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# Living together, everyday life, living

## Coexistence in the society

### Rule of Law and Basic Law

Germany is a **constitutional state**. The decisions of the state or Government are bound by the law.

All people living in Germany must adhere to the central principles of the political and legal order. The most important legal basis for life in Germany is the **Basic Law ("Grundgesetz")**. It is the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

### Basic Law ("Grundgesetz")

#### Article 1, Basic Law: Human Dignity

**"Human dignity is sacrosanct. It is the duty of all state power to respect and protect it. (...)"**

This article explains that in Germany every human being, whether woman, man or child, is protected by the state and that human dignity is paramount.

#### Article 2, Basic Law: Right of personality

**"Everyone has the right to the free development of his or her personality (...)".**

**"Everyone has the right to life and physical integrity (...)".**

Among other things, this protects privacy. At home, everyone in Germany is free to behave as he or she wishes: In his everyday life, with his words, in his way of dressing, in his sexual behaviour. The decisive factor here is that no one else is restricted by it.

Everyone is allowed to dress as he or she wants to and considers appropriate. Only in certain professions and at certain locations, such as in canteen kitchens, on building sites or in court cases, clothing regulations may be possible. They are often intended to protect against accidents or, for example, against infections.

The right of personality is protected by criminal law: Assault, insult or offences against sexual self-determination will be prosecuted. All sexual acts performed on a person against his or her will are punishable in Germany.

#### Article 3, Basic Law: Equal rights

This article states that all people in Germany have equal rights.

(1) **All people are equal before the law.**

(2) **Men and women are equal. (...).**

**(3) No one shall be discriminated against or favoured on account of his or her sex, ancestry, race, language, home and origin, faith, religious or political beliefs. No one shall be discriminated on account of his or hers disability.**

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An overview of the Basic Law can be found in this [video here](#).

You can find further information here:

 [www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen](http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen)

## **Personal freedom and equality**

### **Self-determination and personal freedom**

All adult people are allowed to decide about themselves and their own lives. No matter whether man or woman, young or old, with or without disability, regardless of skin colour, religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

All people may do what they want as long as they obey the laws and do not restrict others in their freedom.

#### **This means for example:**

- All people are allowed to decide what they want to wear.
- All people may eat what they want and what they like.
- Women and men may study or learn a profession. In principle, all professions are open to both men and women.
- Every woman and every man may decide for himself/ herself whether and whom he or she wants to marry. Every woman and every man can get a divorce.
- Unmarried couples may live together and have children.
- Members of different religions and denominations are allowed to marry and have children.
- The tasks and roles in the family are not prescribed.
- Contraception is permitted for both sexes. The decision of a person to use contraception must be respected.
- Same-sex partnerships are recognised in Germany. Homosexual partners are allowed to marry in Germany and therefore have the same rights as a marriage between a man and a woman.
- All (adults) decide for themselves how and where they want to live. For non-Germans, this right may be restricted until an asylum application is recognised.
- Sexual acts between adults may only take place by mutual consent. Any sexual activity with children is prohibited.
- Women and men can vote and be elected to political office.
- Private property is permitted in Germany for every man and woman.
- Women and men have equal rights in inheritance.

■ One's own freedom ends where it violates the freedom or human dignity of the other person or violates laws.

## Democracy and anti-discrimination

### What does democracy mean?

Democracy is the way a state is organized and governed. Germany is a parliamentary democracy. This means that the citizens elect the parliament that makes the laws. The parliament in turn elects the government, which determines what happens in the country.

■ In a democracy, the state protects the rights of the people. Moreover, human rights apply to all people.

### Democracy in the Bodenseekreis

The Lake Constance district is committed to democratic coexistence. With the programme "[Living democracy!](#)" the Office for Migration and Integration supports measures and projects promoting democracy. It offers assistance to authorities, associations and private individuals.

#### Amt für Migration und Integration, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis

Miriam Macak

■ [Albrechtstraße 75, Friedrichshafen, Room A 401](#)

■ [07541/2045873](#)

■ [miriam.macak@bodenseekreis.de](mailto:miriam.macak@bodenseekreis.de)

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](http://www.bodenseekreis.de)

#### Further information and advisory services

- [Demokratiezentrum Baden-Württemberg](#)
- [Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg](#)
- [Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung](#)
- [Amadeu Antonio Stiftung](#)

### Anti-discrimination

The Bodenseekreis is very clearly against any form of discrimination.

■ All people have the same dignity and the same rights. No one must be disadvantaged. Discrimination is a violation of human rights.

