Information for Newcomers

Fritz Haber Institute (FHI) of the Max Planck Society
Faradayweg 4-6
14195 Berlin
Germany
The Fritz Haber Institute (FHI) of the Max Planck Society heartily welcomes you and wishes you all the best for your stay in Germany.

With these guidelines, we’d like to inform you about the formal paperwork necessary for your stay and also to give you some basic information about the life and living in Germany. While reading, please keep in mind that some contact information may have changed over the time and that you should always look up the current contact details on the internet.

Please visit the official website of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany to get a first impression and a general idea about Germany before you come here. The official Berlin website and Visit Berlin offer you a broader range of information about Berlin in particular and in various languages. For those of you considering living in Potsdam, www.potsdam.de and www.potsdam-tourism.com will give you relevant information about the city, shopping, cultural events, health, social welfare and many other things.

Further information can also be obtained on the website of the Free University of Berlin and the very useful and comprehensive Researchers-in-Motion Portal EURAXESS. The latter is also very recommendable for getting information on various issues like funding, taxes and even child care.

Prof. Martin Wolf, Managing Director
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Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet
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The Fritz Haber Institute (FHI)

Welcome Office

For any questions or problems before or during your stay in Germany, feel free to contact the FHI’s Welcome Office. You will receive assistance finding an apartment, a kindergarten place, filling in documents and further support.

You might either send an email to Jessica Paulsen, call or come by personally every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 h till 12:00 h. You find the welcome office on the second floor in building A, room 2.09, the phone number is +49 30 8413 3102. Please also consult the Welcome Office’s webpage.

How to get to the FHI

The FHI is located in the beautiful southwest of Berlin being part of the Dahlem science campus, which offers cutting-edge international research and training for tomorrow’s scientists. The close proximity of the Departments of Natural Sciences at the Free University of Berlin provides ideal conditions to discover new collaborative ventures.

Next to the FHI you find a subway station (“Thielplatz” line U3) which is also served by bus 110. For more details on how to get to the institute by car or public transport, please see “reach” on our webpage.

Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet.
**Arriving at the FHI**

The secretaries of your department will provide you with the key for your office and the key card for all FHI buildings. They will also be able to answer most of your questions or will know who can answer them.

**Department of Inorganic Chemistry**  
Dorothea Damm: Room F 4.09, Andrea Moebius: Room F 4.06,  
Phone: +49 30 8413 4409, email: acsek@fhi-berlin.mpg.de

**Department of Chemical Physics**  
Manuela Misch: Room P 1.02,  
Phone: +49 30 8413 4104, Email: misch@fhi-berlin.mpg.de  
Daniela Nikolaus: Room P 1.05  
Phone: +49 30 8413 4102, Email: nikolaus@fhi-berlin.mpg.de

**Department of Molecular Physics**  
Andrea Braaker-Junkes: Room C 1.09,  
Phone: +49 30 8413 5600, Email: braaker@fhi-berlin.mpg.de

**Department of Physical Chemistry**  
Daria Haberland, Manuel Krüger, Room A 1.11,  
Phone: +49 30 8413 5102, -5112 Email: pcsek@fhi-berlin.mpg.de

**Department of Theory**  
Birgit La Monaco, Julia Pach: Room T 1.20  
Phone: +49 30 8413 4700, Email: thsecretary@fhi-berlin.mpg.de

You will then get a guided tour of the FHI campus which will take you to a number of central service facilities as outlined in the next section.

**Central Services at the FHI**

**Overview**

During your guided tour of the FHI-campus you will visit a number of central service facilities:

- the Administration
- the Computer Support Group (PP&B)
- the Joint Network Center (GNZ)
- the Library
- the Electronics Workshop (ELAB)
- the Mechanical Workshops
- and other Service Facilities

Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet.
**Work Council**
The Works Council represents the employees of the FHI in all affairs concerning the relationship between employer (that is the Max Planck Society, respectively the directors of our Institute) and employee. Consequently every employee may contact the work council during working hours for the purpose of obtaining information or advice, or if they have any requests, suggestions, or complaints regarding some aspect of their labor conditions. For our current representatives please see [here](#) (internal users only).

