



# NEW BEGINNINGS

TIPS FOR YOUNG REFUGEES,  
living in Germany with their families

*We are glad that  
you are here*



## IMPRINT

### PUBLISHER:

Association for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors e.V.  
(BumF)

Paulsenstraße 55-56

12163 Berlin

[www.b-umf.de](http://www.b-umf.de)

email: [info@b-umf.de](mailto:info@b-umf.de)

telephone: +49 (0)30 82 09 743 - 0



### Youth without borders

[www.jogspace.net](http://www.jogspace.net)

facebook: /jogspace

twitter: @jogspace

email: [jog@jogspace.net](mailto:jog@jogspace.net)



### COOPERATION:

Franziska Schmidt, Hanna Hohos, Hava Morina,  
Indrit Kuka, Janina Rost, Jenny Gamradt, Leen Kat.,  
Mirjam Lewek, Mohammad Hasib Taheri,  
Mohammed, Nassi Gauthé, Nemat Bayat, Raafat F.,  
Rahooof Fa., Shabir Taheri, Sylbije Gashi

### ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN:

Tomka Weiß

**Special thanks** to Volker Maria Hügel from the  
Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft zur Unterstützung  
Asylsuchender e.V. (GGUA)  
and the entire team at BumF.

### Berlin 2018.

Parts of the brochure are based on the first new  
beginnings-brochure of the BumF

**Translation:** Kabir Basu

**Proof-reading:** Ruby Mason

English version published in 2022

### SUPPORTED BY:





Imprint	3
Contents	5
Hello!	8
What can you do here?	9
Some information on Germany	10



### 1. Your rights in Germany ..... 12

What rights do you have as a young person?	13
What other rights do you have?	13
How can you fight for your rights?	14
Where can you find out about your rights?	15



### 2. Equal treatment - dealing with discrimination ..... 16

What is discrimination?	17
What does discrimination look like?	17
What can you do against discrimination?	18



### 3. School, vocational school, and learning German ..... 20

Can you go to school as soon as you get here?	21
Do you have to learn German before you can go to school?	21
Does school cost you anything?	22
Which kinds of schools are there?	22
Which qualifications do you need for an apprenticeship or to study at university?	22
Can someone help you study?	24
Why do you have to retake a class?	24
Are you allowed to go on school trips?	24
Will your school qualifications from your home country be recognised here?	25
What is an internship?	25
Are there extra German courses?	25
What is a student scholarship?	26



### 4. Work, training & study ..... 28

Are you allowed to work in Germany?	29
What is an apprenticeship?	29
Are you allowed to do an apprenticeship?	30
Are you allowed to study in Germany?	31
How can you finance your apprenticeship/further studies?	31



<b>5. Support, help, and advice</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Who can help?	33
Where can you find help?	34
What do Youth Migration Services (JMD) do?	35
What is child and youth welfare?	36
What is the Youth Welfare Office and what can it do for you?	37
Who can help you deal with threats and violence?	38



<b>6. Residency - Will my family and I stay in Germany?</b> .....	<b>40</b>
What does residency mean?	41
Why does it take so long to get a residency permit?	41
Which government offices are important?	41
<b>6.1 Your family has the right to apply for asylum!</b> .....	<b>42</b>
Who is a refugee and what exactly is asylum?	42
Which documents are used during the asylum proceeding?	43
What are the "established grace period (Festsetzung der Ausreisefrist) and the border-crossing certificate" (Grenzübertrittsbescheinigung)?	46
Application for asylum: yes or no?	46
How does the asylum proceeding work?	46
What is a Dublin proceeding?	49
Why do you and your family have to move sometimes?	49
Bans and sanctions - why do they exist?	50
What are "safe countries of origin"?	50
Can you apply for asylum without your parents?	52
What perspectives are there after an asylum proceeding?	53
<b>6.2 Possibilities following a rejected asylum application and a Request to Leave (Exit order)</b> .....	<b>54</b>
When do you need help from a counselling centre?	54
Negative decision, exit order, threat of deportation – what next?	55
<b>6.3 Other ways to stay</b> .....	<b>56</b>
Residency for well-integrated young adults	56
Tolerated stay for the purpose of vocational training	56
Right of residency for families with Statutory regulations for long-term tolerated stays	56
Residency for humanitarian reasons	57



