

# Zeitwohnen Update

The Long-Term Flexible Housing Newsletter



## Jan Hase

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## Dear Readers, Dear Friends of Zeitwohnen,

Europe thrives on exchange. For decades, the Erasmus+ program has stood for educational opportunities, personal development, and international experiences. But mobility requires more than just funding programs. It also requires the ability to live affordably in another city for a few months.

Rising rents, housing shortages, and high upfront costs make finding housing increasingly difficult, especially from abroad. Students from lower-income households are particularly affected, as housing costs quickly become a major hurdle for them. The European Commission has recognized this problem and announced initial measures as part of the European Affordable Housing Plan. This brings a previously underestimated issue into focus: long-term flexible housing as a prerequisite for fair educational opportunities and European mobility.

In this issue, we show why affordable long-term flexible housing is more important than ever for students, universities, and the general European concept of international cooperation and cultural exchange.

Yours sincerely,



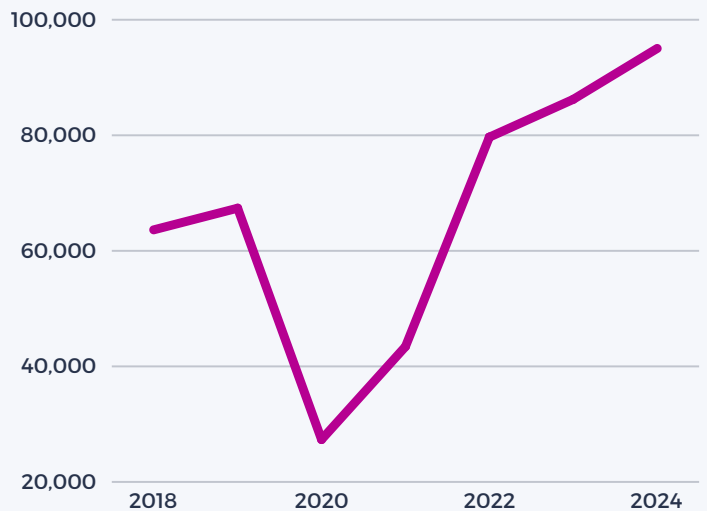
# Housing Market and Temporary Rentals

Democratization of housing sustainably eases pressure on conventional housing markets



## European mobility requires suitable housing options

Germany continues to gain importance within the European higher education landscape as a destination for study-related mobility. The number of Erasmus+ study stays in Germany has risen significantly. At the same time, this demand is concentrated in major university cities such as Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Cologne, and Frankfurt, which are locations with already tight housing markets. According to recent studies, students there must spend a significant portion of their budget on housing. It is precisely here that the success of European mobility in everyday life is determined. Moreover, many stays last only a few months and therefore follow a different logic than traditional rental agreements. Anyone coming to Germany for a semester or an internship needs quick and reliable access to suitable housing. Long-term flexible housing can be an important solution here. Flexible options make settling in easier, strengthen participation, and ensure Germany's appeal as an educational hub.



### Erasmus+ study stays in Germany since 2018

Trends in the number of Erasmus+ participants in the “Learner” category with Germany as their destination country from 2018 to 2024. The decline in 2020 is related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**5.3 months**

#### Studies

Eligible period:  
Min. 2 to max. 12 months

**4.2 months**

#### Internship

Eligible period:  
Min. 2 to max. 12 months

### Average duration of selected Erasmus+ stays

Average duration of Erasmus+ study and internship stays in Germany in months.

#### 1st place: Berlin

(approx. 50,100 international students)

#### 2nd place: Munich

(approx. 40,700 international students)

#### 3rd place: Aachen

(approx. 19,300)

#### 4th place: Hamburg

(approx. 18,000)

#### 5th place: Frankfurt am Main

(approx. 14,500)

### Top 5 German Cities for International Students

Amount of international students at universities in the five German cities with the highest student populations in the 2024–25 winter semester.

Sources: German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Destatis, Erasmus+

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## Mobility requires housing

Erasmus+ is one of the most successful European programs of the past decades. Millions of young people have gained new perspectives, learned languages, and gained international experience through semesters abroad. For many, studying abroad is also the first practical step toward a mobile European lifestyle and often shapes their future career choices or leads to long-term ties to a particular location. However, more and more often, it is not just the study opportunity that determines participation, but the question of whether affordable housing can be found locally. Anyone going to Berlin, Barcelona, Paris, or Amsterdam for a semester needs housing available on short notice for a few months. They are looking for furnished, predictable, and hassle-free options that can be adapted to the duration of their study abroad stay. This is precisely where traditional housing markets often reach their limits. Lengthy rental contracts, high upfront costs, extensive documentation requirements, or a lack of availability significantly hinder access. Many also lack local networks and cannot attend viewings before signing a lease.

