



**Fritz**  
multi - cool - tural

Studentenwerk Dresden



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*"The international dorm is a place where I can learn about various cultures. The great thing about FRITZ? Everything is under one roof! Housemates from all over the world open up about their home countries, we chat back and forth and cook all different sorts of foods together. I even got to know some new music and fashion! To me, it is all very inspiring!"*





# LOOKING BACK

## How it all began / The idea

### May 2013

May 2013: The annual student housing conference is in Bremen this year, as we listen with interest to a Finnish colleague's presentation:

*In Helsinki at the local HOAS (Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region, www.hoaslab.fi), it has always been the arrangement that all foreign exchange students live together in a common residence hall. But the lack of order, cleanliness, and conscientious handling of residence hall inventory resulted in a lessened sense of well-being there.*

*Since 2012, the building has operated under the motto "smarter living". The approach focused not on extensive renovation, since good communication is more important to the students.*

*About more than just design, "smarter living" means new concepts for improved student housing.*

*All hallways and common spaces received a makeover with a friendly new look. The entrance areas now feature floor-to-ceiling chalkboards where residents can post notes as well as a larger-than-life map of Helsinki for filling in with tips. The walls are now fitted with suggestions for smarter living in the form of pictograms that focus more on what students may do than what is forbidden. Tutors are available to help out at any time and there is a Facebook group for daily ex-*

*change, complaints, and recommendations. Newcomers receive a "first aid kit" with helpful information, a vegetarian meal, and bathroom articles. The highlight for all residents, regardless of their home continent, are the two saunas.*

*All these innovations turned the building into a popular student residence hall whose concept met with international praise.*

That was it!

This was the collection of ideas that filled in the details in the rough draft we had made in Dresden a few short weeks ago.

It was exactly what we wanted (except the sauna).

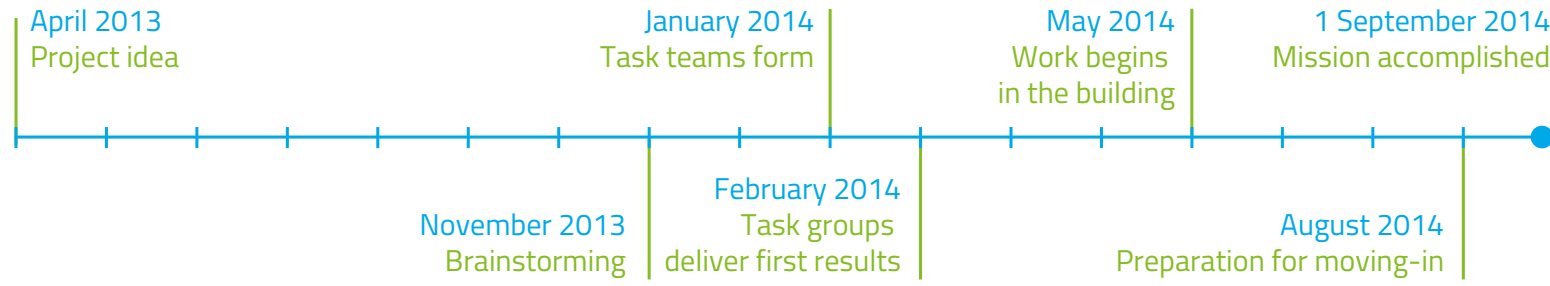
We had already devoted some time at the outset of 2013 to the topic "How can short-term students live best?" Our International Guest House, which operates

rather like a hotel, is ideal for stays of up to four months. But every winter semester sees some 300 short-term and foreign exchange students move into our residence halls for stays of only four to six months. The number hovers around 200 for the summer semester. Upon application, most of these students express the desire to live together with other exchange students. This arrangement would make it easier to study and spend their free time together. But the previous rental practice that saw exchange students distributed among all residence halls as free space would allow this desire. Due to the short length of stay, exchange students may not fully settle in to existing shared flats. The lack of sufficiently large common spaces in most buildings means that exchange students tend to meet in the kitchens of their shared flats, rooms that were often too small for such gatherings. It is understandable that exchange students wish to use their rela-

tively short stay in Dresden in an intense and effective way, as relates both to their studies as well as student life. But staffing and service in our residence halls are aligned more to the needs of long-term rental periods. So, to meet the needs of short-term students, we need a short-term residence hall. The example of our Finnish colleagues demonstrated that it can be accomplished with little money and excellent results.

### November 2013

In November 2013, 20 staff members from our Student Housing and International Affairs divisions met to brainstorm on the basic questions we would have to address. What needs will future residents have, what are our needs as Studentenwerk Dresden, and what challenges are there to face?





January 2014

As a result of the November 2013 meeting, we form four teams of five members to focus on:

- Rental
- Management
- Construction / Technology and
- Networks

The teams worked out approaches to meeting challenges as well as a task catalog, which ranged from creating a rental concept and numerous renovation jobs and acquisitions to exchanging with our Finnish colleagues on our experiences (*this point remains open today*).



## The residence hall

Soon after the brainstorming, we opt for the student residence hall at Fritz-Löffler-Straße 16. The building capacity boasts 124 rooms where the concept could be realized. Close to TU and HTW, the location is also in close proximity to downtown and Dresden Central Station.

The student residence hall at Fritz-Löffler-Straße 16 was built in the 1950s – back then the street was called Reichstraße and briefly thereafter the address was Juri-Gagarin-Straße 18. Drawing to some degree on Dresden's rich Baroque history, the architecture reflects the socialist classicism with which much of the city of Dresden was rebuilt after WWII. In four-bed rooms, the residence hall, known for many years as "Gag18" until the end of the GDR, offered space for up to 664 students.

After reunification and the reestablishment of Studentenwerk Dresden in 1991, one half of the building housed the Studenten-

werk office. The other half is still used as a residence hall, but only single rooms.

The structure remains to today in its original form. Due to a total absence of extensive renovations, it still maintains its 1950s charm. But the building was in bad need of smaller renovation jobs in many areas.

The rooms, with their some 18 m<sup>2</sup>, are pleasantly sized and furnished with the basics.

Each hallway has 26 rooms that all share a common kitchen, two wash / shower rooms, and toilets. It is a living arrangement that has long gone out of high demand. The great advantage of the building are the so-called "learning rooms" on each floor, hitherto largely unused, that offer space for community activities.

The kitchens and bathrooms are simple and economically furnished.

The basement housed the student club "GAG 18" for 40 years. In the 1990s, it was a staple of the local goth and wave scene.

## Realization

May to August 2014

And now the work began. The mission is clear: Without any additional finances, we have to "freshen up" the residence hall for a more comfortable atmosphere, space for community activities, and more service. Our ambitious goal is to be ready for the first residents to move in in September 2014. But the limited budget resulted in our decision to implement our plan slowly. Not everything will already be perfect in September; instead our plan will proceed step-by-step in a living, growing project. The upside to this new gradual approach is that it affords us more space for creativity, individual initiative, and unconventional solutions. An atmosphere of enthusiasm and fun can't be overlooked from the very beginning and drives us on in our work.

This prevents the catalog of tasks, that is growing greater by the day, from overwhelming us. There are over 60 tasks in this building alone, ranging from refurbishing and repairs to painting, decluttering, replacements, and new acquisitions.

The foyer shows the most visible changes in the beginning. Our large-scale welcome/world map graffiti depicts even the smallest islands that we carefully painted on the wall. A guide system – based on the pictograms in Studentenwerk's corporate design concept – is put in place throughout the building.

The bathrooms and kitchens undergo renovation. We also install additional helpful extras, such as shelves and racks, ourselves. The same holds true for the new



curtains and curtain brackets in the rooms. In order to furnish the bay area as a breakfast nook, our colleagues from the cafeterias provide us with appropriate furniture.

And our appeal to all Studentenwerk colleagues for help in arranging the common spaces is met with active support. Who has a used sofa in good condition to donate? Bring it over! Who has books for our free take-a-book-leave-a-book library? We didn't go empty-handed!

We ask DSW for help in smartening up the long halls with pictures. DSW provides more than enough posters; all that is left for us to organize are frames.

The outer rooms to the washing machine and table tennis rooms in the basement need a little freshening up – we commission Spike e.V., a municipally supported youth club, to paint some large-scale graffiti on a small-scale budget.

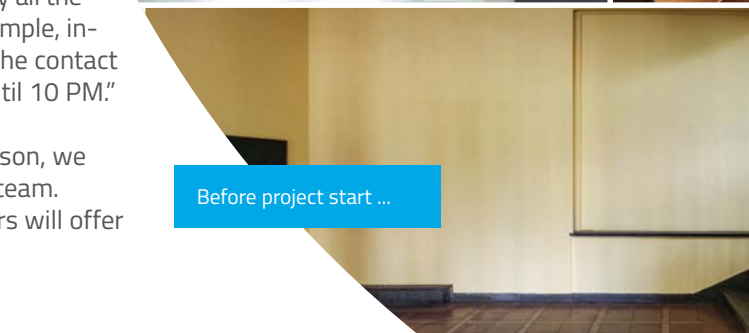
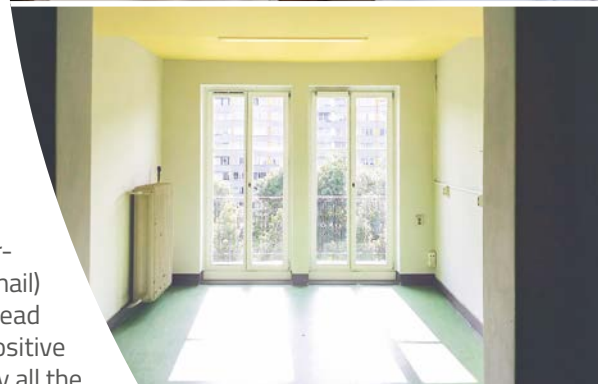
With active tenants living in the building, all these jobs didn't go unnoticed. We informed residents per email about our plans. Anyone who wants to stay may, but residents may also move to our other residence halls for this period. Free rooms are outfitted with new carpeting, new paint jobs, and curtains to make them cozy. The additional fee for short-term stays of 12 EUR per month, common in other residence halls, is replaced by a lump-sum service fee of 20 EUR. This fee covers bedding and cleaning supplies that are supplied upon moving in so students don't have to buy them extra for 45 EUR. Residents still have the option to buy dishes and cooking utensils for 25 EUR. We now require prospective residents to transfer a

reservation fee of 250 EUR before they leave their home country. This fee guarantees that the room will stay reserved, even if arrival in Dresden is delayed. And after moving in, the fee is put toward a deposit on the room.