<b>7. Family reunification</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Who can come to Germany?	59
How does family reunification work in Germany?	60
What other possibilities are there to family reunification?	60
What happens if part of your family is located in another European country?	61
What happens if part of your family is located in another part of Germany?	61



<b>8. Physical and mental health care</b> .....	<b>62</b>
What can you do if you're sick?	63
Which appointments and treatments are available?	63
What is a psychologist and what do they do?	64
What help and advice is available?	65

## HELLO!

You have come to Germany with your family and you probably have a lot of questions. This booklet should help answer some of those questions and explain who to talk to when you and your family need support.

We are a group of young people who have not lived in Germany for long and have had experiences similar to yours. We have spent six months making this brochure. We learned a lot of new things along the way, we talked and wrote, and had a lot of fun creating the brochure. During this time, we learned that many young people from different countries want to help each other. There are many opportunities in Germany, but it can also be difficult at times. We want to

help you understand your rights and how to achieve your goals. There are many people here to support you. Don't lose hope when it gets difficult. You are not alone!

We hope you find all the information you need and wish you and your family all the best for the future!

*We are here  
for you. If we can do it,  
you can do it too!*



## WHAT CAN YOU DO HERE?

You are in a new country called Germany. We are glad you are here! You would like to go to school, learn a new language, make new friends and find out what people your age do for fun. We're sure you have dreams, would like to do an apprenticeship, get a job, and do all the things you enjoy.

*Those were my wishes when I arrived in Germany. I didn't think about the authorities  
▷ Behörden I thought I would always be a child. But when I came to Germany, I realised I had to be a grown up. There are a lot of things I had to do, such as help my family. This is normal, just like in my home country. But suddenly you have appointments at government offices every day. This is difficult for young people who want to live a normal life.*

**TIP:** If you've come to Germany on your own, without your family, this website should have all the important information you need:  
[www.kommgutun.info](http://www.kommgutun.info)

**Behörden, Government Offices** = governmental institutions that implement laws. For example, the Office of Immigration (Landesamt für Einwanderung also known as the Ausländerbehörde) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge or BAMF, for short) are two such offices.

**TIP:** Visit a youth centre ▷ Jugendzentrum near you, if you're looking for someone who:

- can help you with school and studying,
- can help you find sports clubs, a theatre group, or a place where other young people meet up
- can help you look up addresses for counselling centres ▷ Beratungsstellen or find a translator for you.

You don't have to assume all responsibility for your family, friends or other people, just because you might have learned German quicker and you are able to translate. There are a lot of people who can help you and your family understand your situation and take advantage of all opportunities. There are people who can translate for you, your family, friends and other; so you can focus on school and enjoy your free time!

**Jugendzentrum, Youth centre** = a place for young people only. They are officially called children's and youth recreation facilities and you can find them everywhere in Germany. Here you can pursue hobbies, do homework, and get help when you have problems.

**Beratungsstelle, Counselling centre** = a place where you and your family can get independent information. In the middle of this booklet in the chapter "Support, help, and advice", and in all other chapters, you will find tips how to find the right counselling centre.

### SOME INFORMATION ABOUT GERMANY

The full name of Germany is the Federal Republic of Germany. The word "Federal" means that Germany is made up of several states such as Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, or Berlin; which manage their internal affairs independently. Besides the Federal Government, which is responsible for the whole of Germany, each federal state has its own state-government (= Landesregierung). On many topics, state governments are independent from the federal government,

for example on the question of, how and where people applying for asylum live or on matters concerning education. Because of this, there are many differences across Germany in the accommodation of asylum seekers and in deciding who can go to which school and when they can go. Therefore, many young people have very different experiences, depending on which city and federal state they live in.

In Germany, everything is regulated by law. There are many different laws (for example: asylum law, residency law, child and youth protection laws, criminal law). Germany is a democratic country, where every citizen has duties and rights – you have a lot of rights but there are also many rules.

„Keep calm, work hard and never give up. The road ahead is long but your goal is not impossible.“

Shabir Taheri



# 1. YOUR RIGHTS IN GERMANY



In Germany you have many different rights. As a minor, meaning you are under the age of 18, you have specific rights. In the next few chapters, you will find more information regarding these specific rights..

