

How to Define Threshold Households in Different Big German and European Cities

Isabelle Klein and Alexandra Weitkamp (Germany)

Key words: Affordable housing; Land management; Spatial planning; Urbanization; social housing; housing shortage; increasing housing prices; threshold households; population growth

SUMMARY

Contrary to the general negative demographic development, German major cities are growing again. The reasons for this development are, on the one hand, the continuing increased immigration from abroad and, on the other hand, a stronger inland migration from rural areas to big cities. The availability of technical or social infrastructures, as well as job offers, are much better in the large cities than in rural communities. More and more people are moving to the big cities because of these better conditions. German cities are once again gaining in attractiveness.

Due to these developments, the demand for housing in the growing cities is increasing. Consequently, rental and property prices are also rising. Not every household is able to pay the rental costs for an adequate apartment, especially key workers with low-incomes. Also, the property generation is getting more and more difficult for many households due to the rising prices. As a result, a large number of households is dependent on state support. Key workers, who in general earn few money, are highly necessary to maintain the functionality of the cities. But who are these people? Which groups of persons are hidden behind the terms "low-income households", "marginal households", "threshold households" and "borderline households" and how differ all these terms? Is it sufficient to classify them only by their income, as it is done by the government? What kind of surveying-methods exist to categorize and to identify these groups of people?

The paper discusses and tries to define the term of threshold households for the cities of Munich and Cologne as well as for the cities of Basel and Vienna. Which criteria are necessary for a classification and, if needed, even for the cities to be examined? Does a household in the one city still count as a threshold, for example, while in another city it cannot be identified as one?