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Contract children, institutionalised children and those forcibly adopted – belated acknowledgement of suffering and injustice

Victims of compulsory social measures will receive a solidarity payment, and over 9,000 people submitted an application for payment by the deadline. However, this does not mean that the process of coming to terms with the issue is over.

The procedure for dealing with the compulsory social measures and care placements before 1981 is still in full swing. In summer 2013, victims and representatives of the authorities and institutions involved came together for the first time as part of a round table to engage in dialogue. The members of the round table appointed by Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga were given the task of preparing and initiating comprehensive action to come to terms with the compulsory social measures and care placements before 1981. In July 2014, they presented a report including proposed measures, most of which were incorporated into the new law aimed at addressing this dark chapter in

Victims on the Bundesplatz at the launch of the initiative on 31 March 2014
Photo: Wiedergutmachungsinitiative

Swiss social history. This law went through the parliamentary consultation process in record time – not least due to pressure from the Reparations Initiative – and was adopted in autumn 2016. At the suggestion of the members of the round table, federal government also set up an emergency fund which provided around 1,200 victims in financially precarious situations with interim support.

The new law formally recognises the injustice that victims of the compulsory social measures and care placements suffered in Switzerland prior to 1981. It enables victims to apply for the payment of a solidarity contribution of 25,000 Swiss francs. It also provides the legal basis for re-

search to comprehensively examine the issue. An independent expert committee is looking at the destiny of people who were “under administrative care” and will unveil its findings in spring 2019. The Federal Council has also launched the National Research Programme 76 entitled “Welfare and compulsory measures – the past, present and future”. This focuses on the documentation of and research into all other forms of compulsory measures at the time, such as the system involving institutionalised and contract children. The individual research projects are set to be approved and launched by summer 2018. Significant funding has been earmarked for the overall research activities. This



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highlights the importance that Switzerland attaches to coming to terms with this issue.

Finally, the new law also governs the archiving and inspection of records and provides an advisory and support service for victims and others affected through the cantonal points of contact. Organisations representing the victims and persons affected will also be given the opportunity to submit proposals for self-help projects. The victims and persons affected are also to be given the chance to develop personal or professional prospects and to exchange experiences.

The 15th and final meeting of the round table took place on 8 February 2018. The deadline for solidarity payment applications has now also expired. The Federal Office of Justice has received 9,018 applications in total. Some 313 of these applications from 41 countries – around 3.5% – were submitted by people residing abroad. A large number of them were submitted to the specialist department from the neighbouring countries of France and Germany. But many also came from

Canada, Thailand and Italy. The applications must be dealt with within four years of the law entering into force, which means by the end of March 2021.

Persons residing abroad had to personally request a life certificate from a Swiss representation for the application. Individual solutions were found in cooperation between the Swiss representation and the Federal Office of Justice for people who would have had to travel extremely long distances or who are in poor health.

Further information can be obtained from the Compulsory Social Measures Unit at the Federal Office of Justice (+41 58 462 42 84 or sekretariat@fuersorgerischezwangsmassnahmen.ch). Further information is also available online: www.bj.admin.ch > Society > Compulsory social measures and placements. The report and minutes of the round table can be viewed in German, French or Italian at www.fszm.ch > Runder Tisch.

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Federal referendums

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date. The following proposals will be put to the vote on 23 September 2018:

- Federal Decree of 13 March 2018 on Cycle Paths, Footpaths and Hiking Trails (direct counter-proposal to the Popular Initiative "To encourage the use of cycle paths, footpaths and hiking trails (Bike Initiative)")
- Federal Popular Initiative of 26 November 2015 "For healthy, environmentally-friendly food fairly produced (Fair Food Initiative)"
- Federal Popular Initiative of 30 March 2016 "For food sovereignty. Agriculture affects us all"

Further voting date in 2018: 25 November


All information on the proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at www.admin.ch/votes.

Popular initiatives


The following federal popular initiatives had been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- For autonomy in family and business affairs (Child and Adult Protection Initiative) (15.11.2019)
- Appoint federal judges by drawing lots (Judiciary Initiative) (15.11.2019)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found in German at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volkssinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



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