We are committed to making moving out as easy as moving in. The tenant is not responsible for the final cleaning of the room, including the curtains. Studentenwerk takes care of this for a fee of 50 EUR which will be deducted from the tenant's deposit. All these additional services are worked into the lease conditions and are also governed using software.

We assign a contact person to manage this residence hall. They offer office hours, as does the facility manager, coordinate tutoring and events for residents as well as network with partners and service providers in the building. Unlike our other student residence halls, this contact person will have a more intense (email) contact with residents. But instead of using restrictive language, positive communication is used to convey all the rules for living together. For example, instead of "Avoid making noise", the contact person says, "You may party until 10 PM."

To help support the contact person, we successfully grow our tutoring team. Among other services, our tutors will offer



Before project start ...





... and after renovation

a pick-up service and "office" hours, including in the evening on site; tutors will also help residents organize and hold events in the building.

The contact person for the building also organized a monthly "round table" event. All staff members involved in the project will be included. It is an opportunity to discuss new ideas, determine how effective current measures are, and work constructively on updating the concept.

Independent to this project, a new space, StudentenwerksForum, is created in the building's extension. StudentenwerksForum is a 180-m<sup>2</sup> event space for official meetings and the like, but the space can also be used for larger events related to the project.

In June, the upper floor has been set up to allow us to present our project to our network partners the International Offices on site in the building, much to their delight.

The residence hall website remains unchanged. The online application process does not yet offer students the opportunity to select this housing project, but that function is in planning for applications in the coming winter semester.

And so we asked potential short-term tenants on a one-by-one basis about our project and asked if they would want to live there.

They did ...



Our 2014 tutor team





*"This project serves not only the house for students but helps to build intercultural relation. Students from many continents share their views in the domains for any topic (either academic or non-academic). Get to know the languages and foods of different countries. Finally the conclusion is that it is a place where the whole world lives with peace and calm."*



# A LOOK INSIDE

## Winter semester 2014/15

Our project is filling with life! In September and October, 62 international exchange students from 30 countries move in. Our tutors are bubbling over with ideas! We kick things off with a welcome evening and our now legendary crossword puzzle – a real crowd pleaser for all. Our residents

guess terms about their new temporary home in German; the hilarious lost-in-translation moments that ensue also serve as a great icebreaker.

They are available in a small on-site “office” to help out with mundane issues, answer requests for special types of food, where to shop, recreational activities, or where the washing machine is and how to use it. At the same time, it is a great opportunity for residents to network and be invited to semester activities.

Initially thought of as breakfast corners, the bay areas are also a nice spot to have dinner and the chalkboard paint-covered walls to leave notes to house mates are a popular feature.

“Seeing your new home with your own eyes” – this is the motto of this year’s building photo competition. Residents are asked to submit pictures that typify their stay in our international residence hall. A data bank we set up solely for the purpose lets participants rate photos. The photo

with the most likes wins and is printed as a postcard. This year’s winner is called “Pizza”. One floor came together to bake a pizza shaped in the initials of the residence hall, “FL 16”.



Crossword puzzle



Kick-off dinner



Kick-off foosball



Tutors' office



Bay area eats



Chalkboard wall for messages



Winning photo “Pizza” as postcard





Welcome to our dorm



Streetball challenge



New service point



Presentation



New kitchen



## Summer semester 2015

We successfully made it to the new semester! Before 64 new students moved in, we cleaned and arranged the rooms. With the seven students who extended their stay for another semester, there are now a total of 71 exchange students at Lö16.

Since April, students now have the possibility to borrow household devices from our new caretaker service point in the building's extension.

In addition to our welcome evening at the residence hall, this semester we are offering students the opportunity to attend a concert at the Hochschule für Musik (Dresden

College of Music). We satisfy our hunger for knowledge at the "Lange Nacht der Wissenschaft" (Long Night of Sciences) and break a sweat during our streetball challenge. Our events are met with lukewarm attendance – we chalk this up to the many other activities on offer in the summer in Dresden. Besides, by the end of the semester our residents have become a tight-knit community. The few remaining days are precious, so there is less need of outside events.

Dorms can be a creative playground – this is evidenced by a seminar led by Prof. Dr. Eng. Gesine Marquardt (TU Dresden, Chair of Social and Health Care Buildings and Design) where students planned a residence

hall with an inclusive approach. The students' work is presented ceremoniously in the building's extension in Studentenwerks-Forum.

Starting in June 2015, our short-term housing option is available via our online application. This lets students decide whether they want to take part in the project or not right from the beginning of the process.

It has been our plan from the beginning, and now we can finally begin: This summer, two of the five kitchens are renovated. Renovation of an occupied building is never ideal – even more so when residents are

only there for a short stay, since the improved living conditions only benefit later tenants. We chose July and August, since occupancy is then at its lowest point and offered residents a reduction in rent. Still, some expressed their dissatisfaction at the construction.

*"It is very good we get a wonderful spacious room in a low rent. Made new friends. Now it feels like home."*



## Winter semester 2015/16

We launch the semester for our 96 residents with tutor "office" hours, a meet-and-greet event in October, and a tutor-organized campus tour of the new and old faces of the TU campus. After decorating the Christmas tree together, we celebrate Christmas at the International Coffee Hour. For about two weeks at the end of the year, the artist Ella Becker is at work in the building. Throughout the stairwell, she visually refreshes its unrenovated, partially

repaired state in an artistic way. We host a vernissage to present this art project in January.

It seems our short-term students tend to pack very lightly, leaving even dish towels behind at home. It takes little imagination to guess how many paper towels are used in the building. And so for St. Nick's Day, our tutors leave behind, at every door, a present of a chocolate Santa and a dish towel.

In keeping with the overall spirit of the project to facilitate creativity, a Studentenwerk staff member designs pictograms for use in the building's kitchens, bathrooms, and common spaces. The design is now in use in other student residence halls and indicate the proper separation of waste, the location of the washing machine room, and how to use the stove in a hygienic fashion.

Our project has evolved into a working residential concept. It is time to find a name for it. What could be more in keeping with the spirit of the project than to involve the residents themselves in this process. And presently we strike on a slogan that couldn't represent the building and our idea itself any better: "Fritz – multi-cool-tural". We have our wordmark, but it will be sometime until we find a fitting logo to go with it ...



Christmas tree decorated by all



Artist Ella Becker's work in the stairwell



St. Nick visits our dorm



Welcome crossword puzzle



New pictograms

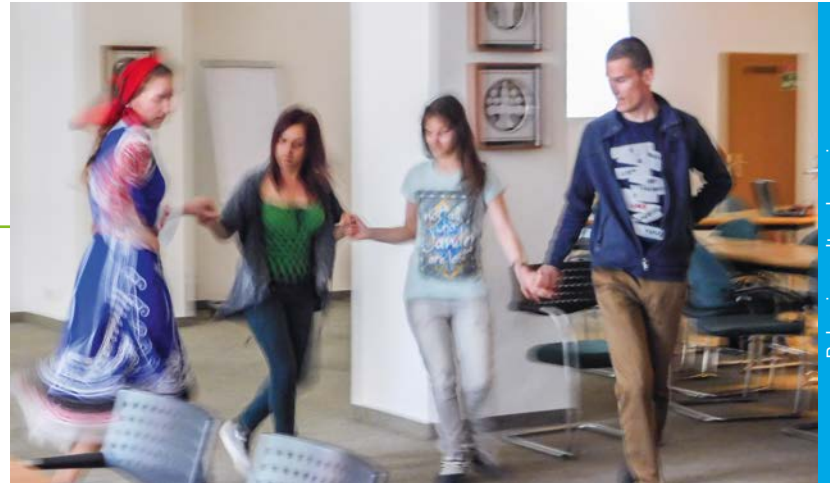


New building slogan





Office hour sign



Bulgarian cultural evening



Cooking party on three floors



## Summer semester 2016

The number of short-term tenants in the building climbs with each new semester. This year, we welcome 94 residents from 25 countries. After our welcome evening and a "city street challenge" through Dresden, our tutors host a Bulgarian cultural evening. This is a chance to get to know a country's flavors and customs while

learning other interesting facts about its culture and people – a true mainstay among Studentenwerk events.

During the summer months, we renovate the remaining three kitchens. We learned from our experiences the previous year and brainstorm on creative solutions at

this year's round table. Free food for a farewell kitchen party across three floors help placate the annoyance of our residents at the construction noise. But it still takes the distribution of a 20 EUR meal card for the cafeteria to fully appease our residents after they file a joint complaint.

*"They are so gentle and helpful whenever we need something to ask, they just won't hesitate to do so."*



## Winter semester 2016/17

Now the fourth change of semesters is successfully behind us; 105 new residents have moved in and on each floor the new kitchens are resplendent in their freshly painted red.

