

## **Information regarding the steps taken on the issues covered by *Guidelines and Best Practices***

### **SLOVAKIA**

#### **Introduction**

The population of the Jewish community in Slovakia before World War II was approximately 89,000 people (according to the 1930 census in it was approximately 135,000 people but approximately 40,000 Jews resided in territories acquired by Hungary after the First Vienna Arbitration in November 1938). From 1942 to 1944 almost 72,000 citizens of Jewish origin were deported to the concentration camps from the Slovak State. Approximately 10,000 fled to neighboring Hungary or hid on the territory of Slovakia to avoid deportation. Many of the Jewish citizens were saved from deportations thanks to the selfless help of the Slovak population. Prior to the mass deportations from the Slovak State from 1942 to 1944, segregation measures were introduced and Jewish assets were liquidated and “aryanized”.

According to preliminary official data from 2011 census, 631 persons claim Jewish nationality and 460 persons claim the Yiddish as mother tongue. More than 2,000 persons are registered in Jewish religious communities in the SR. The Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in the SR (hereinafter the “Central Union”) is the umbrella organization of Jewish communities that has registered 13 Jewish religious communities and 15 other locations in which persons practicing Jewish religious life reside.

#### **Compensation of Holocaust Victims in the Slovak Republic**

##### **Agreement between the Slovak Government and the Central Union on the Partial Compensation of Holocaust Victims in the SR**

On September 18, 2002, the Government of the Slovak Republic through its Resolution No. 1027, approved *The Proposal for the Partial Compensation of Jewish Holocaust Victims* and subsequently the *Agreement between the Slovak Republic Government and the Central Union on the Partial Financial Compensation of Holocaust Victims in the SR* (hereinafter the “Agreement”) was signed on October 9, 2002 which was consequently amended by three amendments.

Pursuant to the Agreement, the Council for the Compensation of Holocaust Victims in the SR (hereinafter the “Council”) was established. It is composed of four representatives appointed by the Central Union and three representatives appointed by the Slovak Government (based on the proposal of the deputy prime minister, the minister of finance and the minister of foreign affairs). The main task of the Council is to ensure the implementing of the process of the partial compensation of Holocaust victims in the SR. Pursuant to Article 5 of the Agreement, a principal in the amount of EUR 28,214,831 was remitted to the special account of the Central Union in the National Bank of Slovakia, from

which the annual yield in the course of 10 years will be used for the purposes of the compensation of Holocaust victims. The above mentioned sum was determined as 1/10 of the estimated value of the assets that changed ownership due to racial laws, liquidation or Aryanizing<sup>1</sup>. The reason for the conclusion of the Agreement was, besides others, to compensate for the loss of certain assets, which in the course of the World War 2 became state property and were not returned even after the war.

The Council implements the partial financial compensation of Holocaust victims in the SR and the financing of social and cultural needs projects of the Jewish community in the SR. In justified cases over the course of the ten year period, it is possible to use up to one third of the principal, i.e., EUR 9,393,879 for the partial financial compensation of Holocaust victims. The principal bank balance will be used by the Central Union after the expiration of the ten year period, i.e., after December 31, 2012.

The Council makes decisions regarding the provision of financial allowances in the process of the partial compensation of Holocaust victims in the SR:

- 1) to natural persons, whose assets were neither returned nor indemnified in any way, for the purpose of the mitigation of certain asset injustices caused by the Holocaust;
- 2) for social-health care projects with special consideration for the needs of Holocaust survivors;
- 3) for the reconstruction, renewal and maintenance of immovable and movable Jewish monuments on the territory of the SR;
- 4) for projects dedicated to the dignified memory of Holocaust victims;
- 5) for support of social, cultural and education activities in the field of Judaism.

Between years 2006 - 2008 most decisions on the compensation has been issued. The following years, the Council mainly focused on administration of the applications submitted in order to exclude the omission of any application or applicant. Today, the process of compensation of natural persons is completed.