**Equal Opportunity Representative**
Equal opportunities are a highly important issue at the FHI. To guarantee these, counseling and support is provided by the equal opportunity representatives. The representatives will help to avoid and if needed, help to remove institutional disadvantages to students, staff and the faculty because of gender.
Please visit [www.fhi-berlin.mpg.de/gleichstellung](http://www.fhi-berlin.mpg.de/gleichstellung) for more information.
Formalities from A to Z

Accommodation

Housing in Germany is either let unfurnished, partly furnished, or fully furnished. Unfurnished accommodation is the most common, and it really is “unfurnished“. A built-in kitchen is usually mentioned separately in the advertisements.

Looking for an Apartment

Looking for an affordable apartment in Potsdam and Berlin can be quite time-consuming. On arrival in Germany, you may find it necessary to stay in temporary accommodation for a few weeks or months until you can move into your own apartment. Please arrange your temporary accommodation >2-3 months before arrival.

... in the FHI Guest-House
Please contact the department secretaries for details.

... in newspapers
Large sections of all kinds of accommodation can be found in various local newspapers on Tuesday and Wednesday. You can also place an advertisement in the newspaper yourself.

... on the internet
studentenwerk-berlin.de
zweitehand.de/immobilien/mieten
kleinanzeigen.ebay.de/
service.tip-berlin.de
studentenwerk-potsdam.de/wohnen.html
studenten-wg.de
immobilien.de/
wg-gesucht.de
immobilienscout24.de
mitwohnzentrale.de/ (+commission)
immonet.de/
berlin.homecompany.de (+ commission)

Alternative Options

Shared apartments: For those who are coming to Germany alone, “WGs“ or “Wohngemeinschaften“ (shared living arrangements) are often a good option as you can live at lesser costs and meet new people. Be aware that most WG rooms are not furnished. Please visit websites like wg-gesucht.de.

Temporary accommodation: If you intend to stay in Germany for a limited time, you can consider temporary accommodation. Sublets can generally be found under the terms “Untermiete“ or “Zwischenmiete“. This means that the flats or rooms are sublet with a contract signed with the tenant, not the landlord.
### Terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Zi. – Whg.</td>
<td>Three room apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ZKDB</td>
<td>Three rooms plus kitchen, hallway, bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstand</td>
<td>You have to buy some of the fixtures and furnishings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG (Dachgeschoss)</td>
<td>Loft apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBK (Einbauküche)</td>
<td>Built-in kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG (Erdgeschoss)</td>
<td>Ground floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH (Hinterhaus)</td>
<td>Back of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (Kaution)</td>
<td>Deposit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalt</td>
<td>Heating extra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR (Nichtraucher)</td>
<td>Non-smokers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM (Kaltmiete)</td>
<td>Cold rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KN</td>
<td>Kitchenette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nachmieter</td>
<td>Tenant, who takes over an old lease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMM (Nettomonatsmiete)</td>
<td>Net monthly rent (plus costs for heating, electricity, gas, water, waste disposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVZZ (Monatliche Vorauszahlung)</td>
<td>Rent in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prov. (Provision)</td>
<td>Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qm (Quadratmeter)</td>
<td>Square meter (Size of apartment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG (Tiefgarage)</td>
<td>Underground garage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VH (Vorderhaus)</td>
<td>Front of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG (Wohngemeinschaft)</td>
<td>Shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBS erford.</td>
<td>“Wohn-Berechtigungsschein” required, i.e. subsidized housing only rented to holders of special permit (WBS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wfl (Wohnfläche)</td>
<td>Living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM (Warmmiete)</td>
<td>Warm rent (this is the cold rent plus additional costs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zi. (Zimmer)</td>
<td>Room(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZH (Zentralheizung)</td>
<td>Central heating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zzgl. NK</td>
<td>Plus extra charges (heating, electricity etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indications about the level of rent in most cases refer to basic rent (“Kaltmiete”) which means that you will have to pay additionally for water, heating and waste disposal (“Nebenkosten”) and electricity. In contrast these subsidiary charges are often included in the rent for furnished flats (“Pauschalmiete”). When you are looking for a flat, keep in mind that “Warmmiete” includes all costs, “Kaltmiete” does not.
Lease and Deposit
Before signing the lease, it is essential to read the document very carefully, including the small print. If you are interested in an apartment, ask the landlord if he could give you a draft of the lease! The lease is usually in German, so ask a German-speaking colleague to have a look at it.
As soon as you have rented the flat you will have to pay a deposit of up to 3 months’ rent. If you leave the apartment without any damages, this will be refunded when you move out.
Normally, the lease includes the rent amount and additional costs, the payment for any necessary repairs up to about 80 EUR, responsibility for renovation costs when moving out, length of lease and terms of rent increase. Furthermore the lease may contain additional arrangements (use of garden, parking lots etc). If you want to keep pets, you must ask the landlord before getting any. The lease also includes general house rules like cleaning the staircases, entrance area or the basement.
Before moving into your new home, you should make an appointment with your landlord to inspect the apartment for any defects (scratches, stains, wear and tear and damage). All this should be included in the lease, even if the damage appears very slight. Otherwise you may be charged for repairs or your deposit will not be refunded when you move out, because it is assumed that the respective damage has been caused by you. The list of defects and damages has to be signed by the landlord. You must keep this list until you move out.

