe and its impact on Jewish life; post-Covid responses to challenges facing the communities; cross-communal collaboration; the many challenges of kiruv; conversion; lessons from past great leaders of the Jewish people including Rabbis Sacks, Druckman and Steinzaltz; the different philosophies of halakhic decision making and classes on current halakhic challenges. One of the main highlights

Each session included a dynamic and informal Q&A from the participants, creating a "learning" atmosphere where participants felt free and able to express their opinions.

These discussions often spilled over, in a positive way, into breaks and mealtimes as well.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

The event was attended by Straus-Amiel graduates currently serving in rabbinic and educational positions throughout Europe, as well as a number of non-Amiel rabbis who share the vision of providing a rich, warm and welcoming Judaism, imbued with passion and adherence to halakha. These leaders now return to their communities refreshed, inspired and filled with new ideas and techniques for promoting a vibrant Jewish life for their communities.

In attendance were also the Straus-Amiel faculty, as well as the leadership of World Mizrahi and World Bnei Akiva. Beyond sharing their wisdom and inspiration, they return to Israel with better knowledge and understanding of the many challenges facing Jewish communities, and thinking of ways to support the communities and their leaders.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

The conference participants presented very positive feedback both during and immediately after the conference, with the emphasis placed on how the discussions and training seminars would serve them well as part of their professional development.

Another means to measure the value of the conference is the willingness of the emissaries themselves to attend, but more so, the willingness of the communities to release their employees for the purpose of attending a professional development conference, one they obviously feel will be a useful and which will have a positive impact.

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

- a. Ongoing communication with the communities and the emissaries, highlighting the importance of meeting in person and not just virtually.
- b. Working with a host community that is ready, willing and able to host a large group of individuals, couples and families for a number of days, including the logistics of kosher-board, lodging, and babysitting.
- c. Securing the funds needed to stage the conference.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (as **PDF documents**)

Please join photos – as **JPG files** – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seem to you relevant – as **PDF document**.

Please join a 5 minutes movie which presents your institution and the particular project supported by the Matanel Foundation. The movie should be accessible to the philanthropic world and to other potential donors.