

# Guide for Newcomers

By International Office, AEI Potsdam



Max Planck Institute for  
Gravitational Physics  
(Albert Einstein Institute)

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## Welcome!

The International Office (IO) would like to warmly welcome you to the Albert Einstein Institute (AEI)! As you prepare to come to the AEI, this guide will help to ease your transition to the Institute and Potsdam/Berlin area, and answer some of your questions. Please take some time to review the information concerning your next steps in getting ready to settle in Germany.

We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunities the AEI offers and that your interactions with other members of our diverse community will be enjoyable and productive!

If you need assistance or have questions, please feel free to contact the IO per email or stop by during the open office hours. The IO is available as your first point of contact in the following matters concerning your stay in Germany:

- Visa, registration and residence permit
- Health insurance
- Translation assistance
- Finding an English-speaking doctor.

### AEI International Office

Max Planck Institute for  
Gravitational Physics  
(Albert Einstein Institute)  
Am Mühlenberg 1, 14476 Potsdam  
Email: [io@aei.mpg.de](mailto:io@aei.mpg.de)  
Phone: +49 331 567-7326



### Room 2.26

Office hours:  
10 am – 5 pm  
Mo – Fri

Apart from the IO, you can get support from the Welcome Service of the Potsdam Science Park. You can find our colleagues on the third floor of the nearby GO:IN building. The Institute has a partnership with the Potsdam Science Park in order to provide you with additional help during your stay.

### Potsdam Science Park Welcome Service



Am Mühlenberg 11, 14476 Potsdam  
[www.potsdam-sciencepark.de](http://www.potsdam-sciencepark.de)

The Welcome Service of the Potsdam Science Park offers you these support services:

- Finding long-term accommodation
- Looking for childcare and school options
- Language courses for AEI employees
- Additional insurance types, such as personal liability insurance, household insurance, etc.

## The Albert Einstein Institute

The Albert Einstein Institute is part of the Potsdam Science Park that is located on the outskirts of the city of Potsdam. The Science Park is the largest science and research site of the German state of Brandenburg.

### How to find us

The Albert Einstein Institute is a 10 minutes' walk, or one bus stop (bus no. 605 or 606) away from Potsdam Golm train station. Please note that you will need to get a ticket for zones ABC, if you're travelling from Berlin (zone C includes Potsdam).

Check these resources for up-to-date connections:

[www.bahn.com](http://www.bahn.com)

[www.vbb.de](http://www.vbb.de)

### Service Departments & Resources

Here are the departments and contact persons at the Institute that, apart from the International Office and the assistant of your department, can help you throughout your stay, in case you have questions and need support.

#### HR Department

Vacation applications, business trips and travel reimbursement, questions about your work contract.

[personal@aei.mpg.de](mailto:personal@aei.mpg.de)

#### IT Department

Help setting up your AEI account, getting equipment, dealing with technical problems.

[support@aei.mpg.de](mailto:support@aei.mpg.de)

#### Equal Opportunity Officer (EOO)

The EOO is your first contact at the Institute in case you experience any workplace discrimination or harassment and would like to report an incident.

[eeo-p@aei.mpg.de](mailto:eeo-p@aei.mpg.de)

#### Web Support

Adding information to your personal page on the AEI website, updating the contents of the page.

[web-support@aei.mpg.de](mailto:web-support@aei.mpg.de)

## Works Council

The works council (*Betriebsrat*) is elected to represent the interests of the staff members to the management. The works council is available as a contact point, in case you experience any problems in the workplace.

[betriebsrat@aei.mpg.de](mailto:betriebsrat@aei.mpg.de)

## Ombudsperson

The first contact for scientists who experience scientific misbehavior by their colleagues, superiors, or workgroup.

[harald.pfeiffer@aei.mpg.de](mailto:harald.pfeiffer@aei.mpg.de)

## Library

Literature and research information services to support your scientific work at the AEI.

[library@aei.mpg.de](mailto:library@aei.mpg.de)

## Before Arriving in Germany

Once you have found out that you will be joining the Albert Einstein Institute, please get in touch with the International Office.

Important questions for you to think of in advance:

- Do I need a visa for Germany?
- Which documents should I bring with me?