Health Insurance and Services
You are required to have a health insurance for the duration of your stay in Germany. In general there are two types, statutory insurance or private insurance, depending on your work contract with the FHI you are liable to commit to one of these. Please consult the website of our Welcome Office or www.euraxess.de for more information.

If you have further questions, please contact
Kerstin Henning (ext: -3126, henning@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de)
Angela Ziebarth (ext: -3122, ziebarth@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de) or
Roswitha Below (ext: -3120, below@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de)
at the FHI (phone: +49 30 8413-...)

The webpage aerzte-berlin.de offers you a list of physicians in Berlin. You can also specify your search according to the doctor’s language competence.
You can get prescription and non-prescription drugs at the pharmacy. In case of an emergency, always there is at least one pharmacy open in every area day and night. The pharmacy at the Berlin Main Station (“Hauptbahnhof“) is open 24/7 for example. You can check online at www.akberlin.de/notdienst.html for a detailed list of all Berlin pharmacies open.
For Potsdam, please visit info-potsdam.de/notdienst.
Money

Opening a Bank Account
For opening an account you will need your passport and registration certificate (Anmeldebestätigung). The most common form of an account in Germany is a “Girokonto” (checking or current account). Most financial transactions are completed using this type of account. In general, a current account allows you to withdraw money from your bank using an EC-card. This is normally free of charge at your own bank’s ATMs, but a fee of several EUR may be charged for withdrawing money from other banks’ ATMs. You can also transfer money to pay bills using transfer forms, set up regular fixed amount payments (e.g. your rent) paid by standing order (“Dauerauftrag”) and set up regular payments (even of variable amounts, e.g. telephone bills and health insurance contributions) to be paid by direct debit.

At many banks you can choose between several current accounts with various facilities (e.g. online banking, interest, credit card at no charge, etc.) but the fees also differ. As a student you can apply for exemption from the usual account charges (“Kontoführungsgebühren”).

EC-card: electronic cash
When you have opened a current account, you are able to order an “EC-card” from your bank. The card works like a credit card with the same advantages and risks. If you lose your card, contact your bank as soon as possible. You can also report your loss to the emergency service (116 116); please have your bank account number and bank code at hand.

If you have frequent payments from or to your bank account in your home country, ask your home bank whether it cooperates with a bank in Germany. This could shorten and cheapen the transfer of money to a bank abroad.

For example, the Postbank offers bank accounts without any charges as long as more than 1,000 EUR per month are paid to the account. You can also check the DKB (account without charges, worldwide free money withdrawal with your credit card), the Deutsche Bank or any other bank that suits your needs best.

Online you’ll find comparison portals like FMH which will help you finding the best banking partner.

Registration in Germany

Residence Registration
As soon as you find a permanent place to stay in Berlin or Potsdam, you will have to register your address at the local Residence Registration Office (“Einwohnermeldeamt/Bürgeramt”), usually located in the town hall.

