

Transcript #0 Introduction

(Fabienne:) Welcome to this short introduction! This podcast is recorded by people working at the International Office of the University of Stuttgart and it is part of a project called "Ankunft- und Studienerfolg" in German which translates to "Arrival and Study Success" in English. The project is funded by the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg in Germany.

This podcast is full of information for new international students studying at the University of Stuttgart or planning on studying at the University of Stuttgart, and no matter if you are starting your bachelor's or master's degree.

(Melanie:) You can also be still at home and be preparing for your adventure abroad or you can already be in Stuttgart while listening to this podcast. We recommend to listen to all episodes that might seem interesting to you, and stay curious. You can check our homepage and read through the mails that you receive by the University of Stuttgart.

Once in a while, we will also have some episodes for students in higher semesters.

(Fabienne:) But please note that all info are only for students studying at the University of Stuttgart. And if you are going to study at any other higher education institution in Stuttgart, in Baden-Württemberg or in Germany, then please make sure to check their homepages as the information vary just from university to university or from higher education institution to institution.

(Melanie:) You will hear many voices of people working at the University of Stuttgart and of course your fellow students. This podcast is about providing information for you to have a great start and a successful study at the University of Stuttgart. Of course, we are always open for feedback and if there is any episode which you would like to hear but you cannot find yet, just send us an email!

So without further ado:

(Fabienne:) Let's start with our first episode!

+++ Important +++

The uni mates program, which is mentioned in the episodes #1 Buddy program ready.study.stuttgart and #2 Intercultural Mentoring Program, is not offered anymore!

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Transcript #1 Buddy program ready.study.stuttgart

(Fabienne:) A very warm welcome to our first episode of the podcast. We are very happy that you decided to listen to this podcast full of information about studying in Stuttgart as an international student.

My name is Fabienne Schopf, I work at the International Office of the University of Stuttgart in Germany. And together with Melanie Schindler I'll be your host for the first three episodes which are dedicated to the support programs at the International Office. If you would like to know more about this podcast, we highly recommend to listen to our Introduction episode as well.

This first episode will introduce you to the buddy program ready.study.stuttgart which is a joint program by the University of Stuttgart and the Studierendenwerk Stuttgart. You can find the link to any reference we make in the show notes below or on our homepage. So you can enjoy listening without the need to take notes.

But before we start: We are recoding this podcast in July 2020, so in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the situation is constantly changing, information will change accordingly. So please make sure to check our homepage for up-to-date-information whenever you are listening to this podcast. And here we go with the first episode:

So it is my pleasure to introduce you to my colleagues Julia Vogl and John Böhmer. Julia is responsible for the buddy program since November 2019 and John is doing his voluntary social year at the International Office.

So welcome to the both of you. Thanks for taking time!

(John:) Thank you for having us.

(Julia:) Thanks for being here.

(Fabienne:) Okay so John, can you explain what a voluntary social year exactly is for everyone who is not familiar with the term?

(John:) Yes, of course. So I have been doing my voluntary social year here at the International Office since September 2019. And compared to other institutions, where you usually do your social year, such as kindergartens or hospitals, my tasks are very diverse. Not only do I support international students with their initial application, but I also organize events, as also being part of the buddy program, and I help to get things settled after the international students arrive in Stuttgart. Due to the fact that I have been taking care of international students as part of my daily work, I was able to strengthen my intercultural competence. So, the social year has been a great opportunity for me, and I really have learned a lot throughout this year.

(Fabienne:) Okay thank you. And it is really great having you here at the IZ. So, Julia, can you describe the buddy program in three words?

(Julia:) Wow, three words is not a lot of words but I would say welcome, support and connect.

(Fabienne:) Okay and what are the benefits for students if they apply for the buddy program?

(Julia:) So, coming to a new country can be very challenging for international students. So knowing that you will receive support from students of the University of Stuttgart can make you feel more comfortable while settling here. The buddy program includes 3 benefits: First of all, there is the pick-up service from the airport on your day of arrival if it's possible. Then there is a guidance on formalities about living and studying in Stuttgart in a group counselling. And there is also the participation in events for international students where you can easily connect with other students from all over the world. Due to the current situation with Covid-19 those three benefits look a little different. We will explain you that later more precisely.

