



## OUR HISTORY

**The Conference of European Rabbis (CER) is the primary Orthodox rabbinical alliance in Europe. It unites more than 700 religious leaders of the mainstream synagogue communities in Europe.**

It was founded in 1956 on the initiative of British Chief Rabbi Sir Israel Brodie, in order to revive the vanquished Jewish communities on the European mainland. Brodie was supported by the chief rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, the chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Aharon Schuster and the British Sephardic spiritual leader, Hacham Gaon. The first conference took place in 1957 in Amsterdam.

As a result of the CER union with the rabbinates of the stronger western European orthodox communities, the vast majority of mainstream communities throughout the continent retained Orthodox affiliation and rabbinical leadership (with the exception of Hungary and Sweden where non-Orthodox groups had a strong prior presence). Even as some major Western European communities were deliberating joining non-Orthodox movements in the post WWII period, the strong rabbinical alliance was successful in ensuring an Orthodox rabbinate and securing the continuity of the orthodox rite even where the larger part of the membership had unfortunately become secularized.

The organization is run by a standing committee of 35 members which convenes twice a year for working meetings and policy assessments in one of the European capitals. These conventions are combined with a visit to the local Jewish community and institutions, and meetings with the government and other bodies for strengthening ties and cooperation on matters of local and pan-European Jewish significance.

The Standing Committee members are in general, the chief rabbis of European countries and major cities and senior rabbinical judges. The entire CER membership assembles once every two years at a general convention to which all European chief rabbis and congregational rabbis are invited.

The Conference of European Rabbis is mandated to defend the religious rights of Jews in Europe, and has become the voice of Judaism for the European continent. The CER has recently been involved with defending the rights of Jews to slaughter animals for consumption according to Jewish law and the right to circumcise their children.

The CER also functions as a rabbinical authority, with expert committees to certify conversions and kashruth (kosher) operations and to pass rabbinical legal decisions affecting the broader Jewish community. The CER has always been the expert address for European Jewish communities and rabbis for support in the facilitation of their religious functions, recruitment of rabbis and educators and other issues.

The CER has a special department for the planning, engineering and building of mikvehs (ritual baths) which has fulfilled over a dozen such projects all over Europe. The current president of the CER is the chief rabbi of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt, who served as chairman of the Standing Committee for over ten years. The chairman of the Presidium is associate president Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. Before Rabbi Sitruk, the organization was headed by Rabbi Lord Dr Immanuel Jacobovits, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain.

The Executive Director of the CER since inception was Rabbi Maurice (Moshe) Rose, succeeded in the year 2001 by Rabbi Aba Dunner, who passed away in 2011. or conversions which would be contrary to Jewish Law.