The website of the German Federal Foreign Office provides an [overview](#)<sup>1</sup> of entry visa requirements for different countries. Please note, however, that in case you are a non-EU national and you intend to start employment at the AEI immediately upon arrival, you should apply for a German national visa in your country anyway, even though the list says “no” (such as USA, Canada, Australia, etc.). If in doubt, please contact the International Office or the [local consulate](#)<sup>2</sup> of the Federal Republic of Germany in your country. We would kindly encourage you to initiate the visa application process **3-6 months before** the planned starting date at the AEI.

### Documents to bring with you:

- Passport or identity card
- Visa, if required
- Birth certificate (original)
- Marriage certificate (original)
- Insurance coverage for Germany
- Matriculation certificate (for students)
- PhD certificate
- Driving license
- Several biometric passport photos
- Medication required; a letter from your doctor about your existing conditions; vaccination certificate

In order to prepare yourself for the new cultural environment we recommend you to have a look at the intercultural handbook “[How Do the Germans Tick?](#)”<sup>3</sup>. If you happen to have any questions regarding cultural adjustment once you are in Germany, or need some advice, please talk to your International Officer for more support in this matter.

## Steps after Arriving in Germany

### Step 1. Health Insurance

Having health insurance in Germany is a legal requirement. This section will provide you with important information relevant to choosing the right type of insurance for you during your stay.

#### Which type of health insurance is right for you?

In general, there are two types of health insurance in Germany – **public** and **private**.

- **Public Health Insurance** (*gesetzliche Krankenversicherung*)

If you have an employment contract at the AEI and an annual salary that is below the official income threshold (66,600 euros per year or 5550 euros per month, as of 2023), you can only take out public health insurance. If you have an employment contract and an annual salary that is above the threshold, you can choose between public and private health insurance.

The services of different public health insurance providers are roughly the same, however, there may be differences in customer service, supplementary benefits and optional rates.

We would encourage you to apply immediately upon arrival, or even **several weeks before** your starting date at the AEI. Please contact the International Office in advance, and we'll help you submit the application to the provider of your choice.

As for the health insurance fee, it is usually based on your gross salary. The monthly contribution rate is 14,6% of your gross salary, and it is shared equally by the employer and employee. Apart from that, public health insurance providers usually impose an additional fee to the standard contribution rate, for which you are liable to pay yourself. This is referred to as *Zusatzbeitrag* in German and is currently at an average of around 1.6% (2023), however it may vary slightly among different public health insurance providers. The monthly payments for your health insurance will be deducted from your salary automatically.

One of the main advantages of public health insurance is that your family members can be co-insured free of charge, if they do not have an income in Germany. In this case, you can apply for family insurance (*Familienversicherung*). Also, if you have public insurance, medical bills are normally sent directly to your insurance provider: you don't have to pay for medical services upfront and apply for reimbursement.

- **Private Health Insurance** (*private Krankenversicherung*)

#### *Scholarship holders*

Scholarship holders can normally only take out private insurance. Check in with your scholarship provider first to find out whether they grant private insurance coverage to their scholarship holders.

In case your scholarship provider does not offer private health insurance coverage, it is important that you sign up for a private health insurance of your choice. In that case you will take care of the health insurance payments yourself.

In case you have a scholarship from the Max Planck Society you can receive a monthly subsidy of up to 100 euros per month from the AEI. For this subsidy, you must provide a certificate (*Bescheinigung*) from your health insurance provider along with a short email to the HR Department ([personal@aei.mpg.de](mailto:personal@aei.mpg.de)). The certificate from your health insurance provider must confirm that they provide full coverage in accordance with the social security code of German Law (§ 257 Abs. 2 SGB V).

## Employees

If you have a contract of employment at the AEI, and if your annual salary exceeds the annual income threshold, you can choose to sign up for private health insurance. In that case you can receive a subsidy from the AEI, which is usually around 50% of the monthly insurance fee.

Please note that, particularly with private insurance providers, there can be considerable differences in the scope of the coverage, and in the rates charged. The rates are normally based on age, pre-existing health conditions and risks.

It is therefore highly recommended to carefully go through the services offered, either individually or by consultation with a suitable representative, before deciding which private health insurance provider would be best for you.