## WHAT RIGHTS DO YOU HAVE AS A YOUNG PERSON UNDER GERMAN LAW?

- You have a right to education. Information on how the German school system works and what you can do can be found in the chapter on **◆ school**.
- You also have the right to healthcare, meaning the right to see a doctor. You can find more information on this in the chapter about **◆ healthcare**.
- You have the right to be supported by **▷ child and youth welfare services**. You will find more on this in the chapter about **◆ help and advice**.
- You have the right to rest and leisure. You cannot be forced to work.
- You have the right to live with your family (your parents and any siblings under the age of 18). Find out more on this in the chapter about **◆ family reunification**.

- You have the right to special protection through the state and its authorities or government offices, if you cannot live with your parents or came to Germany on your own. For situations like this, we made a separate booklet containing information you may need to know: [www.kommgutun.info](http://www.kommgutun.info)

## WHAT OTHER RIGHTS DO YOU HAVE?

- You have the right to physical integrity; no one is allowed to hurt you or force you to do something you do not want to do. You can read more about this in the chapter **◆ help and advice**.
- You have the right to equal treatment; no one is allowed to discriminate against you, based on your origin, religion or your age. You have the right to equal treatment as a girl and woman. You have the right to sexual self-determination: the right to be who you are and love whoever you want. More on this in the chapters **◆ equal treatment** and **◆ help and advice**.
- In theory, one of the rights you have is the right to remain, i.e. the right to stay in

Child and youth welfare services = a support system for all young people in Germany

Germany. Whether you really have this right depends on your ▷ *residency status (Aufenthaltsstatus)*. You can find more on this in the

*In search of the "Why?"  
I have found an "It doesn't  
matter why."* Hava Morina,  
Kosovo-Berlin

Kosovo-Berlin

chapter ◆ *residency and asylum*.

- You and your family have the right to accommodation, which means, by law, you must be provided with housing.
- You have the right to freedom of speech; you can participate in political discussions, you can say what you think. You have the right to demonstrate.

This may all sound complicated, but you have the right to understand what's happening to you and the right to be involved in decisions concerning you!!

#### HOW CAN YOU FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS?

These are your rights and you have many more. If you are under the age of 18, you have the same rights as every other child or young person living in Germany! But at times it might feel like they are not your rights at all. Maybe you don't go to school, maybe you feel that you're not being treated like everyone else. It can be especially difficult if you and your family have not yet secured a ▷ *residency status (Aufenthaltsstatus)*.

You and your family can always ask questions about what is happening. Asking should not result in any negative consequences. You won't always be able to change things and

sometimes it will take a long time, but there are always ways to deal with wrong decisions and other problems. If you have legal problems you can hire a ▷ *lawyer*, which can be expensive. There are also free counselling centres throughout Germany, where you and your family can get legal advice. You and your family have a right to file a ▷ *complaint* if you don't agree with the decisions that were made. Staff within local authorities ▷ *Behörden* are required to inform you about this option.

#### WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS?

All of your rights are not listed in one single law. In Germany, almost every area of life has its own law. Your basic rights are in the Grundgesetz; that is, Germany's charter of Basic Laws. Basic rights mean: Everyone living in Germany has the same rights regardless of origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or political orientation. Your rights as a minor are in the German "Child and Youth Welfare Law" and the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. More on the Child and Youth Welfare Law can be found in the chapter ◆ *help and support*.

**TIP:** At "Youth without Borders" (Jugendliche ohne Grenzen) many young people have joined together who are in a similar situation to yours. They joined together to stand up for their rights. You can contact them here: [www.jogspace.net](http://www.jogspace.net) and [www.facebook.com/jogspace](http://www.facebook.com/jogspace)

Residency status/Aufenthaltsstatus = your legal status in Germany.

More information on *residency*, *lawyers*, *legal action*, and *authorities* can be found in the chapter about ◆ *residency*.

