



**HELMHOLTZ**  
Centre for Environmental Research



# GUIDELINE

## FOR INTERNATIONAL SCIENTISTS UFZ

## » Content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>The Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Preparing to come to UFZ .....	5
Arrival and Registration at UFZ .....	7
<b>First steps</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Find accommodation .....	8
Registering with local authorities .....	10
Money and bank account .....	11
Health insurance .....	13
Visa and residence permit .....	16
Employment and visitor contracts .....	18
<b>Income tax</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Useful Insurance</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Language courses</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Unemployment</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Language courses</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Families</b> .....	<b>25</b>
UFZ Family Support Office .....	25
Introduction to the german education system .....	26
<b>Mobility</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Useful everyday information</b> .....	<b>33</b>
Communication and media .....	33
Vacations and public holidays in Germany .....	36

## » 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Leipzig, Magdeburg and Halle! We hope that you arrive safely, settle in to your new surroundings quickly and are looking forward to a successful stay in Germany. To help you find your feet quickly, we have compiled this little collection of guidelines which aims to give you an idea of what you can expect in your initial period at UFZ and in your new environment. We try to keep these guidelines as up-to-date as possible, and so we'll be delighted to hear your comments and suggestions, as they mean we can expand or correct the information for future users.

The guidelines contain not only general tips for people coming from abroad to work at or visit UFZ; they are also intended to give some specific information about the cities in which UFZ has sites, namely Leipzig, Magdeburg and Halle. You can find more information about working on UFZ's campuses in the UFZ handbook, which all members of staff can download from the UFZ Intranet.

Please send any comments and suggestions on these guidelines to our contact person at the UFZ **International Office**:



Barbara Timmel  
People & Culture/ International Office  
Building: 1.0/ Room 230a  
Phone: +49(0)341/235 4681  
Email: [international-office@ufz.de](mailto:international-office@ufz.de)

## » 2. The Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ



UFZ Location Leipzig

The Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ was established in 1991 and has more than 1,100 employees in Leipzig, Halle/S. and Magdeburg. They study the complex interactions between humans and the environment in cultivated and damaged landscapes. The scientists develop concepts and processes to help secure the natural foundations of human life for future generations.

The UFZ is one of 18 research institutions within the Hermann von Helmholtz Association, the largest research organization in Germany. The Helmholtz Association contributes to solving major challenges facing society, science and the economy with top scientific achievements in six research areas: Energy, Earth and Environment, Health, Key Technologies, Structure of Matter, Transport and Space.



Link

→ [www.helmholtz.de](http://www.helmholtz.de)

Basic financing of the UFZ is provided by the federal government (90%) and the state of Saxony (10%), while additional funds are derived from other sources (third-party funds). As a Helmholtz Centre we are accountable to both the federal and state government and the German tax payer who expects a high degree of transparency in respect to our activities.

The UFZ is a limited liability company (GmbH). The head office and main research base for the company's operations is in Leipzig. Besides Leipzig, the UFZ scientists carry out their environmental research at the locations at Halle, Magdeburg, Bad Lauchstädt (Experimental fields), and Falkenberg (Lysimeter station).

If you would like to more about the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, please visit our homepage, it contains a lot of useful information for your work at the UFZ and for your daily life:



Link

→ [www.ufz.de](http://www.ufz.de)

Internal information for UFZ employees can be found at the UFZ intranet:



[www.intranet.ufz.de](http://www.intranet.ufz.de)

## » 3. Preparing to come to UFZ



You will receive an official letter from the UFZ Personnel Department giving you the details of your job or your visit. In addition to the confirmation that you have the job, you will find a number of forms that you will need to fill out and sign before you sign your employment contract. If you have any questions about how to fill out these forms, you can ask your contact person in your department, or you can contact the International Office. The bureaucratic hurdles facing citizens from non-EU member states are tougher because they must apply for a visa in advance. Things are easier for EU citizens in this respect, as they enjoy freedom of movement and can live and work in Germany without a special visa.

### Visa requirements!

If you are from a non-EU state, please ask the German Embassy or Consulate in your home country or in your country of residence about what requirements apply for you for taking up employment in Germany.

The German Foreign Office website lists all visa regulations depending on the country of origin and purpose of the visit:



→ [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

All non-Germans require a visa to visit Germany for longer than three months or for gainful employment (i.e. to work). EU citizens, and EEA and Swiss nationals are exempted from this requirement.



### Information

Nationals from certain countries, such as Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America can apply for the necessary residence status (*Aufenthaltstitel*) after arrival in Germany. However, you can only start working after you have received a residence permit (*Aufenthaltsgenehmigung*) from the local aliens authority (*Ausländerbehörde*). This means you need to arrive in Germany at least four weeks before you start work in order to apply for and receive this permit. If your employment here is for three months or less, a special kind of employment and visitor contract can be signed which allows nationals of these countries to work in Germany without a visa. The Federal Foreign Office website lists all the countries whose nationals can enter Germany without a visa.

### Be in time

All other nationals must apply for a visa for an extended stay in Germany before they enter Germany: Visitors must apply to the German representation (embassy, consulate) in their country of residence. For a visa to be granted, permission must be obtained from the aliens authority in the municipality in which the non-German national intends to take up residence. If this permission is required in a visa application, the process can take up to three months – and occasionally longer – as other authorities and agencies (e.g. Federal Employment Agency) may be involved. The Embassy or Consulate can grant the visa only when the foreigners' office has given its consent.



**Attention:**  
**Tourist visa vs.**  
**work visa**

**Important**

A tourist visa cannot be converted into a work visa once you are in Germany. You should therefore make sure that you enter Germany on a so-called Multiple Entry Visa or “D-Visa”. These visas and their related residence permits for Germany also allow you to stay in other Schengen Area states for up to 90 days (within a 180-day period), meaning you can leave and re-enter Germany several times.

Visiting researchers and doctoral candidates who have their own funding are invited to UFZ by their supervisors or heads of department, unlike employed researchers who are invited and hired centrally by the UFZ.

Your host/contact person will be able to help you with all the internal UFZ processes as will the International Office. You should find out what documents you need to bring to Germany with you. These can include translated, certified copies of your degree certificate(s), your birth and marriage certificates etc. It is always better to bring these with you rather than have to have copies and/or translations made at the last moment for a lot of money.

**Important**  
**documents**

Here is a checklist of **important documents**:

- ✓ Passport, which should be valid at least until after the end of your planned stay
- ✓ Visa which matches the purpose of your stay
- ✓ biometric passport photographs (see: [www.biometrisches-passbild.net](http://www.biometrisches-passbild.net), [www.epassportphoto.com](http://www.epassportphoto.com))
- ✓ personal certificates such as marriage or children's birth certificates (if your family is accompanying you), if possible translated into German and certified by a notary
- ✓ Original certificates of degrees and other qualifications, also translated into German and certified by a notary

- ✓ Evidence of health insurance that is also valid in Germany (these will also be required by the German Embassy/Consulate when you apply for a visa)
- ✓ International Certification of Vaccination (a good idea if you will be working in a laboratory or conducting field research)
- ✓ International or national driving licence if you plan to buy or rent a car while you are in Germany
- ✓ Cash to pay for expenses in the first few days (500 EUR for rent, travel costs, residence permit)



### Translation of certificates

#### Important

Certificates and copies of certificates must always be translated into German or English by a sworn translator or be certified as true translations by a notary.

