



General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism is dissolved

26 Apr 2022

In its meeting today, the Board of Trustees of the General Settlement Fund determined by resolution that the Fund has completely fulfilled its tasks. The Fund is thus deemed dissolved as per 26 April 2022, pursuant to the General Settlement Fund Law.



President of the National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the General Settlement Fund, thanked the members of the two decision-making bodies of the Fund for their many years of work undertaken in an honorary capacity and paid tribute to their achievements: “With the dissolution of the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism, one of the Republic of Austria’s most comprehensive projects for the restitution and compensation of Nazi property seizures has been completed.”

The General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism was established in 2001 on the basis of the Washington Agreement between Austria and the United States of America. Its task was to acknowledge, through voluntary payments, moral responsibility for asset losses suffered by persecutees of the Nazi regime in Austria.

The filing period for applications to receive monetary awards from the General Settlement Fund ended on 28 May 2003. Persons who had been personally affected by Nazi asset seizures and their legal successors were eligible to file applications. Of 20,702 applicants, 9,650 (47 %) filed applications as heirs of persecuted persons, 11,052 (53 %) also filed applications for their own losses. The applications were decided by the independent Claims Committee chaired by Sir Franklin Berman and Members Kurt Hofmann and G. Jonathan Greenwald.

The awards themselves did not take the form of fixed lump-sum payments but were based on the sum total of the losses incurred in each individual case and calculated *pro rata* in relation to the total amount available to the Fund.

Overall, the Claims Committee recognised claims in the amount of 1.6 billion US dollars; 32 % of them were for educational and occupational losses, 22 % for liquidated businesses and around 15 % for stocks. The remainder was distributed among the other categories of losses: bank accounts, insurance policies, real estate, moveable assets, bonds, mortgages, and other losses and damages.

In total, the General Settlement Fund disbursed around 215 million US dollars to around 25,000 beneficiaries.

The Arbitration Panel for *In Rem* Restitution was also established at the General Settlement Fund under the chairmanship of Josef Aicher and with the Members August Reinisch and Erich Kussbach to decide on applications for restitution of public property. Real estate, superstructures and movable assets of Jewish communal organisations that had been seized from their owners during the Nazi era and were owned by the Republic of Austria or by the provinces and municipalities that had opted into the proceedings of the Arbitration Panel on the statutory cut-off date, 17 January 2001, could be eligible for restitution.

The Arbitration Panel for *In Rem* Restitution received a total of 2,307 applications, 140 of which met the requirements for *in rem* restitution set out by the General Settlement Fund Law. Every one of these restitution recommendations by the Arbitration Panel was implemented by the respective public owners. The total value of the real estate recommended for restitution comes to an estimated 48 million euros; 9.8 million euros of this amount were awarded as a comparable asset. The processing of the applications was completed on 30 November 2018; the last filing period for applications to reopen proceedings expired at the end of August 2020.

Both the Claims Committee and the Arbitration Panel had to take previous compensation and restitution measures into account. If corresponding claims had already been conclusively decided or settled by agreement by Austrian courts or administrative authorities, no award could be made unless the Claims Committee or the Arbitration Panel reached the conclusion that such a decision or settlement by agreement had constituted an “extreme injustice”.

After the completion of their tasks, the Claims Committee was dissolved in 2017 and the Arbitration Panel in 2021. With regard to the recording, preservation and communication of the findings and historical knowledge that the twenty years of work at the General Settlement Fund have produced, the Board of Trustees, which includes the Presidium of the National Council and representatives from all parliamentary parties and the Federal Government, and from victims’ associations and the religious communities, held that these tasks have now been assigned to the National

Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism by the National Fund Law.

Secretary General Hannah Lessing expressed her gratitude to the staff of the General Settlement Fund for their many years of dedication and commitment and emphasized that, “The work of the General Settlement Fund has a significance for Austria’s historical self-image that goes beyond the compensation and restitution it has rendered. The National Fund understands this as a legacy that must be carried forward.”

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Brochure “To Comprehensively Resolve Open Questions Of Compensation For Victims Of National Socialism...” The General Settlement Fund For Victims Of National Socialism 2001–2022 (2.3 MiB)