



PRESS RELEASE

POP UP MY BATHROOM
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Pop up my Bathroom

Perfectly Normal

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- Image change: bathrooms for elderly people eliminate barriers of all kinds
- New study results illustrate just how dramatic demographic change in Germany is
- Bathroom planners and tradespeople play indispensable role: added value for bathroom users increasingly generated by intelligent planning
- Pop up my Bathroom: "Freibad" aims to open the bathroom up to new ideas and generation-specific solutions

Let's be honest: barrier-free bathrooms don't exactly have a sexy image. Most people associate them with a small, "disabled-friendly" tiled room dominated by grab rails, a minimalist ambience and the dubious charm of hospital furniture. However, it looks as if this image is about to undergo some fundamental changes over the next few years.

For one thing, not even bathrooms that conform to the standardised definition of "barrier-free" have to look anywhere near as austere as they did just a few years ago. Because there's much more to barrier-free accessibility than the specifications

laid out in the relevant standards. It starts with an open, spacious design that can be adapted to lots of different individual interests and makes allowances for future care situations with level access showers and modern features like sensor-controlled fittings and lighting systems, programmable water settings or easy-care finishes. But the future is set to be even more convenient, comfortable and lifestyle-friendly – as will be apparent at the coming ISH, the world’s leading trade fair for water and energy technology. Because in a future where 50-year-olds represent a society’s average age, living in an attractive home and aging independently should certainly no longer be regarded as mutually exclusive. As the key room for maintaining independence, the bathroom for the older age group will feature just as much design and convenience as “normal bathrooms” – but probably even more assistive technology and systems.

“Our goal shouldn’t just be to make barrier-free bathrooms more attractive and functional,” argues Jens J. Wischmann, Managing Director of the German Sanitary Industry Association (Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitärwirtschaft e.V. [VDS]), “but to design them as ‘normal’ bathrooms. In an inclusive society, the distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘barrier-free’ will become less pronounced anyway. And working towards that goal is no longer a question of aesthetics and the performance principle – it’s a question of our society’s survival,” says Wischmann.

Pop up my Bathroom: “Freibad” aims to open the bathroom up to new ideas and generation-specific solutions

On the occasion of the coming ISH in Frankfurt am Main (10th to 14th March 2015), the VDS trend platform Pop up my Bathroom is also exploring the requirements the bathroom will have to meet in future. Pop up my Bathroom’s current “Freibad” campaign aims to encourage people to question boundaries and eliminate them – not just in terms of breaking down barriers but in the sense of tackling seemingly fixed usage concepts for the bathroom as well. Because there’s much more to the idea of freedom in the bathroom than barrier-free accessibility: it involves ergonomics, multifunctionality and aesthetics too. This is the underlying thought behind the four concept bathrooms Pop up my Bathroom has captured in photos, conceived to accompany people in every stage of their lives. They promote the barrier-free bathroom as a customisable concept for everybody.

The future is barrier-free – and it all starts in the mind

As society’s demographic structure changes, elderly people’s self-image will change too. They won’t just work longer – either because they have to or because they want to – they will see themselves as active and formative members of society for longer too. The younger generation’s care mentality will have to adapt to its parents’ generation’s strong desire for self-determination. That also includes the right to take risks – for instance by maintaining one’s own household despite age-related health concerns. Reconciling the different interests of younger and older generations and creating the prerequisites for living a self-

determined life well into old age will be one of society's most difficult challenges.

With the current campaign from its experimental trend platform Pop up my Bathroom, the VDS aims to put the idea of a life-stage-friendly bathroom up for discussion and thus dust off the image of barrier-free accessibility in the minds of designers, manufacturers, bathroom planners and consumers. And in view of the latest forecasts on demographic change in Germany, bathroom design for the elderly is certainly a topic that deserves special attention.

