CHAPTER 5: OUTREACH

This chapter contains:

- Outreach at the start of the program
- Interaction with claimants
- Ongoing communication needs
INTRODUCTION: MORE THAN PROVIDING INFORMATION

Public information and outreach are critical for every large-scale compensation program. The goal is to reach as many potential claimants as quickly as possible and provide comprehensive and reliable information to them about the program. An active search for potential claimants was particularly important in the case of the forced labor compensation program, considering the long time that had elapsed since the events giving rise to the claims; the advanced age of the claimants; their often difficult access to public information; and the wide geographical distribution of the program. The importance of outreach was recognized already in a provision in the Foundation Law (Section 10 (2)), and the EVZ Foundation stipulated in its agreements with the partner organizations specific obligations in this respect. 1

The main goal of the outreach was to provide information concerning the following:

- Who is and who is not eligible to claim and receive benefits?
- What are the conditions of eligibility/the categories of claims?
- Where and how should applications be filed?
- What are the filing deadlines?
- Where can claimants obtain claim forms?
- What should claimants submit together with the claim forms?
- What is the process of the resolution and payment of the claims?

Providing this information was particularly important at the beginning of the program in order to announce its existence and to allow claims to be submitted within the filing deadline. Yet a continuous provision of information was also required throughout the implementation process to answer queries of claimants and the public, to address new circumstances and to inform about important requirements and milestones, such as the extension and end of deadlines, or the requirements for legal successor claims.

This chapter focuses more specifically on the outreach activities of the partner organizations, as they mirror the typical situation in a reparations program. The following description concentrates on the practice of the Polish partner organization as an example of a national partner organization and the IOM as an example of an internationally operating partner organization. While each of the seven partner organizations addressed a specific situation and faced particular challenges, the Polish partner organization and the IOM are sufficiently representative for the two main types of situations during the German compensation program.

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1 For example, the partnership agreement concluded with the Polish partner organization provided that in accordance with Section 10 (2) of the Foundation Law, the Federal Foundation and its partner organizations are responsible for the adequate publicity of eligible benefits according to the Foundation Law. It further stated that rather than launching their own public information activities, the EVZ Foundation would financially assist partner organizations in their outreach activities.
OUTREACH AT THE START OF THE PROGRAM

Outreach was primarily the responsibility of the partner organizations, as they would be handling the claims process. However, the EVZ Foundation also undertook general outreach and public information activities. In cooperation with the German Federal Government and all diplomatic representations abroad (embassies and consulates general etc.), the EVZ Foundation could publicly announce the existence of the program and asked for the dissemination of information on the application procedure and the principles of eligibility through these channels. German diplomatic missions published the corresponding information on their websites, held press conferences, and provided consultancy services. When they received further questions, inquiries were directly being forwarded to the EVZ Foundation. Within Germany, the EVZ Foundation launched a comprehensive information campaign. In countries most affected by forced labor practices during the Third Reich, the EVZ Foundation held press conferences, at times in cooperation with partner organizations. Partner organizations received an additional five million Euros from the EVZ Foundation to implement outreach activities.

The five Central and Eastern European partner organizations in Belarus, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Russian Federation, and the Ukraine were each responsible for the claims from former forced laborers (or their legal successors where applicable) residing in their respective country. The JCC and the IOM, on the other hand, were responsible for Jewish and non-Jewish survivors of forced labor residing in any country of the world outside the responsibilities of the five organizations listed here. Both the JCC and IOM, therefore, had to reach potential beneficiaries worldwide.

In the 1990s, four of the five Central and Eastern European countries received lump sum payments from Germany for distribution to Nazi victims, many of whom also became claimants (and beneficiaries) under the forced labor compensation program. Only the Czech partner organization was not part of the earlier 1990s program and had no previous records of potential beneficiaries. All five Central and Eastern European partner organizations, however, possessed considerable historical knowledge about Nazi injustices committed in their respective areas of geographical responsibility. From its fifty years of managing a variety of compensation programs for Holocaust victims, the JCC had wide experience with the history of Nazi injustices and persecution, and it also had extensive records of such victims from its earlier programs.