(Fabiennne:) Okay so Julia just mentioned that there are events throughout the semester. John, as I know that you really like organizing the events, could you elaborate on that?

(John:) Yes, so our buddies always plan many different events where you can connect with other students and get to know Stuttgart even better. Due to the current situation lots of things have changed and also changed our events, which were normally held in person are not possible. However, we try our best to provide our international students with digital alternatives or outdoor events in small groups. Such as game nights, cooking sessions and also rallies in small groups. The program is a different one for each semester and our buddies always come up with new and fun ideas for our events. We announce our events through our ready.study.stuttgart newsletter. So, please don't miss to subscribe.

(Fabiennne:) Okay so you've mentioned the international students, so who can apply for the buddy program?

(John:) Actually every international student who comes to the University of Stuttgart – either for only one semester as an exchange or for the complete or whole degree can apply for the buddy program.

(Fabiennne:) Okay so this sounds great. If a student who is listening at the moment is interested in signing up. How does it work Julia?

(Julia:) Oh that's easily done. If you want to sign up, you just have to visit our homepage. There you can register for the buddy program or sign up for our newsletter. After your registration you will receive all relevant information via e-mail. In times of Covid-19 we must stick to the current guidelines from the German Government and the University of Stuttgart. But we will keep you updated through our homepage.

(Fabiennne:) Okay so there will be some more episodes from this podcast and there will also be other support programs. So, there are currently three programs at the International Office: the buddy program, the mentoring program and the uni mates program. What is the difference in your opinion John?

(John:) So, the aim of the buddy program is to support you during your first few days in Stuttgart, while the mentoring and the uni mates program support international students for an entire semester. We from the buddy program mainly focus on the arrival support. Therefore, the mentoring program and the uni mates program operate via one-on-one matchings throughout the whole semester. You can easily get more information and apply for all three programs on our homepage. We would love to welcome you at one of our programs.

(Fabienne:) Okay so this was a very informative and helpful talk in the last five minutes, so we hope the students got the most information. Thank you very much for taking time to talk to us Julia and John!

(Julia:) Of course, thank you!

(Fabienne:) So we hope that this episode was helpful to you and that you are curious about the buddy program at the University of Stuttgart.

If you need further information or this was too much information at once, we highly recommend that you check the show notes below, our [homepage](#) or just listen to the episode once more. You are always welcome to send us an [e-mail](#) as well, and the address can also be found below. We hope to see you soon in Stuttgart. Goodbye!

(John:) Bye.

(Julia:) Bye bye.

Transcript #2 Intercultural Mentoring Program

(Melanie:) Hello and a very warm welcome to our second episode. Great choice that you decide to listen to this podcast full of information about studying in Stuttgart as an international student.

My name is Melanie Schindler and I work at the International Office of the University of Stuttgart in Germany as a student assistant since 2020. Before I started my studies, I did a voluntary year in the International Office, which we also call IZ. Together with Fabienne Schopf I will host the first three episodes which are dedicated to the support programs at the IZ. Do you want to know more about our podcast in general? Then listen to our introduction episode as well!

In our second episode we will introduce you to the Intercultural Mentoring Program at the University of Stuttgart. For more information you can find the link to any reference we make in the show notes below or on our homepage. So now enjoy listening to this episode!

Before we start just one more note: we are recording this podcast in July 2020, so in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Just as the situation is constantly changing, information will change accordingly. So please make sure to check out our homepage for up-to-date information whenever you are listening to this podcast.

So back to the Intercultural Mentoring Program! We would like to introduce Sarah Walz today. She is the coordinator of the Intercultural Mentoring Program at the International Office since March 2017. Before that, she has been working in the International Office as well as a student assistant. So, welcome Sarah!

(Sarah:) Thank you so much for having me today!

(Melanie:) It's really nice to have you here. So, did I miss something important about you?

(Sarah:) No, you got it all.

