

## English summary of the brochure

Fences, security, and barbed wire - The first impression of a Saxon *Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung* (EAE), the first accommodation centre for refugees arriving in Germany, is reminiscent of a prison. There is hardly any public information about the 'black box' EAE and outsiders are not allowed to enter. Nevertheless, shocking accounts about life in these accommodations continue to reach the public. With this brochure, we therefore want to throw light on the accommodation situation for refugees in Saxonian EAEs.

The brochure, of which this is a shortened english version, is aimed at politicians, who have a responsibility to act, as well as the refugees accommodated and employees in the EAEs, to show that their experiences are not isolated cases. We are also addressing the entire population of Saxony, whom we want to inform about the 'black box' of the Saxonian EAEs. This text is based on interviews with refugees living in the EAE, employees, security workers, and others connected with an EAE in Saxony. In the brochure, we go over different areas of daily life in the EAEs one by one so that you can read the text in every direction. Although every EAE is different from one another, and some offer better living conditions than others, all the problems described in this brochure are a reality in Saxonian EAEs and conditions people have to confront on a daily basis. With this brochure, we want to empower all of you. Refugees, employees and allies, unite! Join us in taking action against the numerous injustices. No more camps - We want homes!

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## Isolated locations

Saxonian EAEs are mostly located outside of city centers and residential areas, making it difficult for their residents to participate in public life. Instead of giving refugees the opportunity to live among other people in a lively environment, to engage in communal life, they are outsourced next to police stations, highways, industrial areas and stowed away from all public life. The EAE Dölzig in Leipzig is located near the airport Leipzig/Halle from which people are frequently deported. The racist signal that is sent out is clear: “You are not welcome here!”. As German politics and politicians repeatedly call for self-integration on the part of refugees, such an outsourcing of the EAEs is deeply cynical.

## Life in Containers

EAEs are converted hotels or supermarkets, fair halls (like the Messe Dresden), container villages or warehouse-like “lightweight construction halls”. We know from interviews with refugees that the rooms in the lightweight construction halls consist of mobile partition walls. Because the rooms have no ceilings, noises can be heard everywhere. The constant background noise and lack of privacy lead to an irritable atmosphere among the people housed. Former residents of the EAE Messering in Dresden told us that the lights in the halls are on day and night, which makes it difficult to fall asleep. Added to this is the poor isolation of the lightweight halls. One person from the EAE Mockau III in Leipzig told us that the hall heats up a lot in summer and cools down very strongly in winter due to poor insulation. While life in an EAE is never comfortable, living in containers or halls is not adequate for humans and is not tolerable.

## Bad Quality of Furniture

Refugees and staff from several EAEs told us about the poor quality of the furniture in the rooms. Residents of the EAE in Max-Liebermann-Straße and Mockau III told us that the mattresses and pillows were too thin and worn out. One group of young refugees explained that they have back pain from the hard beds and therefore lay several mattresses on top of each other if there is a free bed in the room. A particularly shocking case was reported to us from EAE Einsiedel, where only plastic covers for the mattresses and sleeping bags as well as small pillows had been available for some time. An order for better equipment (sheets, pillows, blankets) was not processed by the Landesdirektion Sachsen<sup>1</sup> (LdS) for many months. After months of waiting it turned out that the person responsible for processing the order sympathized with the far-right party “Der Dritte Weg” and was therefore probably blocking the bed equipment order for racist reasons.

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<sup>1</sup> English translation: Saxony state directorate

## Missing Privacy

Room checks are mandatory for staff, as we learned from employees from the EAE Hammerweg in Dresden. Generally, in all EAEs, inhabitants are not able to lock the doors from the outside and security personnel or staff can always come in unannounced. Only in some EAEs are the doors lockable from the inside. Residents from both the EAE Messering and the EAE Stauffenbergallee in Dresden told us that staff, and in some cases also the management, enter the room without knocking. One person from the EAE Messering told us that this is particularly uncomfortable when you want to change clothes and are not sure whether a person will enter the room unannounced at that moment. Other consequences are that sleeping people are woken up or when a room is entered in which a person normally wears a hijab. This is also an uncomfortable experience for the social workers. In addition, the Federal Administrative Court ruled in 2023 that the police can search the rooms of EAEs at any time without a court order. Not being able to lock your door also means that you are not able to secure your belongings. In several interviews people told us about theft and creative measures to secure their personal things. In Saxonian EAEs the right to privacy therefore does not exist.

## Rancid Food

In many EAEs the quality of the food is extremely poor. Refugees in the EAEs Hammerweg and Stauffenbergallee in Dresden said that the food is often overcooked and bland in taste. In the EAE Hammerweg, for example, there are usually large portions of rice or pasta and only small portions of a side dish. People at the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße in Leipzig told us that the food is absolutely inedible. For example, some of the potatoes and meat are undercooked, which can lead to food poisoning. Other people in the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße told us that they don't like the food but saw the cause in cultural differences instead of the quality. Similarly, a person working in the EAE Adalbert-Stifter-Weg in Chemnitz reported that the food generally does not taste good to the people accommodated there. The residents of the EAE Schneeberg explained that the food is very greasy and difficult to digest. People at the Mockau III facility told us that they are often only served bread and tea, even for dinner. The roundabout opinion seems to be that the food in Saxonian EAEs ranges from bland to disgusting.