## » 4. Arrival and Registration at UFZ



The UFZ-Welcome Day

Your research host at UFZ will help you with your first phase in Germany. Please arrange for your research host or another member of the working group to pick you up at the airport/station or to meet you at the main entrance of UFZ.

When you have arrived, you should go to the People & Culture where, after you have shown your visa, you will receive your employment contract which is valid for the duration of your visa (usually 90 days). Along with your contract, you will also receive a **UFZ access chip** which you will need to get into the UFZ Campus and use the car-park. You can also put money onto the chip in the UFZ canteen and use it to take advantage of the reduced canteen prices available to members of UFZ staff. You will also receive a **UFZ account** which gives you access to your email account and to the UFZ Intranet. As soon as you have a UFZ email address, the system will automatically send you a **welcome email** which will give you the most important details.

If your employment contract is to be extended beyond the 90-day visa and you are a non-EU national, you will need to get a **residence permit** (*Aufenthaltsgenehmigung*). Please contact the **International Office** which will support your start. The staff will also help find the right insurance for you and will assist you with the other little challenges at your UFZ site.



The UFZ **Family Support Office** (*Familienbüro*) can help you find a kindergarten and/or school for your children if they are planning to join you in Germany, and will help you with any other problems related to relocating your family.

### Registration UFZ-Welcome Day

We also recommend that you participate in the **UFZ-Welcome Day** when you'll have the chance to meet all the other new arrivals at UFZ. The department DEVELOP organises these meet-and-greet events every 3 months to allow everyone to find out more about living and working at UFZ. You will be welcomed, and representatives from the main departments give an overview of research and administration at UFZ. The Welcome Day is conducted in two languages and includes a tour of the UFZ campus.



[www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=44526](http://www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=44526)

## » 5. First steps



When you arrive in the city where you will be working, there are several things that need to be done. To ensure that your employment or visitor contract can cover the whole time you are at UFZ, please pay attention to the following checklist:

- ✓ **Find accommodation**
- ✓ **Register with local authorities**
- ✓ **Open a bank account**
- ✓ **Arrange health insurance**
- ✓ **Obtain residence permit**
- ✓ **Obtain employment contract**

### 5.1 Find accommodation

#### For the first time

It is a bit easier to find accommodation in Leipzig, Magdeburg or Halle compared to cities of a similar size in western Germany as housing is still relatively affordable in this part of Germany.



For the first time of your stay it is recommendable to book a hostel or B&B possibility in the surrounding of the UFZ. Contact the **International Office** and they will send you a template with economic selections of boarding houses.



### Doctoral students

If you have a student identity card, you may be able to rent accommodation in a university students' hall of residence. The fully furnished single or shared apartments are run by the student service, the Studentenwerk, in each Halle. Leipzig and Magdeburg. We recommend that you register via the university website before the beginning of the semester. The universities' own students are given priority, but there may be some accommodation left over and then students from other universities who have a valid student ID card may have the opportunity to find accommodation.

#### Links

- [www.studentenwerk-leipzig.de](http://www.studentenwerk-leipzig.de)
- [www.studentenwerk-halle.de](http://www.studentenwerk-halle.de)
- [www.studentenwerk-magdeburg.de](http://www.studentenwerk-magdeburg.de)



The **International Office website** carries a range of links to accommodation websites. Please contact us if you need assistance!



### Helpful hints when renting accommodation

Most accommodation in Germany is rented unfurnished, though many apartments do include a kitchen or at least basic cooking facilities. Apart from the rent itself, you will have to pay extra charges which usually include heating, water and waste water disposal, waste collection and facility management. These charges generally amount to around 25% of the total rent. If they are included in the rent, it is called Warmmiete, literally "warm rent" (often abbreviated to WM): without the extra charges, the rent is called Kaltmiete, or "cold rent" (KM). The extra charges are Nebenkosten.

Electricity is a separate charge; the tenant chooses a power company and signs a contract with the supplier directly. There are useful links to websites giving information on power companies and comparing prices:

#### Links

- [www.verivox.de/stromanbieter](http://www.verivox.de/stromanbieter)
- [www.stromtip.de/stromanbieter](http://www.stromtip.de/stromanbieter)
- [www.stromanbietervergleich.de](http://www.stromanbietervergleich.de)

### Deposit

If you rent accommodation, you will generally have to provide a deposit amounting to 2 or 3 months' rent when you move in. After you move out, the deposit will be returned to you within 3 months, provided that there is no damage to the accommodation.

The rental period begins when both the landlord (*Vermieter*), and the tenant (*Mieter*) have signed the contract. By signing the contract, both

parties agree to observe its terms, which set out the amount of rent to be paid (*Miethöhe*), the rental term (*Mietdauer*), the number and the size of the rooms that can be used, the utilities, repair costs, who is responsible for decorating, and how notice (*Kündigung*) must be given (usually three months in advance).



### Warning:

Never transfer money before signing the contract or getting to know the landlord.

### Obligations in the rent contract

The rent contract may include special rules for the house, often called the *Hausordnung*. This means that the tenant has to clean (part of) the stairs/hall of the house on a regular basis, and perhaps clear snow from footpaths around the house in winter. Many rental contracts incorporate these into the *Nebenkosten*, and the work is done by a facility manager (*Hausmeister*) or a service company. Most contracts specify that excessive noise should be avoided between 22.00 and 07.00. If you are planning a party that might be a little loud and go on a little late, you should warn your neighbours in advance. If you are planning to have a pet, please check with your landlord that pets are allowed.

More tips and useful addresses regarding changing address/moving home:



Link

→ [www.meldebox.de](http://www.meldebox.de)

## 5.2 Registering with local authorities

The next step after arriving in Leipzig, Halle or Magdeburg is to register your address with the local authorities. The relevant office is called the *Einwohnermeldeamt* or *Bürgerbüro*. These offices can be found throughout the city; the exact addresses and opening times can usually be found on the city's website. To register, you need to show your passport, and the so called "*Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*" - a signed affirmation of your landlord. Sometimes, the official will ask you personally for the details, and sometimes will want to see your rent contract. When you have registered, you will get an income tax number (*Lohnsteuernummer*); if you don't receive it at the *Einwohnermeldeamt/Bürgerbüro*, it will be sent to you by post by the tax authorities (*Finanzamt*) within 4 weeks.

**Tax number to UFZ People & Culture department!**

You need to give your **tax number** to the UFZ People & Culture as it forms the basis for deciding what tax class you fall into. The income tax system in Germany is very complicated, unfortunately, and so it will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 6 of *page 19* below.

**Please keep the proof of registration!**

Whenever you change your address (even within the same city) or move away from the city, you must tell the *Einwohnermeldeamt* in person. When you have registered, you will receive a confirmation that you have registered; you should keep this safe. At the end of your stay you must deregister (Abmeldung) - at the earliest one week before your departure.

