

## **HANDOUT ABOUT THE BROADCASTING CONTRIBUTION**

Dear all,

Please take note of our Q&A about the broadcasting fee in Germany. Any further information is available on the following website:

[https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/englisch/index\\_ger.html](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/englisch/index_ger.html).

Source: [studentenwerk-goettingen](#)

### **1. What is the broadcasting fee?**

On the 1st January 2013 a broadcasting contribution was introduced to replace the former broadcasting fees - at the same time, the fee collection center (GEZ) was renamed into "ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio Beitragsservice" (AZDBS).

As a result, nowadays it is mandatory to pay a flat fee of € 18.36 per month regardless of whether you have a receiver (TV, PC, smartphone) at home or not. This amount corresponds to the previous maximum fee i.e. for those who had already registered a TV there is no change. The fee payment also covers types of use such as radio use in a motor vehicle. The fee must be paid every three months.

### **2. Who has to pay the contribution?**

Every person of full age (flat owner) who actually lives and is registered in the flat, even if he or she is not a German citizen. The term "flat owner" is understood to mean every tenant and registered person in the flat.

In the case of shared flats/groups of flats (WG in German), you pay all together and not separately. This means: one of the tenants can be assigned to pay the contribution and must pay the amount regularly and for all of the flatmates. Moreover, it is mandatory to keep a balancement in your payments. In other words: the more residents in a shared flat pay the contribution (i.e. they are not exempt by the State), the cheaper the respective sum will be for you and your flatmates. It does not matter that each (co-)resident has his or her own rent agreement.

### **3. What is meant by "flat"?**

A flat is any living unit where you can live or sleep and which is accessible (but not accessible through another living space).

### **4. How does it work in student halls of residence?**

One-room flats: Here, the tenant has to pay a monthly contribution of €18.36 (BAföG scholarship holders are exempt).

Double flats and living groups/shared flats (WGs): count as a separate flat, only one (co-)resident has to pay € 18.36 per month for the whole apartment and has to share the cost with the other flatmates.

Regarding "corridor communities" i.e. single rooms with shared kitchens and/or shared bathrooms as well as a floor access door, the situation is unfortunately not clear: perhaps the "ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio Beitragsservice" will try to make every room count as one separate apartment. However, further legal explanations in this regard are to be expected.

### **5. Who is exempt?**

Anyone who receives social benefits can apply for exemption from the broadcasting fee. This also applies to BAföG scholarship holders who no longer live with their parents.

You can apply for exemption in writing to the relevant state broadcasting authority or online at [https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/englisch/index\\_ger.html](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/englisch/index_ger.html).

Together with the application, the current BAföG decision must be submitted in the original or as a certified copy. In shared flats, the person in charge must also provide the names of the flatmates.

In addition: Those who do not receive BAföG benefits only because their income exceeds the requirement limit by less than € 18.36 can apply for the exemption from broadcasting fee as a special case of hardship; in this case, the notice of refusal must also be submitted.

In the case of married couples and officially registered partnerships who live together in one flat, the BAföG exemption also extends to the other person.

On the other hand, in the case of unmarried couples, the partner may be declared by the "ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio Beitragsservice" as liable to pay contributions.

All exemption and reduction possibilities can be found in § 4 of the State Broadcasting Contribution Treaty (RBStV).

#### **6. Am I exempt if I live at my secondary residence?**

No, the contribution obligation is calculated per residence and not per person.

#### **7. Are non-German students exempt?**

No, there are no special exemptions for foreign students, even if you are in Germany on an exchange program with a scholarship (e.g. Erasmus students).

#### **8. Does the obligation also apply to limited rent agreements (e.g. three-month agreements)?**

You must pay the contribution from the first day of the tenancy until the end of the tenancy agreement. This applies regardless of whether the student registers at the Citizens' Registration Office (Bürgeramt) or not. This also applies to foreign students who only live in Germany for a short time.

#### **9. What do I have to do once I have registered?**

The answer sheet must be completed and returned in two weeks or you can simply answer it online (link: [https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/antworten/index\\_ger.html#e3595](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/antworten/index_ger.html#e3595)) in the same amount of time.

In the case of shared flats, you must indicate the contribution payer through the contribution number of your flat. The data of the other flatmates will then be deleted. If the paying person deregisters, another person in the WG must take over the broadcasting contribution.

#### **10. How are the contributors in a shared flat selected?**

Residents of a shared flat are jointly and severally liable to pay: the licence fee can only be requested once from each resident. This person must then demand the share of the other flatmates himself/herself. Exempted flatmates - for example, as recipients of BAföG benefits - cannot then be involved in the payment.

#### **11. Can I choose the person who pays the contribution in a shared flat?**

Both one-room flats and shared flats (i.e. also subtenants) do regularly pay the broadcasting fee. You decide yourself who officially pays the broadcasting contribution.

**12. Can the landlord pay the broadcasting contribution and demand a share of the costs from the residents?**

No, that is not possible at all.

**13. How do broadcasters have access to tenant data?**

Broadcasters get the tenant data of all persons of legal age (date of birth, marital status, current and last address as well as the day of moving into the flat) through the registration authorities (such as Bürgerämter). You can find more information here:

[https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/antworten/index\\_ger.html#e3595](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/antworten/index_ger.html#e3595)

In addition, there is an obligation for flat owners to register with broadcasting organizations. Broadcasters can also get the necessary data through landlords if they officially show that they have not been able to reach the desired person by any means.

**14. What happens if I was already a fee payer?**

You will then have to pay the contribution in the future as well. The broadcasting fee is then automatically switched over if no other information was provided.

If there are several fee payers, you should contact the "ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio Beitragsservice" yourself and correct the fee payer. The broadcasters will not contact you.

**15. What do I have to do as a tenant regarding the obligation to provide information?**

Every flat owner must register himself/herself with the respective state broadcasting organisation and inform them of any eventual changes in his/her data. In shared flats it is not necessary if another flatmate is already registered and pays the fee for the whole flat. In addition, it is possible that the responsible state broadcasting corporation will demand comprehensive information about your data from each person who is liable to pay the contribution.

**16. Can I avoid to pay? What happens in this case?**

This is very difficult. In the past, it was easy not to pay the broadcasting fee. Today, you have to prove to the GEZ (i.e. the broadcasters) that you do not own any broadcasting equipment. ATTENTION: non-payment can be punished by a fine.

If there is no return, the contribution service will send a reminder letter. If there is still no return after that, the person concerned will automatically receive a contribution account and a request to pay their contribution. If the person does not register or does not pay at all, he or she may still receive notices, reminders or, in the worst cases, an enforcement request.

**17. Can the broadcasting employees enter my flat?**

No, they are not allowed to do that at all. The contribution is levied anyway, regardless of the occupants and the existing broadcasting equipment.