

PAVING THE WAY

A HANDBOOK FOR JOURNALISTS IN EXILE IN GERMANY



INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a compilation of resources designed to assist journalists settling in Germany. On the following pages, you will discover a collection of resources curated by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) with the support of Reporters Without Borders Germany (RSF Germany), aimed at helping journalists navigate their way in Germany.

The document is intended for media professionals already in Germany and does not contain information for those in the process of relocating to Germany from another country.

While we have gathered the most important information, you will also find links to additional resources at the end of most chapters for further information.

In the boxes are respective regional information, mainly focused on Leipzig and Berlin, but not exclusively

ECPMF would like to thank
Reporters Without Borders Germany
for their contribution to this handbook.



DISCLAIMER

This handbook was last updated on 1 March 2024. The document is non-exhaustive and ECPMF does not warrant the information provided and the quality of the services listed. Some recommendations of specific contact points are based on the organisations' experiences, some are recommended by third parties or found through research. Therefore, it is highly advisable to seek the guidance of relevant lawyers and other experts as well.

We encourage the readers of this handbook to inform us about any mistakes, such as outdated information or broken links. You can also share other resources that might be relevant with us. Please reach out to support@ecpmf.eu for any updates.



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EMERGENCY NUMBERS IN GERMANY

- **Police: 110**
- **Fire service: 112**
- **Medical service: 112**

Further information: [Handbook Germany: Emergencies](#)

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

We used many different sources to collect the information in this document. Here are some important sources we recommend for further information:

[Handbook Germany \(by Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen\)](#)

- Handbook Germany offers essential tips on asylum, housing, health, kindergarten, university, work and much more. The Handbook Germany team provides crucial information on an extensive range of topics – where you can find everything from A to Z about life in Germany. Videos and articles help you figure out how to manage in different everyday life situations. On their local pages, you will find useful contact information and addresses in your area.
- Handbook Germany is updated regularly. Handbook Germany is available in **Arabic, English, Farsi, French, German, Paschto, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian.**

[Together in Germany](#)

- Together in Germany (TiG) Community platform is a forum where you can network and exchange ideas with other community members in different languages. You can ask questions about life in Germany, answer others' questions, and share information.
- Their main topics are: Learning, Family, Health, Language, Life, Residence, Work, Rights & Laws. In order to ask or answer questions, you need to create an account.
- Together Germany operates in **Arabic, Dari/Farsi, English, French, German, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian.**

[Welcome to Germany \(by Federal Office for Migration and Refugees\)](#)

- The brochure, drawn up by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, comprises 130 pages containing large amounts of tips making everyday life easier. It also contains a considerable number of (Internet) addresses on where to find advice and further links.
- The brochure is available in **Arabic, Bulgarian, English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Italian, Romanian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish**

All Set – A Guide for freelance journalists who are new in Germany (by Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen)

- The brochure outlays general principles of the media sector in Germany and gives starting advice for freelance journalists.
- They cover topics such as: the media landscape, organisational matters, fairness, and provide useful link tips to help you find what you're looking for.
- It is available in **English, Farsi, German, Ukrainian, Russian**

MAIN CONTACT POINTS IN GERMANY (ALPHABETICALLY)

Arbeit und Leben

- Arbeit und Leben (translation: Work and Life) is an institution for political youth and adult education. It is run by the German Federation of Trade Unions and the Volkshochschulen (translation: Community colleges).
- The idea is to improve the position of employees in society through continuing education based on their needs.
- The local and regional offices provide employees, companies, job seekers and migrants with work-related counselling. For migrants they specifically offer guidance and information about the German job market.

Consumer Protection Centres

- The centres in the 16 German states offer advice and information on consumer protection issues, insurances, health services, help with legal problems etc.
- The advice offered varies from state to state. On the websites of the individual consumer advice centres, you will find the advice offered in your federal state.
- They provide advice in-person, via phone or email.
- They might only provide information in German, this depends on the respective office. You should contact them and ask.
- The consultation is not always for free, depending on the topic and respective office.

Migration counselling centres

- There are quite a lot of migration counselling centres (*Migrationsberatungsstellen*) across Germany. For adults it is called *Migrationsberatung für Erwachsene Zuwanderer (MEB)*. They can help you solve your problems, quickly and non-bureaucratically. They can advise you in relation to the following topics: Learning German; School and work; Housing; Health; Marriage; Family and raising children.
- Find the suitable centre in your area here: [Migration Counselling Navigator](#)

- They also have an [app](#) you can use to get in touch with them.
- For people between 12 and 27 years there are special [Youth Migration Services](#) (*Jugendmigrationsdienste*).
- Please note that depending on your city, there are other non-profit organisations that offer advice for immigrants.

RAA (Regional Offices for Education, Integration and Democracy e. V.)

- RAA promotes and supports anti-discrimination participation projects at local, municipal, state and federal level. Nationwide, diverse offices handle various projects, ranging from workplace discrimination protection to youth work training. Some offices assist with accommodation searches, provide legal advice on migration issues, and address other bureaucratic challenges.

Pro Asyl

- Pro Asyl offers a variety of legal consultations (online or via email, in English and German) for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. They might be able to help you with legal issues regarding your residency permit/asylum and application processes.
- Pro Asyl also provides an [overview](#) of networks and unions per region, providing contacts of counselling services.

Refugee Councils

- Refugee Councils (*Flüchtlingsräte*) are independent representatives of organisations, support groups and solidarity initiatives active in the federal states. Each federal state has their own refugee council providing different services regarding refugees and migration topics.

Touring Artists

- Touring Artists is an initiative that collects and distributes important information for international artists and culture professionals who come to Germany. Although it addresses artists in particular, the information provided there is also very relevant for journalists.
- They inform and advise on administrative topics that are relevant for cross-border artistic or curatorial activities on the following topics:
 - Visa and Residence
 - Contracts and Work Status
 - Taxes
 - Social Insurance
 - Transport and Customs

- Insurances
- Author's Rights
- Mobility Funding
- Their cross-sector service is aimed at:
 - Artists and culture professionals in Germany with international projects,
 - Institutions and groups in Germany working with international artists,
 - Artists and culture professionals living abroad who temporarily work in Germany,
 - and specifically, artists from non-EU countries who have recently relocated to Berlin.
- In addition you can reach out to their "Help Desk" for advice and free consultations on the administrative rules of international projects and working stays abroad / in Germany.
- Currently Touring Artists provides information and counselling in English and German, and only counselling in Turkish. Information in Arabic and Turkish will be available soon.

Welfare Organisations

- The social system in Germany strongly relies on a system of welfare organisations that are called *Freie Wohlfahrtspflege* (translation: Open welfare work) and run on a low-threshold basis. They are represented in every federal state and almost every city and offer a huge variety of social services which are easily accessible and less bureaucratic.
- Included in low-threshold services are for example: counselling centres, emergency overnight shelter, soup kitchen and other emergency shelters.
- The umbrella organisations are:
 - [Deutsches Rotes Kreuz](#)
 - [Deutscher Caritasverband](#)
 - [Diakonie Deutschland](#)
 - [Der Paritätische Gesamtverband](#)
 - [Arbeiterwohlfahrt](#)
 - [Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland](#)
- You can find your regional contact points easily on the respective websites or by a quick online research.

1. LEGAL QUESTIONS

This document provides a legal framework for the most relevant information on visas and residency statuses for journalists at risk who are already in Germany. It does not provide direct legal advice and the information in this chapter is not legally binding. Although the information was cross-checked by a lawyer, it still remains incomplete and will lack important details.

Residency statuses of journalists at risk are usually exceptional cases in the legal system in Germany, therefore we strongly recommend that you always consult a lawyer, especially for visa/residency questions.

While the information in this chapter focuses mainly on residence law, some helpful contact information on other legal questions, such as labour, corporate, or media law are listed under section **1.2.** as well.

1.1. Visa and residency status

Below you will find an overview of the most relevant visa and residency options, focusing on questions you might have if you are already located in Germany.

1.1.1. Overview of relevant visa and residency permits

There are legal residency options suitable for journalists at risk who can no longer return to their country of origin or move to another country. Several of them are listed below. There are more visa and residency permits available, that listed here. Some visa and residency permit options may be more suited to your specific situation than others" ? We strongly recommend that you consult a lawyer to find out which visa or residence permit is suitable for you (**see 1.2**). While a visa will allow you to stay in Germany for a relatively short period of time, a residency permit in general allows you to stay in the country for a longer period of time.

Generally, there are two main visa categories which journalists can receive when entering Germany: Schengen Visa or National Visa.

Please have in mind that there is a difference if you have a visa issued by Germany or a visa by another country. Generally, these cases are more complex, thus please consult a lawyer.

Overviews with further information:

- [VisaGuide](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Immigration to Germany](#)
- [German Federal Ministry of the Interior: Einreise und Aufenthalt](#)

1.1.1.1. Schengen Visa

The Schengen visa has a purpose of transit through the territory of the Schengen states or for planned stays in this territory of up to 90 days within a 180-day period. The 180-day period is calculated backwards from the most recent entry or exit days. Therefore it

is a constantly moving so called “rolling time frame.” There is a [Schengen visa calculator](#) available to calculate your short-stays in Europe

While converting a Schengen visa to a national residence permit in Germany is generally not possible, there are some exceptions. In such a case please urgently consult a lawyer.

Please keep in mind that the Schengen area should always be entered through the country that the visa is issued for. Otherwise it can cause problems at the border while entering another Schengen country.

More information: [Handbook Germany: Visitor Visa](#)

1.1.1.2. National Visa/ Residence Permit

The National Visa is a long-stay visa that allows you to stay in Germany for more than three months and—depending on the type of visa—also work, study, etc.

The most relevant types of national visa/residence permits for journalists at risk in Germany are:

- Freelance visa/residency permit: § 21 Abs. 5 AufenthG
- Work visa/Employment residency permit: §§ 18 AufenthG
- Visa for studying: § 16b AufenthG
- “Scholarship” visa: § 7 AufenthG
- Asylum: § 25 Absatz 1 and § 25 Absatz 2 AufenthG
- Humanitarian visa/residency permit: § 22 AufenthG (can only be obtained from outside of Germany)

Freelance visa/ residency permit: [§ 21 Abs. 5 AufenthG](#)

If you are a freelancer or self-employed you might be able to apply for a freelance visa. Please inform yourself carefully about the requirements you need to fulfil, such as health insurance, pension insurance and references/contracts. The freelance entry visa is a National (D) Visa, that allows you to enter into Germany and to stay for a few months. If you are in Germany with a national visa you might be able to apply for a long term freelance residence permit at the relevant immigration authority (*Ausländerbehörde/Einwanderungsbehörde*). The extension of the visa depends on your ability to sustain your (and your family’s) living or subsistence.

More information:

- [VisaGuide: Freelance Visa Germany](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Visa for Self-Employment](#)

Humanitarian visa/ residency permit: [§ 22 AufenthG](#)

If you received a humanitarian visa according to § 22 AufenthG because you needed to escape a situation in your home country, for example if you were persecuted or threa-

tened, you need to apply for a humanitarian residency permit on the same basis. It will be valid for a maximum of 3 years but can be prolonged. It should not be confused with asylum according to § 25 AufenthG (see 1.1.2). You can obtain § 22 only if you are outside of Germany and the Schengen area, while you can apply for asylum only if you are already within Germany. **If your residency is based on § 22 it is generally not recommended to apply for asylum, as the rights you gain with § 22 residency permit are similar.** If you apply for asylum the residency permit: § 22 AufenthG expires automatically.

More information: [VisaGuide: Germany Humanitarian Residence Permit](#)

Information compiled for evacuated employees from Afghanistan (only in German and Farsi, but covers many central questions): [Handbook Germany: Afghanistan Information](#)

Work visa/ Employment residency permit: [§ 18 ff. AufenthG](#)

If you came to Germany with a work visa or you have an employment offer, you might qualify for employment residence.

More information:

- [Germany Visa: Working/Employment Visa](#)
- [VisaGuide: Employment Residence Permits](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Visa for Skilled Workers](#)

Visa for studying: [§ 16b AufenthG](#)

Non-EU state students can study in Germany with a study visa which is valid for up to 2 years and can be extended on request. In order to apply one must be accepted by a state or state-approved university and be able to support oneself during the period of one's studies.

More information:

- [Germany Visa: How to Get a Visa to Study in Germany](#)
- [VisaGuide: How to Apply for a Germany Residence Permit for Students](#)
- [Make it in Germany: Visa for Studying](#)

“Scholarship” visa: [§ 7 AufenthG](#)

So-called scholarship visas under § 7 AufenthG are provided to persons who were granted a scholarship in Germany. It can be a scholarship awarded by an NGO, foundation or initiative. This visa usually does not allow you to work alongside your scholarship programme, but there are exceptions. If you are offered a scholarship and have open questions, please consult a lawyer.

Asylum: [§ 25 Absatz 1 and § 25 Absatz 2 AufenthG](#)

If you do not qualify for a residence permit, you might have to consider applying for asylum. If this is the case, please consult a lawyer, specialised in migration law (**see 1.2**).

Please have in mind that Germany is part of the Dublin Convention (a legal treaty that determines the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application). If you were registered in another EU country before entering Germany, Germany might not be responsible for your asylum procedure.

The stages of the German asylum procedure:

- [BAMF Brochure](#)
- [BAMF Website](#)

You can further inform yourself about asylum through the following websites:

- [Basiswissen Asyl](#)
- [Pro Asyl](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Asylum procedure](#)

Repercussions of acquiring asylum status:

When you submit an asylum application, a city of residence is automatically assigned to you. If you have another residence title which is valid for more than 6 months and you apply for asylum, you can remain at your original city of residence.

1.1.2. Other questions related to residency

1.1.2.1. Family reunification

If you want to bring your family to Germany, there are several rules to adhere to.

You can find more detailed information on the required steps here:

- [Handbook Germany: Family reunification for Immigrants](#)
- [BAMF: Subsequent Immigration to Join Foreign Family Members](#)
- [European legal framework on family reunification](#)

1.1.2.2. Redistribution and moving

With residence permits according to § 22 and § 25, in the first 3 years in Germany, there is a general obligation to remain residing at the place of assignment.

If you have a residence restriction and want to move, you will need to submit a 'Umverteilungsantrag' to the immigration authorities in the place you want to move to. The eligibility to apply for redistribution is quite strict. Usually one of the following criteria must be met:

- Taking up vocational training or studies in the area
- Taking up an occupation that is subject to social insurance

- Family reunification with a spouse or minor children

Please note that you have to provide proof of a work/apprenticeship contract and of accommodation.

If you file an application for redistribution, state reasons that are as concrete and verifiable as possible. You can appeal against the rejection of a reallocation application before the administrative court. All in all, an approval of the competent authority is required before you move.

More information: Search online for “*Umverteilung + name of the city*”.