#### Advice and assistance in cases of discrimination

##### CJD Friedrichshafen

##### Counselling centre against discrimination in the Bodenseekreis

■ [Konstantin-Schmäh-Straße 31, Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2075272](#)

■ [antidiskriminierungsstelle.fn@cjd.de](mailto:antidiskriminierungsstelle.fn@cjd.de)

■ [www.cjd-bodensee-oberschwaben.de](http://www.cjd-bodensee-oberschwaben.de)

#### Further information and advisory services

- [Antidiskriminierungsverband Deutschland \(advd\)](#)
- [Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes](#)
- [LEUCHTLINIE](#)

## Living diversity: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans\* and Inter\* (LSBTI)

In Germany, people of different religions, different sexes, different origins and different political views live together peacefully. All enjoy the same rights. The same applies to people of different sexual orientation or gender identity: Lesbians, gays, bisexuals as well as transgender and intersexual people, in short LSBTI. In Germany, they have the same rights as other people.

Besides the two sexes "male" and "female" there is also the third sex "divers". Transgender persons can have their gender entry and name changed. In Germany women are allowed to love and marry other women, men are allowed to marry other men.

You can find more information and contact persons at:

### Lesbian and Gay Association in Germany ("Lesben-und Schwulenverband Deutschland (LSVD)")

■ [www.lsvd.de](http://www.lsvd.de)

■ [lsvd@lsvd.de](mailto:lsvd@lsvd.de)

■ Many LSBTI persons have fled to Germany because they were persecuted in their home country. If you are a refugee and are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersexual, you can find support, social contacts and information from many LGBTI organisations in Germany. In the LSVD project "Queer Refugees Germany" you will find contact persons and further information:

#### Project "Queer Refugees Germany"

[www.queer-refugees.de](http://www.queer-refugees.de)

[queer-refugees@lsvd.de](mailto:queer-refugees@lsvd.de)

#### Further information and offers

- ILSE initiative of lesbian and gay parents ■ [www.lsvd.de](http://www.lsvd.de)
- Homosexuals and Church Working Group: ■ [www.huk.org](http://www.huk.org)
- Queergestreift Film Festival ■ [www.queergestreift.com](http://www.queergestreift.com)
- CSD in Konstanz ■ [www.csd-konstanz.de](http://www.csd-konstanz.de)
- UNIQUEER: University group of the University of Konstanz, which organizes regular meetings and events ■ [www.uniqueer.weebly.com](http://www.uniqueer.weebly.com)

#### AIDS counselling, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis

Gesundheitsamt, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis

■ [Albrechtstr. 75, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2045860](tel:075412045860)

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](http://www.bodenseekreis.de)

--> AIDS counselling in Konstanz: ■ [www.aidshilfe-konstanz.de](http://www.aidshilfe-konstanz.de)

## Religion

### Free choice of faith

In Germany people of different religions live together peacefully. The free choice of faith and its exercise is enshrined in fundamental rights. This means that no one must be forced to have a certain faith or religion.

Due to the diversity of religions, there are many opportunities to attend a service or participate in church life.

There are very diverse religious institutions in the Bodenseekreis. Find out in [your community or city](#) which institutions and denominations are represented.

## Everyday life

### Mobility

#### Find your way around the Lake Constance district

You can download the free "MAPS.ME" app. Here you will find the city map of your place of residence. The city map is free of charge. It works offline and has a navigation function.

■ MAPS.ME app in the [Google PlayStore](#) and [Apple AppStore](#)

Many relevant places in the Lake Constance district can be reached by public transport.

### Public transport

To get to your destination in the Lake Constance district, you can use public transport. These are bus and rail/train.

Travelling without a ticket, so-called fare dodging, is punished! You must have a valid ticket for every journey. Otherwise you will pay a heavy fine.

Information on tickets and public transport in the Lake Constance district can be found on the Internet at ■ [www.bodo.de](http://www.bodo.de)

You can also obtain information at the railway stations.

You can also find bus/train and boat connections in the Deutsche Bahn app: [DB Navigator](#)

### Bicycle

A healthy, inexpensive and environmentally friendly alternative for getting from A to B is a bicycle.

If you know that you will be living in the Lake Constance district for a longer period of time, it is worth buying a bicycle. It is cheaper than travelling by public transport.

### **Important traffic rules for cyclists (selection):**

- Always ride on the right-hand side of the carriageway
- Do not ride next to each other, but behind each other
- If there is a cycle path, you must ride on the cycle path (always on the right-hand side of the road in the direction of travel)
- Only children up to the age of 11 are allowed to cycle on footpaths
- Using a mobile phone on a bicycle is prohibited

Purchase and repairs: When buying a bike, make sure that it is equipped as follows and is therefore roadworthy. Otherwise you will have to pay a fine if you are stopped by the police.

