



To ensure that studying and having children are not incompatible, the Studierendenwerk runs two childcare centres in Tübingen and Hohenheim that are specially tailored to the needs of student parents. In this episode, the two heads, Agnes Gavranovic and Verena Roth, tell you what everyday life is like in these centres, where the educational focus is placed and how you can apply for a place.

Mang: Hi and welcome to a new episode of our my-stuwe podcast. I'm Philipp Mang, the press spokesperson for the Studierendenwerk and today we're focusing on the very youngest, namely children.

Yes, studying and having children always sounds like an irreconcilable contradiction to many. However, there are actually around 130,000 students in Germany who perform this mammoth task every day. They master this difficult balancing act between lectures and changing diapers. What many do not know: The Studierendenwerk has a very special offer for precisely this group. In Tübingen and Hohenheim, there are very special daycare centres that specialize in children of students. In today's episode, we want to introduce you to these facilities in more detail. That's why we have the two directors of the Tübingen daycare center in Wilhelmstraße as guests. We want to find out from them what makes the StuWe daycare centers so special.

Hello Ms. Gavranovic, hello Ms. Roth, nice of you to talk to us today. Yes, let's start with you as a person. Perhaps you could start by introducing yourself and talking a little about what you enjoy about your day-to-day work at the daycare center, because I imagine it's a challenging day there. You always have a loud background noise, the responsibility towards the parents. Yes, maybe you can just pick us up a little bit.

Gavranovic: Hello, I'm Agnes Gavranovic and I'm delighted to be here today to talk to you. I am a state-approved educator, I worked in various institutions for many years, gained a lot of experience, then went on to study early childhood education and I find it really enriching that you meet so many different people here, that you accompany the different people and support the children in their everyday lives.

Mang: Ms. Roth, how are things with you?

Roth: My name is Verena Roth. I am also a state-approved educator, have completed the practice-integrated training and am now studying social work and social pedagogy at the same time. I'm still relatively new to the job, but when I was asked if I would like to take over the management, I simply saw it as an exciting challenge and gratefully accepted. I really enjoy working in a team every day. You work with people, with children and you learn from and with the children. So somehow you never stop learning. You see everything through children's eyes and there are always new challenges in everyday life.

Mang: Thank you very much. I said it at the beginning. It's not that easy to juggle family and studies. As head of the facility, you are now also close to the parents. How do you experience them?

Roth: First of all, I would like to say that we have a really great parenthood. As I said, the balancing act between childcare and studying is often very demanding and not always easy. Nevertheless, we have very understanding parents. In the last few months and last year in particular, we often had to close early due to staff shortages. And I would say that 99% of the time, we have always encountered very understanding parents. We have a very open parent community. At the summer party, for example, the parents often put on a play for the children or get involved in other ways.

Gavranovic: It also affected me for two and a half years and I think it's all the more important to have reliable support in the background, where you can hand over your children in complete confidence and concen-

trate on your studies and the work you have to do. I see it the same way as Mrs. Roth. The parents are very grateful that they can get a place there, which is no longer so easy in Tübingen. And the long opening hours really help them during exam periods or when there are simply long days ahead.

Mang: So it's an important offer for students. And that's why we're presenting it again in this podcast. Now let's move on to the facility itself, the Wilhelmstraße daycare center. Could you introduce us to it in a little more detail? How many children are there? How many employees are there?

Gavranovic: The Wilhelmstraße daycare center is divided into two buildings, the villa and the pavilion, and I am the director of the villa. We have 16 employees and other additional staff who support us here in the building, for whom we are very grateful that they simply help us out when staff are absent and there is space for a total of 38 children here in the Villa. It is divided into the kindergarten area and the toddler area: there are 20 kindergarten children and 18 toddlers.

Roth: We in the pavilion have space for 26 children aged 2 to 6 years. We are a mixed-age group. We are a team of eight educators, have different rooms and share the outdoor area with the Villa.

Mang: Why should students with children choose a Studierendenwerk facility? It sounded a bit like what you said earlier, Ms. Roth – with the opening hours, for example. Are there perhaps other advantages worth mentioning compared to other providers?

Roth: Exactly. As I said, the long opening hours are definitely an advantage. What's more, we're really close to the university. It's not a long journey that the parents have to make. What I also think is great is that the parents are simply among like-minded people. This means that all parents are student parents and can then possibly exchange ideas with each other and are simply among like-minded people.

Gavranovic: Another advantage for us is that the families here get a full-day place, whereas some families would not be allocated a full-day place in the city. This is due to the points system and they would be below the limit.

Mang: Now every daycare center has its own pedagogical concept, so to speak. How would you describe

this at the Studierendenwerk? So what priorities are important to you and for the educators?