The Council also funds several activities targeted on combating anti-Semitism, Holocaust remembrance and activities targeted on ensuring the social needs of Holocaust victims in the SR. The activities of the Holocaust Documentation Center, which is one of the prominent and key organizations professionally dealing with the issues related to Holocaust history in Slovakia, and the operation of the Home for retired persons/ Holocaust victims and the National Center of Health and Social Aid (see below) are also co-financed from Council funds.

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<sup>1</sup> The estimate was created based on period materials on aryanizing – the estimate included the value of the aryanized enterprises, blocked bank deposits and unpaid policies in insurance companies and the prices of some movable assets (such as livestock). The following formed the working group of historians, established for these purposes: Katarína Závacká (Institute of State and Law of the Slovak Academy of Sciences), Katarína Hradská (Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences), Ľudovít Hallon (economic historian) and Eduard Nižňanský (Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University). The sum in the period currency estimated in such way was subsequently recalculated in today's currency. The consensus outcome determining the value of the assets; the compensation is related to the assets in the value of today's EUR 28,214,831.

## **Compensation pursuant to the Act on Mitigation of Certain Assets Injustices Caused to Churches and Religious Communities**

The rationale for the passing Act on the Mitigation of Certain Asset Injustices Caused to Churches and Religious Communities<sup>2</sup> that entered into effect on January 1, 1994 was to partially compensate for the consequences of certain asset injustices caused to churches and religious communities through the deprivation their ownership rights towards movable and immovable objects based on the decisions of state authorities in civil and administrative acts issued contravening the principles of a democratic society in the period from May 8, 1945 (Jewish religious communities from November 2, 1938) until January 1, 1990. Restitution of property<sup>3</sup> could be applied for within a period of 12 months (from January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004) otherwise the right expired and the proceedings related to the restitution of property were exempted from administration and court fees.

Pursuant to the above mentioned act, The Jewish communities in Slovakia, in cooperation with the experts of the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO)<sup>4</sup> prepared a list of communal and public assets belonging to the Jewish community in Slovakia. The Central Union submitted over 500 applications for the restitution of property (including cemeteries) and more than 300 objects were restituted, most of them cemeteries. Some applications are currently under proceedings in Slovak courts.

Most of the Jewish religious assets remained in the hands of natural persons. Other movable assets were sold to legal entities from 1945 to 1990, i.e., to the state administration authorities or state enterprises and parts were developed, i.e., not subject to restitution pursuant to the above mentioned Act.

## **Compensation Pursuant to the Act on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices to Persons Deported to Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps**

Pursuant to the Act on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices to Persons Deported to Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps<sup>5</sup> an compensation was awarded not only for the reasons of political, national, racial and religious persecution in camps outside the territory of the SR<sup>6</sup>, but also for detention and concentration in the camps on the territory of the SR in the period from 1939 to 1945<sup>7</sup>. Pursuant to the Act, persons who were hidden throughout this period due to racial or religious persecution may also be indemnified.

This Act was amended<sup>8</sup> in 2002 for the purpose of extending the number of persons eligible for compensation. This is because the original Act did not indemnify the persons living on

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<sup>2</sup> Act No. 282/1993 Coll. on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices Caused to Churches and Religious Communities as amended.

<sup>3</sup> Within the framework of the Act, several restrictions related to the rendering of later built structures on lands or lands used in the public interest and others are in force.

<sup>4</sup> World Jewish Restitution Organization.

<sup>5</sup> Act No. 305/1999 Coll. on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices to Persons Deported to Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps as amended.

<sup>6</sup> “Persons deported from the territory of the Slovak Republic or the territory of the former Protectorate of Czech Lands and Moravia from the period from 1939 to 1945 to a concentration camp and prison camp established on the territory of the Great German Reich or on the other territories.”

<sup>7</sup> Including the time of the return from the concentration and prison camp to homeland.

