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Ohr Torah Stone launches Jewish education grants to small European communities

Funding will support projects in Finland, Latvia, Norway and Poland.



New World Street, one of the main shopping promenades in Warsaw, Poland. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

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(January 8, 2020 / JNS) Ohr Torah Stone (OTS), the Modern Orthodox network of 27 institutions that are transforming Jewish living, learning and leadership worldwide, has launched its first Jewish education grant program to help strengthen seven small European communities in





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Helsinki, Finland; Riga, Latvia; Oslo, Norway; and Warsaw, Szczecin and Wroclaw, Poland.

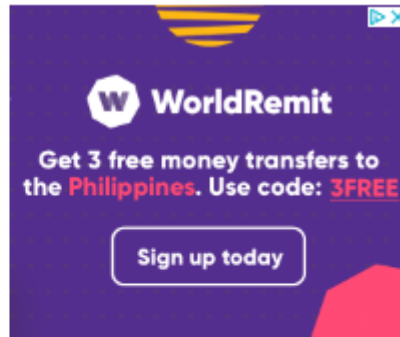
The first cohort of Ohr Torah Stone Grants to Small European Communities, which total \$50,000, will support an updated prayer book (*siddur*) for the Jewish community of Helsinki and another for Jewish camping programs in Warsaw; projects to create Shabbat and holiday experiences for children, adults and seniors; and to teach Hebrew.

The communities selected to receive grants were decided by a joint committee from OTS and the Conference of European Rabbis.

More than 40 proposals were received from European communities with up to 5,000 members in cities with a Jewish population of up to 15,000 people. Priority was given to projects that had matching funds from a foundation or existing community grants; where the OTS Grant funding of \$5,000 to \$8,000 would not replace existing support of donors/resources; and where the project aimed to improve the quality of Jewish education in the community or through Jewish life-cycle events.

The finalists are:

1. The Jewish Community of Helsinki, Finland – Finnish Heritage Siddur





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Produced in cooperation with Koren Publishers in Jerusalem, the *siddur* will offer greater understanding of the liturgy, including for the many Finnish Jews who do not read Hebrew, and preserve the Finnish Jewish *nusach* of the early 19th century. It is also hoped that providing scholars, journalists and educators access to a Jewish prayer book will help combat anti-Semitic stereotypes and sentiment in Finland.

2. JCC of Warsaw, Poland – Camp ATID Siddur Project

Summer and winter family camps, and Camp ATID—an overnight Jewish youth camp—are fundamental community-building programs of the Warsaw JCC. The strong, informal education they offer is a primary source of Jewish knowledge and experience for many campers. Shabbat is the highlight of each program, and the camps require new *siddurs*, which can now be produced and be used in synagogues throughout the year.

3. Hillel Poland Foundation, Warsaw, Poland – Themed Shabbat Dinners

Themed Shabbat dinners will create a network of Jewish young adults in Poland who otherwise would not have a chance to meet, teaching them Jewish traditions and rituals, and make Shabbat an enjoyable experience to be recreated at home for family, friends and the next generation.

4. Jewish Community in Szczecin, Poland – Jewish Holiday Celebrations

The community, which has no rabbi, will now be able to invite one to celebrate the main Jewish holidays with them to lead prayers, Passover





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seders and educational programs.

5. Jewish Community of Oslo – Det Mosaiske Trossamfund (Read Hebrew Now!)

As an Orthodox congregation, it is essential to teach and train young members to read Hebrew, enabling them to follow and even lead services. An improved and more effective Hebrew-education system is being designed. The primary goal of the congregation's weekly afternoon *cheder* ("school") is to encourage students to feel love, dedication and a sense of ownership of their Judaism.

6. Migdal Community, Riga, Latvia – Culana Mishpacha

Young families with children and homebound seniors will celebrate Jewish holidays together. About a dozen families will benefit from seniors' more expansive Jewish knowledge, while seniors with no immediate family, perhaps suffering from poverty and isolation, will enjoy an improved quality of life and be better able to observe *mitzvot*. Each family would deliver a holiday celebration to a senior's residence.

7. Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska we Wrocławiu, Wrocław, Poland – Chewre Sunday School

Jewish parents in Wrocław want their children to learn about Judaism. But having grown up under communism, they don't have such extensive knowledge of religion. The hope is that Chewre will give parents the opportunity to learn with their kids and for them to make Jewish friends, and through this create a future for Wrocław Jewish community.

<https://www.jns.org/ohr-torah-stone-launches-jewish-education-grants-to-small-european-communities/>