This varied geographical scope presented a range of challenges for these two types of partner organizations. The five Central and Eastern European partner organizations could limit their

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2 The Russian partner organization was also responsible for claimants residing in Latvia and Lithuania, the Belarusian partner organization for claimants residing in Estonia, and the Ukrainian partner organization for claimants residing in Moldova. Claimants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan fell under the responsibility of one of the respective partner organizations that were now responsible for the country they were originally deported from into the German Reich. (Many survivors of forced labor did not return to the countries they were once deported from.)
outreach to their respective country; they were able to use familiar national communication channels; could operate in their own language; and could obtain information from and cooperate with governmental and non-governmental organizations, with many of which they had prior working relationships. Conversely, the JCC and IOM had to find and reach out to survivors of forced labor (and their legal successors, where applicable) in many countries worldwide, use large numbers of national and international communication channels, operate in a variety of languages, and seek information and cooperation from governmental and non-governmental organizations, some of whom they dealt with for the first time. The conditions for the IOM were especially challenging since its country offices were the only existing resources it could rely on, which had up to that point, however, not been involved in any matters concerning survivors of Nazi injustice or persecution. The JCC could rely on its offices in a number of countries relevant for the forced labor program, as well as make use of a network of Holocaust survivors and support organizations with whom it cooperates in other programs.

On a general note, the compensation program was to be accessed by claimants directly, without any legal advice or any administrative costs involved.

Example of an outreach campaign of a national partner organization

In Poland, the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation (Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie, FPNP) was entrusted with implementing the compensation program. Prior to this program, the FPNP had already worked with Nazi victims and therefore possessed extensive knowledge about these groups. Organizational structures, technical equipment and an experienced team were already in place. Stretching four kilometers long, the FPNP’s archive stored documentation on former forced laborers during the Third Reich, including an extensive database holding recorded and already processed claims filed by forcefully displaced people and detainees of concentration camps who had been held for the purpose of forced labor.

The FPNP worked closely with victim associations and other organizations representing persons affected by National Socialist persecution. The FPNP set up contracts with some of these organizations that then served as branch offices. They disseminated general information, provided claim forms to affected parties and assisted with the application process. Particularly, members of victims’ associations were able to file an application with their own organization. However, the majority of claimants filed their applications with the FPNP in Warsaw.

Although the implementation of an information campaign within a single country, in this case Poland, may seem a rather straightforward undertaking, there were a number of challenges. First of all, the sheer number of interested parties was overwhelming. In Poland, more than

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3. IOM operated the compensation program in 27 languages.
one million informal and official claims were submitted to the FPNP, which exceeded those of any other country. This was due to the course and extent of the Second World War, where Poland was severely affected.

As this was the first large-scale compensation program for survivors of forced labor in Poland, it was highly anticipated and from the outset received considerable social, media, and political interest. Already during the course of international negotiations with the German Government and companies, numerous Polish residents sought information regarding potential compensation. Thus, the Polish partner organization, which was from the start involved in the international negotiations, was faced with enormous societal expectations.

The FPNP established an information center that was responsible for outreach activities and was the first point of contact for affected individuals. The information center, which was a separate department within the organization, maintained close contact with victims and was the essential source of information for interested parties. Its scope of activities was rather vast and included:

- Contact with the media
- Dissemination of information sheets and forms
- Collaborations with victims’ associations
- Personal and phone support for interested parties
- Reception of claims
- Correspondence with (potential) claimants and their families.

Apart from the ongoing work of the information center, the FPNP initiated a coordinated and professional information campaign for the forced labor compensation program. The Polish partner organization devised the campaign and implemented it in coordination with the EVZ Foundation. The campaign began as soon as the partnership contracts were signed and a claim form was designed in coordination with the German side. Primarily through mass media channels, the FPNP then informed about how the forms should be completed and what the deadlines for the application were. The FPNP also informed competent Polish Government authorities, victims’ associations, official media channels, municipal authorities and gave information to supra-local media, including television, e.g. by holding press conferences.

The importance of the program in Poland was mirrored by the scale of public interest:

- In October/November 2000, the thirteen largest weekly and daily newspapers of all political colors as well as regional papers placed paid advertisements informing about the compensation program. Regional and trade press also published information on the program free of charge, as they expected that this would increase their readership.
News about the official start of the compensation program on 28 June 2001 appeared in all available media channels. These reports were not only used to disseminate information on the compensation program, but they also published guidelines on how to fill the claim forms along with complete printed sample forms. Regional and national press published articles explaining the application procedure step by step. National and regional television and radio stations broadcast special information programs.