- Front and rear lights
- Reflector front and rear
- Reflectors in the spokes (2 per wheel)
- Reflectors on the pedals
- Bell
- Two independent brakes

### **Long-distance travelling**

If you want to visit another city or friends, there are various options.

By train: You can find information on this in the "DB Navigator" app or on the "Deutsche Bahn" website [www.bahn.de](https://www.bahn.de). You can also take the FlixTrain. However, this does not run in every city. You can find information on this [at here](#).

By coach: In Germany, there is also the option of travelling by coach. You can find offers [here](#). You can travel from Friedrichshafen, Überlingen, Ravensburg, Lindau, Constance or Singen. There is also the option of travelling from Ulm via [BlaBlaBus](#).

Carpooling: If you wish, you can also share a car journey with others. You pay a lower price for the journey than for a train or bus journey. These offers are not as regular as a train or bus journey. At [BlaBlaCar](#) you can find offers or offer your own car journey.

### **Driving licence**

In Germany you must always have your driving licence with you when you drive a vehicle.

### **Do you have a valid foreign driving licence?**

Your foreign driving licence is valid for six months after entering Germany.

During this time you have to apply for the exchange into a German driving licence at the driving licence authority.

After the six months have expired, you may no longer use the foreign driving licence in any case.

EU driving licences are generally recognised without exchange.

## Fahrerlaubnisbehörde, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis

■ [Glärnischstrasse 1 - 3, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2040](#) or [115](#)

■ [feb@bodenseekreis.de](mailto:feb@bodenseekreis.de)

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](http://www.bodenseekreis.de)

## You do not have a valid driver's license?

To obtain a German driving licence, you must be able to prove your identity.

For an initial issue, a visit to a driving school with subsequent theoretical and practical examination will be necessary.

You should therefore check with the driving licence office before you register with a driving school to see whether you will be admitted to an examination at all.

A driving school is associated with high costs. Ask the driving school in advance about the costs.

## Current account

A current account is an account for people who want to make payments through the bank. Your money is always available on your current account. Make sure that you have enough money in your account for all withdrawals and payments.

### With a current account you can:

- execute bank transfers
- Receive cashless payments (payments from offices / authorities / social benefits are often made cashless, i.e. transferred to a personal current account)
- Set up standing orders
- Participate in direct debit
- Cash cheques, make cashless payments with the EC/Maestro card
- Withdraw cash at bank counters or cash dispensers
- Print out your account statements

## Opening an account


Decide at which bank you would like to have an account. Arrange a date for the opening of the account. Please bring one of your identification papers with you: Proof of arrival, residence permit, identity card. If no current address is noted on the legitimation document, please also bring along a registration certificate or a comparable document.

- After opening the account, you will receive an EC card with a four-digit PIN code. Sign the EC card on the back and learn the PIN code by heart. You will need the PIN code for cashless payments and withdrawals from ATMs, but you **must keep the card and PIN code separate!**
- If you want to withdraw cash, it is best to use ATMs at the bank where you have your account. Then the withdrawal costs nothing. If the PIN code is entered incorrectly three times at the ATM, the EC card is withdrawn and blocked. In this case you have to get in touch with your bank.



- If your EC card is lost or stolen, have the EC card blocked immediately. Say your bank code and your account number. Then ask your bank for a new EC card.

**Blocking emergency number** ☎ [116116](tel:116116)

 Around the clock.

Different banks offer current accounts at different conditions. Find out exactly how much a current account costs each month and what services the bank offers.

If you do not speak German or English, please bring an interpreter with you.

If you need help in using your EC card correctly, the following offices can help you: Your [municipality](#), a [helping circle](#), the [Adult Migration Advice Centre](#) or the [Youth Migration Service](#).


## Internet and Free WIFI


### Public, free WLAN hotspots

Free Wi-Fi is available in several places, for example in city centres, libraries, restaurants or media houses. You can surf the internet there with your own device.

### Private WLAN

You need a contract for private WLAN via your mobile phone.

 **Caution:** Be careful with mobile phone contracts. A contract that you can cancel at any time is better than a contract that is valid for a long time (e.g. 2 years). Before signing a contract, ask your accommodation provider or landlord whether WLAN is technically possible at all and how you can give the technician access.

 If you have any questions about mobile phone contracts, you can contact the following organisations: Your [local authority](#), a [helper group](#), the [migration advice centre for adults](#) or the [youth migration service](#).

