UNIQUE CULTURE, UNIQUE PROGRAMS
Engaging Russian-Speaking Jews Around the World

Program Guide
Unit for Russian-Speaking Jewry
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As a central connection between Israel and worldwide Jewish communities, The Jewish Agency for Israel is renowned for its expertise in developing meaningful Jewish identity-building programs, in a variety of languages and for specific audiences. This brochure will introduce you to the work of our professional staff of Russian-speaking program experts worldwide and our flagship team of Shlichim (emissaries), who reach tens of thousands of Russian-speaking Jews (RSJs) every year.

During the seven decades of the Soviet regime, the Jewish community of the former Soviet Union (FSU) experienced severe identity loss. Twenty years after the regime’s collapse, only an estimated 20 percent of the 800,000 Jews across the broad expanse of what is now the FSU are meaningfully engaged in Jewish life. Around the world, Russian-speaking Jews are estimated to comprise over 3 million people – and their participation in local “mainstream” Jewish communities is exceedingly low.

Russian-speaking Jews, therefore, have unique Jewish educational needs, both in the FSU and in other regions. To help them feel close to their global Jewish family and to connect them to Israel, The Jewish Agency for Israel runs programs in the FSU, North America, Germany, and Israel, and, beginning in 2013, will run programs in Australia—programs that promote Jewish culture and unity through a continuum of immersive Jewish experiences.

Our strategic efforts fall into four broad categories:

1. Camping, youth programs, and counselor training;
2. Leadership development and grassroots support;
3. Israel Experiences;
4. Facilitation of Aliyah from the FSU and Germany.

In all these areas, The Jewish Agency for Israel seeks new relationships with strategic partners and donors worldwide. We invite you to become part of our vital and exciting efforts to reach a large and unique branch of the global Jewish family that yearns for connection. The Jewish Agency for Israel continues its historic mission to engage them, wherever they are, in their own language and through their own culture.

Roman Polonsky
Director, Unit for Russian-Speaking Jewry
The Jewish Agency for Israel
Camps and Youth Activities

The Jewish Agency’s **FSU Summer and Winter Camps** enable young Jews to enjoy transformative Jewish educational experiences in The Jewish Agency’s trademark high-impact, informal education model. For over 20 years, FSU Camps have provided an indelible experience for young people from age 7 to young adulthood. All camps are staffed by trained, local counselors and Russian-speaking Israelis. For many campers, The Jewish Agency for Israel camp is their first introduction to Jewish history, Jewish customs, and Israel. More than 150,000 participants have graduated from our camps, changing dramatically the Jewish environment in the FSU. Most of the prominent leaders of Jewish organizations and communities in the FSU today are our alumni. In 2012, more than 6,500 campers participated in Jewish Agency for Israel camps in 27 locations across Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the Baltic states, developed in partnership with UJA-Federation of NY and other Jewish federations and foundations.

**Youth Activities in the FSU** are a year-round extension of camp, and operate in large cities and peripheral communities. Approximately 20,000 children and youth participate annually in special programs to celebrate holidays and Shabbat, and in on-going Jewish education activities. Youth Activities are led by local young adults, many of whom are camp counselors, who participate in ongoing training.

The continuum of camp, youth activities, and counselor-training nurtures the development of leadership and strong peer networks.
Leadership Development

Hamama: Incubator for Innovation supports local FSU projects in the fields of education and community-building. Hamama provides the start-up support, seed funding, and educational supervision for initiatives developed by independent groups and sub-communities of Jewish students and young adults. In 2012 we supported 48 projects, reaching about 5,000 young Russian-speaking adults (most of them unaffiliated) across the FSU.

Phoenix is a program for young leaders who want to become the architects and builders of Jewish life in their home communities. The project is based on an educational platform on Jewish history (an online course, a Holocaust tour of Poland and a related preparation seminar before the trip, and a final seminar) and implementation of volunteer initiatives in participants’ home communities. During its pilot year, the program will include 120 participants who pass an online eligibility exam and present practical ideas for community-building projects. Phoenix will be implemented in partnership with Genesis Philanthropy Group and Yad Vashem.

Israel Experiences

Taglit-Birthright Israel provides 10-day educational Israel experiences to thousands of Jews, ages 18 to 26, completely free of charge. The Jewish Agency is directly involved in bringing over 9,000 participants each year, from around the globe, with a special focus on facilitating Taglit-Birthright experiences and related programming for communities in need and for Russian-speaking Jews in the FSU and Germany. In the last decade, over 8,000 young Jews from the FSU visited Israel for the very first time with Taglit-Birthright Israel.

