

# Guide for Newcomers

By AEI International Office



Max Planck Institute for  
Gravitational Physics  
(Albert Einstein Institute)

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## Welcome to Albert Einstein Institute!

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

We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunities AEI offers and that your interactions with other members, as well as with the rest of the 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 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:  
1-4 pm Mo, Tue, Thu

Apart from the IO you can get support from Potsdam International Community Center (PICC), located on the third floor of the GO:IN Center. The Institute has a partnership with PICC to provide you with additional help during your stay.

### **Potsdam International Community Center (PICC)**

Am Mühlenberg 11, 14476 Potsdam  
Email: [picc@wisspark.de](mailto:picc@wisspark.de)  
[www.picc-potsdam.com](http://www.picc-potsdam.com)

PICC offers you these support services:

- Finding long-term accommodation
- Language courses for AEI employees
- Additional insurance types, such as personal liability insurance, household insurance, etc.
- International Women's Group (IWG).

## Albert Einstein Institute

Albert Einstein Institute is part of Potsdam-Golm 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

#### *By train*

from Berlin main station

From 9 am to 3 pm:

regional express RE1 (towards Magdeburg) to Potsdam main station

from Potsdam main station:

bus 605, 606, 612, X5 to Wissenschaftspark Golm

regional train RB 20, RB 21, RB 22 to Golm station

From 7 am to 9 am and from 3 pm to 6 pm:

direct connection (RB 21, RB 22, directions Wustermark via Potsdam, Schönefeld via Potsdam) from Berlin Friedrichstraße, Hauptbahnhof, Zoologischer Garten, Charlottenburg, Wannsee to Wissenschaftspark Golm

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

### Service Departments

During your stay at AEI, apart from the International Office, you will get to know the following departments. You can learn more about them by following the links:

[Administration<sup>1</sup>](#)

[IT Department<sup>2</sup>](#)

[Library<sup>3</sup>](#)

### Representative Bodies

#### Equal Opportunities Officer (EOO)

The Equal Opportunities Officer promotes the equal treatment of women and men and tackles gender-related issues at the Institute. This encompasses promoting the elimination of existing, as well as the prevention of future gender-based discrimination. The EOO therefore contributes to all personnel, organizational and social arrangements that are related to the equality of men and women, the reconciliation of work and family life and the protection against sexual harassment in the workplace.

You can join the on-campus International Women's Group or make use of other available [networks and resources<sup>4</sup>](#). Please contact the Equal Opportunities Officer for more information:

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

## Works Council

The works council (*Betriebsrat*) is elected by the staff to represent their interests to the management. By statute, they have certain rights, for example, they approve candidates during the hiring process as well as other aspects, such as salaries.

The works council is additionally available as a contact point, should you experience any problems in the workplace.

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

## Before Arriving in Germany

Once you have found out that you will be joining 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>5</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 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>6</sup> of the Federal Republic of Germany in your country.

### 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 licence
- 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 Germans Tick?](#)”<sup>7</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.

#### What is your status at the Institute?

In order to find out what type of health insurance you can sign up for, it is important to determine your status at AEI.

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

- On a contract of employment (TvöD) or
- On a fellowship/scholarship

If you have an employment contract, you are normally paid in accordance with the Collective Wage Agreement for Government Service Workers (TvöD). In this case, you are liable for tax and social security contributions. Employees are also insured by AEI against accidents at work and occupational health issues.

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 are automatically covered by Max Planck Society (MPS) group accident insurance.

#### 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 and an annual salary that is below the official income threshold (59,400 euros per year as of 2018), you can only take out public health insurance. The costs are usually split equally between the employer and employee. An exception to this is if you have an employment contract and an annual salary that is above that threshold; in this case you can choose between public and private insurance.

The benefits of public health insurance schemes are roughly the same; however, there are differences in customer service, supplementary benefits and optional rates. Family members are co-insured without additional contributions under certain conditions, for instance if they do not have an income. In this case, you can apply for family insurance (“Familienversicherung”).

Public health insurance schemes have a standard contribution rate based on your gross salary. The contribution rates change slightly each year (14,6% of your gross salary as of 2018) and are shared equally by the employer and employee. Public health insurance providers may impose additional fees to the standard contribution rate, for which you are liable to pay yourself. This is referred to as *Zusatzbeitragssatz* in German and is currently at an average of around 1.1%, however this varies among public health insurance providers. The employer’s contribution also includes nursing care, pension and unemployment insurance; the employee’s contribution (50% of the standard contribution rate plus *Zusatzbeitrag*), for which you are liable, is automatically deducted from your salary along with tax.

In general, if you have public insurance, medical bills are sent directly to your insurance company: you don’t have to pay for medical services upfront. There are some exceptions, e.g. fees for prescriptions,

relatively small contributions for medicine, some medical aids and treatments (massages), spectacles and special fillings for dental cavities.

Please make sure you compare what the different public insurance providers offer in terms of health care services suiting your individual needs. Here you can find an [overview](#)<sup>8</sup> of public health insurance providers. In addition you can take out supplementary health insurance, e. g. dental insurance.

