

We've updated our Privacy and Cookies Policy

We've made some important changes to our Privacy and Cookies Policy and we want you to know what this means for you and your data.

OK

[Find out what's changed](#)



[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Sport](#)

[Weather](#)

[Shop](#)

[Earth](#)

[Travel](#)

AD

Udo Voigt loses fight for right to hotel room

By Michael Steininger

BBC News, Berlin

22 June 2010



A court in eastern Germany has ruled that a local hotel was within its rights to ban the leader of the German far-right National Democratic Party (NPD) from taking a room.



It is easy to see why people love to come to the Hotel and Spa Esplanade.

With its softly bubbling pools and tranquil massage rooms, it sits right on the shore of Lake Scharmuetzelsee in the idyllic small town of Bad Saarow, just 45 minutes' drive south-east from Berlin.

In the roaring 1920s Berliners came out to lush green Saarow to summer by the lake, and today the recently built Esplanade boasts high-profile guests like Chancellor Angela Merkel.

But when Udo Voigt, leader of the far-right NPD, tried to book a holiday there last November, the hotel said "no".

The NPD is a legal party, but has known links with neo-Nazi groups, and stands accused of racism and inciting hatred.

"Given his political opinions, and what he and his party represent, we could not guarantee the well-being of our guests should he stay with us," explains Heinz Baumeister, general manager of the Hotel Esplanade.

Voigt would not take no for an answer, however, and sued the hotel for discrimination. The irony is not lost on Mr Baumeister.

After all, a few years back the NPD leader was found guilty of inciting racial hatred himself.

"There is a debate to be had," Mr Baumeister admits. "Should you discriminate against those who are guilty of discrimination? It's an interesting subject, but in the end decisions have to be made."

'Misunderstood'

The hotel manager can rely on the support of most of his guests, like Anne-Dore Krohn, who is here for the first time.

"For me it would definitely be a strange atmosphere to swim in the same pool as Mr Voigt, or to sit in the sauna next to him," she says.

Just 70km away, in Koepenick, a slightly run-down area in Berlin's east, I find Udo Voigt at party headquarters.

It is a rather unimpressive looking, small two-storey building with no party sign, but with double steel doors and a police car parked outside.

"It's scandalous and a violation of my basic rights," Mr Voigt says about the hotel ban.

Asked about the matter of his own, well-documented discrimination against others, he claims he has always been misunderstood.

"We have nothing against foreigners," he says.

"We do welcome guests in Germany and don't discriminate against them. We just don't want them to stay indefinitely. I didn't intend to stay indefinitely at Mr Baumeister's hotel."

The problem for Mr Voigt is that German anti-discrimination law does not regard political persuasion as something that deserves protection.

The NPD wants to change that, and sees the case against the Hotel Esplanade as a welcome opportunity.

"German legislators specifically excluded the element of political belief when they implemented European anti-discrimination law, because they didn't want to give any legal protection to the far-right," says Klaus Michael Alenfelder, law professor and president of the German Society for Anti-discrimination Law.

"So, when a private contractor decides not to do business with someone whose political opinion he doesn't like, he's perfectly free to do so."

Even though the NPD is represented in two regional parliaments, its share of the national vote is just over 1%.

And given Germany's past, neither politicians nor the courts are interested in changing that, Professor Alenfelder believes.

Even so, the case has prompted many Germans to ask themselves how intolerant they are prepared to be in order to protect a tolerant society.

Share this story About sharing

More on this story

German far-right leader on trial

24 March 2009

German far-right leader charged

25 March 2008

Europe



Italy-France talks halted over ship row

13 June 2018 | [Europe](#)



SPORT Russia ready for 2018 World Cup start

13 June 2018 | [Football](#)



French MPs back Macron's rail reforms

13 June 2018 | [Europe](#)

More Videos from the BBC

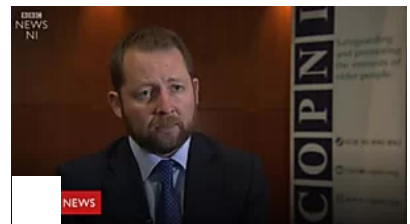
Recommended by Outbrain



'I'm a student, this way I get free food'



