Living and working in Germany

A guide for international scientists at Max Planck Institutes

Dear Junior Scientists, Dear International Guests,

I would like to offer you a warm welcome to the Max Planck Society and am very pleased that you have selected a Max Planck institute for your research residency. Enjoy the excellent research opportunities, the international flair at your institute and the hospitality in your town. You will quickly find that Germany is a country of many facets – a country that welcomes ideas, cultures and people from all over the world. Great value is placed on innovation and high-tech here, yet at the same time there is a strong regional awareness of tradition and culture.

The Max Planck Society is Germany's most successful scientific organisation in basic research. Max Planck institutes are designed to provide top researchers around the world, who determine their own subjects, the best working conditions and a free hand in choosing their colleagues. Here, being a guest means learning from the best, to achieve your best.

The basis for effective working at the institutes is cooperation beyond the bounds of disciplines and beyond national frontiers. The Max Planck Society and its Scientific Members have a national base but global links. Our researchers come from a wide range of countries. From their locations in Germany, they work closely with colleagues abroad to bring together expertise from the world's best scientific facilities and universities.

The international character of the research community makes the Max Planck institutes what they are. Colleagues consider themselves a cosmopolitan community, who gladly welcome guests from home and abroad and guard against any form of discrimination. If you have any problems, do not hesitate to speak to one of your colleagues at the institute. You will receive immediate, and if you wish, confidential support.

I hope that you and your family will quickly settle in Germany and that you are successful in your scientific projects. And I also hope that you will meet interesting people and make friends for life – in short, enjoy it here, so that you will always have fond memories of your stay.

Sincerely,

Peter Gruss
President of the Max Planck Society

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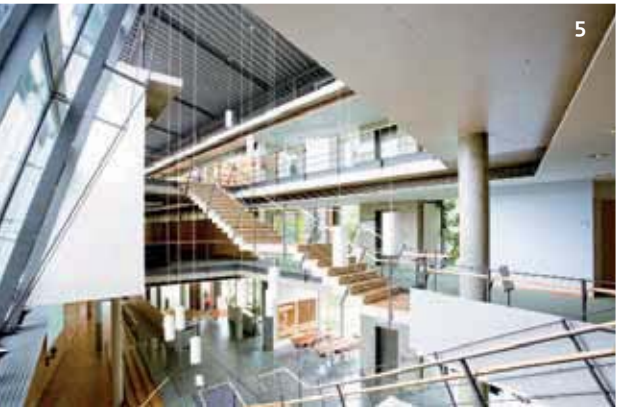

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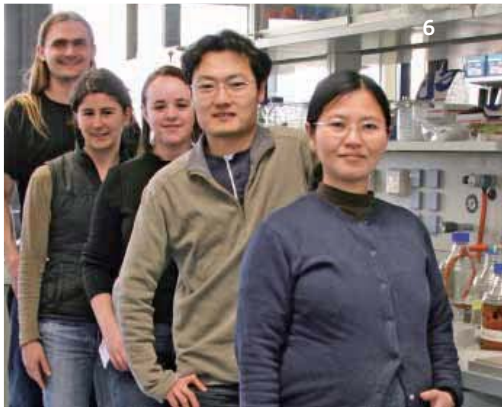

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The Max Planck Society: Science is international

The Max Planck Society (MPS) is one of the world's leading research institutions. More than 90% of its financing comes from public funds from the federal government, the Länder (federal states) and the European Union. For more than 60 years the MPS has stood for knowledge-oriented basic research in the life, natural and human sciences.

Around 21,500 people work and research at 40 sites in Germany, as well as in Rome, Luxembourg, Florence, Nijmegen and Florida. Around 13,000 of them are scientists – from student assistants, through to doctoral students, post docs, senior research scientists and visiting scientists, to the Directors heading the institutes. Around 8,500 employees are non-scientific personnel or are apprentices and trainees.

The 82 Max Planck institutes are very popular as innovative employers with international operations, as word has spread around the world about the activities of the Max Planck Society. More than a quarter (29,6%) of the approximately 21,500 employees come from abroad; if we look at the scientific work only, there are in fact even more (around 37%).

Post docs head the list of international employees; 90 per cent of them come to the MPS from abroad and are not from Germany. Foreign scientists come from a number of countries, by far the main ones being EU-countries (Italy, Great Britain, Austria, the Netherlands and France), the USA, China and India followed by the Russian Federation. Of the other scientists, senior research scientists and Directors, about a third have a foreign passport. All in all, a creative cosmos in which cross-discipline and cross-cultural views and thinking among enquiring minds produce results, which also contribute to the success of the Max Planck Society.

1 Professor Svante Pääbo and post doc Johannes Krause, MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology
2 MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle / **3** Stairwell, MPI for Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics
4 Max Planck Institute of Biophysics / **5** MPI for the Physics of Complex Systems, Dresden
6 Young scientists, MPI of Neurobiology

To ensure that this expertise acquired in Germany by foreign junior scientists is not lost to the MPS, the Max Planck Society has created the tool of Partner Groups so that outstanding post docs returning to their native countries can receive support from the MPS to head a research group, set up specifically by their home institution. At present, 42 Partner Groups along with the 63 International Max Planck Research Schools (IMPRS) have developed into one of the cornerstones of the funding tools for international cooperation (all given numbers refer to key date 01 January 2013).

➜ Get to know the MPS: Read *maxNet*, *MaxPlanckResearch* and *MaxPlanckJournal*

Discover the diversity of research at the institutes: *maxNet*, *MaxPlanckResearch* and the *MaxPlanckJournal* are good for anyone who wants to quickly feel at home in the Max Planck Society's world of science. They make it easier for colleagues to get in touch with each other and give them the news from around the research organisation.

maxNet, the Max Planck Society's social network, is the most recent offspring. It functions like Facebook: You present yourself on profile pages and seek an exchange with like-minded persons. In order to do so, you can organise groups in which you can discuss matters – either openly or confidentially – handle your work, file shared documents, keep a calendar or arrange votes as well. Register at www.maxnet.mpg.de before your stay to obtain information about your guest institute – no matter whether you are on the Baltic Sea coast, near the Alps or in the middle of Germany. Perhaps your future colleagues in addition to the institute's international officer will help you through the first months following your arrival, to find a place to live, to deal with public authorities or to solve problems which they themselves have already worked out. We hope some of these virtual contacts lead to real meetings.

It is also worthwhile to take a look at the English-language magazine *MaxPlanckResearch*: Printed four times a year, it provides information on the work done by hundreds of research groups in search of new insights and on the inside of the Max Planck community. When you have acquired language proficiency, you can also read the German-language staff newspaper *MaxPlanckJournal*.

www.maxnet.mpg.de

1 Young scientists, MPI of Biochemistry / **2** MPI for Mathematics in the Sciences
3 MPI for Chemical Ecology / **4** MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology / **5** MPI for Human Development
6 Young scientists, MPI of Biochemistry / **7** MPI for Comparative and International Private Law

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Formalities – Finding your way through the red tape

On your first day at work, you will be taken on a tour to acquaint yourself with the institute and possibly get to know the immediate vicinity. You will discuss with your supervisor what arrangements need to be made, and take a look at administrative matters, such as insurance, visa and any questions you may have.

There may be more rules and regulations in Germany than you are used to – not without reason do the Germans have the reputation of being bureaucratic. Do not be disheartened; you will soon negotiate the initial hurdles and your contacts at the institute will be happy to help you throughout your residence. The following information will give you an idea of what to do in preparation for your departure for Germany and what formalities have to be dealt with shortly after your arrival.

2.1. What will be your status at the institute?

There are two ways of working at a Max Planck Institute:

- ➜ on a fellowship
- ➜ or on a contract of employment

It is important to know what your status will be, as they are based on different terms and conditions, particularly regarding social security.

