

ECJC 2020

Context :

The European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC), originally founded as an umbrella organization for Jewish communities & organisations in the field of Education, Culture & Social Welfare undertook in late 2011, after nearly a decade of questionable governance and upheavals, a shift in its approach, towards a program orientated, service-based organization.

Such a shift reflected essentially in the downsizing of the manpower of the organization, from 6 employees by 2010 to a single, part-time professional, Mariano Schlimovich, in charge of tasks covering programmatic input and coordination to accounts, website administration, logistics etc.

The current elected Board, presided by Benny Albalas from Athens, is composed of 15 members, of which about half are under 40 years old, and which has varying degrees of wealth and financial independence. He's seconded by 2 VPS, Marguerite Zauberman from Paris, who has been involved in ECJC spin-off Leatid since its inception in 1996, and Alek Oskar, from Sofia, an up-and-coming successful professional currently very absorbed by his private life (recent father) & career .

Membership in the ECJC has grown from 11 to 37 in 3 years, but fees remain low, although they would pay for fixed costs, while expenses represent 50% of all programme costs, w/ plenty of paper work because audits are stringent. The historical sponsor of ECJC, JDC, has reduced its fixed support to 30% of its past allocation, to 30k USD/year (+ 15k for salary), which has resulted in a more balanced relationship between the 2 organisations.

In terms of programmes, the ECJC has been extremely active since 2011 despite its very small structure, with many conferences & events (co)organized (with partnering organisations, eg OSE, JDC, EAJCC, ...) and held on the several tracks its currently pursues: Social Welfare, Education, Culture, Youth & Sport, Presidents, ...

In a European Jewish context in mutation and characterized by uncertainty, eg the impacts of the current crises & related developments (Crimea & Donbass war; Refugees influx; Islamist violence; Rise of Populist parties; Decreasing public resources; Renewed emigration to Israel; ...), there is potentially much to be addressed, with limited means, but also with an environment that offers opportunities through partnerships with other existing NGOs, as well as with national & regional authorities, the EU, etc...

The need

Today, with elections planned in early 2017, this period can be considered as a transition:

- From a generation who witnessed the existential wars of Israel, the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Wall, and also the emergence of the internet and the expansion of the EU,
- To a generation raised into a sense of European identity and proximity, an emotional yet different relationship to Israel, and a stage in its professional & psychological development that puts it at the center of Jewish demography, being both parents and children, caring for both social welfare, education, but also sports & culture & its involvement in society at large.

With a view to review the level of activity one man can handle on his own in a sustainable way, the question may be:

What are ECJC's vision, mission and strategy for 2020?

This question can be broken down in many ways, such as

- What could AND should ECJC do to contribute in a lasting way to the quality of Jewish life in Europe today and tomorrow?
- What is ECJC's current impact of Jewish life in Europe? Where can this organization make a lasting impact?
- Who/what are its constituents? Who/what are its users/"customers"? Who/what are its other stakeholders?
- Should these remain identical? Under which conditions the ECJC would be able to serve them at a level it considers in line with its ambitions?
- What are its means, manpower, methods, etc? Can the means to its ambitions be achieved in a realistic way?
- Should it re-prioritise its ambitions to realign them on its current and foreseeable means?
- What should it decide to do, and decide to possibly stop doing, to make best leverage of its monetary and non-monetary resources, in line with its vision, and mission?

In order to start exploring these questions, the ECJC is interested to get external assistance to help it listen to its stakeholders, formulate the challenges, reflect on the future 5 years ahead, facilitate the exchanges, reframe the issues for the next leadership of the organization.

A draft proposal

Whatever the strategic theory, the business school or Consultancy, and whatever the business sector, the strategic process always starts with two main set of analyses:

- external : to understand the environment in which the organisation operates,
- internal : to understand the strengths (and weaknesses) on which the organisation can base its strategy

The competitive position of the organisation, hence the selection of its strategic portfolio (ie activities and programmes), can then be derived from these two complementary approaches.

Ultimately, and without going deep into classic strategic work (Market description and segmentation; External analysis relative to market and competition; Internal analysis relative to the organisation; Competitive positioning; Selection of the strategic portfolio; Action Plans), we will be able to define, in a collaborative way, key condition for the ownership of stakeholders, a road map geared to strengthening the “competitive position” on the selected segments of the market.

We should make clear from scratch that a couple of important questions need to be answered in order to successfully conduct such a review:

- 1. *Is there clarity and agreement on the critical need for a review of ECJC vision and mission statement, which are the guiding principles of the organization, as well as its goals for its development & growth in the coming years?***
 - a. This includes reviewing what ECJC stands for and how it envisions its future role before planning for those years.
 - b. This discussion needs to involve the board and other significant stakeholders (either involved with the ECJC or committed to the client population it serves), otherwise it might be difficult to see how the ECJC plan could be taken seriously and implemented/supported by those very parties who/which are key to its future
- 2. *Is there clarity and alignment about the (current and/or future) board’s role and how it understands its responsibilities in developing and implementing the plan?***
 - a. One should not exclude that the plan for the future of ECJC state the need for additional financial resources for capital projects or expansion of services
 - b. Asking the board to accept responsibility for raising additional funds if it was not involved and committed in the first place would be at best a missed opportunity.

It is with these 2 questions in mind that we propose a 3-stage approach, with a view to

- 1. collect internal & external opinions in order to substantiate such discussions**
- 2. allocate time and opportunity to conduct these discussions in a facilitated way**
- 3. Translate the mission statement & strategy into goals and operational objectives**

At this initial stage, we propose to conduct such a double-analysis (internal & external), in an economically-viable way, through of mixed consultations, in the following manner :

- **Internal focus: 10 phone interviews with current key stakeholders**

A series of 10 phone interviews with current key stakeholders, both inside & close to the organization, with a questionnaire sent ahead of the interviews

- **Casting of interviewees to be defined jointly**
- I would recommend 3-4 outsiders' views, who could offer their perspective and prognoses of scenarios for the environment, ie Europe's possible evolutions, Jewish life in Europe, etc...

- **External focus: online questionnaire addressed to 25-40 constituents / end-users**

An online questionnaire addressed to possibly 25-40 people (with a distinction between constituents and end users), to

- collect their current & foreseen needs
- assess their respective degrees of satisfaction regarding ECJC
- formulate their expectations in relation to ECJC
- identify their desired values for ECJC

Deliverables

At the end of this 2-stage process we would deliver the following tasks:

Stage 1

1. Conduct a partial, insiders' SWOT analysis of ECJC as reflected by its leaders & key allies
2. Complement the ECJC's SWOT analysis with the outside ("market" of constituents & end-users) view
3. Send the complete SWOT analysis in advance of step 4. to a selected group of ECJC leaders (& friends, eg possible sponsoring foundations?) for their review & proposals
4. Hold a full-day meeting with ECJC's current board and/or Steering Committee, based on an initial presentation of the findings, foollowing by a facilitated discussion

Stage 2

5. Hold 2 seminars with the selected group of ECJC leaders (and friends?),
 - 5.1. Seminar 1 –
 - Review/elaborate the vision & mission statements, and formulate the desired values,
 - Define a strategy, in relation with the internal/external analyses above-mentioned
 - 5.2. Seminar 2 - Review/redefine the best governance, structure, means and core activities in line with the outcomes of seminar 1

Stage 3

6. Conduct a series of one-day workshops (with related stakeholders), per track, to translate the mission statements & the strategy into goals and specific, measurable & time-bound objectives (item not budgeted at this stage)
-