1.2. Help with legal issues

As already mentioned above, it is strongly advised to get professional legal consultations, especially for questions around your residence status. Below you find opportunities that help you to cover the costs, as well as suggestions for lawyers, not only for immigration law.

1.2.1. Support with legal costs

[ECPMF - Opportunities in exile](#): You can always ask the relevant ECPMF team members for support with your fees for lawyers and legal advice. We might be able to financially support you with legal consultations in media law, labour law, immigration law, tax law while you are in exile.

[ECPMF - Legal support programme](#): Furthermore, ECPMF has a legal support programme that offers and coordinates legal support on matters related to free speech for individuals and organisations working in countries located geographically in Europe. Support will be available for, but not limited to, issues such as defamation, access to public documents, protection of sources, and whistleblowing.

Asylum: In urgent cases where intensive legal support by a lawyer is indispensable but the persons concerned are not able to pay lawyer's or expert's fees, it is possible to apply for support from the [PRO ASYL legal aid fund](#) at the refugee council of the respective federal state. More information is available via your respective refugee council.

For other matters: As in many other countries, courts in Germany charge costs for court proceedings. Should you be unable to cover the costs for your own lawyer and the court proceeding by yourself you can apply for financial aid to cover them before a court procedure (*Prozesskostenbeihilfe*). You can file the request at the court directly. For the disputes that can be resolved without a court interference, but still require a lawyer, you can also apply for financial state assistance through (*Beratungshilfe*). Also consider to take out insurance for legal expenses (see **2.3.2**). More information: [Handbook Germany: Legal Aid](#)

1.2.2. Legal counselling

In general, you can search for lawyers in your area on [Deutsche Anwaltskunft](#).

You might want to use the [search function of RAV](#). RAV (Republikanischer Anwältinnen- und Anwälteverein e.V) is a political advocacy organisation and sees itself as part of the civil rights movement, whose aim is to secure and establish the primacy of human and civil rights over the interests of state and economic institutions. This does not automatically mean that we recommend all their members, but it might be useful as a first searching point.

On [Rechtsberaterkonferenz](#) you can find a list of lawyers, who are working closely together with big German welfare organisations and provide legal advice to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

If you are looking for a lawyer, you can also reach out to support@ecpmf.eu, we might be able to give you recommendations.

There are several institutions offering legal advice, some of them pro bono. You can contact them for initial counselling. However, in most cases they can not substitute for legal representation. The most relevant general contact points are mentioned here.

- **[Consumer Protection Centres \(Verbraucherzentralen\)](#)**: There are centres in many different cities that offer advice and information on consumer protection issues, including help with legal problems. The offers vary from state to state. On the websites of the individual consumer advice centres, you will find the advice offered in your region. Most of the services are not for free.
- **[Labour unions \(Gewerkschaften\)](#)**: For legal matters but also in general, labour unions are a good point of reference and you should consider becoming a member of one of them. See here for the overarching organisation and an overview of member unions in Germany: [Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund](#). For journalist unions and other services see below under **4.3.5**.
- **[Touring artists](#)** (for freelancers): Orientation consultations for artists from abroad who have recently relocated to Germany regarding the administrative basics of working in Germany. Please note, this does not include binding legal and tax advice.

Pro bono counselling related to immigration law

- **[Refugee Councils \(Flüchtlingsräte\)](#)** Some Refugee Councils offer legal advice. Please check the respective website for more information on what they can offer.
- **[Pro Asyl](#)** might be able to help you with legal issues regarding your residency permit/ asylum and application processes.
- **[Refugee Law Clinics](#)** provide pro bono counselling in asylum law by law students in several German cities.
- **[Migration counselling centres \(Migrationsberatungsstellen\)](#)**: They also provide legal counselling related to residency and asylum questions, amongst other services.
- **[International Refugee Assistance Project \(IRAP\)](#)**: IRAP's European office was opened in Germany in 2021. The majority of the Berlin-based team focuses its efforts on representing clients through European legal channels, with an emphasis on family reunification and unaccompanied minors. IRAP Europe also works with the UN-

HCR and Equal Rights Beyond Borders to provide legal advice and representation to asylum seekers in the Dublin III EU family reunification process.

- **Deutsches Bündnis für afghanische Flüchtlinge (DBAF)** (German Alliance for Afghan Refugees): Launched in May 2022, this joint project offers free legal support to Afghan refugees seeking resettlement in Europe. DBAF works together with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and 10 other commercial law firms. Pro bono lawyers from all law firms are trained and supervised by IRC legal experts to process applications for family reunification and additional legal pathways to Germany for Afghan individuals and families. E-Mail: Afghanistan.support@rescue.org
- **Penager**: The Penager initiative offers low-threshold advice for refugees in German, Kurdish and Turkish. On Instagram, Penager tries to support those seeking advice, particularly with regard to the local structure. Its activities include asylum procedure advice and guidance through the German bureaucratic process.. The initiative can be reached on Instagram at @pena.ger and by email at pena.ger@yahoo.com

2. SOCIAL SYSTEM IN GERMANY

This chapter provides an overview about the social system in Germany, how it works and what it offers. More detailed information can be found in the respective chapters that follow.

In general the social system in Germany has a lot of benefits you might have access to. The social security system in Germany is ruled through 13 different statutes (Sozialgesetzbuch, SGB) that include regulations about compulsory insurances but also about social benefits in Germany. The most important benefits are listed throughout this document, but do not hesitate to ask for help at the respective office for support in your particular situation.

Overview Social Security in Germany in German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Turkish and simple language: [Brochure BMAS: Soziale Sicherung im Überblick](#)

2.1. Social benefits

Regulations on social benefits are divided according to two main parts of the Social Security Code (SGB). Your current employment status determines which regulation applies to you.

- Leistungen zur Sicherung des Lebensunterhalts nach SGB II §§ 19 ff (Bürgergeld)
- Arbeitslosengeld nach SGB III §§ 136 ff (ALG 1)
- Sozialhilfe nach SGB XII
- Grundleistungen nach § 3 AsylbLG

SGB II (Bürgergeld)

If you are allowed to and able to work, some of the rules of SGB II could apply to you. It is meant to support you to find labour, in order for you to be financially independent, but also to secure you during the time you are looking for a new job. Because Germany consists of 16 federal states forming a federal republic, part of the money you receive comes from the federal states, part from the federal institution “Bundesagentur für Arbeit” and its social service offices which are often called “Jobcenter”. The city in the federal state you live in will usually pay the rent for your apartment to some degree, while the Bundesagentur für Arbeit respectively the Jobcenter will pay living costs that are deemed necessary. These benefits are officially called “Grundsicherung für Arbeitssuchende”, but in daily life you might encounter the more colloquial term used until 2022 “Hartz IV” or the new term since 2023 “Bürgergeld”. In 2023, the standard rate will be 502 € per month for single adults without children.

When you qualify for benefits according to that law, you will receive payments from the “Jobcenter”. You can find more information about the Jobcenter here: [Handbook Germany: Jobcenter](#)

More information:

- [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Bürgergeld](#)
- [Sozialplattform: Bürgergeld](#)

Leipzig

[Refugee Law Clinic Leipzig](#)

- Free legal advice for asylum seekers

[Amnesty International Leipzig Asylgruppe](#)

- Free legal counselling, preparation for interviews at Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF)

Migration Counselling Centres:

- [Mosaik Leipzig e.V.](#)
- [Caritasverband Leipzig e.V.](#)
- [Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Leipzig](#)
- [Naomi e.V. - Youth Migration Service](#)
- [Internationaler Bund: Youth Migration Service](#)

[Refugee Council Saxony](#)

- Offers counselling for refugees in various life situations

[RAA - Salve](#)

- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in their own homes receive advice and support in coping with everyday life in Germany, including help with issues regarding residence law. Languages: Russian, Arabic, English and French.

Berlin

- [Netzwerk Berlin Hilft](#): Overview asylum counselling offers (2016)
- [AWO Asylverfahrensberatung](#)
- [BBZ Beratungs-und Betreuungszentrum für Geflüchtete und Migrant*innen](#)
- [Kontakt und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und Migrant_innen e.V.](#)
- [Rechtsambulanz](#)
- [Sozialrechtsberatung für geflüchtete Menschen im Diakonischen Werk Berlin Stadtmitte e.V.](#)

SGB III (Arbeitslosengeld)

SGB III covers benefits and measures to promote employment. It is thus the basis for the work of the employment agencies *Arbeitsagenturen*. SGB III also contains regulations on unemployment insurance. The benefits are divided into three major areas: benefits for employees, benefits for employers and benefits for institutions.

ALG 1 (Unemployment Benefit): In many cases, there is a claim to ALG 1 after losing a job. The *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* is the institution responsible for it and you need to register yourself there (online or offline).

As soon as it is clear that you will lose your job, you must register as a jobseeker immediately (*arbeitssuchend melden*), officially no later than 3 months before your employment ends. This will help you avoid financial disadvantages if you later receive unemployment benefits. If you find out at short notice that you are likely to lose your job, please register as a jobseeker within 3 days. In order to be entitled to ALG 1, you must essentially meet some requirements: You are without employment, but you are able to work at least 15 hours per week. You are looking for a job that is subject to compulsory insurance. You fulfil the qualifying period (You were compulsorily or voluntarily insured for at least 12 months in the 30 months before you registered for unemployment and became unemployed.)

More information:

- [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Arbeitslosengeld](#)
- [Sozialplattform: Arbeitslosengeld](#)

Leipzig

- [Agentur für Arbeit Leipzig](#)
- [Jobcenter Leipzig](#)

SGB XII (Sozialhilfe)

The regulations of SGB XII apply to people, who are not able to work e.g. due to age, legal status or disability, but are also meant to support people with low income and other problems.

You can receive a variety of services from the corresponding office if you qualify, such as housing acquisition, group supported housing, emergency institutions and primary care. Since the federal states can call the respective social service office as they please, its name differs, but oftentimes it is the *Sozialamt*. The benefits that you can receive according to this law are often referred to as *Sozialhilfe*.

More information:

- [BMAS: Leistungen der Sozialhilfe](#)
- [Sozialplattform: Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt](#)

AsylbLG (Asylum Seeker's Benefit Act)

While in the process of asylum application, you are entitled to specific benefits (AsylbLG). The benefits unfortunately only cover the very necessary and basic needs (*Grundleistungen*) and are on average less than the usual social benefits. Those living in state-run shared accommodation have part of their benefits in a non-cash form (catering).

Since the federal states can call the respective social service office as they please, its name differs, but oftentimes it is named the *Sozialamt*.

More information:

- [BMAS: Leistungssätze Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz](#)
- [Sozialplattform: Leistungen nach dem Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz](#)

2.2. Social insurance system

Apart from the social benefits offered by the state, a network of social insurances is meant to secure people in Germany.

In Germany, as an employee, a specific sum, relative to your income, is usually deposited into a collective fund, with contributions coming from both you and your employer. The insurances are the following:

- Deutsche Rentenversicherung for pensions
- Statutory health insurances
- Care insurance through statutory health insurance
- Unemployment insurance according to SGB III
- Accident insurance, paid solely by employer

If you are not employed, the system works a bit differently, depending if you are self-employed or unemployed.

Have a look here for further information:

- [Touring Artists: Social Insurance Germany](#)
- [Make it in Germany: Salary, Taxes & Social Security](#)

You find more general information on other relevant insurances under **2.3**.

2.3. Insurances

In this chapter you can find an overview of the most relevant insurances. There are compulsory and non-compulsory insurances in Germany.

2.3.1. Health insurance

Health insurance is compulsory in Germany. There are many insurance companies in Germany. Some of them are statutory health insurance, and others are private. These two main types of insurance differ in terms of accessibility, amount of personal contributions and benefits.

More information:

- [Handbook Germany: Health Insurance](#)
- [Welcome Center Germany: Health Insurance](#)

If you are unsure which health insurance company is right for you, you can consult your regional [Consumer Protection Centre](#) (*Verbraucherzentrale*). They are independent and not tied to any insurance.

Another valuable contact point for insurance questions is [Touring Artists](#).

Be careful with so-called *Versicherungsvertreter*, they are working for insurance companies and cannot offer independent advice. Better choices are *Versicherungsmakler* (insurances pay them a fee) or *Versicherungsvermittlung auf Honorarbasis* (you pay them per hour).

Statutory health insurance

The statutory health care system stretches out over various health insurances (*Krankenkassen*). A list of all statutory health insurances can be found here: [Gesetzliche Krankenkassen](#).

You have to take out statutory health insurance if:

- you earn less than 64 350 €/year,
- you receive benefits according to SGB II or SGB III,
- you are a member of *Künstersozialkasse* (**see 2.3.2**),
- you are a student older than 25, with an income of more than 470€/month and are not a member of a family insurance

The statutory health insurance fee is calculated on basis of your income

As a member of the statutory health insurance you will receive a chipcard (*Gesundheitskarte*) that is proof of your insurance and is used by doctors, hospitals etc to invoice their services to your insurance directly.

Private health insurance

When none of this applies to you, you can take out private health insurance or stay in statutory health insurance voluntarily. If you choose to become a member of a private health insurance, be advised of the following:

- It can be difficult or even impossible to get back into statutory health insurance.
- Your insurance premium will be calculated on the basis of your personal health risk.

- All medical costs have to be covered by yourself first. Private insurances usually reimburse you after you hand in the respective invoice.
- In addition, you will have to take out private care insurance.

Family insurance

Under certain conditions, family members can obtain statutory health insurance without having to pay the premium. In private insurance schemes, each person needs their own insurance, sometimes there are special options for families though.

Have a look here for further information: [Welcome Center Germany: Family Insurance](#)

2.3.2. Insurances for Journalists

Insurances designed for journalists in particular exist and are best to be asked at a journalist union and your insurance.

As a member of a journalists union (**see 4.3.5.**) you often profit from cheaper insurance premiums. For a beginning you can have a look at [DJV: Versicherungen](#).

For more information on non-compulsory insurances see [Handbook Germany: Supplementary Insurance](#).

Artists' social insurance ([Künstlersozialkasse](#))

Künstlersozialkasse (KSK) is a way to get into the compulsory health insurance system. It is meant for self-employed people who tend to have a low income like artists, writers and also journalists. The main benefit from KSK is that you only pay half of the contribution you normally would, the other half is paid by KSK. There are also disadvantages. Especially for media workers, the framework in which they qualify for KSK is relatively strict. The substantial part of your work would have to be in Germany, you would have to write your own texts and there are a lot of regulations about being employed.

Private liability insurance

We recommend that you take out private liability insurance (*Haftpflichtversicherung*). Since the private liability often will not cover damages coming from your profession, you also should have professional liability insurance for journalists. This becomes even more important when you work as a freelancer, since you assume all the risks independently.