A fellowship is a form of financial support, an "allowance towards living expenses". If you complete your residence on a fellowship, you have no contractual employment relationship with the Max Planck institute. You will work autonomously and independently; there is no obligation to take part in institute functions and no compulsory attendance; no approval is required for vacations and travel. Fellowship holders are not liable for insurance under the terms of the German social security system, but you must take out health insurance yourself or arrange ad-

equate health insurance from your own country (see section 2.2.2. ➜ *Visa*). We also strongly recommend to have private accident and personal liability insurance. Many insurance companies offer combined insurance packages. Be aware, however, that fellowship holders are automatically covered by the Max Planck Society group accident insurance. In addition, with a fellowship you are normally tax exempt.

If you spend your research residency within the framework of an employment relationship with a contract of employment in Germany, you are normally paid in accordance with the Collective Wage Agreement for Government Service Workers (TvöD). You must sign your contract of employment before starting work, and you are liable for tax and social security. Your Max Planck institute pays the employer's contribution for health, nursing care, pension and unemployment insurance; the employee's contribution, for which you are liable, is automatically deducted from your salary along with tax. You are also insured by your employer against accidents at work and occupational health issues.

2.2. What needs to be done before you come to Germany?

➜ Visa

In many cases, a visa is needed for entry into Germany. You can obtain this from the German embassy or the Consulate General in your own country, but allow approximately two to three months for the application process. Visas for family members travelling with you should be applied for at the same time.

The addresses of the relevant German Consulates with details on the need for a visa for your country and further information on visa requirements can be found on the website of the Foreign Affairs Office at

www.auswaertiges-amt.de ➜ Entry and Residence ➜ Visa regulations

Who does not need a visa?

Group A:
Citizens from countries which have opted in to the Schengen Agreement or apply its regulations at least in part.

Group B:
Nationals from countries including Australia, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Korea, the USA.

If you are in any doubt, please consult the list of countries and their visa requirements on the website of the Foreign Affairs Office at:

www.auswaertiges-amt.de ➜ Entry and Residence ➜ Visa regulations ➜ Visa requirements – list of countries

Generally, a visa only entitles the holder to entry and residence for a maximum of 90 days.

There are various visas depending on the length and the purpose of your residence in Germany:

➜ **The national visa** (D Visa) is necessary if you plan to spend more than 90 days in Germany and/or wish to embark on university studies or a job or have been awarded a fellowship. As of recently, the national visa entitles any holder in possession of a valid travel document to travel freely within the Schengen Area for up to three months in a six-month period. If you are planning any travel outside of Germany during your residence, we advise you to contact the Foreign Affairs Office if you are in any doubt.

➜ **The Schengen visa** (C Visa) is only valid for residence of up to three months and cannot be extended or converted into any other type of residence permit. It is therefore only really recommended for tourists. With a Schengen visa, you may also travel to other Schengen states during your stay.
If your Schengen visa expires, you will need to leave Germany.

If you plan to embark on university studies in Germany, begin a PhD, undertake a research or guest scientist residency, engage in any other form of gainful employment or if you are in receipt of a fellowship, you **must** apply for a national visa or apply for a residence permit (see section 2.5.) **before** you will be allowed to take up this activity.

Please note that though you may be able to enter Germany without a visa, this **does not permit you to engage in gainful employment, it merely entitles you to stay in Germany**. This even applies to citizens of fundamentally visa-free countries. The Schengen visa does not entitle you to take up employment, either. With a national visa you are only allowed to take up employment if your visa has a corresponding endorsement.

Upon expiry of your visa, you will need another residence permit in order to remain in Germany or to continue your employment (see section 2.5. below).

> You must apply for another residence permit in good time prior to the expiry date of your visa

➜ Health insurance

In Germany, having health insurance is a legal requirement. As you must also provide proof of this for a residence permit, please check in good time beforehand whether your health insurance is sufficient for Germany or whether you need to apply for new health insurance in Germany. If there is an insurance agreement between your country and Germany or if EU rules apply, you can sometimes also transfer your health insurance.

Insurance providers in your own country can tell you whether your insurance cover is valid in Germany. Accidents, medical treatment and stays in hospital must be covered. If your cover is adequate, you will receive, on application to your own country's health insurer, a corresponding certificate of insurance (called form S 1 in the EU) to confirm this. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) serves as proof that you are entitled to necessary medical treatment during a temporary stay in Germany, in other words in a country other than your country of residence (other EU/EEA countries and Switzerland).

Basically, if your health insurance cover is not or not adequately covered in Germany, it is advisable to take out additional health insurance for a longer stay. During your time in Germany, the insurance from your own country can probably be suspended on consultation.

Please check the situation regarding insurance cover with your health insurer in your own country before leaving:

- ➜ Can you and your family transfer your health insurance cover?
- ➜ Is this sufficient for Germany?
- ➜ Must you or should you take out additional insurance (such as travel health insurance)?
- ➜ What is the situation regarding payment for services during illness – by a health insurance card or by reimbursement of the bills?

➜ Which health insurance is the right one for you?

In general, there are two types of health insurance in Germany – private and state. **As a general rule, fellowship holders can only take out private insurance.** Under certain circumstances fellowship holders have the option of taking out state health insurance. The institute office will be able to give you a leaflet on health, accident and third-party liability insurance as it relates to fellowship holders. However, if you have a contract of em-

ployment and an annual salary that for three consecutive years is more than 52,200.00 euros (as at 2013) you can choose between state or private insurance. If you have a contract of employment and an annual salary that is below that threshold, you must take out state health insurance.

Your institute will be able to give you the names of various health insurance providers and health insurance schemes. Before leaving your home country, you should then arrange insurance cover to start from the time of your arrival in Germany. Please note that, particularly with private insurance providers, there are very considerable differences in the scope of the benefits provided, and therefore in the rates charged. For example:

- ➜ exclusion of pre-existing conditions, severe disabilities and existing pregnancy or impending birth when the cover was taken out
- ➜ excess payable
- ➜ family insurance

If you are a holder of state health insurance you can take out additional private insurance, for example to reduce your own contributions towards the cost of special dental treatment or consultant fees in hospital. Please be sure to obtain thorough advice and, again, make sure you compare what the different insurance companies offer.

The benefits of state health insurance schemes are roughly the same; however, there are differences in customer service, supplementary benefits and optional rates. Family members are co-insured without contributions under certain conditions, for instance if they themselves do not earn any money.

State health insurance schemes currently have a standard contribution rate though this might change at some point in the future. Around half of this is paid by your employer, the rest by yourself; it is deducted directly from your gross salary. Privately insured persons pay the entire contribution themselves. Privately insured employees get an employer subsidy on their private health insurance if the private health insurance meets certain conditions (§ 257 SGB V (social security code)).

In any event, care must be taken to ensure that you have comprehensive health insurance cover immediately on entering Germany.
This also applies to members of your family travelling with you.

www.euraxess.de/portal/health_insurance_in.html

FINAL NOTICE
PAST DUE

What needs to be done after you arrive in Germany? 2.3.

➜ Step 1: Einwohnermeldeamt (Residents' Registration Office)

You must register with the Residents' Registration Office within one week of your arrival in Germany, so that your new place of residence can be registered. The responsible person at your institute will give you the name and address of the relevant office for you. You will need the following to register at the Residents' Registration Office:

- your identity card / passport
- your visa (if you needed one to enter Germany)
- rental contract or proof of accommodation

You can obtain the registration form in person at the Residents' Registration Office or online on your town's website. Your institute contact will provide information on the procedure in advance and if necessary go with you or handle these formalities on your behalf if equipped with a power of attorney. If your family comes with you to Germany, all members must be registered. For this you need the same documents (see above) for each member of your family, together with birth certificates and (for married couples) your marriage certificate (translated if necessary). After completing the application, you will receive your **registration card** from the Residents' Registration Office.

Keep your registration card safe – it is an important document.

