

Press release:

From 4 September 2015 applications can be made, by the parties concerned or their surviving relatives, for the repayment of unclaimed deposits in Amsterdam 'Gemeentegiro' accounts and of unjustly imposed fines relating to payment arrears of ground rent during the Second World War. The applications will be dealt with by the independent Amsterdam Individual Repayments Foundation (*Stichting Individuele Terugbetalingen Amsterdam, ITA*), which has been set up by the City of Amsterdam. The foundation has been given the task of investigating, assessing, and deciding on repayment claim applications. The foundation has now completed its preparatory work and is accepting applications. More information about how the foundation operates and its contact information can be found on its website, www.stichtingita.com.

As a result of investigations in 2012 and 2013 in the 'Gemeentegiro' archives, carried out by Mr H.G.M. Blocks, every account that became dormant during the Second World War has now been identified. The deposits on a large number of these accounts have never been claimed, and have remained in the coffers of the 'Gemeentegiro' ever since. It concerns 789 private and 99 business accounts with the 'Gemeentegiro' that were added to unclaimed deposits between 1940 and 1949, which were not paid out in the period covered by the investigation (1940 to 1954). In addition, the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies has investigated fines that were imposed on citizens of Amsterdam who had returned from concentration camps or captivity, or who had been underground, for non-payment of ground rent. This investigation has resulted in a list of 240 leaseholders who successfully lodged objections (or on behalf of whom objections were successfully lodged) after the war against the fines imposed on them, but for whom no or only partial remission of the fines was granted.

Repayment

The Amsterdam City Council voted on 10 December 2014 to return these unclaimed deposits and unjustly paid ground lease fines to the legal claimants or their surviving relatives. To implement this decision, the council has asked the independent 'Stichting ITA' foundation (which has been set up for this purpose) to investigate and assess claims, and to honour them if they are valid.

Claims may be submitted to the Stichting ITA. Additional information, application forms, and the lists and reports referred to above can be found on the foundation website. The time needed for processing claims is expected to be between three and six months. If the foundation rules that a claim is valid, the city council will repay the ground lease fines to the legally-entitled parties, plus interest. As the legal successor to the Gemeentegiro, the ING Bank will repay unclaimed deposits, plus interest, that have been identified by the foundation.

The amount of the Gemeentegiro deposits that can be reclaimed varies from one case to the next. In total, it concerns 789 private and 99 business accounts with an original overall balance of NLG3,841.19 which, with interest, now amounts to €52,130.56. That is an average of €58.71 for each account.

The amounts of the ground lease fines that can be reclaimed (the fine minus the amount already remitted) vary from one case to the next. In some cases, further investigations are needed in order to determine the exact amounts. The original total covering the 240 cases on the published list is around NLG35,000 – with interest, that now amounts to more than €430,000. That is an average of almost €1,800 per case.

The amount set aside is greater than this, namely €820,000. This is the result of the estimate based on the city totals of all the fines in the years concerned (including the fines imposed on those who did not lodge objections). See Table 3 on page 29 of the NIOD report, which totals €821,017.13.

Objections were lodged in relation to around half of the fines imposed at the time. Applications may of course also be made in relation to cases where a fine was paid unjustly and no objection was lodged. Processing these applications will take more time and investigation, as files are only available in relation to cases where objections were lodged.

Any repayments made will include interest. In the case of the ground rent fines, amounts that were originally remitted at the time will be deducted from the amounts to be repaid.

Difficult to trace

It is not easy to trace the individuals concerned or their surviving relatives. Contact has been established with a limited number of people as a result of earlier publicity, and they will be approached personally in writing by the foundation. However, the contact details for a very large number of people are currently missing. The foundation intends to make every effort to locate as many people affected as possible, to enable them to decide whether they wish to submit an application.

The foundation is therefore making an appeal – not just to survivors and their relatives – but also to friends and acquaintances who may be able to draw the attention of victims to the existence of the foundation and the information on the website: www.stichtingita.com. This appeal will also be published in advertisements in the media and using messages on social media.

Remainder for good causes

Deposits and ground lease fines that remain unclaimed will be donated by the City to one or more good causes in the Jewish community.

If you decide to publish an article about the repayments, please include the address of the website where all the information can be found about the foundation, about the terms and conditions, and about submitting applications: www.stichtingita.com