

THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS

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Berlin was the site of this year's conference of RA colleagues serving in Europe. Prior conferences have been held in Paris and Budapest. From May 23-25, our colleagues from England, France, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Switzerland gathered in Berlin at the Masorti Center for three days of discussion, study and visits with German Jewish communal leadership and government officials.

The meeting was chaired by our president, Rafi Rank. Much of our internal discussion focused on how we grow our Conservative communities and the resources needed to expand our work in Europe. Our colleagues formally organized as a region and have sent a request to the Executive Council for the establishment of a European region of the RA. A coordinating committee was elected consisting of Gesa Ederberg (Berlin), Jonathan Wittenberg (London), Rivon Krygier (Paris) and Zoltan Radnoti (Budapest). Chaim Weiner chaired several discussions concerning the European Bet Din now being organized and standards for giyur and gittin. Limud sessions were taught by Prof. Benjamin Gampel of JTS and Elliot Schoenberg led a practicum on building community. In addition there were site visits to the Jewish Museum, the new Holocaust Memorial, the Neue Synagogue and its nearby former Jewish neighborhood.

We are greatly appreciative of all the efforts of Gesa Ederberg and her assistant Connie Reigner who established our agenda and site visits and who hosted us all at the Masorti Center. Gesa's rabbinic presence, energy and creativity have made the entire community aware of Masorti Judaism and will lead to expansion of our work in Germany. Also, our thanks to Joe Wernik and his assistant Judy Gray in the Masorti Olami office in Yerushalayim who helped coordinate our European colleagues' visit to Berlin.

On the day prior to the start of our rabbinic conference the lay leadership of Masorti kehillot gathered at the Masorti

Center for a day of discussion and planning. Representatives from even more countries were present at this meeting which was coordinated through Joe Wernik's efforts. There was an uplifting and optimistic tone to the entire day's discussions and participants returned home energized.

These meetings were actually the culmination of a series of meetings, the first of which was held over the preceding Shabbat when some 90 college-age young people from eight countries gathered for a Marom seminar and shabbaton. With them was faculty from the Schechter Rabbinical School and from the Conservative Yeshiva. The excitement was palpable and the Shabbat experience moving.

We look forward to the growth of Masorti Judaism in Europe.