Each private insurance provider specifies in their contract how they reimburse you for your medical appointments. Usually, you pay the bill first and then submit the original invoice to your insurance provider for reimbursement (and also possibly fill out a form). Doctors, dentists and other health care providers therefore normally send an original as well as a duplicate copy of their invoice for this reason. You should hear back from your provider concerning whether they will reimburse you and whether it will be for the full amount. Sometimes it is possible to send the bill directly to your health insurance provider, however please check your individual terms and conditions for the reimbursement procedure.

The application for private health insurance usually takes more time, and it may be required that you get a medical check-up first, and submit the results to the provider for risk assessment and calculating the monthly fee. That's why it's very important that you have travel health insurance for Germany for the first several weeks of your stay. If you are a citizen of one of the EU countries, please make sure to always have your [European Health Insurance Card<sup>4</sup>](#) on you.

## Step 2. Registration of Residence

It is important that you complete the registration of address (*Anmeldung*) at the local city hall, or the Residents' Registration Office (*Bürgerservicecenter/Bürgeramt*) **within two weeks** upon your arrival in Germany. You cannot proceed to the following steps without this registration confirmation. We would encourage you to reach out to the International Office **a few weeks before arrival**, and ask for help booking an appointment for registration. This way the process will go smoothly.

The following documents are required for your appointment:

- Identity card/passport
- Registration form, filled out
- Move-in confirmation from your landlord/guesthouse
- Birth certificate (only if you register in Berlin for the first time)
- Marriage certificate and/or birth certificates of children (if applicable)

If you are coming to Germany with your family, you'll need an appointment and the same documents for each member of your family. The registration procedure is free of charge, and the registration confirmation is usually issued immediately. Please contact the IO for more information if you have questions.

### Where to register:

#### Potsdam

Bürgerservicecenter  
Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 79/81



14469 Potsdam  
[Book an appointment<sup>5</sup>](#)

(Website in German)

## Berlin

You can register at any of the *Bürgeramt* offices in Berlin. Here you can get an [overview<sup>6</sup>](#) of available appointments in all Berlin districts (website in German). It often happens that the appointments for registration in Berlin are booked out for several months ahead. Please contact the International Office for assistance.

Please remember to update your address registration every time you move into a new apartment.

## Step 3. Tax ID Number

After registration you will need to get a German tax ID number (*Steueridentifikationsnummer*). It is necessary in order to open a bank account and to get your salary on time. You will usually get your tax ID number in a letter, 2-3 weeks after your first registration in Germany. We would encourage you to be more proactive though, and visit the Finance Office (*Finanzamt*) responsible for your area to ask for your tax ID number several days after registration. You will need your passport and the registration confirmation. Normally an appointment is not required for this step (websites in German):

- [Potsdam<sup>7</sup>](#)
- [Berlin<sup>8</sup>](#)

Keep your registration confirmation and your tax identification number safely stored – they are important documents!

## Step 4. Bank Account

If you stay in Germany for a longer period, receive a regular salary/scholarship and have to pay rent, you will need to open a local bank account. The services banks provide are roughly the same, but there are differences in customer service and monthly fees. To open an account, you need your passport, registration confirmation and your German tax ID number.

Once you've opened an account, your bank will first send you an EC card (electronic cash card) by post and then, in a separate letter, you will receive a PIN number. These are sent separately for security reasons. It could take about a week to have full access to your account.

As for the choice of the bank, there is a variety of financial institutions to choose from. For many, service in English may be a primary concern. Convenience could also be important – does the bank have branches in your vicinity? Does the bank have many ATMs around the city?

Start by visiting a bank of your choice and setting up an appointment with a financial advisor. You will quickly find out if the bank offers service in English. If you're not comfortable with the options that the institution provides, you can set up an appointment with another advisor at a different bank.

### Remarks:

Withdrawing money at an ATM is usually free at the branches of your bank. Using ATMs of other banks incurs additional fees. Transfers abroad can also be expensive. Ask the bank in your own country whether it has a cooperation agreement with a German financial institution.

In addition to the EC card, there are credit cards that you can use to make cash-free payments. They can also be used to make withdrawals at ATMs with an additional fee, however, you usually see a notification. The most widely used credit cards in Germany are the Eurocard/MasterCard and Visa card.

Regular payments with your bank account can generally be made in the following ways:

- *Direct debit (SEPA-Lastschriftmandat)*  
This is an instruction to a third party allowing them to take money from your account in accordance with your contract. This can only occur if you have signed a form for a direct debit mandate.
- *Standing order (Dauerauftrag)*  
This is an instruction to your bank to make regular and fixed payments to a third party. This can be set up (and cancelled) online.