## Information for asylum seekers

Unfortunately, asylum seekers in Germany are not legally entitled to Internet access (WIFI) in their accommodation. Therefore, there is usually no WIFI (WLAN) in the accommodation centres. If there is a telephone connection in the accommodation, it is possible for you to take out a contract for WLAN yourself.

## Liability insurance

If you cause damage to a person in Germany, you must pay compensation. Even if it was not intentional. This applies to personal injury, property damage and financial loss in the private sphere. For example, if you cause a traffic accident or if your child breaks a window pane with a ball.

In Germany, you can take out private liability insurance. The liability insurance then pays for the damage for you and your family. You can decide for yourself whether you want to take out this insurance. However, we strongly recommend it.

If you have any questions about liability insurance, you can contact the following organisations: Your [local authority](#), a [helper group](#), the [migration advice centre for adults](#) or the [youth migration service](#).

## Contracts and mobile phone

### Contracts

**Especially important:** Never sign anything you have not understood or cannot read. Otherwise, you may sign a contract or agreement that requires you to pay something. It is sometimes very difficult to undo this. Always check and compare several offers and decide in peace. Don't let anyone pressure you into signing.

### Mobile phone

There are two different mobile phone contracts in Germany: **prepaid contracts** and **fixed-term contracts**. The prepaid contract has no fixed contract term. With a fixed-term contract there is a minimum contract period. This contract is automatically renewed if you do not cancel it yourself. If you do not want the contract to renew automatically, you must cancel in writing. Pay attention to the deadline.

#### 10 important questions for the conclusion of the contract:

- How much is the basic fee? Does the fee increase after a certain time?
- Is there a minimum monthly turnover (minimum cost per month)?
- How long is the contract (e.g. 12 or 24 months)?
- If I do not cancel the contract, will the contract be automatically renewed?
- When do I have to cancel if I do not want to extend the contract?
- How much does it cost to set up, change and deactivate the device?
- After which time cycle (60/1, 10/10) is the calculation made?
- How much does the minute cost (foreign/own network)?
- How much does a mobile phone with contract cost and how much does a mobile phone without contract cost?
- How much does Internet cost?
- How much do telephone calls abroad cost?

If you have any questions about contracts, you can contact the following offices: Your [municipality](#), a [helping circle](#), the [Adult Migration Advisory Centre](#) or the [Youth Migration Service](#).

### Waste separation

There are different types of waste. The various wastes must be separated. They are then disposed of. The waste management office ("Abfallwirtschaftsamt") is responsible for this. It takes care of the collection of the waste.

**Abfallwirtschaftsamt, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis**

■ [Glärnischstrasse 1 - 3, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2045199](#)

■ [www.abfallwirtschaftsamt.de](http://www.abfallwirtschaftsamt.de)

**This garbage is picked up by the waste management office:**

- The brown bin
- The blue bin
- The black bin
- The yellow bag

**What belongs in what bin?****The brown bin is for organic waste.**

The organic waste bin includes, for example, leftovers of plants and food, paper kitchen towels, egg cartons.

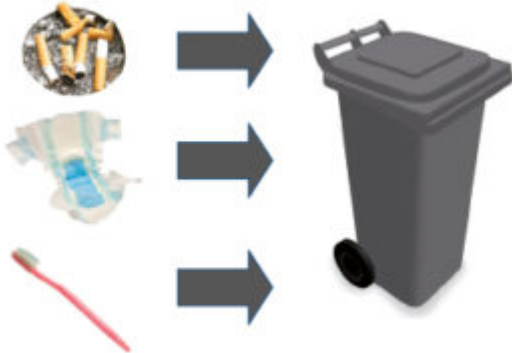
**The blue bin is for paper waste.**

Only cardboard and paper are allowed in the paper bin. For example: Newspapers and advertising, books, letters and envelopes, cardboard boxes.



## The black bin is for residual waste

The residual waste bin includes cigarette butts, old medicines, rubbish, vacuum cleaner bags, nappies, sanitary towels and tampons, plasters, clothes hangers, paper with foil: For example stickers and photos, ladies' tights, baking paper, toothbrushes, razor blades



## The yellow bag is for packaging and plastic.

Packaging belongs in the yellow bag. For example: Plastic food packaging, plastic bottles without deposit, tetra-packs, tins and aluminium.



## When is the garbage picked up?

At the end of the year you will receive the removal plan by mail. There it says when which garbage is picked up. You can also create a [personal removal calendar here](#).

■ On collection day, put the garbage on the side of the road at 06:00 in the morning.

## You'll have to take out this trash yourself:

- Old glass

Glass containers must be placed in collection containers.

You may throw in the glass from Monday to Saturday from 08:00 to 19:00.

