

Between catching up and adjusting

The analysis "Between catching up and adapting" of the Institute for Applied Demography Berlin contains some selected problems and tendencies of consumption and the development of living standards in private households of the former GDR and uses examples to investigate how the transition from the GDR to the Federal consumer behavior, "shopping cart" and consumer spectrum have changed.

The first part briefly outlines the importance of supply and consumption in the economic structure of the former GDR and how the relationship of the SED leadership to the consumption needs, wishes and interests of the GDR population has changed historically, but without any gaps in supply and significant deficits to be able to eliminate in private consumption. Using four focal points (food consumption of the GDR population, supply of durable technical consumer goods, savings, stress in the leisure sector due to gaps in supply), the consequences of inadequate, centrally planned and controlled consumption in the GDR are shown.

The second part deals with statistically demonstrable changes in the consumption behavior of the citizens of the new federal states. The following basic premise is assumed: For the vast majority of East Germans, since the Economic, Monetary and Social Union and the GDR's accession to the Federal Republic, consumption and income relationships have been among the most positive moments in the process of transformation for society as a whole. For all economic and social problems that are still to be solved in the new federal states, material prosperity and the material living conditions associated with it have noticeably and statistically understandable improvements for the vast majority of East German citizens.

The lasting influence on the general prosperity and material living conditions of former GDR citizens in the process of converting the entire economic and social fabric of the GDR is essentially attributed to three components:

- direct access to the western consumer market and direct availability via the range of goods;
- Conversion of private accounts based on DM with the introduction of the monetary system of the Federal Republic;
- completely changed price structures and relations between consumer goods.

In this context, the analysis deals with the "catching up" buying behavior of East German households on the basis of the increase in nominal net working income, with consumer spending and its structure, with the current level of equipment of durable consumer goods and finally refers to some specific characteristics of the development of East German living standards.

The basic idea is to draw attention to the fact that the consumption behavior of citizens in the new federal states ranges between the subsequent satisfaction of basic consumption needs and increasing adaptation to West German consumption standards.