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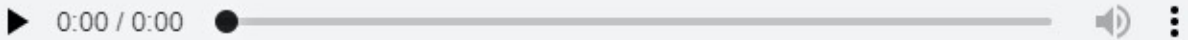
Brussels Playbook

Florian Eder's must-read briefing on what's driving the day in Brussels.

POLITICO Brussels Playbook, presented by UNESDA, Soft Drinks Europe: War on online terror — Poroshenko speaks — Bee Man strikes again

By FLORIAN EDER | 5/15/19, 7:10 AM CET

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PLAYBOOK INTERVIEW: Asked about the biggest threats to Jewish life in Europe, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said there are “challenges from the extreme right and from the extreme left,” with “anti-Semitism disguised [as] anti-Israelism. And we have also terrorism from the radical Islamic world.”





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One of the major issues, he said, is “hate on the internet.” He called for politicians to strike a better balance between security and freedom of speech: “What we need is responsible governments in Europe which are to provide both security and freedom,” he said. Translation: He wants limits to what people can say and spread on the internet. “I think we are only at the beginning of this debate in Europe,” he said.

Safe spaces: “The numbers of Jews is decreasing in almost every EU country,” Rabbi Goldschmidt said when I asked him about the best European countries for Jews to live in. “The two countries where the number is increasing is Germany and Monaco.”

Not-so-safe space: A few hundred rabbis from across Europe have gathered in Antwerp since Monday for a summit that ends today. Why there? Belgium has one of the most vibrant Jewish communities — and “we’re here to fight,” said Goldschmidt. “We decided to have this conference in Belgium because in two regions out of three, religious freedom was greatly curtailed for the Jewish community,” he said, referring to a ban on kosher and halal animal slaughter in Flanders and Wallonia. “We see this as a general assault on the Jewish community.”

‘Collateral damage’: “Nobody raised this issue for 1,000 years, until the Muslims came to live in Europe,” he said. “It is an anti-immigration measure, against the Muslim community. We Jews are the collateral damage. It is against religious freedom.” Goldschmidt said he believes “that’s only the beginning of the wave. This wave is going to continue with curtailing circumcision.”

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