In the collection containers for glass belong, for example: Glass bottles, preserving jars, preserving jars.

You have to separate the glass by colour. And throw them into the correct collection container.



- **Waste with harmful substances**

Waste containing harmful substances is harmful to health. And for the environment. Therefore, waste containing harmful substances must not be disposed of in the residual waste. This waste must be handed in to the so-called "Schadstoff-Mobil". The Schadstoff-Mobil is a special truck. The pollutant mobile comes to your city twice a year. [Here you can see the dates.](#)

Or you can hand in the harmful substances at the disposal centre. You can do that on certain afternoons.

Harmful substances are for example: Paints and varnishes, cleaning agents, batteries.

### **What is a "Wert-Stoff-Hof"?**

A so-called "Wert-Stoff-Hof" is a place in your city or community. There you can hand in recyclable materials. [Here you can find the opening hours.](#)

### **What is an "Entsorgungs-Zentrum"?**

A so-called "Entsorgungs-Zentrum" is a disposal center and a large place for waste. There you can hand in special waste. For example: Garden waste and bulky waste.

The disposal centres are located in:

- [Friedrichshafen-Weiherberg near Raderach](#)

- [Tettang-Sputenwinkel in Tettang Bürgermoos](#)
- [Überlingen filling woad in Überlingen](#)



## Broadcasting fees

Germany has independent radio, television and online programmes from ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio. They report free from economic and political influences. Everyone pays money for this. This is called the licence fee.

The law stipulates that a licence fee must be paid for every home in Germany. However, only one person per home has to pay the licence fee. This costs €17.50 per month and must be paid to the ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio contribution service.

Further information can be found on the broadcasting licence fee website:

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

Also available in several languages:

■ [www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome](http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome)

## Do I also have to pay licence fees?

Some people can be exempted from paying. For example, if you receive benefits under the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act or other social benefits. An application must be submitted for [exemption from](#) the [licence fee](#). You can find out what to do in the [following flyer](#).

Here you can go directly to the page to apply for exemption from payment:

🌐 [The licence fee - apply for exemption or reduction](#)

## Taxes and tax returns

You must pay tax on your income in Germany. If you are employed, you will receive the net amount of your salary from your employer, i.e. your taxes have already been settled. If you are self-employed, you must pay tax on your income independently.

## Tax identification number

The tax ID is an 11-digit number and is used for income tax purposes. The workplace requires this number. If you do not have this number in your documents, you can obtain it personally from the registration office or in writing from the Federal Tax Office.

If you need help with your tax return, it is best to contact your local income tax association. If you have any further questions, the tax office can also help you.

### Lohnsteuerhilfe Baden-Württemberg e.V. in Friedrichshafen

■ [Werastrasse 54, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/38350](#)

■ [friedrichshafen@lohi-bw.de](mailto:friedrichshafen@lohi-bw.de)

■ [www.lohi-bw.de](http://www.lohi-bw.de)

### Further location Friedrichshafen

■ [Riedleparkstrasse 22, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2869977](#)

■ [fh-riedlepark@lohi-bw.de](mailto:fh-riedlepark@lohi-bw.de)

■ [www.lohi-bw.de](http://www.lohi-bw.de)

### Other advice institutions with different locations:

- [Vereinigte Lohnsteuerhilfe e.V.](#)

## Debt and debt counselling

Are you in debt and the bank is no longer paying out any money? The bailiff is at the door?

The **debt counselling** service **of the Lake Constance district office** advises people from the Lake Constance district with financial problems. Counselling is confidential, free and voluntary.

Debt **counselling**, **Social Welfare Office**, **Landratsamt Bodenseekreis**

■ [Glärnischstraße 1 - 3, 88045 Friedrichshafen](#)

■ [07541/2045105](#)

■ [schuldnerberatung@bodenseekreis.de](mailto:schuldnerberatung@bodenseekreis.de)

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](http://www.bodenseekreis.de)

■ Please make an appointment.

■ Open consultation hours for urgent matters:

Every Wednesday from 09:00 to 11:30 and Thursday from 14:00 to 16:00

## **Pets and taxes**

If you have a pet dog in Germany, you must register it with your local authority and pay taxes.

You can find more information about this on the following pages:

 <https://handbookgermany.de/de/pets>

## **Living**

### **Where do I look for a flat?**

### **Important to know**

It is very difficult to find a flat in the Lake Constance district. You should therefore try to start your search as early as possible. You should also try to be flexible about where exactly you want to live and be prepared to make compromises.

### **Search the internet on housing portals**

Most flat adverts can be found on the Internet these days.