The Polish partner organization sent out tens of thousands of application forms to potential beneficiaries who had already registered with the organization through previous assistance programs. Thus, the FPNP database already held hundreds of thousands of potential beneficiaries of the program. Of course, claim forms were available at the FPNP information center and were distributed to victims’ associations as well. A sample claim form was published on the FPNP website.

In order to optimize outreach activities, the Polish partner organization collaborated with a number of civil society organizations. In Poland there were nearly one hundred organizations and associations that represented war veterans, former prisoners (of ghettos, Nazi prisons, and concentration camps), victims of forced labor or other Nazi injustices. Most of them were regionally active and focused on a particular victim group whereas others were operating nationally throughout Poland, holding a number of departments and branch offices.

Given the fact that the FPNP did not have any branch offices, the collaboration with these organizations in terms of reaching victim groups proved to be all the more important. For example, associations and their branches could make use of offices throughout the whole country. Through them, the FPNP sent out thousands of claim forms and corresponding guidelines. The associations’ heads had more or less unrestricted access to claim forms and all other information circulated by the FPNP. The FPNP made sure that the victims’ associations knew all details of the program so that they could in turn support their members and potential claimants.

That said, collaboration with victims’ associations did not always run smoothly. Not all victim groups were entitled to compensation payments, and organizations representing these groups consequently voiced their disappointment and discontent explicitly. This protest was not only directed at the Polish partner organization, but also at the EVZ Foundation and Polish authorities. Similarly, the media reacted to these protests and in most cases took the side of excluded victim groups. In other cases, some of the victims’ associations were displeased with the program. Some of them believed they had better ideas; some started using unauthorized claim forms; others challenged the decisions on some of the claims and criticized the eligibility criteria.
For the aforementioned reasons, regular contact with major and, particularly, representative victims’ associations was of utmost importance. Based on these contacts, a permanent consultative body was established. This committee was comprised of the heads of the six largest and most important victims’ associations and proved immensely helpful in terms of interpreting the Foundation Law and in disseminating crucial information among their members and other victims of Nazi injustice throughout Poland.

Other factors weighed in positively to help inform the Polish society and potential beneficiaries about the program. During the parliamentary election campaign (Sejm and Senate, the two chambers of the Polish parliament) in 2001, a number of candidates from all political parties disseminated information material and claim forms. With the help of the press, more than 1.3 million claim forms were distributed. More than 150,000 of these forms went to the offices of Sejm- and Senate delegates, but they were also sent to veteran organizations for the purpose of forwarding them to potential claimants. This also illustrates the political importance of the program in Poland.

**Example of an outreach campaign by an international partner organization**

IOM’s outreach efforts were faced with considerable challenges regarding communication and logistics. IOM was responsible for processing the claims of all non-Jewish applicants worldwide, except in those Eastern European countries that were covered by other partner organizations. IOM was chosen for this task because it had, through its normal operations in the fields of migration and humanitarian interventions, offices in most countries of the world.

There was relatively little knowledge about former forced laborers residing in the so-called “non-Jewish, rest of the world” for which IOM was responsible. Estimates spoke of 75,000 to 100,000 potential beneficiaries, but figures on surviving spouses or children, i.e. legal successors, were not available. At the beginning, and in contrast to the other partner organizations, the size, composition, and geographical distribution of IOM’s group of claimants was therefore largely unknown. IOM’s most important and pressing task was thus to organize and manage a strong and visible public information and outreach campaign in order to locate the claimants and reach out to as many potential beneficiaries as possible. In addition, IOM established local helplines and support services to assist with the distribution and completion of claim forms for potential claimants and to provide additional information. In the end, the number of claimants seeking compensation within IOM’s program significantly exceeded the initial estimates preceding the Foundation Law.