Insurance for legal expenses

Although there is the possibility to obtain financial support in a legal case (**see 1.2.1.**), it can be advisable to take out insurance for legal expenses (*Rechtsschutzversicherung*).

2.4. Family and Childcare

In this chapter you can find the most important financial benefits for families and options for childcare.

Have a look here for additional information regarding benefits for families in different languages: [Familienportal: Family Benefits](#).

The website can also be used to find the respective offices for family matters and benefits in your area. For questions regarding family reunification **see 1.1.2.1**.

2.4.1. Financial assistance for families

Child benefit (*Kindergeld*)

Kindergeld is meant to secure the basic needs of children. The amount of money depends on how many children you have and is adjusted frequently. From January 2023 it is 250 € per month. You might qualify for Kindergeld if you:

- Are a citizen of the countries listed [here](#).
- have acquired a residency status, that allows you to work and live in Germany (**see 1.1.1**.)
- are a recognized refugee or asylum-seeker.

It is best to ask for Kindergeld at the respective office which is often called *Familienkasse*.

Explanatory video in English: [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Child Benefit Cross Border Cases in Germany](#).

Leipzig

- [Familienkasse Leipzig Office](#)

Parental Allowance (*Elterngeld*)

Elterngeld is meant to compensate for missing income during the time parents take care of their children after birth. You can check here whether you qualify on [Familienportal](#).

Leipzig

- [Stadt Leipzig: Eltern- und Erziehungsgeld](#)

2.4.2. Childcare

In case you are working and can not take care of your child, here are some options. Be aware that offers might differ across the federal states.

Daycare

Children below school age (primary school in Germany normally starts at the age of 6) can attend a Day Care Centre (*Kindertagesstätte: Kita*) or a Kindergarten. It is difficult to ascertain the costs, since it depends on where you live and whether its holder is private or communal. That is why it is best to arrange a meeting at the Kita or Kindergarten that you like to discuss the terms and conditions. Depending on where you live, it is also hard to find a Kindergarten with free capacities, that's why you should start looking for a place for your child even before they have reached the age of going.

Furthermore, there are child and family centres (*Kinder- und Familienzentren: KiFaZ*). They are established in many cities and support communication between different families and try to incorporate parents into the daycare as much as possible.

Leipzig

- [KiFaZ in Leipzig](#)
- [Mein Kitaplatz: Daycare](#)

After-school care (*Hort*)

Many schools offer to look after your child after school. On average the Hort costs 70-150 € per month. Children have the possibility to stay there until late afternoon, to eat and to do their school work. However, there are not many places available. That is why parents with increased need will be preferred. In order to register, you will need a demand notice from the youth welfare office. In some cases the office might also be able to cover the fees.

Childminder (*Tagesmutter/-vater*)

Another option might be to use the services of a childminder during the day. Since they usually offer their services on a private basis, you do not have to meet any official requirements.

With this websites you can search childminders in your area: [topnanny](#) and [Meine Tagesmutter](#).

Leipzig

To find a suitable professional childminder in Leipzig you can have a look here:

- [Verbund Kommunaler Kinder- und Jugendhilfe \(VKKJ\)](#)
- [Mütterzentrum Leipzig](#)

School system

It is compulsory to visit a state school or a recognized private school between ages 6 and 18; homeschooling is not allowed. The school system usually extends over three stages. In every federal state there is a fixed day for school enrollment. Beforehand there will be a timeframe to visit the preferred school and attend initial talks. For an overview you can also check out the [video by Handbook Germany](#).

In several cities throughout Germany you can get advice and counselling in school-related topics. [Here is an overview](#).

Leipzig

- [Educational system in Saxony](#)
- [Overview counselling on school education](#)

2.5. Social card

If you have a low income you might qualify for a social card (*Sozialausweis*). It will grant you discounts for many things from cultural events to public transport. In order to obtain it, you usually have to show your ID, paychecks and rent contract. Not every city offers it, so best ask for it at the municipal office.

Leipzig

- [Leipzig-Pass](#)

3. HOUSING/ACCOMMODATION

This chapter provides some tips on how to find accommodation and talks about important information around renting.

3.1. Searching accommodation

Finding a flat is challenging in many German cities. This map might help you to take the flat situation into consideration while deciding on your next destination: [Deutschlandatlas: Mieten](#).

More information on how to find a flat in Germany on [Handbook Germany: Search a flat](#).

3.1.1. Online search

Here is a list of the usual search engines that you can use to find a flat:

- [Kleinanzeigen](#)
- [WG Gesucht](#)
- [Immonet](#)
- [ImmobilienScout24](#)
- [Immowelt](#)
- [HC24](#) - fully furnished apartments, expensive
- [Wunderflats](#) - fully furnished apartments
- on websites of housing cooperatives (**see 3.1.2.**)

If you are registered with a social service office and are entitled to financial aid with housing, you should search for apartments that fit the official criteria. Search online for “*Angemessenheit von Kosten der Wohnung + name of the city*”.

Leipzig

- If you receive support from Jobcenter Leipzig, you can use [this form](#) to consult the criteria as well as to apply for the cost coverage.

3.1.2. Housing cooperatives (*Wohnungsgenossenschaften*)

Living in a flat from a housing cooperative can be a good opportunity, if you decide to stay in Germany for a longer time. A housing cooperative is a housing company with a special legal structure that aims to be democratic and transparent and is mostly non-profit, but rather committed to their members. If you rent a flat from a housing cooperative you will automatically become a member. The most striking advantage is that flats owned by a Wohnungsgenossenschaft have a lower price per m² than average. Usually, the rental contract can not be terminated easily, meaning that you have a life-long right to reside

in the flat or house. On the other hand this usually means you will be bound to live there for a couple of years.

For an overview of housing cooperatives across Germany see [Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften](#).

Leipzig

In Leipzig there are several big ones: *BGL*, *Kontakt*, *Lipsia*, *UNITAS*, *VLW* and *WOGET-RA*. Together with many smaller ones they own 16 % of the flats in Leipzig.

Also mentioned should be LWB, a huge housing company in Leipzig. Although they are not a housing cooperative, their repertoire includes many affordable flats that are accessible with a *Wohnberechtigungsschein* (**see 3.2.2.**).

3.1.3. Assistance to search accommodation

Note: If you are without a home or shelter or face impending loss of housing, there are several organisations dedicated to providing support for you. Please check chapter **3.3.** for more information.

You can start by reaching out to your local [Migration counselling centres](#), because they might know projects and initiatives in your area. But usually they do not have the capacity to support your search.

In addition, here is a list of projects and initiatives in some of the biggest cities in Germany that might be able to help you find a flat or refer you to places:

Leipzig

- [Kontaktstelle Wohnen](#)
 - housing initiative that helps refugees find flats in the Leipzig area
 - speaks a variety of languages
 - usually a long waitlist, but worth a try
- [RAA - Salve](#)
 - Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in their own homes receive advice and support in coping with everyday life in Germany, including help related to accommodation and finding a flat. Languages: Russian, Arabic, English and French.

Munich

Munich is one of the most competitive housing markets in Germany, but there are some organisations which offer support or social services

- [Münchner Freiwillige](#): the association inspires socially minded landlords to rent to socially disadvantaged people, foreigners and refugees. As soon as a landlord or landlady has declared his or her willingness, the association supports the search for suitable tenants for the property.
- [SOWON](#): SOWON is a portal provided by the city of Munich which is mainly focused on social housing. After registration, you will be put on a list for housing allocation due to urgency.

Hamburg

Hamburg is one of the most expensive cities in Germany, which can also be seen in the housing prices. Therefore some organisations help persons in need.

- [Wohnbrücke Hamburg](#) Koordinierungsstelle is responsible for the concrete acquisition and placement of apartments. The team looks for apartments with permanent rental contracts and accompanies committed landlords in the process of renting their apartments to refugees and persons in need.

3.2. Renting

In the following chapters you find some useful information and tips around renting, you might also want to consider before searching for accommodation.

3.2.1. Documents – Checklist

You should prepare the following documents for your flat search in print in a folder and as a PDF file. Sometimes you have to hand them in during the flat viewing, sometimes you have to send them by email.

- document with personal information (Mieterselbstauskunft)
 - Many renters have their own personal information forms, which they hand out before or during the flat viewing. The applicants usually fill out the form on site or after the viewing. You can find a sample form on [Wohnungsbörse](#).
- copy of your SCHUFA credit report
 - SCHUFA is a company that collects and provides data regarding the credit rating of citizens
 - You can obtain a free credit report once a year. This video explains how: [Handbook Germany: Schufa](#).
- proof of income from the last three months (for employees) or your most recent tax assessment (for self-employed)
 - If you receive social support from the state, you also need a copy of the respective social service office's confirmation that they will cover the rental costs.
- proof of Rent Payment Certificate (Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung)
 - this is a certificate by your current renter to confirm that you have always paid your rent and there are no arrears to be paid
- copy of your passport and residence documents

If applicable:

- copy of your Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS) (**see 3.2.2.**)
- copy of personal liability insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung) (**see 2.3.2.**)
- guarantee (Bürgschaft)

Almost always, you need to pay a deposit when renting the flat which you get back when leaving the flat in the condition that was agreed on in the contract.

3.2.2. Social housing (*Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS)*)

In case you are unable to find an apartment in the normal housing market and you are entitled, you can apply for the permit for subsidised housing. This permit gives you a right to apply for social housing.

See here for further information: [Handbook Germany: WBS](#).

Leipzig

- [Information on how to apply for it in Leipzig](#)

3.2.3. Housing allowance (*Wohngeld*)

Wohngeld as a social benefit is meant to support persons with low income with paying their rent and other housing-related expenses. To be eligible, your income (combined with the overall income of the household) must not exceed a certain threshold. The amount of payments will be calculated for each applicant individually and depends on your income, general living situation and costs of your flat. For the corresponding form, ask for it at your respective social service office.

Further information:

- [Information by the German Trade Union Confederation \(DGB\) from December 2022](#)
- [Sozialplattform: Housing Benefit](#)

Leipzig

- [Wohngeldantrag Leipzig](#)
- [The application form can also be filled out online](#)

3.2.4. Application for initial furnishing (*Antrag auf Erstaussstattung*)

In some cases the social service office contributes to the cost of the initial setting up of your apartment. Be aware though, that it usually is only a one-time offer. Also, the social service office can choose whether to give you money to buy furniture and household objects or if they pay in kind. Best ask at your office which form you need in order to apply.

Leipzig

- [Application form: Antrag auf Erstaussstattung Leipzig](#)

3.2.5. Registration at the Municipal office

Once your address changes you need to register your new address with the registration department (*Einwohnermeldeamt*) at the municipal office (among other names: *Bürgeramt*, *Bürgerservice*, *Bürgerbüro*). The registration can be done at any of these offices in your city and it should be done within the first weeks of moving in order to avoid possible fines.

For the registration you need your passport and the confirmation of accommodation (*Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*) from your renter/lessor. Keep the given registration confirmation (*Meldebestätigung*) safe.

Further information: [Handbook Germany: Registration.](#)

Leipzig

The registration appointment is booked [online](#) and it is not easy to find a free one. But free slots for short term appointments are usually advertised from Monday to Friday at 8 am, long term appointments at 5 pm.

3.2.6. Living in your flat

Once you find a flat, there are several tasks and issues you need to consider. You can find some useful information here: <https://handbookgermany.de/en/housing>

Licence Fee for Public Broadcasting (*Rundfunkbeitrag (GEZ)*)

The German media system is characterised by a huge network of public television and radio broadcasters. The biggest public broadcasters in television are ARD and ZDF, and in radio Deutschlandradio. In addition to that there is a huge amount of regional broadcasters in every federal state. In Leipzig and Saxony it is called MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk). The whole program of the stations can be streamed on the internet:

- [ARD](#)
- [ZDF](#)
- [DLF](#)

The network is financed by a broadcasting fee called *Rundfunkbeitrag*. That fee is mandatory for each household: In case you live together with a person, who already pays it, you do not have to. When you register at a new address, you will receive a letter from the respective office, to clarify whether or not you must pay the fee. You can often be exempt from the contribution if you receive state benefits. Upon receiving correspondence from the relevant office, please respond promptly as failure to pay or take action may result in legal consequences. In that response letter, you can also state that another person in your household already pays the fee, providing them the identification number of the other person's fee (*Beitragsnummer*). The amount of contribution is 18.36€/month in 2023.

More information: [Handbook Germany: Rundfunkbeitrag.](#)

Internet usage rules

Unauthorised streaming and torrenting/downloading is an administrative offence in Germany. You may stream via the legal platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. But please

note that it is illegal to download or stream content from illegal platforms, and if caught you will be charged with a high fine.

3.3. Housing Emergencies

A system of emergency shelters and programs exists in every federal state in Germany. If you are at risk of losing your home, already lost it or need any other kind of help you can reach out to the welfare organisations, mentioned under Main Contact Points. As a first address each of them should be at least able to contact other programs and initiatives in your city to help you. Often they will be able to provide assistance themselves.

Churches in Germany in general often provide help for people in need. If you need help, you can consider asking for support from a church parish in your area.

Furthermore, in some cities you can find housing counselling initiatives in case you have problems with your flat, for example with missed rent payments.

Berlin

- [Overview & database of low-threshold organisations in Berlin area](#)
- [My Life My Way](#)

There are four big institutions, which coordinate social services for persons in need under the level of regular care. They are focused on people who are without a home or shelter and those who face impending loss of housing:

- [Berliner Stadtmission](#): in addition to providing the necessities of life for homeless people, the aim is counselling and support on the way back to a secure home of one's own.
- [Berliner Kältehilfe](#): was established to provide non-bureaucratic overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness. Numerous church congregations, associations, and initiatives participate with their own offers, such as night-time cafés, soup kitchens, and meeting places.
- [GEBEWO](#): Operates various facilities with assistance specialised for women and in emergency housing, and integration. For some of these facilities, there is a legal obligation under § 75 i. For some of these facilities, there are service agreements with the State of Berlin or other services, cooperation, or grant agreements following § 67 ff or § 53 of the Social Code XII.
- [Berliner Obdachlosenhilfe](#): they organise several tours a week to support the homeless and people in need. That means, the supporters go to different places in Berlin and provide food, meals, drinks, clothes, sleeping bags, and sleeping mats to people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the association provides information about free health care, emergency shelters, soup kitchens, rehab facilities, psychiatric clinics, and other helping institutions.

Munich

[Wohnhilfe e.V.](#): Wohnhilfe e.V. offers help for homeless people and youths primarily, but can possibly help you further if you contact them.

Hamburg

All helpful social organisations can be found in this [PDF](#).

- [Diakonie Hamburg: Wohnungslos und Obdachlos](#): People threatened and affected by the loss of housing receive counselling and support in the diaconal emergency housing assistance facilities. The goal is to find safe, adequate and permanently affordable housing.
- [Hinz und Kunzt](#): Hinz und Kunzt is a street magazine that is sold by homeless people and an organisation offering a variety of social services as well, yet foremost for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. They are very well established in Hamburg though and can maybe direct you to other organisations.