(Melanie:) Perfect. So today we want to talk with you about the Intercultural Mentoring Program or, in the following we just call it the Mentoring Program. My first question for you is: What exactly is the Mentoring Program?

(Sarah:) The Mentoring Program is a program for international degree seeking students, offered by the International Office of the University of Stuttgart. Each semester, we match about 100 new international students with 100 students from a higher semester in a one to one mentoring. Those tandems meet regularly themselves and we as the Mentoring Team organize events and opportunities for our participants to learn and meet new people.

(Melanie:) And who can participate in the Mentoring Program especially as a mentee?

(Sarah:) Our mentees are international degree seeking students in the first or second semester of their Bachelor or Master's degree, so at the beginning of their studies. That means they just started and will stay here in Stuttgart for at least two years. They should also have enough time for regular meetings in the tandem and of course be interested in meeting other people.

(Sarah:) Our Mentors are students in a higher semester, at least in the third semester, with a German background or very good German skills and knowledge of the University system. They have signed up by choice, because they want to have more contact to international students. The study programs vary and we cannot guarantee a matching within the same study field, but we try our best. We also consider other factors into the matching, like hobbies and interests and we do as much as we can to match the mentees with someone they will get along with.

(Melanie:) And when someone decides to participate as a mentee, what are the advantages for them?

(Sarah:) Mentees have many advantages: They can have someone on their side from the beginning of their first semester, guaranteed for six months but often it becomes a real friendship. Our mentors help their mentees in organizing their studies, getting to know the campus and the city and in learning the German language and understand the German culture better. They are the first to ask if there are any questions. Additionally, the Mentoring team offers regular meetings and activities, where they can network with students from all the fields of the University. For example, we offer hiking tours or other activities, the mentees can do in groups. And last but not least, we offer workshops and seminars for the participants to learn and educate themselves, which are all free of cost. For example, we offer workshops with political topics, or just classes for fun like cooking classes. The only thing they need for participating as a mentee is interest for meeting a new person and a little bit of time.

(Melanie:) That sounds great. So, now there are two other programs, the uni mates and the buddy program. What exactly is the difference between the Mentoring Program and the other programs?

(Sarah:) The difference to the other two programs is that we do not offer a pick-up service and help with registration at the beginning like in the uni mates or buddy program. Instead our focus is more on offering help with your studies, the German culture and finding contacts. The tandems will meet regularly for six months, so for a whole semester, therefore it goes on longer than the buddy program.

(Melanie:) Okay, so last but now least the important question now: how and when can students register for the Mentoring Program?

(Sarah:) The registration for the Mentoring Program is for the winter term always in August, it starts in August, and for the summer term it starts in February. The program starts within the first week of classes each semester. And if there are questions, interested students always send us an [e-mail](#) or check out our website, where they can find for more information.

(Melanie:) Okay perfect. So, thank you very much for being here with us today.

(Sarah:) Thank you so much!

(Melanie:) If you want to learn more about the Intercultural Mentoring Program, please check out their [website](#) and you can also find them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). [Note Dez. 2: The Mentoring program can be found via @unistuttgartinternational] We recommend as well that you check the show notes below for more information, or, if it was just too much information at once, you can also listen to the episode once more. Of course, you are always welcome to send us an [e-mail](#), the address can also be found below. We hope to see you in Stuttgart soon. Goodbye!

Transcript #4 Financing your studies

(Anu:) Hello everybody. My name is Anu Dohna and with me today is Svenja Wübker. She is advisor for international students at the University of Stuttgart. Hi Svenja.

(Svenja:) Hi Anu.

(Anu:) Nice to have you here today. We are going to talk about study financing. I can imagine this is an important topic for many students, am I right?

(Svenja:) Yeah that's true. Actually, we receive a lot of emails by people who are interested in studying at the University of Stuttgart and who are asking about strategies to finance their studies. But it also comes up in consultations with students in higher semesters as well. So, I would say it's a topic not only when preparing for coming to Stuttgart, but also for throughout your studies basically.

