



ROMANIA



JDC volunteers serve food to Ukrainian refugees in Siret, Romania, 2022.

BY THE NUMBERS	21.2 MILLION	~10,000	1916
	COUNTRY POPULATION	JEWISH POPULATION	JDC ENTRY DATE

For more than seven centuries, Jews have built a home in Romania. Today, JDC is helping them build a Jewish future — in Bucharest and beyond.

Jews have called Romania home for more than 700 years. Prior to the 19th century, Jews fleeing antisemitism found refuge here and contributed greatly to Romanian society and Jewish culture. During World War II, Jews in Romania suffered discrimination, pogroms, deportations, and killings. The survivors then faced repression under communist rule until 1989, when communism collapsed. Jews then began to

rebuild a Jewish life all their own — and 30 years later, it's thriving more than ever.

For more than a century, JDC has stood alongside and worked as partners to Romania's Jewish community. After World War II, JDC helped Romanian refugees and displaced

persons re-establish their lives, and in 1967, when JDC returned more fully to the country, we provided welfare and medical help to Holocaust survivors.

We've been there for the past three decades, too, strengthening Jewish leadership and institutions — ensuring a bright Jewish future.

JDC in Romania: A Snapshot

CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE

Romania's Jewish community was heavily affected by the 2008 financial crisis, which created mass unemployment and sent living costs skyrocketing. To aid the country's most vulnerable Jews, JDC partners with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM) providing food, medical assistance, homecare, and winter relief grants. JDC also supports the Rosen Home, serving elderly Jews in Bucharest, and Project Braille, a program for Jewish seniors who are visually-impaired. And for Jewish families dealing with unemployment and high living costs, JDC support helps provide case managers, monthly food vouchers, emergency grants, medical and psychological care, clothing, and academic support.



Volunteers help assemble Chanukah boxes at the JDC-supported Bucharest Jewish Community Center (JCC) in 2021.



CULTIVATING A JEWISH FUTURE

JDC helped establish the Bucharest Jewish Community Center (JCC) in 2007, a center of Romanian Jewish life that features a diverse array of community activities. When pandemic struck, the Bucharest JCC — and JCCs across the country — innovated its programming, and over 2,000 community members joined a variety of activities organized by JCC Bucharest alone, while JCCs in Iași, Oradea, and Timișoara, provided regular virtual programming. In the summer, when lockdown measures were briefly lifted, JCCs across the country hosted “Children’s Day” festivals and Shabbat celebrations for people of all ages.

In addition, Bereshit, Romania’s flagship Jewish learning event, held virtual gatherings in 2021 that attracted more than 500 participants in over 25 communities — more than 10% of Romania’s Jewish population. And Keshet, a weekly seminar that explores topics in Jewish culture and identity, attracted some 200 participants to its online sessions. Community members found new ways to innovate events and ceremonies, holding hybrid Chanukah candle-lighting and Shabbat celebrations.

BUILDING JEWISH LIFE

By investing in the next generation of Romanian Jewish leadership, JDC invests in the future of Romanian Jewish life. That’s why JDC helps run Limmud-Keshet, an annual pluralistic festival of Jewish learning that attracts over 1,000 participants. JDC also sends young Jewish leaders to pan-European events and seminars, like the Buncher Community Leadership Program — a series of intensive seminars, workshops and mentoring programs. And at Szarvas, the JDC-Ronald S. Lauder Foundation international Jewish summer camp in Hungary, JDC connects young Jewish Romanians to the broader Jewish world.



JDC has also been instrumental in developing family camps — a place where parents and children can access a rich array of social and educational activities and learn about their Jewish heritage together. In partnership with the Polinger Family Foundation, JDC strengthened its family camps, reaching hundreds of Jewish families in Bucharest, Romania’s largest city, as well as Timișoara, Iași, Cluj-Napoca, and Oradea. These family camps are entry points for unaffiliated Jews, and lay the foundation for a caring and unified community.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The pandemic worsened an already difficult situation for Romania’s most vulnerable Jews. That’s why JDC partnered with FEDROM’s Social and Medical Assistance Department (SMAD), adapting its services to continue meeting clients’ needs throughout the pandemic. This assistance included food vouchers, medicine delivery, phone consultations with psychologists, as well as the distribution of masks, gloves, disinfectant, and protective gowns for volunteers, clients, and staff. In addition, JDC also partnered with SMAD to support newly poor families through the COVID-19 Emergency Humanitarian Fund, a safety net that complements local welfare efforts by supporting families in distress.

JDC in Romania: Images Across Time



Images from left: Women at a JDC-supported home for the elderly. Iasi, Romania, 1920. Photo: Willy Goestein. Children eating lunch at a JDC-supported childcare center. Arad, Romania, 1948. Congregants celebrate Simchat Torah. Bucharest, Romania, 1969.