# 2. EQUAL TREATMENT

## — DEALING

## WITH

# DISCRIMINATION



The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The German constitution states that human dignity is inviolable protected, and no one is allowed to be discriminated against. Nevertheless, some young people and their families do experience discrimination in Germany and are treated differently to others.

ground, religion, or sexual orientation. We ourselves can be part of the problem, too. Discrimination is learned behaviour, which we learn from those we trust starting at a young age. When we discriminate, others, like our siblings and our children also learn this from us.

### WHAT DOES DISCRIMINATION LOOK LIKE?

*“We collected our experiences in Germany here, hopefully they help you!”*

*“Sometimes I’m discriminated against on a bus or train because of my native language, Arabic, even though I speak four languages!”*

### WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

Discrimination is when individuals or groups are disadvantaged. They are not treated equally. This can be due to different characteristics or features attributed to that person. Often people are discriminated against based on gender, skin colour, ethnic back-

*“I was shouted at by someone in a government office who told me to go back to my country. I filed a complaint about him!”*

Perhaps you have experienced something similar to this. You feel you’ve been treated unfairly; as though you are not being treated

*“Sometimes people say something about my headscarf or give me funny looks. But it is simply my own choice to wear it.”*

*“I was not let into a club, even though I’m 18 years old. The bouncer didn’t accept my ID. Now I know I can do something about this sort of thing!”*

*"I didn't get a school place because I live in a initial reception centre (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung). I filed a complaint with the support of a counselling centre. Now I can go to school!"*

in the same way as others. For example, as a young person, a "refugee", a "foreigner", as a woman, as a Muslim, as a Hindu, as a Christian, as a Jewish person, because you as a boy love another boy, because you as a girl love another girl, or because you are not German. It can happen that strangers use this to then determine if you are good or bad, if you deserve the same opportunities as others, and who you are. They think they know where you are from, which language you speak und what your religion is – without even asking you. This is called prejudice. Discrimination and racism can happen anywhere, at school, on the street, at work, on public transport, in your neighbourhood, at the doctors, in the media, in laws, or even in government offices or by the police.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO AGAINST DISCRIMINATION?**

Discrimination is illegal in Germany. The "General Equal Treatment Act" prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, origin, gender, sexual identity, age, and disability. If you experience discrimination, you can go to a ▷ *counselling centre* and report it as well as file a complaint. Throughout Germany there are anti-discrimination-counselling centres:

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

There are also counselling services specifically for victims of racism and right-wing extremism. You will find help and support there too: [www.reachoutberlin.de](http://www.reachoutberlin.de)

Here you can find information about what the police can and cannot do:

[www.kop-berlin.de/was-darf-die-polizei-was-darf-sie-nicht](http://www.kop-berlin.de/was-darf-die-polizei-was-darf-sie-nicht)

*"You don't have to accept or endure it. Together we can recognise discrimination and fight it."*

*"Never give up!"* Raheem Fa., from Syria, 16 years old. I live in Brandenburg.



**TIP:** Staying calm is the best protection! Even when you are right, even when the situation is unfair, even when it's difficult, you can. If there is another person there, ask them to speak out as a ▷ witness (Zeug/in). If you can, record the situation on your phone or secretly make a video. Write down everything that happened right after the incident, so a ▷ counselling centre can help you. With their help, and the help of a ▷ lawyer, (Anwalt/Anwältin) you can report the incident.

Witness = a person who says what they saw to the police and in court.

Counselling centre = a place where you and your family can get unbiased information and support.

Lawyer = explained on page 43.

# 3. SCHOOL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL AND

## LEARNING

## GERMAN



All children and young people have a right to education, regardless of their **▷ residency status**. This right is part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Reception Directive, and state school laws in each federal state.

The German school system is complicated, because each state has its own laws. This is why you should gather information on your possibilities and opportunities specific to you, so you can understand what is best for you.

Going to school is compulsory for all children and young people in Germany. This means you have the right, but also an obligation, to go to school. Your residency status has no influence on this. Only in rare cases, if, for example, you are new in Germany and still have to live in a **▷ state institution (Landeseinrichtung)**, could your compulsory education be suspended for you. A **▷ counselling centre** can clarify this and help you understand your situation.

