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Historical background

After the "*Anschluss*" of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938, many different types of assets were seized by the Nazi regime. These included real estate, which was confiscated from its racially and/or politically persecuted owners through various means. The bureaucratically organized seizure of assets, executed on the basis of discriminatory laws, predominantly affected people who were considered Jewish pursuant to the "Nuremberg Laws", the Roma and Sinti and political persecutees. Assets belonging to Jewish associations and foundations, including real estate but also religious and artistic objects, were frequently seized by the Liquidation Commissar for Clubs, Organizations and Associations without recompense. The registration of Jewish property, as introduced by law in April 1938, was a fundamental prerequisite for the state-supervised "aryanization". Seizures occurred by means of enforced sales or direct confiscation by the state. In many cases assets were forfeited to the German Reich as a result of their owners' flight abroad or deportation to concentration and extermination camps.

After the war, the re-established Republic of Austria faced the task of dealing with this enormous displacement of property from a legal perspective. The restitution acts passed in the second half of the 1940s, the implementation acts enacted within the scope of the State Treaty of 1955 and other measures covered a large number of properties that had been "aryanized" or seized by other means. The research of the Historical Commission showed that, although the majority of the seized properties had already been restituted or the subject of settlements, the restitution proceedings of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were considered unsatisfactory by many restitution claimants. The range and complexity of the various restitution acts and deadlines and the lack of state assistance for the victims of the seizures in their attempts to achieve restitution were deciding factors in this regard. This is where the task of the Arbitration Panel, as defined by the General Settlement Fund Law, began.