

Welcome Package

Prepared by the Working Group Welcome Package

[en] As the Leibniz PhD Network we welcome you to the Leibniz Association and hope you enjoy your time at your institute. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask the PhD representatives at your institute or the Leibniz PhD Network. Good luck with your PhD!

[de] Als das Leibniz PhD Network heißen wir dich herzlich willkommen in der Leibniz Gemeinschaft und wünschen dir viel Spaß an deinem Institut. Falls du Fragen hast, kannst du dich immer gerne an die PhD representatives deines Institutes oder das Leibniz PhD Network wenden. Viel Glück mit deiner Promotion!

[dsb] Jako Leibniz PhD Network witamy tebje wutšobnje w zjadnośeństwje Leibniz a życymy wjele wjasela na twojim instituśe. Gaž maś pšašanja, móżoš se pśecej wobrošiś do PhD-ego zastupnika na twojim instituśe albo do Leibniz PhD network. Wjele gluku z promociju!

[es] Como el Leibniz PhD Network, te damos la bienvenida a la Asociación Leibniz y esperamos que disfrutes tu tiempo en tu instituto. Si tienes alguna pregunta, no dudes en consultar con los PhD representatives de tu instituto o con el Leibniz PhD Network. Suerte con tu doctorado!

[fr] Au nom du Leibniz PhD Network, nous te souhaitons la bienvenue au sein de l'Association Leibniz et espérons que tu passeras un agréable moment dans ton institut. Si tu as des questions, n'hésite pas à contacter les représentants des doctorants de ton institut ou le Leibniz PhD Network. Bonne chance pour ton doctorat!

[nl] Als Leibniz PhD Network heten we je hartelijk welkom in de Leibniz Gemeenschap en wensen je veel plezier in je nieuwe instituut. Bij vragen kun je gerust terecht bij de PhD representatives van jouw instituut of natuurlijk het Leibniz PhD Network zelf. Veel succes met je promotie!

[zh] 跨过大山大河,穿过人山人海,不知道您有没有到达您心目中的远方,但这一定是一场诗意的相逢。欢迎您加入莱布尼茨协会,祝您诗酒年华,阳光灿烂;愿您以梦为马,勇攀高峰!期待与您在 Leibniz PhD network 中相遇,与我们保持联系,祝您成功!

[pt] Em nome da Leibniz PhD Network, damos boas-vindas a você à Associação Leibniz, e esperamos que desfrute o período em seu instituto. Se tiver alguma pergunta, não hesite em consultar os representantes dos doutorandos do seu instituto ou a Leibniz PhD Network. Sucesso no seu doutorado!

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Welcome to the Leibniz Association!

We hope that you will have a pleasant journey as a doctoral researcher in terms of academic and personal life. This Welcome Package aims to help you making that journey smoother. It is a guide, a list of suggested steps to go through before (and during) a doctoral research at a Leibniz institute or research museum. Whether you are already familiar with Germany or just newly arriving, you will find tips and contacts to help you settle in your new environment.

The Leibniz Association consists of 96 institutes and research museums which are divided into 5 sections and located throughout Germany.

Section A

(23 institutes) Humanities and Educational Research

Section B

(18 institutes)
Economics, Social and Spatial Sciences

Section C

(24 institutes) Life Sciences - Biodiversity & Health

Section D

(23 institutes)
Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Engineering

Section E

(9 institutes)
Environmental Research



Getting familiar with the Leibniz PhD Network

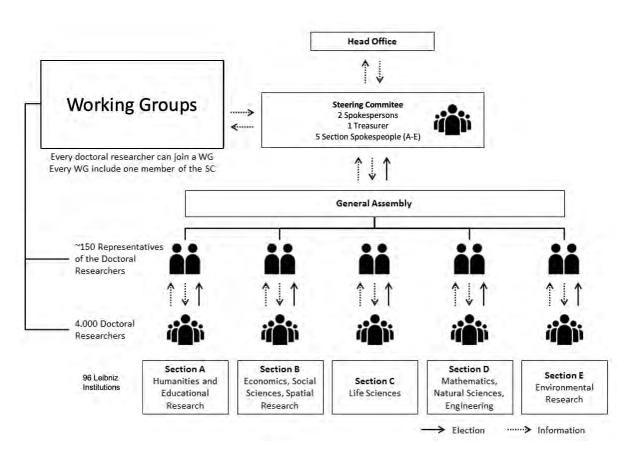


The doctoral representatives at the 2019 General Assembly in Potsdam.