At the Residents' Registration Office, you will also be given a **tax identification number**. Certain personal information such as your name, address, sex, date of birth and the relevant tax office is stored under this number.

Keep your tax identification number safe – it is an important document and is valid for the whole of your residence in Germany no matter where you live or how long you stay.

If you change address during your time in Germany, you need to re-register with the Residents' Registration Office. The procedure will then be familiar to you. Before you leave Germany for good, you need to go back to the Residents' Registration Office to officially cancel your registration. Discuss this with your institute contact who can also do this for you if equipped with a power of attorney.

➜ Step 2: Registration with the Ausländerbehörde (foreigners' authority)

If you remain in Germany for more than 90 days, or before your visa expires if it is valid for longer than this, you need to apply for another residence permit (see section 2.5.). You need to go to the foreigners authority to apply for the residence permit. It may take some time before you receive it, so it is advisable to visit the foreigners authority soon after you arrive in Germany. Here again, your institute contact can give you details of the relevant authority or go with you.

To apply for a residence permit, you need the originals and copies of the following documents:

- passport
- 2 biometric passport photos
- Residents' Registration Office registration card (see step 1)
- verification of employment (contract of employment or confirmation of fellowship will usually suffice or – if these are not yet available – if necessary a letter of invitation from the institute showing the amount of monthly payments, gross and net
- (rental) contract (stating the floor space in square metres) or proof of your accommodation in a hall of residence or guest house
- proof of health insurance for the whole of your stay (or better still, beyond). International travel health insurance is not sufficient

We recommend that you have the photos taken in Germany and explain that they are for a passport. You will then automatically be given photos that meet the biometric requirements for passport photos (35 x 45 mm).

In some towns, your institute contact can take care of the application procedure for you. If this is the case, you must hand over your passport to the institute for a short time, but you will be given a copy in the meantime together with a receipt to prove that your passport is currently with the authorities. The passport will of course be returned to you immediately after the matter has been dealt with. The residence permit will involve costs of at present between 40 and 100 euros.

Do you have to pay tax in Germany? 2.4.

Whether or not you have to pay tax when you are working at a Max Planck institute depends on a number of factors. Fellowship holders are not normally liable for tax. If you have a contract of employment and you stay in Germany for less than six months, you pay tax in your own country; however, if you stay in Germany for longer than six months on a contract of employment, you automatically become liable for income tax and social security contributions.

To ensure that you do not pay tax in two countries, there are currently double taxation agreements between Germany and a number of countries governing the country in which your tax contributions are paid. They also govern potential exceptions regarding how they can apply, despite the 6-month rule, for foreign scientists working in Germany. It may be that if you work for two years as a visiting scientist, you yourself can pay your taxes in your own country. The administration department at your institute will give you information on this; alternatively, you can check it out on the Federal Ministry of Finance website:

www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/
Web / DE / Themen / Steuern / steuern.html

www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/
Web / EN / Topics / Taxation / taxation.html

If you are liable for tax in Germany, your employer will deduct the tax and contributions from your monthly salary and pay them directly to the State. The rate of taxation depends on how much you earn, your family circumstances and the tax bracket based on this. The data is filed electronically with the tax authority together with your personal tax identification number and is given to employers directly on demand.

At the end of a calendar year, you have the option of applying to the tax office for income tax adjustment at your place of residence, so you may have part of the tax you have paid refunded. Consult a tax adviser for more information. You will have to pay for this, but a tax adviser can help you to set up a tax return.

2.5. Working – only with a residence permit

Please note that you are not allowed to take up any work at a Max Planck institute if you do not have one of the residence permits listed below or a national visa with an endorsement permitting you to work (see section 2.2.1. above). So you should leave enough time to apply for your residence permit prior to leaving home.

The following residence permits can be issued:

- ➜ § 7 AufenthG (Residence Act)
  Residence permit which usually only entitles the holder to reside in Germany but not to work there
- ➜ § 16 AufenthG (Residence Act)
  Residence permit to attend university, a language course or school
- ➜ § 17 AufenthG (Residence Act)
  Residence permit for an internship
- ➜ § 18 AufenthG (Residence Act)
  Residence permit for (self-employed or dependent) employment

For scientists, foreigners with a recognised academic qualification or foreign scientists who plan to conduct a research project within Germany at a recognised research institution, there are special residence permits with more relaxed requirements for issuance and other advantages, such as permission for family reunion and family members' employment. They may provide entitlement to parental benefit and child benefit.

These residence permits are:

- ➜ § 19 AufenthG (Residence Act)
  Settlement permit for scientific, research and teaching elite who have outstanding professional skills and in whose residence in Germany there is a particular interest (such as MPI Directors)
- ➜ § 19a AufenthG (Residence Act)
  EU Blue Card for foreign employees with an academic qualification

➜ § 20 AufenthG (Residence Act)
Residence permit for foreign researchers who plan to conduct a research project within Germany at a recognised research institution; also for doctoral candidates under certain circumstances

Please note that the residence permits under § 19, 19a and 20 AufenthG (Residence Act) have additional requirements in some cases, such as a certain minimum income.

Checklist: What do I have to bring with me for entry to Germany?

- ☐ Passport or identity card valid for the entire period of residence
- ☐ A visa if required, including for accompanying family members
- ☐ Several biometric passport photos
- ☐ Birth certificate (original)
- ☐ Marriage certificate (original)
- ☐ PhD certificate
- ☐ For students: the original of your certificate of matriculation
- ☐ Insurance documents, if available: third party insurance, health insurance, accident insurance, car insurance (please check in advance that it is valid in Germany)
- ☐ Evidence that insurance cover also includes Germany
- ☐ Any medication required; letter from your doctor regarding existing conditions; vaccination certificate
- ☐ Driving licence

Please bring both copies and the original of important documents with you because your documents will be checked. Certified translations may also be needed in some cases.

Checklist: What things do I have to take care of?

- ☐ Register your place of residence with the Residents' Registration Office
- ☐ Extend/change your visa
- ☐ Apply for a residence permit
- ☐ Set up a giro account at a bank or savings bank
- ☐ Select and register with a local electricity supplier after signing the rental contract
- ☐ Take out health insurance
- ☐ If necessary, have your driving licence changed after six months and register your car with the Vehicle Registration Office

Everyday life in Germany

3.1. How do you find somewhere to live?

A number of Max Planck institutes have their own guest apartments or have contacts with institutions offering accommodation. Ask your institute about this. Sometimes these are simply temporary arrangements that can give you time to look for something else.

Ask at the institute which residential areas are better, because they are close to the institute, or because you are looking for a particularly lively or quiet district, for instance. In a number of towns and cities, there are districts that should be regarded as less safe.

Local daily papers run adverts for the property market, usually on Fridays or Saturdays, occasionally throughout the week too. Normally, these can also be accessed online on the paper's website. Many apartments are rented out through an agent, which involves an extra fee (two to three months' rent). You can also place an advert yourself; discuss with your institute whether you can advertise as a Max Planck employee.

Scientific staff and university lecturers especially often go abroad and temporarily move out of their apartment. Make enquiries at the university's International Office whether they can give you some contacts. A good alternative for anyone coming to Germany alone and is prepared to live with others, is shared accommodation. In many university towns and cities, there are agencies specialising in shared accommodation that can provide details of short-term accommodation on commission.

➜ Rental charges

Most apartments in Germany are let unfurnished, although occasionally cooking facilities are provided. The costs for accommodation only are quoted as rent, excluding utilities. Added to this, there are additional costs or running costs. What is actually included depends on the rental contract. Usually, charges for heating, water, refuse collection and property management are included in this; they make up approximately 25% of the rent, excluding utilities costs. If the additional costs are already included in the rental charge, this is called rent including all utilities costs. Electricity is usually charged separately by an electricity supplier of your choice, with which you must register yourself. You can obtain information on local suppliers from the landlord or the MPI.