### CAN YOU GO TO SCHOOL AS SOON AS YOU GET HERE?

If you've recently arrived to Germany, you might have to wait a little while before you

can go to school. Each federal state has its own rules: Sometimes it is just a few days, other times, it could take a couple of months.

If, after three months, you still can't attend school, something probably went wrong. Your parents can then go to the local school board and tell them that you request a school placement. The school board then have to help you find a school.

### DO YOU HAVE TO LEARN GERMAN BEFORE YOU CAN GO TO SCHOOL?

It doesn't matter whether you speak German or not: every child in Germany is obligated to attend school. However, it can be hard if you don't speak German. Many children and young people attend a preparation class at a local school, for students new to Germany.

The class may be referred to as *Willkommenklasse* (welcome class), *Integrationsklasse* (integration class), or *Flüchtlingsklasse* (refugee class). As soon as you speak German well enough, you can switch to a regular class. Some schools will place you in a regular class with German children from the beginning and give you extra German lessons.

**Residency status** = your legal status in Germany

**State institution** = is usually called a primary care facility or arrival centre. Explained on page 49 in the section "Why do you and your family have to move sometimes?"

**Counselling centre** = Tips on counselling centres for school and training can be found from page 29 onwards in the chapters on **◆ work, training and study**.

### HOW MUCH DOES SCHOOL COST?

School is free. However, lunch, school transportation, excursions, class trips and your school supplies (pad, pens, calculator, etc.) do cost money. If your parents can't afford all this, you can receive some help from the state. Your teachers can explain to you what you have to do to get this help.

### WHAT KINDS OF SCHOOLS ARE THERE?

There are different types of schools. All children go to primary school (Grundschule). Which school you can attend after primary school depends on your academic performance and grades. You can also switch from one type of school to another, if your grades are good enough. You can make this decision with your teachers and parents. You can obtain a general education certificate (Hauptschulabschluss) after 9th grade. After 10th grade you can take exams to get secondary school certificate (Realschulabschluss) and after 12th or 13th grade you can qualify for a certificate of higher education (Abitur).

### WHICH QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU NEED FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP OR TO STUDY AT UNIVERSITY?

In order to be able to do an apprenticeship and learn a profession, you almost always need a general education certificate. For higher-level professions, you may also need a certificate of higher education. To study at university, you will need a certificate of higher education. To study at a college of applied sciences (Fachhochschule), you may choose a vocational diploma. There is also the option of getting your school qualifications later on, for example, by attending a second-chance or evening school.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL



4 years (6 years in Berlin and Brandenburg)

## LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

after primary school up to 9th or 10th year



### QUALIFICATIONS

general education certificate (Hauptschulabschluss), certificate of intermediate education (mittlere Schulabschluss), secondary school certificate (Realschulabschluss)

## UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

after lower secondary education up to 12th or 13th year



### QUALIFICATIONS

certificate of higher education (Abitur), technical college entrance qualification (Fachschulreife), vocational baccalaureate diploma (Fachabitur)

## ALTERNATIVES



**TIP:** You can look for a youth center near you to get help with your class work. Check out the chapter ♦ support, help and advice, to find out more. Youth centers are also a great place to meet young people your age.

**TIP:** Many schools have a social worker. This person can help you if you have problems studying and need tutoring, or at home and you don't know what to do.

### CAN SOMEONE HELP YOU STUDY?

There are many people and organisations that help children and young people with their classwork and with studying. This help is called tutoring. Tutoring and support with school may vary throughout Germany. Sometimes it costs money. But there are also

a lot of people who will help you study for free. Ask your teachers or classmates for information in there to get help.

### WHY DO YOU HAVE TO RETAKE THE YEAR?

Sometimes you have to retake your class. This is not a bad thing. Many children retake a school year, even though they are very smart. This can happen if your German language skills need improvement or if you were absent a lot. When you repeat the school year, you have a chance to get better grades and improve your education certificate.

### ARE YOU ALLOWED TO GO ON SCHOOL TRIPS?

Even if the ▷ *Office of Immigration (Landesamt für Einwanderung or Ausländerbehörde)* doesn't allow you to leave your city, because you still live in an ▷ *initial reception facility (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung)*, you can join your class on trips. To get permission, your parents must make an appointment at the Office of Immigration.