The Leibniz PhD Network represents around 4,000 doctoral researchers from all Leibniz institutes. The network has a bottom-up structure (see organigram on page 4). In the annual General Assembly, two spokespeople, a treasurer, and five section spokespeople are elected to coordinate and represent the network. However, a substantial part of the work takes place in the working groups, in which all doctoral researchers are welcome to participate. The network aims to improve working conditions, provide a forum for discussion and get involved in general policy making for doctoral researchers.

Reach out to the doctoral representative and/or the doctoral program coordinator of your institute to learn more about the network and how to get in touch.

For further details on ongoing work and possibilities of participation, visit https://leibniz-phd.net/.



Organigram of the Leibniz PhD Network. Elected doctoral representatives from their respective institutes come together once a year at the Generally Assembly, where the steering committee is elected.

The Leibniz PhD Network is a founding member of N^2 , the Network of Networks, together with the Max Planck PhDnet and the Helmholtz Juniors. N^2 unites more than 15,000 doctoral researchers of Germany's non-university research organizations to discuss the future of science to gain political weight when working to improve the situation of the doctoral researchers. You can find more information about N^2 at: http://n2-network.net/.

Before leaving home

It is important to start getting familiar with some aspects of German bureaucracy and culture before coming to Germany. We have compiled a couple of important points for you to take into consideration:

Visa

Apply for a visa as soon as possible. Application should be done at the German Embassy in your country. Please check the list of documents required for a student visa application with your local German Embassy.

<u>Important:</u> At the embassy, make sure to request certified copies of your undergrad degree, master's degree and maybe even birth certificate. It is also helpful to translate them into English if you do not have an international version.

Non-EU researchers will likely be required to have a provisory health insurance in order to obtain a visa. In many cases, you will also be asked to register for permanent health insurance in Germany within 90 days after getting the visa. More on health insurance can be found on page 8.

Accommodation

Some Leibniz institutes have guest houses or rooms that are available for rent over the initial months. Also asking colleagues via your institute's mailing list can help finding short-term accommodation. Airbnb is usually not the most affordable option for short-term rental in Germany, but students often rent out their own rooms when they travel or leave during the holidays on local Facebook pages (e.g. 'WG & Wohnung + *your city* + gesucht'). Otherwise, you can use the following searching engines to look for accommodation:

- https://www.immobilienscout24.de
- https://www.wq-gesucht.de
- https://www.immowelt.de
- https://www.ebay-kleinanzeigen.de

To rent an apartment you will usually have to provide:

- 1. An income proof, usually in the form of an Einkommensnachweis or a Bürgschaft
- 2. A Schufa, a financial solvency certificate
- 3. A Mietschuldenfreiheitsbestätigung

Schufa

Schufa is a private company which collects debt data. If this company has no negative information on you, they will provide a positive statement. For more info, see: https://www.meineschufa.de/downloads/SCHUFA Infoblatt-BA-Antrag-englisch.pdf

Einkommensnachweis

This is a monthly income statement. You can print it out directly from your bank's webpage. In case you have not been paid yet, a copy of your working contract usually works fine. Talking to your landlord and explaining that you are about to start your "Doktor" position might help convince them to wait a little bit for your Einkommensnachweis.

Bürgschaft

This is a bail certificate signed by someone with steady income (e.g. your parents) committing to cover your rent in case you are unable to do so.