<sup>8</sup> Act No. 126/2002 Coll. that changes and amends Act No. 305/1999 Coll. on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices to Persons Deported to Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps

the territory that belongs/belonged to current and pre-war era Slovakia, but which was under the administration of Hungary in the period from 1939 to 1945. Thus, based on the amended regulation, it is also possible to indemnify those citizens of the SR, who at the time of their deportation were officially citizens of Hungary<sup>9</sup> and were deported from the territories of the Czechoslovak Republic from the period from 1918 to 1938. At the same time, the Act will indemnify spouses and children of deceased persons deported to the prison camps and the survivors of the persons deported to the concentration camps from the territory of the former Protectorate of the Czech Lands and Moravia or after the modification of the current territory of the Czechoslovak Republic, which was not possible under the currently valid legal regulation.

Pursuant to the above mentioned Act, a concerned person is entitled to financial compensation for each started month of deportation or hiding in the amount of EUR 99.60, and in the event that the person died during deportation or hiding, the surviving relatives of the victim<sup>10</sup> are entitled to a single compensation in the amount of EUR 3,319.40.

### **Holocaust-Era Looted Works of Art**

Pursuant to Resolution No. 109/1999,<sup>11</sup> the Slovak Government authorized the Ministry of Culture to process the database of works of art alienated from the territory of the SR throughout and after World War 2. The assigned task was implemented in cooperation with the Slovak National Gallery and the Slovak National Museum.

In Phase 1, in May 1999, the Ministry of Culture addressed all state collection institutions with art collections with the request for their revision from the aspect of their acquisition or for the provision of information on any collections that included objects from the assets of Jewish citizens who were deported from the territory of the SR during World War 2. A total of 44 of the 61 addressed museums and 9 of the 21 addressed galleries responded to the Ministry request. Except for the Ľubovniansky Region Museum in Stará Ľubovňa,<sup>12</sup> all addressed organizations responded negatively.

At the same time, the Ministry of Culture of the SR addressed the Ministry of Interior of the SR for their cooperation in analyzing the archive documents on the auctions of the assets of Jewish citizens in Slovakia during the Holocaust era. Based on the response of the Ministry of Interior, several funds regarding Holocaust issues are located in the Slovak National Archive. However it is impossible to determine definitely, which of them, if any, incorporates the lists of the works of art – cultural objects that constituted part of the auctions of the assets of Jewish citizens in Slovakia during the Holocaust era. In order to

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<sup>9</sup> It especially pertains to the persons who did not submit a claim for the acknowledgment of compensation from the Republic of Hungary or submitted this claim after its legal deadline. Pursuant to the applicable laws, the Republic of Hungary settled the claims of 533 persons who applied for compensation from the overall number of 839 submitted applications. The Czech Republic compensated only persons who were their citizens, by means of which a group of persons was subject neither to the Czech legislation nor could they submit their claim in the SR.

<sup>10</sup> In the following order: a) spouse and children of the eligible person all equal shares, and if there is none b) parents of the eligible person.

<sup>11</sup> Slovak Republic Government Resolution No. 109 of February 10, 1999 regarding the report on the participation of the Slovak Republic delegation at the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets.

<sup>12</sup> The works of art were returned pursuant to the applicable legislation.

find out the relevant information regarding works of art (cultural objects) in the archive documents, it would be necessary to carry out detailed research of the archive funds almost on the level of the individual archive documents. However, the overall volume is enormous – 4,427 archive boxes, i.e., approximately 553 common meters (all relevant archive documents are accessible to the general public pursuant to applicable legislation in the SR).