(Anu:) Okay. Svenja, sometimes I heard people telling me studying in Germany is for free, is that true?

(Svenja:) Actually that would be nice. Well, the state of Baden-Württemberg introduced a tuition fees for non-EU citizens at universities in the year of 2017. So that means, that non-EU citizens have to pay tuition fees of EUR 1.500 per semester in addition to the semester fees of EUR 200. So the semester fees are paid by all students at the universities in Baden-Württemberg. And if you calculate that, so based on the standard period of studies, that would amount to around EUR 10.000 for a Bachelor's degree and around EUR 6.800 for a Master's degree, so for four semesters.

(Anu:) So these are the tuitions fees only?

(Svenja:) Yes, that's true.

(Anu:) What other costs come on top of that?

(Svenja:) Well actually a much bigger part of the costs of staying in Stuttgart are the living costs. So, a good estimation of living costs would be around EUR 860 per month. And if you compare that, so it's EUR 860 for the living costs and EUR 250 for the semester and tuition fees. So if you set aside every month EUR 250 EUR for the semester and tuition fees, then you have the full amount of EUR 2700 that you have for the next semester for the fees. And if you compare that, I mean the living costs are much bigger. And of course, the living costs depend on your lifestyle, right? But I think it's important to keep in mind that the living costs in Stuttgart are really high. I mean just the rent itself is basically over the roof on the private market in Stuttgart. So if you see that the costs for your studies in Stuttgart would then amount to around EUR 40.000 for a Bachelor's degree, which is like the tuition costs and the living costs, and EUR 28.000 for a Master's degree, again living costs and study costs. So, I would definitely say, that studying in Germany is not for free, right? EUR 40.000 is not free. But if you compare that to the tuition fees alone that you have in several countries, like the US or Great Britain, then it is basically a gift to study in Germany.

(Anu:) Okay, so are there any scholarships for international students to finance their studies?

(Svenja:) I just said, that studying in Germany is a gift because of the low costs for education. So, the deal is basically that the costs for education are low, but then again there are basically there are no scholarships or scholarships in Germany are not very

common. So the biggest grant giving organization for international students in Germany is the DAAD, which means German Academic Exchange Service. And they do offer a full scholarship program for studies in Germany. And I would highly recommend to check out the data base because you can not only find scholarships funded by the DAAD there, but also scholarships by other organizations.

(Anu:) Okay, are there any scholarships by the University of Stuttgart itself?

(Svenja:) Not really. There are some options, but those are only partial scholarships. So, for example we have the "Deutschlandstipendium" which means Germany scholarship and this scholarship is awarded for one year, but you only receive EUR 300 per month if you are lucky enough to get the scholarship. Another option would be the STIBET scholarship which is again funded by the DAAD and can be awarded for between two to six months and it's awarded by the International Office.

(Anu:) Okay, can you apply for STIBET in all phases of your study?

(Svenja:) Oh no, sorry. Actually, the STIBET is for students in the higher semesters, so for the third semester and upwards.

(Anu:) Okay, what would you say, how many students actually have a scholarship of German university students?

(Svenja:) That is actually a really low number. So, only about two percent of all students have a scholarship and of all students meaning domestic students and international students.

(Anu:) Okay, I see that's really not very common. But what about working, can international students work to finance their studies?

(Svenja:) Yes, they can, actually that's a really popular topic among international students. So, there are actually many aspects to working in Germany as an international student and one topic or aspect is actually the work permit. If you come to Stuttgart and are a non-EU citizen then you will have to apply for a residence permit. And this residence permit will allow you to work for up to 120 full days in addition to a student assistant position for up to 85 hours per month. If you are an EU citizen you do not require a specific work permit, you can just work, and you don't have any limitations regarding your student's jobs.

(Anu:) So it makes a difference if you are a citizen of the European Union country or not.

(Svenja:) Yes it does.

(Anu:) Okay, what other things should international students consider, who think about working as a mean support in their studies?

