

Marek Bucior – Ministerial Panel

The Role and Responsibility of States Towards Holocaust Survivors and Other Victims of Nazi Persecution

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Marek Bucior. I have the honour to represent the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

In the beginning I would like to pay your attention, that the responsibility of the Polish State results from a difficult Polish history.

We need to remember, that before the II world war the Polish society used to be multicultural and multinational.

About one third of the population were national minorities.

It is important to mention that the Jewish minority amounted to 10% of the society. It means that in 1939 about 3.5 mln of Jews inhabited Poland.

During the II world war Nazi German authorities were consistently conducting the extermination policy on the occupied Polish territory.

As the result of this inhuman, barbarous policy about 6 mln Polish citizens lost their lives. Among them were about 3 mln Polish Jews, who died in ghettos, gas chambers, in concentration camps.

We should emphasise, that although during the war the Polish soil was occupied, a lot of Polish citizens were fighting against the aggressor, in Polish armies in western and eastern Europe but also as partisans.

Appreciating the efforts and sacrifice of combatants and victims of Nazi persecution the Polish state treats them with special care and recognition.

After the democratic transition in 1989 numerous combatant organizations began to spring up. Among them were the **Association of Jewish Combatants and Victims of World War II** and the **Children of the Holocaust Association**.



In 1991 free Poland voted special status for all those citizens who were repressed and fought for independence.

It was the expression of our recognition and gratitude. In this way the Polish state tried to reward and compensate the victims of persecution.

It should be stressed that people incarcerated in ghettos are one of the groups of the current beneficiaries of Polish combatant law.

Polish citizens of Jewish nationality or origin, Holocaust survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution have been enjoying various forms of Polish public aid.

People in possession of combatant rights, which comprise victims of the Holocaust, are entitled to a monthly flat-rate of about 100 Euros, their widows or widowers receive an allowance of about 50 Euros and a 51% reduction of domestic transport fares.

Victims of Oppression are also granted priority in the access to community welfare services and homes for the elderly.

Persons in difficult financial situation may receive short-term financial assistance.

Another important form of support for those who lost health and got injured in the course of repressions are invalidity pensions of about 500 Euros, their widows or widowers receive about 450 Euros.

From the 18th of April 2015 all veterans and victims of oppression living abroad can receive benefits in their countries of residence.

In 2014 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs successfully managed to negotiate a bilateral agreement on the transfer of special benefits for Holocaust survivors who were employed for remunerations during their imprisonment in German Nazi ghettos.

On the account of this agreement from the 1st of June this year Polish citizens will gain the right to the benefits resulting from German Pensions for Work in Ghettos Law, known as ZRBG.

It wouldn't be possible without the negotiated agreement as our citizens are already entitled to Polish pension for the same periods of incarceration in Nazi ghettos.

And therefore from the 1st of June Polish citizens will be able to enjoy dual rights to both Polish and German benefits for the same ghetto work period.



We shouldn't forget that beneficiaries are today eighty or ninety and we hope that the introduced changes will secure them better lives.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.