Here are some addresses for searching for flats on the Internet:

 [www.meinestadt.de](http://www.meinestadt.de)

 <http://www.vierwaen.de/>

 [www.wohnung-mieten.de](http://www.wohnung-mieten.de)

 [www.immonet.de](http://www.immonet.de)

 [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)

 [www.immozentral.com](http://www.immozentral.com)

 [www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)

 [www.wohnungsmarkt24.de](http://www.wohnungsmarkt24.de)

 [www.nestoria.de](http://www.nestoria.de)

 [www.wohnung-jetzt.de](http://www.wohnung-jetzt.de)

### **Searching on social media**

Many flat adverts are now also published on social media such as Facebook (often in local groups). People looking for a flat can also advertise in these groups that they are looking for a flat.

### **Search in newspapers (sometimes also available online)**



You can also find adverts in local newspapers (e.g. Südkurier or Schwäbische Zeitung) that are placed by landlords. You can also place an advert in a newspaper yourself (for a fee) and advertise your rental search. Sometimes this way works to get a flat.

## Search among neighbours and acquaintances

You can often find a flat through personal contacts with neighbours and acquaintances. Let your acquaintances know that you are looking for a flat. If you are a member of an association, let them know that you are looking for a flat. Perhaps someone from the association can help you or knows someone who rents a flat.

## Search in public places

Also look out for notices at bank branches or in other public places. Sometimes (although less often) flats are also advertised there.

## Housing entitlement certificate and social housing

If you have a low income, you can apply for a certificate of eligibility for social housing under certain conditions. Contact your [local authority](#) for this. There you can also clarify directly which documents you need to submit in your case.

■ Please note that you are not entitled to social housing even if you have a certificate of eligibility.

## Which documents do I need?

The **application for housing** usually contains the following documents:

1. Covering letter on the apartment ad
2. Tenant self-assessment
3. Proof of income or notice of performance
4. Schufa information
5. Copies of identity cards
6. Certificate of freedom from rent debt

If you prepare these documents carefully, you will have a better chance of being accepted for the apartment.

### 1. Covering letter on the apartment ad

When writing your cover letter, you write a short text in which you introduce yourself and explain why you are interested in this apartment. Try to answer the following questions in the cover letter:

- Who belongs to you or should move into the apartment?
- Why are you searching for an apartment?
- Why are you applying for exactly this apartment in this area?

This is what a cover letter could look like:

-----

**Subject: Application for the 3-room apartment at Mustermann-Straße 1, 88677 Markdorf**

**Dear Mr. Mustermann,**

**Your 3-room apartment in Mustermann-Straße 1 in Markdorf is exactly what we imagine for our new home.**

**We (Mr. and Mrs. Mustermann with our 3-year-old daughter) are looking for a larger apartment in a quiet area in Markdorf.**

**The apartment you offer is ideal for a small family and offers enough space for the three of us.**

**The location of the apartment is also ideal for us, we can reach our workplaces quickly and our daughter's kindergarten is only a few minutes' walk away.**

**We're both employed. You will find our proof of income enclosed.**

**We could move in on TT.MM.JJJJ.**

**We are looking forward to hearing from you and visiting the apartment together.**

**With kind regards**

**Mr and Mrs Mustermann with daughter**

**Facilities:**

**Self-disclosure**

**Proof of income or notice of performance**

**Schufa information**

**Copies of identity cards**

**Certificate of freedom from rent debt**

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■ Be objective and honest in your cover letter. If you do not currently have a job, please formulate it like this: The rent for the apartment is secured by the job centre.

## **2. Tenant self-assessment ("Mieter-Selbstauskunft")**

The first question that every landlord asks himself is: Who wants to move in here? The self-assessment provides the answer. In this document you provide information about all relevant personal information that is of interest to the landlord. These are:

- First and last name
- Birthday
- Current address
- Contact details (phone and e-mail)

- Current profession and employer
- Monthly income

You can set up the tenant self-assessment yourself.

■ The important thing is: If you do not want to move in alone, but with a partner, your family or a friend in a shared flat, all tenants should provide a self-disclosure form.

### **3. Proof of income**

Landlords want to be sure that you can pay the monthly rent. Thus, a proof of income is an important document to show your financial situation. In most cases, proof of the last three months is requested. Always enter the total joint income (families, couples usw.).

■ If you have no income of your own, you should submit the notice of benefits from the job centre.

### **4. Schufa information**

A Schufa information (German credit investigation agency) provides information about your solvency. You can apply online for a [Schufa information](#). Take care of it early so that it arrives in time for the apartment search.

■ The free version of the Schufa information is called ["data copy according to Art. 15 DS-GVO"](#). This is sufficient for landlords.