(Svenja:) I would definitely say that you have to look at the hours or the capacities that you need for studying. I mean if you come to Stuttgart or to Germany in general in order to study, that should be your primary focus. And working on the side is nice, because I know a lot of students have to work and have additional income, but I would say that you really have to again focus on your studies and make sure that the hours that you need for working are still compatible with your hours that you need for studying. So please never ever come to Stuttgart and think that you can finance yourself by working in Stuttgart alone. You always need additional income, savings or family support, always calculate that.

(Anu:) What about language skills? There are English-taught study programs in Germany and German-taught study programs. Which language skills do you need to find a job?

(Svenja:) I would actually say that many student jobs require an advanced German skill, so basically B1 and up. So it is really helpful if you know how to speak German, at least a bit or even fluently. Many positions ask for that. I mean you might be lucky and find a student assistant position where your English skills are enough, but it is always helpful to know German. So to anybody who thinks about coming to Germany and study here and work on the side, or even think about staying in Germany and work fulltime after their graduation, I would highly recommend to start learning German and start as soon as possible.

(Anu:) So, let me sum that up a bit. So, I understand that you shouldn't rely on working and scholarships only as study financing. You will need some other sources of financing too, is that right?

(Svenja:) Yes definitely. I would actually recommend that you have both, savings on your own and family support. Just account for any possible changes in your financial situation. There might be a change in your family, let's say you have a spouse and you have a child, or if somebody gets ill in your family and they can't support you anymore, or another part is also the currency fluctuation, that you can't account for right now. So you have to plan ahead. Also many students take an additional semester, so they do not only study six semesters for the Bachelor or four semesters for the Master, but even one or two semesters more. So I would actually recommend to plan ahead.

(Anu:) Okay, so good planning is halfway to success. Thank you very much for these insights Svenja!

(Svenja:) Thank you for having me!

Transcript #5 Faculty 5 – Dilip

(Melanie:) Hello everybody and a very warm welcome to the fifth episode of our podcast which is full of information about studying in Stuttgart as an international student! In this episode, we will talk with one of your fellow students about his start at the University of Stuttgart. You can find the link to any reference we make in the show notes below. If you want to know more about our podcast in general, listen to our introduction episode as well.

My name is Melanie Schindler and I work at the International Office of the University of Stuttgart in Germany as a student assistant since 2020. Today I am talking to Dilip who is studying at the University of Stuttgart. First of all, thank you for being here. Dilip, do you want to introduce yourself for our listeners?

(Dilip:) Yes so, hello ladies and gentlemen. My name is Dilip, I study master's in electrical engineering at the University of Stuttgart since winter semester 2019, so I came to Germany in October 2019 and I am here since the last one and a half years.

(Melanie:) Okay, so thank you very much. So, as I already said, today I want to talk with you about your start here at the University of Stuttgart. Let's start by talking about the time before your arrival. What did you do in advance to prepare for your first days here in Stuttgart and for your studies?

(Dilip:) Okay so in order to be prepared for the first few days in Stuttgart, I watched a lot of videos and vlogs about the city on YouTube and I also made aware of the most important things that I should do immediately after arriving, in the first few days. So generally, you can find this content on social media platforms, so those things are really helpful. You have a lot of basic things to be done like your city registration, opening your bank account and enrolling yourself at the University. So all these things are also available on the International Office's website, so you would get a good overview of what you have to do. And this is how I prepared myself for the first few days in Stuttgart.

(Melanie:) Okay so were those also the first steps after your arrival or was there anything you did in addition to it?

(Dilip:) Yes, so this is the most exciting part. I was prepared beforehand so I knew what exactly I had to do. The very first thing immediately after arriving in Stuttgart was to visit the International Office and collect the welcome package. This is very important, because the welcome package, which is provided by the International Office, contains all the information, which you have to do in the first few days. It also contains information about the various activities, which would be conducted by the University for international students. The staff at the IZ is very friendly and helpful and they also gave me a brief introduction about everything that I should know. So I would recommend everyone of you who is coming to Stuttgart to first and foremost visit the International Office, collect the welcome package and interact with the staff at the IZ.