Being slightly too mobile, the cafeteria furniture in the bay areas have a tendency to wander into private rooms, so joint meals have been taking place in the common spaces with increasing frequency. Without further ado, we install fixed tables and benches in the bay areas – now these

spaces are guaranteed to offer a great spot for residents to mingle.

30 October is Russia day. Our popular cultural evening event at StudentenwerksForum includes a quiz on Russia, tasty Russian food, and traditional dance and music.

We top off the year with a gingerbread contest: Each floor receives a starter set for building a gingerbread house. Now they compete to see who makes the best one. The event encourages communication

among residents, but there is no shortage to the fun they have doing it either. As a prize, the winning floor receives an authentic Dresden "Stollen" for all to share.

Our short-term tenants from China suggest that we celebrate Chinese New Year together. And so we celebrate the Year of the Red Rooster with many guests and delicious eats.

Starting in December, we begin employing our own cleaning personnel for our resi-

dence halls. It is the emphasis we place on cleanliness as well as the desire for closer cooperation with our own staff members in the building that inform this decision.



Fixed tables and benches in bay areas



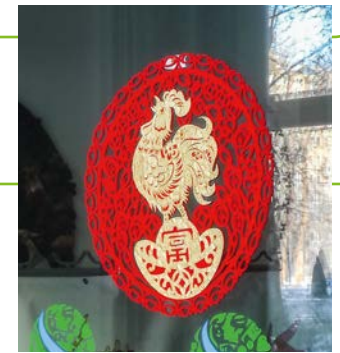
Russian cultural evening



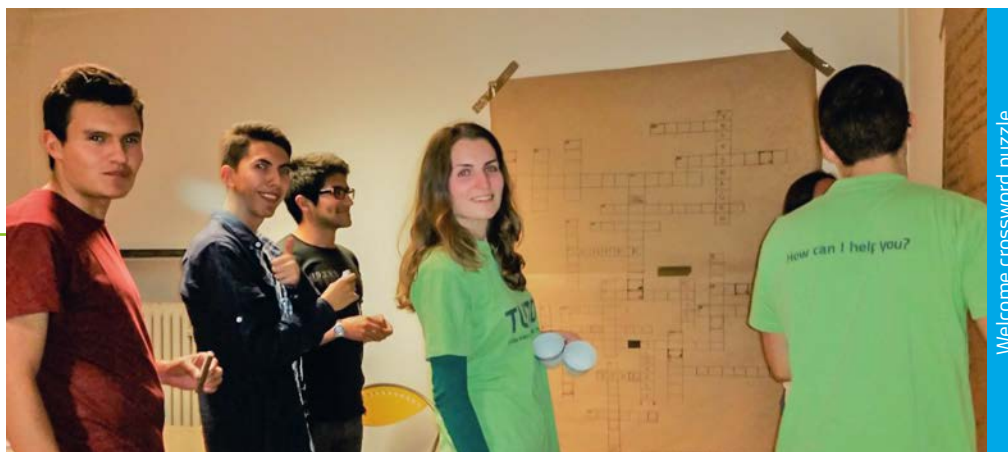
Gingerbread contest



Chinese New Year's celebration







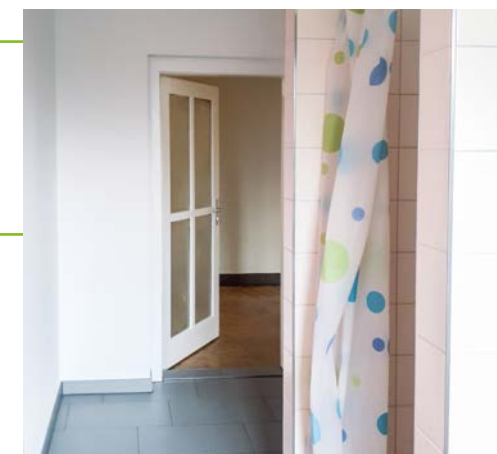
Welcome crossword puzzle



Student club Gag18's medieval festival



New wash rooms



## Summer semester 2017

Our new residents are met with our traditional crossword puzzle at the outset of the semester. All residents are cordially invited to the student club Gag18's annual medieval festival. Our tutors do their best to motivate residents to come – as well as to the International Coffee Hour at StudentenwerksForum, the "Lange Nacht

der Wissenschaft" (city of Dresden's Long Night of the Sciences), and to an exhibition opening the TU International Office is holding for their photo contest.

Not to break with our summer tradition, this semester there is a construction project underway again. Up to this point, each floor

has only two large wash rooms with two showers each that offer very little in the way of privacy. And so we reconstruct each wash room into two lockable bathrooms, each with a shower, toilet, and WC. We work one wash room at a time, so residents have access to one at all times. This along with a 25 EUR meal voucher for the

cafeteria helps keep annoyance with the construction site to a minimum.

*"This project offers wonderful all round quality of life."*



## Winter semester 2017/18

For the seventh time in a row, more than 100 new residents from 30 different countries move in – and there is no shortage of new ideas, especially at our round table meeting. Besides all the available digital channels, we think it prudent to inform new residents of the relevant contact persons in a more traditional way. So without further ado we design a welcome card and place one in each room along with other Studentenwerk giveaways.

One new idea that our tutors come up with is a meet-and-greet / karaoke event. And the result is an enjoyable and funny evening at a local karaoke bar.

In mid-October, our welcome evening at StudentenwerksForum takes place as a joint project with the International Coffee Hour.

The highlight of the event was our garbage-separating contest. Teams first receive instructions on proper separation of waste

and then separate garbage against the clock! It is amazing to see how strangers adapt into well-attuned teams – even if each team member speaks a different native language. The winners walk away with the new Studentenwerk thermos cups as a prize. Talk about sustainability made easy!

In addition, our tutors put on two short sketches to demonstrate the day-in-day-out experience at German public offices. The premiere is a resounding success.

November is cold and wet; the perfect weather for a film night. We watch "Willkommen bei den Hartmanns", a comedy about welcoming culture. The movie runs in German with English subtitles so no one is left behind. And of course, there is fresh popcorn for all.

Like every year, we pick a winner in our gingerbread contest.

This year's cultural evening takes us on a journey to Italy, with a small presentation / quiz, an "Italian in three minutes" crash course, and of course music and a sample of delicious Italian food.



Introducing our waste separation competition



Waste separation awards



Popcorn for movie night



Gingerbread competition



Italian cultural evening





## Summer semester 2018

Welcome to the new semester! In addition to a kick-off evening, the Gag18 club's medieval festival, and the International Coffee Hour, the focal point of this semester is the European Championship in football. With a little appropriate decoration and an old TV, we turn the residence hall into a public viewing locale.

The summer months we use to reconstruct the rest of the wash rooms. Now each floor boasts four modern, lockable bathrooms.

To further their reach, our tutors launch their own Instagram channel at the end of the semester.

*"I like most is that so many students stay here from different countries and as we share common rooms, kitchen areas, bathrooms, we always interact and get to know about each other's culture, living style and a lot more."*



## Winter semester 2018/19

It's great to see how residents themselves muster the initiative to hold shared events. For the second time already, our Indian residents organize a Diwali celebration for everyone. No one who attends can resist diving into Indian culture.

Our tutor team is always at least 12 strong. We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, who thankfully don't make themselves too scarce. The allowance of

50 EUR a month for tutors is surely not the only motivator; most of our tutors sign up as a matter of passion, having been abroad themselves in the past. They hold "office" hours, host welcome evenings, and also make themselves available when students arrive in Dresden in the evening or on week-ends. This personal welcome is always greatly appreciated – but due to the great number of arrivals, it is not always manageable on all days. And so we installed

three key safes in the foyer to take the load off of tutors for new arrivals.

At our fall 2019 round table, we decide to restrict residents' access to their own floor only. Before, they had enjoyed access to all floors in the building. On the one hand, this new arrangement accommodates our residents' need for safety. But it is also a measure to knock down the countless external partyers in the building. It is a

decision we take with mixed feelings; after all, it will result in a loss of the building's hitherto open atmosphere that had greatly contributed to sociability amongst residents.

Good things come to those who wait: At the end of the semester, our slogan, "Fritz – multi-cool-tural", finally gets paired with a fitting logo!



Diwali



### Lost? We can help!

Und? Hast du schon an alles Wichtige gedacht?

- Anmeldung im Einwohnermeldeamt
- Eröffnung eines Bankkontos
- Abschluss einer Krankenversicherung

Falls du dabei oder bei einem anderen Problem Hilfe benötigst, dann helfen wir dir gerne dabei!

Melde dich bei uns: [tutoren@study-dresden.de](mailto:tutoren@study-dresden.de)



Tutor flyer



Our logo in the foyer

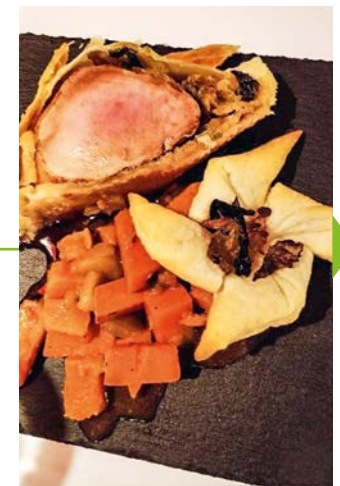




Kick-off event at student club Aquarium



Running Dinner



## Summer semester 2019

For this year's semester kick-off event, our tutors invite residents to the student club Aquarium. We talk, we dance, party-goers can mark their country of origin on a large map of the world. We dub the event our International Get-Together.

