

Dr Michael Jansen has already been the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Foundation from September 2000 until June 2004 and from July 2006 until July 2007. In 2008, Chancellor Angela Merkel appointed him as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. In March 2005, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ) again elected former State Secretary Dr Michael Jansen as Interim Chairman of the Board of Directors. Jansen took over from Dr Martin Salm, who had to leave the Foundation for health reasons before his term of office was completed, and died in November 2015. On 31/3/2016, Jansen turned over his office to Dr Andreas Eberhardt, who took office on 1 April 2016.

1. Dr Jansen, when you stepped down as Chairman in 2007, the Foundation EVZ had successfully completed payments to more than 1.6 million former forced labourers. What was particularly important to you in this work?

Given the advanced age of the applicants, it was initially important for us to complete the payments as quickly as possible to people who were inhumanly exploited as slave and forced labourers in the Nazi system of injustice. In order to get started quickly, the Foundation paid the first instalments to survivors before we even knew how many people had legitimate claims. It also meant a lot to me that, through the opening of borders, it became possible to provide compensation payments to former forced labourers from Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, the vast majority of applicants who received payments from the Foundation EVZ until 2007 lived in Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

2. How had the Foundation changed by the time you took office again in April 2015?

The Foundation EVZ had already begun to support civil society projects in 2001, but especially since 2007, this has become its main task. Each year, the Foundation supports over 500 projects that are approved through various funding programmes. In 2015, more than 40% of the funds (in the amount of EUR 8 million) went to humanitarian projects. Of these funds, more than 60% (over EUR 2.2 million) went to organisations implementing projects for the benefit of Nazi victims in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

3. Especially in light of the humanitarian programmes and the social situation of former victims of Nazi forced labour, what has most occupied you in the last year?

I've been observing the war in eastern Ukraine with great concern. Many elderly Nazi victims have again become innocent victims of war and violence. Many have had to fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. They've also had to fear the destruction of their homes, or inadequate access to medicine and humanitarian aid. In the interest of all victims, I sincerely hope that the ceasefire agreement negotiated in Minsk will be seriously followed by the conflict parties.

4. Through the programme “Meeting Point: Dialogue”, the Foundation has for eight years been supporting projects that bring together Nazi victims with members of other generations and enable informal exchange. What messages can very elderly survivors convey today to younger generations?

I've been deeply impressed for example by the call by Russian and Ukrainian veterans of the Soviet Army who fought against the Nazis in World War II and fell into German captivity. Their common appeal to soldiers "to listen to the voice of reason in the face of hatred, and to speak to each other instead of shooting each other" shows great wisdom and humanity. I've also been impressed by the former victims of Nazi forced labourer who in their youth experienced first-hand that war produces innocent victims on both sides. Based on these experiences, they are particularly credible in their call for "never again war", and in their appeal to the conflict parties to not allow themselves to be taken over by chauvinistic slogans.

5. How does the Foundation support war-affected Nazi victims?

In 2015, the Foundation provided additional funding for Nazi victims in conflict-affected regions. Among others, six projects supporting Nazi victims affected by war in eastern Ukraine were approved. Recently, representatives of two of these projects visited the Foundation to present their work supporting elderly victims of the war. I was particularly impressed by how the young people, and older, still mobile members of victims' associations engaged together in the projects to assist war victims. I extend my deepest respect to these people.

6. Let's turn back again to the Foundation EVZ. On 1 April 2016, Dr Andreas Eberhardt is taking over the office of Chairman of the Board of Directors. What can you tell us about him?

I've known Mr Eberhardt since the late 1990s, when he was involved alongside other representatives of German civil society in the payments to former forced labourers. He has been intimately familiar with the goals and work of the Foundation since then. I am sure that Andreas Eberhardt will carry forth the impressive work of my predecessor, Dr. Martin Salm, in good faith and will provide important new impulses for the Foundation.

Dr Jansen, we thank you very much for the interview.