

Pilot Scheme: Menstrual products for free

The provision of free menstrual products in public spaces is repeatedly the subject of polarizing debates. There are frequent discussions about necessity, feasibility and financing.

At the University of Magdeburg, a pilot project started on July 1, 2023, that sets a clear signal with the installation of 10 dispensers for period products. But why is the topic so important?

"Menstruation is a topic that affects about half of the population worldwide. At Magdeburg University alone, it affects an estimated 42% of all students. For them, the use of hygiene products during menstruation is just as ubiquitous as the use of toilet paper soaps, or paper towels," explains Dr. Anne Teller, [Equal Opportunity and Diversity Officer](#) in the Prorectorate for Research, Technology & Equal Opportunity at Magdeburg University. In addition, menstruation often starts unexpectedly, which can also affect everyday life at the university.

Another problem: not everyone can afford hygiene products. What looks like a minor expense to some at first glance can be a major financial burden. According to a survey by the children's rights organization [Plan International Germany](#), around 25% of menstruating people have difficulty paying for the tampons, pads and the like they need on a regular basis. The phenomenon, also known as "period poverty," shows that it is not only a matter of gender equality but also of equal opportunities. "Each menstruating person spends an average of 141 euros on menstrual products over the course of a three-year bachelor's degree. Depending on the university location, this is roughly equivalent to another semester's tuition that menstruators involuntarily pay."

Free menstrual products would therefore be a solution to several problems. But often it is not only the understanding that fails, but also the implementation. So far, there is no legal regulation for the provision of free period products in public spaces. This means that the equipment would have to be provided voluntarily and financed and organized specifically. The [Magdeburg start-up "Periodically"](#) offers a solution for this. As early as 2021, the two medical students Katharina Weißig and Corvin Groß are developing a dispenser for period products that covers everything imaginable. The stainless steel boxes are hygienic, easy to refill and require no electricity. Up to 100 tampons and 40 pads can easily be accommodated. The company's website states, "Our goal is to make free menstrual products freely available to all. We want to support menstruators who spontaneously need period products. Furthermore, we want to create equal opportunities and educational justice, support menstruators who do not have sufficient financial means and de-taboo the topic of "menstruation" as well as normalize it." The product is proving to be extremely successful. For example, the students have already been recognized for their development as "signposts to an equal future". Already at 50 universities & colleges the practical donors of Periodically are represented, as well as in quite a few schools, municipalities and enterprises. In addition, a portion of the proceeds will be used to support institutions for the needy, such as women's shelters or organizations for the homeless.



Dr. Anne Teller from the Prorectorate for Research, Technology & Equal Opportunity, Dominik Florian Babetzky from the Student Council, the central Equal Opportunity Officer Dr. Mareike Fingerhut-Säck and Gabriel Rücker from the Student Council were instrumental in initiating the donors (from left to right) Photo: private

In the six-month pilot project of the University of Magdeburg, the need as well as future costs are to be determined first. In cooperation with the Rectorate for Research, Technology and Equal Opportunity as well as the Equal Opportunity Officer and members of the Student Council, the installation of 10 period article dispensers was made possible. These are to be located in lecture hall buildings 16, 22, 26, 40 and 44 as well as the refectory and library on the main campus from the end of July 2023. The project has already been under discussion since 2021: "We are very pleased that the university management supports the students in this important topic and thus also draws attention to the explosive nature of the issue," report Periodically founders Katharina Weißig and Corvin Groß.

Thus, the university takes another step towards equal opportunities and equal rights. This measure is intended to make it easier for students to stay at the university and to reduce barriers caused by menstruation. By offering free period products, OVGU has taken a very practical approach to counter period poverty and reduce social injustice." **Access to free menstrual products is a concrete measure to promote gender equality and improve students' mental health and well-being – an important step toward a fair future.**

<https://www.unimagazin.ovgu.de/en/Articles/2023/August/Menstrual+products+for+free.html>



Location of the dispensers:

| Building | | Number | Total | Lavatory |
|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 16 | Hörsaal V | 1x f | 1 | R072 |
| 22 | Hörsaal II | 1x f; 1x uni | 2 | A-017; Unisex: E-003 |
| 26 | Hörsaal I | 1x f | 1 | R111 |
| 27 | Mensa | 1x f | 1 | Basement |
| 30 | Bibliothek | 1x f; 1x uni | 2 | Basement; R144 (1. OG) |
| 40 | FHW | 1x f; 1x f | 2 | 2.OG / R 246; f R018 |
| 44 | Hörsaal VI | 1x f | 1 | Foyer |
| | | | 10 | |

f: female

uni: All Gender toilet