Our tutors also come up with the genius idea of a "Running Dinner". They invite residents to take a culinary tour of Dresden one evening. But the special thing is: Each course (appetizer, entrée, dessert) is eaten in a different shared flat. Each team of two

prepares a course for themselves and four others. It is a wonderful opportunity to discover culinary treats and come into contact with interesting new people. Besides that, the smorgasbord of international food is to die for!

*"Better opportunity to get new friends with new cultures. Got to know about new foods and culture from all over the europe."*



## Winter semester 2019/20

We start our sixth year of the Fritz building with 111 new tenants from 32 countries. Many of our new residents arrive on the weekend; with the 12 newly installed key safes in the foyer this is not a problem.

Our International Get-Together at Club Aquarium is a popular event where many tasty drinks are enjoyed. Residents have

the opportunity to take part in our International Coffee Hour, once a month at StudentenwerksForum. Our tutors inform the residents of all planned activities via email, flyers, posters, and social media.

After being met with resounding success in the spring, our "Running Dinner" event enters its second round. The great number

of attendants almost meets the event's capacity. Cries to repeat the after-dinner party at Studentenhaus TUSCULUM are especially loud. After the winning cooks are celebrated and the most original team photo selected, it is an opportunity to dance off all those Running Dinner calories!

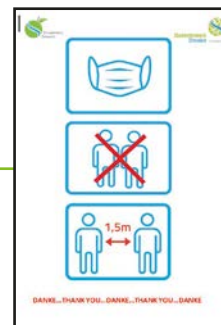


New key safes





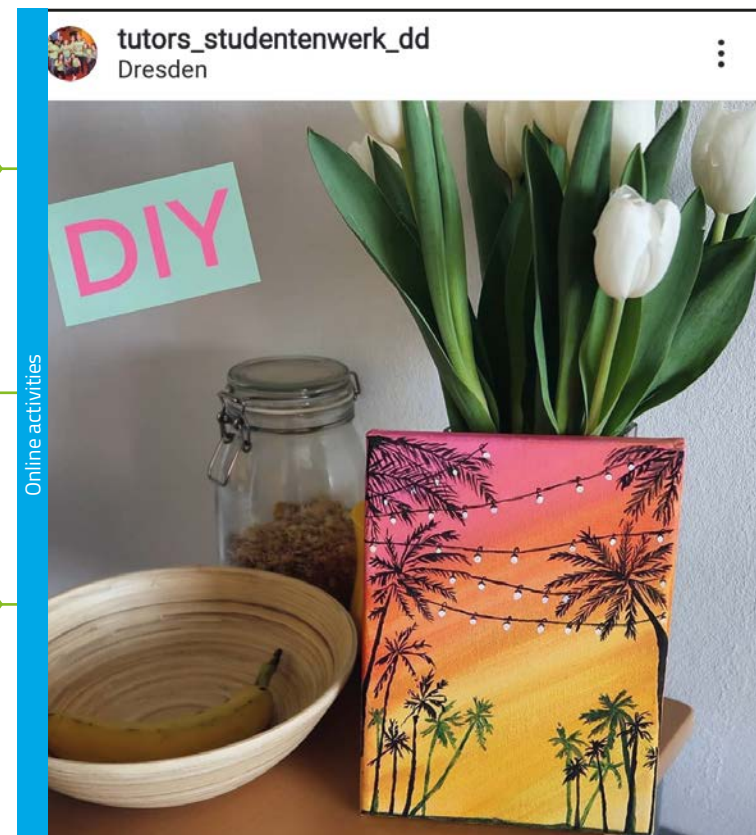
*"Service staff is awesome, regular and very helpful. Tutors are very nice, always interested about how I am settling into the dorm as an international student, which is very comforting and I must say events organized by the tutors were fantastic. I really appreciate their efforts and thankful to them for making us more comfortable here. Thanks to everyone guys."*



Open air yoga



Hiking in Swiss Saxony



Online activities

## Summer semester 2020

What a crazy time!

The novel coronavirus holds the whole world in suspense.

Lockdown in Dresden starting in March.

The exchange students planned for the Fritz building can't even arrive in Dresden or abruptly cancel their stay from one day to the next.

And on the other hand, 23 other residents can't return to their home countries. Some of them have to wait for months for a return flight.

More than half the rooms in the Fritz building are abandoned.

For the first time, the semester is fully online – all community activities and communications are fully digital.

As soon as outdoor activities are again permitted, our tutors host a hiking tour in Swiss Saxony in June. After the long online phase, it is a welcome diversion, as is our open-air yoga in July.

*"Also wanna say great thanks to Mrs Cimander for her attitude to students and help with all questions! She was my support there and it's very important for me as an exchange student from other country."*



*"I think it is good place for living – the building is sufficiently staffed and you can stay for a good price. I won't compare it with other Dresden student halls, which may be more ,beautiful', but the price is higher. Here, I have all I need to cook, sleep, shower, and just live. I can feel comfortable with my time and plans – that's enough, without extra perks."*





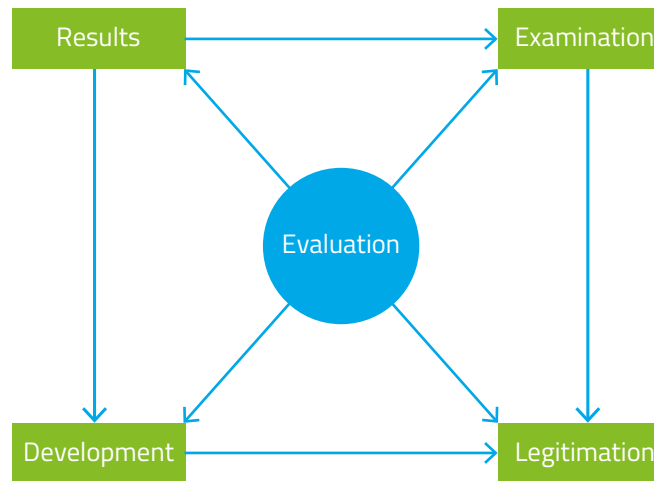
# EVALUATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

## From the idea to the project:

### Evaluating the residential concept

Evaluation research is a subfield of empirical social research whereby knowledge is generated empirically. Collected results can be used to evaluate measures taken in order to allow targeted decision-making (Häder 2019). Improving practical measures and related decision-making requires (Bortz / Döring 1995) that all involved actors accept the results of a given study and exhibit readiness to make changes. In the scientific context, one can distinguish between various models, forms, and concepts of evaluation (Stockmann / Meyer 2014).

Evaluation of our international residential concept was completed on behalf of Studentenwerk Dresden by research associates at TU Dresden. As an accompanying research program, the process evaluation began after conception of the residential project and its earliest beginnings in the winter semester of 2014/2015. Concomitant with the concept and future-oriented, the program sought to assess the mood of residents on one hand while simultaneously to improve the concept itself through evaluating the results and related discussion. The Studentenwerk Dresden Student Housing Division was actively and openly involved through participatory evaluation. After forming a control group, in particular at the outset we focused on the background of the program, among other our motives for introducing the residential concept and our related ideas, including what we believed could be achieved by having international students live together. Meetings were held periodically for mutual exchange, evaluating the results, and for setting interim goals. So-called optimization of program control (Stockmann / Meyer 2014: 80) seeks to increase both the effectiveness and efficiency of the residential concept in order to ensure the highest possible satisfaction of international exchange students with their stay in the residence hall.



Our initial motivation in planning the evaluation was the key question as to the project's benefit. Together, we drew up the following sub-questions:

- Why did you decide to stay in a student residence hall?
- How do you appraise the furnishings, the cleanliness, the rooms, the kitchen, the bathroom, the common spaces in the residence hall?
- How do you appraise the Studentenwerk Dresden staff?
- How do you evaluate the programs/events of Studentenwerk Dresden?
- What do you like in particular / What is missing in particular?

The members of the control group opted to use an online questionnaire for collecting data in order to reach the highest possible number of students and to enable systematic repetition of the survey (Kallus 2016). We determined the

### Evaluation research on the Fritz residential concept

- External through research associates at TU Dresden (Dr. Annett Kupfer and Dipl. sociology graduate Romy Simon)
- Accompanying research (formative)
- Participatory evaluation, with concept provider involved

### Range of topics

Introductory questions on the decision for the residence hall and its concept

Furnishings & appraisal of the residence hall / its cleanliness

Programs / events of Studentenwerk Dresden and appraisal thereof, evaluation of our office hours as well as issues experienced with various staff groups

Networking with other students with a focus on contacts made among students and their appraisal of said relationships

Expectations

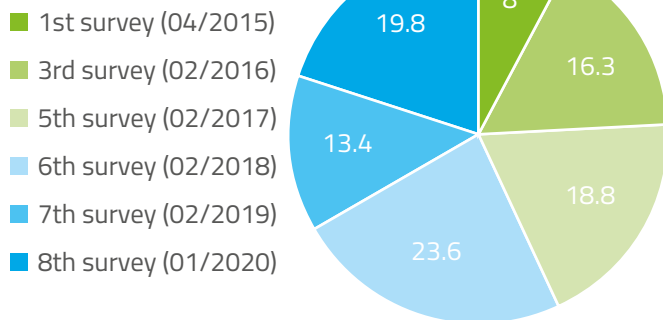
Open questions related to positive but also negative aspects of the concept

Socio-demographic factors



The questionnaire was carried out a total of eight times since 2015. The first survey was retrospective, i. e. students had already returned to their home countries and responded from there to our questionnaire. From the second time on, the survey has taken place at the end of the semester. In the first two years, we evaluated both the summer and winter semesters; but starting in the fifth year, we only looked at the winter semester. The following presentation of the results includes data from winter semester surveys, under exclusion of the summer semester surveys as the presence of kitchen renovation works may have a distorting effect on the results. The following graphic shows the distribution of respondents per questionnaire in the surveys conducted in the winter semester.