(Melanie:) Okay, you mentioned those introductory events, so there are some offered by the International Office, by the faculties at the beginning of the semester. How did you learn about those?

(Dilip:) Generally the information of these introductory events will be put on the website of the respective faculties. So, if you go to the website, suppose I study Electrical

Engineering, which comes in faculty five. So when you go to the website of faculty five under the section news and events you get this information. Also the International Office has a separate website. So when you go to the link of the International Office of the University of Stuttgart, they would have also mentioned all these in their news and events section. Another source of getting this information is following the Instagram page of the International Office, which is really helpful. So you get all the notifications on Instagram as well. *[Note Dez. 2: The International Office can be found via @unistuttgartinternational]*

(Melanie:) Okay perfect. So regarding support for international students: In your opinion, what was good, what could have been better?

(Dilip:) Okay, so the support for international students from the International Office and as well as the faculty five was really great. There were no issues in this respect. It is clearly mentioned on the course website whom we should contact at the faculty five or at the IZ regarding our queries. So everything was perfect and for most of my queries I contacted the course coordinator. So each course at the University of Stuttgart will have a program manager or course coordinator as it is called. So if you contact him you will get all the details. And at the IZ we have dedicated staff, a lot is for a set of international programs, so I contacted the person who was in charge for my study program, which is Electrical Engineering.

(Melanie:) Okay, that sounds good. So, do you have any tips for new international students in getting acquainted with the new surroundings, the university, the faculty or their studies?

(Dilip:) I would strongly recommend new international students to participate in the buddy program and also in the Intercultural Mentoring Program, which is offered by the University of Stuttgart and the International Office, since these two programs will help you get acquainted with the new surroundings. It will enable you to make a lot of new friends and get to know the culture here. Only when you come out of your space and meet a lot of new people, you will be well acclimatized to this place and you will have a good beginning here at the university.

(Melanie:) Yes, I agree to that. So, you mentioned getting contacts with other students and I also think this is really important during your studies to have contact to others. So how did you manage this, how did you get contact to your fellow students or maybe senior students?

(Dilip:) For me LinkedIn was a really helpful platform to connect with fellow students, the senior students and also the professors and PhD students at the faculty five. So LinkedIn is one very useful platform. Also there were many additional groups which were formed on Facebook and WhatsApp. So generally the people who get the admits for one particular intake just form a group and discuss everything together. So it is very important that you identify these groups, which are there on Facebook and WhatsApp for every intake.

(Melanie:) Okay so is there anything you think is important to share, anything important for international students that are going to start their studies at the University of Stuttgart?

(Dilip:) Yes, so generally being an international student, you tend to have a sense of fear as to how everything goes in a new country. I would like to encourage all the incoming international students of the University of Stuttgart to let go of this fear, to be confident and to enjoy the experience of studying abroad. The IZ and the faculty five are always supportive and helpful towards the international students. So you will definitely enjoy your stay in Stuttgart. So I'd like to wish all the very best for all the students who will be coming to study here in Stuttgart. You will definitely have a great time. Good luck!

(Melanie:) Okay, so that was my last question. Is there anything left that you want to say?

(Dilip:) No, I think I have covered everything.

(Melanie:) Okay. So, I think that was an interesting talk, thank you very much. And I think this will help a lot of students. Because as you said, it can be very frightening to study in another country. I know this myself, so I'm planning to do this and I am also a bit frightened like, will everything work out, but as you said, it's great and I also think it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to study abroad.

(Dilip:) Yes, you don't need to have any fear, as long as you follow the guidelines, which are given by the university. If you follow everything correctly, everything will go smoothly without any issues.

(Melanie:) Yes, I can agree. So thank you very much for being here today.

(Dilip:) Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I hope the new incoming students will be benefiting from this information.

(Melanie:) I am sure they do. And if you listeners want to know more about how to have a perfect start at the University of Stuttgart, you can check out the links in the show notes below, or, if it was just too much information at once, of course you can listen to the episode once more. And of course, you can always send us an e-mail, the address can also be found below, and you can check out our social media channels. We wish you a great start in Stuttgart. Goodbye!