

Press-release

Welfare Policy Database Launched at International Conference on Welfare of Holocaust Survivors

European Shoah Legacy Institute's "Living with Dignity" conference focuses on issues facing Holocaust survivors and other Nazi victims with support of 39 governments, European institutions and NGOs

Prague – March, 26, 2015 - Today, the two-day conference, "Living with Dignity" concluded, raising awareness of the urgent welfare needs of the estimated 500,000 Holocaust survivors and 4 million victims of Nazi persecution. The conference was attended by roughly 200 representatives of 39 governments, the European Union, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent experts.

The conference was organised by the European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI) and had the patronage of the European Commission, European Parliament, the Czech Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and Foreign Affairs. It was further supported by the EVZ Stiftung and the Israeli Ministry for Senior Citizens and the Claims Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

Co-Chairs of the Conference, US Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Holocaust Issues, and Jiri Sitler, Special Envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for Holocaust Issue and Combating Anti-Semitism, in a joint declaration released at the conference's conclusion, noted that the attending participants:

- "Affirmed the acute and urgent need for the existence of comprehensive medical and social programs/mechanisms and other benefits to enable Holocaust survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution to live in dignity in the years to come."
- "Recommended the identification of an EU official/special coordinator to combat anti-Semitism and to address Holocaust era issues, including the implementation of the Terezin Declaration."
- "Urged states to appoint an official with the responsibility to coordinate mechanisms/programs to assist Holocaust survivors or other victims of Nazi persecution and recommend identification of national focal points to increase awareness of available services and benefits."

Research has found that needs of survivors are accentuated by the effects of their wartime trauma and are more susceptible to chronic ill-health and income poverty with many living below the poverty line; 24% in Israel, 35% in the United States. The large majority of survivors currently reside in five countries: Israel, the US, Russia, Ukraine and France.

Halyna Senyk, Executive Director of the European Shoah Legacy Institute, said: "Through the research presented here, we now have more tools available to help governments optimise their finite financial resources supporting Holocaust survivors and other Nazi victims. The average survivor is now 87 years of age, meaning we have a very limited amount of time to ensure they enjoy a dignified rest of their lives. Every single country providing support to survivors heavily relies on the NGO community. Supporting NGOs financially and facilitating their cooperation at national and international levels should be a priority for governments and the EU."

The conference also launched a new database compiled by Prof. Lyle Scruggs, University of Connecticut, which for the first time provides a comprehensive analysis of national social welfare policies for survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution. The database, launched with an

accompanying report, is based on extensive country surveys detailing specific provisions of policies of particular relevance for the current population of survivors and other victims across the 47 countries who endorsed the [2009 Terezin Declaration](#). Greg Schneider, executive vice president, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, noted in the conference that this support for welfare services boils down to “physical, mental and dental” care.

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