Addresses of the main branches of *Bürgerbüro*:

**Leipzig:**

Leipzig Stadthaus  
Otto-Schill-Str. 2 | 04109 Leipzig  
Phone: 0341/ 123-0  
Email: [buengeramt@leipzig.de](mailto:buengeramt@leipzig.de)

→ [Website](#)

**Halle:**

Bürgerservice  
Marktplatz 1 | 06108 Halle/Saale  
Phone: 0345/221-4619, -4646 oder 221-0  
Email: [buergerservice@halle.de](mailto:buergerservice@halle.de)

→ [Website](#)

**Magdeburg:**

Einwohnermeldeamt Magdeburg Mitte  
Leiterstr. 2a | 39104 Magdeburg  
Phone: 0391/540-4359  
Email: [bbm@buengerbuero.magdeburg.de](mailto:bbm@buengerbuero.magdeburg.de)

→ [Website](#)



Links

## 5.3 Money and bank account

If you are planning to stay in Germany for an extended period of time, have a regular income or receive grant payments, it is a good idea to open a giro account at a bank or local savings bank (*Sparkasse*). The services offered by the various banks are generally very similar, but there are some differences, particularly in customer service and bank charges. You should consider what you want from a bank account (online banking, interest rates,



credit card without charges etc) before deciding which bank to approach. To open an account, you will need your passport, visa or residence permit and proof that you have registered your address with the local authorities.

If you are planning to stay in Germany for an extended period of time, have a regular income or receive grant payments, it is a good idea to open a giro account at a bank or local savings bank (*Sparkasse*). The services offered by the various banks are generally very similar, but there are some differences, particularly in customer service and bank charges. You should consider what you want from a bank account (online banking, interest rates, credit card without charges etc) before deciding which bank to approach. To open an account, you will need your passport, visa or residence permit and proof that you have registered your address with the local authorities.

**Giro account**  
**Bank card**  
**ATMs**  
**Bank transfers**

When you have opened your account, the bank will send you a bank card by post and a second letter containing the PIN for it. You can use the card in combination with the PIN to withdraw cash from your account using any cash machine or ATM. You can also view your balance and print out statements at ATMs. These services are provided free of charge as long as you use your bank's own ATMs or an ATM operated by a bank in the same "Cash Group". If you withdraw cash from another bank's machine, you will probably have to pay a charge.

Money transfers to another country can be very expensive, and so, before you come to Germany, it is a good idea to ask your bank at home if it cooperates with any banks here.

You can set up standing orders or direct debits on your giro account to pay your rent, telephone or insurance. The SEPA system was introduced in Germany with effect from February 2014, simplifying international bank transfers. The previous system of bank account number and sort code was replaced with IBAN and BIC numbers.



#### **Opening hours:**

Banks are normally open from Monday-Friday 8:30 am – 4:00 pm  
 ATMS have 24 hours access

#### **Banks with English language services**

Unfortunately there are relatively few banks in Germany which have websites in German and English, or offer customer services in English. The University of Leipzig and Deutsche Bank have a cooperation agreement which

means that students and members of staff at the University of Leipzig do not have to pay bank charges if they have an account at *Deutsche Bank*. The *Deutsche Bank* has an English-language website, as does the *Commerzbank*. The *Sparkasse* and most other banks have a German site only; however, some counter staff in individual branches speak English.

### Alternative banks

There are now alternative banks which specialise in ethical investment and finance, and attract customers who share these ideals. These banks generally support non-profit or ecological projects with the money deposited with them. Some **sustainable banks** include GLS Bank, EthikBank and Triodos Bank.

### EC card/ credit card

You can pay with an EC card in most shops nowadays, but some smaller retailers (such as butchers and bakers) still accept only cash. If you have an EC card or a credit card, you should keep your **PIN** secret and never keep a written note of it anywhere near the card itself (in your purse, wallet etc). If someone steals your card and the number together, they can empty your bank account very quickly.



### Important!

If you lose your card or it is stolen, call the hotline on **116 116** free of charge and have the cards cancelled. If you are outside Germany, call **+49 30 4050 4050**.

## 5.4 Health insurance



Health insurance is required by law in Germany. This is why you must show proof of health insurance when you apply for a visa at the German Embassy in your country of residence. If you plan to stay in Germany for an extended period, it is a good idea to arrange health insurance from a private insurer (if you have a grant/scholarship) or from a statutory insurance fund (if you are employed). If possible, the proof of insurance should be in German; if not, then at least in English. The Embassy and the local aliens authority (*Ausländerbehörde*) will want to see this proof when you apply for a visa or a residence permit. The kind of insurance – whether it is provided by a private company or state insurance fund – depends on the kind employment contract you have and the payment you receive.

If you are a member of a private or statutory fund, you will be given a chip-card containing your personal data which must be shown to the medical practitioner when you need treatment.

### Scholarship holders

As you are not an employee, you will have to take out private health insurance. Please ask the institution providing your scholarship or grant about which insurance providers are recommended or whether agreements are in place with insurance companies. As UFZ is listed as a co-operating institution by the DAAD, you can obtain health insurance via the DAAD. The coverage provided by DAAD is the same as that provided by statutory health insurers and covers interns, doctoral students and visiting researchers for all eventualities from pregnancy through to serious illness. The DAAD scheme also includes personal liability and accident insurance. The insurance currently costs between 50 EUR and 123 EUR per month, depending on whether you are an intern, a student or a researcher.

Private insurers often offer insurance for less than this, but these policies often do not cover pregnancy or serious illness.

If you already require medication for an illness, you should bring your medicine with you from home, as private insurers in Germany will generally refuse to cover existing conditions. You will have to pay for any treatment yourself.

### Examples of private health insurers:

Recommended for scholarship/grant holders visiting UFZ:

→ [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de)

The following link gives an overview of private health insurers and a cost comparison. The same website gives a summary of the German health system:

→ <https://icwb.com/de/private-krankenversicherung>

→ <https://icwb.com/de/inter>

### Members of staff with an employment contract

Members of staff who are employed on a regular contract (i.e. one that includes making contributions to the German social security system) have to sign on with one of the statutory health insurance funds (gesetzliche Krankenkasse). There are several of these to choose from: the amount you have to pay per month varies slightly, but the range of cover they provide is broadly the same. There can be small differences in terms of customer

## Not employees...

## Private health insurers

## Links

## Employees...

services and bonus systems designed to encourage healthy living. If you don't speak any German, it's a good idea to choose a insurer that offers an English-speaking service.

If you earn less than a certain amount per year, you are required by law to choose one of these statutory health insurers. The threshold changes: in 2019 it is 5062,50 Eur monthly gross salary before tax.

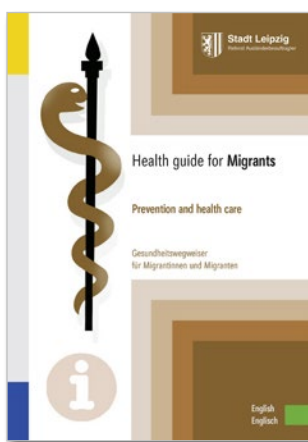
Your insurance contributions (between 8 and 9% of your gross salary) are automatically deducted from your wages every month. If you earn more than the threshold, you can choose between a statutory and private insurer. When you have chosen your insurer and applied to become a member of their scheme, you need to tell your employer (i.e. UFZ) as soon as possible as the employer has to pass on the employee's employment details to the insurer and to other social welfare institutions.



