

WORLD

Ukrainian prominent businessman named to head European Jewish group

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Baku, April 7 (AZERTAC). A Ukrainian international businessman, Igor Kolomoisky, has been named the new president of the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC) at the organization’s "Once a Decade" conference in Berlin on Monday.

The 47-year-old Kolomoisky also chairs the Ukrainian Congress of Jewish Communties.

The nomination “reflects a change and a new paradigm that really draws together East, Central and Western European Jewry as a united front for Israel, against anti-Semitism and for a stronger European Jewish voice on several Jewish issues," outgoing ECJC president, Jonathan Joseph, told 150 delegates from 25 countries across Europe, including the former Soviet Republics, the US and Israel who gathered in the German capital.

The meeting, organized in cooperation with the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Central Welfare Agency for German Jews, marked a “revival” for the London-based Jewish organization which was founded in 1968 as a non-profit organization dealing mainly with education, culture, social welfare and civil society.

In the last few years, the ECJC and Jewish communities have faced a change in financial capacities and reduced commitments due to the decline of economies and an aging leadership, Jonathan Joseph, who was president of the organization for the last six years, explained.

“We need new blood, new momentum and a new president with a vision on a united Jewish Europe and with financial resources,” he said in reference to his Ukrainian successor

“Millions of euros will be invested in strengthening Jewish life in Europe”, he added.

The ECJC resolved to put an end to the artificial dividing line between its role in working on Jewish community matters in isolation from the political events that constantly influence the communities.

The ECJC has NGO status at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and the European Union. It has offices in London, Berlin and Kiev.

Participants at the conference included heads of Jewish organizations and communities in Eastern and Western Europe, major sponsors of Jewish community life, public figures and journalists.

Among the guest speakers were Israel’s education Minister Gideon Sa`ar, Israel’s Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger and Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice-President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, as well as Israel’s ambassadors to London and Berlin, Ron Prosor and Yoram Ben Ze`ev.

The conference discussed various topics from the relationship between the Jewish communities and the State of Israel, the deligitimization of Israel, the interaction of communities in Western Europe and the former Soviet Union, the partnership of European

Jewry with the American Jews, training a new generation of Jewish leaders and the question of Jewish philanthropy.

"Today as we are facing the biggest threat to Jewish life in Europe and when a campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel is growing strong all over the world, Jewish communities and their leaders need to focus on European countries that have become a springboard for the campaign. We must coordinate our efforts and develop new creative approaches to oppose this outrageous phenomenon effectively," Alexander Mashkevich, president of the Eurasian Jewish Congress (EAJC), told the participants of the conference.

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