**The National Library of Israel**

**Gesher L’Europa – A Bridge to Europe**

**Evaluation Study 2021**

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**Summary**

The Education and Culture Division at the National Library of Israel (NLI) offers formal education institutions as well as informal education organizations a wide range of educational programs and resources in numerous fields of knowledge. In this context, we have launched a unique initiative in the field of Jewish education in the Diaspora. In recent years the NLI has been engaged in developing the program Gesher L’Europa – A Bridge to Europe, intended for schools in Europe and funded by the Rothschild Foundation. In preparation for further development and enhancement of the program in the coming year, the Library’s Education Division has sought to conduct a brief evaluation process aimed at **examining the extent to which the initiative has met the expectations of its participants and helping to identify future needs of the current participants as well as those of additional potential participants.**

**The evaluation process** included gathering data from various circles of education professionals, based on in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with nine education professionals from schools, education networks, and educational organizations that represent three perspectives – communal, national, and European. The interviews aimed to obtain an overall picture of the field, drawing on the experience and familiarity of the interviewees, collect feedback on the quality of the resources offered by the Library in various respects and the degree to which they meet the needs in the field, examine the scope of interest, possibilities, and opportunities for cooperation with the Library, and map the needs of education professionals (types of resources and assistance) in preparation for developing new resources. The questionnaires were disseminated among various circles: participants in the program to date (organizational representatives), workshop participants and relevant organizational staff members, and users of the Library’s website. Responsiveness to the questionnaires was relatively low (presumably because of reduced availability due to Covid-19). A total of 30 people responded to the questionnaires, mostly from nine states across Europe, with a minority from North America and Israel. The respondents belong to a wide variety of organizations: half of them are in the field of formal education (schools and organizations that work with schools), about a fourth are engaged in informal education organizations, and a minority are engaged in adult education.

The findings indicate that the **state of Jewish education** in Europe varies significantly in accordance with the country and the community in the city in question. A number of key parameters were identified: the central authority’s policy regarding schools in general and Jewish schools in particular; the size of the Jewish population in the country and the size of the local community; the nature of the community (its history, changes in its composition, its ties to Judaism); and the characteristics of the community’s institutions, including its schools. The unique characteristics of each community and each country have a bearing on what it expects from a connection with the Library and highlight the vital importance of adapting the responses yet to be developed, as part of the European program’s further development, to the particular needs of communities and educational staff.

**The main challenges in the field of Jewish education in Europe** with which respondents are dealing include lack of ready-to-use learning materials for student use during the Covid-19 pandemic, lack of adequate professional knowledge and training on the part of the educational staff, a shortage of educational personnel, insufficient time to teach subjects and convey knowledge, and the need to find teaching methods that are relevant and experiential for the students. In addition, differences were found between teachers and educators, who gave higher ratings to the degree of challenges than those not engaged in teaching.

The challenges identified by the participants during the interviews may be classified according to five main categories: *identity* challenges (non-Jews at Jewish schools, children of intermarriage, the significance of identity, a broad and multifaceted definition of Judaism and the discovery of new and different connections to Judaism, a sufficient education for life after Jewish school, and the need to persuade young generations to be a link in the chain); *community* challenges the (the need to create a sense of community and belonging, formal/informal membership in a community, competition for the attention of a target audience that has many alternative activities, and the formation of a connection with children and young people that will make them want to take part in the Jewish world); *professional-organizational* challenges (minimal time for Jewish studies at school, a Jewish studies curriculum that is not fully consolidated or coherent and lacks supervision, the problematic status of teachers at Jewish schools and lack of organized training for them, and lack of professional relations among teachers); *economic* challenges (lack of governmental support for Jewish studies); and challenges related to *Covid-19*. These challenges exist in varying degrees across different countries and therefore necessitate suitably adapted solutions.

In response to the question of how they cope with the various challenges in the course of their educational work, the respondents listed the following: informal teaching methods (such as experiential teaching), collaborative work, creating projects, tools for teachers and attractive educational material, participating in the EFI initiative and other programs such as Centropa, working with educational staff who are less well-trained, and adapting educational material to specific needs.

**The participants' familiarity with the National Library of Israel** was limited. About one-third of the respondents reported that they are very familiar with the NLI, an additional one-quarter reported some degree of familiarity, and one-third reported that they are only slightly or not at all familiar with the Library.

The respondents’ **sources of acquaintance** with the NLI’s educational website were primarily the organization in which they work (37%), a professional recommendation (37%), random browsing (27%), and Jewish content websites (27%). Education professionals discovered the website in the course of searching a specific topic (33%).

The degree of **familiarity with the NLI’s resources** was relatively high. Most respondents (69%) reported that they are familiar with the primary sources on the website (maps, photographs, films, manuscripts) and use them occasionally or regularly. About half are familiar with teaching resources (lesson plans and worksheets) (55%) and ready-made activities for students (48%).

The findings on **website browsing patterns** indicate that the most frequent activity is searching for primary sources on teaching subjects. Other frequent activities include searching for materials about holidays and commemorations, and researching new primary sources.

An examination of the **suitability of material on the website for various target audiences** found that a substantial majority of respondents (92%) consider the material on the website to be very suitable for secondary school students (middle school and high school). Most believe that the materials are suitable for adult students (86%) and informal education (82%). About half (48%) believe that the materials are suitable for elementary school students.

There is a high **degree of interest in the fields of knowledge** corresponding with all the subjects currently offered by the NLI, particularly the subjects of the State of Israel, Jewish history, and Zionism. No differences were found between teachers and others. A number of respondents suggested additional subjects, such as genealogy, Hebrew language instruction for adults, and the Holocaust.

**The degree of interest in the NLI’s resources** and tools is particularly high in the field of supplementary materials (films, lectures, news items, historical background), with those engaged in teaching expressing a stronger interest than others (by a significant margin) in primary sources, ready-made activities for students, and lesson plans.

Active teachers proved to be more interested than others in having guidelines available in their own language (other than English), worksheets for students, materials for families, semester-long or year-long courses on specific topics, and updates on what is happening in other places around the world in the field of education.

The **most effective and successful aspect of the NLI's service**, in terms of usefulness in the context of educational work, in the eyes of the respondents, are the personal ties formed with the NLI staff and the professional assistance they provide, as well as the NLI’s collaboration with European educational organizations in developing toolkits and lesson plans for schools. Another aspect that was frequently mentioned was their visit to the NLI, which acquainted educational staff with the subjects and resources offered by the Library. Other positive aspects mentioned were the NLI database, its unique primary sources that are unavailable elsewhere, the accessibility of its archives to the public, the films on its website, which have become a particularly useful tool for teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, lesson plans and posters with explanations, and materials that foster student activities.

The participants also noted **aspects for improvement**. The aspect most frequently cited in this regard was the language barrier, which prevents teachers and students from using the rich array of resources provided by the website. Many respondents also mentioned the following: the need for instructions on classroom use of the subject matter (this relates to the above-mentioned need for professional assistance by the NLI staff), the lack of suitability for local needs in terms of content, technical matters, or otherwise, the website's user-friendliness (inadequate search engine), the suitability of subject matter to the teachers’ needs and target audience characteristics (in terms of geographic location, degree of religious observance, and connection to Judaism), and the need for cross-cultural sensitivity in working with different communities.

Many participants addressed the issue of **the training required for teachers** at Jewish schools in various communities across Europe. Such training is necessary for several reasons: the limited education and knowledge of most teachers, the lack of support from schools for teacher training in the course of work, the fact that in most cases teachers do not receive wages or compensation for the hours or days spent training, the lack of a systematic, consolidated curriculum in most places, and changes in the identity and demographics of communities that, in turn, necessitate continuous amendment and adaptation of the educational work. The respondents were explicit about the need for in-depth, rather than one-off, training, with the participation and active collaboration of the teachers, and with a focus on the practical aspects of teaching the subjects in the classroom and on subjects that are relevant to the students’ and parents’ worlds. They ascribed a great deal of importance to “translating” existing materials into classroom teaching materials. In addition, there is a need for training in e-learning, which is a point of weakness at many of the schools because of outdated systems and teachers’ aversion to technology. The issue of cultural suitability is very relevant to teacher training in general and to technological training specifically.