Köln

- [Wohnungslos in Köln](#): The organisation offers a big database with services such as counselling, shelter, soup kitchens, and mental support.
- [WIKU Köln](#): There is an overview provided for persons in need of a home.

4. WAYS INTO JOURNALISM IN GERMANY

This chapter guides you through the most relevant information around your professional life. It includes basic information on the educational system, work and employment, language and dives deeper into the profession of journalism and specific information for journalists in exile.

Journalism is not an officially protected profession in Germany. Some definitions of journalism are provided by journalist networks, NGOs and unions. Partially due to this, journalism in Germany manifests in various forms, offering numerous avenues to enter the field. As with other jobs, you need to know the challenges that come with different work forms (**see 4.3.1.**). For more information about the challenges and necessities that come with being a freelance journalist in Germany in particular **see 4.3.1.2.**

Continuing your work as a journalist in exile in Germany comes with challenges and might bring frustrations. However, journalism, particularly in exile, is a very valuable profession and vital for press freedom. Some advice that we learned from other journalists in exile are:

- Make use of your expertise and offer your knowledge in your particular field
- Realise that you have a big network due to your biography and utilise it
- Try to get a foot in smaller media outlets
- And be persistent

Being a journalist in exile can come with specific risks. Please have a look at chapter **5.2.**, if you are feeling unsafe and want to get security advice.

4.1. Media system in Germany

The largest internationally operating media companies in Germany are the Bertelsmann enterprise, Axel Springer SE and ProSiebenSat.1 Media. Around 90% of German households have cable or satellite TV, with a variety of free-to-view public and commercial channels. There are more than 300 public and private radio stations in Germany; Germany's national radio network is the Deutschlandradio. Deutsche Welle is the main German radio and television broadcaster in foreign languages. The papers with the highest circulation are Bild, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Die Welt. The largest magazines include ADAC Motorwelt and Der Spiegel.¹

You find non-exhaustive lists of newspapers, magazines and radio stations based in Germany on Wikipedia:

- [List of newspapers](#)
- [List of magazines](#)
- [List of radio stations](#)

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany#Media>

- [List of television stations](#)

Even if the media landscape in Germany is comparatively plural, there are points of criticism. This collection of criticism by Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen (ndm) provides interesting [background information](#) about what needs to be improved in order for the media landscape in Germany to be as diverse as the society.

Further information on the media system in Germany:

- [Media in Germany](#): An overview of newspapers, radio and television, as well as analyses on the future of the media
- [ABC of the German media system](#): Why the media are considered the “fourth power”, what the press code involves and how press freedom is guaranteed
- [Centre for Media and Information Literacy \(FU Berlin\) - Media System Germany](#): How is the mass media organised and structured in Germany? Who owns the media? (info material in German)

4.2. Education

The subsidiary principle of Germany as a federation of 16 states results in a variety of educational systems that can be very confusing. Please make sure which rules exactly apply in your federal state. The following points are only meant to lay out some general principles.

Also see here for more detailed information and further links: [Handbook Germany: Learn](#).

4.2.1. Tertiary education

With the *Abitur*, *Fachhochschulreife* or a recognized equivalent from another country (more information on recognition **4.2.5.**) you can apply for study programmes. In some cases it is also possible to apply for studies with other certificates, best ask for these possibilities at the student counselling. In addition you will often have to prove a certain level of German skills. Your residency status is not a criteria for enrolling in a university. Still, your legal status can have repercussions on your studies that you should make yourself acquainted with. You often need certified translations of previous certificates and qualifications such as language certificates, which is an expensive and time consuming process that should be taken into account in the application and enrollment process.

Be advised that some subjects only have a limited capacity for new students (*zulassungsbeschränkt*). The decision on whether you can start studying that subject will then depend on various conditions like your GPA in your final school certificate and other qualifications you obtained, for example a voluntary service or a vocational training. You can check on the website of the educational institution which requirements the respective study programme has.

If additional costs arise in the process, feel free to reach out to ECPMF, as we might be able to support you as part of [our work with journalists in exile](#).

More information on the higher educational system and application procedures:

- [Handbook Germany: University system](#)

- [Handbook Germany: University application](#)

4.2.1.1. Study programmes and journalism schools

To find your preferred study program, you can start by browsing through the following websites:

- [ZEIT: Studiengänge](#)
- [Hochschulkompass](#)

Apart from that, consider going to a student advisory service. You can find them at the [Jobcenter or Agentur für Arbeit](#).

Furthermore, student counselling services might be able to help you (search Studierendenwerk + your city) or see here: [Studentenwerke/Internationale Studierende](#).

Often, the Studierendenwerk also offers relatively cheap housing, which is called *Wohnheim*.

Leipzig

- [Studierendenwerk Leipzig](#)

Studying journalism and related topics

Some universities offer programmes to study journalism. The often rather theoretical approach to journalism will usually be compensated by internships or e.g. an integrated *Volontariat* (see 4.2.2.). There are different models of studying journalism: Master and Bachelor, main subject or minor.

- [Overview of the different study programmes for journalists](#)
- [Overview of Bachelor programmes in journalism](#)

Studying as an international

There are web portals to assist you in your application:

- [Uni Assist](#)
- [Internationale Studierende](#)
- [Experience exchange: Study in Germany: Meet the Community](#)

Many universities offer a guest hearing program. There you can attend lectures and seminars without actually being enrolled in the university. Often you can ask for a writing that can be used to get points credited in a later study program.

Apart from that you can usually get advice from *Studierendenwerk* and other programs. Best contact the university of your choice for that.

Other counselling opportunities are:

- [German Academic Exchange Service](#)
- [University Educational Guidance Guarantee Fund](#)

Leipzig

- [Auditor status](#)
- [General information for refugees](#)

4.2.1.2 Financing your studies

Studying in Germany in and of itself is free for students from EU-member states and states of the European Economic Area (EEA). Regardless, there are semester contributions (*Semesterbeitrag*) that are used to finance student support services and tickets for the public transport. The amount depends on the university, but usually does not exceed 300 € for each semester. In general, there are no additional semester contributions for international students with a non-EU or non-EEA citizenship. An exception to this rule is applied in the state of Baden-Württemberg (1500 €/ semester).

More information: [Handbook Germany: Student Finance](#).

BAföG

BAföG is a state financial support program for people in their vocational training or studies. In general, immigrants can also qualify, if there is a good perspective of staying in Germany for a longer period of time. The BAföG consists of two parts: One half is a grant, the other half is an interest-free loan that has to be repaid up to 10 000 € in the years after your studies.

You can apply for BAföG via this online form: [BAföG Digital](#).

Stipends

Gifted and Talented Funding (Begabtenförderungswerke) is a network of 13 foundations that issue grants for students with outstanding achievements. The amount of financial support corresponds to the BAföG payments, but unlike this does not have to be paid back. Have a look here for an overview: [Begabtenförderungswerke](#).

Apart from this, there are many other stipends available. You can browse through here for the ones that suit you: [My Stipendium](#).

Student loans

There may be situations in which you might need one. Student loans can be obtained from banks and saving banks (e.g. Sparkasse). Educational loans with good terms and conditions are issued by the Federal Government and granted by a group of development banks called KfW-Bankengruppe. There is a special loan for students in their advanced studies. See here for more information: [Studentenwerke: Educational loan](#).

4.2.2. Traineeship, journalism schools, internship and apprenticeship

There are several ways how journalists can get trained and shape their skills further. The most relevant ones are mentioned in this chapter.

Traineeship for journalists (*Volontariat*)

One common way to get journalistic training in Germany is a traineeship (*Volontariat*), often after finishing a study program in University. It is offered by many newspapers and magazines but also TV and radio stations and usually takes 18 to 36 months. The idea is to be “trained on the job” – that is why it consists mostly of practical journalistic work, but also of workshops and seminars. Traineeships can be found on any of the job search websites already mentioned and at the media outlets directly.

More information in German: [DJU: Volontariat](#)

The most important traineeships are:

- [Bayerischer Rundfunk \(BR\) - München](#)
- [Deutsche Welle \(DW\) - Bonn](#): offers a bilingual traineeship for native speakers of a DW programme language with excellent knowledge in English and a good knowledge of German.
- [Deutschlandfunk - Köln](#)
- [Deutschlandradio Kultur - Berlin](#)
- [Hessischer Rundfunk \(HR\) - Frankfurt am Main](#)
- [Hinz&Kunzt - Hamburg](#)
- [Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk \(MDR\) - Leipzig](#)
- [Norddeutscher Rundfunk \(NDR\) - Hamburg](#)
- [ProSiebenSat 1 Media AG - Unterföhring](#)
- [Radio Bremen \(RB\) - Bremen](#)
- [RTL Deutschland GmbH - Köln](#)
- [Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg \(RBB\) - Babelsberg](#)
- [Saarländischer Rundfunk - Saarbrücken](#)
- [Südwestrundfunk \(SWR\) - Stuttgart](#)
- [Westdeutscher Rundfunk \(WDR\) - Köln](#)

- [ZDF - Mainz](#)

Journalism schools

Big media outlets often have their own journalism schools to train the next generation of journalists. To get the chance to study there you usually have to pass a preselection, where you have to show work samples, take tests and convince in personal interviews. There are public and private schools. Please be aware of the fees each school is charging.

Journalism schools in Germany are:

- [Akademie der Bayerischen Presse \(ABP\) e.V., München](#): training centre offering courses in the fields of print, radio, TV and new media.
- [Akademie für Neue Medien, Kulmbach](#): offers seminars for broadcasters and online journalists.
- [Bauer Media Academy, Hamburg](#): 18-month training programme in text, photography and layout with four four-week theory blocks and a final project, selection through internships and application process,
- [Bayerische Akademie für Fernsehen und Digitale Medien e.V., Unterföhring](#): Training in the areas of TV journalism, camera, editing, 3D Animation & VFX and production management.
- [Berliner Journalisten-Schule gUG \(BJS\), Berlin](#): Training and further education in the areas of print, radio and television.
- [Burda Journalistenschule, Offenburg](#): 18-month training programme for students with journalistic experience, selection through Internship in a regular editorial office.
- [Deutsche Journalisten-Akademie, Berlin](#)
- [Deutsche Journalistenschule e.V. \(DJS\), Munich](#): 16-month training programme for 45 students, Maximum age 28 years, selection through entrance examination with tests.
- [Ems - Babelsberg, Potsdam](#): 20-month traineeship for 16 young journalists, specialising in electronic media, radio, television, internet.
- [Free Tech \(Axel Springer Academy of Journalism and Technology\), Berlin](#): offer both a training program and a schooling (18-month-Ausbildung) in journalism. The training is a part of a university programme and has strong selection criteria.
- [Georg von Holtzbrinck-Schule für Wirtschaftsjournalisten, Düsseldorf](#): 18-month training programme for 8-9 students with a university degree and editorial experience, selection in assessment centre.
- [Günther-Holland-Journalistenschule, Augsburg](#): 18-months traineeship.
- [Hamburg School of Media \(mainly in German\), Hamburg](#): offers education (BA, MA, MBA), as well as shorter courses and seminars around media.

- [Henri-Nannen-Schule, Hamburg](#): 24-month training programme for 18 applicants with previous experience or completed studies, selection through tests.
- [Institut zur Förderung publizistischen Nachwuchses e.V. \(ifp\) - Die katholische Journalistenschule, München](#): traineeships in Catholic media and training and traineeships in Catholic media for 15 Catholic students each students, selection through tests and interviews.
- [Kölner Journalistenschule für Politik und Wirtschaft, Köln](#): Training linked to an economics degree programme for 20 students, selection through tests and interviews.
- [Madsack Medien Campus GmbH & Co. KG, Hannover](#): 24-month training programme for up to 24 students, selection through text samples and tests.
- [ProContent gemeinnützige Aktiengesellschaft Akademie für Journalismus, PR und Kommunikation, Essen](#): e-platform as well as a training centre (Hamburg, Berlin, München and Essen) in a variety of journalism-related themes.
- [Die Reportageschule, Reutlingen](#): 12-months training programme.
- [RTL-Journalistenschule für TV und Multimedia GmbH, Köln](#): 24-month training programme for 18 journalism students with previous journalistic previous knowledge, selection through work samples, tests and interviews.
- [Stiftung Journalistenakademie Dr. Hooffacker GmbH & Co. KG, München](#): Six-month course in Online journalism, press relations online, media production and media management.
- [WBS Training AG, Berlin](#): Six-month course Online editor / technical editor / content manager / social media manager.

Further service providers for journalistic training programmes are under **4.2.3**.

Internships

As a first step into German media, an internship might be interesting for you. Many media outlets offer internships that you can use to orient and reorient. The conditions of internships vary greatly: Sometimes they only last a week, sometimes almost as long as a Volontariat and they can be paid or unpaid.

Securing an internship becomes more feasible if it is a compulsory component of your university studies, as media outlets are not obligated to provide minimum wage in such cases.

One platform to look for journalistic internships is [Praktikum.info](#).

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in Germany are a good option to continue your education after your studies. There is a huge variety of recognised apprenticeships available. Apprenticeships always consist of both theoretical and practical stages. There are specialised training programs for journalists, as outlined in the following section.

Most apprenticeships are in-company, meaning you receive education while working. The companies themselves decide what qualifications you have to bring, usually the intermediate school certificate (*mittlerer Schulabschluss*) is sufficient. In the in-company-scheme you are entitled to a wage.

In-school apprenticeships mean, you receive your education in a vocational school (*Berufsfachschule*). The practical stages are in the form of internships. Since you are not entitled to a wage, you can apply for BAföG (**see 4.2.1.2.**).

Another form of apprenticeship is a dual study program that partly takes place in university and partly in a company. You obtain a wage from the company you are working for and after finishing the dual studies you will have a Bachelor of Arts as well as a completed apprenticeship. At times, the company you interned with during your studies may offer you a permanent position as an employee.

More information: [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Ausbildungswege](#)

For additional information on vocational training and apprenticeship in Germany have a look at [BIBB](#). There you can also find a [glossary](#) of important terms around the topic.

4.2.3. Adult education and training

A good first address to find out about options for further education and vocational training is the *Jobcenter* or the *Agentur für Arbeit* counselling. Best ask for an appointment at your respective office.

You find information on traineeships (*Volontariat*), journalism schools and internships under **4.2.2.**

Volkshochschule

Adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*): Volkshochschulen exist all across Germany. They offer all kinds of different courses and have affordable prices. You can use their “course finder” to select topic and location, but as it does not work very well, it is better to directly check the websites of the [Volkshochschule](#).

Leipzig

- [Volkshochschule Leipzig](#)

[IQ Netzwerk](#)

IQ Netzwerk, an initiative that offers consulting services, but also educational programs that can support you to meet the qualifying criteria for your certificates to be recognized in Germany. They have regional offices.

