

Recognition of different groups of victims

For a long time, victims of National Socialism were not afforded the recognition they deserved. Many live under difficult circumstances and require special assistance and support. The National Fund provides acknowledgement and support to each of them in the form of payments.

Recognition by the National Fund not only means recognition of people's persecution in individual terms; it is also an important contribution towards raising awareness within society with regards to the different groups of victims and the different forms of persecution. The definition of the term "victim" in the National Fund Law (NF Law) is worded in such a way that all persons who were victims of National Socialism can be taken into consideration.

The grounds of persecution listed in Sec. 2 (1) item 1 of the NF Law – political grounds, grounds of origin, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap, the accusation of so called asociality or grounds which caused people to otherwise fall victim to National Socialist persecution – signify a broader definition of the term "victim" than that used in earlier measures, such as the Victims' Welfare Act.

Since 1995, on the basis of this provision, people have been taken into account who had never been afforded recognition as victims of National Socialism until the establishment of the National Fund. In this way, people who had been persecuted on grounds of their sexual orientation or of accusations of so called asociality received recognition for the first time. From the outset, persons who were resettled from the "Döllersheimer Ländchen" between 1938 and 1941 to make way for the construction of the military training area Allentsteig (Lower Austria) were acknowledged as victims pursuant to Sec. 2 (1) item 1 of the NF Law.

The decision-making practice of the National Fund also takes into account the findings of academic historical research. Over time, further groups of victims were also subsumed under the NF Law. Here a few examples:

In 1996, the so called Spanienkämpfer were recognized for the first time as victims of political persecution in the meaning of the NF Law. The Spanienkämpfer fought against General Franco's troops in the Spanish Civil War and were subsequently surrendered to the German Reich and held in concentration camps.

Since 1997, persons who, alone by virtue of belonging to a group, were generally endangered – for example persons with one Jewish parent (so called Mischlinge ersten Grades ["first grade half castes"]) or Carinthian partisans – are recognized as victims in the meaning of the Law, even if they were not subjected to any acts of persecution.

In 1997, the National Fund also acknowledged as victims widows, widowers and children of people who had been executed or died in prison or a concentration camp as well as parents and children of people who had fallen victim to "euthanasia".

In 1998, the National Fund recognized people who had emigrated from 12 July 1936 for racial or political reasons – the day of the so called July Agreement between Austria and the German Reich from which time on, persecution of persons of Jewish origin could be foreseen. In the same year, the National Fund recognized for the first time children who had been committed to the institution "Am Spiegelgrund" in Vienna during the National Socialist era, where they were subjected to abuse and were often also used as guinea pigs in medical experiments.

In 2002, conscientious objectors and deserters from the German Armed Forces were granted recognition.

In 2007, children of persecuted Carinthian Slovenes were recognized as victims in view of the particularly difficult circumstances in which they lived, which often meant they also suffered as a result of their parents' persecution.