In the context of the many requests that the NLI become immersed in all aspects of teacher training, participants addressed the question of **recommended methods of communication with education professionals** in the field. The main recommendations were to have designated contacts at the NLI for a specific place/community (not generically, but rather to have Library staff assigned to a specific country and serve as a go-to for questions/guidance), continuously available assistance for teachers through WhatsApp, forming ties with community schools and educational organizations that provide consultation and services for education professionals in various locations, bringing educational staff over to visit the NLI and establish initial contacts that will grow from there, and creating cooperative endeavors with Israeli institutions that train education professionals in the Diaspora.

It emerges from the respondents’ remarks that **in the field of informal education in Europe** there is interesting potential for action, in light of the conceptual shift that has been underway in recent years and has been reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic. If, in the past, Jewish education entailed a complete separation between parents and children, today the approach is to have intergenerational processes that combine the two groups. Parents became more involved in children’s education during the Covid-19 lockdowns and as part of long-distance learning, which in turn has created new opportunities to continue developing joint programs for children and parents.

The respondents offered **ideas for new projects** involving cooperation with the National Library of Israel, emphasizing the value of focusing on what is unique to the Library and does not exist elsewhere. Among the ideas they proposed were the following: a project based on a “community story” composed in conjunction with a specific community, using the assistance of “Shin-Shin” (a Jewish Agency program that sends youth delegates overseas), creating an overall framework for online educational materials, establishing cooperative projects with local cultural institutions (such as museums), holding exhibits and competitions on relevant topics, developing new materials adapted to specific cultures and places, expanding to reach additional (including non-Jewish) target audiences, and more.

# 1. Introduction

**Objectives of the Evaluation**

The Education and Culture Division at the National Library of Israel (NLI) offers a wide range of educational programs and resources in numerous fields of knowledge for formal education institutions as well as informal education organizations. In this context, a unique initiative is taking place in the field of Jewish education in the Diaspora. In recent years, the NLI has been engaged in developing a program intended for schools in Europe and funded by the Rothschild Foundation. In preparation for further development and enhancement of the program in the coming year, the Library’s Education Division has sought to conduct a brief evaluation process aimed at examining the extent to which the initiative has met the expectations of its participants and helping to identify future needs of the current participants as well as those of additional potential participants.

**Method of Evaluation**

The evaluation process includes gathering data from a number of circles of educators using a variety of tools as detailed below.

1. In-depth interviews with educators from schools, education networks, and educational organizations that represent three perspectives – communal, national, and European. The communal perspective was represented by the communities of Berlin, Frankfurt, and Budapest. For the national perspective, we looked at France, England, Germany, and Hungary, through educational organizations (Lamorim, Pajes), among other elements. The pan-European perspective was examined through representatives of the organizations Centropa, EFI, and Look to Learn. In all, 8 interviews were held involving 9 interviewees. Among them were formal educators (5), educators who work or have previously worked in informal education in various community contexts, representatives of network organizations in the field of Jewish education in Europe (4), and an organizational representative in the field of informal education. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain an overall picture of the field through the experience and knowledge of the interviewees, to receive feedback on various aspects of the quality of the resources offered by the Library and the degree to which they meet the needs in the field, to examine the extent of interest, possibilities, and opportunities for cooperation with the Library, and to map the needs of educators (types of resources and types of guidance) in preparation for developing new resources.
2. Structured questionnaires were disseminated among various circles: participants in the program to date (organizational representatives); workshop participants and relevant organizational staff members; and users of the Library’s website. Responsiveness to the questionnaires was relatively low (presumably because of reduced availability due to the Covid-19 pandemic). A total of 30 people responded to the questionnaires: 21 educators from nine countries across Europe, with an age range of 29–66 (53.2 on average): France (6 respondents, 3 from Paris and the rest from Marseilles, Champagne, and Strasburg); England, Sweden, Spain, The Netherlands, Italy, Finland, Kosovo, and Moldova. There were also nine respondents from outside of Europe: 6 respondents from North America (4 from the United States and 2 from Canada) and 3 respondents from Israel.

The respondents belong to a wide variety of organizations: half of them are in the field of formal education (schools and organizations that work with schools), about a fourth are engaged in informal education organizations, and a minority are engaged in adult education. More than half (60%) are teachers, 17% work in informal education, 20% in program coordination, and 10% in administration. About a third responded that they maintain a number of roles simultaneously (management, teaching, administration).

1. Updates and consultations with the staff of the Education Division at the NLI.

# 2. Jewish Education in Europe – The Current Situation

The picture that emerges from the data gathered indicates that the state of Jewish education in Europe varies significantly in accordance with the country and the community in question, and that it depends on a number of key parameters: the central authority’s policy on schools in general and Jewish schools in particular; the size of the Jewish population in the country and the size of the local community; the nature of the community (its history, changes in its composition, its ties to Judaism); and the characteristics of the community’s institutions, including its schools. Below we present a general and far from exhaustive overview based on the data collected in the course of this study.

**France**

The Jewish community in France numbers approximately 450,000 Jews. It is the largest community in Europe and, second only to the United States among Jewish communities outside of Israel. France currently has about 100 Jewish schools. Among Jewish schoolchildren, 1/3 attend Jewish schools, 1/3 attend private Catholic schools, and 1/3 attend public schools. The organization Lamorim, a representative of which was interviewed as part of this evaluation, works only with Jewish schools (more precisely, with 30 of these 100 schools, from pre-school to high school).

Recent years have seen an increase of about 200 students annually in Jewish schools (following the formation of an organization that recruits students from public schools to Jewish schools). The number of Jewish schools has also increased in response to the challenge of growing anti-Semitism and in light of the fact that these are private schools. Every major city in France has a Jewish school, particularly Paris and its surroundings, as well as the major population centers in Strasburg, Nice, Cannes, and Toulouse. In all, there are about 13,000 students and 500 Hebrew and Jewish studies teachers. The Jewish schools in France are, by definition, religious schools and most of them belong to the liberal Orthodox stream, alongside a minority of ultra-Orthodox schools and a very small number of progressive (Reform/Conservative) schools. At the elementary school level, Jewish studies account for 5–8 hours per week, 3–4 hours in high school (with the remaining time devoted to matriculation exams).

**England**

The Jewish community in Britain numbers 290,000 Jews, constituting the second-largest community in Europe (after France). Pajes, an organization with which the NLI has been collaborating, works with 10 Jewish schools ranging from elementary to high school, mostly in London, with a few in Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester. The schools are religious by definition, but about half the students come from families that do not observe the Sabbath.

Look to Learn, an organization founded 12 years ago that operates in Britain, provides workshops for teachers, curriculum development, tours of galleries, and construction of school exhibits, among other services, in three primary areas: teacher training, curriculum development, and educational consultation. The organization has been working in cooperation with other European organizations, such as EFI, which facilitate access to small Jewish communities in locations including Finland, Istanbul, and Rome, among others. It has also been providing consultation for organizations such as Pajes. In recent years the organization’s work has helped promote increased integration among various subjects – for example, learning about Passover by way of a tour of the Egyptian exhibit at the British Museum, or developing an environmental studies curriculum that centers on the holiday of Tu Bishvat (Jewish Arbor Day).

**Germany**

The community in Germany is composed primarily of refugees who arrived after the Holocaust, and therefore the country lacks a long-standing tradition of Jewish education. Most of the Jews residing in Germany today are not of German heritage, but rather the children of immigrants. The large wave of immigrants who came to Germany from the former Soviet Union numbers approximately 115,000 Jews, a very small percentage of whom receive a Jewish education. Most members of the Jewish community do not attend Jewish schools, and among those who do, the majority do so at the elementary school level. The community also offers afternoon school programs that provide supplementary Jewish studies for students who attend general educational institutions, but these classes meet for only one and a half hours weekly, meaning that from 5th through 12th grade the students receive a sum total of only 400 hours of Jewish studies. Some curricula require authorization from the Ministry of Education, but all teachers are free to teach what they wish and there is no single curriculum to which they are bound.