"Always look ahead, not back." Indrit

Kuka 17 years old, from Kosovo



If your class is going abroad it can be a bit more difficult. For class trips that travel to other countries, the Office of Immigration might not give you permission to go. But you can still try asking anyway. It is best to talk to someone at a counselling centre if the Office of Immigration does not allow you to go abroad.

### CAN YOU GET YOUR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS RECOGNISED?

If you have attended school before coming to Germany and have an education or graduation certificate, you can try to get it recognised. However, this can be difficult as the school system in Germany may be quite different.

There is an office in every federal state that decides whether your education certificate can be recognised. This office is called the certificate recognition service (Zeugnisanerkennungsstelle):

[www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de)

Office of Immigration = explained on page 42

Initial reception facility = also called arrival centre, explained on page 49 in the section "Why do you and your family move sometimes?"

Counselling centre = explained on page 35.

### WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

You can do an internship while you're in school. Internships are great introduction to a profession. For short internships during school, you do not need a permit.

For internships where you do need a permit, you will need to get one from the ▷ *Office of Immigration* and the ▷ *federal employment agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)*.

### ARE THERE EXTRA GERMAN COURSES?

German is a very difficult language and it may take some time before you can speak fluently. For your life in Germany, it is very important for you to understand and be able to say anything you want to. So, don't give up, even if it takes a bit longer than you expected.

If you want to attend an extra German course during the holidays, it is best if you ask your teachers. They may be able to recommend different options, some of which are free. For example, at ▷ *adult education centres (Volkshochschule)*, at ▷ *youth centres*, through ▷ *youth migration services*

*Office of Immigration (Landesamt für Einwanderung or Ausländerbehörde)* = explained on page 42.

*Federal employment agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)* = helps to find work and pays for accommodation, living costs and health insurance. To access these services, you need a residency permit.

*Adult education centre* = a school open to everyone, where you can learn almost everything. Adult education centres are found everywhere in Germany. There are many free courses on offer to refugees.

*Youth centre* = explained on page 33.

*Youth migration services* = explained on page 35.

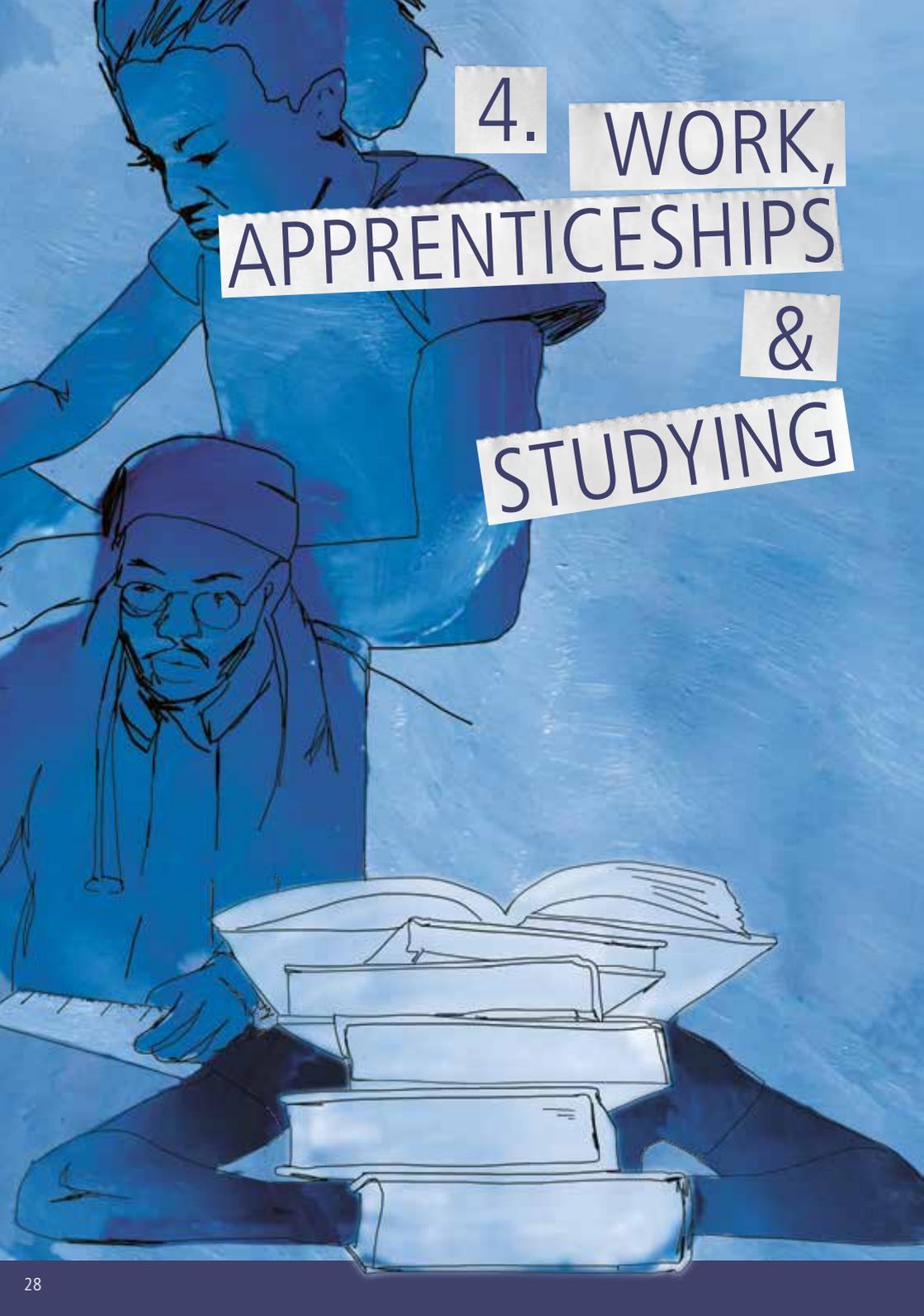
(*Jugendmigrationsdienste*), or through volunteer teachers.