Further journalistic trainings

A great number of institutions offer training, workshops and seminars relevant to journalists. Here is a list that can be used as a starting point. Don't forget to look into the Journalism schools listed under **4.2.2.**:

- [Akademie der Deutschen Medien](#) (**only in German**): media academy offering online and offline courses, webinars and training around media, marketing and digitalization. Their topics include content writing, newsletter marketing, visual content for social media, usage of AI, graphics and media law.
- [Akademie für Publizistik Hamburg](#) (**mainly in English**): offer online live courses in various topics, from social media to podcasting and storytelling.
- [ARD.ZDF Medienakademie](#) (**mainly in German**): seminars and e-learning platform, various topics.
- [Berliner Journalisten Schule](#) (**mainly in German**): Berlin-based school for journalists and media professionals. The school offers seminars, workshops (e.g dissecting fake news and media manipulation, investigative journalism, AI tools, storytelling & content creating, work with radio/video/audio) as well as professional training.
- [E-learning by Brost-Stiftung and Mediendienst Integration](#) (**mainly in German**): online workshops and training in topics related to migration and integration.
- [Deutsche Welle](#) (**both German and English**): offer media training, journalism training and various relevant workshops, as well as an English MA course in Media Management, Journalism, Development Cooperation (with a possibility of scholarship).
- [DJU \(Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union\)](#): offer their own seminars and provide [information about journalistic internships, traineeships, media degree programs](#) and much more that will interest young people who have set their sights on a career in journalism.
- [Foundation Academy Photo Insider Community](#) (**English and other languages**): provides free courses in visual journalism. See the schedule and location of the courses on their website.
- [Friedrich Ebert Stiftung](#) (**mainly in German**): journalism academy with regular workshops and seminars.
- [IREX](#): Trainings and workshops
- [KAS Journalistische Nachwuchsförderung JONA](#): programme for young professionals, students of journalism. The program lasts three years and takes place during the semester breaks.
- [Kohero Magazin](#) (**different languages, depending on trainer**)
- [Leipzig School of Media](#) (**mainly in German**): educational centre offering certified courses in content marketing & storytelling, social media management, performance on camera, video production and other subjects.

- [Masterclass \(English\)](#): an e-learning platform offering various workshops, for instance in writing. Instructors are prominent writers or content creators. Subscription-based.
- [Reporter-Akademie Berlin \(mainly in German\)](#): offers seminars on investigative journalism and storytelling.
- [Reporterfabrik Correctiv \(mainly in German\)](#): online workshops, learning material, often for free.
- [Tactical Tech \(English\)](#): offer resources and workshops on topics like digital security, data privacy, investigative tools and methods of information verification.

Costs

For those who receive payments according to SGB II or SGB III (**see 2.1.**), the *Jobcenter* or *Agentur für Arbeit* can provide training or financial support for training (*Bildungsgutschein*). In order to ascertain the possibilities for you, you can make an appointment at your respective office.

An overview in German of the support options and a tool to find an office in your area can be found here: [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Berufliche Weiterbildung](#).

You can also ask the ECPMF team for [support with your fees for training courses](#). We might be able to financially support you, whilst you are in exile in Germany.

4.2.4. Language courses

If you decide to live, study and work in Germany, some German skills will be needed at some point. Furthermore, to obtain long-term residency permits, you will eventually need to demonstrate proficiency in the German language.

Costs

Language courses can be quite expensive, depending on the mode of learning. In general private lessons will cost more than group lessons, but often also prove to be more effective. Still, there are ways of saving money through state or private subsidy:

- Within the frame of integration courses, language courses can be subsidised by the state, if you receive payments according to SGB II, SGB XII or AsylbLG (**see 2.1.**). These courses are called *DeuFöV* and can be found at many language schools.
- If connected to your work, you can ask your employer about possibilities to finance your language studies.

You can find an overview of free options for language learning below.

You can also ask the ECPMF team for [support with your fees for language courses](#). We might be able to financially support you for a certain amount of sessions, while you are in exile.

Integration courses

The integration course teaches German language skills, as well as knowledge about the legal system, culture and history in Germany. Each integration course consists of a language and orientation course.

There are different types of integration courses:

- General integration course: this course consists of 600 hours of instruction in the language course and 100 hours of instruction in the orientation course.
- Special integration courses: These courses consist of 900 hours of instruction in the language course and 100 hours of instruction in the orientation course. They are available for
 - Women
 - Parents
 - Young adults who are no longer of school age (youth integration course)
 - Immigrants with literacy needs (literacy course)
 - People who have not learned the Latin script (second-script learning course)
 - People with increased linguistic needs (remedial courses)
 - People with disabilities (for example, the deaf, the visually impaired)
- Intensive courses: These courses are suitable if language learning is easy for you and you want to and can reach the course goal particularly quickly. An intensive course consists of 400 lessons in the language course and 30 lessons in the orientation course.

Integration courses are offered as full-time and part-time courses. Before taking part in an integration course, you need a certificate of eligibility. This is your participation permit with which you register with an integration course provider. If you want to participate in the integration course voluntarily, you must first [apply to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugee](#).

The integration courses are intended for anyone who is new to Germany and whose German language skills are not yet adequate enough for dealing with the demands of everyday life. Whether you are free to attend a course or if the course is mandatory for you depends on your country of origin and your level of fluency in German. Here is where we have compiled the most important regulations for participation:

- As an EU citizen, you are welcome to take part in a free integration course if you want to learn German or improve your German skills, provided that a place is available. However, you are not required to do so.
- Non-EU citizens are also allowed to take these courses. If your German language skills are not particularly good yet, you may also be required to attend. If you work and do not have time to attend a full or part-time course, you can be exempted from attending the course. Upon the issuance of your residence title, the Foreigners' Authority will let you know whether you are free or required to attend a course.

Conditions of participation and costs: [BAMF Integrationskurse Teilnahmekosten](#)

Find courses: [BAMF Navi](#)

See here for more information regarding integration courses:

- [Germany Visa: Integration Courses](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Initial Orientation Course](#)

Language schools

Please note that since the Corona-pandemic, many language schools have switched to online classes, but there are also offline classes available. In every bigger city you can find quite a lot of language schools. For example you can check out the Adult Education Centres (*Volkshochschule*, **see 4.2.3.**), which offer a variety of languages.

- Online German-school with good prices: [DeutschAkademie](#)
- German courses designed for journalists (in Berlin and online): [GLS](#)

Free options: Organisations, tandems and language cafés

In addition to lessons at a language school you can use one of the free offers from local initiatives or organisations to deepen your language skills e.g. with tandem learning or language cafés (*Sprachcafé*). Language cafés often take place in neighbourhood centres (**see 5.4.**).

The concept of a tandem is that two people meet while exchanging their language skills, practising the languages that both of them currently learn. There are several online platforms where you can create a profile and find a tandem partner. Sometimes, your local *Volkshochschule* (**4.2.3.**) also provides a platform as well as local initiatives often help to connect people. To find them, you can use this tool: [VHS Tandem](#).

Or easily google *Tandem + the name of your city*.

Leipzig

Frauenkultur e.V.

- Frauenkultur e.V. offers a language learning tandem combined with a visit in Leipzig's Museum of Fine Arts (Museum der bildenden Künste)
- You can reach the organisers here: 0341 – 216 999 41, kirsten.huwig@leipzig.de

Sociocultural centre Die VILLA

- They have many different language learning offers, including a tandem and or group lessons

Sociocultural centre [Der Anker](#)

Autodidactic Initiative ([Autodidaktische Initiative](#))

- Self-organised German class

[Dresdner59](#)

- Language café

Society for International Understanding ([Gesellschaft für Völkerverständigung](#))

- Language courses every Wednesday

Association for Integration and Education ([Verein für Integration und Bildung](#))

- German classes, but also counselling and accompaniment

[RAA Leipzig e.V.](#)

- Language courses and translation service (for a fee)

[Universität Leipzig](#)

- University of Leipzig offers German classes for international students

[HTWK](#)

- Free German classes for refugees, international students and prospective students

[Sprachtandem Leipzig](#)

- A platform which helps you find a fitting tandem partner in different languages

Berlin

[German Courses for All](#) Network

- Free German courses in different locations in Berlin

[Deutschkurs Fuldastraße](#)

- Mondays and Tuesdays at 7-8:30 pm in Fuldastr. 50, 12045 in Neukölln.
- Online Classes take place every Wednesday at 7-8:30pm via Zoom

4.2.5. Certificates

Your school and university degrees obtained abroad might be recognized in Germany. An official recognition of your diplomas might make it easier for you to find work and advance professionally. If you have such certificates or documents, it is necessary to have them assessed and maybe translated.

An option to get your certificates recognized is the *IQ Netzwerk*, an initiative that offers consulting services, but also educational programs that can support you to meet the qualifying criteria for your certificates to be recognized in Germany. They have regional offices. The costs of the recognition procedure vary – there are fees for the procedure itself and costs for translation and certification. The *Jobcenter* can possibly cover the costs. See here for the website of the [IQ Network](#).

If additional costs arise in the process, feel free to reach out to ECPMF, as we might be able to support you as part of our [work with journalists in exile](#).

More information:

- [Handbook Germany: Recognition](#)
- [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Recognition of Qualifications](#)
- [BAMF: Anerkennung Berufsabschlüsse](#)

4.3. Work

This chapter includes a variety of general information about working in Germany, such as explanations about the different work forms, hints for your job search, information about taxes and the relevance of labour unions.

It's crucial to understand how the German media system operates and utilise these resources available for education. However, we also encourage you to share the knowledge, expertise, and unique perspectives gained from your previous journalistic endeavours. German media outlets should welcome the opportunity to integrate your perspectives into their platforms. Please keep in mind though that journalism as a profession relies on a strong set of language, locally specific expertise and networks that will be very difficult to translate into immediate working opportunities in your chosen field in Germany. All the more important become further training options (**see 4.2.**). A way to bypass these challenges might be to work with an exiled media outlet (**see 4.3.3.**) or to establish your own one. In case you want your article to be published in a different language, the ECPMF can cover the costs for translation. Please reach out to support@ecpmf.eu.

4.3.1. Work forms

This chapter gives a brief overview of the different work forms in Germany. Since the work forms build the foundation for different taxation schemes and have repercussions in many other important areas of life that cannot be listed conclusively here, it is advisable to make yourself more acquainted with them as you take up a job.

- [More information about working in Germany: Make it in Germany](#)
- [Information on opening a bank account: Handbook Germany: Bank Account](#)

4.3.1.1. Employment

The most common workform is to be employed by an external employer. Within this model the following workforms are usual options:

- Minijob: up to 520 €/month without having to pay taxes and contributions to the social insurances
- Midijob: up to 2000 €/month with lower or no taxes and lower contributions to the social insurances
- From 2000,01 € you have to pay the full taxes for your tax class and contributions to the social insurances according to your income

4.3.1.2. Self-employment and freelancing

Another option is to be self-employed or work as a freelancer when you have a residency title that allows this (**see 1.1.1.**). Self-employment or freelancing is a step that should be very carefully thought out. Without the social security framework that comes with employment by an external employer (holidays, continuation of pay and more) you will have to bear a lot of risks yourself.

General information: [Make it in Germany: Types of Businesses.](#)

Freelance journalism

As you begin working as a journalist in Germany, there is a high probability that you will have to work as a freelancer. Freelance journalism in Germany is quite common and the language barrier, the lack of a professional network and, unfortunately, employers' resentments are some of the reasons why access for journalists in exile is more difficult. In order to be authorised to work as a freelance journalist, your residence permit must explicitly say "*Erwerbstätigkeit gestattet*" or "*selbstständige Tätigkeit gestattet*". Please do not forget that you need a tax number (*Steuernummer*) in order to submit invoices, which you can apply for in your local tax office (*Finanzamt*).

We strongly recommend reading [this brochure regarding freelance journalism](#) from Neue Medienmacher, as it outlays general principles of the media sector in Germany and gives starting advice for freelance journalists. It is available in different languages.

Freischreiber released a [book](#) for 39 € that compiles a lot of know-how for freelance journalists.

The national journalist unions are constantly working for better standards for freelance journalists, which makes them great addresses for any concerns related to your journalistic works.

Useful contacts related to freelancing in general are:

- Journalists' Unions (**see 4.3.5.**)
- [Touring Artists](#)

- Write an email for a counselling appointment: beratung@touring-artists.info
- [Journalism Assembly](#)
 - Offer resources, tools, networking opportunities and free trainings for freelance journalists

ECPMF can cover costs to translate journalistic articles. For more information, please reach out to support@ecpmf.eu.

Founding

If you are interested in founding and/or registering your own media outlet or another type of organisation or association in Germany you can look into the following links:

- [Vielfalt Gründet, Berlin](#) - Offers seminars on the topic of starting business in various languages in Berlin.
- [Lotsenstelle, Berlin](#) - The project Lotsenstelle supports entrepreneurs and self-employed people with migration background to activate their entrepreneurial potential and their participation in the Berlin social and economic life. Every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Guwbi e.V. offers counselling. The consultation is free of charge and is offered in the following languages German, English, Spanish, Russian and Polish. Translations into Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Farsi are also available upon need.
- [Leethub - MoveOn, Hamburg](#) - Supports people on their way to self-employment, especially through accompanying mentoring in the 4-6 month incubator programme in Hamburg.
- [Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Existenzgründungszuschuss](#) - Financial assistance from Bundesagentur für Arbeit for the start-up phase: In certain cases, the employment agency can support you when you start your own business – with a start-up grant. With this financial support, you can compensate for fluctuating income in the start-up phase and secure your livelihood.
- [Für Gründer](#) - A big resource concentrating on founding in Germany. Among detailed general information around founding, you can find templates, recommendations, software-tests, etc.
- [Handbook Germany: entrepreneurship](#) - Q&A about founding of your own business
- [Für Gründer: Sozialversicherungspflicht](#) - Almost everyone in Germany is subject to compulsory social insurance, including business owners and the self-employed. Here you can find more information about this topic.
- [Netzwerk Selbsthilfe: Brochure](#) - Publishes a practice-oriented brochure for independent research into funding and provides tips for submitting applications, which can be ordered online for 26 €. The network also supports groups, initiatives and associations with questions about founding an association and project planning.
- [Wir Gründen in Deutschland](#) - provides information on several topics such as “from idea to start-up”, the business plan, the correct legal form, financement etc. and several guidebooks that can be downloaded on the website.

Proactive networking, persistence and contacts to other media outlets is an important aspect of the development and establishing of your media outlet, organisation or enterprise. It is also recommended to get a consultation from a lawyer who is specialised in entrepreneurship.

Information about foundations and NGOs supporting journalists in different ways, including funding and grants can be found under **4.4**.