In May 2007, a meeting of the representatives of the Ministry of Culture, the Slovak National Museum, the Slovak National Gallery, the Ministry of Interior, the Central Union and the WJRO and CJMCG<sup>13</sup> regarding the issues related to works of art and other assets of a cultural artistic character looted from the territory of Slovakia during and after World War 2 took place. Based on the conclusions of the working meeting, the Ministry of Culture again addressed all Slovak museums and galleries with a request to provide information on the collection items that constituted assets of deported citizens of Jewish origin. 57 museums (of the 86 addressed) and 11 galleries (of the 25 addressed) responded to this request. The addressed organizations responded negatively regarding the subject matter, i.e., according to the available documentation and records on the method of acquisition, none of the registered collection objects was identified as objects coming from the assets of deported Jewish citizens. The outcomes of both above mentioned surveys were also publicized on the website of the Ministry of Culture.

However, it is necessary to state that as opposed to other European countries where during and after the Holocaust era, the auctions of valuable works of art confiscated from Jewish citizens assets were frequently organized and thus in some cases documented in auction catalogues, the situation in Slovakia was entirely different. It not known that any separate auctions of works of art were organized. Works of art from the assets of Slovak Jews did not become part of independent auctions of works of art; they were taken from Jewish citizens pursuant to the valid laws at that time and found their way to the interiors of houses, villas and apartments. Due to the above mentioned facts, no necessary materials exist for the elaboration of the database of works of art looted from the territory of Slovakia during and after the Holocaust era. The absence of relevant documents is also confirmed by the Central Union.

### **Jewish Cultural Assets and Judaica**

Within the framework of the above mentioned meeting at the Ministry of Culture (May 2007) regarding the issues of art objects and other assets of cultural artistic character looted during and after the Holocaust, the possibilities for establishing an internet location where information on the origin of the collection objects of the Slovak museums and galleries would be available, the creation of a database of Judaica in Slovakia and making the archive funds related to Holocaust issues or the question of further historical research in the Slovak archive funds were discussed. In continuation of this discussion, the Ministry of Culture undertook to create conditions for the completion of the electronic form of the central register of the collection objects in museums and galleries in Slovakia, which is implemented by the Slovak National Museum and the Slovak National Gallery. Making the electronic form of the register available to the general public is also included in the above mentioned project. At the same time, the above mentioned register will be within the framework of the *European Digital Library Network*, a European Union project, whose

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<sup>13</sup> Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany.

goal, besides others, is to preserve digital collections and to make the European digital cultural heritage accessible.

As in the case of the works of art and other Jewish cultural assets and Judaica, the archive funds of the Slovak Republic connected with the period from 1933 to 1948 are accessible to the general public. The relevant archive collections constitute the long-term research of, besides others, the Holocaust Museum in Washington. However, in order to find out any information on works of art or cultural items in the archive documents, detailed research of the archive funds must be carried out all the way down to the level of individual archive documents.

In connection with the issue of documenting Jewish cultural heritage in Slovakia, it is also necessary to mention the project of the Slovak Jewish Cultural Heritage Center, which for a long time has carried out documentation activities targeted on creating a database of preserved Jewish buildings and monuments in Slovakia. The outcomes of the *Synagoga Slovaca* project (a database of photographs and other documents related to Jewish Cultural heritage in Slovakia) are accessible and continuously updated on the website [www.slovak-jewish-heritage.org](http://www.slovak-jewish-heritage.org).

### **Unpaid Insurance Policies**

Due to the fact that claims for the payment of the unpaid insurance policies of Holocaust victims in Slovakia were individually resolved by Holocaust victims or their descendants, the SR has no official statistics on the returned means. ICHEIC<sup>14</sup> which established an office in Bratislava, assisted in the recovery of unpaid insurance policies to the individual applicants and has exact statistics on the recovered unpaid insurance policies from the Holocaust era.

### **Publicizing Information on Liquidated and Aryanized Jewish Assets**

The aryanization and liquidation of Jewish enterprises was part of the process of the elimination of Jews from the economic and social life of the Slovak Republic in the period from 1939 to 1945. The term aryanizing describes the dispossession and transfer of assets of Jews to citizens of non-Jewish origin (“Aryans” in the period terminology). The liquidation of enterprises entailed the seizure, inventory, appraisal and sale of the movable assets of the original owner. In both cases, the original owner was deprived of the possibility of doing business and of the enterprise itself without any compensation.