#### Distribution of respondents

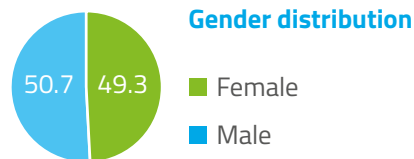


In winter semester 2018/2019, the percentage of foreign students at German universities was at its highest since 2003/2004 with 13.8% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019). This result demonstrates that more and more foreign students are taking advantage of the opportunity to continue or start a degree program abroad. One can differentiate between students who study abroad for a short period (usually one semester) and students who commence and complete a degree program abroad. Pollock and Ripmeester (2013) make the following three assessments based on the evaluation of three studies: "International exchange students will presumably attempt to make

the most of their time and meet as many people of various nationalities as possible" (p. 76; translated from German). Degree-program students, on the other hand, have to meet the same workload as their German classmates. These differences in attitude toward a student's course of study may also be noticeable in their lifestyle in a residence hall. In the case of Erasmus students, an increased amount of partying in particular can be observed.

### "Hosting the whole world" – A glance at our sample and reasons for the residence hall

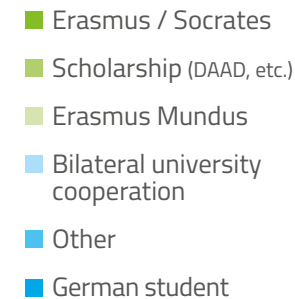
A glance at the socio-demographic factors indicated by respondents at the end of the questionnaire shows that the average age of respondents is 23.1 years of age, whereby the youngest student was 19 and the oldest 36 years of age.



Our project team thought it interesting to gather data on our residents' type of housing prior to their stay in Dresden. There are some notable differences on this point. The sixth round of surveys showed that 43.8% of students indicated living in a residence hall, while in the seventh round of surveys 50% of respondents reported living with their parents prior to their stay. This is interesting insofar as previous experiences in student housing will influence the respondents' horizon for making comparisons. Longitudinal analysis of the eighth round of surveys shows that the majority of

respondents had lived in their own apartment prior to their stay. Slightly more than three quarters of respondents came to Dresden as Erasmus students or on a scholarship. Respondents came from European countries (Czech Republic, Poland, France, Hungary, Italy, etc.) and non-European countries (China, India, Argentina, Mexico, Korea, etc.) which reveals a wide array of various sociocultural backgrounds that invariably influence life in our student residence hall.

#### Study program



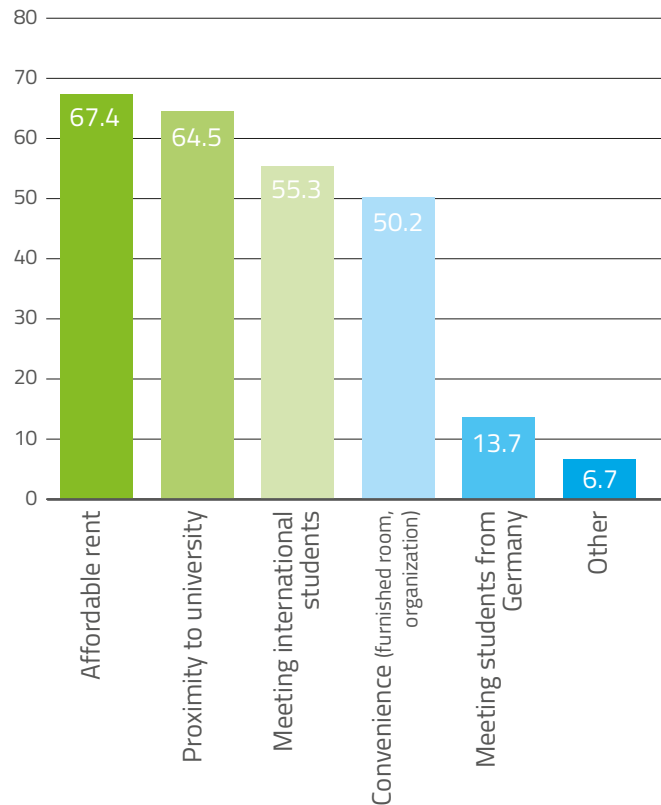
Our introductory questions sought to incite respondents' interest in the survey itself and to ensure a pleasant atmosphere for the interview (Peterson 2014). We therefore began by asking respondents for their reasons for choosing to live in a student residence hall in general. In all rounds of surveys, the top answers were the affordable cost of rent as well as proximity to the university. These were the most common answers in the winter semester 2019/2020 survey. This corresponds with the results of the 21st survey conducted by the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW – German National Student Services) wherein proximity to the university and affordable rent were given the greatest importance by respondents (Middendorff et al. 2017). More than half of residents reported preferring meeting international students and the comparatively low effort, as opposed to searching for a room in a shared flat, of renting a room in a student residence



hall. In the last four rounds of surveys, proximity to the university was an important reason for opting to live in the Fritz residence hall. In the last survey, it is a striking result that respondents' desire to meet German students was at its lowest.

The Studentenwerk Dresden homepage offers a crucial pathway for gathering information on the residential concept – some 60% of respondents reported learning about our short-term stay offer at an international residence hall in this way. This value rose continually from 2015 to 2020. In addition, a longitudinal view reveals that the importance of acquaintances and classmates as sources of information on the short-term residence program increased. It can be assumed that exchange students coming to Germany rely on reports and recommendations of their classmates when it comes to looking for accommodation; a respondent in the sixth round of surveys reports: "Actually, the previous students suggested to stay in FL16 and I was wondered why so many people from different countries are saying the same". The third question related to a respondent's reasons for choosing the international residential concept.

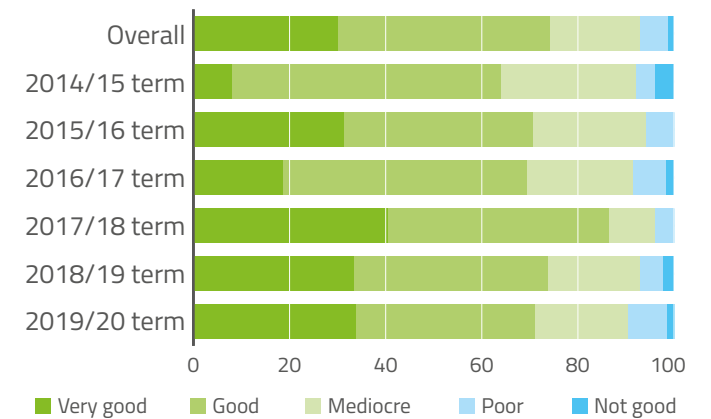
### Why opt for an international residence concept



### Infrastructure and cleanliness of the premises

One important aspect the questionnaire revealed was how respondents evaluate the facilities of the residence hall itself. Closer examination of respondents sense of wellbeing in the residence hall reveals the following:

#### Feel-good factor



The most recent three rounds of surveys indicate a very positive development. The 21st survey conducted by the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW – German National Student Services) (Apolinarski / Brandt 2018) focused on respondents satisfaction with their accommodation; three-fifths of exchange students living in student residence halls reported being (very) satisfied with their experience. Comparison of both values sheds a very positive light on our Fritz residential concept.

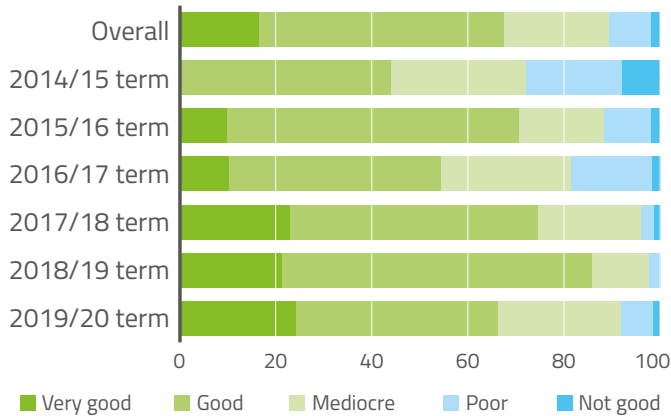




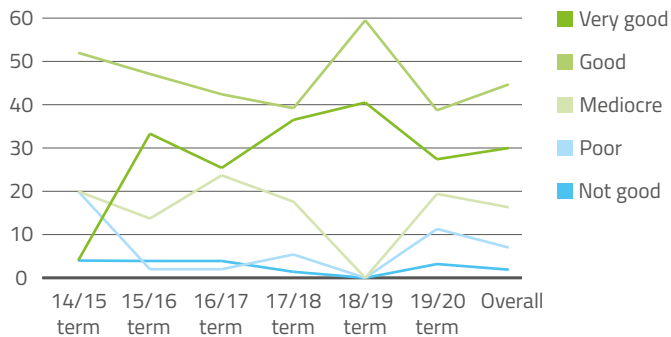
### Residence hall overall

The facilities and cleanliness of the student residence hall were evaluated as follows:

#### Residence hall facilities



#### Residence hall cleanliness



### Rooms

88.2% of respondents assessed the room furnishings as “very good” / “good”, which indicates a high level of satisfaction. The value remains this high throughout the various rounds of surveys.