Mietschuldenfreiheitsbestätigung

This is a document proving that you are without outstanding rent debt. Before moving out of your previous flat, prepare a letter stating that you paid every monthly rent and have it signed by your landlord.

Getting started in Germany

Here are a couple of useful guides on studying in Germany:

- http://www.unigoettingen.de/downloads/FlippingBook/webr2017/HTML/files/assets/basichtml/index.html#1
- https://www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/nachdeutschland/publikationen/sid en 2016 barrierefrei.pdf
- https://www.studying-in-germany.org/

Arriving in Germany

Upon arriving in Germany, you will need to follow some common steps, such as:

Registration

Once you found a permanent residence, you **must** register your arrival in Germany at the registration office (*Bürgeramt* or *Einwohnermeldeamt*) in your city or district. After registering, you will obtain your *Anmeldebestätigung* or *Meldebescheinigung*. This document is needed for many official procedures in Germany (e.g. opening a bank account or getting visa extension).

That is why it is important that you do register as soon as possible, usually within 14 days after your arrival. Please note that there might be fees if you wait too long. In most cities, you can make an online appointment on the city's homepage. Appointments can also be made on the spot, but registration offices are usually busy places, so they do come with quite some waiting time. Keep in mind that if you move to another flat, you also have to update your registration at the registration office.

Check with your local registration office what documents are required for the registration, since the exact list may vary, but you will generally need:

- your passport;
- your rental contract;
- a signed confirmation from your landlord that you are renting your flat (<u>Wohnungsgeberbestätigung</u>)

When you are at the *Bürgeramt/Einwohnermeldeamt* make sure to ask what discounts or advantages your city offers to new residents. Free museum tickets, coupons for restaurants, or even welcome money. Also, do not forget to mention that you are a student, because that may include additional benefits!

General support for foreigners

Some cities offer a program called 'Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer' (MBE). This counselling for adult foreigners might help you with getting a long-term visa or finding a place to live. Searching the web for 'MBE + your city' should quickly give you the link to your specific MBE and how to get in touch with them.

Opening a bank account

There are several banks you can register; all of them will ask you for your residence confirmation document (*Meldebescheinigung*), which you receive from the registration office. Common choices are:

- Sparkasse: public bank with many ATMs
- Volksbank: cooperative Bank, also with many ATMs
- Postbank
- Commerzbank
- **DKB**: online bank with good conditions, but they are a bit more restrictive in opening bank accounts. It is one of the few banks in GER that offers free international cash withdrawal.
- Online Banks like N26

Don't forget to ask your bank about cash withdrawal conditions abroad (for credit cards as well). They are often costly.

You can compare what different banks offer here (in German): https://www.check24.de

Getting a SIM-Card

You can buy a SIM-Card directly from telecommunication providers (e.g. O_2 and Vodafone) or in a supermarket (e.g. REWE or Aldi). If you intend to stay for a short-term, you may buy a prepaid card. Do not forget to bring your passport to buy it. You might also be requested to show a residence registration document (e.g. *Anmeldung*).

You can compare different options for phone contracts/sim cards here (in German): https://www.verivox.de

Health Insurance

In Germany, health insurance companies usually do not offer student discount for doctoral researchers. You can choose between statutory insurance (*Kassenversicherung*, i.e. TK and AOK) and private insurance (*Privatversicherung*. i.e. MAWISTA Science and Continentale). Private insurance may be cheaper on the short term but be aware that fees increase as you age. The first option is the most common one among German citizens and people who plan to stay for a long time.

Keep in mind that if you are hired directly by a Leibniz institute you will be asked to which health insurance you are registered, since your institute covers half of the fees. The second

half will automatically be subtracted from your gross salary. If you are a stipend holder and you need to cover health insurance on your own, know that **some organizations will provide extra health insurance money** upon request.

