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## C'est tout?

I met with some young people in Sarcelles and Paris on my recent visit there. All of them were born in France, and nearly all are second or third generation descendants of North African Jews. That's pretty much the story of the Jews of France today, where the Jewish population flipped from majority-Ashkenazi to majority-Sephardi some 40 years ago.

Here's what fascinated me about the discussion we had: The young Jews I met are neither optimistic nor pessimistic regarding the future of the community. And they're not sure where they'll be in ten years' time.

Again and again I'd hear comments such as, "When I look around me, just at my life in Sarcelles, then I feel that my situation is good." But I also heard remarks like, "It's a good community and we're ok. But when you see the news, or you think about the other Jews in France, you feel that the future here isn't so clear."

When I asked the kids where they thought they'd be in ten years' time, what I found most interesting was less the actual answers and more the unease and discomfort in having to articulate an answer. "Why are you asking?" "How do you want me to answer?" "First, you have to understand this or that." "I can't predict."

Now, true, these were kids who were already more involved in the community (since they were the ones who chose/who were chosen to come speak with us). But in some ways that's even more striking.

Because one of my colleagues asked the kids the following question: "If you had a half million euros to invest in the future of the community, and you didn't need to worry about security, where would you put it?"

The first answer was "closed-circuit televisions for schools," the second was "improve security for the schools."

And only after that did they speak about non-security issues such as youth movement programming and community initiatives.

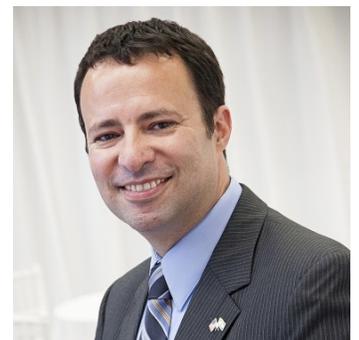
What you hear in every conversation is that the French state gives very generous benefits. Unemployment benefits can be two years at 80 percent of your previous salary!

There are free bus passes, subsidies, you name it.

One young woman, who works in the Jewish Agency's Aliyah (immigration to Israel) Department, told me that when families come to her for a pre-Aliyah interview, they usually ask what Israel will give them ... and they're usually disappointed with what they hear (compared to what they would expect). The reply they always give is, "C'est tout?" Is that it?

There's a disincentive to get out and take the initiative, to take responsibility for yourself, for your community, for your future.

Aug 15, 2016



### THE CORRIDOR

By Dov Ben-Shimon,  
Federation CEO

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And dealing with that challenge is going to be a big issue for us.

We were there, on the ground in France, at exactly the same time as the Brexit vote, as Europe's identity is changing, discussing the work that our Jewish Federations are leading – on Jewish communal identity, Aliyah, security, and education.

Empowering Jewish community life, ensuring safety and security, connecting communities – it's happening in France. But it's happening all over the world too.

My colleague Jacob Solomon put it best: "Your UJA gift connects you to the biggest Jewish issues of our time." It's an awe-inspiring privilege and responsibility.

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## The challenge – and the enemy

## The secret sauce

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 Center for Volunteerism  
 Global Connections  
 Holocaust Awareness and Education  
 Leadership Programs  
 Missions  
 Synagogue Leadership Initiative  
 Teens  
 UJA Campaign  
 Women's Philanthropy  
 Young Families/Couples/Singles

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Adults 60+ and Eldercare  
 Books (Free!) for Jewish Preschoolers  
 Careers  
 Community Calendar  
 Community Directory (including Synagogues)  
 Disability Services  
 Hebrew Words and Phrases  
 Jewish Camping  
 Jewish Education  
 Jewish Life  
 Jewish Resource Line  
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 Social Services/Partner Agencies  
 Synagogue Directory  
 Young Families/Couples/Singles

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