How Koreans see the Trump-Kim handshake



'It is an absolute disgrace'



5 things Saudi women can't do



Emirates tests virtual plane windows



£25m longest aircraft moved to new base

Elsewhere on BBC

Recommended by Outbrain



BBC Culture

Cultural Calendar



BBC Culture

Sex and the City: A global revolution



BBC News

The warrior queen who 'achieved the incredible'



BBC Culture

Van Gogh and Japan: the prints that shaped the artist



BBC News

Ivanka Trump and Kushner income revealed



BBC Future

The health risks of maturing early

Top Stories

Fighting rages over vital port in Yemen

The assault on Hudaydah marks the first attempt by Saudi-backed forces to capture a major city.

46 minutes ago

Antarctica's ice melt 'has accelerated'

7 hours ago

Russia ready for 2018 World Cup start

7 hours ago

ADVERTISEMENT



HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro
CO-ENGINEERED WITH 

AI POWER / ENDURING ENERGY

Join us >

Features



A changing life for a North Korean family



Grenfell Tower: Global roots of fire victims



Deciphering the Trump-Kim summit



'My daughter wants a hysterectomy at 15'



Who is going to win the World Cup?



Why adults in Japan are getting younger



Why many Nigerians scoff at paternity leave



Where women have more bank accounts than men



Untold stories from the Grenfell wall



Most Read

Einstein's travel diaries reveal physicist's racism	1
Woman sues Nasa over ownership of moon dust vial	2
Russian teacher sacked over Instagram swimsuit photos	3
Brexit: MPs reject bid to stay in EEA amid Labour revolt	4
US jogger who dumped homeless man's belongings arrested	5
Antarctica loses three trillion tonnes of ice in 25 years	6
Trump Kim summit: US wants 'major N Korea disarmament' by 2020	7
America's Got Talent: The 13-year-old Brit who got the golden buzzer	8
Daredevil raccoon's Minnesota skyscraper climb	9
Music mogul Jonathan King 'used fame' to lure teenage boys	10



From Around the Web

Promoted content by Outbrain |



Wenn Sie einen Computer haben dann müssen Sie...

Astro Conques



Which Museum Is the Most Popular on the Planet?

Far and Wide



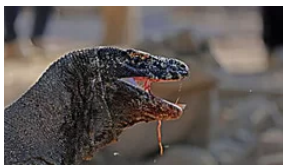
Best Photos from the Royal Wedding

familyindex



Living Like a Queen: The Royal Family Isn't Like...

familyindex



15 Prehistoric Creatures That Are Still Alive Today

Far and Wide



14 Body Language Tricks to Appear More Confident at...

Work+Money

Ads by Google



British Expat In Germany?

Avoid Losing 55% Of £70k+ Pensions
Download A Free Expat Pension Guide
your.expatpensionreview.com

MBA Without Bachelor

Advance your career with an Online MBA in
1 Year. No bachelor required. Learn more!
Univ. of Cumbria @ RKC

1 Absagen-Killer

Diesen 1 Satz sofort aus der Bewerbung
löschen!
Die perfekte Bewerbung

Geldanlage Schweiz 8%

8% Rendite im Jahr. Euro frei. Ohne Risiko &
100% steuerfrei!
ShareWood Switzerland AG



Why you can trust BBC News

BBC News Services

On your mobile

On your connected tv

Get news alerts

Contact BBC News

Explore the BBC

Home

Sport

Shop

Travel

Culture

News

Weather

Earth

Capital

Autos

[Future](#)

[Radio](#)

[CBeebies](#)

[iWonder](#)

[Music](#)

[Make It Digital](#)

[Nature](#)

[TV](#)

[CBBC](#)

[Food](#)

[Bitesize](#)

[Arts](#)

[Taster](#)

[Local](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Accessibility Help](#)

[Contact the BBC](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[About the BBC](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Parental Guidance](#)

[Get Personalised Newsletters](#)

[Ad choices](#)

Copyright © 2018 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. **Read about our approach to external linking.**