## Step 5. Residence Permit

Citizens from the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) do not need a residence permit. The EEA includes Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Citizens from all other countries need to apply for a residence permit at the local Immigration Office (*Ausländerbehörde*) if the stay in Germany is planned for more than 90 days. The application usually takes place in person in the city of residence.

### Potsdam:

Ausländerbehörde  
Helene-Lange-Straße 6/7  
14469 Potsdam

### Berlin:

Landesamt für Bürger- und Ordnungsangelegenheiten (LABO)  
Standort Keplerstr.  
Keplerstr. 2  
10589 Berlin

**Since there is a considerable processing time (6-8 weeks), you should submit your residence permit application well in advance before your current visa expires OR within 90 days if no visa was required for entry.**

### Documents:

- Your passport
- Application form
- Registration confirmation
- Proof of health insurance
- Biometric photo
- Rental contract
- Employment contract at AEI *or*
- Fellowship confirmation
- Hosting agreement from AEI
- Fee: about €110 per person

Depending on your status at the Institute and city of residence (Potsdam or Berlin), the list of the required documents may slightly vary. Please contact the International Office to help you schedule an appointment for the application and support you in preparing the documents.

If your family comes with you to Germany, all members must be present at the appointment. You will also need to provide a set of documents for each member of your family, including the birth certificates of the children and (for married couples) your marriage certificate (with a certified German translation).

### Types of Residence Permits

The following residence permits are usually issued by the Immigration Office (*Ausländerbehörde*) for scientists working at the AEI:

→ § 18d AufenthG (German Residence Act)

#### *Residence permit for research*

For scientists with an employment contract from the AEI, or with a fellowship and a hosting agreement.

→ § 18b (2) AufenthG (German Residence Act)

#### *Blue Card EU<sup>9</sup>*

Issued for highly-qualified professionals starting an employment in Germany. One of the prerequisites for the Blue Card for the AEI scientists is a minimum gross income of 45,552 euros per year (as of 2023).

One of the considerable advantages of the Blue Card, in comparison with a regular work permit or residence permit for research, is that you will become eligible for a settlement permit (permanent residence permit) for Germany much sooner, namely after 33 months of employment. If you can prove the knowledge of German on level B1, you can apply for a settlement permit even sooner, after 21 months.

Another advantage of the Blue Card is an easier reunification process with your family members.

Please get in touch with the International Office for further information and support on the Blue Card application.

### Remarks for Non-EU/EEA Citizens

You can only start working at the Albert Einstein Institute if you have a long-term visa (national D visa) for scientific work/research OR one of the residence permits mentioned above.

Citizens specifically from the following countries must therefore take this into consideration, as these countries do not require an entry visa for Germany: Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, the USA and the UK.

Please always make sure to email a copy of your visa or residence permit to the HR department and the International Office. Thank you!

## Submitting the Documents to the (HR) Department

Congratulations! You've completed all the steps!

Please kindly forward all the necessary documents to the AEI Human Resources Department (*Personalabteilung*). You can do this by sending an email to [personal@aei.mpg.de](mailto:personal@aei.mpg.de) or handing in the documents in person in room 1.007 of the central building.

The documents and information you need to submit to the HR:

- Your health insurance confirmation
- A copy of your registration confirmation
- German tax ID number
- Bank account information
- A copy of your residence permit

### PhD researchers

In case you are joining the AEI as a PhD researcher, you will also need to enroll at one of the local universities as part of your program. Please get in touch with your supervisor for more information.

## Living in Potsdam/Berlin

### Finding Accommodation

#### Short-Term Accommodation

##### On-Campus Guesthouse

The assistant of your division and/or Eva Reis (at the GO:IN complex, see below for contact information) can book the guesthouse for you for the first month after you arrive and, upon request, extend your stay at the guesthouse for up to a maximum of three months.

*Eva Reis*

Tel.: 0331-237 351 108

Fax: 0331-237 351 204

Email: [eva.reis@potsdam-sciencepark.de](mailto:eva.reis@potsdam-sciencepark.de)

##### Other Options

For short-term accommodation (< 6 months) in Potsdam or Berlin, it is recommended to look for other guesthouses (*Gästehaus*), vacation rentals (*Ferienwohnungen*) or furnished apartments (*möblierte Wohnungen*).