Admin Consulting for Independent Media by VD

VD manages the independent media outlets Meydan TV [Azerbaijan] and ROMB [Russia]. They are offering administrative consulting for small and mid-sized media organisations. Their consulting focuses on practical, easy-to-implement improvements and solutions in order to optimise your work. They offer counselling on the following questions:

- How to successfully manage multiple grants?
- How to prepare a solid financial report?
- How to manage a risk-prone team geographically spread apart?
- How to mitigate risks of working in a hostile environment?

For more information and quotes, you can write to: consulting@vd.media

4.3.2. Job search

To find a job in general you can use the following search engines:

- In general:
 - [Indeed](#)
 - [Stepstone](#)
 - [Bundesagentur für Arbeit](#)
- Jobs in culture, education and NGO work in Berlin, Leipzig, Halle: [Gesines Jobtipps](#)
- Many cities have their own job portal

Leipzig

- [Leipziger Jobanzeiger](#)
- [Studierendenwerk Jobvermittlung](#)

Job search in the media sector

While you can use the platforms and information listed above for your job search, it is advisable to look for jobs in the media sector through the follow job portals:

- [New-start.media](#)
- [Medienjobs](#)

Job counselling

A point of reference from state-side can be the Bundesagentur für Arbeit and the Job-center. By law it is bound to support, but also encourage people who are looking for a job. You can make an appointment there to meet a consultant, who will help you find a job. They usually also support you with your documents like CV and motivational letter or refer to a training course. More information: [Handbook Germany: Job search](#).

A counselling service is also provided by Arbeit und Leben e.V., the overarching organisation of adult education centres (**see 4.2.3.**) in Germany. Also the Migration counselling centres (**see 1.2.2.**) can advise you in your job search.

Leipzig

- [Arbeit und Leben e.V. in Saxony](#)
- [RAA - Salve](#): Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are no longer living in a camp (Gemeinschaftsunterkunft) receive advice and support in coping with everyday life in Germany, including help with job applications and job searches. Languages: Russian, Arabic, English and French.

More contact points - [Overview](#) 2022

Journalism-related jobs

As it might not be easy to find employment or be successful as a freelancer, working in a journalism-related job could be an option to finance your life and build professional networks.

An interesting option might be for you to work at organisations, initiatives and NGOs that e.g. help and support other exiled journalists (**see 4.4.**). Good possibilities for journalists when it comes to that area of work are press work and communications work. Naturally, press and communication demands are not limited to media freedom organisations. Many different kinds of organisations but also companies are looking for keen writers to handle their output. In addition, these kinds of jobs do not always require German. Jobs in NGOs specifically can be found via these websites:

- [NGOJobs](#)
- [Stellenmarkt für Stiftungen](#)
- [Nachhaltige Jobs](#)

Another way to work in the media sector might be working more on the technical side of content production, for example as a sound technician, camera person or cutter.

4.3.3. Exile media and opportunities for exiled journalists in German media

If you would like to work together with other exiled journalists, you can start by contacting one of the following initiatives and media outlets formed by or with other exiled journalists:

Overview of migrant radios in Germany: [Colourful Voices](#).

Please note that not all of them offer paid jobs, some just work voluntarily.

- [Abwab](#): First newspaper in Arabic language in Germany
- [Amal, Berlin!](#): News in Arabic, Ukrainian and Dari/Farsi
- [Amal, Hamburg!](#): News in Arabic and Dari/Farsi
- [Amal, Frankfurt!](#): News in Arabic, Dari/Farsi and Ukrainian
- [Deutsch-Türkisches Journal](#): Online news magazine on Turkey and the German-Turkish community
- [Iran International](#): Iranian news platform in Farsi (with office in Berlin)
- [Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka \(JDS\)](#): News blog on Sri Lanka
- [Kohero Magazin](#): Outlet platform to share perspectives/ experiences/ stories, [Podcast](#); They offer freelancing opportunities in English and German: Requests via [this link](#).
- [MeydanTV](#): News platform on political, economic and social issues in Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani, Russian and English
- [MiGAZIN](#): Online magazine that focuses on the topics of integration and migration
- [netzwerk medien vielfalt](#): Network of media creators with experience of flight or migration, focusing on radio shows
- [Özgürüz](#): German-Turkish online magazine
- [PYL](#): Independent media outlet covering the destruction and regeneration of urban life
- [Radio Popcorn](#): Persian language radio show
- [RefugeeRadioNetwork](#): Independent Radio Project by refugees
- [Stimmen des Exils by Tagesspiegel](#): A project spotlighting the voices of exiled individuals or communities.
- [The African Courier](#): African community news platform based in Germany, in English.

If you are looking for German media outlets/programmes publishing in different languages here you can find some multilingual programmes:

- [ExBerliner](#): Berlin culture magazine in English
- [WDRforyou](#): News in German, Farsi and Arabic

- [WDRCosmo](#): Podcasts in various languages (Turkish, Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, Greek, Spanish, Kurdish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian)
- [WDRCosmo Refugee Radio](#): News and Information for Refugees in Arabic
- [Times Media](#): English-language newspapers across various regions of Germany.

A few media outlets in Germany offer ways for journalists in exile to participate.

For background information, you can read a [report on exile journalism in Europe](#), published in 2022.

4.3.4. Taxes

The tax system in Germany is complicated and ramified, even more so in cross-border employment relationships. [Make it in Germany](#) should give you an overview of the most important things you should know about.

[All Set - Guide for Freelance Journalists](#) who are new in Germany also provides some important information related to taxes.

However, should you have questions about the tax regulations that apply to you or face tax-related problems, consider seeking advice from a tax consultancy. One more reason to take the services of a tax consultancy is that taxes for your insurance for legal expenses might be tax deductible.

Since there are a lot of tax consultants available and it is hard to know which one fits, it is advisable to ask colleagues or in your environment in general.

ECPMF might be able to cover costs for certain consultations, if they are necessary to ensure you can continue working as a journalist. For more information, please reach out to support@ecpmf.eu.

4.3.5. Unions and press card

Membership in a union can give you many advantages. They are supportive communities that stand up for the rights of workers. Below you can find some general information about labour unions in German. But different industries have separate unions, which is why we compiled specific information about journalists unions below. Labour unions are organised in an umbrella organisation called [Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund \(DGB\)](#).

Wikipedia provides an [overview of German unions](#).

To join a union, you must register, which can easily be done online, and pay membership fees whose amount depend on your income. As an EU citizen in Germany you can become a member of the trade unions and exercise trade union rights just like nationals. These rights include access to the administration and management of trade unions and the right to vote and stand for election.

Non EU citizen workers in Germany are allowed to become a member of a trade union to represent their economic and social interests. More information on your rights as a Non EU citizen working in Germany can be found in this [brochure by the DGB](#) which is also available in German, French, Spanish, and Arabic.

The DGB also offers [information for refugees and workers' rights](#).

The union membership offers many advantages especially in terms of legal protection. Members are guaranteed free legal advice and legal representation if they have any questions regarding:

- Labour law (wages, holidays, dismissal, etc.),
- Healthcare insurance, unemployment insurance, pension insurance (illness, accident at work, accident on the way to work),
- Other social law issues and administrative law.

Please note: In order to take advantage of free legal advice or legal representation, you must have been a member of the respective trade union for at least 3 months and have paid membership fees.

More information about labour unions and work councils:

- [EU Gleichbehandlungsstelle: Trade Unions](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Works Council](#)

Journalists unions and associations

- [Deutscher Journalisten-Verband \(DJV\)](#) is the largest journalists union in Europe. As a member you not only benefit from various services like legal advice, legal protection and workshops, but also from cheaper insurance contributions. They also provide information in German for freelance journalists regarding the legal framework, insurances. Also available: templates for contracts and agreements.
- Another large journalist union is the [Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union \(dju in ver.di\)](#). It offers a variety of services like counselling, legal assistance, information and networking and benefits, especially for freelancers.

Other journalists unions are:

- [Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger \(BDZV\)](#)
 - Advocacy for newspaper publishers and digital publishers
- [Medienverband der freien Presse \(MVFP\)](#)
 - Advocacy for publishing houses
- [Verband Deutscher Sportjournalisten \(VDS\)](#)
 - For sports journalists
- [FREELENS](#)
 - For photographers

Umbrella unions:

- [EFJ: European Federation of Journalists](#)
 - European umbrella organisation for the national unions, with links to other national unions' services for freelancers
- [IFJ: International Federation of Journalists](#)
 - Largest global union federation of journalists' trade unions in the world

Other relevant associations:

- **[Freischreiber](#)**: In general, the unions are open for freelance journalists. However, a journalist association for freelancers that is not in union form is Freischreiber. Services provided by them include counsellings, training, stipends, tax consultancy and legal advice.
- **[Deutscher Presse-Verband \(DPV\)](#)**: DPV is an association for journalists that is not in union form. You can obtain insurance, counselling and legal support from there.

Press card

The German press card is given out by the association "Deutscher Presserat e.V.". It is widely recognized by police, courts, politics and companies. You can apply for the card at every union mentioned above. In general, be cautious with buying a press card online. There are a lot of expensive press cards available that do not have any real merits for you. There are currently six institutions that are issuing it:

- Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger (BDZV)
- Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union in Ver.di (dju)
- Deutscher Journalisten-Verband (DJV)
- Medienverband der freien Presse (MVFP)
- Fotografenverband FREELENS
- Verband Deutscher Sportjournalisten (VDS)

More info: [Presserat: Presseausweis](#).

An [international press card](#) with a good reputation is issued by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and can be obtained through the national unions mentioned above.

4.4. Foundations, NGOs, Grants

Foundations, NGOs and other initiatives can play an important role in supporting or funding your work or projects you have planned. Below you can find an overview of some organisations and networks, where you can get advice and overviews of grants and stipends.

Funding

Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) run a [multilingual fundraising guide](#), “designed to help anyone seeking funding for media development or journalism support projects”.

Further they offer an [overview of funding opportunities](#) for media, journalism, media development, and journalism support organisations.

Foundations

There is a huge amount of foundations and it can be hard to find the suitable one for your project. “Deutscher Journalisten-Verband” created a paper, which gives advice in German on how to choose a foundation and how to apply for support in [this brochure from DJV](#).

Further the “Netzwerk Selbsthilfe” publishes [brochures, in German, for independent research](#) into funding in Germany.

Some of the big German media outlets have their own foundations, which might be worth it to take a look at.

NGOs and other initiatives

Overview:

- [Here you can find an overview of different types of support](#) that organisations offer to journalists, human rights defenders (HRDs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and a variety of other actors who may be at risk as a direct result of their work, compiled by Free Press Unlimited.
- [PRESSProtect](#): Overview financial support for journalists at risk in Europe, compiled by ECPMF.

Below you can find a non-exhaustive list of some NGOs, which offer different kinds of support for journalists:

- [DJV Sozialwerk](#):
 - Support for journalists in need, their relatives or dependants and to promote the training and further education of journalists.
- [European Centre for Press and Media Freedom \(ECPMF\)](#):
 - ECPMF arranges and finances counselling and training to facilitate professional activities in exile. These offers can be used by media professionals in Germany, regardless of their origin, who had to leave their country due to oppression or persecution. The selection of the offers depends on the individual needs and knowledge, as well as professional goals of the journalists. The offers are related to professional training, language, legal support, health and equipment.
- [JX Fund](#):

- The JX Fund supports media and journalists who have fled war and crisis regions, providing them opportunities to quickly and with flexibility continue their work in exile. The JX Fund awards grants of varying amounts to help media outlets in exile get back on their feet. Financial support is awarded both to media outlets that were already established in their countries of origin and which had clearly defined audiences, as well as to outlets that have developed new models for their work in exile and are in a start-up phase. The prerequisite for applying is a clear and workable editorial concept and a medium-term financial and strategic plan for further development and strengthening of the medium.
- [Shpargalka](#) (Russian):
 - The Shpargalka Media Rights Protection Center provides free and transparent answers to the legal questions that journalists from Russia and Belarus have when choosing a new country to live and work. They support finding answers such as, how long can one stay in Serbia or Turkey without a visa, how to open a bank account in Georgia, where is it faster to register a media outlet: in Latvia or in Poland?
- [Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen \(ndm\)](#):
 - A German wide network of journalists with and without a migration history, offering training courses, workshops and seminars
- [MiCT](#):
 - Founding a media NGO or media company in Germany: MiCT assist with the foundation, registration and development of the business plan, tax returns etc.
- [University of New Europe](#):
 - Mentoring programme for scientists and activists
- [Vielfaltfinder](#):
 - Database of experts

Grants, Prices and Stipends

Overview:

- [Journalism prizes in Germany](#)
- [Open calls for journalists with application deadlines by “International Journalists’ Network”](#)
- [Upcoming stipends for journalists and researchers stipends by Netzwerk Recherche](#)
- [Annual stipends by International Journalists’ Programmes](#)

Other Grants:

- [Investigative Journalism for Europe IJ4EU](#)
- [Journalism Fund Europe](#)

- [Journalism Grants by Gates Foundation and European Journalism Centre](#)

Fellowships

Many fellowships require at least an intermediate level of German, as work in the newsrooms takes place in German. Here are only examples of fellowships:

- [Netzwerk Recherche Diversity in Investigative Journalism](#)
 - A research-oriented fellowship that aims to give aspiring investigative journalists with a background of immigration and/or experiences of racism and/or poverty access to renowned research editorial offices throughout Germany, regardless of their social background. Includes a three-month paid full-time internship in investigative departments, a scholarship (for the duration of the internship), workshops on investigative journalism, and access to the network of investigative journalists. The internship would take place at one of the following outlets: [Bayerischer Rundfunk \(BR\)](#), [Norddeutscher Rundfunk \(NDR\)](#), [Paper Trail Media](#), [Spiegel](#), [Südwestrundfunk \(SWR\)](#).
- [Oxfam Germany Research Fellowship](#):
 - A bi-annual fellowship to support journalists to cover development issues in depth, with a focus on the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality.

4.5. Networking

As professional networking really is one of the most important pillars in the field of journalism, we hope that some of the following options can help you start building a reliable and extensive professional network in Germany. Apart from the unions, foundations and NGOs mentioned in the chapters before, here are some more useful contact points.