In 2012, The Jewish Agency introduced special Taglit-Birthright tracks just for participants from the FSU. The special programs are designed for young professionals, and combine traditional excursions to Israel’s heritage sites with site visits that emphasize Israel’s entrepreneurial and science-rich spirit. These programs extend the age limit for participants. In the pilot year, 68 young Jewish professionals from the FSU participated.
Pre-Israel Experience Programs provide essential Jewish educational preparation for every FSU resident who travels to Israel on a Taglit-Birthright program, and contribute to leadership development and strengthening the Jewish community’s next generation in the FSU. In 2012, about 1,400 participants – those who traveled on Taglit-Birthright from the FSU – took part in a Pre-Israel Experience Program.

Onward Israel is a new Jewish Agency for Israel initiative that provides 6-to-10-week, high-quality résumé-building experiences in Israel for 18- to 30-year-olds, in partnership with Jewish organizations overseas. Onward Israel offers exciting opportunities – internships, service learning, academic study, and fellowships – providing a global, cross-cultural experience in Israel and direct contact with Israeli peers. In 2012, our pilot Onward program from the FSU attracted 20 young adult participants.

Masa Israel Journey acts as an umbrella for over 200 gap year, study abroad, post-college, and volunteer programs serving young Jewish adults from around the world; provides significant scholarships to participants; performs high-impact outreach; informs program development; provides year-round enrichment activities; and operates a growing number of activities for Masa’s alumni. Masa programs serve Diaspora Jews ages 18-30 who are staying in Israel for 5 to 12 months. In the last seven years, about 5,000 young adults from the FSU took part in long-term programs in the Jewish State thanks to promotional efforts by The Jewish Agency.

Academic studies show that a single peer-trip to Israel greatly increases Jewish engagement when participants return to their home countries – and the longer the trip, the greater the impact.
Supplementary Jewish Education

Ulpanim provide Hebrew language classes across the FSU, as well as teacher training, programming, materials, and testing resources. Each Ulpan offers tracks at several levels of fluency and by areas of interest. In the 2012 program year, 120 teachers served about 5,000 students.

Sunday Schools: The Jewish Agency’s network of Sunday Schools in the FSU offers professional, managerial, content, and financial support to teachers of elementary and high school-age children, upgrading the quality of complementary Jewish education. The project is organized in partnership with local organizations. Sunday school programming promotes a connection to Russian-Jewish heritage, global Jewry, and Israel. Each year, 100 schools reach 3,000 students and their families.

Integration of Children with Special Needs in the Jewish Community of Moscow is a cooperative project with the JDC that works with about 200 special-needs children and their families, 73 specialists, and 42 volunteers, providing access to Jewish heritage and communal life, as well as individual professional assistance in education and personal development. The project provides Jewish identity programs, integrative summer camps, and after-school programs on Jewish history and culture.

The Cooperative Project: Teaching About the Holocaust to Educators in the FSU: This Holocaust-education program brings 30 teachers each year from the FSU to Israel, training them in partnership with Yad Vashem and Beit Lohamei Hageta’ot, so they can transmit meaningful curricular material to the next generation of students.

Jewish Literacy Programming includes a range of cultural-identity programs to enable Jews throughout the FSU to connect to their roots and to Israel through modular educational classes on Jewish history and Israel. In 2012, more than 2,500 Jews of all ages participated.

Masa Shorashim: Holocaust Education in the FSU is a year-round educational program for FSU Jewish high school students that teaches the history of the Holocaust and includes an educational trip to Ukraine, Belarus, or the Baltic states. In the 2011-12 program year, 268 students from 26 schools participated in the trip.
Formal Jewish Education

**Aleh Neta** provides advanced training for Hebrew teachers at Jewish high schools in the FSU, so they can more effectively encourage Hebrew fluency among their students. In 2012, the program provided instruction for approximately 40 teachers in 12 schools.

**Tal Am** provides training for Hebrew teachers at FSU Jewish primary schools, teaching them to use a highly effective Hebrew instructional model, adapted for RSJ students. The program trained 65 teachers at 28 Jewish elementary schools in 2012.