In July 2000, upon the adoption of the Foundation Law, IOM established its own sub-program called “German Forced Labor Compensation Program” (hereafter GFLCP). It issued a press release informing the general public, national governments and victims’ associations about the establishment of the program. Based on the feedback from this first outreach effort, IOM arrived at an estimate of the size of its group of claimants and their locations. IOM then
launched a global public information and outreach campaign with the dissemination of a one-page notice (Public Service Announcement) through its international network of country offices, the German Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and its affiliated embassies, as well as relevant Permanent Missions in Geneva. The response from more than 80 IOM offices together with the data received from historians and victims’ associations was used to determine 46 core countries in which the majority of IOM’s claimant population resided and to develop an appropriate communication strategy. This information was also an important factor in the determination of the budget for IOM’s outreach.

The information campaigns followed a two-track strategy. First, IOM continuously disseminated multilingual\(^4\) general information about eligibility criteria and claims procedures, mainly through mainstream media, with a special effort to reach out to target communities globally. IOM closely cooperated with victims’ associations, the other partner organizations, media, international organizations, national governments, local authorities, minority representatives and other partners. IOM coordinated the dissemination of brochures, flyers, posters, and fact sheets on the program through IOM’s field offices and other partners.

Through an international bidding process, a Czech advertising agency was selected to develop a campaign logo and to provide the layout and graphic design of printed information material. More than 1,400 print advertisements were, in cooperation with a US company selected through another bidding process, placed in major newspapers and target group media in 40 countries. IOM arranged for the production and worldwide broadcasting of multilingual radio and TV spots, organized 40 press conferences in 30 countries, published 24 press releases, and created web banners and a special webpage that was updated on a regular basis. The support of a multitude of international and national partners including media companies such as CNN, Deutsche Welle, Swiss Radio International, and UN Radio was enlisted. IOM staff around the world gave numerous interviews to the press and other media and frequently participated in local radio and TV programs. In general, large print media had the widest reach, but depending on the country, TV spots, and radio programs were also successful information tools. Weekly reports from more than 40 IOM country offices involved enabled the management team of the program in Geneva to closely monitor the impact of its information campaigns and to obtain an increasingly more accurate picture of the size and geographical distribution of IOM’s claimant group.

The expenditures for IOM’s information campaign could partly be covered by a special outreach budget made available by the EVZ Foundation in acknowledgement of the particularly difficult task assigned to IOM, given the geographical scope of its responsibilities and the fact that it

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\(^4\) Information material that was first drafted in English was translated into the other program languages. For forced labor claims, they were: Albanian, Croatian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Macedonian, Norwegian, Slovak and Slovenian; for property loss claims, they were: Czech, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian.
first had to establish its claimant group. In the end, the number of claimants seeking compensation within the different components of the GFLCP significantly exceeded the initial estimates preceding the Foundation Law: IOM received more than 332,000 claims for forced labor instead of the estimated 75,000–100,000.

However, the general information campaign did not reach all target groups, and IOM reinforced its outreach activities with special information campaigns focusing either on a certain component of the program or reaching out to a specific target group. These included, for example, targeted campaigns for Sinti and Roma survivors of Nazi persecution. In Central and Eastern Europe, Sinti and Roma survivors often lived in remote communities, and many elderly victims were either illiterate or did not speak the respective national language. To reach them, IOM developed specific outreach activities, assigning a prominent role to local Roma organizations and Roma media including radio and television programs.

In May 2001, IOM held a meeting with Roma representatives at its headquarters in Geneva to discuss the scope of the program and the best approach for a coordinated outreach effort. Campaign strategy and draft information materials were shared and adapted in accordance with feedback from the representatives and other experts on Roma issues who participated in the meeting. Materials were printed not only in local languages but also in Romani. In 17 countries, IOM cooperated with a specialized company that also provided outreach services to the Roma community in similar programs in close cooperation with local IOM offices. The special outreach campaign for Sinti and Roma included a radio spot broadcast in Romani and local languages, a brochure and a flyer published in Romani, English, German and other local languages, a print advertisement placed in Roma newspapers and magazines and web banners uploaded on numerous Roma websites. In addition, local IOM staff participated in talk shows on Roma television and radio programs.

**INTERACTION WITH CLAIMANTS**

Particularly during their initial outreach, the partner organizations had to balance creating awareness of and providing comprehensive information to a broad public while avoiding raising excessive expectations, especially among victims who would not be covered under the program. This proved challenging since the eligibility of a number of victim groups was not clarified until later in the program.

