



Pfarrei Gut Hirt  
Katholische Kirche  
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**How is poverty defined?** Defined as poor is somebody who cannot cover the basic needs, rent and health insurance for himself or the family. This can be caused by difficult life situations, loss of employment or severe illness. Flight in another country can have severe consequences. People with migration background are often and without reason disqualified as incompetent workers. This causes great difficulties in finding a job. Single parents and families with more than two children are also at risk of poverty. The problem is mostly a too low income. Furthermore, poverty is considered hereditary. As it was proved, children who grew up in poverty, are often affected also as adults. In the canton Zug, about 4 % of the population live under the level of poverty, this are approximately 5000 people.

**This introduction is followed by an interview with Iris Bischof, Head of the Cantonal Social Welfare Office of Zug.**

**How it can be that 4 % of the population of Zug is poor?** This has to do with the unequal distribution of income and wealth. But with 1,7 % the quota of social welfare in Zug is only half as high as the one throughout Switzerland with 3,3 %. One of the main reasons why people depend for a shorter or longer period on social welfare respectively live under poverty level is missing education. About half of the welfare recipients have no post-compulsory education. This is not different in the canton Zug than in the rest of Switzerland.

**Which people are especially at risk to live a life in poverty?** At risk is everybody who is not wealthy, low qualified or working in cheap sector. Especially at risk is also who does not ask for social welfare although he/she is entitled to benefits. The reasons are manifold: can be that he/she has inhibitions, that he/she is ignorant of the right of application, or because he/she is unable to applicate because of psychological reasons.

**How is the geographical distribution of poor people in the canton Zug?**

It is only known how high the social welfare quota is in the different local communities. This does not say much, among other things because the quota is partly very low. Throughout Switzerland you can tell, that in urban areas the quota of social welfare is higher. Financially worse off people prefer often an urban and therefore more anonymous environment.

**How does the Canton of Zug help people affected by poverty and what is it doing to combat the poverty trap?**

The canton Zug is organizing social assistance as all cantons. In addition, there are various needs-based benefits which precede social assistance. Without this, the quota of social welfare would be higher. The canton Zug offers also benefits which are not known in other cantons as the help for unemployed people or cantonal supplements. To mention are also the various counseling centers in the canton Zug and offers co-financed by the public authority which help in a longer term to avoid poverty. Preventively acting in relation with poverty are also the low taxes for incomes under 70,000.-- Swiss francs or the especially family friendly tax system.

**According to "Avenir Suisse" the wage gap in Switzerland did not widen in the last years. Can one assume that in the canton Zug the number of people affected by poverty is decreasing in future?**

No, one cannot assume this automatically, because poverty depends on different factors not least also of the available cheap housing.

**Prevention so that it does not even come to poverty.** Every person affected by poverty is one too many, this is valid also for the canton Zug. The funds are there, but fair distribution is also here (or right here) out of question. Though there are the cantonal social welfare and relief organizations as the "Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft Zug", the Caritas or the action "Tischlein Deck dich" who help as much as they can, but in the end, they are "only" here, to alleviate the already existing distress. The question now is, what the authorities are doing to prevent the onset of poverty and prevent it from happening. Here the cantonal schools could also get involved to sensitize children and adolescents to avoidance of poverty.

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