➜ Deposit

It is usual to pay a deposit (one to maximum three months' rent plus VAT) to cover any repairs for damage in the apartment caused by the tenant when he/she leaves. This sum is deposited in a special savings account. Arrange this together with the landlord or obtain a receipt for the savings account. When you leave, the deposit will be returned to you with interest. However, any costs for repairs or renovation will be deducted. The exact rules and regulations on this should be included in the rental contract which you will receive for signature from the agent or landlord.

If you require any help or advice when you are looking for accommodation, your institute will be happy to help with interpreting, understanding the adverts and ultimately with the handover of the apartment.

"Du fehlst" – "You are missing".
Graffiti under doorbell panels of apartment building

➜ Obligations in the rental contract

The rental contract or house rules can entail certain obligations, such as path clearance in winter when it snows or periodic responsibility for cleaning the stairwell. You should check whether pets are allowed. The general rule is that noise should be kept to a minimum between 22:00 and 7:00, so as not to disturb your neighbours. If you have a party or invite guests, it is common courtesy to let your neighbours know in advance that there may be a little more noise on the day in question. And if you are not going to be at your apartment for a while, perhaps ask your neighbours to empty your post box occasionally while you are away, or arrange with the postal service to hold back any post. You can then collect all the mail when you return. The following Internet links are useful when looking for accommodation:

www.immoscout24.de | www.immowelt.de | www.immonet.de
www.quoka.de | www.zwischenmiete.de | www.wg-gesucht.de

2-Zi-Whg	2-Zimmer-Wohnung / 2-room apartment
Abstellk	Abstellkammer / storeroom
Blk / Balk.	Balkon / balcony
DG	Dachgeschoss / under the roof / attic rooms
D	Diele / hall
DU	Dusche / shower
EBK	Einbauküche / fitted kitchen
EFH	Einfamilienhaus / detached house
EG	Erdgeschoss / ground floor
HK	Heizkosten / heating costs
KM	Kaltmiete / rent excl. utilities costs such as heating, cable TV, cleaning of communal areas, waste removal etc.
Kaution	deposit
Keine zusätzl. Prov.	no additional commission
MM	Monatsmiete / monthly rent
NK / NBK	Nebenkosten / additional costs such as heating, cable TV, cleaning of shared areas, waste removal etc.
NR	Nichtraucher / non-smoker
OG	Obergeschoss / top floor
RH	Reihenhaus / terraced house
Stellpl.	Stellplatz / parking space
TG	Tiefgarage / underground parking
warm/WM	Warmmiete / rent incl. all utilities costs such as heating, cable TV, cleaning of communal areas, waste removal etc.
Wfl.	Wohnfläche / floor area
WG	Wohngemeinschaft / shared accommodation
WK	Wohnküche / open-plan kitchen
ZH	Zentralheizung / central heating

3.2. How do you receive your money? Opening an account

If you stay in Germany for a longer period, receive a regular salary and have to pay rent, it is advisable to open a giro account at a bank, a savings bank or the Postbank (Post Office Bank). The services they provide are roughly the same, but there are differences in customer service and account management fees. Check out what meets your needs (on line banking, interest, free credit card). To open an account, you need your passport and possibly your registration card.

➜ EC card and withdrawing money

Your bank will send you an EC card (electronic cash card) by post for your account and under separate cover a PIN number (personal identification number) which you need to withdraw money at an ATM (cashpoint). With the card you can also get bank statements there and in some cases even make transfers. Withdrawing money at an ATM is free at branches of your bank or banks in the "Cash Group" association of banks. However, using ATMs at other banks will incur additional costs. Transfers abroad can also be expensive. The best course of action is to ask the bank in your own country whether it has a cooperation agreement with a German financial institution. You can set up standing orders for regular payments such as rent, and it is also possible to provide authorisation for direct debits, i.e. regular but variable amounts (for example for insurance or telephone) are automatically debited from your account.

Banks are normally open Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 16:00; ATMs are accessible 24 hours a day.

➜ Credit card

As well as the EC card, there are also credit cards that you can use to make cash-free payments. They can also be used to make withdrawals at ATMs, although this carries an extra cost. The most widely used credit cards in Germany are the Eurocard/Mastercard and Visa card. The EC card is more commonly used to make payments in German shops, but sometimes there is a minimum amount for purchases.

If your credit card or EC card for your account is lost or stolen, call the free hotline 116 116 to put a stop on the bank card. The number is available at all times. For calls from abroad there is also the number +49 30 4050 4050.

You're ill – what now? Medical care 3.3.

The German health system has a very good reputation and has a network of hospitals and doctors throughout all regions – but medical treatment in Germany is never free! All costs, even for emergency treatment, must be paid for by you or your health insurance. Comprehensive health insurance is therefore also very important and proof must be provided when you visit a doctor, normally by means of your health insurance card.

➜ Visiting the doctor

If you need a doctor, you can ask at the institute about the nearest practice. You can also find doctors locally, grouped according to their respective specialty fields, in the telephone directory, in "Yellow Pages" or on the Internet (www.gelbeseiten.de). The usual procedure is to first consult a family doctor who may be a general practitioner or internist, who will then, if necessary, refer you to a specialist.

It is advisable to contact the practice in advance by telephone and ask for an appointment. Allow for the fact that an appointment can only be made for a few days ahead. If it is urgent, you must make a special point of mentioning this. In acute cases, practices cannot refuse you – either on the telephone or in person. Medical practices are closed on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, but once a week offer early evening appointments for working people. When you visit a doctor, please take your insurance card with you.

Those with private insurance receive a bill after their visit which, depending on their health insurance, they initially pay themselves and then claim the amount from their insurance or send the bill directly to their health insurer who will then pay it.

➜ On-call medical service

If you need a doctor outside of normal surgery hours, for example at weekends, during holidays or at night, you can use the medical emergency and on-call service. Normally, the doctors' answering service will give you their telephone number, but you can also find information in the local daily newspaper. The clinics also have ambulances that you can call or visit in emergency cases, 24 hours a day.

Emergency calls
In an emergency, call an emergency doctor using the emergency telephone numbers **112** or **110**. These numbers can also be called free from any call box.

➜ Pharmacies

In Germany, many medicines are not available over the counter, only on prescription; a prescription issued by a doctor is required. Without a prescription, pharmacists may not give out medicines such as antibiotics.

Pharmacies are open during normal opening hours; outside these hours there is an emergency pharmacy service. You can find the address of pharmacies that are open at night and during holidays in the daily papers or on the Internet.

www.apotheken.de/notdienste

In addition, all pharmacies have a sign on the door giving a list of emergency pharmacies that change on a daily basis. There you will sometimes have to ring first and then be handed your medication through an opening. There are additional charges for this.

Individuals with private insurance, as with doctors' bills, pay for the medication themselves and then pass the bill to their health insurer. Keep the receipt safe!

How much money for what? Living costs 3.4.

The major part of monthly living costs will probably be for your accommodation. Rent prices vary greatly from region to region; rents in cities are generally higher, although Berlin is (still) an exception. In Munich, you will have to pay a price per square metre of at least 10 euros; the same applies to Frankfurt and Hamburg. Added to this are the additional costs that account for approximately 25% of the rent. In the eastern federal states and in some rural areas, however, you are lucky, as here the costs for accommodation are only about half as much.

The other living costs are comparable to other states, and food is even slightly cheaper. However, you will find the cost of local public transport and going out more expensive. Here again, the price range varies depending on the area where you live. Lunchtime menus in many restaurants are cheaper than in the evening, so a pizza can cost between six and 15 euros.

For cultural events, such as the theatre or cinema, it is always worth asking about special rates such as student discounts, family tickets or special days when it is cheaper. At some museums, entry is free on Sundays and at many cinemas there are 'cinema days' when special rates apply.

Getting around in Germany: The transport network 3.5.

Germany has a very good transport network structure in all areas; virtually all places can be reached at least by bus or rail. In Germany, you drive on the right! You also need to take special care when you are crossing the road on foot if you have been used to driving on the left. In addition, many people use bicycles, and in some places there are designated cycle paths.