Aryanization and liquidation affected all types of assets of Jews (capital assets, houses, enterprises, etc.) From the overall number of approximately 12,300 enterprises in the ownership of Jews, more than 2,000 enterprises were aryanized and more than 10,000 were liquidated in those years. This process was managed by the Central Economic Authority.

Since December 2005, The National Memory Institute (Ústav pamäti národa - UPN)<sup>15</sup> has gradually made public the register of liquidated and aryanized Jewish assets from the

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<sup>14</sup> The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims

<sup>15</sup> The leading institution in the SR in the field of making the facts on the activities of the repressive

Holocaust era. The ÚPN website<sup>16</sup> currently includes the lists of liquidated and aryanized assets including the basic data on the owner of the enterprise, the nature and location of the business and the information on its liquidator<sup>17</sup> or aryanizer<sup>18</sup>.

### **Social Security of Holocaust Survivors**

The National Center of Health and Social Aid (hereinafter the "Center") is the key organization in the field of ensuring social and health care and assistance for Holocaust survivors in the SR. It was established in Bratislava in 2000 based on the initiative of the Central Union in cooperation with individual Jewish religious communities, the Ezra Foundation and Hidden Child Slovensko<sup>19</sup>. It was established to implement the program OR CHAIM (Light of Life) – assistance to Holocaust victims. The first phase of this project included creating a database of all persons, within the framework of Jewish communities and others who survived the Holocaust (according to data at that time, there were approximately 1,400 survivors and more than 880 of them were in database). The Center, besides others, provides contributions for medication, health aids, glasses, dental treatment, nursing service, therapeutic-rehabilitation care, and reconstruction of apartments into barrier-free apartments, social assistance, transport to healthcare facilities, treatment in private facilities and individual assistance to people in extraordinary situations.

The Center's activities are financed from several international sources (the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims and others) but also from the funds of the Council, which pursuant to the Agreement, may be used, besides others, also for the support of social and health care projects with special regard to the needs of Holocaust survivors. Currently more than 900 clients have entered the Center from the overall number of 1,220 survivors in Slovakia. The day sanatorium in Bratislava, which is visited by approximately 10 to 12 people daily, operates as part of the Center. The sanatorium provides a daily program consisting of a social component and therapeutic and work rehabilitation. Telephone help lines in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Košice were established within the framework of the Center.

Besides the Center, the OHEL DAVID, home for retired Holocaust survivors also operates in Bratislava. The activities of this home are predominantly financed from the funds of the Council.

The fixed supplementary sum to the monthly pension pursuant to the Act on the Mitigation of Certain Injustices of Persons Deported to Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps<sup>20</sup>

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authorities from 1939 to 1989 accessible. The National Memory Institute launched its activities in 2003.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.upn.gov.sk/arizacie/> a <http://www.upn.gov.sk/likvidacie/>

<sup>17</sup> Persons entitled to carry out the liquidation (sale) of enterprises. The liquidator was entitled to pertinent financial remuneration for the execution of the liquidation.

<sup>18</sup> Persons authorized to take over the enterprise.

<sup>19</sup> The *Kuratorium* (Curatory) is the top body of the Center, composed of employees of the Central Union, some Jewish religious communities and representatives of The Hidden Child Slovakia organization. *Kuratórium* approves the criteria for the provision of allowances and budgets and monitors the drawing of the funds, etc.

<sup>20</sup> An eligible person included in § 2 Section 3 of the concerned Act, who is awarded indemnification, is entitled to a supplementary sum for each even started month of deportation to the pension in the amount EUR 1 monthly in case of the old age pension, disability pension, partial disability pension, special retirement pension and disability special retirement pension.

constitutes a separate chapter within the framework of the social security of Holocaust survivors.

The so-called “Second Generation” Project has been launched successfully in 2010. It focuses on people who were born after the World War II (1945-1961), but were touched by the Holocaust.

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