Platforms and initiatives

- [Hostwire](#)
 - Hostwire is a cross-border journalist networking platform for journalists all over the world by Hostwriter.
 - ECPMF has established ExileNet, a private group for journalists in exile to receive and share information. If you are interested to join the group, please contact exilenet@ecpmf.eu
- [Migrants Re:Framing](#)
 - Migrants Re:Framing is an online space where actors struggling for appropriate media representations of migrants and refugee communities can meet, discuss, or share different kinds of resources.
- [Wir Machen Das](#)

- Wir Machen Das (wearedoingit e.V.) is a network of agents in culture, science, arts and journalism that aims to help people who had to flee or migrate to Germany build a professional network. The organisation can refer you to a tandem partner who already has a professional network that you can benefit from.
- [journalists.network](#)
 - journalists.network is a platform that connects young journalists with experts and contact persons from different countries. The organisation also organises research travels and manages an Alumni network for long-term partnerships.
- [European Data Journalism Network](#)
 - In addition to providing you with tools and data, this organisation can put you in contact with experts and researchers.
- [Informationsdienst Wissenschaft \(idw\)](#)
 - In the first line, idw is a science research portal, collecting, bundling and providing data from around 1000 member associations. Furthermore, idw can put journalists in touch with experts in different fields of science.
- [Internationale Medienhilfe \(IMH\)](#)
 - IMH is an organisation and working group that promotes collaborations between German media and non-German media. They also play an important role in arranging internships (**see 4.2.2.**)
- [Verein der Ausländischen Presse \(VAP\)](#)
 - VAP (Association of the Foreign Press in Germany) is an association of journalists in Germany who are working for media outside Germany/ media for an audience outside Germany. Their services include: field trips and research travels as well as talks and meetings with agents in politics, culture, science and economy.
- [Jugendpresse Deutschland e.V.](#)
 - Jugendpresse is a network of young media professionals based in Germany – from school newspaper editors to young trainees. They accompany young journalists into the profession, train them with almost 300 seminars a year, and organise events for contact and discussion between experts from the media and politics and young people. They also provide the youth press card and give young people the opportunity to report at “[politikorange](#)”.

(Exile) journalism events

- [DW Global Media Forum](#)
 - Interdisciplinary platform for media professionals as well as decision-makers from politics, civil society, culture, education, business, and science from all over the world to get together and to learn from each other as part of an intercultural exchange
- [Exile Media Forum by Körber Foundation](#)

- Yearly networking meeting in Hamburg to discuss questions around exile journalism and the German media landscape with around 100 experts and media representatives; no entrance fee
- [Global Investigative Journalism Conference \(GIJC\)](#)
 - Biannual world's largest international gathering of investigative reporters
- [Annual Conference Netzwerk Recherche](#)
 - Yearly conference in Hamburg from journalists for journalists (for members of Netzwerk Recherche and interested people); with entrance fee
- [Youth media convention \(YouMeCon\)](#)
 - For people between 16 and 17 years

5. SAFETY AND WELLBEING

This chapter starts with information around your health, how to find a doctor and useful information around psychosocial support. Furthermore, it includes information and contact points related to threats because of journalistic work, as well as issues around discrimination. The last part offers some tips for your social life in Germany.

5.1. Health

5.1.1. Medical emergencies

The emergency number in Germany is **112**. To reach the police call **110**. Don't hesitate to use the numbers in case of emergency, the operators should be able to speak English. In case of any urgent medical help, you can also go to the Emergency Room of any hospital by yourself. They are open 24/7.

More information on medical emergencies: [Welcome Center: Medical Emergency](#).

In theory you can always go to the hospital for medical attention but you should not do it, if your medical need is not urgent. In that case the general practitioner or a specialist's practice is the better option. Only go to the hospital directly or call 112 for emergency medical needs.

For not immediately urgent but pressing medical issues, you can call **116 117** to speak to an on-call doctor for some direct advice.

Outside of the usual opening hours of practices you can get medical treatment in emergency practices (Notfallpraxis). Doctors with practices in your city work there in a rotation system, 116 117 can help you to find one in your area.

More information about healthcare for refugees: [Handbook Germany: Healthcare for refugees](#).

Leipzig

Hospitals

- Leipzig-Center:
 - [University Hospital - Emergency Room](#) (*Zentrale Notaufnahme Universitätsklinikum Leipzig*):
 - Address: Paul-List-Straße 27, 04103 Leipzig
 - Phone: 0341 - 97 17800
- Leipzig-West:
 - Diakonissenkrankenhaus
 - St. Georg West
- Leipzig-North:
 - St. Georg
- Leipzig-South:
 - Elisabethkrankenhaus
- Leipzig-East:
 - Klinikum am Thonberg
 - Helios Park-Klinikum

In case there are language barriers in the communication with medical personnel you can reach out to [CoMedS](#). They might be able to help with translation.

5.1.2. Finding a doctor

For the usual medical care, general practitioners (*Allgemeinarzt/Hausarzt*) are the first point of contact. The general practitioners will refer you to other specialists in case of need.

Some doctors can be booked online through these platforms, where you can also use the language filter: [Doctolib](#) and [Doctena](#) and [Jameda](#). Another way would be to call them directly, and ask if they take new patients.

[116 117](#) can also be used to find a doctor in your area. You can either call them for referrals or use their online service.

Overview of doctors in the different federal states: [KBV Arztsuche](#).

[Queermed](#) is a nationwide directory in Germany of LGBTQ+-friendly doctors, therapists, and practices, with an intersectional perspective.

ECPMF can only recommend a few doctors we had good experiences with. It is advisable to check reviews and be aware that not all doctors are BIPOC and/or queer-friendly.

ECPMF cannot take responsibility for the quality, language proficiency, availability, or level of friendliness of the doctors or their staff.

You find further information on how to find gynaecologists and dentists in the chapters below. Please view **5.1.4.** for information on how to find psychosocial support or a therapist.

Leipzig

- A complete list of doctors in the city can be found here (also with an option to use the language filter): [KVS Sachsen: Arztsuche](#)
- You can also find doctors who speak different languages in this brochure: [Mehrsprachige Gesundheitsangebote in Leipzig](#)
- Here is a partial list of English-speaking (and few Arabic, French, Spanish, Dutch, Farsi, Albanian speaking) doctors in Leipzig, compiled by Leipzig Global. Some of them are private: [English speaking doctors Leipzig](#)

Psychiatrists

See Psychosocial health (**5.1.4.**).

Gynaecology

For gynaecological specialists no referral is needed: the specialists can be directly approached through appointment. A gynaecologist (sometimes referred to as *Frauenarzt*) can be found through the websites listed above or here: [Frauenärzte im Netz](#).

Leipzig

Finding a gynaecological specialist in Leipzig usually takes time. For short-term appointments or urgent matters we recommend the clinic [MedVZ](#), located in the city centre.

In case of an immediate need, you can come to the open hours (7:30 or 8:30 depending on the day of the week) and ask for a direct appointment.

Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion

General information: Zanzu provides valuable [information on sexual health in 14 languages](#), including a section on unintended pregnancy and abortion. Unfortunately, the website does not reflect gender identities outside the binary gender system.

Abortion process in Germany: According to German law, an abortion is considered a crime against life, but under specific conditions and within prescribed timeframes, a lawful abortion may be conducted. This section is intended to explain to you the procedures for a lawful abortion, point you towards counselling centres for an unintended pregnancy and outline the formal mandatory steps for an abortion in Germany. No information about the procedure and execution of abortions is provided.

Legal provisions for abortion: The termination of pregnancy must occur within 12 weeks after conception. The pregnant person must undergo so-called pregnancy conflict counselling (*Schwangerschaftskonfliktberatung*). The termination of pregnancy takes place no earlier than the fourth day after the conclusion of the counselling. The counselling professional is bound by confidentiality. The termination must be performed by a medical doctor. Abortion remains legally protected from prosecution in situations involving rape or when the mental or physical well-being of the pregnant person is jeopardized.

General Information and addresses for mandatory pregnancy conflict counselling: Mandatory pregnancy conflict counselling in a state recognized counselling centre is required for an abortion. Afterward, you will receive a counselling certificate which is proof that you have participated in counselling (*Beratungsschein*). Depending on the counselling centre and counsellor, the conversation can be difficult. If needed, bring a supporting person. Also remember that you are not obligated to speak or engage in discussions during the appointment. You can find relevant locations searching online

for “*Schwangerschaftskonfliktberatung + name of the city*”.

Please note: Only state-recognized counselling centres issue the certificate which is essential for the procedure. You can use [this search mask](#) which includes the criteria *Beratungsschein* so that the results only list counselling centres which provide the required paper.

Medical provisions for abortion: You can find the medical professionals offering abortion practice here: [Bundesärztekammer](#). It lists the abortion methods offered as well as the languages spoken by the practitioner.

Costs coverage: In general, individuals are responsible for covering the costs themselves. The costs range from 350 € to 700 €, depending on the method of the procedure. The health insurance covers expenses for individuals with lower income, which often requires an official application of cost coverage in advance. Public Health insurance covers expenses for medical or criminological terminations of pregnancy. Recipients of public benefits (*Bürgergeld, ALG1, SGB XII, § 3 AsylbLG*) can apply for cost coverage through the *Jobcenter, Arbeitsagentur* or *Sozialamt*.

Dental care

Please note that insurances usually cover a very limited number of dental care services, so better make sure with your insurance beforehand. You can find a dentist on the websites listed above. Alternatively, you can have a look here: [BZAEK: Zahnarztsuche](#).

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)

Health authorities (*Gesundheitsamt*) often offer the opportunity to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases free of charge.

Leipzig

- [Beratungsstelle für sexuell übertragbare Infektionen und AIDS - Gesundheitsamt](#)
- [Aidshilfe Leipzig](#)
- [Rosalinde e.V.](#): Please note: This is an offer for queer people with limited financial resources. We ask for solidarity for using it. Please register by telephone on 0341/23 23 126).

5.1.3. Pharmacy

You can get regular medication without prescription at pharmacies. Other medication is also handed out in pharmacies, but only if you have a prescription from a doctor. Outside the normal business hours of pharmacies, there is a pharmacy emergency service. This covers weekends and public holidays as well as night hours. If you use the services of an assigned emergency pharmacy a fee of 2,50 € may be charged.

Leipzig

- The pharmacy at the train station (Apotheke im Hauptbahnhof) has longer opening hours and is always open on Sundays.
- The pharmacies with emergency service change daily and provide a [schedule](#).

5.1.4. Psychosocial Health

Psychosocial support can be provided in different ways and settings. Depending on the specificity of the need, you might find centres or associations (*Verein*) that work in the relevant field. Psychosocial centres for migrants and refugees, psychotrauma centres, associations supporting people with depression, PTSD, dependencies or initiatives supporting LGBTQ+ communities can usually be found in cities. As a rule, those centres provide support pro bono. See further in this section for further information and contact data.

If you have the financial means, you could find a suitable specialist privately. This can either be a private psychotherapist, systemic therapist, trauma counsellor or alternative practitioner (*Heilpraktiker*).

For those without this possibility and for those insured through a German state insurance (*gesetzliche Krankenversicherung*), finding a psychotherapist paid by the health insurance can be an alternative to psychosocial centres. Within the coverage of health insurance there are four forms of psychotherapy that are covered: psychoanalysis (*Psychoanalyse*), behavioural therapy (*Verhaltenstherapie*), systemic therapy (*systemische Therapie*) and depth psychology (*Tiefenpsychologie*) While looking for a specialist search for “sämtliche Psychotherapeuten mit Kassenzulassung”.

Please note that only medical practitioners are authorised to prescribe psychiatric medication. If you already have a history of medication or if your therapist confirms the need for a timely prescription, a general practitioner can agree to prescribe you with a concrete drug. Otherwise it is usually advisable and in some cases required to see a psychiatrist. For information on psychiatrists see below.

More information:

- [A guide to psychotherapy in Germany](#)
- [Handbook Germany: Mental Health](#)

[Here](#) you can find more information about the expertise and roles of psychotherapists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and alternative practitioners.

5.1.4.1. Finding a psychotherapist

Same websites listed under **5.1.2.** can be used for finding a psychotherapist. Another option is to consult with your health insurance for partnered specialists.

Below are several databases of approbated psychotherapists with a language filter:

- [Deutsche Psychotherapeuten Vereinigung](#)
- [Bundespsychotherapeutenkammer](#)
- [Kassenärztliche Vereinigungen](#)

Just like with other medical issues, you can call **116 117** to request a referral to a therapist with free places. At the moment this also takes some weeks and you do not have influence on the choice of the therapist.

Recommendations for queer people: [Queermed](#) is a German-wide directory of queer-friendly and sensitised doctors, therapists & practices with an intersectional approach.

On the platform [Complicated.Life](#) you can find many international private psychologists/counsellors who offer short-time online sessions. Important: the quality of the therapy is not guaranteed by the platform and usually your health insurance does not cover the sessions. ECPMF suggests exercising caution due to security concerns as they are not experienced with the platform.

Regional/local contact points for therapists:

Leipzig

- Trauma therapists in East Germany
- Private therapists in East Germany
- Public insurance therapists in East Germany

Berlin

[ACT](#) is an organisation of International multilingual therapists, counsellors, and social service providers working in Berlin.

5.1.4.2. Therapy costs

Psychotherapy can be very expensive. State health insurance can cover costs for psychotherapy, but there are certain conditions that you should be aware of before booking appointments with a psychotherapist.

- State health insurance will only cover costs for therapists who are registered with them (Kassensitz). If you have appointments with a psychotherapist, who is not registered with statutory health insurance and therefore can not invoice their services there, you can try to get reimbursement. We can not recommend this way though, because it often takes a long time and rarely turns out to be successful.

You can ask the ECPMF team for [support with the costs for your psychosocial support](#). We might be able to financially support you for a certain amount of sessions, while you are in exile.

Offers from trainees in psychotherapy

State universities and training institutions may provide therapy covered by insurance. This could potentially result in shorter waiting time.

Leipzig

- [IPT Leipzig](#)
- [LAP Leipzig](#)

Berlin

- [Overview](#)

Bremen

- [IPP Bremen](#)
- [NIVT Bremen](#)
- [ZAP Nord Bremen](#)

Psychiatrists, psychiatric hospitals and day clinics

Good to know: Psychological psychotherapists do not prescribe medication, such as antidepressants. Psychiatrists are responsible for that. Same websites listed under **5.1.2.** can be used for finding a psychiatrist.

Inpatient treatment may be recommended for severe mental health problems such as suicidal thoughts, certain addictions or psychotic symptoms. There are usually two options: psychosomatic clinics and psychiatric hospitals. In Germany, these are either independent clinics or departments within general hospitals.

Patients usually stay in psychosomatic clinics for four to six weeks. Psychiatric hospitals, which provide emergency care, can provide treatment from a few days to several months and also offer outpatient services. In Germany, there is also a hybrid treatment model known as a day clinic (*Tagesklinik*), where patients spend the day in hospital and can go home at night to sleep.

5.1.4.3. Pro bono counselling

If you have difficulties finding a psychotherapist, there are other offers available, which usually cannot substitute a psychotherapy, but can be helpful as a starting point.

Social psychiatric service (*Sozialpsychiatrischer Dienst*)

Sozialpsychiatrischer Dienst is a communal low-threshold offer for counselling and ambulatory services regarding various mental health conditions. It is free of charge and it is designed to mediate the access to psychiatric and psychosocial services. Please note that the service is under strain which negatively affects the quality and timeframe of its offer.