The following resources could be useful:

- [www.homecompany.de](http://www.homecompany.de)
- [www.wunderflats.de](http://www.wunderflats.de)

For short-term accommodation, you are welcome to contact the assistant of your division and/or the IO for further assistance. The IO can provide additional useful resources and an overview of keywords in German for your search.

##### Long-Term Accommodation

If you are looking for long-term accommodation (> 6 months) in Potsdam or Berlin, check out the following resources in German:

- [www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)
- [www.immonet.de](http://www.immonet.de)
- [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)

Another option would be renting a furnished room at BaseCamp Potsdam-Golm. The BaseCamp building is located in the immediate proximity to the Albert Einstein Institute and Golm train station:

- [www.basecampstudent.com](http://www.basecampstudent.com)

If you are enrolled at one of the universities in Potsdam or Berlin, you may be eligible to apply for a room in one of the student dormitories. More information can be found here:

- [www.studentenwerk-potsdam.de](http://www.studentenwerk-potsdam.de)
- [www.stw.berlin](http://www.stw.berlin)

If you are looking for an apartment in Potsdam or Berlin for a minimum of 1 year (or 6 months in a shared flat), do not hesitate to contact the Welcome Service of the Potsdam Science Park for support:

- [www.potsdam-sciencepark.de](http://www.potsdam-sciencepark.de)

In Germany, apartments are generally **unfurnished**, unless stated otherwise. In Berlin, it is also quite often that an apartment is available as soon as possible (*ab sofort*). If you would rather have your rental contract begin on a certain date, refine your search criteria or talk this over with the landlord and see if you can come to an agreement.

#### *Shared Flats (WG)*

There are lots of ads on info boards, offering flats to share. This is called a *WG* or *Wohngemeinschaft*, i.e., you get your own room but share a kitchen and bathroom with roommates.

#### *Security Deposit*

If you are going to rent an apartment, you will be asked for a security deposit (*Kaution*). The security deposit is usually around two or three monthly rents excluding utility costs. *Kaltmiete* (the rent excluding utility costs) and *Warmmiete* (rent inclusive of utility costs) refer to the amount of the basic rent and the rent with utilities respectively. The deposit is returned to you (around 3-6 months after leaving) in full if you leave the apartment undamaged.

#### *Electricity*

Since electricity companies can only estimate how much you will consume, you pay a monthly flat rate and the difference is settled after the end of each year. The electricity readings are taken whenever you move in and out of an apartment. If your consumption exceeds the payments made so far, the monthly flat rate will be increased; if you have consumed less, it will be decreased. In some houses the hot water is heated by a boiler instead of the heating system and hence uses electricity. Please note that this significantly increases the costs for electricity.

#### *Utilities*

Besides the monthly electricity charges, you are charged for other general utilities associated with the management of the building complex. These can include costs for heating (including heating up water), garbage disposal, property tax, charges for street cleaning, lighting in the public areas of the house, elevator use if applicable, water consumption and sewage, fees for the janitor, maintenance person (*Hausmeister*), etc. Usually, you need to conclude separate contracts for electricity and gas (depending on your contract). When moving in and out, the meters for electricity and water (and gas if applicable) are read to calculate your consumption during your tenancy.

#### *Signing the contract*

Before you sign the contract, ask a German speaker to go through the main paragraphs with you. You should also receive a signed copy for your own records. We recommend writing a complete list with the landlord, documenting all pieces of furniture in the apartment and more importantly, any damage you notice (even if they are minor damages!). This helps to avoid arguments concerning your deposit when moving out.

It is sometimes necessary, in case it is stated by the contract, to apply for household insurance (*Hausratversicherung*) and/or personal liability insurance (*Haftpflichtversicherung*), especially in case you are going to rent a furnished apartment.

