WELCOME TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC!

On behalf of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic (FJC), welcome to Prague for the WJC Executive Committee meeting. We are honored to host you and are looking forward to meeting you personally in this difficult time, a time so much influenced by the recent global coronavirus pandemic and current war in nearby Ukraine.

FJC is an umbrella organization for Jewish communities and other Jewish institutions in the country. Currently there are ten Jewish Communities in Bohemia and Moravia with approximately three thousand registered members of which one half resides in Prague. It is estimated that there are an additional ten thousand unregistered Jews in the country.

Jews have lived in the territory of today’s Czech Republic for more than a thousand years. Evidence of our rich Jewish culture is visible on every street. When in Prague do not forget to visit the Old-New Synagogue – the oldest functioning synagogue in Europe, or the Old Jewish cemetery with the grave of Rabbi Jehuda Löw ben Bezalel, the famous Maharal of Prague. In addition, Gustav Mahler, Franz Kafka and Sigmund Freud all lived and worked here.

Czech Jews had to overcome many difficult periods, having suffered tremendously during the Holocaust and surviving the subsequent period of Communist dictatorship which made recovery difficult. It was the Velvet Revolution in November 1989 which brought freedom to Czech society and its Jewish community.
Nowadays the Czech Republic is well established in EU and NATO and is considered as one of Israel’s most important allies. Antisemitism is on the rise here as it is everywhere else, but the Annual Report on Manifestations of Antisemitism – which is regularly published by the FJC – shows that the Czech Republic is one of the least antisemitic countries in Europe. On the basis of the EU strategy, the Czech government, in cooperation with FJC, is currently preparing its National Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. This national strategy is due to be presented in November, during the upcoming Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU, being held in the second half of 2022.

The current Czech government, established after elections in the autumn of 2021, is a strong supporter of Ukraine, supplying the country with important humanitarian, material and military help. Prime Minister Prof. Petr Fiala was one of the first politicians who travelled to Kyiv following the onset of the conflict to manifest this support. There are now well over three hundred thousand refugees from Ukraine here and the Czech Jewish communities have selflessly engaged with helping them.

We wish you a productive and pleasurable visit in the Czech Republic.