



Information on data processing: Seizure of Jewish claims

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Terms of reference

Following an initial review of the file of the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland (Financial Directorate Vienna) with the registry number (file number) 21340 and the rather elusive title “Jewish claims”, it soon became evident that

1. the file contained documents on companies and individuals from whom monetary sums had been seized from claims by the Chief Finance President Vienna on grounds of the Elfte Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz (“Eleventh Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law”) and
2. that this data had not been taken into account in the index of the Financial Directorate Vienna on the files according to the First Restitution Act.

As such, when the Financial Directorate index was recorded electronically by the staff of the General Settlement Fund and for the Findbuch for Victims of National Socialism, the names of these aggrieved natural and legal persons were not taken into account. It therefore seemed appropriate to subsequently electronically record the data of the aggrieved persons by systematically reviewing the materials and the documentation of the seized monetary sums for two reasons:

1. As every file according to the First Restitution Act is generally recorded and traceable by means of an index card on the person persecuted by the Nazi regime, it must be presumed that a grave deficiency has occurred in the documentation as it could be assumed that individuals appear here for the first time in connection with a Nazi act of seizure.
2. Given the vast number of documents, the unsystematic manner in which they have been filed and the largely poor material condition of the documents, it seemed sensible to record and document the contents as clearly as possible, not least to protect the material.

Digitization

On the basis of the systematic review of the file material, which comprises four boxes, the surnames, forenames, maiden names if applicable, dates of births and business names were recorded in an electronic list. The relevant currency (Reichsmark [RM] of Austrian Schilling [ÖS]) was recorded for the respective monetary sum, and the institution acting as third party debtor (e.g. Reich Railway Directorate) entered into the comments field. With regard to the amounts, it must be noted that the amount actually seized/collected by the Chief Finance President, generally by means of an “acceptance disposition” and a sort of account document (paper strip), was recorded where possible. As a result of the chaotic filing of the documents (in places, documents have been filed in the boxes in duplicate or triplicate under a single file number of the Chief Finance President) it cannot be ruled out that Jewish claims initially recorded in Schilling may have been recorded again as a result of their conversion into Reichsmark; equally, it cannot be ruled out that individual claims may not have been recorded as seized assets as a result of these multiple entries.

A member of the Historical Research Department of the General Settlement Fund recorded the data electronically and revised these records in February and March 2014.

Revising the digitization

As an initial step, all entries which without doubt referred to an identical person were consolidated in a single record. This is especially applicable for payments of equal instalments, the documentation of which was distributed throughout the boxes, leading to a large number of electronic records. As a second step the business names were examined using the Wiener Adreßbuch, Lehmanns Wohnungsanzeiger 1938 (“Vienna Address Directory”), specifically the sections on names, addresses and so called “registered companies”, amended or supplemented if necessary and the type of business added. As there were many lawyers among the aggrieved persons, the dates of birth were checked and amended if necessary or supplemented if they could be unequivocally identified using the biographical index “Lawyers 1938” (Barbara Sauer/Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal: Advokaten 1938. Das Schicksal der in den Jahren 1938 bis 1945 verfolgten österreichischen Rechtsanwältinnen und Rechtsanwälte). Incomplete entries were supplemented by submitting queries to the Findbuch for Victims of National Socialism and consulting the resources of the Fund (internal database).