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5 The EVZ Foundation allocated approximately 1.28 million Euros for IOM’s global outreach activities. More than 50 percent of these funds were spent on paid print advertisements in major newspapers across the globe.

6 These countries were Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine.
After a large scale information campaign in Poland, the information center staff as well as FPNP staff in general was tasked with providing information on all aspects of the program, such as eligibility criteria and the procedures of the compensation program. Claimants could visit the FPNP and contact it through service hotlines, via e-mail, or in writing.

Even the best press release could not make up for the direct and personal contact with affected parties. For this reason, the personal service in information centers was received very positively. The claimants expected to have their cases dealt with on an individual and personal basis, have all questions answered and remaining doubts dispelled. The staff members of the information center also advised on how to provide evidence of Nazi persecution, how to authenticate documents and how to complete claim forms. In fact, many forms were completed in situ with the help of FPNP staff. Interested parties (victims, family members, friends, even neighbors and representatives of victims’ associations) came from all over Poland throughout the year and often had to accept long waiting hours and standing in queues. On average, more than 5600 people were received per month.
The interaction with claimants was needed throughout the program. Whenever updated information was available and new regulations were in place, public interest notably increased. Already in 1999, when the German Government announced that it would set up a compensation fund, inquiries to the FPNP increased by 67 percent compared to the previous year. In 2000, the number of people being serviced in this manner increased by another 50 percent. Inquiries increased again when the deadline for submitting claims drew closer. By the end of 2001, numbers peaked. Notably, on the last day of claims acceptance, on 31 December 2001, more than 800 people visited the information center; many of them spent New Year’s Eve with FPNP staff members.

As was the case for other partner organizations, conversations with claimants were not only informative but also often very personal and almost therapeutic. Many came to the information center with traumatic past experiences, and many of the elderly lived in impoverished living conditions and had to deal with chronic physical and psychological illnesses. Almost all claimants wanted to tell their unique life story and share their experiences of suffering. There were critical moments that required a gentle but determined way of solving issues; for instance, when claimants realized that they would not receive benefits immediately; that they might have to wait for a considerable amount of time; that documents were missing information; or that they were in fact not entitled to receive any compensation payments. Upon realizing this, a few people fainted, and there was one case where a person died of a heart attack.

It was clear that staff members of the FPNP should treat each claimant with respect, dignity, and patience. In order to be more prepared, the staff of the information center received periodical training in assertiveness and attended psychological and first aid training. Additionally, the information center was equipped with a first aid kit.

Finally, the sheer number of claimants had also consequences for the space of the FPNP office. The high numbers of claimants in 2001 who stood in long lines at the FPNP office affected the work at the Ministry for State Security, where the Polish partner organization had its office on the second floor. Eventually, the information center was separated from the FPNP and relocated. The new information center offered a spacious and comfortable waiting area and sufficient space for consultations. Air-conditioning, automated assigning of one number per claimant, large information boards, information material on compensation payments, along with additional amenities were made available in the new building. The waiting area also held an information desk where claimants obtained only the most essential information and could hand in their claims without long waiting times. With the establishment of 14 professional contact points made available to interested parties and with 11 phone helpdesks, more than 250,000 claimants could be assisted in 2001 alone.

Finally, despite the effectively implemented information campaign, a few thousand people failed to submit their claims within the fixed deadline and were as a result not entitled to receive potential compensation payments.
In the case of IOM, direct interaction with claimants took place basically in two ways. Personal contact occurred in the already existing country offices when claimants submitted their claims or when they visited the office to enquire about the program or the status of their claim. Often it was important for claimants not only to receive advice and information concerning their eligibility and the submission of the claim, but also to be able to tell their stories and express their feelings towards the program. While the formal and practical aspects of claim submission did normally not create problems, when large numbers of claimants attempted to file their claims simultaneously, logistical and security challenges could arise for an office and its staff.