For additional information see here: [Psychiatrienetz: Sozialpsychiatrische Dienste](#).

Leipzig

- [Sozialpsychiatrischer Dienst](#): Until 19.00 you can reach it at this number: 0341 99990001

Welfare organisations

The welfare organisations [DRK](#), [Caritas](#), [Diakonie](#), [Der Paritätische](#), [AWO](#) and [ZWST](#) can support you if you have psychosocial concerns. Programmes and support options may differ from town to town and are best to be asked at their offices or looked up at their websites.

Leipzig

- [DRK Leipzig](#)
- [Caritas Leipzig](#)
- [Diakonie Leipzig](#)
- [Der Paritätische Leipzig](#)
- [AWO Leipzig](#)

Psychosocial centres (*Psychosoziale Zentren*)

Psychosoziale Zentren offer psychological, social and to some degree legal and medical support. They are private initiatives and are present in all federal states. Often the services are available in different languages.

See here for an overview: [BAFF: Psychosoziale Zentren](#).

Leipzig

- [Psychosoziales Zentrum für Geflüchtete Leipzig \(PSZ Leipzig\)](#)

Hamburg:

- [Lichtpunkt. Traumatherapie und Psychosoziales Zentrum](#)
- [Psychosoziales Beratungs- und Koordinierungszentrum SEGEMI](#)
- [PSB Flucht – Psychosoziale Beratung für Flüchtlinge](#)

Organisations and initiatives

Several other organisations might be able to offer psychosocial support:

- [Helpline for journalists in Germany](#) (peer counselling)
 - The free and anonymous counselling service is run by specially trained journalists who know or can relate to many problems from their own experience. Peer counselling is not a substitute for therapy, but a low-threshold approach to working together with those affected to find solutions.
 - Call 030 7543 7633 on Monday/Tuesday 18-20, Thursday 16-18, or Friday 8-10.
 - Currently only available in German.
- [ArrivalAid](#): offers a wide array of services. These include assistance with preparing for asylum interviews at BAMF, support with job searches and application processes, and the "AbilityAid" program, which helps integrate refugees and migrants with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Additionally, they provide a psychological support program.
- [International Psychosocial Organisation IPSO](#): provides low-threshold access to psychosocial counselling in different languages through licensed counsellors: during personal conversations in psychosocial centres, in care points provided by partners as well as from any location that can access the [IPSO Care online platform](#) or by using the IPSO Care App.
- [Redezeit für dich](#): volunteer trained listeners supporting with insecurities, self-doubt, loneliness, anger, helplessness, frustration, restlessness, excessive demands etc. Free of charge, in various different languages.
- [Quarteera](#) offers, among other, psychosocial support in Russian for the LGBTQ+ community. Their network is German-wide.

Various locations:

- Support for refugees with addiction in Bremen, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich and Berlin: [Sucht und Flucht](#)
- Health institutions based on principle of solidarity in Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg, Cologne, Jena, Freiburg and Dresden: [Poliklinik Syndikat](#)
- Psychological and psychosocial counselling for refugees in Thüringen and Brandenburg: [Albatros Direkt](#)

Berlin:

- [TransVer](#): Initial psychosocial consultation in different languages in Berlin. If you wish, they can help you get in touch with specialists and therapists.
- Psychosocial support for refugees in Berlin: [Internationaler Bund](#)
- [Trixiwiz](#): FLINTr*Aum: Safer Space and workshops for FLINTA* refugees and migrants (FLINTA* stands for women, lesbians, inter, non-binary, transgender and agender, the asterisk * stands for all those who do not find themselves in the letters and are oppressed by the patriarchal society because of their gender identity) for (post)trauma and stress management in Berlin.
- [Casa Kuà](#): Trans* Inter* Queer Community & Health Centre in Berlin

Hamburg:

- [Haveno](#)

5.2. Threats related to journalistic work

As the situation of press and media freedom worldwide is deteriorating, this puts journalists and media workers further at risk from a wide range of direct and indirect physical, legal, psychological and digital safety threats. The majority of journalists have been exposed to intimidation and online harassment, solely for carrying out their work. For women, non-binary and LGBTIQ+ journalists as well as journalists of colour these attacks can be especially consistent and vicious.

This chapter gives some safety recommendations.

Information disclosure

A first step to increase safety and security is to block your personal data at the Citizens Registration Office (*Bürgeramt*). As every entity can request your personal address for a fee there, it might be necessary to restrict access if you find yourself in a threatening situation. If you can prove that you are under threat, you can file a request to the Bürgeramt to block access to your personal data. The restriction must be renewed every two years.

Leipzig

[Information about blocking your personal address](#)

Steps:

- You send an email with the following documents to: meldeservice-sperr@leipzig.de
 - [Application form](#)
 - Copy of ID/Passport
 - Proof of threats (screenshots of messages/emails)
- They might want to speak to you directly (via phone or at their offices)
- Once approved you receive a confirmation that the block is valid for two years.

If you experience threats of any kind that are related to your journalistic work here are some information and support options:

Netzwerkrecherche and Dart Centre Europe have created a [helpline for journalists who need psychosocial support](#). The Helpline is available during telephone hours (Mondays and Tuesdays from 6 - 8 pm, Thursdays from 4 - 6 pm and Fridays 8 - 10 am) on +49 30 7543 7633. If the times don't suit you, you can send an email to helpline@netzwerkrecherche.de with an appointment suggestion. Look at their website for more information.

Contact points

- [Schutzkodex](#): Schutzkodex (Code of protection) is an advocacy mission to establish standards and procedures in media outlets to prevent attacks on journalists and to support journalists who suffer from threats and attacks. Some big media outlets in Germany are already incorporating the guidelines.

In addition to the advocacy mission, Schutzkodex also offers the possibility for journalists to meet and talk about attacks and threats they faced, enabling them to help and counsel each other. If you are interested in that option you can write an email here: info@no-hate-speech.de

- [RSF's Digital Security Lab](#): If you suspect you are being spied upon, due to your journalistic work, you can bring your digital devices to RSF's Digital Security Lab to let them get checked for any sort of spyware.
- [Access Now - Digital Security Helpline](#): Access Now's Digital Security Helpline (free of charge) works with individuals and organisations around the world to keep them safe online. If you're at risk, they can help you improve your digital security practices to keep out of harm's way. If you're already under attack, they provide rapid-response emergency assistance. Their 24/7 services are available with support in 9 languages: English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, Arabic, and Italian. They respond to all requests within two hours.

Handbooks

- [Guide for threatened journalists in Germany \(by Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen \(ndm\)\)](#): The brochure from Neue Medienmacher*innen provides a useful plan of action when you face threats due to your journalistic work. In addition you can find a list of useful contacts (p. 10ff.), preventive measures and counselling options. Unfortunately the brochure is only available in German at the moment.
- [Safety Guide for Journalists - A handbook for reporters in high-risk environments \(by Reporters Without Borders \(RSF\)\)](#): The brochure compiles information on how to work, act and react in highly dangerous environments. Not all information may be useful in Germany right now, but still, you can read information regarding e.g.: Reporting in demonstrations, digital security and psychological challenges
- [IWMF - mental health guide for journalists facing online violence](#): The guide aims to help journalists understand the psychological reasons why abusers attack online and how to take steps to better protect their mental health. It provides a mental health self-evaluation chart so journalists can assess how online violence is affecting their wellbeing. Further, it provides easy-to-implement, downloadable exercises to help manage the mental health toll of online abuse and suggests resources and organisations that can support journalists with issues related to online violence.

Workshops and Trainings:

Workshops that might be helpful to improve safety are offered by the schools and organisations listed under **5.7**. Some workshop topics that could be interesting for you in general are: Digital Security, Demo Reporting

- [Holistic Protection Collective \(English\)](#): is a collective of experts in security. They work with human rights organisations and individuals at risk and consult in mitigating digital, physical and emotional risks.
- [Tactical Tech \(English\)](#): offer resources and workshops on topics like digital security, data privacy, investigative tools and methods of info verification. See their projects [here](#).
- [IREX](#): Trainings and workshops, including holistic security.
- [Totem Project](#): Digital Security Training for Activists and Journalists.

Online Tools

- [Digital Safety Kit by CPJ](#)
- [Helpdesk by RSF](#)
- [Holistic security strategy manual by Tactical Tech](#)
- [Me and my shadow](#)

- [Netzwerk Recherche](#): tool to assess the security standards in your editorial office/ organisation. The test takes one hour, ranks the security standards and provides advice on how to improve security.
- [On the line - Measures for Newsrooms and Journalists to Address Online Harassment by IPI](#)
- [Security in a Box](#)

5.3. Discrimination

If you experience any kind of discrimination, this chapter provides some useful contacts and information points.

Counselling for victims and affected persons

People who are threatened, insulted or attacked for right-wing extremist, racist or misanthropic reasons can receive support from counselling services. Among other things, those affected are offered a safe space to talk about what they have experienced, advice on legal issues, support in dealing with the police and authorities, and help in dealing with the material consequences of the acts.

VBRG: VBRG (*Dachverband der unabhängigen Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt*) is the umbrella organisation of counselling centres for victims. On their website you can find initial information on what to do, if you experience these sorts of violence and discrimination. Furthermore, you will find an overview of all counselling centres in Germany that are part of VBRG. All services are free of charge, confidential, on site and (if you wish) anonymous.

Brochure with practical advice (plan of action): [Brochure Verband BRG](#).

Overviews of counselling centres in your area:

- [Verband BRG: Beratungsstellen](#)
- [Demokratie Leben: Opferberatungsstellen](#)

Leipzig

[RAA Saxony - Support. Für Betroffene rechter Gewalt](#): supports victims of right-wing, racist and anti-semitic violence, their relatives and witnesses. You can turn towards them if you experienced violence with the aforementioned motive.

Further, they run a 24/7, [multilingual emergency hotline](#) for foreigners and migrants in Dresden and East Saxony in English, Arabic, Farsi/Dari and German.

Anti-discrimination counselling centres

Anti-discrimination counselling centres offer support for anyone who has experienced discrimination in Germany and would like advice – confidential and free of charge. Treating people unequally because of certain characteristics, i.e. discrimination because of age, disability, race, gender (identity), religion, sexual identity, body type, etc. is prohibited by law in Germany, but that does not mean it is not common. It can happen during flat-hunting, at work, in government facilities, schools, doctor's offices, during leisure time or at the police station.

The main contact point is the [Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency](#) (*Antidiskriminierungsstellen*). They give first advice and can also refer you to a counselling centre close to where you live.

Alternatively, you can use [the search function](#) to find a counselling centre close to you.

Leipzig

- [Antidiskriminierungsbüro Sachsen e.V.](#)

Community-based contact and advice centres for people affected by racism

If you have been racially attacked or discriminated against, you can find community-based contact and counselling centres throughout Germany on this [map](#).

Information for persons with disabilities

[Fachstelle Antidiskriminierung Behinderung ISL](#) (Anti-Discrimination Office Disability ISL). ISL has a hotline which is staffed by disabled project employees and can be reached three days a week (Mondays from 3 pm to 6 pm, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 am to 1 pm).

The telephone number is 030 235 935 195.

Leipzig

- Counselling for refugees with disabilities: Caritas - [Contact person: Hanna Gradulewski](#)

Information for queer people

Most cities in Germany have consultation offices for LGBTIQ+ , as well as, queer community spaces, where you can connect with others. In some cities there are some counselling centres specially for queer migrants and refugees.

Counselling for LGBTIQ+ and Meeting Points

- [LSVD Lesben- und Schwulenverband Deutschland](#) (Lesbian and Gay Federation)
 - are a civil rights organisation representing the interests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people
- LSVD project [“Queer Refugees Deutschland”](#)
 - connects, supports and advises LGBTI* refugees and organisations working with them
- [Overview of Queer Meeting Points in Germany](#)
- Overview of Counseling for LGBTIQ+in Germany
 - [Queer Refugees: Counselling](#)
 - [VLSP: Beratungsstellen](#)
- [Overview of LGBTQI+ Resources in Germany](#) (coming soon)

Leipzig

- [RosaLinde e.V.](#) is an association for facilitating queer spaces, education and advice. Their offers and activities are aimed primarily at lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* and intersex, as well as queer and asexual/aromantic people
 - One of their projects is the [‘Queer Refugee Network’](#), which offers support in the asylum process, but also psychosocial counselling and support for queer refugees.
- [RAAinbow](#) offers counselling for LGBTIQ+ refugees

Berlin

- [GLADT](#) is a self-organization of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans*, inter* and queer people who are BiPOC (Black, indigenous, people of colour) in Berlin.
 - [Information about special offers](#) for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex (LGBTI) refugees in Berlin.
- [Quarteera e. V.](#) is the association of Russian-speaking LGBTQ* and their friends.

Chemnitz

- [different people e.v.](#)

Dresden

- [Gerede Dresden: Queer Refugees](#)

North Rhine-Westphalia

- [Overview of Queer Counseling and Meeting Points](#)

Counselling on anti-semitic violence

[OFEK e.V.](#): provides support to those who suffered from anti-semitic attacks in Germany. They do not have offices in every federal state, but in case you need support or counselling you can call their number, write an email or write in a chat.

5.4 Social Life

As big cities often tend to be rather anonymous it can sometimes be challenging to find social contacts. If that is the case for you, you could try one of the following websites and initiatives to get to know people. For professional journalism networks, see **4.5**.

- [Start with a Friend e.V.](#): The aim of Start with a Friend e.V. is to interconnect people who newly arrived in Germany with locals. That is achieved mainly through arranging tandem partnerships.
- [Buddyme](#): On Buddyme you can upload a profile showing people who you are in order to connect with people in your area.

Clubs and associations

As there is a huge variety of clubs and associations for almost everything in Germany, consider reaching out to the ones you are interested in. Often it does not cost much to become a member and it can be a good opportunity to meet like minded people.

Find a sports club in your area here: [Sportomat](#).

Neighbourhood centres (*Stadtteilzentren*)

A possibility to get to know people is a *Stadtteilzentrum*. Sometimes they are also called *Nachbarschaftszentren* or *Kulturzentren*. They are gathering places for people from one part of the city or one neighbourhood, often host small events or offer courses and seminars. See below for a list of overview websites:

Leipzig

- [Overview: Soziokulturelle Zentren](#)
- On [Afeefa Leipzig](#) you can find a map of the city with an overview of all places, events, organisations and offers for local internationals.

Overview of neighbourhood centres in other big cities

- Berlin: [Stadtteilzentren](#)
- Hamburg: [Kulturzentren](#)
- München: [Nachbarschaftstreffs](#)
- Köln: [Bürgerzentren](#)

Language exchange/Tandem

If you want to meet new people while practising languages, you can look for a Tandem (**see 4.2.4.**).