**Heftzibah FSU Jewish Day School Network** introduces children to Hebrew, Jewish history, and tradition. In 2003, The Jewish Agency for Israel, in partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Education, assumed day-to-day administration of key elements of the network’s management, currently including 44 schools with enrollment of over 8,000 children. Heftzibah schools offer comprehensive Jewish Studies curricula that emphasize Hebrew language mastery, the history of Zionism, Israeli history, and Jewish-Israeli culture.

Aliyah

The Jewish Agency for Israel remains the leader in the facilitation of Aliyah to Israel. In 21 locations throughout the FSU, The Jewish Agency for Israel provides, for those considering Aliyah, orientation, personal consultations, seminars, and fairs, with a particular focus on Aliyah-preparation programs for youth and young professionals. About 7,650 people made Aliyah from the FSU in 2012.

Our Aliyah services for Russian-speakers supplement the wide variety of programs and services that The Jewish Agency for Israel provides to all those who make Aliyah from around the world. In partnership with the Ministry of Absorption; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Employment; institutions of higher education; and municipalities of different Israeli cities, The Jewish Agency for Israel offers a variety of Aliyah programs for different target audiences, markets those programs to potential immigrants, and prepares future olim for their programs in Israel.

These programs enable the new olim to learn Hebrew on a high level, to acquire a labor market-oriented profession, or to continue their academic educations.
**Na’ale: The World’s Jewish High School** makes it possible for parents in Jewish communities abroad to register their children for three or four years of tuition-free Israeli high school, leading to an Israeli “matriculation” diploma.

Na’ale provides room and board, a monthly stipend and fees for extra-curricular activities, home hospitality, and other support services. Over 85 percent of Na’ale students have earned their diplomas; 90 percent of alumni have made Aliyah. In the FSU, The Jewish Agency for Israel is directly involved in the marketing and participant recruitment process and provides a preparation program for applicants (Limudiya; see below) for the Na’ale applicants. In the 2011-12 school year Na’ale enrolled students from 32 different countries. The largest contingent, with 362 teens, came from the FSU.

**Limudiya** is an educational program that prepares teenagers aged 13 to 17 who plan to study in Israel on the Na’ale or Selah programs. The Limudiya curriculum introduces the participants to the unique aspects of the Israeli educational system and offers classes in history and Jewish heritage.

**Selah: Academic and Hebrew Preparation for Young Olim from the FSU** is a 10-month academic preparatory course and Aliyah program for recent high school graduates from the FSU who immigrate to Israel prior to their parents or on their own. The program served 200 young adults between 17 and 21 years old in 2012. In the FSU The Jewish Agency for Israel is directly involved in the marketing and participant recruitment process and provides a preparation program for applicants (Limudiya; see below).

**Know Israel** includes a variety of activities that encourage potential olim to discover contemporary life in Israel from different perspectives: cultural, economic, educational, security, and employment. Within the framework of the program there are organized seminars, fairs, round tables, meetings with lecturers, video conferences between participants and their families in Israel, and videoconferences with Aliyah experts in Israel. The activities stimulate interest in Israel and Aliyah and provide a framework for potential olim to ask practical questions about Israeli life.

**Professional Training** programs in Israel train or re-train Russian-speaking olim for careers in Israel. The variety of programs offered depends on the Israeli labor market and the needs of current olim. The programs recently offered have prepared Russian-speaking olim for careers in metal working, early childhood education, and professional culinary arts. About 250 new immigrants took advantage of these opportunities in 2012.

In 2012 alone, over 7,600 people made Aliyah from the former Soviet Union. They all received Jewish Agency services to facilitate, and help them prepare for, their immigration to Israel.
IN GERMANY

The German-Jewish community is the fastest-growing Jewish community in the world. Over 220,000 Russian-speaking Jews from the FSU have immigrated to Germany, and over 90 percent of the German-Jewish population is composed of Russian-speaking immigrants and their families.

Population growth and vast geographic dispersal across Germany have presented a number of issues and challenges that distinguish this Jewish community from others in the Jewish world. Status issues, problems of immigrants, non-involvement in community life, and differences in perception of Judaism and Jewishness have led to assimilation in the past.

In Germany, The Jewish Agency for Israel focuses on strengthening Jewish identity among teens, students, and young adults, and developing a new generation of Jewish communal leadership.