Each subsequent change of address must also be registered with the relevant local authority.
Registration Offices in Berlin
In Berlin, you will find a "Meldebehörde" for each borough to register your address. Please go to Bürgeramt where you will find all boroughs. Click on yours, and you will subsequently find address and phone number of your registration office.

Registration Offices in Potsdam
If you live in Potsdam, you have to register at the

Stadtverwaltung Potsdam
Bereich Bürgerservice
Friedrich- Ebert- Straße 79/81
14461 Potsdam
Phone: 0331/2891111

Mon: 10.00-18.00
Tue-Thu: 08.00-18.00
Fri: 08.00-14.00
Sat: 08.00-12.00

Residence Permit
To apply for a residence permit ("Aufenthaltsgenehmigung"), you first need to get your registration certificate ("Anmeldebestätigung", see above). Once you have obtained the registration certificate, take it to your Berlin or Potsdam foreigners’ registration office ("Ausländerbehörde") to get your residence permit. You will have to present the above mentioned registration certificate and have to fill in additional forms. These can usually be found at the information booths or the waiting areas. The Berlin foreigners’ registration office provides the form in various languages online at www.berlin.de.

Citizens of the EU, United States of America, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and Switzerland may apply for a residence permit after entering Germany without a visa. Citizens of other countries are required to apply and obtain a visa prior to entry (an option also open to US citizens) at a German embassy or consulate in their country of residence.

When applying for a residence permit, you usually have to present the following documents:

- application form
- lease agreement for accommodation
- confirmation of landlord renting a flat (only for Potsdam)
- valid Passport
- passport photograph (biometric)
- proof of valid health insurance (Germany)
- contract of employment/grant/fellowship
- proof of residence/address in Germany
- certificate of academic degree for BlueCard applications (only for TVÖD employments, not stipends)
- research agreement ("Forschervereinbarung nach § 20 Aufenthaltsgesetz") - if applicable
- marriage certificate - if applicable
- fee of 60 € - 110 € per person
Scholarship/fellowship holders have to proof their fellowship by a document from the Max Planck Institute.

If you are employed as a scientist by the Max Planck Society, you do not need a work permit. Sometimes it is difficult to convince the officials of this fact, but things usually work out. Before you go to the registration office, call them to check out the latest details. Requirements can change, so try to get as much information as possible to avoid multiple visits (e.g. because of a missing document). Also check opening times before you go there.

Your application for a residence permit will usually be processed within one or two weeks. In this time, you will be covered by a certificate stating that you are awaiting a residence permit.

Frequently asked questions are answered at Ausländerbehörde Berlin. If you have further questions, please contact Jessica Paulsen (phone: 3102, paulsen@fhi-berlin.mpg.de).

Registration office for foreigners (Ausländerbehörde) in Berlin

Landeseinwohneramt Berlin
Abteilung Ausländerangelegenheiten
Friedrich-Krause-Ufer 24
13353 Berlin
Phone: (030) 90269-0
Fax: (030) 90269-4099
berlin.de/lab/auslaender/dienstleistungen/index.html

It is strongly recommended to arrange an appointment by using the online appointment tool. You should do this ~1 month in advance. Without appointment, you can go to the office directly, but to keep queuing time low, you should be there right before the office is opened.

Registration office for foreigners (Ausländerbehörde) in Potsdam
You will find the Ausländerbehörde on their campus in building 20. Please also consult potsdam.de

Phone: 0331/289-1113
Fax: 0331/289-1764

Opening hours
Tue: 09.00-18.00
Thu: 09.00-16.00
Fri: 09.00-12.00

Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet
Social Security Plans

As a result of social security agreements with several countries, guest scientists can apply to be exempt from contributing to the German social security system. In this case, payments are automatically transferred to the respective social security plan in the scientist’s home country.

If you have to contribute to the German pension plan, you can apply for refunds but only within 24 months after your contract has ended and only if you were not compulsorily insured in Germany within this time.

Tax Number

Every employee in Germany is required to have a tax number (“Steuernummer”). Once you are employed and registered at the Bürgeramt, you will receive this number via mail soon thereafter. More information, e.g. about where your tax office (“Finanzamt”) is located, can be found at euraxess. Scholarship/Fellowship holders do not need a tax number, as they do not pay taxes.

