News

An older person carries a sign and wears a mask outside a cathedral

A demonstrator holds a placard reading "Tradition & Customs Catholic Church cares for tradition! Maintain many traditions! Such as abuse!" during a protest in front of the Cologne Cathedral in Germany March 18, 2021.(OSV News photo/Thilo Schmuelgen, Reuters)



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The Catholic Church in Germany has so far paid more than $43.5 million (40 million euros) to victims of sexual abuse, German Catholic KNA agency has reported.

The Independent Commission for Recognition Payment approved an average amount of $24,000 (22,150 euros) in 1,809 cases. The commission’s annual report was presented in Bonn Feb. 3. There have been a total of 1,839 applications from victims of sex abuse seeking compensation from the Catholic Church.

In 143 cases (about 8%), the commission ordered a payment of more than $54,300 (50,000 euros); in 24 cases (1%) more than $108,600 (100,000 euros). In almost 1,000 cases (54%), the approved amount was $16,300 (15,000 euros) or less, KNA reported.

Most of the applications -- three out of four -- came from men, and one in four were from women. However, KNA noted, 20 of the 24 payments over $108,600 went to women.

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The panel classified nine cases as not plausible. For an additional 21 applications, payments were not awarded because these applications were withdrawn or because they involved multiple applications that were combined, the German Catholic news agency provided.

The Independent Commission for Recognition Payments, headed by lawyer Margarete Reske, formerly the presiding judge at the Cologne Higher Regional Court, has been operating since Jan. 1, 2021. It has 11 members -- experts from various disciplines. They were proposed by a majority non-church body and appointed by the German Bishops' Conference. The members freely make the decisions about applications and payment amounts, KNA reported.

In terms of dioceses, a particularly large number of applications were submitted last year from Cologne (52) and Muenster (51). Among the religious orders, the Salesians (16) and Redemptorists (15) had the most applications submitted.

According to Reske, the average waiting time for a claimant to receive payment is currently less than four months after the commission's office has received an application, as reported by KNA.