- **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 fee 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 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). 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 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 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 services, and therefore 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. Here you can find an [overview](#)<sup>9</sup> of private insurance companies.

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.



## **Step 2. Registration of Residence**

It is important you get registered (“Anmeldung”) at the local Residents’ Registration Office (“Bürgerservicecenter/ Bürgeramt”) **within two weeks** upon your arrival in Germany.

You cannot proceed to the following steps without this registration confirmation from Bürgeramt (“Anmeldungsbestätigung”/“Meldebescheinigung”).

The following documents are required for your appointment:

- Identity card/passport
- Registration form, filled out
- Confirmation of residence from your landlord
- Birth certificate (only in 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 confirmation is usually issued on the same day of the appointment. The IO is happy to take care of your registration in Potsdam. If you need to register in Berlin please contact the IO for more information.

#### Locations:

##### Potsdam

Bürgerservicecenter  
Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 79/81  
14469 Potsdam

##### Berlin

You can register at the local "Bürgeramt" in your Berlin district, or at any other "Bürgeramt" in Berlin. Here you can get an [overview<sup>10</sup>](#) of available appointments in all Berlin areas.

#### Remarks:

After registration and only if you have an employment contract, the local Financial Office will also send you a **tax ID number**. This is a very important number that you should keep safe for your records.

If you change your address, you need to re-register within 14 days at the Residents' Registration Office at your new address. The procedure is the same as with "Anmeldung" if you move to Berlin; in Potsdam, please select "Wohnsitz ummelden" when you book your appointment, otherwise it is the same procedure.

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



### Step 3. Bank Account

If you stay in Germany for a longer period, receive a regular salary/scholarship and have to pay rent, it is advisable 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 and registration confirmation from Step 2.

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 (personal identification number). These are sent separately as an extra security precaution. 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. Germany's major banks include but are not limited to Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank, Postbank, Volksbank and Sparkasse.

Choosing the one for you depends on your expectations and needs. For many, service in English may be a primary concern. Convenience could also be important – does the bank have branches in the vicinity of your flat or are they easily accessible by transit? Does the bank have many ATMs (“Geldautomaten”) around the city?

Start by visiting a bank 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 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 4. Residence Permit**

Citizens from the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) do not need a residence permit. EEA citizens include those from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Citizens from all other countries must apply for a residence permit at the Foreigners’ Office (“Ausländerbehörde“) if the stay in Germany is planned for more than 90 days. This should be done in your city of residence.

##### **Locations**

###### **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, 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.

Contact the International Office for the list of documents you need to prepare for the residence permit application. Depending on your status at the Institute and city of residence the list of the required documents may vary.

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 Foreigners' Office for scientists working at MPis:

→ § 20 AufenthG (German Residence Act)

#### *Residence permit for research*

For scientists with a scholarship and a hosting agreement or an AEI work contract.

→ § 19a AufenthG (German Residence Act)

#### *EU Blue Card*

Issued for highly qualified foreign nationals starting an employment befitting their qualifications. One of the prerequisites for the Blue Card for AEI scientists is a minimum gross income of 3,380 euros per month.

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

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

### General Remarks:

You must apply for your residence permit (including any extensions) well in advance and prior to the expiry date of your visa/within 90 days.

Your city of residence determines which Foreigners' Office you should go to. You will therefore need to book a new appointment if you move from Potsdam to Berlin and vice versa.

### Remarks for Non-EU/EEA Citizens:

You can only start working at 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 and the USA.

Please contact the IO for further assistance.



## Step 5. Forwarding Necessary Documents to the Human Resources (HR) Department

The last step is forwarding all the necessary documents to the AEI Human Resources Department (*Personalabteilung*) who handle all the employment contracts. You can do this by sending an email to [personal@aei.mpg.de](mailto:personal@aei.mpg.de) or handing in the documents to room 1.007 in person.

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

- A copy of your health insurance confirmation
- A copy of your registration confirmation from the Residents' Registration Office
- Tax ID number
- Bank account information
- A copy of your residence permit from the Foreigner's Office

The HR Department or the IO will contact you if any additional documents are needed.

## Living in Potsdam/Berlin

### Finding Accommodation

#### Short-Term Accommodation

##### On-Campus Guesthouse

The secretary 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: [guesthouse@wisspark.de](mailto:guesthouse@wisspark.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.airbnb.de](http://www.airbnb.de)
- [www.homecompany.de](http://www.homecompany.de)
- [www.wunderflats.de](http://www.wunderflats.de)

For short-term accommodation, you are welcome to contact the secretary 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:

- [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 Albert Einstein Institute and Golm train station:

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

If you are enrolled at one of the universities of Studentenwerk Potsdam (e. g. University of Potsdam) you are 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)

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 Potsdam International Community Center for support:

- [picc@wisspark.de](mailto:picc@wisspark.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, make sure the deposit is reasonable - 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 home insurance (*“Hausratversicherung”*) and/or personal liability insurance (*“Haftpflichtversicherung”*), especially in case you are going to rent a furnished apartment.

In general, you should always consult with someone before signing a document in a foreign language. Never sign anything if you do not know what it is for or if you do not understand the contents of the document you are signing!