### WHAT IS A STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP?

Are you good in school, but need help to achieve your bigger goals? You might be able to apply for a scholarship. There are many different types of scholarships. A scholarship can provide you with money for school supplies, school trips, or someone to help you study. It always depends on where in Germany you live. Ask your teachers if there are any scholarships you could be eligible for.

*"To learn a new language means to become a new person."* Nassi Gauthe, from Benin, 19 years old





# 4. WORK, APPRENTICESHIPS & STUDYING

## ARE YOU ALLOWED TO WORK IN GERMANY?

If you are younger than 13 years old, you are not allowed to work in Germany. This is known as child labour and child labour is against the law. If you are 13 or 14 years old, you can work for up to two hours a day. Once you turn 15, you can work more than two hours a day. There are, however, a lot of rules for minors who want to work. The most important thing to keep in mind, is that you are not allowed to work during school hours and that you have enough free time and get enough sleep. Before you take on a job, you must check with the **▷ Office of Immigration**, to make sure you are allowed to work.

**Important:** Working without a work permit in Germany, is against the law.

## WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

You have a school leaving certificate and want to learn a profession. There are a lot of professions in Germany that you can only do if you have done an apprenticeship. There are apprenticeships for almost every profession. Some apprenticeships are school-based, and others involve training on the job. A school-based apprenticeship

**TIP:** At a vocational information centre (BiZ) or a Youth Employment Agency (JBA) near you, you can get answers to questions about education certificates, apprenticeships, and your studies. 

consists mostly of lessons at a vocational school (Berufsfachhochschule) and several internships. You can do a school-based apprenticeship regardless of where you're from, how long you have lived in Germany, and what your **▷ residency status** is. You don't have to get permission from the Office of Immigration.

Most apprenticeships are offered through a company. For these, you need a **▷ work permit (Beschäftigungserlaubnis)** from the Office of Immigration. Whether you get this or not depends on many things. During a company-based apprenticeship, you are required to learn the theoretical and practical content at a vocational school. You will have to take regular exams to prove that you know everything about your job in theory as well as in practice. When you finish your apprenticeship, you can always continue learning. For example, you can go back to school and get your general higher education entrance qualification.

Office of Immigration = explained on page 42.

Residency status = your legal status for remaining in Germany.

Work permit = the permission to work or to start vocational training.