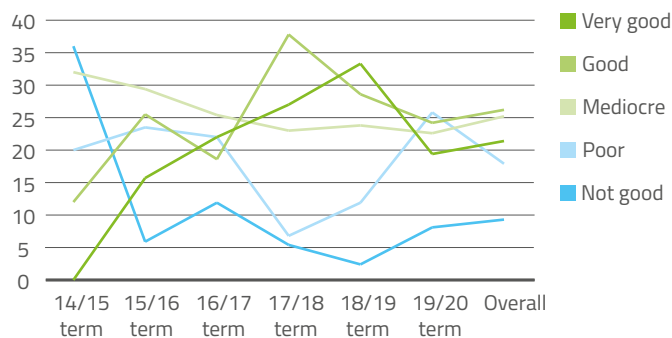
The open questions reveal that the large rooms met with especially positive evaluation. Throughout the period covered by our surveys, 86.5% of respondents were (very) satisfied with the cleanliness of their room.

#### Kitchen

*“The shared kitchen is very good, because we can meet up with people there and form friendships. That allowed us to meet everyone on our floor, and that is very good!”*  
(2nd survey)

Approximately half (50.4%) of respondents reported that the kitchen furnishings were “very good” / “good”. Throughout the period covered by our surveys, positive evaluations increased, which is likely a result of the kitchen renovations.

#### Kitchen cleanliness



Worse evaluations of the kitchens and bathrooms were taken as grounds to renovate these rooms. The kitchens in the building were fully renovated in the summers of 2015 and 2016. Residents received either a reduction in rent or meal cards for the cafeteria as compensation

for this period of renovation.

*“I missed my own bathroom or at least one bathroom for 2 – 4 people, not for the whole floor.”* (1st survey)

Renovation of the bathrooms also resulted in a positive effect on their overall evaluation by respondents. In the summer semester of 2017, the five shower rooms were separated to make ten shower rooms. To that effect, the gradual process of the evaluation also showed that the cleaning team was changed out. Therefore, the improved evaluations may be due to the renovations in combination with the new custodial staff.

In the most current survey, some two-thirds of respondents evaluated the furnishings as “very good” / “good”. But overall slightly more than one-fourth evaluated the furnishings as “poor” / “good”. As far as cleanliness is concerned, the early surveys reveal poorer values as the most recent three.

*“The common rooms are a great plus for meeting friends and doing various activities.”*  
(7th survey)

One special feature of our residence hall are the common rooms on each floor of the building. Such spaces can assume great importance for networking purposes among students in the form of informal and even chance

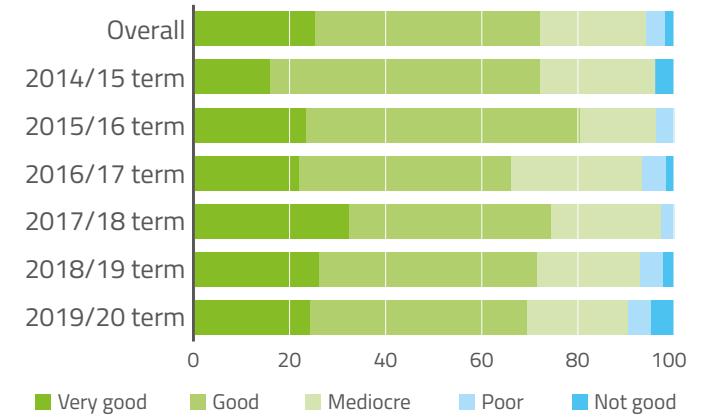




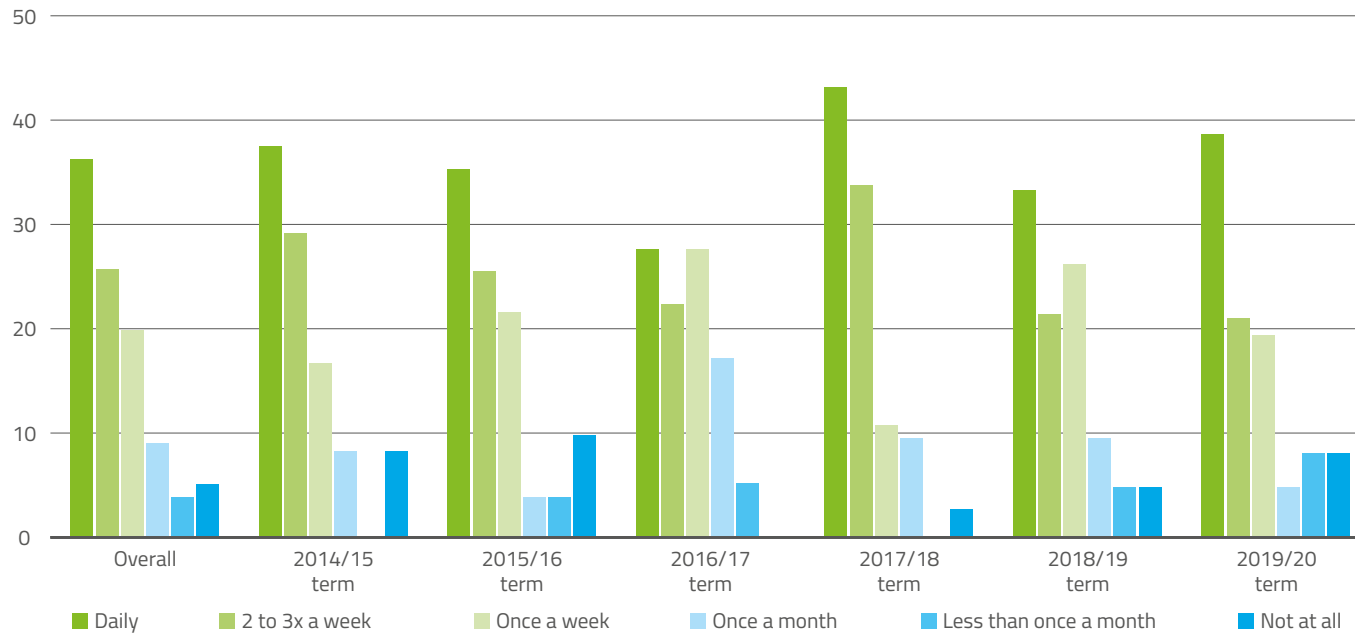
encounters. And so the information we gathered in our surveys are not surprising:

The common spaces in our residence hall are an important focal point of life in a student residence hall.

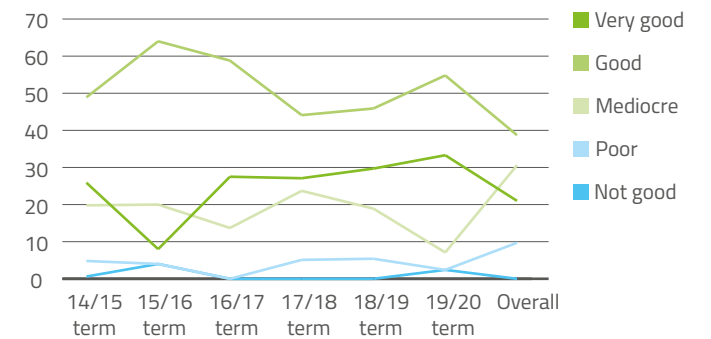
### Common rooms facilities



### Frequency of use of common rooms



### Common rooms cleanliness



## Offers and support within our residential concept

### Variety of opportunities

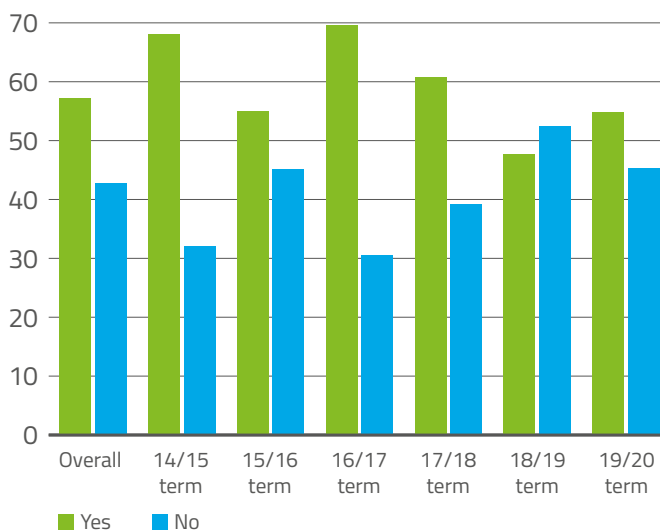
As already highlighted in the first part of this brochure, what makes our residential concept truly special is the wide range of offers for international students during their exchange semester in Dresden. One respondent described it as follows in the second survey:

*“For me, the support I received from Studentenwerk Dresden was of great importance for me, especially toward the beginning of my stay when everything was new and I needed advice ... After that, my stay went practically without hitch and I barely needed help from the Studentenwerk staff.”*

Our offers can be divided into those that are offered every semester, such as our welcome party and tutor “office” hours, and those that result from ideas arising from life in our residence hall or the needs of residents, such as our photo competition, the Chinese New Year’s celebration, or our Italian cultural evening. 57.2% of respondents reported having made use of at least one Studentenwerk Dresden offer.

Most popular among students are our welcome party, the tutor “office hours”, and the International Coffee Hour. The welcome party at the outset of each semester can take on an especially important break-the-ice function for students. Evaluation of our WOMIKO concept also showed that the event provided a first opportunity for students to meet and network (Kupfer/Simon/Wesenberg 2014).

### Use of Studentenwerk Dresden offers



Such offers bear great significance for mutual networking and exchange as well as aid for exchange students, as illustrated in this quote from a respondent in the second round of surveys:

*“I liked the events, the people and funny surprise for Nikolaus. Here you can find a lot of people from all the world. You can learn new cultures, new languages.”*

A review of the total list of events reveals a broad range of opportunities for students to network in a variety of contexts.