While the food in most EAEs is of poor quality, in some EAEs it is even hazardous to health. In both the EAEs Schneeberg and Mockau III, it has often happened that the distributed meals were already expired. According to one resident from the EAE Mockau III, the scandalously poor food led to one person having to be hospitalized due to food poisoning. From an asylum consulting organisation in Schneeberg we learnt that residents of the EAE Schneeberg frequently report moldy food from the EAE and send them photos of the rancid meals. One resident of the same EAE told us that his wife is seven months pregnant and does not receive a larger portion of food despite asking. Their request to be transferred to another EAE was

rejected. In the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße, a child with leukemia received special food for its condition only for people to find out that the food had already expired. As residents of the EAEs do not get enough money to buy their own food and are not allowed to cook, the disgusting and hazardous quality of the catering in some EAEs is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

## Discriminating Employees

The staff of an EAE is necessary for managing the camp and helping people with their day-to-day life and their asylum process. This can create closeness and a good treatment of each other but also creates a power imbalance. In the EAE Bremer Straße in Dresden one resident spoke of disrespectful treatment by staff, which was not violent, but not particularly helpful either. Many things are simply dismissed, such as questions about psychological support or help with visits to the authorities. A drastic report comes from a group of residents of the EAE Stauffenbergallee in Dresden, who explicitly spoke of poor treatment. The management is part of the problem there, our interviewees said, as they do not talk to the people accommodated and misbehave towards them. The residents reported one case in which praying people were insulted by the management with the words “No praying here!” and then pushed aside. There were also insults and violence from regular staff. From a Security worker at the EAE in Chemnitz, we heard that there are rumors that Malteser social workers use their position of power to harass women\*. As a result, there are many complaints from those affected. There are also increasing official reports of assaults on the people accommodated by employees of European Homecare, a company responsible for all EAEs in Dresden.

## Fascist Security

In an interview with a social worker, we learned about racist, homophobic and transphobic behavior by security staff towards the residents in the EAE Marx-Liebermann-Straße in Leipzig. One security employee, who frequently insulted a gay person in a homophobic manner, outed the resident's sexual orientation to other residents against their will. In another case, a trans\* woman was taken out of her room by security staff towards a room without surveillance cameras. There she was forcibly pushed to the floor and pinned down by a knee on her neck so that she could not breathe. The woman filed a complaint against the perpetrators, who responded with a counter complaint. Ultimately, there were no consequences for the security forces involved and she was transferred to another EAE against her will. Some of the security in the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße wear apparel from the extreme right, ranging from pro-Russia shirts to Thor-Steinar hoodies. While this EAE is the only one where we heard from such incidents in the interviews, EAE-managing companies,

like “European Homecare”, and security firms, like “Ihre Wache” have also had cases of fascist and racist security and still get hired to manage and control the EAEs.

## Medical Negligence

The law prescribes a so-called “basic” healthcare for the residents of the EAEs, which means that only acute pain conditions are treated. The healthcare rights of asylum seekers are therefore significantly lower than the statutory health insurance. The actual quality of medical care differs strongly in each Saxonian EAE. According to interviews with nurses, in some EAEs there are consultation hours with qualified doctors, in others it is just very limited service according to regulations. Many people report problems with paying for medication, long waiting times or even a lack of treatment due to a lack of health insurance. One person in the EAE Messering told us that their baby was sick and they did not have enough money to pay for the prescribed drugs. In the EAE Schneeberg there is no help when inhabitants have toothache and often treatment of diabetes is ignored. This also happens in the EAE Hammerweg. Especially horrifying is a report from the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße where treatment for a cancer patient and a person in a wheelchair was not paid for by the LdS. The latter was told to “go back to Venezuela” when they spoke up about the conditions.

According to several interviews with employees and housed people, there is no long-term psychological support anywhere, despite the high urgency. The psychological stress on many refugees, caused by experiences of fleeing or violence, is therefore not recognized. On the one hand, this leads to a lack of care, even for severe mental health problems, and on the other, to a burden for the other people in the EAEs and the staff, who are not trained to deal with such illnesses and trauma.

## Violent Places

Several of the EAEs have concepts for protection of vulnerable groups from violence. But there are also still grave problems. An asylum advisor at the EAE Schneeberg told us how a woman did not dare to go to the toilet at night due to repeated harassment by a man on the way to the public toilet. A similar problem exists at the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße in Leipzig. It is possible for men to get past security and look into the womens’ shower despite the separate sanitary facilities because the bathroom stalls cannot be locked. The classification of persons as a part of vulnerable groups is also at the hand of the administration: In one example, a gay man was questioned and denied his sexual orientation despite the need for special protection. These incidents and the aforementioned violence against the trans\* woman by security and staff show that there are severe gaps in the violence protection concept.