Jewish Identity and Connections to Community

Year-round programming, operated directly by The Jewish Agency, increases students’ and young adults’ sense of belonging.

The Jewish Agency for Israel operates a variety of programs to help young adult Jews in Germany, especially the unaffiliated, to develop a sense of belonging to the Jewish People, enthusiasm for their Jewish heritage, and connection with Israel.

Israel Experience Programs expose young Jewish adults to the broader Jewish world, to Jewish heritage, to Israel, and to new possibilities for community engagement.

WAHL (“Choice”) is an educational project for FSU emigrés in Germany who are no longer eligible for Taglit-Birthright trips due to their age. It includes an eight-day visit to Israel geared to the unique needs of Russian-speakers in Germany.

Onward Israel offers mid-length experiences in Israel including internships, service learning, academic studies, and fellowships (see page 10).

Promotion of Masa Israel Journey and development of specialized Masa programs for young Jews from Germany.

Post-Israel Experience Follow-Up Programs include the annual PT (Post-Taglit) Convention that unites former participants of Israel Experience programs from all over Germany; seminars; and workshops for students and young adults. In 2012 about 1,400 Israel Experience alumni in Germany participated in Post-Israel Experience programs.

Leadership Training includes support for grassroots initiatives (such as one component of the Nevatim platform, see below) and other Jewish Agency programs to increase Jewish knowledge and commitment to the Jewish community. These include a year-round training course for madrichim (counselors) who will lead other Jewish Agency activities, and a unique

The Jewish Agency for Israel engages Jews, wherever they are, in their own language and through their own culture.
Strategic Partnership Programs

The Jewish Agency implements activities in partnership with the organized community of Germany:

As part of a strategic cooperation agreement between The Jewish Agency and the ZWST—the umbrella organization for education in the German Jewish Community—one of The Jewish Agency emissaries is in charge of educational activities on behalf of the ZWST, and is therefore responsible for a large educational system including summer and winter camps, student projects, training programs for educators, youth and student conferences, and educational support for Jewish schools.

An example of The Jewish Agency’s intensive cooperation with local and regional communities is its innovative Cha’il project, which operates in formal Jewish schools in cooperation with regional communities and with the support of the Israeli government. Project Cha’il is active in 14 German communities, reaching 400 teenagers.

The Jewish Agency enjoys intensive cooperation with local Jewish organizations and provides important educational support to their activities. Major partners include the community of Munich (where The Jewish Agency’s Emissary is in charge of educational activities), the German-Jewish Liberal Movement (for which a Jewish Agency Emissary is in charge of educational activities), Chabad, and the Lauder Foundation’s institutions. Other partners include the Zionist youth movement, Maccabi, and the Union of Jewish Students (both the national and regional branches).

Support for Independent Initiatives, Grassroots Organizations, and Networking

The Jewish Agency for Israel enjoys a strategic partnership with the J. Korczak European Academy of Jewish Education, an umbrella organization that supports grassroots initiatives. The majority of these initiatives are developed and spearheaded by graduates of other Jewish Agency for Israel programs. The Academy conducts training programs, seminars, and workshops for activists, and offers professional development for organizations and individuals interested in the field of Jewish entrepreneurship. In 2012 the initiatives reached about 2,500 people.

The Jewish Agency for Israel continues to empower and nurture the next generation of community leaders also through Nevatim, a program that provides financial and professional supervision for grassroots educational initiatives in Germany. The network of initiatives supported by this program expands every year and now includes more than 20 groups and their projects; in 2012 it reached about 1,500 participants.

intellectual leadership development project called Jewish Heritage. Participants in “Jewish Heritage” study Jewish culture and history through academic study, tours of significant historical and religious sites, arts and culture, and community-building exercises. In 2012 about 200 people participated in leadership activities and training seminars.

Virtual Ulpan is an online platform for learning Hebrew. Virtual Ulpan offers tracks at several levels of fluency and by areas of interest.

Aliyah Services include consultations with Jewish Agency staff members, who provide the potential olim with information they require, explain options about different types of communities and Absorption programs, and help with government paperwork. In 2012 about 140 olim made Aliyah from Germany.
**IN NORTH AMERICA**

The United States and Canada are home to over 700,000 Russian-speaking Jews and their families. Jewish Agency Shlichim engage them with the larger Jewish community, often in partnerships with local Jewish organizations. We train local Russian-speaking educators, volunteers, and camp counselors; build program frameworks for community growth; and promote Israel experiences in cities across North America.