In Frankfurt, which has a community of 8,000–9,000 Jews, the 6–18-year-olds who are active in the community depend on approximately 200–250 available personnel. Berlin has one official elementary school affiliated with the city’s Jewish community (in addition to other Jewish schools, such as Chabad), for grades 1–6, and after 4th grade some of its students transfer to a gymnasium school that has a student body of 350. The faculty has 9 Hebrew/Jewish studies teachers, some of whom teach in German and some of whom teach the Hebrew speakers, and the Hebrew language coordinator is the school’s principal. The target audience consists of the second and third generations of the community’s founders and, in recent years, a growing number of Israelis as well. The school uses Israeli curricula, such as “Mila Tova,” and the curriculum prepared for the school entitled “Ivrit Sheli” (“My Hebrew”).

**Hungary**

The community, which numbers 47,000 Jews, serves as an important center for smaller surrounding communities in Serbia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland (but has only loose ties with Ukraine and Romania despite their geographic proximity). It does so by offering summer camps that are attended by residents from those countries and providing online materials, which have expanded as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, making it possible to reach much larger numbers of people and achieve greater geographic distribution.

The Jewish school in Budapest (K–12) has a majority Jewish student body (as defined by the Law of Return). In the lower grades, Jews account for approximately 90% of the students, but their background in Jewish studies is very basic and they do not have strong ties to Jewish tradition or history. Nor do they have pre-existing knowledge when they start attending the school. Through EFI, the school has been updating its Jewish studies curriculum. Among the faculty, all have a Bachelor’s degree in Jewish studies and there are some faculty members with Master’s degrees or even PhDs. Most have a mastery of the Hebrew language, and most have a teaching certificate. At the same time, all are 40 years old or older, and therefore their pedagogic and methodological training is somewhat outdated, a vestige of Hungary’s communist era – very conservative and focused on conveying subject matter, with no emphasis on understanding or experience.

The JCC in Budapest, a representative of which was interviewed for this evaluation study, is primarily geared toward a national target audience of secular Jews who are not interested in cultivating religious ties to Judaism. It currently focuses on two population groups: (1) Families – children who do not go to synagogue or attend Jewish school, but whose parents seek to infuse Jewish content into their lives. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic the focus was not necessarily on having people attend JCC events more frequently, but rather on having them celebrate Judaism in their own homes. The aim was also to foster inter-generational ties and thereby educate the parents and grandparents as well. (2) Young adults who have engaged with Jewish subject matter in the past, whether at school or summer camp, and who are interested in Jewish material that relates to their values, such as the concept of *tikkun olam* (“mending the world”).

**Holland, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Finland** – these countries have small Jewish communities, each of which numbers 19,000–30,000 Jews.

# 3. Main Challenges in the Eyes of the Respondents

The results of the questionnaires indicate that the most significant challenges with which respondents must cope are the lack of ready-to-use learning materials for students during the Covid-19 pandemic, lack of adequate professional knowledge and training on the part of the educational staff, a shortage of educational personnel, insufficient time to teach subjects and convey knowledge, and the need to find teaching methods that are relevant and experiential for the students (see Diagram 1). In addition, active teachers gave higher ratings to the degree of challenges than educators not engaged in teaching.

**Diagram 1**

**Extent of Challenges Faced in Daily Educational Work: Much – Very Much**

The interviewees, too, were asked to list the main challenges in the field of Jewish education in Europe these days. We classified the challenges they named according to five main categories: identity, community, professional-organizational, economic, and challenges related to Covid-19. These challenges exist in varying degrees across different countries and validate the results of the questionnaires regarding the main challenges faced by educational personnel. The following quotes are taken from respondents’ remarks about the various challenges they face:

**Identity challenges**

* *Many schools have a high percentage of non-Jews, and many children come from mixed or secular families; Jewish studies and teachings about Jewish tradition must be adapted to what is relevant to them.*
* *The main challenge in recent decades in Germany has to do with identity – what it means to be a German Jew. In past years, not enough attention was paid to questions of identity that are very relevant today.*
* *It is easy to describe the desired results when teaching mathematics; it is hard to define success in Jewish education.*
* *The challenge is to define Judaism as not only focused on learning and knowledge but also on Jewish activity and conduct (charity, holidays), and the question of relevance to the students’ lives is challenging. In Helsinki, for example, the community is very secular and the Chevra Kadisha is the strongest Jewish organization because it is relevant to an activity that must be carried out.*
* *The biggest challenge in many communities is life after Jewish school. The parents are not always supportive, and schools must provide students with sufficient knowledge, tools, and a Jewish lifestyle so that as the children grow up they can bring their Judaism home.*
* *Fewer people are going to synagogues and Jewish schools, and more of them are connecting to Judaism in other ways. People no longer come in order to discover their Jewish roots, and therefore it is important to identify their motivation and how to connect them to Judaism (and the answer might vary). How does one educate a new generation of secular progressives with Jewish roots to care about Jewish values? How, for example, do we turn charity into one of their Jewish values?*
* *Overall the community in Germany does not have a budgetary problem; its strategy is that lack of money must not prevent a Jewish child from taking part in activities. The challenge is one of identity and understanding that it is necessary to invest in Jewish education.*
* *It is necessary to convince the younger generations to be a link in the chain (France).*

**Community challenges**

The community-related challenges listed by respondents include the need to create a community and a sense of belonging, formal/informal membership in the community, competition for the attention of a target audience that has many alternative activities, and the creation of a connection for children and young people that will inspire them to want to take part in the Jewish world. The following quotes are taken from the remarks of interviewees and respondents:

* *Successful communities are communities that bring people together to promote agreed-upon issues. It is challenging to decipher what will connect people. She thinks that it is a joint activity and shared goal, and not only an idea. Covid-19 taught them that being part of a community is important (this is why people bake sourdough bread or adopt a dog – in order to connect to new communities of “dog owners” or “bakers”).*
* *In Germany joining a community requires paying a membership fee, and most are not interested in doing so (for burial in a Jewish cemetery it is possible to pay retroactively, shortly before burial). Jews from the Soviet Union immigrated to Germany (they did not wish to go to Israel) because of the benefits they received, rather than because of a special interest in Jewish education.*
* *In Hungary there is much competition involving content for families, including not necessarily Jewish content, and it must be highly relevant to attract the families’ attention.*
* *Our community is scattered throughout the city without any geographic focal point; there are micro-communities that we have to find and reach out to, which is challenging.*
* *Regarding young people – helping them understand why Jewish activity “helps them” and why it is good, so that they would want to join.*
* *The big challenge in informal education is to make a connection for children so that they even want to be part of it, so that they become curious about Judaism not in its religious sense, and first of all to have them show up; they [the community organizers] already know how to provide them with subject matter. There is stiff competition (with, let’s say, final exam grades) and it is difficult to get children to come to activities or summer camps.*

**Professional-organizational challenges**

The respondents listed various types of professional and organizational challenges they face. First and foremost are the minimal time devoted to Jewish studies at school, a Jewish studies curriculum that is not fully consolidated or coherent and lacks supervision, the problematic status of teachers at Jewish schools and lack of organized training for them, and the lack of professional relations among teachers. In addition, organizations that work with different countries must deal with the challenge of adapting material to each country separately, as the curriculum and ages of the target audiences differ from place to place. The following quotes are taken from their remarks:

* *There is little time for Jewish studies. In Germany, for example, there are one and a half hours weekly devoted [to Jewish studies] for those who choose the more formal track (but not at Jewish schools); this requires minimizing the number of subjects taught.*
* *In England, the curriculum is dense; schools have between one hour a day to three hours a week to devote to Jewish studies. In addition, students do not receive academic credit for Jewish studies and do not take them seriously. The scholastic overload toward the end of high school leads them to focus on subjects that count toward their certificate.*
* *In Hungary, the government has set a limit on the number of Jewish studies lessons, and any additional studies are at the expense of the schools’ and students’ time. For example, 5th grade is allocated one hour per week, and if there is interest in teaching more material, the students must stay after regular school hours. Some grades are allocated more time, and the main challenge there is to make the teaching relevant and interesting so that the students are motivated. In high school it is more difficult because once they focus on a subject that is geared toward a vocation, it is hard to convince them to invest in other subjects.*
* *In small countries (such as Croatia and Serbia) two hours per year are devoted to Jewish history, and they must decide what subject is most important to present to the students and present the material in a very focused way.*
* *In small countries (such as Croatia and Serbia) two hours per year are devoted to Jewish history and sometimes teachers already have material that they wish to present, in which case it is necessary to convince them to use Centropa’s material.*
* *Professional relations among Hebrew/Jewish studies/Israel studies teachers at various schools are insufficient (even when there are social relations).*
* *The current challenge in France is to build a community of Jewish studies teachers in the country, to make them aware that there is a bigger world than their school and that material from other places presents not a threat but rather an opportunity for learning, that it does not threaten French Jewish culture.*
* *There is no consolidated or uniform curriculum at Jewish schools. In Germany, for example, each district decides independently on educational matters, including the calendar for educational institutions. Jewish schools have the Jewish and Hebrew calendar in common, and therefore are somewhat connected, but there is nothing around which they can consolidate efforts and unite.*
* *The traditional media lacks attractiveness (is “lifeless”) and there is a lack of digital media suited to the young generation (France).*
* *In Hungary it is possible to influence the Jewish studies curriculum through other subjects as well and to integrate subjects, but this depends on the willingness of other teachers to include Jewish material in other lessons. Lauder Foundation schools, which are semi-private, have resources for this purpose that other schools do not.*
* *There is no supervision over Jewish studies and Hebrew classes, and therefore there is no single body where the knowledge is concentrated (Germany).*
* *Every school can choose its own curriculum; there is no supervision over the subject matter; the supervision is only focused on ensuring that schools teach what they are intended to teach (Britain).*
* *Finding educational personnel, and lack of educational and teaching material in Swedish (Sweden).*
* *Shortage of teaching material in Finnish; increase in intermarriage (Finland).*
* *Because there is no governmental support for Jewish schools, without Lamorim there would also be no continued education for teachers as there is no supervision over the subjects (France).*
* *Jewish studies teachers lag behind in terms of using digital tools, and this is very challenging. For this reason I also find it difficult to use the Library’s materials. Since Covid-19 they have improved a little, but it is still necessary to explain the benefits to them and then to teach them how to use [these tools] (France).*
* *There is no training for Jewish school teachers, and some of the teachers do not have a teaching certificate (Germany).*
* *Teacher training in the community is inadequate. The status of teachers is low, given the low salary, and most of the teaching staff are women (Britain).*
* *Teachers work hard and are inadequately compensated. There is little time and little energy to devote to continued education and training. Because the education program at universities is quite outdated, they start out without adequate educational tools. And during the course of their work they do not have enough time to gather material and build a curriculum (Hungary).*
* *Some teachers are creative enough to develop curricula on their own, but most teachers need direction in selecting material and presenting it in class, to ensure that they do not focus solely on the Holocaust (Hungary).*

**Economic challenges**

* *The state funds schools but there is no governmental support for Jewish studies, which are voluntarily funded by the parents (Britain).*
* *Jewish schools have no affiliation with the government. A distinction is drawn between secular studies and Jewish studies, and there is no governmental support or funding (France).*

**Covid-19 Challenges**

* *The Covid-19 pandemic posed additional challenges for schools; many projects were halted or interrupted, there is no regular curriculum, and the cooperation that existed in the past between schools was terminated (Germany).*
* *There is no planning for next year, but this situation could also be an opportunity in the form of a vacuum that could be filled with other, quality content.*

# 4. Familiarity with the National Library of Israel and Use of Its Resources

About one-third of the questionnaire respondents reported that they are very familiar with the NLI; an additional one-quarter reported some degree of familiarity, and one-third reported that they are only slightly or not at all familiar with the Library.

As Diagram 2 indicates, respondents heard about the NLI’s education website primarily through the organization for which they work (37%), a professional recommendation (37%), random browsing (27%), and Jewish content websites (27%). Teachers discovered the website while searching for another specific subject (33%).

**Diagram 2**

**Responses (by Percentage) to the Question:**

**How Did You Hear about NLI’s Education Website?**

Most respondents (69%) reported that they are familiar with the primary sources on the website (maps, photographs, films, manuscripts) and use them occasionally or regularly. About half are familiar with the teaching resources (lesson plans and worksheets) (55%) and ready-made activities for students (48%).

**Website browsing patterns**

The most frequent activity engaged in while browsing NLI’s website, according to respondents, is searching for primary sources on the subjects they teach (56% – often). Other frequent activities include searching for materials about holidays and commemorations (44%) and researching new primary sources (44%). Individual responses included: “I like the website, it’s fun”; “I’ll use it more now”; “I send items to colleagues”; “I look for human-interest stories from the past.”

**Suitability of material on the website for various target audiences**

A substantial majority of respondents (92%) noted that the material on the website is very suitable for secondary school students (middle school and high school). Most believe that the materials are suitable for adult students (86%) and informal education (82%). About half (48%) believe that the materials are suitable for elementary school students.

**Degree of interest in the fields of knowledge**

As Diagram 3 indicates, the respondents reported that they need material on all the subjects about which they were asked, in particular on the State of Israel, Jewish history, and Zionism. No differences were found between teachers and non-teaching education professionals. A number of respondents suggested additional subjects, such as genealogy, Hebrew language instruction for adults, and the Holocaust.

**Diagram 3**

**Responses to the Question:**

**To What Extent Do You Need Materials from the Following Subject Areas?**

**(Averages on a scale of 4 values)**

**Extent of interest in resources and tools**

Among the NLI’s resources and tools, the area in which questionnaire respondents expressed the most interest was that of supplementary materials (films, lectures, news items, historical background), with teachers expressing a stronger interest than others (by a significant difference), as well as primary sources, ready-made activities for students, and lesson plans.

Teachers are more interested than others in the following tools and resources: educational content in the local language – not in English (3.1 on average for teachers, compared with 1.6 on average for others), worksheets for students (2.9 on average, compared with 1.8), content for families, such as texts about the weekly Torah portion and holiday activities (2.8 on average, compared with 1.8), a semester-long or year-long course on a specific topic (1.6 on average, compared with 1.4), and updates on what is happening in other places around the world in the field of education (2.9 compared with 1.9).

**Diagram 4**

**Responses to the Question: To What Extent Do You Need the Following?**

**(Averages on a scale of 4 values)**

# 5. NLI Resources – Positive Aspects

We inquired which activities, resources, and tools the respondents considered helpful and useful in their past educational work. The most effective and successful (and necessary) aspect, according to them, was the personal ties formed with the NLI staff and the professional assistance they provided, as well as the NLI’s collaboration with European educational organizations in developing toolkits and lesson plans for schools. Another aspect that was frequently mentioned is their visit to the NLI, which acquainted educational staff with the issues and resources offered by the Library. Other positive aspects were the NLI’s database and the unique primary sources it offers that cannot be found elsewhere, as well as the accessibility of its archives to the public, the films on its website, which have become a particularly useful tool for teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, lesson plans and posters with explanations, and material that foster student activities. The following quotes are taken from the respondents’ remarks:

* *The connection with the Library’s professional staff member was very effective. She not only gave us tools for using primary sources, but also inspired us and let us feel that there was someone we could turn to at the Library.*
* *The most useful tool was having a professional contact person who could help in finding and assembling the most suitable material. She understood our project very well. We could have searched online on our own, but the fact that there was a professional contact person helped us in specifically using the Library’s material and allowed us to work more precisely.*
* *A specific contact person at the Library (also in terms of training and subject matter).*
* *The most relevant use for me was the conversations with NLI staff; the personal connection was very helpful.*
* *We need professional guidance by subject matter, personal guidance for material in Hebrew, personal guidance for material on Judaism, such as a “subject coordinator” in Israel who provides pedagogic guidance with regard to the content. Teachers are inundated with material, and there is no lack of material but rather of someone who can filter it and provide direction for specific content.*
* *There was a very good relationship with the Library and working with it was pleasant. It felt different to me from other curriculum writing processes in which I participated, because the Library did not act like a service provider for a client but rather as a partner. As far as I know, this is the first time the Library has written such a curriculum, and both sides learned from doing it. It is important to preserve the knowledge of the staff members who were there and who have acquired a great deal of information about the process that took place.*
* *Together with the Library, we created toolkits for the schools using the materials of both organizations. They are still in the stage of content assembly, but the process of combining the strengths of each organization is working. They bring personal stories from the twentieth century and the Library brings primary sources that they would not be able to access otherwise – posters, documents, artifacts – and together they complement one another.*
* *The visit to the Library – a very special experience and I used [what I learned] after I returned to the school as well.*
* *My face-to-face meeting at the Library was very effective; the reception was very heartwarming and I also learned a great deal during the visit. It’s a tool that should be used if available, including with organizations that do not yet work with the NLI, because it is a recruitment tool.*
* *My visit to the Library, and seeing the activities they have developed for students there, was very successful. I encourage students to research their Jewish history through museums or local databases, and they really take an interest and want to do their own research. I think that if possible, in the future, it could very much help our staff, who train teachers, to physically visit the Library once every few years and to have some of the staff training take place there using primary resources, which is the Library’s great strength.*
* *The visit to the Library is important because most teachers do not know what’s there and what isn’t, what primary resources there are and how to work with them. In this sense it was interesting and good. What’s missing is the follow-up afterward, maintaining contact with the teachers. They had workshops on processing a picture or about the website Sefaria, but these remain theoretical and difficult to implement in the day-to-day routine.*
* *I took a Library tour about two years ago and also participated in a specific seminar for teachers from France, and today these teachers are part of the team that is developing material with the Library and writing content in French. I would therefore be happy to see this happen again because it is evident that teachers who undergo a meaningful experience are then able to generate material.*
* *The seminar revealed the NLI’s world of content and provided peer learning, practices, and encounters with people, as well as material that is useful for work.*
* *The [website] tab for collections and archives is simply wonderful and enriches the range of accessible digital material. It is always possible to find an item there that will add another dimension to the learning process.*
* *The Library’s method of making archives accessible is great. I work with local archives, and their approach is to try not to reveal all the material but to reserve some of it so that people will visit the place physically. I’m glad that this is not the NLI’s approach.*
* *Working with the Library was good thanks to the unique element of primary sources and the Library’s methodology surrounding them.*
* *It is very helpful to have primary sources with zoom-in and zoom-out pictures, allowing us to examine the item with the students.*
* *Ready-to-use lesson plans, worksheets for students, online quizzes.*
* *Issues related to Jewish history since antiquity, but also to Zionism*
* *Teaching material about Jewish holidays, the Holocaust, the Bible.*
* *Primary sources (pictures, posters), educational activities and manuscripts, which serve as a source of inspiration.*
* *Historical primary sources. Old pictures, maps…*
* *Databank of material.*
* *We create integrated material such as mobile exhibits that combine film with other visual media. There is no doubt that they consider films to be a very important tool.*
* *The Covid-19 pandemic actually helped us because teachers were looking for films to show in class since they had transitioned to online teaching; [these included] teachers who did not use their material [before].*
* *Films from the webpage about Hanukkah that compared Hanukkah and Christmas worked well. These are questions that preoccupy the children, even though it showed a story from Chicago in the 1960s. If it is relevant to their life then the time and place do not matter; it relates to a day-to-day question that they ask themselves.*
* *Recently the most popular tool has been 2–10 minute YouTube videos. It doesn’t provide an entire lesson but it is a tool for relating to the students and does not require special equipment. Kahoot, for example, is more challenging because not every student has a smartphone and many schools don’t allow smartphones in class. Often the necessary equipment, such as a projector, is not available.*
* *The fact that the Library had prepared the lesson plans was a great help to us.*
* *For me, what is relevant is posters and explanations for them, texts that can be used in relation to the pictures.*
* *It is important to have material that encourages activity and student ownership over the process. We found excellent posters that could be used for educational work – for example a poster on “Only Hebrew Bananas” turned into an exhibit with a giant mosaic of Israel’s fruits and vegetables, from the [biblical] Seven Species to present day. Every object was represented by a high-quality picture and an explanation for the teacher, and every school conducted an educational journey around the picture and created exhibits.*

# 6. NLI Resources – Aspects for Improvement

Alongside the positive and effective aspects of the educational resources and tools, respondents also notedmany aspects for improvement. The aspect most frequently cited in this regard was the language barrier, which prevents teachers and students from using the rich array of resources provided by the website. Many respondents also mentioned the following aspects: the need for instructions on classroom use of the subject matter (this relates to the abovementioned successful aspect regarding the need for professional assistance by NLI staff), the lack of suitability for local needs in terms of content, technical matters, or otherwise (see the example of Tu Bishvat activities, below), the degree to which the website is user-friendly (inadequate search engine), the suitability of subject matter to the teachers’ needs and target audience characteristics (in terms of geographic location, degree of religious observance, and connection to Judaism), and the need for cross-cultural sensitivity in working with different communities.

The following are sample quotes regarding aspects for improvement:

* *It is important that the Library be sensitive and attentive to cross-cultural differences (this might require training on working with each individual community). For example, when writing an email to begin with “How are you?” before asking for something, or if there is a task to be carried out (such as writing a contract), not to ask the other side to do so if they have not volunteered. These are only examples to illustrate the need for cultural sensitivity in transcontinental work.*
* *The language barrier interferes with use of the Library’s materials. The Library needs to provide access for each country in its own language. We like the Library’s website and Facebook page very much and would like to see more teachers use it; it is very easy to use, but we feel that there is a language barrier.*
* *It is hard for me to adapt material that is not in my language (German), and there is a [language] discrepancy that prevents using all the materials. She feels that for her the website is overloaded, although its search function is convenient and it is accessible and easy to identify the target audience. She does not use it much; this year she took images from it on one occasion but ultimately did not use them. Searching for the specific suitable material is difficult for her.*
* *What is most difficult for us is the language. In order to feel comfortable enough to search in English or Hebrew the teachers need a higher level of Hebrew or English (I wouldn’t necessarily recommend translating into the various languages). From 9th grade upward, children here (Hungary) already know more English and are better able to use the materials.*
* *The relevant material is in Hebrew (not in English).*
* *The films are more usable, but they too involve a language barrier. Our solution is to skip over certain parts.*
* *The material needs to be in German; otherwise they won’t use it. Their English and Hebrew is very limited. It is a very small market and he understands if material is not translated into German.*
* *Using the website is easy for me because I have excellent Hebrew in addition to English; teachers without knowledge of Hebrew do not manage as well.*
* *The website has a lot of material in Hebrew, and therefore they are linguistically limited.*
* *The audio/written documents in Hebrew, because unfortunately my students cannot use them correctly.*
* *We find it difficult to find what is suitable for the different ages, to determine which activities are suitable for which age. Aside from knowledge about a primary source, it is not always clear what skill they are trying to impart.*
* *Even when there is material we like it is not always clear how to use it in the classroom.*
* *Because of their limited knowledge, the teachers cannot always use the NLI’s material. They do not sufficiently understand the difference between showing a twentieth-century postcard about Jewish life and a picture from the website of Chabad; they are unable to get to the point where they can process the material on their own and it is therefore difficult to get them to use the website.*
* *The teachers want ready-made lesson plans, without having to think too much about how to present them. What would be best from my perspective is a tool such as a film with an accompanying lesson plan, rather than simply a film.*
* *The NLI website is not recognized as a source of knowledge (he said he would be glad to have a look and provide feedback but noted this fact so as to point out that the website is not sufficiently recognized as a platform for teachers to use to assemble their material).*
* *Recently, for example, we used the Tu Bishvat booklet. But the staff could not apply it in practice. The plan included, for example, going outside and taking photographs and looking for plants, at a time when everything here was frozen and snowy; it wasn’t suited to them; she tried using the booklet at different grade levels but it didn’t work.*
* *In a survey we conducted before setting out, all the teachers noted that they want a curriculum that doesn’t require in-class training. They do not have smartphones/tablets/computers in class, and although there is a computer room, it serves the entire school. Therefore they created a curriculum that the teacher brings to class, but which does not involve the direct use of technology in the classroom. Now, since the Covid-19 pandemic, things have changed; every student has a laptop and teachers have learned how to work with this technology. I fear it will be hard for me to “sell” the curriculum in its current format because it wasn’t created for this type of use. Right now the schools are overburdened because of Covid-19-related difficulties, and they have not yet launched the curriculum in classrooms.*
* *The website is not very friendly in my view. I do not use it very much, and because I worked closely with the educational staff, I received what I needed through them. I don’t think our teachers use the website very much. But we put a link to the Library’s website on our website, and I believe that when people start using it there will also be more visits to the Library’s website.*
* *When you look for other material, for items, rather than ready-to-use materials, it is very difficult to use the Library’s search engine. If I go into Google, for example, I know what it will show me if I search for “community + Jewish art.” There [on the Library’s website] the search is complicated and doesn’t lead to suitable sources. The search should resemble what a teacher would wish to see if searching for something and should be adapted accordingly. The system for locating primary sources should be more sophisticated. The collection is large and amazing, so I think it is unfortunate that it is not so accessible, or not accessible enough to find material easily.*
* *Navigating the website is a little difficult. You have to follow several links and if you write a word incorrectly, instead of finding something similar, it finds nothing. So a word like “Shabbat” is problematic because there are several ways of writing it in English and French.*
* *The search engine is irrelevant. There should be several options for the same entry, particularly in cases of different spellings (Lvov, Lupul, Iliko, Lamberg…).*
* *For some festivals the material is not as successful as it is for others; for some holidays there is a lot of varied and interesting material, while others receive somewhat less attention. We spoke about Tu Bishvat, which might not receive as much coverage on the Library’s website as other holidays, but it is a holiday that he actually hopes to turn into a central holiday in his community in light of a new approach that involves bringing holidays into people’s homes and celebrating them at the inter-generational level (perhaps even leaving an artifact at home as a way of marking the celebration), and also in light of the strategy of providing Jewish material that is not religious as a way of addressing other motivations (in the case of Tu Bishvat – recycling, environmental issues, food, etc.).*
* *The yearly cycle is always relevant. Some of the Hebrew teachers are looking for content that relates to the culture of Israel. The teachers are not aware of the NLI’s material and do not use the content on its website.*
* *Material that is relevant to their community. Material on history and sites in France. Adaptation to local needs; what is suited for North America will not necessarily work in a classroom in France.*
* *The relevant subject matters for them are: festivals; mitzvah and Jewish activity, for example finding primary sources that relate to Jewish activity; art – for example right now I’m searching for material about the plagues of Egypt as represented in art across the generations; if there were a specific focus on posters by topic or issue it would help us. Currently I’m using the British Museum as my main source.*
* *We focus primarily on the Hebrew calendar, so material about the months of the year and the holidays are the most relevant for us. The school also operates on the basis of the Hebrew calendar, which is the “rhythm” of the school in any event.*
* *The material offered should be of a sort that anyone can present it easily and simply.*
* *The NLI website has substantial material regarding the festivals, and less so regarding Jewish history. They built a curriculum for elementary school based on the yearly cycle, and for this there really is relevant material from the Library. We haven’t tried, and perhaps we should try, teaching Hebrew using material from the Library.*
* *There are insufficient primary sources on the Holocaust and on biblical figures.*
* *There is a shortage of material and lesson plans for younger age groups.*
* *There are not enough didactic resources.*
* *There is no translation tool or summary of written sources for more effective use by the students.*

# 7. Training and Communicating with Educators

An important aspect addressed by many of the interviewees and questionnaire respondents is the training required for teachers at Jewish schools in various communities across Europe. Such training is necessary for several reasons: the limited education and knowledge of most teachers, the lack of support from schools for teacher training in the course of work, the fact that, in most cases, teachers do not receive wages or compensation for the hours or days spent training, the lack of a systematic, consolidated curriculum in most places, and changes in the identity and demographics of communities that in turn necessitate continuous updating and adaptation of the educational work. The respondents were explicit about the need for in-depth, rather than one-off, training, with the participation and active collaboration of the teachers, and with a focus on the practical aspects of teaching the subjects in the classroom and on subjects that are relevant to the students and parents. It is very important to “translate” existing materials into classroom teaching materials. In addition, there is a need for training in e-learning, which is a point of weakness at many of the schools because of outdated systems and the teachers’ aversion to technology. The issue of cultural suitability is very relevant to teacher training generally and to training in technology specifically.

* *I would be happy to participate in a regular, annual course for teachers. Focusing on one issue throughout the year and studying it together could be productive. A team of teachers that jointly develop lessons at the practical level using NLI materials (rather than showing teachers all the many possibilities; not opening but rather closing options and focusing). This could create the peer learning experience it is missing and also cultivate ties between different schools.*
* *It would be good to focus on general social issues and infuse them with Jewish content, values-oriented learning of the Hebrew calendar. For example the program Mafteach Halev and social studies in Israel, which is something that doesn’t exist here in Germany and could work, filling the void of values education by teaching Hebrew/holidays/history.*
* *Here in England is very difficult to train Jewish studies teachers. If they need to leave in order to receive training, then a substitute teacher must be sent to their class and there is no pool of substitute teachers in this field; schools do not like to send teachers for training because ultimately the school must pay for it out of its own pocket. Most teachers are not interested in receiving training in the evening. We wanted to ask schools to hold a concentrated training day – it was supposed to take place in May 2020 but was canceled because of Covid-19 – and they proposed paying for substitute teachers for that day (they thought about bringing somebody from the Library staff to conduct a workshop). Now it is more complicated because some members of the administration do not want to have any face-to-face meetings, but I actually hope that it can take place this year. For example, I wanted to include a tour of an ancient synagogue in London and generally to reward Jewish studies teachers, who usually do not receive recognition.*
* *I dream of starting a training course for teachers that would be academic, long-term, and not only focused on a specific subject. Elementary school teachers receive training focused on the Bible, but there is no training for high school teachers, which is a major void. I’m looking for a teacher-training organization to collaborate with so that they can receive academic credit. I would be happy if the Library were part of it, but we want subject-focused, not only pedagogic, help. We are looking for experts on the subject of history.*
* *It is necessary to examine the needs of each country and then develop teacher training. In Moldova, for example, they will need something very basic; they do not know much, and learning is optional rather than compulsory. The further east you go in Europe the more complicated it becomes. In Russia, for example, it would be more important to learn about Lenin than about the Holocaust, and it takes years to make it part of the discourse. Most people do not know how the Jews lived before the Holocaust and they need more historical background and context, or even just a visit to the synagogue to learn about prayer or Shabbat, which they have never experienced. The perspectives vary and therefore each state would have a different seminar adapted for it.*
* *We strive to have the training include not just lecture-style seminars but also have them be as interactive as possible, with guest experts, peer learning, joint development of lesson plans, tours, exhibits, etc.*
* *EFI invests a great deal in training teachers, but after 25 years of experience I can say that a conference or 3-day course or 2-hour lecture is not enough, and that longer training is necessary. Teachers need to receive guidance and assistance in the course of work, not just through training. Something ongoing that would take place once a month with a regular group where they develop lessons and, while they are still fresh, teach them in class.*
* *I was at the NLI in Jerusalem with a teacher who doesn’t use the Library’s website even after the visit. The experience was powerful during the visit in Israel and the teachers were more willing to take part in later training. But in Eastern Europe, being a full-time teacher takes up a lot of hours, and by the time one finds something suitable on the website it then needs to be adapted for age and language, and teachers do not have the energy or time for this. Yet if we met once a month and searched for something for a specific class and learned how to implement it, I think this would work, because in the course of doing so they could determine what works and what doesn’t and analyze why.*
* *I send teachers to all sorts of courses and I see the difference between short and ongoing courses. Currently, it’s hard for me to think about having teachers attend more Zoom sessions after teaching on Zoom all day long, but I’d be happy to think about such a group for the future. Now that they’ve learned that long-distance learning works, we can take advantage of this later when it becomes relevant (for example, a focused seminar at the beginning and at the end, and monthly Zoom sessions during the year).*
* *Today training depends on the teachers themselves. They do not receive compensation for the time spent on continued education. In fact, they attend on a voluntary basis when it interests them (in contrast to a specialist subject teacher who receives a general salary that includes training, they receive wages based on classroom lessons). But if the training takes place at the right time and the subject is interesting – they will come. For example, we had training for teachers on how to manage Zoom, and many teachers attended even though it was on Sunday evening.*
* *In terms of teacher training, the situation in Germany today is a little bit more organized than in the past because the authorities monitor what is being taught, which they did not do previously. Because of the Muslim immigration, closer attention is being paid to the material being taught, and they have to submit a curriculum at the start of the year and receive a teaching certificate in order to teach.*
* *The teachers try to focus on providing the children with practical tools for leading a Jewish life (knowing how to sing “Lecha Dodi” for example) and fostering emotional ties to the community so that they stay connected even when they don’t have a “reason” – for example, when they become university students. Teachers need to build a curriculum that includes a bit of each of these elements.*
* *The main focus should be on how to use the material pedagogically in class; not on using the website but on how to translate it into practice. The teachers’ manual also doesn’t provide enough ideas about how to bring it into the classroom. It should be easy and simple, and of course this isn’t a challenge just for the Library but for all digital material they encounter.*
* *There is an umbrella organization that conducts teacher training, but on the other hand all the teachers are free to build their own curriculum. Jewish schools have Jewish studies and Hebrew lessons, with different teachers for each subject. The continued education for these teachers is also separate. The pedagogic starting point should be that we cannot rely on the teachers in the field, as their qualifications are quite low, and every curriculum should be constructed as if intended for use by anyone rather than Jewish educators specifically.*
* *Technology is our weak point. The education system is rigid and slightly old-fashioned, and averse to technological changes. During the Covid-19 pandemic we had no choice but to start using [Microsoft] Teams, but there are strong concerns surrounding privacy and personal information, and people are not enthusiastic about using digital platforms. The teachers might agree to use a film or activity (they like being spoon-fed) but they won’t want to learn how to use a new system or do anything that uses complicated technology. German teachers do not like that.*
* *It is important that the teachers become Generation 2.0 teachers, that they know how to teach and learn technologically. The students no longer relate to books and are able to check during class whether the teacher is right or wrong. Teachers need to adapt themselves to the new world. They are working on offering training via Zoom to give teachers these tools, to enable them to understand the advantages of working digitally and knowing how to do it (France).*
* *If I were looking for training in e-learning, I don’t think that right now the Library would be a source, unless it offered a unique combination of technological teaching and primary sources. If they were to create something unique in this area we would be happy to hear about it. Right now the teachers primarily want ready-made material that is easy for them to use.*
* *Digital education is a must. First of all there should be group coaching for the staff and then one-on-one [coaching] on the teaching material. For example, if there is material from the Library then there should be a specialist in the area as well as a digital specialist who participate in training the teachers.*
* *There should be training on specific issues via Zoom in the evening, which should be recorded so teachers can come back to it.*
* *We are interested in training the staff in e-learning. We have a staff member who received training on the subject, and a survey we conducted among the staff found that they see a need for this – that is, the methodology, as well as the tools and content about using online educational material.*

