

Conference Report

European Jewish Communities managing the COVID-19 outbreak

March 30th 2020

Opening : 5pm (Brussels Time)

Organizers	Speakers	Participants
Ophir R. Elie K. Rozy F. Israel B. Dan K. Dany C.	Ophir Revah Elie Kagan Milo Hasbani Kevin Reiss Charlie Gotlib Perla Salama Carina Bentolila Uriel Perugia Maurice Cohen Andras Heisler Raya Kalenova	Presidents of communities Directors CMT leaders Heads of security 100 participants

OPENING

Ophir Revach – CEO SACC by EJC

Welcoming the participants.

Objectives of the conference: share best practices, continue to apply the measures from the authorities, find the gaps between the support provided by the State and the need of support from the Community. Identify the people who need help (infected, isolated, their relatives) to provide practical help and emotional support. Take any possible actions to minimize the impact of the crisis on the Community.

EPICENTRE OF THE OUTBREAK IN EU

Milo Hasbani – President of the Jewish community of Milano

General update about the situation in the Jewish Community of Milano: 8 members died from COVID-19, young adults are also at risk. Schools are operating online. Mikve remains open to ladies. Active group of volunteers is active. Issues: Logistics: 1) Food for Pessah, meat delivery due to supply chain inefficiencies and the increase of requests. 2) Health equipment: masks finding. 3) Social: funds issues. Community decided to pay full salary to community employees to, for example, maintain the school activity. Future perspectives: the rise of unemployment. They are living day by day. It is going to be very challenging to come back to normality.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Kevin Reiss – Head of CMT, Jewish Community of Brussels

General update of the local situation. They started to face the problems 5-6 weeks ago. Communication: centralized communication via the webpage “www.cmtbrussels.be”. Emphasize information from the government measures to the community through centralized communication channel and 2 weekly calls with the head of the Community’s institutions. Opening of a hotline. Use of the local Jewish radio “Radio Judaica to promote everyday useful information from the CMT. Specific actions: providing ipad to the elderly home so elderly could somehow be in contact with their relatives. Security guards help as volunteers. Logistics: order of mask and gel, waiting for the delivery

Charlie - Head of CMT, Jewish Community in Antwerp

General update: they opened the CMT early. They faced challenges with religious communities due to their complete reliability on God ("God will help us...") and by their lack of information and access to the media. Emphasizing the importance of considering the Pikuah Nefesh rule to the religious communities.

MEDICS, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Perla Salama – Head of Security and Crisis Management of FCJE

General update about the local situation. 2 CMT groups: Madrid and Barcelona. They have performed drills together. So far, essentially focused on counter terrorism situations. Communication: through newsletter. Doctors: national update for more accurate results and ongoing follow-up. Warning: challenge to collect data from the members about their real status.

Carina Bentolila – Head of CMT, Jewish Community of Madrid

General update about the local situation. Schools are closed, disinfected the Mikve. followed ministry of health protocols. Specific use of doctors and psychologists focused on the children's needs. Social teams: volunteers' groups and social workers are supporting the isolated people. Social Workers are pro-actively calling elderly support (food, medications). Psychologists are providing emotional support whether the cause is the current outbreak or economic difficulties. Doctors of the CMT are well informed from the different hospitals about the situation and are cooperating the psychologists when needed. Halahic challenges: Attending burial and Shiva made possible with the use of a live stream video on a phone.

JEWISH LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN

Uriel Perugia – General Secretary of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities

Anticipation is key. We should learn from that crisis and take the opportunity to prepare all the simple things that we could have done in advance. 2 main activities: 1) Psychological and medical support 2) Logistics support through volunteers. UCEI has developed its online presence by using Facebook activities from 8.30am to 11pm for different projects: kids, religious and sharing about the economic impact. Logistic issues: mask, gel and food especially for Pessah.

DAILY COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES ON ZOOM

Maurice Cohen – Chair of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland

Grateful to be united and share with friends. Focused on how we could re-create a community under lockdown. Through finding specific solutions to maintain Jewish life activities by using technology via Zoom. Main important update: to allow community members to speak and share, but also interesting talks, specific courses such as yoga, fitness, etc. No major depression issues thanks to those tools.

SHORT AND LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

Andras Heisler – President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Hungary

Thank you to Dr. Moshe Kantor and the EJC for their continuous support. The preparation of the current crisis started 3 years ago when the team of the SACC by EJC and the Jewish Community of Hungary cooperated to build a professional CMT. By consequence, the Community gained a lot of experience to face this crisis. Challenges: Jewish hospitals and elderly house. Logistics: they had to reorganize themselves and divide the kitchen teams. Production capacity is 2000 meals per day. Our mindset is to always anticipate things ahead. Volunteers: good commitment. Strong philosophy: provide solution to any negative impact of the crisis on the Jewish life. Example: if they close synagogue, they open prayer online, etc. That crisis helped to increase cooperation and should be useful for the future.

Q & A

Elie Kagan – Moderator – Head of Crisis Management SACC by EJC

1) Shmulie - Antwerp: Make update for men too. 2) Saville Kauffman from CST: Far right groups may be a threat to enter Zoom meetings.

Elie stressed the importance to share the best practices among all the Jewish Communities to be more efficient. SACC by EJC will share today's best practices with the participants.

CLOSING

Ophir Revach – CEO SACC by EJC

Reminder about the importance of information and negative impacts of rumors. Anticipation of the next Jewish events. For the future, we must think about: 1) Economic impacts: business and finance (illustration of the Austrian fund). 2) Society challenge: potential increase of violences and antisemitism. We can face those challenges with solidarity by being stronger together.

Raya Kalenova – CEO and Vice President of EJC

The importance to work together and united. The fact that so many participants were present at the conference confirms the need for this platform. Raya recommends to organize more online conferences in the coming weeks for an efficient follow-up and joint effort.

Raya invites the Jewish Communities to contact directly EJC or SACC by EJC, should they need any specific support.

End: 6:20pm (Brussels Time)