### Excerpt demonstrating our range of offers

Movie night

Russian cultural evening

Christmas party

Gingerbread contest

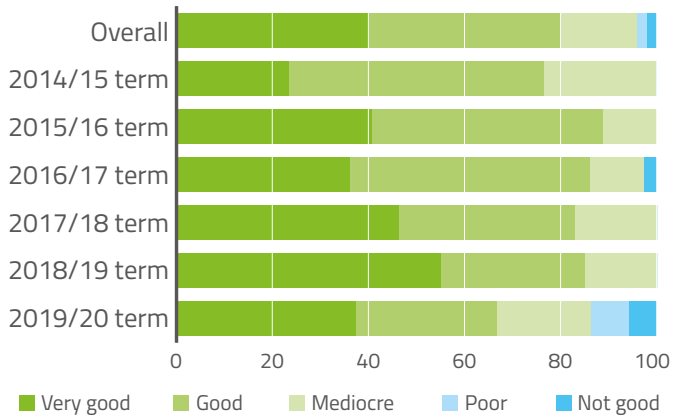
Hindu Festival of Lights (Diwali)

Running Dinner

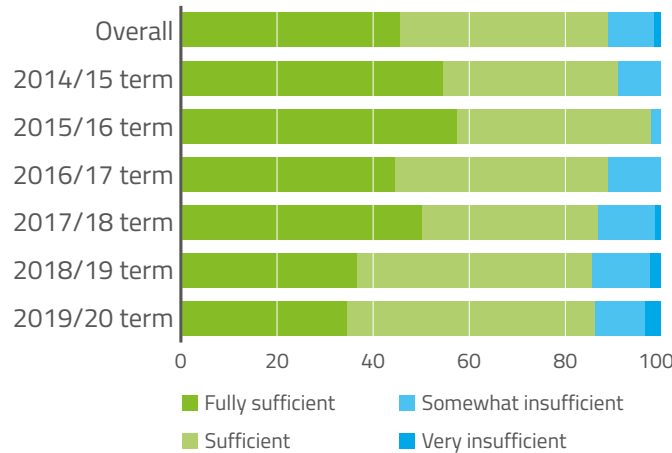
In addition to finding out which events were taken advantage of, our control was also interested in finding out how participants evaluated them. The following graphic shows the results.



### Decrease in offers



### Office hours of contact person sufficient



## Social networks in our international residence hall

Social relationships are a central prerequisite for giving and receiving social support (House 1987). It is especially important in student residence halls for students to be able to network, which simultaneously increases the chance for students of similar regional origin to meet (Zwengel 2012). In this way, social support can act as a preventive coping resource to help against stress factors. It can facilitate a sense of wellbeing and help deal with or even solve problems and crises (Laireiter 2009; Nestmann 2007; House 1987).

### Evaluation of support

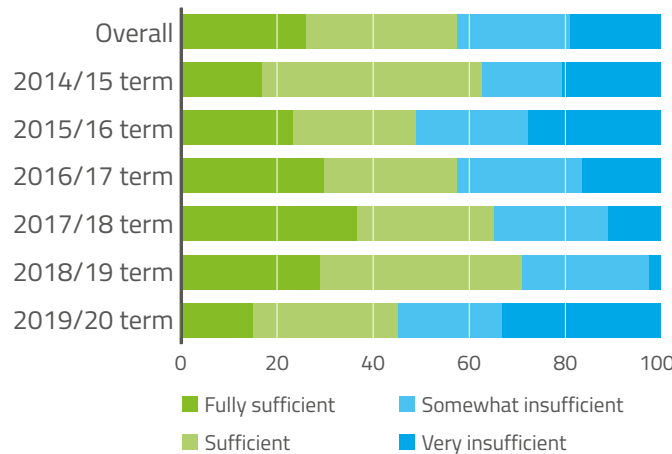
In order to detect any desire for improvement as relates to our support for exchange students, the survey focused on gathering data on how respondents evaluate Studentenwerk Dresden staff's efforts. We looked at three related aspects:

- Prior to arrival,
- Upon arrival, and
- During the stay.

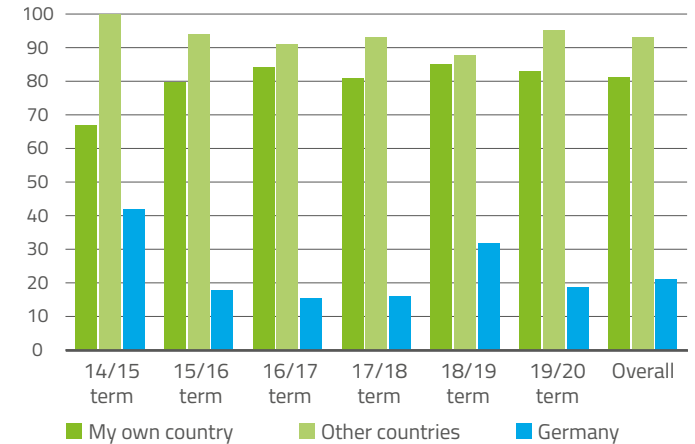
All eight rounds of surveys show a positive overall evaluation of Studentenwerk Dresden staff and tutors. The results showed that some 91% of respondents prior to arrival, 90.5% upon arrival, and 86.1% during their stay evaluated our support as "very good" or "good". Of the 287 respondents, only 2.7% indicated they found our efforts "poor" or "not good".

Office hours during which Studentenwerk staff members are available to answer questions and help with problems are of crucial benefit for students. There are some notable differences as relates to the office hours on offer by various Studentenwerk staff groups, as the following graphics shows.

### Office hours of contact person sufficient



### Meeting students from ...



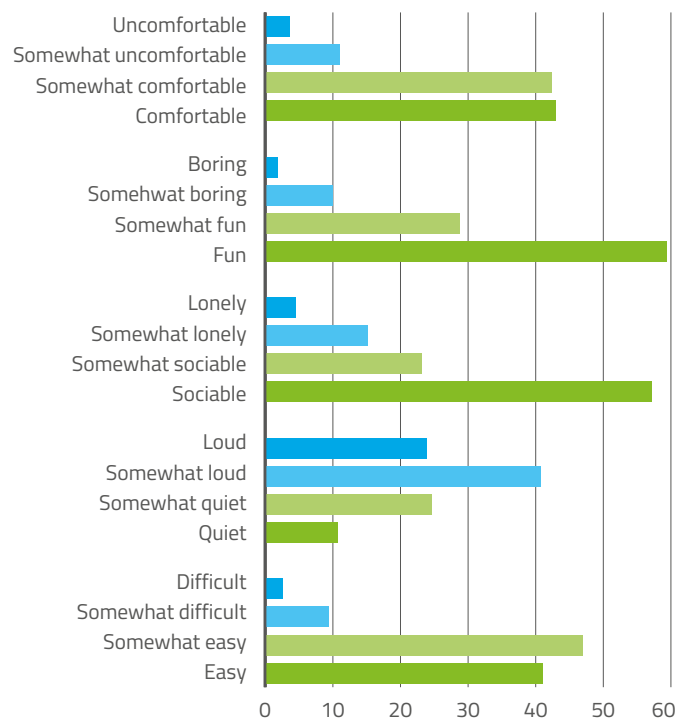
The graphic above reveals how residents network and exchange with each other. The value ascribed to meeting German students, one-third in the last-but-one survey, is relatively high compared with the three previous winter semesters. Viewed through the lens of Pollock's and Ripmeester's 2013 report, there are a number of notable commonalities. The authors note that Erasmus students

in particular spend more time with international students. One reason might be the language barrier on both sides.

In the overall view, relationships in the residence hall were evaluated positively: 86% of respondents evaluated them as “very good” or “good”. A comparative analysis reveals a higher ratio of “very good” responses in the last round of surveys – more than half of respondents answered this way.

Across all rounds of surveys, a strong majority of respondents evaluated life in our student residence hall as follows:

### My stay in the dorm was ...



This clearly demonstrates that fun-filled and gregarious student hall life goes hand in hand with loud volume.

## Praise and criticism –

### Affirmation and off to new pastures

Suggestions on designing a questionnaire recommend building it along a “curve of difficulty or excitement” (Pickel/Pickel 2018, p. 89; translated from German). After respondents received the more basic introductory questions, the open questions in the second third of the questionnaire aim to ascertain more about life in the residence hall. For this evaluation, the following open questions were of significance:

- “What do you like in particular about our international residential concept?”
- “What is missing in our international residential concept?” and
- “How do you like the idea of an international residence hall?”

These questions were included in the final third of the questionnaire. On average, some two-thirds of respondents responded in length to the open questions. Open questions thus help gather information as well as motivate respondents with a bent toward optimization (Porst 2014).

The 218 responses to the question of what students like in particular about our international residential concept relate overall to the four categories “Life in our residence hall”, “Residence hall”, “Studentenwerk Dresden”, and “General information”. Most students (N = 110) suggested of their own accord that meeting other international students was a positive aspect of their stay, also as it relates to the process of intercultural exchange. 13 respondents indicated that they especially liked the opportunity to help each other provided by the similar life situation. Regarding the residence hall, 32 of respondents found the common rooms, 25 the location, 24 the size of their room, and 30 the cleaning service especially good. Studentenwerk staff were

### In respondents’ own words: „What do you like in particular about our international residential concept?”

*“You can meet people from all over the world who are usually with Erasmus. This is very important, since we are all in the same situation (everyone has a lot of free time, everyone wants to travel, go out, etc.). If I had lived with full-time students, then our plans/ activities would have been different. That’s why it was important to me to live together with Erasmus students.” (3rd survey)*

*“We can make friends with students from the other countries and we can have fun together, get to know the other countries’ culture and have some activities. Also we can share delicious food.” (6th survey)*

*“The fact that you can easily make friends from all over the world. I also love having my own room and privacy, but a common space to hang out with the others.” (7th survey)*

explicitly mentioned by 18 students in a positive light. And eight students indicated that they found events organized by Studentenwerk positive. Networking among students in similar situations was evaluated as very positive.