Students on a limited budget are particularly affected; for them, additional housing costs quickly become a decisive hurdle, making a stay abroad uncertain or impossible. Programs like Erasmus+ risk becoming unintentionally more selective. The latest MLP Student Housing Report shows just how much of a burden housing costs already are. Students living on their own spend an average of around 54 percent of their income on housing. For many, housing costs have long been a deciding factor in whether international mobility is practically possible. Against this backdrop, the European Affordable Housing Plan is gaining importance. With this plan, the European Commission should also aim to strengthen affordable flexible housing and reflect the needs of mobile students. By creating better access to educational pathways, future opportunities to acquire international talent are secured.

## Key Questions

### Is long-term flexible housing really an educational issue?

Yes, because without suitable housing, it's practically impossible to spend a semester abroad. Mobile students, in particular, rely on housing that becomes available on short notice. Those who can't find an apartment are often unable to take advantage of available educational opportunities.

### Why does Erasmus+ need special housing options?

Erasmus stays are usually limited to one semester or a few months. As a result, students are looking for furnished, flexible, and legally secure housing options that do not require a lengthy commitment and are available on short notice. Traditional rental housing often fails to meet this specific need.

### Do only international students benefit from this?

No, German exchange students, interns, doctoral candidates, and visiting scholars also benefit from long-term flexible housing. Flexible housing options generally make it easier to settle into new cities and provide planning security during transitional periods.

### Is long-term flexible housing just a quick fix?

No, long-term flexible housing is often the best option for temporary stays. The latest MLP Student Housing Report also shows that flexible housing options are gaining importance at many university locations, reflecting a growing demand for long-term flexible housing.

### Why is this relevant for Europe as well?

International education enhances language skills, personal networks, and future career mobility. When housing costs become a barrier, both equal opportunity and cultural exchange come under pressure. According to the MLP Report, students living on their own already spend about 54 percent of their income on housing.



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## Long-term flexible housing as a locational factor

International mobility doesn't end with the semester. Those who live abroad during their studies gain experience, build networks, and are more likely to pursue cross-border careers later on. Erasmus+ is therefore not just an educational policy, but also an investment in Europe's future, innovation, and competitiveness. Many companies today are looking for employees with intercultural experience, language skills, and an international outlook. Universities are recruiting talent worldwide, and cities are competing for bright minds and innovative startups. Today's international students are often the skilled workers, researchers, and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. Attracting them to a location early on significantly increases the chance of retaining them later. This is precisely why the housing issue is not a footnote, but part of strategic location policy. If cities want to welcome international talent, they must also create realistic arrival structures. This includes a functioning market for long-term flexible housing. Long-term flexible housing complements the traditional rental market where short-term and temporary demand arises and conventional options are often not suitably available. The European Affordable Housing Plan provides important first steps in that regard. Among other things, it calls for increased investment in affordable housing, new partnerships between the public sector and private actors, and targeted solutions for groups with special mobility needs. This should explicitly include students. For university towns, this would open up the opportunity to systematically integrate education and housing policy for the first time. It is not only students who benefit from this. Universities become more attractive in international competition, cities enhance their visibility as open locations, and companies gain better access to qualified young talent. Those with positive early experiences in a country often return later to work, research, or build companies. Long-term flexible housing is more than just a practical living arrangement. It is a location factor in the competition for talent. Therefore, anyone seeking to strengthen European exchange must not only promote study opportunities but also facilitate the transition to life in the host country.

## Political Recommendations

### **Making educational mobility a reality.**

European exchange programs need more than just funding commitments and university spots. Anyone who wants to promote international mobility must recognize affordable, readily available housing as a key prerequisite and systematically factor it into their planning.

### **Integrate long-term flexible housing in a legally compliant manner.**

Clear and practical rules are needed for temporary housing. Students, landlords, and platforms need legal certainty to ensure that long-term flexible housing options remain reliably available and are clearly distinguished from short-term touristic accommodation.

### **Strengthen university campuses in a targeted manner.**

University cities across Europe are competing for talent. Federal and state governments, local authorities, and universities should work together to improve access to long-term flexible housing. This strengthens Germany's appeal as an international study destination.

### **Attracting tomorrow's skilled workers early on.**

International students are often the skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and researchers of tomorrow. Creating favorable conditions for their studies and integration today will strengthen the labor market, innovation, and competitiveness tomorrow.

### **Keep Europe socially inclusive.**

A semester abroad should not depend on parents' income. Additional support measures for students on a tight budget, e.g. housing certificates, can help make European mobility a realistic option for more people.

# The Wunderflats Team

Shape the future of housing with us



## Join us on the road to the future of housing

Wunderflats is a digital platform for flexible housing that brings together the demand and supply of landlords and tenants.

While vacation rentals take away housing space from cities, long-term flexible housing helps relieve the pressure on the traditional housing market. This is because specialists, project workers, and highly specialized experts often request apartments that are rented out temporarily in a manner that conforms to the intended use, but are not currently available to the permanent housing market.

At the same time, long-term flexible housing is still too little known in terms of its importance and the many opportunities it offers, among other things, for a fair housing market and its contribution to economic promotion by solving the shortage of skilled workers.

Therefore, it is necessary to create a framework that recognizes long-term flexible housing as a pillar of support and a solution to the problem.



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As a digital scale-up from the heart of Berlin, Wunderflats welcomes any dialogue on digital and housing policy issues.