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**Summer Outreach: Camp Education and Counselor Development**

**Counselor training programs** by The Jewish Agency for Israel prepare young North American Russian-speaking adults to work as counselors in specialized summer camps for Russian-speaking Jewish teenagers, increasing the counselors’ own Jewish knowledge as well as their ability to serve as positive Jewish role models for campers. The training includes both teaching skills and content in Jewish history, texts, literature, and art.

Additionally, with its experience all over the world providing pluralistic, inviting, enriching Jewish heritage programs to unaffiliated Jews, The Jewish Agency for Israel is uniquely qualified for its role as the developer of specialized educational programs for camps for Russian-speaking teenagers.
Leadership Development

The Jewish Agency’s leadership development programs for Russian-speaking Jews ages 25 to 40, in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Toronto, are designed for young professionals with leadership abilities, motivation to make a difference within their communities, and creativity.

Graduates of these programs become engines for change within their local Russian-Jewish communities, promoting connection to the wider Jewish community, with the Jewish Federation at the center.

The Jewish Agency for Israel implements its RSJ Leadership Development programs in North America with the generous support of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles; the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties; the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto; and Genesis Philanthropy Group.

Community Events

Year-round, The Jewish Agency Shlichim in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Toronto organize activities for Russian-speaking Jews and family members of all ages. The events integrate the RSJ population into the mainstream Jewish community, create local traditions, and encourage a sense of belonging. They also spark interest for participation in Jewish communal life.

The Jewish Agency for Israel, Masa Israel Journey, and the Hillel of Brooklyn College work in partnership to encourage participation of young-adult North American Russian-speaking Jews in Masa’s long-term Israel programs (see page 11). Among the thousands of American Jews who took part in Masa in 2012 were 144 from Russian-speaking families in North America.

News Flash: The Jewish Agency for Israel is proud to announce that, since the end of 2012, one of our outstanding Educational Emissaries has started working with the Russian-Speaking Jewish community of Melbourne. We look forward to providing Jewish Agency programming for Australia’s Russian-Jewish community.
IN ISRAEL

In its efforts to strengthen the bonds between Israelis, Jews overseas, and the State of Israel, The Jewish Agency trains Israelis to work with RSJs abroad, and provides programs—in addition to Taglit-Birthright and Masa— that help those from the FSU feel at home in the Jewish state.

Our counselor-training and summer camping programs in Israel complement our many Absorption opportunities for those Russian-speaking Jews from around the world who choose to make Israel their home. In addition to the projects listed on pages 15–17, The Jewish Agency provides—to Russian-speakers and to olim from all over the world—temporary living arrangements in our many Absorption Centers and on kibbutzim; Hebrew-language instruction for new immigrants; opportunities to be mentored by more experienced immigrants; chances to socialize with Israelis; assistance planning careers in Israel; and absorption programs for immigrant Israeli soldiers.

Counselor Training programs in Israel prepare Israeli RSJs to work as counselors in specialized summer camps for Russian-speaking Jewish teenagers in the FSU and North America (see pages 6 and 24). The training program introduces young adults to basic pedagogical principles, methods of group facilitation, and advanced tools for effective group-leading. The training includes both teaching skills and content in Jewish history, texts, literature, and art.

Makom.IL is a unique overnight Jewish summer camp for Russian-speakers from the FSU, Israel, and other countries. The Makom.IL camping program facilitates encounters between Russian-speaking Jewish youth from Israel and their peers from around the world, creates conditions for participants to explore their Russian-Jewish culture and heritage alongside their connection to Israel, and provides participants with tools to continue learning about their personal and Jewish identities after camp is over.

Makom.IL offers opportunities for the discovery, creativity, and connectedness best realized through informal education experiences, peer interactions, group learning, and traveling around the Jewish state. Each day is dedicated to a specific theme in group discussions, textual learning, arts and crafts, sports, and evening activities. At the end of the camp, every group presents the results of its work, along with project ideas that can be implemented over the course of the coming months.

In summer 2012, over 120 Jewish youth from Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, and Belarus enjoyed a Jewish experience during the summer camp sessions in Israel.
We invite you to join us in our efforts worldwide to engage 3 million Russian-speaking Jews with the global Jewish family.

For information about any of our programs, contact rsjprograms@jafi.org