➜ Deutsche Bahn (DB)

Deutsche Bahn trains link large and medium-size German towns and cities with long-distance trains, providing fast and regular service (IC – Intercity or ICE – Intercity Express). Smaller towns can be reached by a regional rail service. There are also several good daily connections to other destinations in Europe, including cities such as Amsterdam, Paris, Zurich, Brussels, Vienna and Rome.

Deutsche Bahn offers various options for tickets at attractive rates. When you buy a BahnCard 25 or BahnCard 50, you receive a reduction on the regular ticket prices at the selected percentage (around 25 or 50%) for all rail journeys in one year. The BahnCard 25 can also be used in combination with other savings offers. There are Happy Weekend tickets for small groups and regional offers (Länder tickets). Children up to six years old travel free; if they are accompanied by their parents or grandparents, they can also travel free up to their 15th birthday. Mention this when buying a ticket. And if you book your ticket in advance, you can take advantage of a limited offer early booking discount.

Usually in Germany you are not tied to a specific train, although this may be the case with special offers. You should also buy your ticket before setting out on your journey – you can do this on the Internet (www.bahn.de), at a ticket machine at the station or at the ticket office. Tickets can only be purchased later on long-distance trains, and only without any problem if you speak to the ticket collector immediately after the train sets off. Buying a ticket on the train will incur a surcharge. On regional trains and on local public transport, not having a ticket is counted as a "Schwarzfahrt" (ride without paying), the penalty for which can be very expensive.

If you want to be sure of getting a seat at peak travel times, such as on Friday or Sunday afternoons, you should reserve a seat. Trains that are likely to be busy are marked on the Internet timetable with an "R" (reservation recommended).

www.bahn.de

➜ Local public transport

Local public transport includes buses, underground rail, suburban rail and trams, all of which run at very regular intervals, particularly in the rush hour periods in the morning and late afternoon. Unfortunately, each town has its own transport system, so the rates and conditions are different everywhere. In some towns, tickets for local transport must be stamped even before stepping on to the platform; in others, on the appropriate means of transport. The best thing to do is to ask when you buy your ticket what the procedure is in your town.

However, the rule for virtually all transport networks is that a single ticket is only valid for one journey, in one direction! Occasionally, the journey can be interrupted for a certain time and then resumed in the same direction. In this case, for the return journey, you must purchase a new single ticket. However, a day ticket is valid for the whole day within the particular area; in other words, it is also valid for journeys in different directions.

There are special discounts for local transport, too. The integrated transport system in your town may offer day, multi-journey or partner tickets. If you travel regularly, it may be worth buying a monthly, weekly or even an annual season ticket. You can find information about this on the websites of the various transport associations or at the local transport ticket offices. Tickets for local public transport can be obtained at signposted ticket offices and at automatic ticket machines.

Note
In many towns and cities, there are also special night-time services for local transport. Where this is not an option, there may alternatively be a suitable shared taxi service. Ask about this at the institute.

➜ Travelling by taxi

Travelling by taxi in Germany is not particularly cheap, but it is useful at night or if you have a lot of luggage. The price is based on a fare scale and is calculated on a basic price plus the number of kilometres travelled and the length of the journey. It is shown on the taximeter during the journey and at the end of the journey the price shown is the one to be paid. The taxi driver can give you a receipt upon request. Usually, the amount is rounded up with a tip.

➜ Long-distance travel by air, train or coach

In addition to long-distance rail services, numerous airlines also link German and European cities. It is worth comparing the cost of flying with the price of a train ticket, particularly if you have a BahnCard (railcard). If you compare the travel time, you will see that many airports are located out of town and normally you need to check in an hour before departure.

German cities have a Central Bus Station (Zentrale Omnibus-Bahnhof - ZOB), which is the starting point for long-distance coach journeys to other countries in Europe and to destinations within Germany. It can be worth comparing journey times and fares with other forms of transport.

www.berlinlinienbus.de | www.meinfernbus.de | www.adac-postbus.de | www.DeinBus.de | www.bahn.de/icbus | www.eurolines.de | www.city2city.de

➜ Cycling

Many German towns and cities have very good cycle networks and you will sometimes see enormous numbers of bikes parked at locations such as stations and universities. If you stay in Germany for any length of time, it may be worth investing in a bike. Many cycle shops offer reasonably priced second-hand bikes or you can look in the adverts section of the local newspapers. Lost property offices also auction off bikes at reasonable prices.

Children up to the age of ten may and should, for safety reasons, travel on the pavement. Adults must use cycle tracks; if there is no cycle track, the road. Often you can also see cyclists in traffic wearing a safety helmet; small children in particular hardly ever travel without one. This is voluntary and there is no obligation.

➜ Using your own car

You can drive for six months in Germany on a driving licence issued in your own country. However, after that, driving licences which have not been issued in an EU country must be changed to a German driving licence. Please apply to the competent authority in good time as this process can take a while and involves tax and insurance issues.

There are a few rules and regulations for driving in Germany which you should be aware of:

- Always carry your driving licence and vehicle registration document with you. This also applies to your identity card or passport.
- It is compulsory for everyone in a car to wear a seatbelt.
- Children up to the age of 12 or a height of 1.50 metres must be secured in a prescribed child seat.
- Making telephone calls while driving is only permitted if you have a hands-free system.
- Driving is permitted if you are below the legal blood alcohol limit of 0.5, but it is better not to drink at all.
- In built-up areas, there is a speed limit of 50 km/h; on country roads this is 100 km/h. Motorways do not have a speed restriction unless this is indicated.
- It is compulsory to have a first-aid box, a space blanket and a warning triangle in the car.

The southern federal states in particular are prone to heavy snow in winter. Road treatment services are very quickly mobilised, but your car must be fitted with winter tyres or all-year/all-season tyres if you are travelling in winter conditions on roads with snow or icy surfaces, black ice or slush. This applies whatever the date. Those driving with summer tyres in winter weather must expect to be fined. In neighbouring Austria, too, it is compulsory to fit winter tyres where weather conditions require this, including in the Italian South Tyrol. If you are planning to go skiing in other countries, find out in advance whether winter equipment is a requirement there and whether you need to use snow chains.

If you are involved in an accident or have a breakdown, a small black arrow on the white posts next to the road indicates where to find the next emergency telephone. Mention the counter markers you will find at the side of the motorway when you report an emergency so that the assistance service knows where you are. In the event of an accident, you should call the police (telephone 110) to be on the safe side. You may not leave the scene of an accident without leaving your contact details with other people involved in the accident. If you do, you will be guilty of a hit-and-run offence.

Places where there are speed restrictions may have radar speed checks installed. Driving too fast incurs hefty fines.

You should use a car wash for washing your car – you will find one at filling stations or on an industrial estate.

Badge for Green Zones: Every vehicle entering an environmental zone - no matter whether registered in Germany or another country - needs to display an environmental badge. These badges have unrestricted validity for the individual vehicle and all German environmental zones.

To be eligible for an environmental badge, your vehicle must be registered in your country and fulfil certain conditions as per validation of the key number in the vehicle registration.

www.Green-Zones.eu **www.umwelt-plakette.de**

You can find out about other rules and regulations from the Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club (ADAC) (German Automobile Club) or the Automobilclub Europa (ACE) (European Automobile Club) or receive help and assistance as a member in various areas.

www.adac.de **www.ace-online.de**

Your apartment may be in a residential area where you need a parking permit for which you will have to pay. Ask the local authority where you can obtain a permit and what you need for applying for one.

➜ Car-sharing agencies

A good way to travel is to join a car pool; car-sharing agencies can help with this. You can enquire there whether a driver is travelling the same journey at a particular time and can take you with him/her for a comparatively reasonable sum. Or you yourself can offer to drive and so reduce travel costs.

www.mitfahrzentrale.de **www.mitfahrgelegenheit.de**

If you bring your children with you 3.6.