In the context of the many requests that the NLI become immersed in all aspects of teacher training, respondents addressed the question of recommended methods of communication with educators in the field. The main recommendations were to have designated contacts at the NLI for a specific place/community (not generically, but rather to have library staff assigned to a specific country and serve as a go-to for questions/guidance), continuously available assistance for teachers via WhatsApp, forming ties with community schools and educational organizations that provide consultation and services for educators in various locations, bringing educational staff to visit the NLI and establish initial contact that will grow from there, and creating cooperative endeavors with Israeli institutions that train educators in the Diaspora.

The following are sample remarks:

* *Guidance via a WhatsApp group. Teachers are used to working this way with their colleagues, and at one time we had such a group with a Library staff member, which was very effective because she had been to France, knew the community, and knew how to draw connections between our questions and NLI material. We felt very comfortable contacting her. Today there is a contact person who doesn’t speak French and there is more distance.*
* *Finding local partners, institutions in the community such as schools, the JCC, and the like – these are the most useful bodies in the community in terms of mapping their specific needs and understanding what the Library can offer them. He is very open to such cooperation regarding Hungary.*
* *Physically bringing people to the Library – the visit provides motivation as well as inspiration. Having a contact person at the Library who is familiar with our specific region can help us feel that we have someone at the Library. I would be glad to send members of our staff, who are now developing our knowledge center, to receive training.*
* *Connecting between Israeli institutions, and between them and training bodies in the Diaspora.*
* *It would be amazing if the teachers had access to educational material about Jewish education. If possible it would be good to establish contact between teacher-training bodies in the Diaspora and institutions that train teachers, such as the Hebrew University, so that there is an official relationship for those who, like her, conduct workshops in the Diaspora. She would be happy to incorporate the Library’s material in her teacher training and to make the Library’s resources available to the teachers, and this way the Library would also receive exposure among many schools and teachers.*

# 8. Informal Education and Outreach to Families

In addition to the area of formal education, the Library staff wishes to examine needs in the area of informal education and determine whether the Library can offer its resources to families in Jewish communities abroad. It emerges from the respondents’ remarks that there is interesting potential for action in the field of informal education in Europe in light of the conceptual shift that has been underway in recent years and has been reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic. If, in the past, Jewish education entailed a complete separation between parents and children, today the approach is to have processes that combine the two groups. Parents became more involved in children’s education during the Covid-19 lockdowns and Zoom sessions, which in turn has created new opportunities to continue developing joint programs for children and parents.

* *Various schools, usually elementary schools, try to engage parents. Some are trying to bridge the difference between Jewish education at the school and the parents’ Jewish education (secular parents at an Orthodox school). High schools invest less because the focus is on exams, so the extent of parents’ involvement depends on the parents. In my project, we wanted the parents to be involved but we understood that we have to be focused, and our focus was to create a tool for teachers to teach Jewish studies. Of course the parents can find material there, but that is not our primary objective.*
* *We are developing material for families, but we have to find the balance between those who send [their children] to this school simply because it is a good school, whom we do not want to scare off, and those who are seeking a Jewish school. We send children home with material and would be happy to receive good content for families (England).*
* *Since the Covid-19 pandemic the need to develop material for families has grown. In France there is a clear separation between church and state, and between school and home. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers did not want to mix the classroom with home life, and they would not send material home. Now suddenly, ever since school has entered home life via Zoom, the family is connected and has become part of school life and we have found tools to connect the home with the school. For example, we prepared worksheets about the weekly Torah portion for home, covering what the children learn in the classroom, what they bring home, and had another discussion the following week about how it was to learn at home. We had virtual tours in preparation for Israel’s Independence Day during the evening, so that the entire family could participate. Right now there is a very strong need to develop content for the family and we are building a curriculum based on Rabbi Sachs’s French translations of the weekly Torah portion so as to routinely have such worksheets for families.*
* *We do a lot of family education, especially around the holidays and particularly Passover. In contrast to the past, when we would separate parents and children and provide different material for each group, now we have similar processes for parents and children, although each derives different things from the process. I believe in a fellowship of parents and children and think there is potential for creating such material. We genuinely put this into practice in the field, for example by bringing parents to the school or by providing ready-made kits to be worked on jointly at home. This is an underdeveloped area with a great deal of potential; it is also hard to do online as it requires being together.*
* *There are young families who are interested in Jewish subject matter; the numbers are not large but they do exist. The umbrella organization that provides continued education for teachers has a division that works on informal educational material such as packages for families, which are sent home. I see potential for cooperation with the Library in this area, by including in these packages material that is unique to the Library. I would be happy to connect the Library with the umbrella organization if there is interest (Germany).*
* *We have educational programs for children and youth who come to them as supplemental education to Jewish/general school. Even before Covid-19, as part of the strategy of bringing Judaism into the homes, they created a website for each holiday that serves the community at the family level. For Hanukkah we launched the website* [*https://hanuka.balinthaz.hu/hello*](https://hanuka.balinthaz.hu/hello)*, which includes kits that people received at home with games and activities, as well as online activities offered during the festival – concerts, lectures, etc. … We decided that in terms of Jewish education we would focus right now on the festivals, and we regard the transition to online and the focus on festivals as offering potential for cooperation with the Library.*
* *As part of a strategic shift, we identified three areas of interest: innovative community, establishing cooperation and micro-communities, and an information center. At the information center we develop local material for community use; we have a JCC team alongside external freelancers who are responsible for putting together the material (such as the Hanukkah website and the like). We would be happy to establish cooperation around this team and to have it receive training.*
* *Producing material for families is less relevant for us in Berlin. There are other organizations such as the JDC or the PJ Library that provide material for families. The educators do not work with the family, but in my view there is potential in this area for content suited to the entire family, not only to little children; it is indeed lacking where we are.*
* *The lifecycle – for members of the community who do not attend synagogue, there is the potential of using lifecycle events. For example, a bat mitzvah: there are those who celebrate it by reading from the Torah in synagogue (the older generation of the community), but secular Jews who do not attend synagogue will perhaps look for something else, and here there is the potential to use NLI material for informal teaching.*