## Links

### Statutory health insurance

- [www.barmer.de](http://www.barmer.de) (Barmer GEK)
- [www.tk.de](http://www.tk.de) (Techniker Krankenkasse, TK)
- [www.aok.de](http://www.aok.de) (AOK - Die Gesundheitskasse)
- [www.dak.de](http://www.dak.de) (DAK-Gesundheit)
- [www.ikk-classic.de](http://www.ikk-classic.de) (IKK classic)



**Leipzig** has a very good guide to healthcare, available in several languages. You can get a free copy from the city's department for migration and integration (*Referat für Migration und Integration*) and from public health offices (*Gesundheitsamt*). You can also download it from the city of Leipzig's website. Aside from a list of physicians and medical practitioners who speak languages other than German, the website also offers general information for migrants and foreign nationals living in Leipzig on how and where to find assistance:

→ [www.leipzig.de/.../health-and-migration](http://www.leipzig.de/.../health-and-migration)

↓ [Download](#)

**Halle** has a page on the official website dedicated to health and health-care: in the city:

→ [www.halle.de/.../FB-Gesundheit](http://www.halle.de/.../FB-Gesundheit)

**Magdeburg** also has a page on its website giving some information about healthcare and health institutions in the city, but this is only in German:

 **Links**

→ [www.magdeburg.de/Gesundheit](http://www.magdeburg.de/Gesundheit)

## 5.5 Visa and residence permit



### Important

UFZ can issue an employment contract only if the potential employee is already in possession of a visa or residence permit (*Aufenthalts-genehmigung*). Most incoming researchers at UFZ apply for a 90-day visa combined with the relevant work permit (*Arbeitsgenehmigung*). This means they can sign a 3-month contract at UFZ to begin with, and it gives them enough time to apply for and be issued with a residence permit. Visitors and researchers with a valid visa for the whole time of their stay do not need to make any other applications to the foreigner's office (*Ausländerbehörde*)

 **Service hotline**

The German government has recently set up a hotline to answer questions on immigration and residence for highly qualified specialists: **49/30/18 15 111**

### The foreigners' office (*Ausländerbehörde*)

Residence permits are issued by the foreigners office authority (*Ausländer-behörde*) in the city where you are registered as resident.

**Dokuments for aliens authority**

### To apply for a residence permit, you will need:

- ✓ The application form, filled out and signed by you.
- ✓ Hosting agreement of UFZ and working contract or guest contract
- ✓ 1 biometric passport photograph
- ✓ Your original passport with visa
- ✓ A copy of your passport and your visa
- ✓ Proof of health insurance
- ✓ Copy of your rental contract
- ✓ For students and PhDs: acceptance letter from the university  
Filled and signed allowance form for the International Office
- ✓ For scholars and PhDs: award letter and proof of immatriculation or acceptance letter by the university



**Additional documents needed for your husband/wife and/or family:**

- ✓ Certified German translation of your marriage certificate
- ✓ Certified German translation of your children’s birth certificate(s)

Please make sure that your contact person/supervisor has informed the UFZ Personnel Department about your employment or visitor status. If you can give the foreigners authority all the documentation it needs, you will receive a preliminary paper about your granted residence permit. The temporary confirmation functions as your residence permit until the electronic card can be made and sent to you (which can take up to 4 weeks). Applications for permits to settle (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*) can take even longer to process as several authorities and offices are involved. **For all these reasons, it is a good idea to apply for a residence permit as early as possible.**

**Different types of residence status**

The aliens’ authority issues different types of permits depending on the kind of occupation, income and purpose of residence in Germany. Below is a summary of the major permit types; a more comprehensive list including conditions and consequences is available in a brochure compiled by the German Rectors’ Conference. It also includes information on work permits for family members and eligibility criteria for family allowance (*Eltern und Kindergeld*):

↓ [www.hrk.de/uploads/media/Synopse\\_final\\_mit\\_BC\\_1.08.12.pdf](http://www.hrk.de/uploads/media/Synopse_final_mit_BC_1.08.12.pdf)

**Summary of residence permits relevant to UFZ**

(References are to the relevant paragraphs in the Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*, abbrev. *AufenthG*))

**Residence permits**

Paragraphs	Residence permits
§ 16 Abs.1 AufenthG	Residency permit for purpose of further education and doctoral qualification (e.g. for our scholarship holders and master students)
§ 16 Abs. 4 AufenthG	Search for employment after completion of studies
§ 18 Abs.3-4: AufenthG	Residency permit for the purpose of economic activity (only given to technical staff/not longer applicable for scientific staff)
§ 19a Abs.1 AufenthG	EU Blue Card (possible above a certain income / advantage: permit to settle is granted faster)
§ 20 Abs.1 AufenthG	Research (suitable for PhDs with a working contract or PostDocs with a working or guest contract at UFZ)
§§ 29 und 30 AufenthG	Subsequent immigration of dependants
§ 9 AufenthG	Settlement permit after 5 years of contributions to social security
§ 19 AufenthG	Settlement permit for highly qualified workers (for senior managers and professors/chairholders/ permit granted immediately)



The **International Office** will help you when you apply for a residency permit and if you have any difficulties. The UFZ International Office has good relations with the foreigners' offices in Leipzig, Halle and Magdeburg and will be happy to make appointments for you and interact between you and the authorities.

### Contact foreigners' offices



### Links

#### Stadt Leipzig | Ordnungsamt

Technisches Rathaus | Bereich AKZESS

Prager Str. 128 (Eingang B1) | 04317 Leipzig

→ <https://english.leipzig.de/.../foreigners-authority>

#### Stadt Halle

Am Stadion 5 | 06122 Halle/Saale

→ [www.halle.de/en/.../Foreign-Citizens-Asylum](http://www.halle.de/en/.../Foreign-Citizens-Asylum)

#### Stadt Magdeburg

Breiter Weg 222 | 39104 Magdeburg

→ [www.magdeburg.de/...](http://www.magdeburg.de/...)

## 5.6 Employment and visitor contracts

The UFZ People & Culture can draw up your employment contract when you show it your visa. As soon as you receive confirmation from the aliens' authority that you have been issued with a residence permit, please send a copy to your contact person in the People & Culture Department.

Your employment contract is written in German and becomes legally binding when you sign it. So that you know what you are signing, you will also receive an English translation: the translation does not have any legal validity.

### Once you have signed the contract, you can start work at UFZ!

In view this, what follows is just a brief explanation of income tax, as this is an important aspect for foreign nationals working in Germany. (Grant and scholarship holders are not liable for tax!)



## » 6. Income tax



### Tax number!

If you are employed in Germany for longer than six months in a calendar year, you are automatically liable for income tax (*Lohnsteuer*) and social security contributions (*Sozialversicherungsbeiträge*). To pay your tax, you need an income tax number (*Lohnsteuernummer*), which you should get from the city authorities (*Bürgerbüro* or *Einwohnermeldeamt*) or directly from the tax authorities (*Finanzamt*). As soon as you have it, please tell the UFZ People & Culture Department.

To make sure that you don't pay taxes in two countries at the same time, Germany has signed so-called double taxation agreements with several countries. The agreements include exceptions that in certain cases exempt people from tax who stay and work in Germany for longer than six months. For more information on paying tax and double taxation agreements, go to the Finance Ministry's website: [www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/...](http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/...)

If you are liable for tax in Germany, UFZ will deduct it directly from your wages and pay it to the tax authorities. The exact amount of tax you have to pay depends on how much you earn, whether you are married and have children and other factors. It is important that you are put into the correct income tax bracket (*Lohnsteuerklasse*).

You can see what your income tax bracket on your payslip, to be found on: Intranet/SAP Fiori Portal/my remuneration slips. The following is intended to give you a rough idea of the tax bracket (*LSK*):

### Overview about income tax brackets in Germany

### Correct income tax bracket?

**Tax bracket 1 is intended for single people.** Divorced employees as well as for married employees whose spouses live abroad or who consistently live separately from their spouses. Widowed employees also belong in tax bracket 1 if their spouse died before 1 January of the previous year. Tax bracket 1 also includes employees with limited liability for income tax or who live in a registered partnership.

