

Housing Integration in Zurich

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Approaches, Measures and
Exemplary Projects

Housing is a fundamental human necessity. To have a flat with one's own space is of essential importance to feel sheltered in a private sphere that enables regeneration and social contacts so that one can face the demanding challenges of today's world. A flat of one's own is the basis for coping with life independently. However, housing is not simply a private matter, housing circumstances rather reflect the social and cultural situation of a society.¹ The diversity, social differentiation and flexibilisation of our modern lifestyle can be clearly seen in housing. Migrants bring into community life different attitudes to home-making, different needs, traditions and practices along with their own values and preferences. However, social processes of inequality, discrimination and segregation can also be seen. Many socially and economically disadvantaged people also live in precarious circumstances in Switzerland: when they have no rental contract or only a short-term tenancy those affected must move from one temporary solution to the next, when the rent costs are too high in relation to income (as a rule if they are more than one third of household income) and lead to indebtedness and when the accommodation is too small or when the surroundings and climate impair health and well-being.² A secure and satisfactory housing situation is the basis for social integration and well-being in everyday life — in the world of work, at school and in education as well as in the development of social contacts in general.³

Satisfactory housing as a basis for social integration

Access to suitable and affordable housing is also often difficult for disadvantaged groups in Switzerland. These often include people with few professional qualifications, various kinds of handicaps or few financial resources. Among them are migrants and refugees, elderly people who can no longer pay their rents after complete renovation of their apartment house and the "working poor" who live close to the poverty line but receive no social benefits and who all too often fall through the social safety-net.⁴ People who experience explicit or im-