The IOM office faced with the biggest of such challenges was IOM Rome. This had to do with a particular aspect of the (non-) eligibility of many of the Italian claimants. It was not until after the process of receiving and registering claims by so-called Italian Military Internees (IMIs) was completed, that the EVZ Foundation managed to have their ineligibility clarified (see Chapter 2). By that time, IOM Rome had no choice but to accept for further processing the over 100,000 claims by IMIs, with the prospect that they all might have to be rejected — which later turned out to be the case. Had the status of the IMIs been clarified at the inception of the program, the filing of such a large mass of eventually ineligible claims could have been avoided, including the stress on IOM and its staff in dealing with these claimants and, importantly, the disappointment of the IMIs when they received the rejection of their claims. This emphasizes the need to communicate clear eligibility criteria from the very start of a program.

The other way that interaction with the claimants occurred was through the telephone hotline established at IOM headquarters. Upon the expiration of the filing deadline and the gradual phasing out of the involvement of IOM country offices in the program, a Geneva-based hotline became the most important source of information for IOM’s claimants. Multilingual staff operated in three shifts to attend to queries from claimants and other interested parties 12 hours per day, Monday through Friday. Additional hotlines were kept operational in Berlin and The Hague almost to the end of the program in order to attend to claimants residing in Germany and the Netherlands, respectively. Callers sometimes called regularly because they appreciated that the hotline staff listened to their stories of the past and their current concerns. Other callers, on the other hand, used the opportunity to vent their anger about what they saw as the limitations of the program, the long time that the process took or the small compensation amounts.

In addition to the two examples described thus far, the case of the Ukrainian partner organization is noteworthy as it also made use of local authorities to disseminate information and accept claims. The organization held its own offices in the largest governorates that informed the general public, distributed claim forms, received and processed claims and assisted

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7 The cost incurred by the hotline service in The Hague, Netherlands, was covered exclusively by funds provided by the Dutch Government as a voluntary contribution.
with the completion of forms. Also, conversations about injustices suffered and present living conditions of affected parties formed part of the daily work routine. Yet, as district capitals were hard to reach for many potential claimants, it was organized that social welfare offices would fulfill the functions on a local level. The majority of claimants, however, could make their way to the Ukrainian foundation’s head office in Kiev to hand in their forms and clarify relevant questions in person. The examples show that accessibility needs to be considered in an attempt to reach all eligible persons of such programs.

**ONGOING COMMUNICATION NEEDS**

While outreach typically is an activity in the beginning of a compensation program, communication and interaction with claimants is often needed on a continuous basis, and indeed even until the end of the program, sometimes beyond.

In the case of the Polish partner organization, contacts with victims were neither limited nor concluded after a certain date. The information campaign was continued throughout the program. The compensation program was the most important program in the post-war history of German-Polish relations and, therefore, it was often prioritized over other running projects the FPNP implemented around the same time.

Communication needs could be divided into three phases. During the first phase, claimants mostly needed information on the application procedure and about the payment of the first installment. The second phase was related to the fact that the compensation payments were paid out in two installments. During this phase, the FPNP dealt with disseminating information on paying out second installments and, due to the fact that a number of beneficiaries had passed away in the meantime, about the procedures regarding legal successors. The final step on the outreach agenda was the completion of payments. At that time, several institutions within the Polish partner organization played a role in providing further information, for instance the appeals committee and the department that dealt with cases of legal successors.

The public interest in German compensation payments lasted for many years. Although the deadline for submitting claims had expired, those who had submitted their claims in time could still hand in missing documents and evidence past the submission date. For this reason, many people continued to visit the Polish foundation. A number of issues remained of great interest until the completion of compensation payments: providing evidence of persecution, appeals, resolving doubts, dealing with the issue of deceased beneficiaries’ legal successors. With the completion of compensation payments, queries shifted towards other humanitarian projects that the FPNP had established largely with funds from the EVZ Foundation.

Upon expiration of the final filing deadline on 31 December 2001 and the start of the first payments, the focus of IOM’s public information activities shifted from targeted outreach and awareness raising to general public information related to the status of program
implementation and to helpline services for claimants, their representatives, media, and other interested parties. Large groups who had submitted claims to IOM and who did not meet the eligibility criteria of the Foundation Law needed special attention and information. Also, the limited scope of the Foundation Law as well as sporadic and isolated attempts to deceive elderly and defenseless victims about the purpose of the program and relevant deadlines required targeted public relation activities, as illustrated in the following examples:

- In Serbia and Montenegro, in early 2003, IOM had to take steps to counter rumor that the filing deadline for the program had been extended. A special press release was distributed to all relevant national media and IOM staff participated in several TV programs and reunions of victims’ associations. In addition, all late filers received a standard response postcard.