### In respondents' own words: "What is missing in our international residential concept?"

*"Sadly, some students really didn't take care about cleanliness of the common areas and used to let them dirty after use." (1st survey)*

*"I noticed that students in exchange programs unfortunately aren't very keen on speaking German." (6th survey)*

*"Private bathroom and a bigger bed." (7th survey)*

Responses to the query as to what is missing in our international residential concept can be divided into five categories:

- "On student life in general",
- "On the project itself",
- "Infrastructure of the residence hall",
- "After moving out", and
- "General".

Most answers (N = 29) can be allotted to the first category due to the absence of German students to help improve respondents' German language skills. But a longitudinal analysis shows that this value has been decreasing since the sixth round of surveys – this may be due to word-of-mouth popularity of our residential concept in students' countries of origin. In addition, 13 residents raised the topic of absent family members and/or friends. As for the second category, six students stated that they would have liked more integrative activities, which shows that shared

activities have a high importance for residents. Other, in part isolated, answers related to the desire for joint sports events, more or less parties, a shared Christmas party, and a city tour. This list provided a great opportunity throughout the course of the project for us to cater to the desires of students and come up with our offer for subsequent semesters. As related to the third category on the infrastructure of the residence hall, some topics were raised which cannot be altered, such as the absence of a lift, no parking or sports field near the building, or the lack of insulation in the walls. But other topics were raised that represent addressable concerns. For example, in the third round of surveys, six students expressed the desire for improved bathroom furnishings. After renovation of the bathrooms, the topic was not raised again. As for the last category, "General", respondents mentioned the friends they made at the residence hall as well as the good janitorial service, which can be counted as positive aspects.

The third important open question on how the students like idea of an international residence hall was answered by 200 students. The responses can be divided into the following categories:

- "Positive aspects",
- "Negative aspects",
- "On the project", and
- "General".

80 students rated the project idea as good. Meeting other international students was explicitly mentioned by 25 respondents, and 10 students evaluated the concept as especially helpful for their outset abroad. 19 students described as poor that they missed the opportunity to meet German students and to speak German. As for the project itself, a total of five students indicated the desire to see more activities for German and foreign students together. In the category "General", there was a very mixed

### In respondents' own words: „How do you like the idea of an international residence hall?"

*"It's a good project but considering that we don't have contact with German people like in 'our daily lives here' would be interesting that the activities inside the residence were more frequent and oriented to the practice of the language." (3rd survey)*

*"I think, that it is very good. It is hard for international students to leave their home, their city, and to go to a new country with a new language and new people ... Living with others who are in the same situation be a very helpful support." (5th survey)*

*"It is quite idea all international students together. As we all have more or less same mindset as we share the same feeling of being far away from home. It helps us to get into the home like feeling and make friends quickly." (7th survey)*

distribution of a variety of topics, such as the desire for improved furnishings, the opportunity for extended stays, and the excessive volume in the building. A review of the evaluation by Studentenwerk staff reveals that there was an increase of parties involving persons from outside our

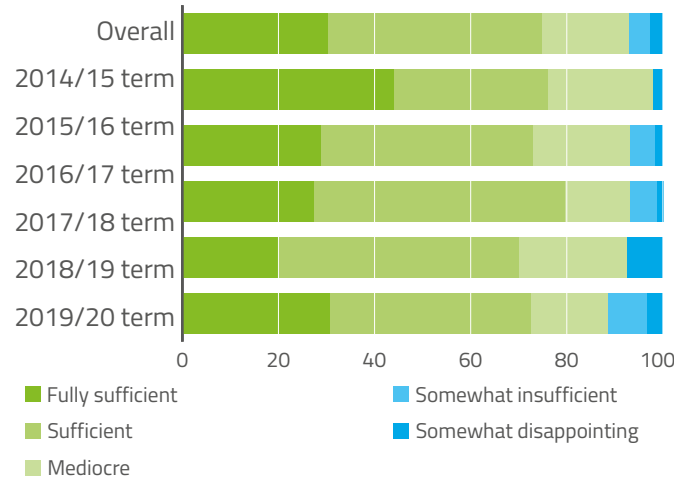
residence hall, which led to the necessity of keeping each individual floor locked. On the one hand, this aided in keeping volume and mess to a minimum. But locking the floors also impeded networking among residents.



## Conclusion and discussion

The positive evaluation of our residential concept becomes clear in the following graphic.

### Expectations of our residence hall



In the open questions, two respondents came to the following conclusion:

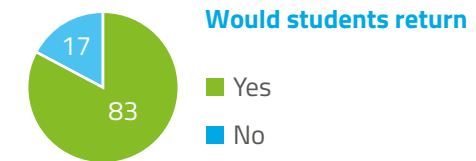
*"Very attractive, but at the same time, the concept eliminates the opportunity of speaking German a lot." (5th survey)*

*"I think it is a great project. I had a great time during my stay." (1st survey)*

This makes clear a central and intractable discrepancy: On the one hand, the concept enables students to live together with other similarly situated students in order to

aid each other in meeting the challenges of their studies. But on the other hand, this goes hand in hand with lessened contact with German students, a drawback that we attempt to diminish e.g. through the International Coffee Hour and other offers.

The final question put to respondents related to the repeated decision to live in our international residential concept was answered as follows:



Responses to both questions substantiate the success of the idea of a residence hall for international exchange students. Even where there is room for improvement, as evidenced in several responses, our residential concept orientated toward the needs of foreign students, has been met with great success. The fact that German students are missing to help aid in learning the language can be countered by expanding our range of joint activities between both groups of students. Moreover, a student's place of residence is but one aspect of student life among many. For instance, exchange students may network with German students at joint lectures, parties, sports activities, etc.

*"It was a great experience. This is the best dorm to know international student and to adopt the European culture. I really enjoyed the whole stay. I never feel lonely in that dorm. I really miss this dorm Fritz Löffler 16." (8th survey)*





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*"It's a really great idea, really interesting! I discovered a lot about different cultures and it gives me the opportunity to become friend with people all around the world. Also people in international dorm are alone in Germany so it allows to find some kind of a family in Germany. One of the best experience in my life, and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to do it and will never forget about it."*





# LOOKING FORWARD

## Project expansion

We can now look back at six successful years with our “Fritz”. The positive feedback of our tenants validate the concept, and it has been some time since we have been able to meet every application with a room at Fritz each semester. The numbers, too, speak for themselves: Up to 280 of the students who move in every semester stay for a maximum of six months. Then there are the additional 60 students each winter semester who stay up to ten months.

Our experience has shown that additional service would also be a great option for these tenants. With its 112 spots, our Fritz is nowhere near meeting the demand of incoming applications.

At our tried-and-true round table discussion, we therefore decided to expand our short-term residential concept.

## Selecting suitable residence halls

We first discussed which residence hall is best suited to implement the concept idea. Several residence halls come into question. The criteria for our decision included avoiding disturbances caused by the rapid turnover of tenants in existing shared flats; the feasibility of cleaning in kitchens, bathrooms, halls, and shared spaces; and ideally preventing vacancies. We eliminated heavily demanded WOMIKO buildings and residence halls without common spaces and a student club. Profitability and acceptable rent were additional points we considered.



Our discussion yielded the consensus that our concept for short-term tenants could be best expanded in the two residence halls at Budapester Straße 22 and 24.

- There are common spaces on each floor.
- The ground floor can be modified at low cost to install a welcoming office for the caretaker as well as common spaces for sports and cooking together. There is also space for a tutors’ office, who will work exclusively with tenants in these two buildings and help support the caretaker.
- The cleaning of halls and bathrooms already works well in parts of the Budapester Str. 22 residence hall and can be extended to both buildings.
- The shared flats of up to four residents per kitchen and bathroom are easy to manage and in high demand.
- The rooms, each with 11 sq m, are small and not popular among long-term tenants, but this is of less consequence for stays of short-term duration.
- The penthouse flats are ideal for letting to tutors.
- The Budapester Str. 22 residence hall is not a WOMIKO building; there is space to house all mechanical engineering students in the residence hall at Fritz-Löffler-Str. 12. So the Budapester Str. 24 residence hall can be used for short-term stays without causing any noticeable disruptions to the WOMIKO program.
- Both residence halls are in a desirable location to downtown as well as the TU and HTW campuses.
- The Budapester Str. 24 extension houses a student club that is interested in working with international students.
- And there are ample shopping facilities in the direct vicinity.

We are adopting the tried-and-true features from our Fritz rental contracts, such as the 20-EUR service charge and withholding 50 EUR from the deposit to make moving out easy.

Overall, the expanded project will boast more than 330 rooms for letting to short-term international students who stay in Dresden only four to ten months.





## Schedule

Our initial schedule allowed for full-scale rental of all rooms from as early as the 2020 summer semester. However, we couldn't put the whole plan into action since the necessary construction measures were more extensive than expected. (And there was also a lesser number of tenants in the 2020 summer semester due to the coronavirus pandemic.) At Budapest Str. 24, all the kitchens and floors in the hallways were modernized. The walls and steel furniture in the common areas got a fresh coat of paint and the rooms in both buildings were outfitted with shutters. Our team is slated to be expanded by one additional caretaker and a primary tutor by the end of the summer semester.

Starting winter semester 2020/2021, rooms will be rented out according to a new concept.

We are confident that these two new residence halls will soon house satisfied tenants who say,

*"Here you will not only experience Germany, you will experience the entire world!"*





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