**Tax bracket 2 is intended for single people with children.** The employees named under tax bracket 1, if they are entitled to tax relief for single parents. Prerequisite for the granting of this tax relief is that the employee is single and their household includes at least one child, for whom the employee is entitled to a tax exempt amount for children or child benefit.

Employees are required by law to pay taxes in Germany. As it is usually in your financial interest to do so, we strongly recommend that you also fill out an income tax declaration at the end of the calendar year. This is a complex piece of bureaucracy and, as certain financial expenditures can be deducted from your tax burden, it is a good idea to go to an income tax

**Tax bracket 3 is intended for married couples living together, for the partner earning a higher salary.** It applies on request for married employees where both partners live in Germany, do not live in permanent separation and the spouse of the employee does not receive wages or receives wages and is classified in tax bracket 5. Widowed employees belong in tax bracket 3 if the spouse died before 31 December of the previous year, both partners lived in Germany on the day of the death of the spouse and did not live in permanent separation.

**Tax bracket 4 applies for married couples who live together, who earn approximately the same amount.** It applies for married employees, where both spouses are drawing salary, live in Germany and do not live in permanent separation.

**Tax bracket 5 is intended for married couples living together, for the partner earning a low salary.** It is used for the spouse in place of tax bracket 4, if the other spouse, at the request of both partners, is assigned to tax bracket 3.

**Tax bracket 6 applies, in the case of multiple employment relationships, for the employment relationship that generates the lowest earnings.** It is intended for employees who receive wages from multiple employers at the same time, for the retention of wage tax from the second and further employment relationships. Wage tax deduction as per tax bracket 6 should be undertaken by the employer from whom you receive the lower wage (reduced by any allowances).

→ *Source: [www.steuern.sachsen.de/...](http://www.steuern.sachsen.de/)*

**Please note: if you do not provide details of your tax bracket, your employer will automatically take tax bracket 6, the least favourable tax bracket with the highest deductions.** Employees are required by law to pay taxes in Germany. As it is usually in your financial interest to do so, we strongly recommend that you also fill out an income tax declaration at the end of the calendar year. This is a complex piece of bureaucracy and, as certain financial expenditures can be deducted from your tax burden, it is a good idea to go to an income tax advisor.



**Checking:  
church tax...**

**Note on church tax (*Kirchensteuer*):**

When you register your address with the authorities, you will be asked for your affiliation to a religious organisation. You do not have to answer, however. If you say that you are a member of the Catholic or Protestant church (the two major confessions in Germany), a tax will automatically be deducted from your pay and given to that church.

## » 7. Useful Insurance



The range of insurance available in Germany is wide. Some insurance coverage is required by law, but in many other areas it is up to you to decide how much risk you want to bear yourself or whether you want to insure yourself against loss.

The first major differentiation to understand is the one between social insurance (*Sozialversicherung*) and private insurance (*private Versicherung*).

Social insurance (called social security in some countries) is required by law and includes health insurance, pension contributions, unemployment insurance, accident insurance and long-term nursing care insurance. Your contributions to these statutory insurance funds are deducted by UFZ from your pay at source.

There are also private insurance schemes available for many of these areas, particularly health care, pensions and accident and long-term nursing. It is worth considering taking out private insurance in one of these areas as an alternative or even a supplement to the statutory coverage if:

- ✓ You have no statutory coverage (e.g. grant holders), or
- ✓ You would like to have coverage that goes beyond the level offered by the statutory insurance.

Whether you have to make social insurance payments depends on your personal status. If you are conducting your research at UFZ with the framework of an employment contract (i.e. you are employed at UFZ), then you are liable to contribute to social insurance. Grant holders are generally not liable.

### Other insurance available:

Aside from the insurance discussed above, a wide range of coverage is also available from private companies. Whether they are necessary depends entirely on your personal circumstances, and you should consider them carefully. Some examples are:

- ✓ Disability income insurance
- ✓ Personal liability insurance (very strongly recommended!)
- ✓ Household contents insurance
- ✓ Vehicle insurance (required if you want to register a car in Germany)
- ✓ Life insurance
- ✓ Legal costs insurance

More details (only in German) are available from the website of the independent association of insurance policyholders: [www.bdv-service.de](http://www.bdv-service.de)



### Important

With regard to **personal liability**, please be aware: In Germany, everybody is personally liable for any loss or damage he or she causes to other people's property. If parents violate their duty of supervision over their children and the children can be assumed to understand the consequences of their actions, the parents are liable. This is why almost everybody in Germany has a **personal or family liability insurance** which protects them against claims resulting from accidental damage to third party property.

Third-party insurance is also required by law for all vehicles registered for the road. **If you drive a car on the public roads with inadequate or no insurance, it constitutes a criminal act.**

Pet owners are also liable for any damage caused by their pets. This includes, in particular, dogs and horses, and is the reason that most pet owners have a **special animal liability insurance**.

### Checking! already existing insurance

If you **have insurance** in your home country, please check to see whether it covers you while you are in Germany, or if it makes more sense to suspend it and take out insurance in Germany.

## » 8. Unemployment

If you pay contributions to social insurance, you are insured against unemployment. If you do become unemployed, the local office of the employment agency (*Agentur für Arbeit*) is responsible for paying you unemployment benefit and helping you to find a new job.



**Bundesagentur  
für Arbeit**

To be eligible for unemployment benefit, you must have paid social insurance contributions for at least 12 of the last 36 months. The amount of benefit (called *ALG I*) you receive and the length of time that you receive it depends on how much you earned in your previous job and how long you worked there. Furthermore you must have a valid residence permit with a working allowance to get unemployment money. If you are not eligible for unemployment benefit, or if your eligibility expires, as a job-seeker you then receive a payment to cover living expenses (*ALG II*, sometimes called *Hartz IV*). Social welfare payments are available for people who cannot work for reasons such as ill health or disability. If you claim *ALG II* or social welfare payments, this can cause problems with your residency status.

As a rule, the foreigners' office must be informed when employment ends, as this may also have consequences with regard to residency. The unemployed person may be eligible for *ALG I* if he or she has the necessary residency status, has been employed for a sufficient length of time and the employment agency has been informed about the end of the employment contract three months in advance. Information about unemployment benefit is available in English on the employment agency website:

→ [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)

## » 9. Language courses

If you intend to stay in Germany for a longer period of time, the only really effective way of learning about German life and culture is to learn the language.

UFZ offers free **German courses** for employed researchers from outside Germany; please check the education portal in the Intranet for more details:



[www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=45667](http://www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=45667)



If your partner wants to learn German, there are a number of public and private schools that offer courses. *The Goethe-Institut* is one of the best-known language schools, but many countries have other institutes that give you the opportunity to begin learning German before you come, either in classrooms or via distance-learning:

→ [www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)

A cost-effective and very popular alternative to private schools in Germany are *Volkshochschulen*, or evening adult education institutes. They generally offer a wide range of German courses at all levels and usually have integration classes as well, which are essential if you intend to apply for German citizenship.

