

Pressemitteilung

Expropriation Referendum is in sight - despite deficit in democracy.



Berlin, 26.4.2021.

The Berlin State Election Office revealed this morning that 130,000 signatures have been collected as part of the ‚Deutsche Wohnen und Co. enteignen‘ initiative. If they are successful in collecting the required quorum of signatures by the end of June, there will be an official referendum on the issue in September. Berliners will then be asked to vote on whether an estimated 240,000 flats from corporate landlords should be expropriated and turned into socialized housing. This most recent count indicates that the initiative ‚Deutsche Wohnen und Co. enteignen‘ has already managed to collect more than 50% of the required 175,000 valid signatures. So far 50,962 signatures have been reviewed and 75.2% confirmed as valid. Over 50% of the signatures deemed invalid by the State Election Office were disqualified because the signees did not have the required German citizenship. Because more than 20% of Berliners do not have German citizenship, they are disqualified from taking part in crucial democratic processes such as state elections and referendums. Berliners who are unable to formally register as residents in the city are also disenfranchised.

“With this latest count we are well over target and truly on our way! If the 1,700 activists and countless supporters across Berlin continue with the same energy, we will easily surpass the required 175,000 signatures by the 25th of June” said Moheb Shafaqyar, representative of the initiative.

“We encourage everyone to support and sign the expropriation referendum who sympathizes with our cause. Those hit hardest by the housing market in Berlin have campaigned for decades to change the electoral law. We demand voting rights for all people who call Berlin their home” stated Rosa Silva, member of the Right-to-the-City-for-All-working group in the initiative, which organizes for the visibility and rights of disenfranchised Berliners.

Berliners without German citizenship and/or registration are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis and rising rents. The reasons are diverse: precarious working arrangements play just as much a role as insecure and exploitative housing situations. The lack of affordable and accessible living options impacts those most at risk first: low-wage earners, refugees and migrants. Racism and discrimination on the housing market leads to drastic exclusions. “Many of us find ourselves caught in a vicious cycle of low pay, high rents, not having our own contracts, and not being able to register as residents. We can’t plan our lives like this. The majority of flats are simply not accessible to us” comments Rosa Silva from the Right-to-the-City-for-All-working group.

By transferring 240,000 apartments to public ownership, the initiative aims to democratize housing in Berlin and enable tenants, regardless of their citizenship, to co-manage the socialized housing stock. “The socialization of housing should benefit those who struggle the most in the current system” said Moheb Shafaqyar.

Link to data from the State Election Commissioner with breakdown of reasons for invalidity:
<https://www.berlin.de/wahlen/pressemitteilungen/2021/pressemitteilung.1078790.php>

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**DEUTSCHE
WOHNEN & CO
ENTEIGNEN**