You can compare health insurance providers here (in German): https://www.check24.de/gesetzliche-krankenversicherung/

Note: To prepare your work contract, the institute will ask you to provide a social security number (*Sozialversicherungsnummer*). If it is your first job in Germany and you chose a statutory insurance, they will provide you with this number. If you chose a private insurance, you have to apply to get this number from the *Deutsche Rentenversicherung*.

Extend your visa by applying for a residence permit

Usually, within 90 days of arrival in Germany, you are required to obtain permission from the German Federal Government to remain and work in Germany for a longer period of time. This permission is known as *Aufenthaltstitel*. To get one, you need to make an appointment with the *Ausländerbehörde* in your city. Since there can be long waiting lists for appointments, contact the *Ausländerbehörde* in your city as soon as possible.

The documents needed depend on the specific visa you are applying for, but generally include:

- Passport;
- Anmeldung;
- Work contract:
- Rental contract;
- A biometric photograph of correct size;
- A proof of health insurance, or Mitgliedsbescheinigung;
 The Mitgliedsbescheinigung is not simply the health insurance card but a formal letter from the insurance company stating that you are a member. You can ask your health insurance provider to send you this document.
- Paying a **fee** (credit cards are usually not accepted).

Driving License

Your driving license might not be valid in Germany. For more information of this topic: https://handbookgermany.de/en/live/driving-licence.html

Enrolment at a University

In the German academic system, there are two different kinds of research institutions: universities and non-university research institutions. The 96 Leibniz institutes and research museums belong to these non-university research institutions. However, only universities and some universities of applied science have the formal right to award a doctoral degree. That is why your institute and the local university usually cooperate very closely.

To obtain your degree, you need to enroll at the university. Depending on your doctorate supervision agreement (If you have one – this is something like a contract which aims at defining your relation to your supervisor.) specific terms might apply that you have to keep in mind regarding partner universities, minimum semesters of enrolment supervision. Make sure to carefully read the rules of your supervision agreement and/or university department and don't hesitate to ask your supervisor, if you have open questions. Supervisors in Germany usually do appreciate this.

An enrolment as doctoral researcher might come with some benefits like free sports courses, museum ticket discounts or soft-skill training lessons. Ask your doctoral representatives or the coordinator of your doctoral program for more information on that topic.

Important contacts

If you are facing issues in your work environment, there are different people you can get in touch with at your institute.

Ombudsperson:

The ombudsperson (or mediator) of your institute can advise you and help you solving conflicts with coworkers or your supervisor. There might also be a contact person (ROI) for scientific misconduct. <u>Here</u> is a list of the ombudspersons of all institutes at the Leibniz Association. The Leibniz Association also has an <u>ombuds committee</u>.

Equal opportunities representatives:

They enforce equal opportunities and chances for all genders, minorities, and for disabled people at all levels of employments and career. In experiences of inequality, discrimination and sexual harassment at work, these representatives can and should be contacted.

Work and family balance:

These people provide support for childcare and other family-related issues. Not every institute has a person in charge of this topic.

PhD Coordinator

Your institute might have a PhD coordinator who oversees many aspects of your PhD program. This person can help you with question regarding the PhD agreement or initial steps at your institute.

Doctoral representatives:

The tasks of the doctoral representatives are to offer opportunities to optimize the working environment for doctoral researchers and to improve information exchange between the various Leibniz institutes.

Working councils:

This council is elected by employees of your institute to represent their interests and ensure compliance with the Works Constitution Act. The members offer their help for fixing problems regarding your working conditions or contractual issues and confidentially handle your requests.

Your institute has an **IT department** that helps you solving computer-related issues. The **facility manager** of your workplace is also there for any kind of technical assistance (changing a lightbulb, getting furniture, etc.).

Important documents

After starting at your institute, you will receive some very important documents that you should keep. These include your payroll, health insurance documents, pension fund records and social security number. Here is a list of the documents and what you need them for:

- Arbeitsvertrag (Employment contract)
- Sozialversicherungsnachweis (Social security card)
- Lohnsteuerkarte (Income tax card) this is now digital; you can request one from your administration