The universities in Halle, Magdeburg and Leipzig also offer German courses for non-German members of staff, doctoral candidates and students:



- [www.vhs-leipzig.de](http://www.vhs-leipzig.de) (Volkshochschule Leipzig)
- [www.uni-leipzig.de/interdaf](http://www.uni-leipzig.de/interdaf) (Herderinstitut of the Uni Leipzig)
- [www.uni-halle.de/ssc/...](http://www.uni-halle.de/ssc/...) (Universität Halle)
- [www.vhs-halle.de](http://www.vhs-halle.de) (Volkshochschule Halle)
- [www.vhs.magdeburg.de](http://www.vhs.magdeburg.de) (Volkshochschule Magdeburg)
- [www.hs-magdeburg.de/international](http://www.hs-magdeburg.de/international) (Hochschule Magdeburg)

Aside from the *Goethe-Institut*, the following institutions also offer **German courses** via distance learning:

- [www.deutsch-uni.com](http://www.deutsch-uni.com)
- [www.carl-duisberg-german-courses.com](http://www.carl-duisberg-german-courses.com)
- [www.dw.com/de/deutsch-lernen...](http://www.dw.com/de/deutsch-lernen...) (free of charge)

In Leipzig, there is a regular intercultural meeting evening where you can meet speakers of other languages from around the world in an informal atmosphere and try out your language skills. The event takes place every Tuesday in the *Villa* socio-cultural centre:

→ [www.villa-leipzig.de](http://www.villa-leipzig.de)

The foreigners' association (*Auslandsgesellschaft*) organises so-called *Sprachcafés* (language cafes) in Magdeburg:

→ [www.agsa.de](http://www.agsa.de)



## » 10. Families

### Subsequent immigration of dependents

Moving abroad with the whole family is a major challenge. Nonetheless, it is an adventure that can lead to unique experiences and bring unforgettable memories. If you have an employment or visiting contract in Germany which gives you residency status, your husband or wife and your children are also entitled to apply for residency in Germany. This kind of residency permit is governed by § 29 and 32 of the Residence Act: the process is called “subsequent immigration of dependents” (*Familiennachzug*).

If you have a research visa according to § 18d or the Blue Card according to § 18b of the Residence Act, it is generally easier for your family to join you as there is no language requirement, for example. If you enter Germany on another type of visa, it may take a little longer before your family can join you, but it is possible in principle. Check the relevant page on the German Embassy’s or the Foreign Office’s website to find out which documents you need to submit. The UFZ **International Office** will help you apply for residence status when you are in Germany.



There are also questions regarding childcare, balancing your job and your family, and finding the right school. UFZ has a Family Support Office whose members of staff are there to assist you.

### 10.1 UFZ Family Support Office

UFZ has set up a Family Support Office within the People & Culture Department as a central contact point to coordinate enquiries relating to staff members’ families, whether it be for information, advice or support in combining family and work life.

The Family Support Office coordinates the allocation of places in the kindergartens and day care centres that cooperate with UFZ; contact person is Antje Grusa, who will be happy to help you choose the right kindergarten or school for your child(ren) and will help you apply for family allowance.

UFZ has a special “parent&child” office for parents with very young children; if you would like to reserve this office, please contact the Family Office:

You can find out more about the Family Support Office at:



[www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=45178](http://www.intranet.ufz.de/index.php?en=45178)

## 10.2 Introduction to the german education system



It is not compulsory for young children to go to kindergarten or pre-school. However, it is a good idea to put children into a German-speaking environment at an early age, as this is the best way to ensure they will learn German, which is very useful for them if you plan to stay in Germany for a while. There are some multi-lingual establishments (such as the International School in Leipzig or Montessori kindergartens) but these are private institutions and so charge fees. State day care centres (or *Kindertagesstätte*, *KiTa*) also charge fees, but these are much lower as the state pays the lion's share.



### Legal right!

#### Important

**Every child over the age of 3 is entitled to a place in a kindergarten.** This means that the municipality (which is responsible for day care provision) is legally obliged to offer every child between the ages of 3 and 6 registered in that municipality a space in a kindergarten. Children under the age of 3 are entitled to day care if the parents work, are in full-time education, or if it is judged beneficial to the child's welfare that it goes to day care.

Very young children (age 0–3) can go to a crèche (*Kinderkrippe*), which most day care centres have. Older children (3 and above) attend Kindergarten, which offers pre-school education in the final year (age 5–6).

Most children start school when they are 6 years old, 7 at the latest.

#### Day care for very young children

Parents can choose what kind of day care they would like for their young child(ren). Some of the factors worth considering are the distance from home/workplace, opening times and the overall concept of the crèche or day care institution. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of places, and that means long waiting lists. You should register for the crèche of your choice via the kindergarten that it is attached to. If you want your child(ren) to go to one of the centres that cooperate with UFZ, please contact that **Family Support Office** as soon as possible.

One alternative to day care centres are childminders or day nannies (*Tagesmutter* and *Tagesvater*). The childminders usually care for up to 5 children in their own homes, are officially certified and charge a daily rate that is partly subsidised by the municipality.



## Links

### Kindergärten

There are many types of Kindergarten (plural: *Kindergärten*) in Germany: municipal, private, bilingual, international etc. Municipal Kindergärten are generally less expensive than the private ones, but that does not necessarily mean they offer less. The chances of getting a place in the kindergarten of your choice are usually higher in August or September (when the older children move on to elementary school) than they are at the beginning of the calendar year, for example. It is nonetheless a good idea to register your child(ren)'s name with a kindergarten as early as possible. Opening times depend on the type of kindergarten; children can usually be dropped off between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and picked up again between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Meals are provided by a catering service; the kindergarten itself usually organises this.

### Leipzig

- [www.sonnenstrahl.froebel.info](http://www.sonnenstrahl.froebel.info)
- [www.kv-leipzig.de](http://www.kv-leipzig.de)
- [www.meinkitaplatz-leipzig.de](http://www.meinkitaplatz-leipzig.de)
- [www.wiesenknopf-leipzig.de](http://www.wiesenknopf-leipzig.de)
- [www.rockzipfel-leipzig.de](http://www.rockzipfel-leipzig.de)

### Halle

- [www.studentenwerk-halle.de/en/...](http://www.studentenwerk-halle.de/en/...)
- [www.kitas-halle.de/de](http://www.kitas-halle.de/de)
- [www.halle.de/en/Life-Society/The-Nursery-School-System](http://www.halle.de/en/Life-Society/The-Nursery-School-System)
- [www.betreut.de](http://www.betreut.de)

### Magdeburg

- <https://kitaplatz.magdeburg.de/default.aspx>
- [www.magdeburg.de/index.php?NavID=37.572.1&La=](http://www.magdeburg.de/index.php?NavID=37.572.1&La=)
- [www.betreut.de/tagesmutter-magdeburg](http://www.betreut.de/tagesmutter-magdeburg)

### Schools

All children and minors in Germany are required by law to attend school, regardless of their residence status. It is in this context that German language skills play a particularly important role.

Each state (*Bundesland*) in Germany has control over its own schooling system, and so there are some variations between the types of school and curriculum. In Saxony, for example, German as a Second Language (*Deutsch als Zweitsprache, DaZ*) has been incorporated into the timetable in schools and is taught by specially qualified teachers. Some elementary and secondary schools also have specialised preparatory classes in German.

Almost all large cities have bi-lingual schools as well. Please contact the education authorities (*Bildungsagentur/Landesschulamt*) in your state to find out more about the different types of school and how to register.

The official websites of Halle, Magdeburg and Leipzig also have pages on the school system:

**Bildungsagentur Sachsen:**

→ [www.lasub.smk.sachsen.de/...](http://www.lasub.smk.sachsen.de/...)