Work Permit Applications

In general, foreigners from non-EU countries, countries not affiliated with the European Economic Area or persons who are not married to a citizen of the EU or the European Economic Area require a work permit if working in Germany.

However, there are some exceptions. Scientific employees of research institutions who are financed mostly or solely by public funds do not need a work permit, providing that their skills and abilities are of a public interest to Germany. Because of this, most Max Planck scientists do not require a work permit. Nevertheless, you have to submit a copy of your contract, job description, academic transcript and university degree to be exempt from applying for a work permit. Foreign fellowship holders do not require a work permit because they are no employees. The same applies for students working less than 90 days or 3 months per year.

All other foreigners, including the scientists’ spouses, require a work permit for Germany. It can be obtained at the employment office for foreigners (“Arbeitsamt für Ausländer”). The form that you get there has to be filled in by yourself and by your potential employer. According to German law, you have to wait 4 weeks before receiving a work permit and you are not allowed to work while your application is being dealt with. That is because the officials have to make sure that no other German or EU citizen fits your position. You have to renew your work permit every year. In order to receive a residence permit, you must take your work permit to the foreign registration office along with your residents’ registration, documentation of health insurance, a valid passport and a passport photo.

Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet
Communication

Public Telephones
You can call any number in Germany or abroad from any public telephone box. However, to some countries there is no direct dialing, so you have to call an operator first at 0010 and ask for a connection. In most public telephone boxes it is also possible to be rung back; there should be a number on the phone or above it.

However, payphones have become fairly rare in Germany. Most public phones are card-phones. You can buy a card for € 6 or € 25 at post offices or newspaper stands. The debit card Telekom Telefonkarte Comfort or the postal-bank cards (with integrated telephone chips) enable you to call within Germany and to 50 other countries; the charges will be deducted from your account directly. For national inquiries dial 11880 or 11833.

The English Language Service can be reached by dialing 11837. For international inquiries call 11834.

Private Telephones
You can get both the relevant application (“Anmeldeformular”) forms at the post office, in the Telekom telephone shops in your town or at www.telekom.de. If you apply for a connection, you can normally be registered directly. You will have to show your passport.

Internet Access
Getting connected to the Internet in Germany is fairly easy, options include: dial-up, ISDN, DSL and cable. Bear in mind that it may take 2-3 weeks to get high-speed access, such as DSL, installed. Go to www.dslweb.de or www.verivox.de to get information on possible providers for DSL. To get an internet contract or a mobile phone with internet, you also need to show your residency registration when going signing up for a contract.

Please note that many contracts are extended each year automatically without notification for the next period, usually for the next year.

Learning German

To help you feel more at home in Germany, the FHI offers you German classes. For detailed information please contact Beatrix Wieczorek in the Administration Department (email: wieczorek@fhi-berlin.mpg.de, phone: +49 30 8413 3152).

Furthermore, there are language courses at the “Volkshochschulen” in Berlin and Potsdam Berlin and Potsdam.

The Potsdam University offers special classes for foreign students, doctoral candidates or guest scientists, who are staying at the university. Depending on their previous knowledge they can join special courses (Aufbaukurs 1 und 2). You will have to take a German language test and need at least 60% of the points to be accredited. You finish your class with a participation certificate and a mark. Further information is available at uni-potsdam.de.
Public Transport

Please note that every city or administrative district has its own regional transport system, which has its own charges, tickets and services. There is no uniform system for Germany. You can find schedules for buses and trains at the following useful websites.

www.fhi-berlin.mpg.de/reach.epl
Our site gives you all the information you need to get to the Institute.

www.bvg.de
The list of buses and trams that run in Berlin with some PDF maps to download.

www.vip-potsdam.de
Here you can download schedules of trams and buses.

www.havelbus.de
List of buses in and around Potsdam. It has good downloadable PDF files of bus schedules.

www.vbbonline.de
List of all public transportation in Berlin and Brandenburg with file searching and maps.

www.bahn.de
Here you can get information about train schedules for the whole of Germany. There is a file searching service and you can buy your tickets online. They also offer an English version of their website.

Different Fare Zones in Berlin/Potsdam

Berlin and Potsdam each have their own fare zones (A, B and C) which extend concentrically around the city centres. Tickets can be purchased with the zone combinations AB, BC or ABC.

