



Welcome Package

Prepared by the *Welcome Package* working group



[en] On behalf of 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, please 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 tebjje wutšobnje w zjadnošeńtwje Leibniz a žycymy wjele wjasela na twójim instituće. Gaž maš pšašanja, móžoš se pšecej wobrošiš do PhD-ego zastupnika na twójim instituće 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!



Table of contents

Table of contents.....	2
Welcome to the Leibniz Association!	3
Getting to know the Leibniz PhD Network.....	4
Before leaving home	6
Visa.....	6
Accommodation	6
Getting started in Germany	7
Arriving in Germany.....	8
Registration.....	8
General support for foreigners.....	8
Opening a bank account	9
Getting a SIM card	9
Health insurance	9
Extend your visa by applying for a residence permit.....	10
Driving license	10
Getting started at your institute.....	11
Institute information.....	11
Enrolling at a university.....	11
Life as a doctoral researcher	12
Important contacts.....	12
Important documents.....	14
Miscellaneous	14
In-house funding opportunities.....	14

Welcome to the Leibniz Association!

We hope that the journey you are embarking on as a doctoral researcher will be pleasant, both in terms of your academic and your personal life. This Welcome Package aims to help make the journey smoother for you. It is a guide, a list of suggested steps to go through before (and during) a doctoral research program at a Leibniz institute or research museum. Whether you are already familiar with Germany or coming here for the first time, you will find tips and contacts to help you settle into your new environment.

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

Section A

Humanities and Educational Research

Section B

Economics, Social Sciences, Spatial Research

Section C

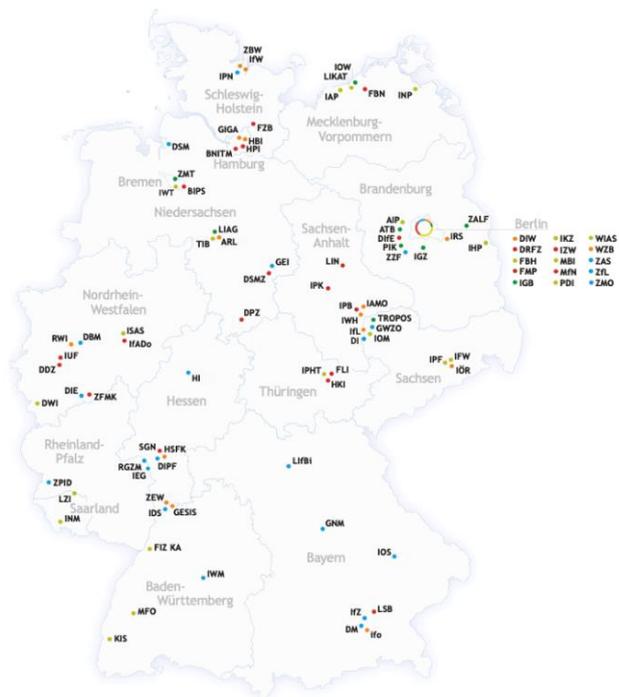
Life Sciences

Section D

Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Engineering

Section E

Environmental Research



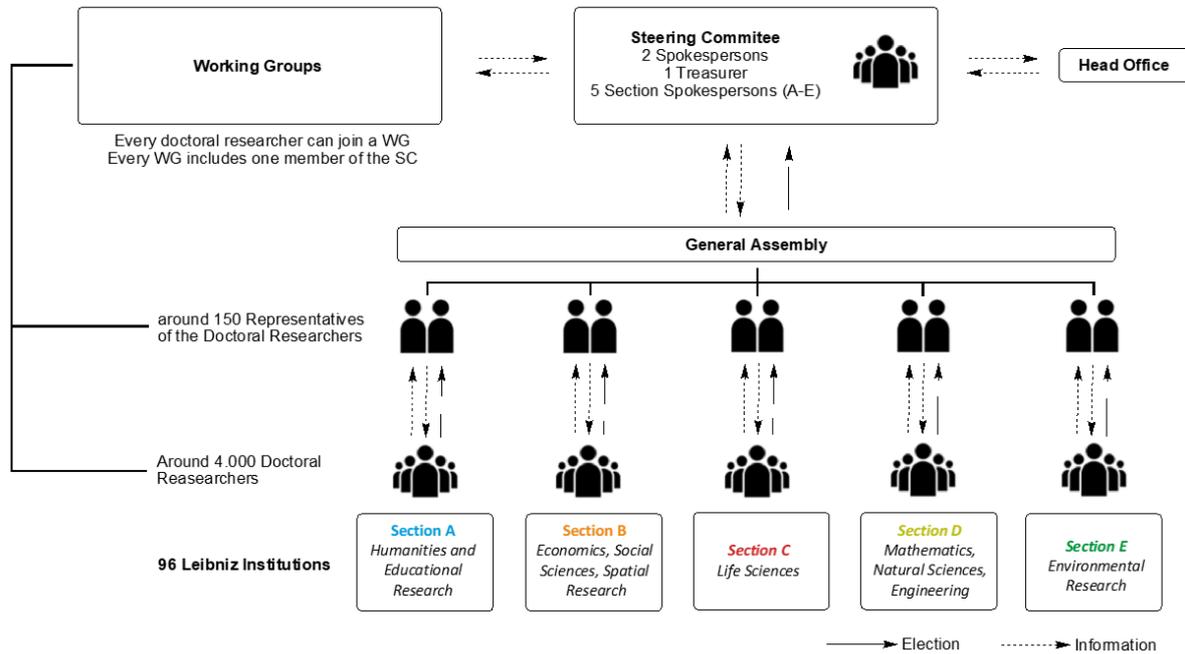
Getting to know the Leibniz PhD Network



The PhD 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 organizational chart on page 5). In the annual General Assembly, two spokespersons, a treasurer, and five section spokespersons 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 participate in general policy-making for doctoral researchers.

