

# **The Empowerment of the Russian Immigrants in Israel: Towards Successful Integration and the Role of Integration in Minimizing Discrimination and Hostility<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

*This lecture examines the ways in which the strengths and organizing capacity of the Russian immigrant community in Israel contribute significantly to its integration into the host society and help it to minimize discrimination and hostility towards its members. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) form a unified community in Israel which is distinct from the absorbing society in many ways. Yet their communal cohesion does not appear to prevent the immigrants from becoming integrated into the surrounding society. The pattern of integration that is chosen by individuals, families or groups of immigrants depends highly on the socio-economic status of the immigrants, their perception of and commitment to their community of origin, and the attitude of Israeli society towards them. I conclude with a short explanation of the efforts of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee<sup>2</sup> (JDC) in initiating a strategic partnership with government ministries to develop comprehensive services that address unmet long-term integration needs of immigrants from the FSU and elsewhere in Israel.*

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<sup>1</sup> This lecture is based on "Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel 1999 – 2003," research conducted by Professor Eleazar Leshem, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, prepared for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Israel, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Since it was founded in 1914, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has sponsored programs of relief, rescue and reconstruction to help Jews around the world when no other actor can do so. As the overseas arm of American Jewry, JDC reaches out to Jewish and non-sectarian communities in distress. In Israel, JDC improves the quality of life for vulnerable populations, including Jews, Arabs, Bedouin or Druze, abused children, troubled teens, individuals with special needs, elderly and immigrants (especially from Ethiopia, the former Soviet Union and the Caucasus).