Different Tickets in Berlin/Potsdam

Note that each ticket allows you to travel with all kinds of public transport, e.g. S-Bahn, U-Bahn, bus, tram and Regionalbahn.

Einzelfahrt/Single Ticket: Is valid for one hour in Potsdam or two hours in Berlin one way only.

Tageskarte/Day Ticket: Is valid all day until 3 am on the next day.

Wochenkarte/7-Tage-Karte/Weekly Ticket: Is valid for a whole week and costs about the same as 5 Tageskarten.

Monatskarte/Monthly Ticket: Is valid for entire current calendar month or 30 days after you’ve bought it.

Jahreskarte/Yearly Ticket: Is valid for 1 year and costs about as much as 10 monthly tickets. As of now, you can use it to travel with another adult and 2 kids on the weekend or evening (after 20:00 h).
Traveling with the “Semesterticket”
Students of the Berlin or Potsdam Universities can obtain the student’s semester ticket. With this ticket you can board all buses, trams, urban lines and underground lines throughout the entire public transport system of Berlin and Brandenburg (VBB). You can find more detailed information on www.astafu.de and www.asta.uni-potsdam.de.

Traveling with the Deutsche Bahn
For all who want to travel in Germany or Europe, some offers of the Deutsche Bahn are listed below.

Bahncard: This card is recommendable for those who, travel by train frequently. Please see Bahncard website. Card holders receive discounts on their tickets. It can be purchased in every travel agency of the Deutsche Bahn. You will need a photo and your valid passport for the application. For further information use the link “Angebote/BahnCard” at DB’s homepage.

Shopping
Most shops are open between 08:00 and 21:00 (or 18:00 for small shops) Monday-Saturday. Berlin shops are often open a bit longer. Shops are usually closed on Sundays and public holidays.

In Berlin you will have no problems to do your shopping; you will find department stores and shops all over the city. www.shopping-hauptstadt.de gives you a list of some shops and their opening hours. Shops can be found around Kurfürstendamm, Friedrichstraße, Tauentzienstraße, Wilmersdorferstraße, Hackescher Markt, Schönhauser Allee, Alexanderplatz or Schlossstraße.

Potsdam has some nice and good places to buy food or non-food things e.g. the pedestrian precinct Brandenburger Straße, the shopping malls Bahnhofspassage, Marktcenter or Stern-Center. For groceries, you will either have to go to Potsdam-City or to Potsdam-Eiche.

Television License
In Germany, every household has to register for the compulsory „Rundfunkbeitrag“. You can register online at their webpage Rundfunkbeitrag. As of 2015 the monthly fee is € 17,50 payable for three, six or twelve months. Unfortunately, this site is only available in German.
Child Benefit ("Kindergeld")

As parents, you may receive a monthly allowance ("Kindergeld") for your kids. Citizens of the Member States of the EU, the EEA States, and Switzerland may receive child allowance irrespective of whether they have a settlement permit or a residence permit. The same applies to nationals of Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey on the basis of the respective bilateral agreements if they are liable to pay contributions for unemployment benefit under the terms of their employment in Germany.

Foreigners from other countries may be entitled to receive child allowance provided their residence status ("Aufenthaltstitel") in Germany is presumably permanent ("voraussichtlich dauerhaft"). A residence permit and work permit are necessary but not automatically sufficient prerequisites for receiving child allowance (see familien-wegweiser.de). In any case, it is advised to contact the local Family Office (see below) to find out whether there is an entitlement for child allowance or not.

Applications for child allowance must be made at the local Family Office ("Kindergeldkasse Berlin") with a copy of your passport from which the status of your residence permit can be identified. There are several Family Offices in Berlin or Potsdam; please contact the one that is responsible for your borough.