**Landesschulamt Sachsen-Anhalt:**

→ [www.landesschulamt.sachsen-anhalt.de/...](http://www.landesschulamt.sachsen-anhalt.de/...)

 **Links**

**Infos für ausländische Familien in Leipzig:**

→ <https://english.leipzig.de/youth-family-and-community>

**Infos für ausländische Familien in Halle:**

→ [www.halle.de/en/Life-Society/The-School-System](http://www.halle.de/en/Life-Society/The-School-System)

**Infos für ausländische Familien in Magdeburg:**

→ [www.magdeburg.de/Start/.../Integrationsportal](http://www.magdeburg.de/Start/.../Integrationsportal)

Further information on how to apply for children´s benefit (*Kindergeld*) or how to apply for a kindergarten place, you can get on the webpage of the network “Welcome to Leipzig”:

→ [www.welocme-to-leipzig.de](http://www.welocme-to-leipzig.de)

If you have difficulty understanding this information or need help choosing the right school for your child(ren), please contact the **Family Support Office** ([familysupport-office@ufz.de](mailto:familysupport-office@ufz.de)) at UFZ.

## » 11. Mobility



Germany is the home of the Autobahn and fast transport. The challenge is not so much in getting quickly from A to B, but in making sense of the complex interchanges and self-service ticket machines.

There follows a short introduction to:

- ✓ **Cars and driving licences**
- ✓ **Car sharing / Bike sharing**
- ✓ **Local public transport**
- ✓ **Long-distance buses**
- ✓ **Intercity trains**
- ✓ **Flying**

### Cars and driving licences

Driving licences obtained in another EU member state are valid in Germany without restrictions. If you obtained your driving licence outside the EU, you will need to exchange it for a German licence if you stay in Germany for longer than 6 months (and plan to drive). The driver licensing authority (*Führerscheinstelle*) of your local authority (*Ordnungsamt*) is responsible for issuing licences:

### Driving licence

#### Leipzig/ Technisches Rathaus

Prager Straße 118 -136 | 04317 Leipzig

Phone: 0341 123-8562

Email: [fahrerlaubnis@leipzig.de](mailto:fahrerlaubnis@leipzig.de)

→ [www.leipzig.de/buergerservice...](http://www.leipzig.de/buergerservice...)

### Links

#### Halle/ Team Fahrerlaubnisbehörde

Am Stadion 6 | 06122 Halle (Saale)

Phone: 0345 221-1399

→ [www.halle.de/de/verwaltung...](http://www.halle.de/de/verwaltung...)

#### Magdeburg/ Fahrerlaubnisbehörde Magdeburg

Tessenowstraße 15 | 39114 Magdeburg

Phone: 0391 540-4407

Email: [strassenverkehrsabteilung@magdeburg.de](mailto:strassenverkehrsabteilung@magdeburg.de)

→ [www.meldebox.de/umzug-magdeburg/fuehrerscheinstelle/...](http://www.meldebox.de/umzug-magdeburg/fuehrerscheinstelle/...)



### Important traffic rules!

Processing your new licence can take up to **6 weeks**, so planning ahead is necessary.

#### The following general rules apply for driving in Germany:

- ✓ You must have your driving licence and the car registration papers with you when you are driving
- ✓ The driver and all passengers must wear seatbelts
- ✓ Children up to the age of 12 or smaller than 1.50 tall must be seated in special child's seat
- ✓ Mobile phone calls must be made and received using a hands-free system
- ✓ The drink-drive limit is 0.5 per mille. As alcohol affects different people differently depending on size, weight, metabolism etc, it is generally safer not to drink any alcohol at all if you are going to be driving.
- ✓ The following must always be in the car: first aid kit, hazard triangle and a high-visibility vest.

Freezing temperatures and the likelihood of snow and ice mean that winter tyres are essential in the colder months. If you plan to drive in mountainous in winters, snow chains may be a good idea.



### Links

#### More information:

→ [www.stvo.de/strassenverkehrsordnung](http://www.stvo.de/strassenverkehrsordnung)

#### German automobil club:

→ [www.adac.de](http://www.adac.de)

#### Car sharing / bike sharing

Owning and running a car in Germany is expensive, and so it may be worth thinking about joining a car-sharing scheme. There are several, but one that can be recommended for UFZ researchers at all three sites is TeilAuto. If you need a car for your job (e.g. to conduct research in the field), you should ask your line manager for approval.

UFZ researchers enjoy special conditions with *TeilAuto* if they use the scheme outside work, paying less than for purely private car sharing.

There are also a number of websites (*Mitfahrzentrale*) that allow you to look for a ride in someone else's car, or to offer rides in your car. This is currently the cheapest way of getting around and is safer than hitchhiking. Some of the websites charge a fee for their services:

→ [www.blablacar.de](http://www.blablacar.de)



**Bicycles** can be rented according to a principle similar to car sharing, for instance from Nextbike. You rent a bike at point A and can then leave it at point B at another the company's facilities. For more information, go to:

→ [www.nextbike.de](http://www.nextbike.de)



### Local public transport

The local public transport system is very comprehensive and incorporates **busses, trams, underground trains (U-Bahn)** and **local trains (S-Bahn)**. You can buy tickets from the operator's service points, and from machines at the stops/stations and inside the bus, tram or train.

If you use public transport regularly, it is worth considering buying weekly or monthly tickets as these work out cheaper than buying individual tickets for each journey. If you are a student or doctoral candidate at one of the universities in Leipzig, Halle or Magdeburg, you can get a *Semesterticket* which gives you free travel on local public transport. The student welfare organisation (*Studentenwerk*) can give you more information.

### Here you find information on timetables and ticket prices:

→ [www.l.de/verkehrsbetriebe](http://www.l.de/verkehrsbetriebe) (Leipzig)

→ [www.havag.com](http://www.havag.com) (Halle)

→ [www.mvbnet.de](http://www.mvbnet.de) (Magdeburg)

Leipzig's *City-Tunnel* was completed at the beginning of 2014, and since then the major stations in the city have been linked by quick and frequent train service. The *S-Bahn* also links the city centre with other towns in the region and, as bicycles travel for free, it constitutes an excellent way of exploring beyond the city's boundaries.



### Long-distance buses

Since the market was liberalised in 2013, more and more bus companies have been offering cut-price alternatives to intercity trains. The bus services generally serve only the larger cities and are often slower than trains, but nonetheless they offer a viable alternative to travellers who need to be careful with money but still want to travel safely. Prices and timetables are available online. Bicycles can also be carried.

→ [www.flixbus.de](http://www.flixbus.de)

→ [www.busliniensuche.de/busunternehmen...](http://www.busliniensuche.de/busunternehmen...)

The website [www.busradar.com](http://www.busradar.com) offers a comparison of the various regional connections.



### Intercity trains

The quickest and most convenient method of travelling around Germany is by train. The trains are generally on time and offer connections even to fairly small towns and villages within a few hours. *Intercity* and *Eurocity* trains are fast and relatively expensive, while regional trains (e.g. *Regio*) are cheaper but slower.

Money can be saved if you purchase a Bahncard (various types available) or travel at weekends on a *Quer durchs Land Ticket* or within the same state on a *Länderticket*. You can also save money by booking your tickets early.

