

Pavel Svoboda – Opening Remarks

International Conference on Welfare for Holocaust Survivors and Other Victims of Nazi Persecution

Mr. Chair ...

thank you for inviting me to this conference on such an important topic.

I will not speak on behalf of the EP but mainly as a member of KDU-ČSL forming the coalition in the government and responsible for steps that need to be carried out in CZ.

This year we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. It is therefore high time to do as much as possible to improve the welfare of the holocaust survivors; they get older – as we do – and their community decreases, there are some 2000-3000 thousand of them these days.

As all other concerned EU Member States, CZ has considerably helped to the holocaust survivors; however this kind of assistance/support came rather late compared to other countries on the Western side of the former Iron Curtain. The first attempt after 1989 was the Act 217/1994 Coll. on the provision of a lump sum to certain victims of Nazi persecution. With the time the group of those who were entitled to any kind of compensation has enlarged – yet, those who are not entitled to any kind of compensation/assistance from the CZ is still quite large.

These elderly people are disadvantaged in our social system, they are often in poor health due to the hardships undergone during the war years, not to talk about the worsening financial situation of the retired eldest generation group in general. I therefore urge those who represent the Czech government to search urgently for ways how to provide for better access to social and health care to them. Those who receive any kind of compensation are often not entitled to ordinary allowances from the social scheme since they overpass the necessary threshold!

Having a close look at examples of best practices from other countries, I think it is necessary to search for ways how:

- To equalize different groups of holocaust survivors and victims of Nazi Persecution with respect to entitlement to any kind of social/financial assistance from the CZ state;
- To set up a volunteer assistance network on the national level; or even
- a general voluntary donors' fund (contributions from companies as well as individuals);

in order

- to avoid that the holocaust survivors fall into social isolation, since they lost their wide families during the war years or their families fled CZ abroad during/shortly after WWII;



- to allow them to benefit from the standards of social and health care equal to those in other EU Member States. In this respect, for instance home care is seen as more advantageous compared to institutionalized care,
- to allow them to spend the last years of their life with dignity in a friendly, ideally, home environment.

Time is flying. The generation of those who suffered for better future of our country or simply because of their origin is slowly leaving us for good. Any improvement we may achieve in this regard will be only a small gesture of gratitude towards them. There is nothing to wait for!

Thank you for your attention