## 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

**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 17.50 euros per apartment. This fee remains the same regardless of how many people live in the same apartment and/or whether there is any appliances in the apartment.

If you live in the Max Planck Campus guesthouse, these fees are already covered by AEI. If you live with roommates, 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>11</sup>](#). The overview is available in a number of languages. All the necessary forms which can be filled out online, are provided as well. If you need assistance, please contact the International Office.

### **You are liable to pay this fee as soon as you are registered in Germany!**

If you do not register for the fee yourself, ARD ZDF Deutschlandradio will register your apartment for you 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. You can also contact them to arrange the outstanding payment via installments.

## Emergencies, Hospitals and Doctors



If you need urgent medical treatment at night or at the weekend, go to “Notaufnahme” (emergency room) 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 or Potsdam International Community Center ([picc@wisspark.de](mailto:picc@wisspark.de)).

### Hospitals and Doctors:

[Hospitals in Potsdam<sup>12</sup>](#)

[A list of specialized doctors in Potsdam<sup>13</sup>](#)

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

[Specialized doctors in Berlin<sup>15</sup>](#)

### Mental Health Resources:

#### Crisis Intervention:

*Berliner Krisendienst*  
Hotline 030 390 63 00

*Vivantes Krankenhaus am Urban*  
24/7 Emergency Department  
Dieffenbachstraße  
10967 Berlin  
030 130 22 7030

*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)

#### Support groups:

[online.supportgroups.com](http://online.supportgroups.com)

Check out well-being meetups and self-help groups in Berlin or Potsdam:  
[www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

## 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.

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

In all other aspects of family life in Potsdam, including parental and/or child benefits, other kindergartens and enrolling your children in schools, please contact Carolin Schneider at PICC ([schneider@wisspark.de](mailto:schneider@wisspark.de)).

The IO would be glad to help you with any family-related issues in Berlin.

## Sports & Recreation

### At AEI

#### *Bikes:*

The AEI administration offers members and guests at AEI the option of taking out a bike for a certain amount of time, free of charge. If you would like to take out a bike, please head over to room 1.003 to fill out the form and receive your bicycle key and lock. You can also ask for a helmet but please keep in mind to return all items when you return the bike.

#### *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 contact 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>16</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 are two gym locations, one being here in Golm (*goFIT*) and the other close to Potsdam's main train station (*beFIT*). There are different fare options for the fitness clubs, depending on the length of the membership.

#### *Sports 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 AEI, full of growth and professional and personal development!

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

### 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.

### Terminating Contracts in a Timely Fashion

Cancelling 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.*

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. In case you cannot take all your furniture with you when moving, you can use our [Offer and Search<sup>17</sup>](#) service.

You can cancel your TV and radio fee by filling out the [online form<sup>18</sup>](#) or by mail. Contact the International Office for assistance.

### 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.

### 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

## **Return of Your Deposit from Your Landlord**

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.

## **Join 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, you should register with the communication platform of the Max Planck Society:

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

## Links

1. AEI Administration:  
[http://www.aei.mpg.de/32845/15\\_Administration](http://www.aei.mpg.de/32845/15_Administration)
2. AEI IT Department:  
[http://www.aei.mpg.de/33020/01\\_IT\\_Department](http://www.aei.mpg.de/33020/01_IT_Department)
3. AEI Library:  
[http://www.aei.mpg.de/33394/05\\_Library](http://www.aei.mpg.de/33394/05_Library)
4. Equal Opportunities:  
<http://www.aei.mpg.de/equalopportunities>
5. 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)
6. Overview of German Missions abroad:  
<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen>
7. "How Do Germans Tick?"  
<http://www.mpikg.mpg.de/5483753/How-do-Germans-tick---Dez-14.pdf>
8. Overview of public health insurance companies:  
<https://www.check24.de/gesetzliche-krankenversicherung/>
9. Overview of private health insurance companies:  
<https://www.check24.de/private-krankenversicherung/>
10. Registration in Berlin:  
<https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/120686/>
11. TV and Radio Fee:  
<https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/>
12. Hospitals in Potsdam:  
<https://www.potsdam.de/kategorie/krankenhaus>
13. A list of specialized doctors in Potsdam:  
<https://www.potsdam.de/kategorie/aerzte>
14. Hospitals in Berlin:  
<http://www.berliner-krankenhausverzeichnis.de/en/search/>
15. Specialized doctors in Berlin:  
<http://aerzte-berlin.de/>
16. 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)

17. Offer and Search:

<https://portal.campus-golm.mpg.de/offer-search?language=en>

18. Canceling TV and Radio fee

[https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen\\_und\\_buerger/formulare/abmelden/](https://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen_und_buerger/formulare/abmelden/)

## Sources

BerlinOnline Stadtportal: [www.berlin.de](http://www.berlin.de)

Flaticon Graphic Resources [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

Landeshauptstadt Potsdam: [www.potsdam.de](http://www.potsdam.de)

Living and Working in Germany - A Guide for International Scientists at Max Planck Institutes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, January 2014

### Disclaimer Notice

The guide is provided for informational purposes only and represents no legal advice on any subject matter.