



Jewish learning center unveiled in Berlin

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BERLIN (JTA) -- A new center for Jewish studies was dedicated in Berlin, and a new center for training Conservative rabbis and cantors is expected to open in Germany in 2013.

The Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg, a joint project of several Berlin educational institutions, was dedicated officially Wednesday in Berlin. The center will provide a symbolic focal point at Berlin's Humboldt University for Jewish studies programs in the region where the 18th and 19th century Jewish Enlightenment movement, or Haskala, took shape, and offer space for interfaith dialogue. Christina von Braun, director of the seminar for cultural studies at Humboldt, originated the idea for the center.

Its start-up funding of \$8.5 million over five years comes from the German government and will support fellowships and professorships for visiting scholars. It will endow two new academic chairs: one in Jewish biblical exegesis at the University of Potsdam, and another for Jewish music at the Weimar Academy of Music, in the former East German state of Thuringia.

Meanwhile, the training center for Conservative rabbis and cantors will open under the auspices of the Geiger College, which opened a Reform seminary in 1999. The Zacharias Frankel European campus of the Los-Angeles based Ziegler Rabbinical School will be the first Conservative seminary on the European continent, according to Jewish Theological Seminary graduate Rabbi Gesa Ederberg of the Berlin Jewish community.

Its launch underscores the growth in privately funded training programs for Jewish teachers and rabbis in Germany, particularly since the influx of nearly 200,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union since 1990. Along with the opening of the Reform seminary, the Rabbiner Seminar zu Berlin, also known as the Hildesheimer Seminary, was launched in 2000. The independent institution was co-founded by the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. Chabad-Lubavitch in Berlin opened its Yeshiva Gedola in 2007.

They were preceded by the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg, which opened in 1979 and is supported by the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

As of June 4, the Hildesheimer Seminary will officially link its rabbinical studies with the Jewish social work program at the Fachhochchule Erfurt University of Applied Sciences in Thuringia.