

FORTHEM: Outreach mission: International Hub over borders

“Join the International hub, today” is the slogan, we declared after the confusing chain of events started by the declaration of a state of emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic. As it became clear that something needed to be done, we wanted to make sure that no one was left alone. Therefore, we wanted to create a platform, that would help students to interact with each other and still experience a sense of belonging and community in times where most people spent a lot more time alone at home than usually.

The idea evolved into a discord-channel called “International Hub”. Discord is an application that allows you to create a server people can join via a shared link. All rooms created on this server can automatically be seen after one has joined. Text as well as voice chat channels are possible. These channels are structured under categories to provide an additional level of organizations. Each chat can be assigned a specific topic and important messages can be pinned so that they stay visible as the discussion in the chat continues. Topics can range from political discussions, general information, admin roundtables to music recommendations. Voice Chats offer a great possibility to hold official meetings, talk while playing games, host hangouts or start a discussion round. If the Voice chat is open to everyone, people can join or drop out at any time point without affecting the other participants in the chat. Private chats can be created that are only visible to those invited specifically. Through the creation of different roles, the participants on the server can be allowed to have certain admin rights according to their role in an association for an example. Rights of these roles can be individualized for certain text channels, enabling certain roles to effectively moderate their own text and voice channels. This provides a high degree of organization without granting too many people server wide admin rights.

We propose to create a Discord Server that will help connect the Universities participating in the FORTHEM Alliance. This will open up the possibilities for a new level of communication between the students of the different universities and will help the universities distribute information, gather ideas from students, create project groups and gain access to the needs and wishes of its students to provide the best possible solutions.

The purpose of this server is to enhance the efforts of the FORTHEM Alliance by providing a social foundation to supplement the outreach, visibility and general communication between projects, universities and everyone interested. The server will serve as a hub for information and events to be shared and comments and feedback to be collected. The users of the server would be able to use the Discord server to create categories for the individual universities and projects. Under these categories text and voice chat channels can be created to encourage exchange about different projects, communication within and between universities or just miscellaneous social interaction. The channels can be tailored to achieve the appropriate amount of transparency. This can reach from being open to all members of the server to be read and write to only for selected roles or members and several degrees between.

With the help of such a server, students could work on projects together remotely and organise meetings and projects that are coming up. The FORTHEM Alliance would be able to use the Discord server to create categories for the individual universities and projects. Under these categories text and voice chat channels can be created to discuss the project and its subtasks. The channels can be tailored to achieve the appropriate amount of transparency. This can reach from being open to all members of the server to be read and write to only for selected roles or members and several degrees between.

Since implementing a server like this is always work-intensive in the beginning and needs active participation to be accepted by its users and develop its own dynamic, we propose to select specific people as moderators. These people would work together to keep the channel active and organised for every one to get the best use out of it.

There are several different servers, that can be used. So far we have used Discord and made good experiences with it. However, other options exist, for example Slack.

We are delighted to provide you this link, that you can check out our pilot: <https://discord.gg/TJkVkrJ>

Let's join the power of communality and creativity over borders!

Students from University of Jyväskylä:

Antonia Thamm, Sascha Lüdeke, Sarah Tornberg & Eevi Hakala

Contact: Antonia Thamm, antonia.thamm@me.com