Reach out to the PhD representative at your institute to learn more about the network and how to get in touch. For further details on ongoing work and options for getting involved, visit <https://leibniz-phd.net/>.



Organizational chart of the Leibniz PhD Network. Elected PhD representatives from their respective institutes meet once a year at the General 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 brings together more than 15,000 doctoral researchers from Germany's non-university research organizations to discuss the future of science and to increase their political influence when working to improve the situation of doctoral researchers. You can find more information about N^2 at: <http://n2-network.net/>.

Before leaving home

It is important to start familiarizing yourself with some organizational matters before coming to Germany. We have compiled a few important points for you to take into consideration:

Visa

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

Important: At the embassy, make sure you request certified copies of your undergrad degree and master's degree and maybe even your 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 provisional 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 of obtaining a visa. More on health insurance can be found on page 9.

Accommodation

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

- <https://www.immobilienscout24.de>
- <https://www.wg-gesucht.de>
- <https://www.immowelt.de>
- <https://www.ebay-kleinanzeigen.de>

To rent an apartment you will usually have to provide:

1. Proof of income, usually in the form of an *Einkommensnachweis* or a *Bürgschaft*
2. A *Schufa* credit report
3. A *Mietschuldenfreiheitsbestätigung*

- **Einkommensnachweis**

This is a monthly income statement. You can print it out directly from your bank's online service. If you have not been paid yet, a copy of your employment contract is usually sufficient. Talking to your landlord and explaining that you are about to start your "Doktor" position might help convince them to wait a little while for your *Einkommensnachweis*.

- **Bürgschaft**

This is a guarantee signed by someone with a steady income (e.g. your parents), committing to cover your rent in the event that you are unable to do so.

- **Schufa**

Schufa is a private company which collects credit information. If this company has no negative information on you, they will issue a positive credit report. For more info, see: https://www.meineschufa.de/downloads/SCHUFA_Infoblatt-BA-Antrag-englisch.pdf

- **Mietschuldenfreiheitsbestätigung**

This is a document proving that you do not owe any rent arrears. Before moving out of your previous flat, prepare a letter stating that you have paid all your rent and have it signed by your landlord.

Getting started in Germany

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

- https://www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/nach-deutschland/publikationen/sid_en_2016_barrierefrei.pdf
- <https://www.studying-in-germany.org/>
- Also the university you enroll at likely has a webpage specifically for your city

Arriving in Germany

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

Registration

Once you have 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 registration document is needed for many official processes in Germany (e.g. opening a bank account and extending a visa).

That is why it is important that you register as soon as possible, usually within 14 days of your arrival. Please note that there might be fees to pay if you wait too long. In most cities, you can make an online appointment on the city's website. Appointments can also be made in person, but registration offices are usually busy places, so you may have to wait a very long time to see someone. Keep in mind that if you move to another flat, you need to update your registration at the registration office.

Check with your local registration office what documents they require. The exact list may vary, but you will generally need:

- your passport;
- your rental agreement;
- a signed confirmation from your landlord that you are renting your flat ([Wohnungsgeberbestätigung](#))

While you are at the *Bürgeramt/Einwohnermeldeamt*, make sure to ask what discounts or advantages your city offers to new residents. Some offer free museum tickets, coupons for restaurants, and even welcome payments. Also, do not forget to mention that you are a student, because that may entitle you to additional benefits!

General support for foreigners

Some cities offer a program called '*Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer*' (MBE). This advisory service for adult foreigners might be able to help with getting a long-term visa or finding a place to live. Searching the web for 'MBE + *your city*' should 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 with; all of them will ask you for your residence registration document (*Meldebescheinigung*), which you obtain from the registration office. Common choices are:

- **Sparkasse:** a public bank with many ATMs
- **Volksbank:** a cooperative bank, also with many ATMs
- **Postbank**
- **Commerzbank**
- **DKB:** an online bank with good conditions, but they are a bit more restrictive when it comes to opening bank accounts. It is one of the few banks in Germany that offer free international cash withdrawals.
- **Online banks** like N26

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

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

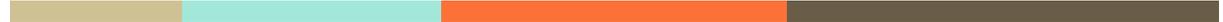
Getting a SIM card

You can buy a SIM card directly from the phone companies (e.g. O₂ or Vodafone) or in a supermarket (e.g. REWE or Aldi). If you are planning a short-term stay, you can buy a prepaid card in the shops or online. Don't forget to take your passport along when you go to buy your SIM card. You might also be asked to show a residence registration document (e.g. *Anmeldebestätigung/Meldebescheinigung*).

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 discounts for doctoral researchers. You can choose between statutory insurance (*Kassenversicherung*, e.g. TK or AOK) and private insurance (*Privatversicherung*, e.g. MAWISTA Science or Continentale). Private insurance may be cheaper in the short term but be aware that fees increase as you age. Statutory insurance is the most common choice 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 which health insurance company you are registered with, since your institute will cover half of the fees. The rest will be deducted automatically from your gross salary. If you are a scholarship holder and you need to cover health insurance payments on your own, you should 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 employment contract, your institute will ask you to provide a social security number (*Sozialversicherungsnummer*). If this is your first job in Germany and you chose a statutory insurance company, they will provide you with this number. If you chose a private insurance company, you will have to apply to the *Deutsche Rentenversicherung* to get this number.

Extend your visa by applying for a residence permit

Usually, within 90 days of arriving 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 permit 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* as soon as possible.

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

- **Passport**
- **Anmeldebestätigung/Meldebescheinigung**
- **Employment contract**
- **Rental agreement**
- **A biometric photograph of the 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.
- **Payment of a fee** (credit cards are usually not accepted).

Driving license

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