

Information on the public broadcast fee ("Rundfunkgebühr")

In early 2013 a new law was passed on the funding of public broadcast in Germany, changing the laws on who has to pay the license fee ("Rundfunkgebühr")

- Everyone living in Germany **has** to pay the license fee. It doesn't matter whether you have a radio or a TV or not.
- The fee is 17.98 euros a month and has to be paid once per apartment.
- Every tenant who has a rental contract has to pay for his or her apartment.
- If there are several tenants in one apartment they can divide the fee and just pay once.

What this means for the student dorms:

- If the dorm is built with small apartments you may divide the fee.
- If the dorm has long hallway with single rooms each side every room is seen as an apartment.
- But if the hallway is closed to the stairway by a door then the closed floor can be one apartment. One apartment is defined as several rooms with common bathroom and kitchen, but it needs to be separated from the rest of the house.
- In this case you have the chance to pay the fee once and divide it among the tenants.

Problem: Not all of you have received a letter from the broadcast fee service by now, which has to do with the way tenants are processed. Right now, it looks like only new tenants (since October or November) are receiving their letters.

If you get a letter you have three options:

1. You register with the form. You will receive a payment number and have to pay the fee of 17.98 euros every month.
2. You find another tenant in your apartment who has already registered and has his own payment number. In this case you can tell the broadcast fee service that the fee for your apartment is already in payment. Tell them the payment number of the other tenant. Now you don't need to pay the fee yourself. Please don't forget to give your part of the fee to the other tenant.
3. You find other tenants in your apartment who also need to pay. But no one has registered until now. Together you have to decide which one of you registers for the broadcast fee payment. There is no rule for that, but it needs to be one of you. The registered tenant then has to pay the fee and collects the parts of the fee from other tenants.

Problem: You need to come to an agreement.

There will be tenants in your apartment may be exempt from the fee because they receive BAföG (financial support program usually for Germans only). They will not want to take part. You may find that some students in your apartment haven't received their letters. In theory they also have to pay but they might not want to. If there is no agreement amongst you you will have to go with option 1: You have to register and pay the whole fee.

Important: Many of you got the letters and did not take care of it. It is often said on campus: "Don't worry, ignore it". *This is not a good idea.*

In the last weeks lots of students received concrete demands for payment. The number of months since you moved in the flat is counted (they get the information from the city registration office). This time we have demands for payment from November to April with $6 \times 17.98 \text{ euros} = 107.88 \text{ euros}$.

The longer you wait the higher the amount due will be. You're going to have to pay the fee in the end anyway, it's the law.

In the moment it is only the total amount of the monthly payments. If you go on ignoring the demands you will get reminder letters with rising late fees. If the payment is still not made you may end up in court.

So look for partners in your apartment and try to divide the fee with the other tenants.

By the way: Student services once tried to pay the fee for all students. The idea was that every tenant would've had to pay one or two euros more with the rent. But this is not allowed by law. Every tenant has to pay. The landlord is not allowed to take the fee with the rent. That's why student services and the caretakers cannot help you here.

There is a rumor that if one of the tenants in an apartment receives BAföG that means no-one in the apartment has to pay — this is not true. The exemption is valid for his or her spouse but not for any of the other tenants.

This is where you can find more information:

Information of student services (English, good information):

<http://www.stw-thuringen.de/english/housing/broadcasting-fee/rundfunkbeitrag.html>

Website for license fee (German): <http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/>

Flyer with general information (English): https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/e1645/e2143/Informationsflyer_Buergerinnen_und_Buerger_englisch.pdf

Flyer for students (German): https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/e1645/e2450/Der_neue_Rundfunkbeitrag_Informationen_fuer_Studierende.pdf

Website with all flyers and forms (German, partly English, partly Turkish): https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/anmelden_und_aendern/buergerinnen_und_buerger/index_ger.html

We hope this information will help you further.