



## Group 1

### Tasks

1. Explicate the internal perception of disabled veterans.
2. Identify which factors may caused it.

### M1 Scientific Text - Everyday heroes

After being severely injured many disabled veterans were dependent on external aid. Already during the war the Gouvernement proclaimed the disabled heroes. Therefore they expected exclusive rights „to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population, especially the people without war experience.“<sup>1</sup> „They are not just war heroes but also everyday heroes, whose actual struggle, the struggle for life, began after combat.“<sup>2</sup> They demanded a higher standing in society and strove to gain moral acknowledgement.<sup>3</sup> At the same time they wanted to be reintegrated and be part of the society.

The demands did not correspond to reality: They were often socially isolated also because „the war experience was permanently imprinted“<sup>4</sup> at their bodies and the defeat was emblematically recognisable.

They had the impression to be seen as a burden to society. This in turn leads to disabled veterans glorifying themselves even more as heroes and think of themselves as victims.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Beil, Christine: Zwischen Hoffnung und Verbitterung. Selbstbild und Erfahrungen von Kriegsbeschädigten in den ersten Jahren der Weimarer Republik. In: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 2 (1998). p.141f. (author's translation)

<sup>2</sup> ibid. (author's translation)

<sup>3</sup> Kienitz, Sabine: Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914 - 1923. Paderborn 2008. p.19.

<sup>4</sup> ibid. p. 35. (author's translation)

<sup>5</sup> Kienitz, Sabine: Der Krieg der Invaliden. Helden-Bilder und Männlichkeitskonstruktionen nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In: Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift 60 (2001). p. 401.



Unemployment, poverty, hunger and diseases became part of everyday life of many disabled.<sup>6</sup> Many felt abandoned, deceived and humiliated by their fellow citizen.

„One disabled man once observed in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, that while in the early years there were donations and celebrations for the liberators of Berlin, for the miserable patients in lazaret, there is nothing more left.“<sup>7</sup>

Another disabled Veteran criticised: „There is no appreciation for German heroes, who gave their life or health for the German people.“ Whats more he bewailed the obvious lack of public rituals in which the disabled are involved.<sup>8</sup>

All this led to the fact that a lot of disabled were not able to reintegrate. They distanced themselves from society.

„A group identity as deceived, supplicants and losers in war and peacetime“<sup>9</sup> was formed after the war.

---

<sup>6</sup> Beil 1998. p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, Deborah: *The War Home. Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939.* 2001. p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Was Kriegsbeschädigte hoffen! In: *Zentralblatt für Kriegsbeschädigte und Kriegshinterbliebene* 6 (1921). Zitiert nach: Kienitz 2001. p. 378. (author's translation)

<sup>9</sup> Beil 1998. p.157. (author's translation)