# 9. Ideas and Opportunities

During the course of data collection, respondents offered ideas for new projects involving cooperation with the National Library, emphasizing the value of focusing on what is unique to the Library and does not exist elsewhere. Among the ideas they proposed were a project based on a “community story” composed in conjunction with a specific community, using the assistance of “Shin-Shin” (“Shin-Shinim” – young Israeli delegates who come to the school for a while to teach Hebrew and serve as youth movement guides), creating an overall framework for online educational materials, establishing cooperative projects with local cultural institutions (such as museums), holding exhibits and competitions on relevant topics, developing new materials adapted to specific cultures and places, expanding to reach additional (including non-Jewish) target audiences, and more. The following quotes are taken from their remarks:

* *The Library should consider what it can offer that no one else has to offer, because there are many lesson plans on websites and a lot of information on the Internet, but the Library has primary sources. Therefore the Library should consider the ways in which it is unique and how it can offer something that no one else has.*
* *The National Library has a vast reservoir of knowledge and I would be happy to see how it connects to my specific community. For example, if I could use a primary source to teach about something that happened in Germany, in my city, it could create an emotional bond for the entire community. Cooperation could be established with the local museum, which the teachers work with in any event when it comes to Jewish history. [Members of the local community could] learn about people from their region, such as commentators of the Torah or Gemarah who lived there before the Holocaust. We would be happy to have a cooperative project that highlights our specific community. Something like a community book, which doesn’t sound particularly interesting, turned into a project of ours that lasted an entire year; we traveled to all the places mentioned in the book as locations in this region where Jews had lived, and it became a “roots journey” of sorts for the community. Such a project could incorporate the Library’s resources for any community.*
* *I regret that the tool of Shin-Shinim and the Jewish Agency is not used to its full advantage. We have Shin-Shinim who bring material to classes and teach about Judaism and Israel, and they themselves are not familiar with the website and what it has to offer. It is too bad that the delegates’ training does not include Library training for using the website material in classrooms. Of course this is relevant for all other countries as well, not only for her in Hungary.*
* *“The community story” – the Diaspora has an important role in preserving communities’ past. She actually sees the communities as having a role in relation to the Library; the community can serve as a source of information for the Library regarding the community, and the Library, for its part, can help the community document its past. If there are specific lessons/activities relating to the community, there will be motivation to use them. The community itself can be the subject around which the community comes together, and the Library too has an interest in preserving material that the community possesses but has not yet documented. The school can play a part in documenting the community’s story, with the guidance of the Library. This can address the lack of a community “glue”; perhaps the Library could help fill this void with the materials it has (adapted to a specific community).*
* *An exhibit in which children around the world provide illustrations on Jewish topics, and exhibits with historical illustrations and modern art surrounding a selected topic.*
* *I visited the Library and was given a tour by a woman from the Library’s staff. The visit was successful but I would like to emphasize the issue of exhibits. For example, the new building could have an educational gallery in which children, from Israel and abroad, view original artifacts but are also able, themselves, to create. This would be an incentive for teachers to visit the Library, but also for children to take an interest in its materials. Here in Britain, for example, one of the radio stations has a children’s writing competition for stories of up to 500 words, and thousands of children participate and are exposed to reading and writing. I would like to see the same thing with Jewish art.*
* *There is potential for cooperation on teacher training. When the EFI creates a curriculum these days, it includes experts, mostly from Israel and the United States, most of whom have a background in TALI [Jewish studies program] schools. They use almost no materials from the Library, which is too bad. There is potential here because we focus very much on method and pedagogy, but less on sources. We could present a picture and include with it a lesson plan; the lesson plan could be great but having the source would be even better. This could bring together the strengths of a European organization and the Library; this is an organization that trains 18 schools across Europe, so it has widespread influence.*
* *There are programs in Israel, such as the Oranim Academy, that train teachers in European Judaism, and as far as she knows these programs also do not use the Library’s resources or expose their students to this option.*
* *If there were materials suited to postsecondary school students (just as there are materials for schoolchildren and secondary school students, and for teachers, so this would be somewhere in the middle), then, as a university lecturer, I would use the website more often with my university students, not only with the teachers.*
* *Educators need to have a credible body that will provide everything, from A to Z; everyone, from summer camp counselors to teachers and schoolchildren, is looking for more online options. It is important to provide an ever-increasing number of tools and to understand what is right and what is not, which website is of sufficiently high quality, and which can be trusted among the online sources. We want to devote less and less time to understanding what works and what doesn’t or how to work with material. Therefore I recommend thinking about something that I know they do at Haifa University in the context of Israel studies. They are building a year-long curriculum and giving it to teachers as is. The teachers do not need to think what works where; instead they receive it all as one package. In my view the Library can offer something similar regarding the subjects in which it has an advantage, for example a curriculum about the “yearly cycle” structured for a specific grade: teachers could download the whole thing as a curriculum rather than collecting teaching material on their own for each festival and determining what to teach and how and what is suited for which age group.*
* *We need to think ahead. For example, right now I am preparing for Israel at 75 because it is a lengthy educational process with teachers and schools, and it’s not possible to assemble relevant materials only a few weeks in advance of the occasion. In my view, none of the schools will be conducting major projects because everybody is busy with survival, so this is a good time to plan for the future.*
* *I would be interested in seeing more materials that make new forms of Zionism accessible. There is a lot of material about “old” Zionism, and in my view there is room to develop new material that meets contemporary needs and incorporates modern Israeli art and literature.*
* *In Europe there is currently a strong interest in Jewish history. People are interested in visiting historical and cultural sites, and there are many Jewish festivals and cultural events (before Covid-19, of course…). So, at the public level, Jewish culture is being discussed, and if even Moldova has added Jewish culture to the curriculum then something is changing and we need to seize this momentum and see how to spread the word about Jewish history.*
* *Precisely because the issue of Jewish history has been receiving attention in recent years, we have a responsibility to see that European Jewish history is being relayed not only as the history of the Holocaust but also as embodying a rich and complex world of Jewish life, culture, history, and music. This is the great challenge because there is still a highly developed tourism surrounding the Holocaust compared with everything else.*
* *We need to find ways of digitally bringing children to the Library, for example through something like a “treasure hunt” or an “escape room” that can be operated live on the website, content that can be developed together and implemented together, with someone who provides guidance. Matach and Galim have similar material but they are at a level not suitable for the Diaspora, and this is where the Library can potentially step in.*
* *It is important to have diverse, high-quality subject matter about additional festivals that are less religious. Right now we are working on a website and kit for Tu Bishvat; we collaborated with a local Judaica shop and hope to generate new local customs surrounding the holiday. The strategy is to approach influential families and the community who will draw in other families (informal education).*
* *Centropa are interested in expanding their relations with general public schools and feel that most of the Library’s materials are suited to Jewish schools or teachers (the terminology or the presumption of pre-existing knowledge). They want to feel comfortable referring non-Jewish teachers there, and would like there to be an option of receiving more background information for those who want it. In the past, NLI staff would come over and take part in teacher training (especially for Jewish teachers or at Jewish schools); they would be happy to host professional personnel from the Library but would like to adapt the training for public schools as well. This summer they will host a seminar for 30 teachers from Germany and Israel, and they would be happy to have the Library be involved.*