Roth: So to summarize, we can definitely say that the children's independence is very important to us. Self-efficacy. We have children's conferences, for example, where we meet with the children once a week or every two weeks in a discussion group. And the children are allowed to express their wishes, for example for excursions, toy days, where the children are allowed to bring their own toys or completely different ideas. Conflicts can be resolved. And we simply value the fact that the children solve problems and contribute ideas and that we as educators do not dictate and that the children are allowed to do so. These are our guiding principles: I can get involved, I can make a difference, I am strong.

Mang: Let's talk about the application procedure. Perhaps a drier topic, but still important. Can anyone apply in principle? And are there any special requirements that you have to meet? And if so, how do I submit the application?

Gavranovic: Exactly, so of course we have special requirements. We also differ a little from the city. Families must be resident in Tübingen and have a valid enrollment. So they have to be enrolled here at the University of Tübingen to get a place. Then the families first register with ZAK, the central registration office, that they would like a place with us. And so we can filter out the families and write to them if they haven't already done so. And some also contact us directly and ask how it works. Then the families are put on the waiting list and we look to see when they can be admitted and where the best place for the family is.

Mang: Now daycare places are in demand, you can read that everywhere in the media, even outside the StuWe. Educators are often difficult to find. How likely is it that you will get a place for your child? So there are waiting times that you have to reckon with.

Gavranovic: In the past, people used to say it was three months. Now it's actually the case that many families simply say that they might not get a place at all. It's a bit better with us. Of course, we also have a waiting list, but around the desired month of admission, we have to be a bit more flexible and say we can bridge another 3, 4, 5 months. So you can't really answer that in general terms.

Mang: Now let's take a look at everyday life at the faci-

lity. What does a typical day look like for the children? Does it even exist?

Roth: So there isn't really a fixed daily routine in this form. It varies depending on the group, the needs of the children and the age of the children. In the crèche groups, there are more fixed routines because the structures are needed there. In our pavilion, for example, we don't have a fixed morning circle. We simply see how the children are feeling and what their needs are. Is there anything to talk about? And so it simply varies from group to group. And then there are special features. For example, we have swimming day in the pavilion on Fridays, when we take all the children swimming, or Mondays are off-site days. These are just special things that happen.

Mang: Yes, that sounds like a very varied daily routine for the children. Meals together are certainly an important part of this daily routine. How is this actually organized in the StuWes facilities? Do they cook their own meals or is there an external caterer who delivers them? And what is taken into account when choosing the meals?

Gavranovic: At our daycare center, the children get three meals a day. We start with breakfast, using regional products, and the children in the kindergarten area eat freely. In other words, they can choose when they have breakfast and some have breakfast as soon as they arrive at the daycare center. Some want to wait for their friends and then have breakfast in the community and for children under the age of three, they need more fixed structures in their daily routine and then have breakfast together. In general, however, we make breakfast very varied. Sometimes it's muesli day, there are different breads, sometimes bread rolls, cheese, fruit and vegetables.

And next comes lunch. This is delivered by a caterer. We order that ourselves. We have a wide selection of products. We also make sure that it is varied. Especially the side dishes, sometimes potatoes, rice, pasta – or even something au gratin. Yes, simply a wide range so that the children can try lots of things.

In the afternoon we offer a snack. Here too, it should be as varied and diverse as possible for the children. They get lots of fruit and vegetables here too. And these are the children who like to eat together. It's easy to see that small groups form here that always enjoy having breakfast together. And you also know from yourself

that you enjoy eating together and sitting together. It also promotes language development.

Mang: So there is a lot of variety here too. Finally, perhaps a few more current topics that we are still looking at. What are you most concerned with at the moment? Any upcoming projects or anything else you would like to tell us about?

Gavranovic: There are always a lot of changes in education. For example, we have currently drawn up a child protection concept. There's more and more that we have to do with the facilities and so what we're working on at the moment is also changing. There are also many different families in our house, including families from different countries. Of course, we also try to support them so that they have a good start with us. And many of them may not yet be familiar with our system, but they get help. But that's also very enriching for us, of course, and it's also fun. Exactly. Different parenting styles come together here too and we simply try to create a community in which everyone feels comfortable.

Mang: Ms. Gavranovic, Ms. Roth, thank you very much for presenting the facility to us today. I think we were able to show why these facilities are so important. The people who work here really put their heart and soul into making sure that studying and family life remain compatible.

If you have any further questions about daycare centers at StuWe, please feel free to write us an email or post on social media. Thank you for listening and see you next time!

**Note: This transcription of the podcast was generated with the help of machine software. We apologise for any minor discrepancies or spelling mistakes.*