




Welcome Package

Prepared by the *Welcome Package* working group

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[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 tebje wutšobnje w zjadnošeńtwje Leibniz a žycymy wjele wjasela na twojim instituće. Gaž maš pšašanja, móžoš se pšecej wobrošiś do PhD-ego zastupnika na twojim 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!



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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.

More information: <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en.html>

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



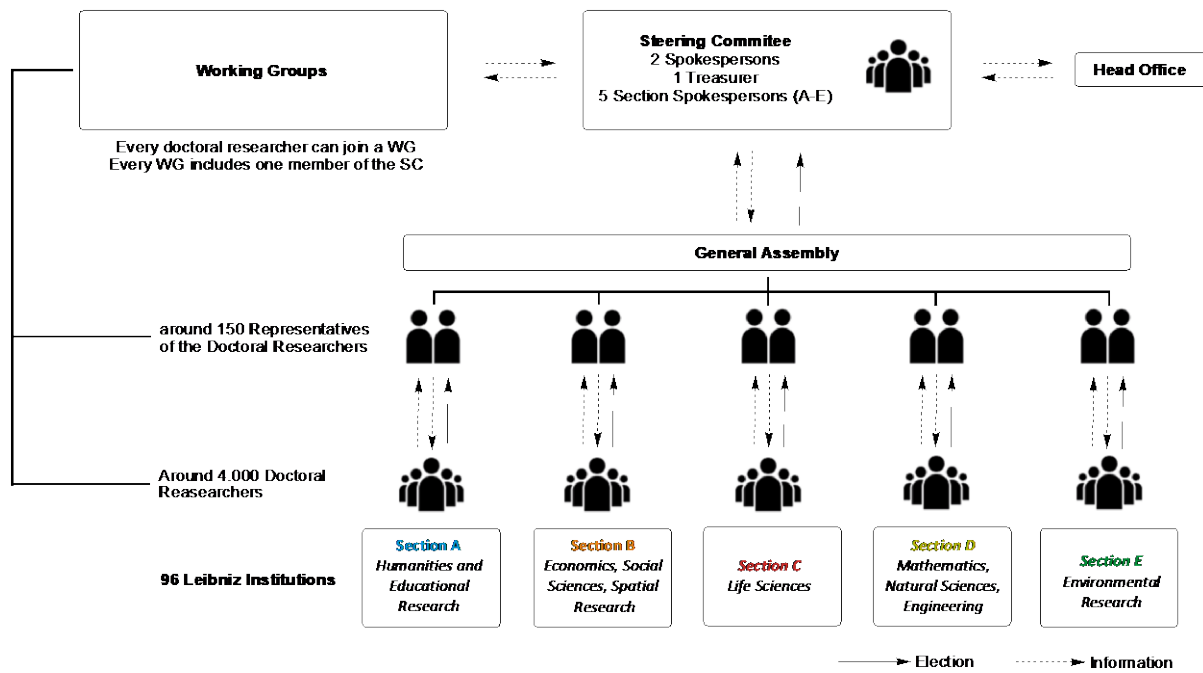
Getting to know the Leibniz PhD Network



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 N², the Network of Networks, together with the Max Planck PhDnet and the Helmholtz Juniors. N² 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 N² 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: 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.

Potsdam: <https://www.potsdam.de/wichtige-adressen-zum-thema-migration-und-integration/page/0/2>

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/girokonto/>

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>

Getting started at ATB

Institute information



Official website: www.atb-potsdam.de

Welcome to the **Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy (ATB)**.

All information about important contacts, documents and life as doctoral researcher are available in the institute's intranet once you have started working at ATB. You will also receive further information at regularly offered newcomer meetings.

Enrolling at a university

In the German academic system, there are two different kinds of research institution: 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 will usually cooperate very closely with a local university.

To obtain your degree, **you need to enroll at the university**. Depending on your supervision agreement (if you have one – this is something like a contract designed to define the relationship between you and your supervisor), specific terms might apply that you have to keep in mind regarding partner universities and the minimum number of semesters you must enroll for. Make sure you read the terms of your supervision agreement and/or university department regulations carefully, and don't hesitate to ask your supervisor if you have any questions. Supervisors in Germany are usually happy to help.

Enrolling as a doctoral researcher might come with some benefits like free sports sessions, museum ticket discounts or training in soft skills. Ask your PhD representatives or the coordinator of your doctoral program for more information on this.

Here is a list of universities in the region partnered with ATB:

- Technical University Berlin (TU Berlin)
- Humboldt University Berlin (HU Berlin)
- Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin)
- University of Potsdam (UP)

Life as a doctoral researcher at ATB

Agreements and offers

- **PhD supervision agreement**

This document includes a list of rights and responsibilities for doctoral researchers and their supervisors.

- **Graduate program**

This program offers workshops and soft skills training to doctoral researchers. Your university might offer a graduate program as well.

- **German language classes**

For learning German different options are available in the region of Potsdam and Berlin. ATB cooperates with a language school in the Science Park in Potsdam-Golm for offers of language courses for its employees. ATB also offers a Regulars' table at lunch time in the ATB canteen for training conversation in German.

- **Social activities offered at your institute**

At ATB, regularly social activities are organized, e.g. sports or get-together events.

About social activities you get information via emails, the ATB intranet or via the PhD-representatives.

Important contacts

If you encounter problems in your work environment, there are a number of people you can get in touch with:


- **Ombudsperson:**

The ombudsperson (or mediator) at your institute can advise you and help resolve conflicts with coworkers or your supervisor. There may also be a contact person for scientific misconduct. The Leibniz Association also has an [Ombuds Committee \(https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/about-us/leibniz-integrity/good-scientific-practice-and-ombudspersons.html\)](https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/about-us/leibniz-integrity/good-scientific-practice-and-ombudspersons.html).

- **Equal opportunities representatives:**

Equal opportunities representatives enforce equal opportunities and chances for all genders and minorities, and for disabled people at all levels of employment and career stages. If you experience inequality, discrimination or sexual harassment at work, these representatives can and should be contacted.

- **Work–family balance:**



ATB has been certified for its family friendly environment. A working group was established to implement measures for the reconciliation of career and family life for the employees, a.o. to provide information and support on childcare and other family-related issues. Members of this group are available for questions in this context.

- **PhD coordinator:**

ATB has a PhD coordinator who oversees many aspects of your PhD program. This person can help you with questions regarding the PhD agreement or initial steps at your institute.

- **PhD representatives:**

The role of the PhD representatives is to offer opportunities to optimize the working environment for doctoral researchers, and to improve information exchange between the various Leibniz institutes.

- **Contact person for assistance of international colleagues:**

This person takes care of the concerns and questions of international colleagues. At ATB, you find this person in the human resources team.

- **Works council:**

This council is elected by ATB's employees to represent their interests and ensure compliance with the Works Constitution Act. The members offer to help resolve problems regarding working conditions or contractual issues, and will deal with your request confidentially.

- **Technical support at your workplace:**

ATB has a central IT unit as well as IT specialists in each department who will help to solve computer-related issues. Team assistants of your department and the institute's facility management will provide you with any kind of technical assistance concerning your workplace (changing a lightbulb, providing furniture, etc.).

Important documents

After starting at ATB, you will receive some very important documents that you should keep hold of. These include your pay slip, health insurance documents, pension fund records and social security number. Here is a list of the documents:

- *Arbeitsvertrag* (employment contract)
- *Sozialversicherungsnachweis* (social security card)
- *Lohnsteuerkarte* (income tax card) – provided in digital form