## No Room for Activity

While some EAEs provide means of living and playing together, courses, and other important services to become active in your freetime, others remain merely grey living quarters with no possibility to entertain oneself or learn something. According to reports from people housed in the EAE Mockau III in Leipzig, there are no leisure activities apart from sports and toys for children. Residents also report that they have been waiting for several months to be accepted into a German course. One person in their early 20s explains: "I just want to learn German and get out of here." The EAE Bremer Straße in Dresden only has a "living room" with one sofa and a TV and a small concrete sandpit for children. According to our interviews, there are no books or games to be found there. In the EAE Stauffenbergallee in Dresden there is not even a living room. Leisure activities for adults and even toys for children are missing and there are not any language courses on site. In this EAE, there is only a pool table, which is reserved for the employees. Residents report that they used sticks from the park to play. Those EAEs provide no space to feel welcomed or to come together. Their bare functionality is especially damaging for children, who need opportunities to play, but also for adults, who want to learn languages and partake in a community.

## Financial Dependency

In our interviews, money was a particularly important issue concerning mobility, communication, and basic needs. In the EAE Max-Liebermann-Straße in Leipzig, we were told that internet access costs the residents around €23 per month, which is 1/7 of the maximum monthly "allowance" of €104 to 174. The people accommodated in almost all other camps also regularly have to pay a similar amount of money for WiFi. Even more outrageous is the behavior of the EAE Schneeberg, where the residents have to pay €16 a week for catering. Because of their low allowance, refugees are tied to their EAE's services. To charge for basic needs like WiFi and food adds insult to injury.

## Our Demands

General Demand: We demand the abolition of all EAEs and a completely revised concept for the first accommodation of refugees on the basis of independent flats.

Profit: We demand the exclusion of private enterprises from the accommodation of refugees and that the free state of Saxony ends its frugality in the process of seeking asylum.

Complaints Office: We demand the introduction of an independent complaints and control office financed by the free state of Saxony, which continuously monitors the current state in the accommodations for refugees. The inhabitants of these accommodations must be able to reach this office digitally and in all languages. They must gain easy access to lawyers and juridical support in all languages.

Entry and Exit: We demand that entry to the EAEs may be granted to civil aid organisations, journalists, relatives, and friends and that their inhabitants may leave whenever and however long they want independently.

Place: We demand the integration of EAEs in central housing estates.

Facilities and Privacy: We demand the abolition of containers, tents, and halls as accommodations for people. Refugees must live in heated houses with lockable rooms, concrete walls, and ceilings. Sanitary rooms and living quarters should, wherever possible, be usable in private for one person.

Meals: We demand catering to be oriented after the needs of the inhabitants of EAEs and be rich in nutrients. Furthermore, we demand opportunities for cooking for the inhabitants of EAEs.

Working Conditions: We demand good working conditions for all workers in EAEs, including regulated shifts, safe planning for vacation, clear division of work, and overtime pay. The number of staff must be raised according to need, so that humane and personal care and working conditions can be maintained. The wearout of staff must end!

Social Work and Security: We demand that staff, security and others working in and with EAEs, as well as responsible persons at the LdS, are checked concerning their dispositions, so that racist people do not gain access to EAEs! There must be regular further training of staff by migrant organizations.

Medical Provision: We demand the establishment of a room for psychological counseling in different languages specialized on the experience of refugees in every EAE. Medical drugs must be available without bureaucracy and free of charge and access to medical specialists must be guaranteed on the level of public health insurance.

Vulnerable Groups: We demand the guarantee of an accommodation free of discrimination, especially for vulnerable groups! Aid should not only be the task of voluntary organizations, but must be provided in the accommodations. It should also be structurally grounded in the organization of the accommodation itself. All rooms and sanitary facilities must guarantee absolute privacy and freedom from assaults by EAE staff or other inhabitants.

Free Time and Education: We demand extensive language learning and free time activities in every EAE! Language learning teachers should not be working on a voluntary basis but with a wage. Free time activities should entail opportunities for sport, education, exchange and entertainment, especially regarding kids and adolescents. The accommodations should not

merely serve as a place of residence, but as a social place. WLAN must be accessible everywhere, fast, and free of charge.

Money: We demand that all refugees immediately and without bureaucracy gain access to Bürgergeld on a balance account of their own! If there is demand, refugees should be able to work for a normal wage under social insurance conditions. The Deutschlandticket must be handed out to inhabitants of EAEs free of charge.

Admission: We demand that the free state of Saxony actively engages itself to fight deportation of people from Germany or the EU and for a voluntary raise in admission of refugees from all countries.