## Glossary

**Altbau** – an old building, usually built before 1950s

**Besichtigung** – apartment viewing

**DG/Dachgeschoss** – attic floor

**EBK/Einbauküche** – built-in kitchen

**EG/Erdgeschoss** – ground floor (BrE)/first floor (AmE)

**Erstbezug** – (about an apartment) rented for the first time after renovation

**Hausmeister** – maintenance person

**Hausverwaltung** – property management company

**Kaltmiete** – rent without utilities

**Kaution** – security deposit

**Nebenkosten** – utilities

**Untermiete/Zwischenmiete** – sublet

**Warmmiete** – rent with utilities included

**WBS** – a document certifying someone's eligibility to live in a state-subsidized apartment

**WG/Wohngemeinschaft** – shared apartment

**Zi/Zimmer** – room

### TV and Radio License Fee (*Rundfunkbeitrag*)

*Rundfunkbeitrag* is an obligatory monthly license fee for public access to radio and television. Every household (with very few exceptions) must pay this monthly fee, which is currently set at a **monthly total** of 18.36 euros per household (2023). This fee remains the same regardless of how many people live in the same apartment and/or whether there are any appliances in the apartment or not.

If you live in the Max Planck Campus guesthouse, these fees are already covered. If you live with roommates, please make sure you talk to them about sharing the costs.

The *ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio Beitragsservice* provides an overview on this topic on their [website](#)<sup>10</sup>. The overview is available in a number of languages. All the necessary forms can be filled out online. Please contact the International Office for assistance.

#### Important!

If you do not register for the fee yourself, ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio will register your apartment for you automatically and charge you an outstanding balance dating back to your registration date! If you receive such a letter, do not ignore it or dispose of it as this can lead to more serious consequences.

## Emergencies, Hospitals and Doctors

*If you need urgent medical treatment at night or at the weekend, go to the emergency room (Notaufnahme) at the nearest hospital or call 112 for an ambulance (Notarzt).*

### Emergency numbers:

- **Police: 110**
- **Fire Brigade & Ambulance: 112**
- **Poison control center: (030) 192 40**

If you are looking for hospitals and/or English-speaking doctors, you can turn to your insurance provider for assistance, refer to the information below, or contact the IO.

### Hospitals and Doctors:

[Hospitals in Potsdam<sup>11</sup>](#)

[A list of specialized doctors in Potsdam<sup>12</sup>](#)

[Hospitals in Berlin<sup>13</sup>](#)

[Specialized doctors in Berlin<sup>14</sup>](#)

*(Websites in German)*

### Mental Health Resources:

#### Counseling Service

Counseling service “pme Familienservice” is available to all AEI employees, as part of the Employee and Manager Assistance Program (EMAP).

Support in difficult life situations and crises:  
external, anonymous, and free.

24/7 emergency hotline

[More information<sup>15</sup>](#)

#### Crisis Intervention

*Berliner Krisendienst*

Hotline 030 390 63 00

*Vivantes Krankenhaus am Urban*

*24/7 Emergency Department*

*Dieffenbachstraße*

*10967 Berlin*



*Klinik für Psychiatrie, Psychotherapie und Psychosomatik*  
*24/7 Emergency Department*  
Ernst von Bergmann Hospital  
In der Aue 59/61  
14480 Potsdam

**Looking for a therapist:**

[www.kvberlin.de](http://www.kvberlin.de)  
[www.therapie.de](http://www.therapie.de)

*(Websites in German)*

## Taxes



*First of all, you need to determine whether you are liable to pay taxes in Germany.*

**Have you lived in Germany for more than 6 consecutive months?** You are considered 'ordinarily resident' in Germany and, as such, are subject to unlimited tax liability and must pay tax on your worldwide income there.

**Have you lived in Germany for less than 6 months?** You are not considered tax resident, and pay tax only on income earned in Germany (limited tax liability)<sup>16</sup>.

**Do you have an employment contract at the AEI?** In case you are employed by the AEI, and your salary is your only source of income, you do not normally have to file an annual tax return. All your taxes are deducted by your employer automatically from your salary. Apart from the income tax, your employer also deducts your contributions to statutory social insurance schemes – pension, care, unemployment and healthcare insurance. Once a month you will usually receive a letter with a payslip that contains an overview of all the tax deductions. Please keep your payslips safe for your records.

Even though in the scenario mentioned above you do not have to take care of your taxes, you still have the option of filing a tax return, for up to four years of employment retroactively, and get some funds back. The International Office can recommend you several online resources in English that will help you file a tax return.

In case your salary at the AEI is not your only source of income, and you also have income abroad throughout the time of your employment at the AEI, we would recommend you to get in touch with a tax advisor to help you in your case. We are happy to put you in touch with an English-speaking specialist.