➜ Nursery schools/daycare centres

Are you coming to Germany with your partner and child or several children, and are still undecided whether you actually need childcare facilities? Whether or not you are looking for a certain type of surroundings, make use of daycare centres! Here your children will meet friends of the same age and you will get to know other parents without any hassle. In Germany, going to nursery school is voluntary. Children are admitted from the age of three; for younger children there are crèches which also have facilities for babies. Sometimes, however, there are long waiting lists for these, as there are for nurseries.

The nursery year usually begins in August or September; however, application needs to be made in the spring. Therefore, register your child/children as early as possible, and find out about what is available where you live. If there are free places, many nurseries will also take children throughout the year. Nursery fees normally depend on your income and/or on the length of time your child will spend there.

➜ Childminders

You can find childminders who will look after your child individually at your home or their home through an advert in the paper or the youth welfare office. The best way to find babysitters, who only look after your children for a few hours during the day or in the evening, is through colleagues or neighbours. Local churches usually run playgroups and nurseries where you can meet other parents with your little one(s). In many towns and cities there are also foreign-language playgroups.

In general, places for short periods (up to six months) are often hard to come by. Your International Office will give you more help with this or suggest you use the Family Service. The service can help to find childcare facilities. The Max Planck Society has a contract with them so the service is free. It can help to find the best solution for your family circumstances.

www.firmenservice-betreut.de

➜ Schools

In Germany, schooling is compulsory; children must attend school for nine (in some federal states ten) years. Attendance at school begins at the age of six, with primary school (Years 1 to 4). After that there is a choice between three different types of school: Hauptschule (secondary school) up to Years 9 or 10 (leaving qualification), Realschule (upper school) until Year 10 (final qualification: school leaving certificate) and Gymnasium (grammar school) which goes up to Year 12 or 13. Grammar school culminates in the Abitur (advanced level qualifications) as a requirement for higher education. In addition, there are comprehensive schools where children are streamed according to their ability up to the average school leaving qualification. Since schooling in Germany is a matter for the individual federal states, there are differences in the education systems and curriculums.

Attendance at state schools is free; only private and international schools charge school fees. You can find information on local schools from the local authority or on their websites. Normally, you cannot choose a primary school yourself. Your postal address determines which primary school is the appropriate one for your child (known as the catchment area). However, the choice for further education is up to the student. Acceptance for a place is normally decided after discussions with the headteacher.

➜ Teaching times and after-school care

The school year begins after the summer holidays between July and September. Teaching in the early years is almost exclusively in the morning, normally between 8:00 and 13:00. In the higher year groups, teaching is also standard on certain afternoons. Primary schools in particular offer midday supervision after school has finished, as do municipal daycare centres near the school. There the children are given lunch, are supervised while doing their homework and have time to play.

Midday supervision and after-school care must be paid for; the cost usually depends on the number of hours. Admission in an after-school scheme during the school year is often a problem due to the limited number of places; opportunities increase if you apply in good time before the school year begins.

Communications and media 3.7.

➜ Post

Post is normally delivered once a day in the morning, Monday to Saturday; several times a day for businesses. There is no post on Sunday. Parcels are delivered by separate mail. If an item will not fit in your post box, the postal worker will ring your bell; if you are not in, he or she might leave it with a neighbour. If no one is available, the postal worker will take the item back and leave a note in your post box telling you when and where you can collect it (usually from the nearest post office). When you go to collect the item, you must take some means of identification with you.

You can also apply at your local post office for a post office box where your mail will be collected for you to pick up.

To send post, you will find yellow post boxes bearing the black post horn, the symbol of Deutsche Post, at a number of places. The post box will have on it information when it is emptied. Price lists giving information on which stamps you need to send mail at home and abroad are available at post offices. Local post offices are open Monday to Friday, usually 8:30 to 18:00, and Saturday until about 12.30. In smaller towns, there are also branches in supermarkets where they have a desk at the entrance.

www.deutschepost.de

Apart from the post office, other providers have counters in lottery agencies or beverage stores. It is worth comparing the shipping costs and the time it will take.

www.hermespaketshop.de

➜ Telephone/Internet

The telephone network in Germany is largely in the hands of Deutsche Telekom; however, there are also a number of network operators that may be cheaper. If you are looking particularly at special foreign or combined Internet and telephone tariffs, discuss this with a supplier who can meet your needs.

www.call-magazin.de/Telefonanbieter

Most public phone boxes accept credit cards, coins or telephone cards which you can obtain at post offices, telephone shops or kiosks. There are also Internet cafés where you can telephone abroad. Note: Calls from phones in hotels or restaurants are usually more expensive than public phones.

If you want to use a mobile phone, compare the services and rates offered by the numerous providers; pre-paid cards may be a good option. If you take out a contract, be aware of how long it will run.

There are also a number of attractive call-by-call programmes where you can save money by keying in a certain number before the actual telephone number. This too will allow you to make cheaper calls.

Skype is a useful alternative. This allows you to have a free telephone conversation with your family, friends or colleagues over the Internet (even with a webcam).

www.billiger-telefonieren.de **www.skype.com**

Most Germans use their surname when answering the telephone. If you call anyone, it is a matter of courtesy to also announce yourself by your surname first, and then ask for the person to whom you would like to speak.

You can find telephone numbers either from telephone directories or online (www.dasoertliche.de). There is also a directory inquiries service that you might find useful when looking for telephone numbers, although there is a charge for this. The rates for these service costs are quoted in advance (approximately 50 cents to 2 euro).

German inquiries:	**11 8 33** or **11 88 0**
English-language inquiries:	**11 8 37**
Directory inquiries for international numbers:	**11 8 34**

The "Gelbe Seiten" (Yellow Pages) lists entries in alphabetical order with telephone numbers for all types of businesses: commercial enterprises, shops, doctors, restaurants and tradespeople.

www.dasoertliche.de **www.gelbeseiten.de**

➜ Radio and television charges

If you have a television and radio, the State charges you to finance the public broadcasting service. You must register with the Gebühreneinzugszentrale (Radio and Television Licences Agency, GEZ) if you move into an apartment. You will find forms to register online (see link).

www.rundfunkbeitrag.de

➜ Books

Your institute will have a library with specialised literature and you can use university libraries if you apply for a library card. Larger towns and cities also have public libraries as a cultural facility for everyone, providing information and educational material. As well as light fiction, newspapers and books for children and young people, you can usually also borrow games, DVDs or CDs. You will need a borrower's card; to apply for one, you must take your identity card and your passport with you.

Bookshops offer a wide selection of books to buy; both here and in libraries, you will often find English-language literature. Books in Germany are subject to fixed book price agreements, which means that books are the same price everywhere.

➜ Newspapers

Virtually all larger cities have one or more local daily newspapers and there are also a number of national dailies such as Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Frankfurter Rundschau (FR), taz and Die Welt. You can buy foreign daily newspapers at larger newsagents or at rail stations.

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Shopping 3.8.

Shops are generally open between 9:00 and 20:00 Monday to Saturday; large supermarkets and shopping centres will open even longer. Smaller shops or businesses on the outskirts of towns and cities, however, close between 18:00 and 19:00 during the week, and on Saturday possibly even at midday. All shops are normally closed on Sundays. Exceptions are bakers and florists which often open on Sunday mornings. You can buy food, newspapers and smaller household items at night and at the weekend at large rail stations or airports, kiosks and filling stations, but this is usually a bit more expensive.

Many towns have markets one or two days a week which are normally held in the centre or in particular areas of the town and offer fruit and vegetables direct from the producer. You can also find food from specific countries in speciality shops such as Asia Shops or Italian food shops.