If you decide to purchase a Bahncard, please aware that the contract is automatically renewed after 1 year unless you give due notice in writing. The *Deutsche Bahn* price system changes frequently, so it is advisable to look at the *Deutsche Bahn* website [www.bahn.com](http://www.bahn.com) in advance of any journey. Much of the information is also available in languages other than German.



### Flying

**Leipzig-Halle airport** has expanded in the last few years to become a gateway for international passengers and freight. The airport itself is close to the junction of the A9 and A14 autobahns and offers flights to major cities in Europe (often with low-cost airlines such as Ryan Air and AirBerlin.)

The S-Bahn takes you to Halle or Leipzig in about 15 minutes; a regular service takes you from there on to Magdeburg. More information on airlines and flight schedules can be found at:

→ [www.leipzig-halle-airport.de](http://www.leipzig-halle-airport.de)

### Taxi

Taxis can be used for journeys in every city and large or medium-sized town in Germany. There are usually several taxi companies, each with their own phone number.

Taxis are almost always available at major locations in the city such as stations, hospitals, large churches and market squares, and empty taxis can be hailed on major streets. The fare consists of a basic rate plus a fee for every kilometre driven. A higher rate applies from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. A taxameter inside the taxi shows the fare as you drive.



### Taxi phone number

→ [www.gelbeseiten.de](http://www.gelbeseiten.de)



## » 12. Useful everyday information



The websites of Magdeburg, Halle and Leipzig offer a good overview of things to do and places to go in the city and the surroundings. The sections on tourism, leisure, culture and international life in particular are in English and often in other languages:

- [www.leipzig.de](http://www.leipzig.de)
- [www.halle.de](http://www.halle.de)
- [www.magdeburg.de](http://www.magdeburg.de)

Here are a few more tips on important aspects of daily life in a city in Germany.

### 12.1 Communication and media

#### Telephone

Deutsche Telekom ([www.telekom.de](http://www.telekom.de)) is the largest provider on the extremely crowded telephone market. A good overview of the various providers can be found at

- [www.call-magazin.de/Telefonanbieter](http://www.call-magazin.de/Telefonanbieter)

Aside from contracts with flat rates for mobile phones and smart phones, pre-paid or pay-as-you-go deals are available online, in kiosks and in supermarkets.

Despite the ubiquity of mobile and smart phones, call boxes can still be found which accept cash or cards. You can buy telephone cards at post offices, fuel stations, tobacconists and newsagents. Public payphones can be used to call abroad as the call charges are deducted directly from the card.

An overview of call charges inside Germany and abroad can be found at:

- [www.telefontarifrechner.de/auslandstarife](http://www.telefontarifrechner.de/auslandstarife)

International country codes and services offering cheap international calling rates can be found here:

- [www.auslandsvorwahlen.net](http://www.auslandsvorwahlen.net)



### Post

Letters and packages can be sent with *Deutsche Post* or with other smaller service providers such as:

→ [www.deutschepost.de](http://www.deutschepost.de)

→ [www.hermespaketshop.de](http://www.hermespaketshop.de)

Many large post offices have been closed down in recent years to save money, with the result that post offices are now often quite small: look for the yellow sign with a black posthorn, the same logo as on post boxes.

### Important telephone numbers



#### Emergency calls:

Polizei: 110

Feuerwehr/Katastrophen: 112

#### Information of *Deutsche Telekom*

National: 11833

International: 11834

International (in English): 11837

Telephone directories list the numbers of private persons and public institutions:

→ [www.dasoertliche.de](http://www.dasoertliche.de)

The “Gelbe Seiten” contains numbers of companies, service providers, shops, doctors and restaurants:

→ [www.gelbeseiten.de](http://www.gelbeseiten.de)

### Radio and TV licence

If you have a radio, a computer or a TV in Germany, you have to pay a monthly fee to the *Gebühreneinzugszentrale*, or *GEZ* for short. You should register by downloading the necessary forms from the website:

→ [www.rundfunkbeitrag.de](http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de)

### Monthly license fee!

However, note that the fee must be paid only once for each residence: this means that if you live in shared accommodation, you might not have to register yourself – your flatmate might have already done it. You should check to see if the cost is included in your rent.



### Books and libraries

UFZ has an excellently stocked library with branches at all the UFZ sites. Specialised literature from every field of environmental research and a large number of specialised journals can be ordered from the catalogue, and rare or difficult-to-obtain literature can be sourced from other libraries or purchased for the UFZ collection. For more details, visit the library's own online pages:

 [www.ufz.de/index.php?en=34270](http://www.ufz.de/index.php?en=34270)

As there are universities and other higher education institutes in each of the 3 cities where UFZ has a site, the range of libraries available to UFZ researchers is wide. The cities' websites and the "Gelbe Seiten" list the addresses and opening times. Not to be forgotten is the German National Library (*Deutsche Nationalbibliothek*) in Leipzig. Together with its sister site in Frankfurt, the "DB" is the largest reference library in Germany, housing at least one copy of everything that is published in Germany. The library also offers guided tours, which are highly recommended:

→ [www.dnb.de](http://www.dnb.de)

The largest library of environmental literature in Germany is housed at UBA, the federal environmental protection agency in Dessau in Saxony-Anhalt. The library is both a reference and a lending library. The HIGRADE graduate school at UFZ organises an excursion to UBA every year for doctoral candidates:

→ [www.umweltbundesamt.de/.../...environmental-library](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/.../...environmental-library)

### Newspapers/magazines/journal

Regional, national and international newspapers and magazines are available in all three UFZ sites. You can either have them delivered to your home or you can buy them in specialised newsagents (usually at the station or in kiosks). Regional newspapers in UFZ's three sites include:

→ [www.lvz-online.de](http://www.lvz-online.de) (*LVZ - Leipziger Volkszeitung*)

→ [www.mz-web.de](http://www.mz-web.de) (*MZ - Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*)

→ [www.volksstimme.de](http://www.volksstimme.de) (*Magdeburger Volksstimme*)



Links



### Culture

Local event and listings magazines give a good overview of upcoming cultural highlights and offer tips about where to go:

#### Leipzig:

- [www.kreuzer-leipzig.de](http://www.kreuzer-leipzig.de)
- [www.zeitpunkt-kulturmagazin.de](http://www.zeitpunkt-kulturmagazin.de)
- [www.prinz.de/leipzig](http://www.prinz.de/leipzig)

#### Halle:

- [www.kulturfolger.de](http://www.kulturfolger.de)
- [www.halle365.de](http://www.halle365.de)
- [www.hallespektrum.de](http://www.hallespektrum.de)

#### Magdeburg:

- [www.dates.md.de](http://www.dates.md.de)
- [www.urbanite.net/de/magdeburg](http://www.urbanite.net/de/magdeburg)
- [www.prinz.de/magdeburg](http://www.prinz.de/magdeburg)
- [www.ottokar.info](http://www.ottokar.info) (Family events)



## 12.2 Vacations and public holidays in Germany

The dates of school vacations vary from state to state; this has the advantage that not everyone hits the road at the same time, reducing the pressure on the transport infrastructure.

The dates of the school holidays for the next couple of years in every state can be found here:

- [www.schulferien.org](http://www.schulferien.org)

There are also nationwide public holidays when shops and public institutions are either closed all day or open only part of the day. Holidays and Observances in Germany can be found here:

- [www.timeanddate.com/holidays/germany/](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/germany/)



## Imprint

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### Editor

Barbara Timmel / People & Culture Department / International Office

### Layout

Susan Walter-Pantzer / Public Relations Department

### Picture

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