**Are you at the AEI on a fellowship?** If you have a fellowship or scholarship, it means you have no contractual employment relationship with the Institute. Scholarship holders are normally tax-exempt and do not have to file taxes, if the fellowship or scholarship is the only source of income.

## Child Daycare and Kindergartens

Your child can be registered for a kindergarten, a nanny, a nursery (8 weeks to 3 years), a nursery school (3 to 6 years) or an after-school care center (up to 4 hours in the afternoon for school kids independent of the employment status of the parents). You can choose if you prefer a nanny or a nursery until the age of 3.

All parents have the right to receive childcare for 6 hours per day in the first year. If both parents are employed, childcare for 8 hours may be possible. An explanation may be requested if only one parent is employed and more than 6 hours are needed; integration of your child and promotion of the German language could be possible reasons. If there are enough free places available in Potsdam, it could be possible to get 8 hours of childcare.

An adaptation period, of approximately 2 weeks for children 3 years and older, is to be expected. During this time, being in the kindergarten will slowly become easier for your child and a trustful relationship with kindergarten employees will develop.

Many kindergartens are re-organized in September due to the start of the school year. Places can therefore be available at the beginning of August. This means if you move to Potsdam in May and cannot find any available places, the situation may change significantly in a short amount of time. However, please keep in mind to apply well in advance (> 6 months) or as soon as possible in order to secure a place for your child/children.

You can choose various facilities in Potsdam depending on age, language skills or residential area. Please note though that finding a kindergarten spot can take quite a long time and effort. We would recommend you to start the search **before your family moves** to Germany.

You have the option to register in the *Kita Springfrosch* with our cooperation partner *Fröbel*. The AEI has an agreement with the kindergarten, reserving a certain number of places for the AEI employees. However, please note that there could be a long waiting list.

## Family Service "Familienservice pme"

Support with finding childcare, emergency care, or care for the elderly family members. The family service is a cooperation partner of the Max Planck Society and is available to all its employees, fellows, and guest scientists.

[www.familienservice.de](http://www.familienservice.de)

*(Website in German)*

## Child Benefit Information

Every parent, residing in Germany with their child or children, may be eligible to apply for [child benefit](#)<sup>17</sup> (*Kindergeld*). The child benefit is not received automatically, you need to apply for it at the Family Benefits Office in your area (*Familienkasse*). The International Office is happy to help you with the application!

## Sports & Recreation

### At the AEI

#### *Football and Volleyball:*

If you'd like to play a game of football and/or volleyball, you'll find the courts at the back of the Institute. Please ask the reception in the central building for equipment.

### **Sports with the University of Potsdam:**

If you are an AEI employee and would like to join a local fitness club and/or take part in sports courses, you can do this, for example, with the University of Potsdam.

When [registering](#)<sup>18</sup>, scroll down to Group 3 as your status (*Statusgruppe 3*) and select to register as a member of a cooperating institute of the University of Potsdam (*Koop. Einrichtungen & An-Institute der Uni Potsdam*). The price also reflects your status.

#### *Fitness Club:*

There is currently one gym location (*goFIT*), close to Golm train station. There are different fare options for the fitness club, depending on the length of the membership.

#### *Sports & Fitness Courses:*

The university additionally offers specific sports courses. You can sign up for a course or several courses throughout the university semester and/or during the lecture-free periods. Alternatively, you can also look at sports offers from other universities or gyms.

## Before Leaving Germany

We hope you've had a great stay at the AEI, full of growth and professional and personal development!

Here's a few important things to think of before you leave:

### Terminating Contracts in a Timely Fashion

Canceling contracts usually requires notice according to terms stated in the contract. In Germany, this is usually **3 months' notice**, however each contract must be checked for its individual cancellation policy. Please remember to cancel all your standing contracts. These can include: *apartment/room, electricity, gas, cell phone, landline, internet, TV and radio license fee, as well as health insurance.*

#### Help our newcomers!

Before canceling your rental contract, please get in touch with the International Office, and we'll let you know if any of our newcomers would like to take over the apartment and any of the furniture. It's a win-win for everyone. Thank you!

If utilities were not included in your rent and you concluded separate contracts with the respective providers, you have to remember to cancel these too. For electricity, gas, heating, and water, you should note down the numbers of the meters on the last day of rent and forward these numbers to the providers. The meters are situated either in the apartment or in the basement.