### **5. Copy of identity card**

A copy of your identity card (or residence permit) also belongs in the application for an apartment.

■ All tenants who want to move into the property add copies.

### **6. Certificate of the freedom from rent debts**

Future landlords often want to know whether you are free of rent debts. The certificate of freedom from rent debts shows that you have paid your rent from your previous landlord continuously and punctually.

Your previous landlord can issue you a certificate that you do not owe rent.

■ Another way of proving that you are free of rent debts is to show bank statements from the last year, which show punctual payments.

## **Support and advice**

### **Advice**

**Deutscher Mieterbund Bodensee e.V. ("German Tenants' Association"), advice centre Überlingen**

■ [Mühlenstr. 4, 88667 Überlingen](https://muehlenstr.4.88667.ueberlingen.de)

■ [07551/67678](https://07551/67678)

■ [www.mieterbund-bodensee.de](https://www.mieterbund-bodensee.de)

**Deutscher Mieterbund Bodensee e.V. ("German Tenants' Association"), advice centre Konstanz**

■ [Zähringerplatz 15, 78464 Constance](https://zaehringerplatz.15.78464.constance.de)

■ [07531/25913](https://07531/25913)

■ [www.mieterbund-bodensee.de](https://www.mieterbund-bodensee.de)

**Mieterverein Oberschwaben e.V. Beratungsstelle Ravensburg (Tenants' Association) advice centre Ravensburg**

■ [Seestr. 15, 88214 Ravensburg](https://seestr.15.88214.ravensburg.de)

■ [07512/4541](https://07512/4541)

■ [www.mieterverein-oberschwaben.de](https://www.mieterverein-oberschwaben.de)

## Financial support

- **Certificate of entitlement to housing and social housing ("Wohnberechtigungsschein")**

If you have a low income, you can, under certain conditions, apply for a certificate of entitlement to social housing. You should contact your [local authority](#) to find out which documents you need to submit in your case.

■ Please note that you are not entitled to social housing even if you have a certificate of eligibility for housing.

- **Housing assistance ("Wohngeld")**

If your income is very low, you can apply for housing benefits and receive a rent subsidy under other conditions.

You can find more information and contact persons at

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](https://www.bodenseekreis.de)

The Housing Benefits Office of the District Office Bodenseekreis is responsible for all municipalities in the Bodenseekreis, except for the large district towns of Friedrichshafen and Überlingen.

If you live in Friedrichshafen, you can obtain further information at

■ [www.friedrichshafen.de](https://www.friedrichshafen.de)

If you live in Überlingen, you can get further information at

■ [www.ueberlingen.de](https://www.ueberlingen.de)

- **Assistance with subsistence (e.g. initial equipping of the home)**

If you do not have a job, no assets and your family income is insufficient, you can apply to the social welfare office for various forms of assistance (e.g. for initial home furnishing, initial equipment for newborns).

You can find more information and contact persons at

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](http://www.bodenseekreis.de)

## Terms and costs

### Important terms and costs

#### Explanation of important abbreviations in housing advertisements:

Whg. = Wohnung (**flat**); App. = Apartment (**apartment**); WG = Wohngemeinschaft (**shared flat**); Zi. = Zimmer (**room**); ZKB = Zimmer-Küche-Bad (**room-kitchen-bathroom**); EG = Erdgeschoss (**ground floor**); 1. OG = 1. Obergeschoss (**Upper floor**); Wohnfl.= Wohnfläche (**living space**); EBK = Einbauküche (**fitted kitchen**); teilmb. = teilmöbliert (**partly furnished**); inkl. = inklusive (**including**); MM = Miete pro Monat (**rent per month**); NK = Nebenkosten (**additional costs**); HK = Heizkosten (**heating costs**); Kaut. = Kaut. = Kaut. (**deposit**)

### Rental agreement

A commitment to an apartment only becomes binding through a rental contract. The rental agreement clarifies both the rights and obligations of the landlord and the rights and obligations of the tenant. The rental agreement also contains many other important details that you should read carefully (settlement of heating and operating costs, cancellation periods, keeping of pets, subletting and much more).

■ Read the rental agreement carefully before you sign it. Have a friend with a good knowledge of German read the rental agreement or get professional support, such as from the [tenant protection association \("Mieterschutzbund"\)](#). This association assists tenants with legal questions relating to the rent. In the event of disputes with the landlord, the tenants' protection association can advise you. The consultation is bound to a membership (for a fee).

### House rules

The house rules describe the rules of living together in the house. This includes, for example, rest periods in the house from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m., clearing snow in winter, regular cleaning of the staircase and much more. Please read the rules of the house carefully.

