



Historical background

After the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938, in addition to other assets, properties were also seized from the racially and/or politically persecuted owners through various avenues. The bureaucratically organized seizure of assets, executed on the basis of discriminating laws, concerned above all persons who were considered Jewish pursuant to the "Nuremberg Laws", the Roma and Sinti and political persecutees. Assets belonging to Jewish associations and foundations, including properties but also religious and artistic items, were frequently seized by the Liquidation Commissar for Clubs, Organizations and Associations without compensation. The registration of Jewish property, as introduced by law in April 1938, was a fundamental requirement for the state-supervised "aryanization". The seizure occurred by means of forced sales or direct confiscation by the state. In many cases assets were forfeited to the German Reich as a result of the flight abroad or the deportation to concentration and extermination camps.

After the war, the re-established Republic of Austria faced the task of constitutionally 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 the "aryanized" properties or those seized by other means. The research of the Historical Commission shows that although the majority of the seized properties were 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, set out by the General Settlement Fund Law, begins.