If you need to cancel your rental contract with less notice than what is stated in your contract, you will have to negotiate with your landlord about the remaining rental payments. It could be possible to find a new tenant (who must also be accepted by the landlord). If you find that you need to find a new tenant, please contact the IO with a summary of your flat/an exposé.

You can cancel your TV and radio fee by filling out the [online form](#)<sup>19</sup> (website in German) or by mail. Contact the International Office for assistance.

### AEI Leaving Form

Before leaving the Institute, please think of filling out a leaving form. You can get this form from the HR Department in room 1.007.

### De-registration

This is a very important step and applies for all residents who plan on leaving Germany. Please make sure you send a de-registration form to your local Bürgeramt by post or schedule an appointment to hand it in in person.

### Return of Your Security Deposit

You should receive your deposit around 3-6 months after moving out (in accordance with the terms of your contract). This gives your landlord time to assess certain aspects of the apartment such as any damages, etc. If you do not receive your deposit after 6 months, contact your previous landlord and ask when you should expect your deposit to be returned to you.

### Closing Your Bank Account

In order to close your bank account, you simply visit your local branch to notify your bank. However, it is recommended to keep your German bank account for about six months after you leave until all final payments (such as the refund of your security deposit from your landlord) are made.

The banks have certain forms for this purpose, in which you can set a specific date to close your account. Additionally, you can specify where your remaining funds should be transferred to (e.g. to your account in your home country).

The following documents should be brought along with you when you go to the branch:

- Passport or other form of ID
- EC card belonging to that account
- If applicable, credit cards belonging to that account

### **Join the Max Planck Alumni Association!**

Do you want to become an alumnus/alumna of the Max Planck Society? Do you wish to stay in contact with former colleagues or develop new links? If so, register on the platform of the Max Planck Society:

[www.mpg-alumni.de](http://www.mpg-alumni.de)

## Links

1. Overview of entry visa requirements for Germany:  
[http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/03\\_Visabestimmungen/StaatenlisteVisumpflicht\\_node.html](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/03_Visabestimmungen/StaatenlisteVisumpflicht_node.html)
2. Overview of German Missions abroad:  
<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen>
3. "How Do the Germans Tick?"  
<http://www.mpikg.mpg.de/5483753/How-do-Germans-tick---Dez-14.pdf>
4. European Health Insurance Card  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559>
5. Registration in Potsdam  
[https://egov.potsdam.de/tnv/?START\\_OFFICE=buergerservice](https://egov.potsdam.de/tnv/?START_OFFICE=buergerservice)
6. Registration in Berlin:  
<https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/120686/>
7. Finance Office in Potsdam:  
<https://fa-potsdam.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/lbm1.c.378553.de>
8. Finance Offices in Berlin:  
<https://www.berlin.de/sen/finanzen/steuern/finanzaemter/zustaendigkeit-finden/>
9. Blue Card EU  
<https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa/kinds-of-visa/eu-blue-card/>
10. TV and Radio Fee:  
<https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/>
11. Hospitals in Potsdam:  
<https://www.potsdam.de/kategorie/krankenhaeuser-0>
12. A list of specialized doctors in Potsdam:  
<https://www.potsdam.de/kategorie/aerzte>
13. Hospitals in Berlin:  
<https://www.berlin.de/special/gesundheit-und-beauty/adressen/krankenhaus-und-klinik/>
14. Specialized doctors in Berlin:  
<http://aerzte-berlin.de/>
15. EMAP – Employee and Manager Assistance Program  
<https://www.mpg.de/16344036/counselling-and-mental-health>
16. Income Taxes Abroad – Germany  
[https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/taxes/income-taxes-abroad/germany/index\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/taxes/income-taxes-abroad/germany/index_en.htm)

17. Child Benefit:  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/financial-support>
18. Sports at the University of Potsdam:  
[https://buchung.hochschulsport-potsdam.de/angebote/aktueller\\_zeitraum/index.html](https://buchung.hochschulsport-potsdam.de/angebote/aktueller_zeitraum/index.html)
19. Canceling TV and Radio fee  
[https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen\\_und\\_buerger/formulare/abmelden/](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen_und_buerger/formulare/abmelden/)

#### Disclaimer Notice

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