Rapid demographic change calls for rapid adjustment – in housing too

The data indicates that demographic change in Germany will be even more dramatic than previously thought. In November 2014, one current database led Prof. Dr. Eckart Bomsdorf of the University of Cologne's Institute of Econometrics and Statistics to publish the prognosis that the number of gainfully employed Germans will drop from 50 million today to 36 million by 2060 – by which time every second German will be at least 51 years old. There will also be more very elderly people aged 90 or older – around 3.3 million of them as compared to the current figure of 650,000. This will have an impact not just on how pensions are financed but on the infrastructure of education, the housing industry and the health system as well.

At the same time, there will also be more people in need of care. Germany's Federal Statistical Office anticipates a figure of 3.4

million by 2030. Since the majority of care recipients are looked after at home, a safe and convenient bathroom plays a crucial role in this context too.

German bathroom concepts as role models – an opportunity not to be missed

And Germany is not alone: the phenomenon of falling birth rates accompanied by an increase in life expectancy is being observed all over the world. Whilst in many countries the dynamics of population growth are unstoppable, populations in other parts of the world are shrinking – especially in the OECD countries of Europe and North America. Although this same demographic development is manifesting itself in other highly developed industrial nations like Japan or Italy too, it is making itself felt a little earlier and in more concentrated form in Germany – which therefore has the opportunity to serve as a role model for the accelerated adjustment processes required.

Germany's sanitary industry is already rising to the challenge of adapting the bathroom to future requirements: besides its "Barrier-free Bathroom Campaign", it is also participating in the development of intelligent bathrooms. Even today, the technical possibilities already exist for bathroom models in which the toilet automatically adapts to people of different sizes, the mirror display provides guidance for taking medication and ambient aids make life both easier and safer. Besides basic requirements like freedom of movement and more space, there are various other aspects to generation-specific design that are helpful to all users, such as atmospheric lighting, a sensor-controlled

nightlight, slip-resistant surfaces, level-access showers and seating for resting and chilling.

“Freibad” – a fresh approach to the barrier-free bathroom

Pop up my Bathroom is exploring the needs that should be taken into account by any bathroom concept designed for a specific life stage. The concept of the multigenerational bathroom whose design is suitable for as many different target groups as possible is only the first step in these considerations towards a variable bathroom. In future, variable floor plans and modern installation systems will be able to increase the bathroom’s versatility to such an extent that, provided the renovation options and space available meet the necessary requirements, it will be more than able to adapt to its users’ lives. The “Frei” component of the “Freibad” motto is synonymous with freedom, independence and joie de vivre. “Freibad” aims to achieve greater acceptance for the concept of the barrier-free bathroom – with unconventional perspectives on the bathroom as a place where people can lead their lives and live their dreams no matter what situation they find themselves in.

The bathroom is where individualistic interior lifestyle comes face to face with key needs: hygiene, relaxation and the opportunity to experience one’s own body. These functions will play an even more important role when it comes to ensuring continued wellbeing and independence in our old age. Because the bathroom doesn’t just help us cope with the day, it helps us cope with our entire lives – a complex function that turns the design of this space into a highly challenging assignment.

Bathroom planners and tradespeople play an indispensable role. As a result, ambitious tradespeople and professional bathroom planners are playing an increasingly important role as well. Because an adaptable bathroom that permits both individual zones and barrier-free elements (or at least allows for their installation later on) whilst still taking users' individual needs into account calls for a great deal of professional advice – even if tried-and-tested models will certainly make it easier to transfer this concept to a 'normal' bathroom. "We want to use imaginative scenarios like Pop up my Bathroom, as well as experiments and collaborations with the trades, industry, architecture and research, to develop a life-stage-friendly bathroom," says Jens J. Wischmann, summing up one of the key challenges the sanitary industry will face in future. "We aim to make it a recipe for success in changing societies."

Further information:

www.pop-up-my-bathroom.de

For further information on the world-leading ISH trade fair go to:

www.ish.messefrankfurt.com

The German Sanitary Industry Association [Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitärwirtschaft e.V. (VDS)] is the umbrella organisation for German companies in the bathroom and sanitary sectors and consists of 10 member associations from industry, specialist wholesale and specialist trades. For further information on the VDS go to: www.sanitaerwirtschaft.de.

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