

# Seehaus Leipzig - Germany

## Introduction

Seehaus Leipzig is a juvenile correctional facility that follows a "free form" model (Jugendstrafvollzug in freien Formen). This means it offers an alternative to traditional closed or open prisons, allowing young offenders to serve their sentences in a different way. The facility is located near Leipzig, a major industrial and scientific hub in Saxony, right by Lake Hainer See in the Leipzig New Lakes region.



It is one of two such facilities in Germany run by the NGO Seehaus e.V. Seehaus Leipzig was opened in 2018, following the establishment of Seehaus e.V.'s first facility for free form juvenile detention in 2011. The organization aims to create a "school of life that gives young prisoners the chance to make a change of life". To achieve this, the residents learn positive social behavior through group culture and family-like living which reflect the values of trust and responsibility.

## Scale

Seehaus Leipzig has room for a maximum of fourteen residents. Residents are divided and live in different family units. Each unit consists of a family (parents and children) up to five residents.

### RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

## Differentiation

### *Target group:*

Seehaus Leipzig is a male-only facility for young offenders between the ages of 14 and 23. It primarily accommodates individuals serving prison sentences of one to five years, though those in pre-trial detention can also apply. Residents stay for a period of 12 to 36 months.

To be accepted, applicants must be personally motivated, willing to cooperate, and not pose a risk of fleeing or using the program to commit further crimes. Seehaus Leipzig does not accept individuals convicted of sexual offenses or murder. Additionally, those with less than nine months remaining on their sentence or

with limited German language skills cannot be accommodated, as German is the sole language used at the facility. Young offenders with severe substance use disorders or significant psychiatric issues are also not admitted, as the facility lacks the necessary support for these conditions.

### *Forms of security:*



Seehaus Leipzig has no static security measures. The security is mainly based on relational security, combined with procedural security. Seehaus ensures a safe environment by giving the residents responsibility and building relationships of trust and confidence. One-to-one discussions in informal formats, a positive peer culture, which involves a culture of helping each other out, and the buddy system are also seen as important in the facility. In

addition, Seehaus Leipzig provides a full and thorough program. This way, residents are actively engaged and occupied throughout the day.

In Seehaus Leipzig the residents are always surrounded by a staff member, volunteer, or another resident. The staff has implemented a phase system that aligns with different levels of freedom, autonomy and responsibility depending on the phase a resident is in. There are six phases and the higher a resident is in the system, the more autonomy they get, for example being able to participate in leisure activities or becoming a buddy for another resident.<sup>1</sup>

Seehaus uses twelve basic norms in the facility, such as “we do not hurt anyone, neither through words nor through deeds”, “we respect ourselves and each other” or “we confront in order to help, not to hurt”. Breaking these rules can result in being expelled from the program.

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<sup>1</sup>More information about the phase system can be found here: Seehaus e.V. (2020, August 12). *Phase System - Seehaus e.V.* Retrieved July 19th, 2023, from <https://seehaus-ev.de/alternative-juvenile-prison/phase-system/>

*Activities:*

Seehaus Leipzig has a strict weekly schedule that includes different activities, training or workshops and time spent with the family. Vocational training and school are central to the weekly schedule. The vocational training focuses on reintegration into the job market by, among other things, organizing different workshops in three different work fields: carpentry, metal work and joinery. Seehaus Leipzig has partner organizations with whom the residents have the possibility to work after their release.

While most residents work within the facility, those who have progressed to higher steps in the phase system may also have the opportunity to work outside of the facility. The residents go to school three days a week and have vocational training two days a week. Besides this, the weekly schedule consists of sports and leisure activities, confrontational pedagogy, community service and volunteer service. Christian faith plays a role in the weekly schedule by



organizing church service and reading of the Bible in the first weeks at the facility. Seehaus Leipzig also strives to prepare the families of the residents for their return by visiting them and offering seminars on life after detention.

The facility proposes an additional program wherein a staff member visits the former residents for two hours every week for a period of six months to sometimes a year, depending on their individual needs. This follow-up program includes regular one-on-one discussions, assistance with job searches, guidance on engaging in leisure activities, support with schooling and training, assistance with resolving debts, and advice on managing finances effectively. If the residents have chosen godparents during their stay, these individuals also continue to provide support to them after their sentence has ended.

## Community-integration

### *Location and architecture:*



Seehaus Leipzig is located in Neukieritzsch, 25 km south of Leipzig, in the state of Saxony, and is part of the local community. Neukieritzsch has a population of about 6,995 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> While the facility is situated in a remote area, it is conveniently close to Leipzig, one of Saxony's main industrial and scientific centers. The facility is located in the Leipzig New Lakes County, on the shores of Lake Hainer See, an up-and-coming recreational area. Seehaus Leipzig is

also easily accessible by public transport.

The facility is surrounded by nature, with Lake Hainer See right next to it. The site consists of newly built houses designed to support the concept of family-integrated group living. The main building includes several family living units, each equipped with a balcony, kitchen, living room, bathroom, and bedrooms. Residents share a bedroom with two or three people. Outside the main building, there are additional houses for various activities and a small playground for the children of resident families.

### *Interaction with the community:*

Seehaus is an organization that cooperates with different organizations and services in the community. On the one hand, the community offers services to the facility. Companies can hire residents for different kinds of work possibilities. In addition, Seehaus relies on many volunteers such as host families or godparents. The facility also receives money and material donations from the community.

On the other hand, Seehaus provides community service through projects that benefit the community. Residents engage in activities such as sports, non-profit initiatives, and for-profit construction projects, including building playgrounds, park benches, and working on historic sites. This involvement serves as a form of symbolic restitution, allowing residents to contribute positively to society. They also perform voluntary tasks like trimming hedges, painting fences, and making minor repairs.

#### Seehaus Leipzig

Founded: 2018

Capacity: 14

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Leipzig  
(Germany)

Nature of interaction:

Mapped by Seehaus  
(09/01/2023)

<sup>2</sup>CityPopulation.de. (n.d.). *Neukieritzsch (Sachsen)*. CityPopulation.de. Retrieved February 2, 2025, from [https://www.citypopulation.de/en/germany/sachsen/leipzig/14729320\\_\\_neukieritzsch/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/germany/sachsen/leipzig/14729320__neukieritzsch/)

In addition to these efforts, Seehaus runs a kindergarten for young children, organizes events, and offers self-defense training open to the public. The organization also facilitates projects that bring people from both inside and outside the facility together. An example is the Sycamore Tree Project, where 4-6 victims and 4-6 offenders meet over six sessions to share their experiences and begin the healing process. The goal is to help young offenders understand the consequences of their crimes, develop empathy, and take responsibility for their actions and the harm they have caused.

### Publicity/ read more

- About Seehaus Leipzig at the official website of Seehaus e.V.:

Seehaus e.V. (n.d.). *Seehaus Leipzig*. Seehaus e.V. Retrieved January 31, 2025, from <https://seehaus-ev.de/seehaus-leipzig/>

- About the phase system in Seehaus at the official website of Seehaus e.V.:

Seehaus e.V. (2020, August 12). *Phase System - Seehaus e.V.* Retrieved July 19th, 2023, from <https://seehaus-ev.de/alternative-juvenile-prison/phase-system/>