Since sorting waste is a major issue in Germany (see section on waste disposal), a deposit is paid for many drinks bottles and cans. It is therefore advisable to keep bottles and cans and take them back the next time you go shopping. Many supermarkets have recently installed return machines; you place bottles and cans in these and when you press a button you are given a receipt showing the amount. Take this to the till and you will be paid the amount shown, or it may be deducted from your shopping bill.

Going out 3.9.

Every town has a number of cafés, bars and restaurants of a wide variety of types and nationalities, usually with a free choice of table. Sometimes it is advisable to reserve a table in advance if a restaurant is very popular. If you are happy with the service, you can show this by leaving a tip (approximately 10% of the bill).

1 Chalk cliffs, Rügen / **2** Beach chairs, Sylt / **3** Television tower, Berlin /
4 Winter landscape, Havel, Brandenburg / **5** Boats on lake Starnberg

3.10. Smoking

There are different rules and regulations on smoking in public places and buildings in the individual federal states. In Bavaria, for example, you may not smoke at all in restaurants; in other states, you may sometimes smoke in designated areas. To be on the safe side, be aware that smoking may not be permitted; if in doubt, find out where smoking is allowed.

3.11. Culture

Germany has a high density of theatres, opera houses, museums, galleries and cinemas; programmes and listings can be found in daily newspapers. There are normally discounted rates for children, students and families.

3.12. Sport & leisure

Every town has sports clubs or fitness studios where you can sign up for different activities. Adult education centres offer a wide range of facilities with a number of sports activities in their programmes. There may even be sports activities at your institute, such as football, or a running or yoga group, where you can also make contacts.

Another popular activity in Germany is to visit one of the many parks when the weather is fine and relax there for the day, or play football or badminton. You may walk on the grass unless there is a sign forbidding this. At the weekend, you can often see large groups meeting up to spend a pleasant day together, having a barbeque or just relaxing. There are also a number of lakes where the water quality is good – ask your colleagues if they can recommend a nice one. On the shores there may be designated areas for nude bathing.

1 Football players on meadow, Cologne
2 Swimming pool in container on the River Spree, Berlin

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3.13. Religion and holidays

Article 4 of the German Constitution guarantees freedom of belief. Anyone can freely have a religion, join a religious community, change or leave it, or decide to be non-denominational. The State must be neutral and tolerant of all religious and philosophical communities.

In Germany, there is no state religion; this means that State and religious and philosophical communities may not enter into an institutional association with one another. However, collaboration between the State and religious communities is possible and religious communities are invited to comment on social matters, take part in committees and forums, and are consulted for advice.

Germans celebrate Christmas on the evening of Dec 24 with a decorated Christmas tree

In state schools, religious education is basically compulsory for members of the respective religious community; however, parents can opt out of religious education for their children. Non-denominational teaching of ethics is usual for students who do not take part in religious education. State schools may also provide education for students in ethical matters.

The largest churches in Germany are the Catholic and Protestant churches. They each account for around 30% of the population, with a different regional distribution. In Southern Germany, the Catholic church has a higher percentage; whereas in the north it is the Protestant church.

Islam, in its various forms, is increasingly gaining in importance due to immigration into Germany; approximately 4% of the population is Muslim. Just 2% of the population belongs to various other religions represented in Germany, and around 34% is non-denominational.

There is no strict division between church and State. The state revenue authorities collect church taxes that the Protestant and Catholic churches, the Jewish communities and a few small religious communities raise from their members. There are also a large number of statutory holidays in Germany based on Christian traditions.

New Year	1 January
Good Friday	Friday before Easter
Easter Sunday and Easter Monday	End of March, beginning of April
Labour Day	1 May
Ascension Day	Thursday, 10 days before Whitsun
Whit Sunday and Whit Monday	In June
German Unity Day	3 October
Christmas Eve	24 December (afternoon onwards)
Christmas Day and Boxing Day	25 and 26 December
New Year's Eve	31 December (afternoon onwards).

Added to these there are holidays that only apply in certain federal states.

3.14. Sanitation

Different countries, different customs. This is also the case with sanitation. Unlike in some countries, sitting toilets are the norm in Germany. These are so called because you sit on the toilet while your legs remain on the floor next to the bowl. This protects the toilet seat from contamination and scratching. Only urinals which are found in public men's toilets are used while standing up.

Since the sewerage system in Germany is very good, used toilet paper can be disposed of in the toilet bowl and flushed away. The bin next to the toilet is used for any other rubbish. In some public toilets, special cloths or films are provided for cleaning the seat and so keep sitting toilets hygienic. Sometimes there are also staff who clean the toilets after use. Occasionally you will find air fresheners on the rim of the bowl which make the toilet smell pleasant. You normally have to pay to use public toilets or you will find a small bowl at the entrance for a small voluntary contribution.

There are usually separate toilets for men and women. You can see which is which by the appropriate pictograms or letters on the doors (H for 'Herren' (men), D for 'Damen' (women)). If there are joint facilities for men and women – for example, on trains or aeroplanes – these are normally marked WC.

3.15. Electricity

The German electricity system works on 220 volts and uses two-pin plugs. Depending on where you come from, you may need an adaptor for any electrical equipment you bring with you.

Sorting waste/recycling 3.16.

The subject of sorting waste and recycling plays a special role in Germany. You may perhaps be surprised to see an array of different rubbish bins in front of houses; each, in fact, has it own particular purpose. Rubbish is separated into paper waste (blue bin), compost/organic waste (brown bin, also known as the compost bin) and packaging waste (yellow bin or yellow bag). The remaining waste is placed in the grey or black bin. Glass and cans can also be recycled. There is a deposit on some bottles and cans, so it is worth returning these when they are empty the next time you go shopping (to the supermarket). If glass bottles do not have a deposit on them, you can dispose of them in glass containers in your neighbourhood. Supermarkets and shops have small collection boxes for used batteries because they cannot be disposed of with household waste. There are special recycling centres for old electrical equipment and larger items – you will have to find out where these are. The system may at first seem costly, but it helps the environment and ultimately means much cleaner towns and cities.

Waste sorted into aluminium, plastic, glass

What else you need to know

4.1. Do's and don'ts in professional situations

➜ Family and friends

A study recently showed that Germans are considered to be very sociable – contrary to all clichés that they are reserved and have no sense of humour. Professional performance and success are particularly important for most Germans, as is leisure time, which is best spent with family and friends. And the Germans like beer! Even if you cannot of course speak about "the Germans", we would like to make a special mention of a few "characteristics".

➜ Punctuality

In professional situations, Germans place great emphasis on being correct and punctual. It is therefore helpful to keep to the agreed time for meetings or presentations. This also applies to private appointments. If you cannot keep an appointment or are likely to be late, it is advisable to give notice of this in good time through a colleague or by telephone.

➜ Greeting people

When greeting and taking leave of people, it is customary to shake hands and look at the person. It would be impolite not to make eye contact – this also applies in direct conversation with someone. Hugging is only customary among close friends.

➜ Formality

Unless you know someone well, and for people in a senior person and older colleagues, do not use the "Du" form, unless they have offered it to you; you should address people using the "Sie" form. At the institute, however, academic titles are usually omitted when addressing people and the "Du" form has now become widely established among younger people. If you are unsure, it is best to wait until someone introduces himself/herself and use the appropriate form.

➜ Communication

It is said of the Germans that they are very direct in their dealings with one another and in communication. This is true. Germans tend to get to the point quickly and work and communicate in a focussed and result-driven way. Private and general small talk are usually kept separate, but terms of a contract, work allocation and timetables often drive discussions. This can be quite confusing for people from cultural groups where the emphasis is more on relationships.

➜ Sticking to the point

Because they are more focussed on facts, Germans tend to give presentations that are very specific and based on figures and background facts. Therefore, be aware in your own presentations that this is what is required. The tone in meetings can sometimes be rather brusque. The reason for this is normally the committed debate or discussion. This may occasionally have an unfriendly or even complicated effect; however, from a German perspective, this is simply a means to an end and does not have anything to do with personal esteem. You will see that a possibly strict tone will quickly revert to normal at the end of the meeting. Do not be confused if you do not receive any positive feedback or praise for your work. As long as no one says anything, you can assume that everything is OK….