### Landlord Certificate ("Wohnungsgeberbescheinigung")

Your landlord must fill out this form . You need this certificate for your change of registration (change of address) in your municipality or at the registration office.

■ You need to re-register in your new community as soon as possible, at the latest after 2 weeks.

## **Cold rent ("Kaltmiete")**

The cold rent refers to the costs for the apartment **without** service charges such as water, heating, water heating, caretaker and the property tax. The cold rent is always lower than the warm rent.

## **Warm rent ("Warmmiete")**

The warm rent refers to the total costs for the apartment, i.e. the cold rent plus additional costs. But: Sometimes there are additional costs to the warm rent, such as electricity, radio (radio, television) and waste disposal.

■ When looking for an apartment, you should always pay attention to whether the apartment advertisement states the cold rent or the warm rent. Without information on the additional costs, some of the housing offers appear deceptively cheap. You should therefore clarify in advance which costs are included in the rent.

## **Security deposit ("Kaution")**

The deposit serves as a financial security for the landlord in case something gets broken in the apartment. The deposit is usually 2-3 cold rents.

At the end of the tenancy, the deposit will be refunded if the apartment is handed over to the landlord/renewed tenant clean and without defects.

■ It is recommendable to take pictures of the apartment when you move in or hand over the apartment to verify its condition. Thus, you can prove the condition of the apartment when you moved in which might be of interest when you move out.

## **Tenant self-assessment ("Mieter-Selbstauskunft")**

The tenant self-assessment is comparable to a questionnaire that is requested by the landlord. Above all, the landlord wants to check whether the tenant is able to pay the rent. You can set up the tenant self-assessment yourself. It contains the following information:

- First and last name
- Birthday
- Current address
- Contact details (phone and e-mail)
- Current profession and employer
- Monthly income

## **Schufa information**

A Schufa information (German credit investigation agency) provides information about your solvency. You can apply online for a [Schufa information](#). Take care of it early so that it arrives in time for the apartment search.

The free variant of the Schufa information is called ["data copy according to Art. 15 DS-GVO"](#). This is sufficient for landlords.

## **Behaviour in the apartment**

### **Basics for living**

#### **Heating and ventilation:**

Heat so that the room temperature is 19-21 degrees. In bedrooms the optimal temperature is 16-18 degrees.

#### **Sufficient ventilation is important:**

Open the windows 2-3 times a day for about 10 minutes to let fresh air into the room. A tilted window is not effective enough. At temperatures below 0 degrees 5 minutes of ventilation is sufficient. Be careful not to cover radiators. If you are absent for a longer period of time, turn off the heating.

#### **Save water:**

Always turn off all taps. Shower instead of taking a bath and do not wash dishes under running water.

#### **Avoid mould in the bathroom, kitchen and bedrooms:**

Ventilate immediately after getting up, cooking and showering or bathing. Make sure that furniture is placed 5-10 cm from the outside wall.

#### **Save energy:**

To keep your electricity bill low, look out for new energy-efficient appliances in your household. Use a power strip that can be switched off. This allows you to consistently turn off your devices when you don't need them.

■ [Flyer Economical use of energy](#)

## **Accommodation for asylum seekers and ethnic German repatriates**

### **Shared accommodation (asylum seekers and ethnic German repatriates)**

As an asylum seeker, the district office will provide you with a place to stay in shared accommodation. You will live there for the duration of your asylum procedure.

German ethnic German repatriates also have the option of living in shared accommodation for up to one year.

■ As an asylum seeker, you have a residence obligation for the first three months after your arrival in Germany. This means that you are not allowed to leave the federal state of Baden-Württemberg without permission. The foreigners authority will decide whether to grant you permission (written authorisation). From the fourth month onwards, you can then travel freely in Germany.

### **Subsequent accommodation (asylum seekers)**

After 24 months in the shared accommodation or when a decision has been made on your asylum application, you must move out of the shared accommodation.

Before moving out, you can look for your own accommodation. If you are unable to find your own accommodation, the district administration office will place you in a neighbouring accommodation.

■ Please inform your local authority when you start work so that benefit payments (including rent) can be adjusted in good time.

### **Contact**

#### **Office for Migration and Integration, Landratsamt Bodenseekreis**

■ [Albrechtstraße 75, 88045 Friedrichshafen](https://www.bodenseekreis.de/Albrechtstra%C3%9Fe%2075%2C%2088045%20Friedrichshafen)

■ [07541/2045095](tel:075412045095)

■ [migration@bodenseekreis.de](mailto:migration@bodenseekreis.de)

■ [www.bodenseekreis.de](https://www.bodenseekreis.de)