- A similar situation developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the end of 2003 after former detainees of the Jasenovac camp had received their first payment. IOM received a huge number of late attempts to file a claim. To discourage individuals, representatives, and organizations that insisted on filing claims at this stage, IOM disseminated a special fact sheet and a press release, contacted victims’ associations involved, and established a special hotline number with a Bosnian-speaking staff member.

- In 2004, in many republics of the former Yugoslavia, rumors were spreading that IOM was paying compensation for damage caused by the NATO bombardment in 1999 or awards for children born after the bombardment. To set the record straight and to avoid abuse and the raising of false expectations of a vulnerable group of people, IOM initiated an intensive media campaign including the publication of public service announcements and background media reports, the dissemination of a targeted fact sheet and the participation of IOM staff in topical TV programs and meetings with victims’ associations.

On the other hand, IOM had to stop time-consuming and costly individual correspondence in response to high numbers of queries received by post. In some countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro, the high influx of unwarranted mail and late requests was provoked by rumors, systematic misinformation and even attempts to defraud. IOM created special response postcards containing the basic information on program deadlines in the respective languages.

In order to keep claimants, partners and the general public abreast of program implementation, new developments, procedures, decisions by the EVZ Foundation etc., IOM made use of a broad range of information tools. These included regularly updated fact sheets, periodic
responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs), a bi-annual newsletter Compensation News, and regular contributions to the IOM magazine Migration, published four times a year in English, French, and Spanish and distributed to governments, embassies and IOM country offices worldwide. Press conferences were organized to mark major milestones of the program and press releases were issued in English and local languages to raise awareness of new developments and to ensure broad and continuing press coverage by international and national media.

Figure 5: First page of a Compensation News newsletter, Issue 2, 2002, IOM.
Towards the completion of the program, public information activities focused on the expiration of final deadlines, the need to provide death notifications for deceased claimants in timely fashion and to submit missing information.

**SUMMARY**

A thorough on-going and wide-scale information and outreach campaign is crucial to reach, inform and attend to as many potential beneficiaries as possible. The chapter sheds light on information channels used, measures taken, and challenges faced during the campaign, as well as on the central role local partner organizations played in processing thousands of incoming claims.

**CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

- Outreach is not a one-time shot at the beginning of a claims program. Together with general public information activities, it should continue throughout program implementation, and to a certain extent even beyond.

- Outreach requires significant efforts and resources that must be foreseen in the planning and funding of a program.

- Outreach must be targeted towards the conditions and infrastructure in the country or countries concerned. It should employ the communication means that are best suited to reach the largest numbers of claimants. It should also use existing organizations and networks, such as victims’ associations, social and other public offices, banks, medical cabinets, etc.

- Outreach should be clear, easily understandable, “barrier-free,” and also available to vulnerable groups and people with impairments.

- A difficult balance needs to be struck: on the one hand, the outreach should find as many potential claimants as possible and provide them with comprehensive information about the program; on the other hand, it should make clear who is not eligible under the program to avoid wrong expectations and subsequent disappointment and resentment. To achieve this goal, the eligibility criteria must be clearly defined at the outset of the program.

- Even the most efficient and comprehensive outreach and information campaign will not reach every single potential claimant or convince each one to file a claim.
- The personal contact with the claimants should be respectful and take into account, as much as possible, their specific needs. This will also contribute to the overall acceptance of the program.

- An outreach that targets not only direct beneficiaries, but also their family members, neighbors, similar victims, as well as associations and organizations which accompany the victims in their daily lives, can help prevent isolation of old and vulnerable victims and sensitize society for their needs.

- The best outreach is to begin paying out compensation, as this assures those expecting payment that the program actually takes place. This is another reason why payments should start as soon as possible, and claims processing and payment should occur on a rolling basis.

- Outreach turns into continuing communication with clients, as information needs to be provided during the later phases of the program. This should be considered in planning for capacities and budget.

- Even when reparations programs have deadlines, ongoing communication needs to be anticipated for a certain time after the end of the program, requiring appropriate institutional capacities.