➜ Hierarchy

There are clear divisions between the different levels in the hierarchies. It is always advisable to be aware of the status of the people you are working with and not to by-pass the individual levels in working relationships. However, there is no discrimination in hierarchy between men and women. Women have equal rights and work in top jobs – although much less often than men. It is quite common in families for both parents to work; more and more men are taking time out to bring up their children while the woman goes out to work. A woman's instructions must be followed and carried out just as those of male colleagues. A common approach by men and women is not unusual and should therefore not be interpreted in any particular way.

➜ 'Mistakes'

Even away from the work environment, you may find that an anonymous person will point out alleged "mistakes", for instance if someone supposedly makes too much noise in their apartment, has parked incorrectly or has taken an allocated space. Take this in good part (it is a learning curve for all of us…) and just ask your International Officer any time how to deal with this kind of thing – or if anything seems strange, or you are unsure of anything.

And finally

Settling in Germany – between euphoria and challenge 5.1.

The first few months in a new country are an exciting time, with many stimulating and life-enhancing impressions to deal with. You meet a lot of people and have to cope with changes in both your professional and your social life. This takes a lot of energy – and yet can be great fun! From time to time, this triggers a certain feeling of euphoria, and curiosity promotes openness to the different situations that are felt to be interesting.

But this is also a challenge. Settling in can be quite stressful and trigger unpleasant feelings. This is called culture shock. It is usually felt two or three months after arrival and becomes more apparent the more your home country differs from Germany. Then, the initial enthusiasm turns to a kind of disorientation, as the normal behaviour patterns do not fit or misunderstandings occur. In some people, it can lead to disturbed sleep, feeling ill, stressed or unhappy.

If this happens to you or members of your family, try not to let it get you down. There may be someone in your circle of acquaintances who comes from the same country as you and is familiar with this process, or someone from Germany who you trust, and who has already gone through this experience abroad. Make a conscious effort to widen your social circle and improve your language skills. Give yourself enough time, and do not be afraid to seek help and advice. Your contact at the institute will be happy to listen and help you to work through this phase.

As time goes on and you become more familiar with the customs in Germany, you can get a better feel for and be able to accept reactions, as well as values and standards. You yourself will most likely gain something from this; experts call it biculturalism: you are familiar with two different cultures; you can understand and live in both without losing your own identity.

If you can work through the problems of settling in, you will gain a great deal of enjoyment and fun from your stay in Germany – and it will always be associated with good memories.

6. Links/addresses/imprint

Click the following links to find more information on research institutions, official government agencies/offices and also on websites offering further background on Germany and life here.

www.mpg.de
www.research-in-germany.de
www.dfg.de
www.humboldt-foundation.de
www.daad.de
www.euraxess.de
www.bmbf.de
www.auswaertiges-amt.de
www.bamf.de
www.goethe.de
www.entdecke-deutschland.diplo.de
www.young-germany.de
www.deutsche-kultur-international.de
www.justlanded.com
www.about-germany.org
www.newcomers-network.de

Brief glossary (German – English)

Gehalt	salary
Lohn	wage
Einkommen	income
Steuern	taxes
Sozialabgabe	social security contributions
Krankenversicherung	health insurance
Arzt	doctor
Krankenhaus	hospital
Notfall	emergency
Arbeitgeber	employer
brutto	gross
netto	net
Vertrag	contract
Aufenthaltsgenehmigung	residence permit
Genehmigung	permit
Visum	visa
Zuwendung	grant
Mahlzeit	meal
Pünktlichkeit	punctuality
Unfall	accident
Mülltrennung	waste sorting

Research Establishments

- Institute/research center
- Sub-institute/external branch
- Other research establishments
- Associated research organisations

Holland	Nijmegen	**USA**	Jupiter, Florida
Italy	Rome	**Brazil**	Manaus
	Florence	**Luxembourg**	Luxembourg

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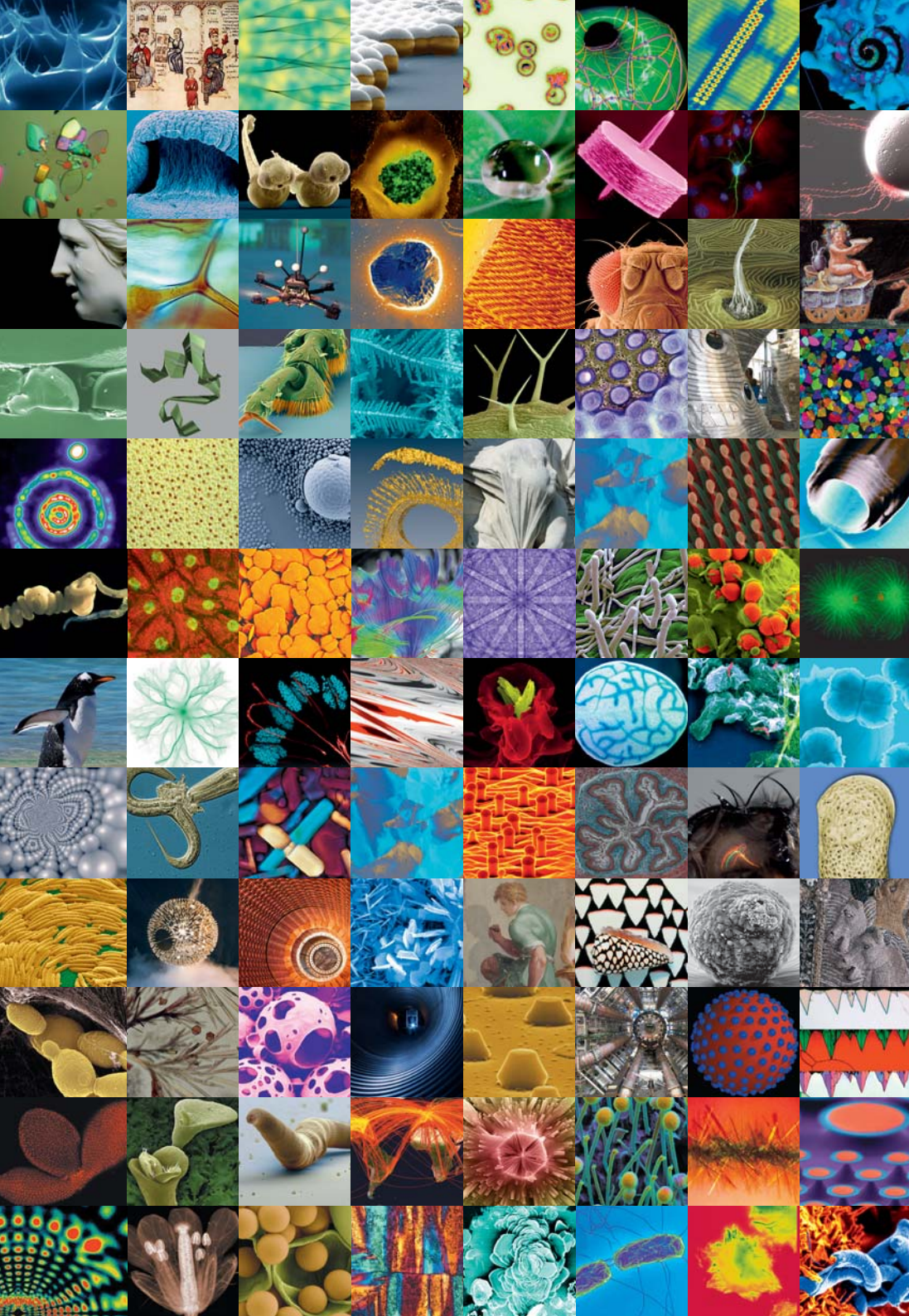
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