Familienkasse Berlin Mitte
Charlottenstr. 87 - 90
10969 Berlin

Familienkasse Berlin Nord
Storkower Str. 120
10407 Berlin

Familienkasse Berlin Süd
Sonnenallee 282
12057 Berlin

Familienkasse Potsdam
Schlaatzweg 1
14473 Potsdam

If you have further questions, please contact Kerstin Henning (ext: -3126, henning@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de), Angela Ziebarth (ext: -3122, ziebarth@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de) or Roswitha Below (ext: -3120, below@vw.fhi-berlin.mpg.de) at the FHI (Phone: +49 30 8413-...
Nursery and Pre-School

So-called “Kitas” mostly include full services including nursery ("Krippe") for children between 8 weeks and 3 years of age and pre-school ("Kindergarten") for children above three years until they enter school. Parents contribute financially based on their income. The last three years of Kita before the child enters school are free of charge for all Berlin children.

Please note that you should apply for a Kita place well before the time day care is needed (~6 months, more if your kid is younger than 1 year). All necessary information (e.g. list of Berlin Kitas, application procedure, opening times, fees, alternatives to Kitas) can be found at this daycare website in English language.

Staff members of the FHI have special conditions of day care for their children in the Kita Lützelsteiner Weg e.V., Lützelsteiner Weg 25, 14195 Berlin, phone 030/832 56 44. This Kita is quite close to the FHI and covers both, nursery and pre-school. This facility is supported by the Max Planck Society and preferably accepts MPG employees children. Parents should apply until January 31. Subsequently, free places will be allotted, and accepted children will start attending the Kita from August 1. For questions or details regarding this Kita, please contact Gabriele Faust, faust@mpib-berlin.mpg.de.

The family support by "PMEassistance" provides consultation on and procurement of child care or assistance for family members, if you stay with the FHI for at least six months. Consultation is free of charge; all other assistance must be paid. Brochures are available in your local department’s secretariat or in the personnel department. More information can be obtained under phone 0800 801007080 or mail to berlin@familienservice.de. Before using this service you must verify that you are a collaborator of the Max Planck Society either by using a special authorization document, available from the personnel department.

For further questions, e.g. on how to apply for a Kita place, please contact Katrin Quetting (phone: -3181) or Andrea Moebius (phone: -4409) gleichstellung@fhi-berlin.mpg.de.

Schools

Finding a primary school for your children aged 6-12 is not a problem. Generally, the place where you live determines which school your children will go to.

If you live in Berlin, schools and day care centers in your neighborhood can be found on schools in Berlin website. If you live in the county of Brandenburg (e.g. in Potsdam), you find information on schools in your neighborhood in Schulportäts.

At international schools which offer teaching in English like the Kant school tuition fees are charged. For Americans another option besides the German school system are bilingual schools like the www.jfks.de.
Imprint and Disclaimer

Based on:

- An information guide of the Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces
- Original document by Scott H. Hawley, Brian Grady, Guruswamy Kumaraswamy and Bao-Hang Han 2001
- “Living in Germany”, Guide for Marie Curie Research Fellows by Barbara Lieder, Andre Schlochtermeier, Jörg Schneider (DLR e.V.)
- “Leitfaden für Ausländer”, Guidelines for Scientists New to Germany by Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Generalverwaltung
- Web: websites listed in the document.

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Further information including a version of this document with working links is available on the FHI-intranet
Overview on Essential Formalities (Checklist)

Checklist for EU-citizens

√ settle accommodation before arriving in Berlin

√ make an appointment at the local townhall to register your residence – you will need to bring:
  • the application form, which can be received at the welcome office or the internet
  • your lease agreement or the confirmation of your landlord
  • a valid passport
  • if applicable – proof of doctoral degree

√ apply for health care

√ apply for a bank account

Checklist for Non-EU-citizens

√ check if visa is necessary to enter Germany

√ settle accommodation before arriving in Berlin

√ make an appointment at the local townhall to register your residence – you will need to bring:
  • the application form, which can be received at the welcome office or the internet
  • your lease agreement or the confirmation of your landlord
  • a valid passport
  • if applicable – proof of doctoral degree

√ apply for health care

√ make an appointment at the foreigners’ registration office to apply for a residence permit – you will need to bring:
  • the application form, which can be received at the welcome office or the internet
  • a copy of your residency registration
  • valid passport
  • biometrical passport photo
  • copy of work contract, fellowship- or research agreement
  • copy of health insurance
  • if applicable - marriage certificate
  • if applicable - birth certificates of children

√ apply for a bank account