## ARE YOU ALLOWED TO DO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

	Residency authorisation/ proof of arrival	Temporary suspension of deportation	Residency permit	Family from "safe country of origin" / Initial reception facility
School-based apprenticeship	✓	✓	✓	✓
Can you get financial support for school?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Company-based apprenticeship	Office of Immigration decides	Office of Immigration decides	✓	✗

If you do not get a work permit from the Office of Immigration, do not give up immediately. Sometimes the decision of the Office of Immigration is wrong and you can try to do something about it. The best thing to do is to go to a counselling centre and ask what opportunities or alternatives there are for you.

**TIP:** Youth migration services can explain to you what kind of apprenticeships you can do with your residency status:  
[www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de](http://www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de)

You can also contact the refugee council in your federal state to ask where to get help near you:  
[www.fluechtlingsrat.de](http://www.fluechtlingsrat.de)

You can find all the information about different **residency papers** on page 43 and page 44.

Even if you have not yet secured a residency permit, there are still a lot of **APPRENTICESHIPS** you can do and **professions** you can learn. See page 56 for more information. Furthermore, there are projects all over Germany that can help refugees find apprenticeships or jobs – regardless of their residency status. The projects are called "IVAF-PROJEKTE", you can find a **current overview online**.

## HOW CAN YOU FINANCE YOUR APPRENTICESHIP/FURTHER STUDIES?

During vocational training, you may receive a training allowance through the company know as an **Ausbildungsvergütung**. If you are doing a school or company-based apprenticeship, you will not receive any money from the **social welfare office (Sozialamt)** or the **Jobcenter** for that period. You will have to apply for an **education grant (Schülerbafög)**, a **student loan (BAföG)**, or a **vocational training allowance (Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe/BAB)**. Whether you get this, depends on the type of residency permit you have and how long you have lived in Germany.

Before you start your apprenticeship or further studies, you should definitely go to a counselling centre. There, you can ask which applications you need to submit to help you to finance your education.

## ARE YOU ALLOWED TO ATTEND COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN GERMANY?

You don't need a German passport to study in Germany. However, you must have good German language skills, you will need to have good grades in school and get your certificate of higher education or an entrance qualification for technical college.

**Social welfare office** = pays for accommodation, living costs, and health insurance if the asylum application has not yet been decided, has been rejected, or you have a "temporary suspension of deportation".

**Jobcenter** = pays for accommodation, living costs, and health insurance and helps with the search for work, if you have residency papers.

**Education grant** = money from the state to support you while you're at school. You don't have to pay back the money later.

**Student loan** = money from the state to support your further studies. The money has to be partially paid back later.

**Vocational training allowance** = money from the state to support you during your apprenticeship. You don't have to pay back that money later.

# 5. SUPPORT, HELP, AND ADVICE

## WHO CAN HELP?

Many things are difficult in Germany, there is a lot of bureaucracy and there are a lot of rules to follow. It can be difficult, not only for you but also for families who have always lived here. Because of this, there are a lot of counselling centres. They can help you and your family to understand your situation and give you advice on how to manage the challenges you face.

In Germany, all children and young people should have the same opportunities. Not every parent is able to offer these opportunities. Some parents might not have the financial means or might not be able to offer the best care for their children, if they are, for example, ill. In these situations, there are **▷ child and youth welfare services (Kinder und Jugendhilfe)** which you and your family can access. They can support you and your parents living in Germany.

**TIP:** A **▷ youth centre or family centre (Familienzentrum)** can give you advice on what kind of support you can get!



**Child and youth welfare services** = a support system for all young people in Germany

**Youth centre** = a place for young people only. They are officially called "Kinder- und Jugendfreizeiteinrichtungen" and they are found all over Germany. Here you can pursue hobbies, do homework, and get help if you have problems.

**Family centre** = a place for families. There are family centres all over Germany. Here families get information, support, and can meet other families.

*"When you come to a new country, you build a new future. And if you want to succeed, you have to put in a lot of effort"* Mohammed, from Syria, lives in Kaiserslautern



There are counselling centres for all your questions. We would advise you to go to a youth counselling centre. They are really good! Everywhere in Germany, there are youth migration services (Jugendmigrationsdienste), which can help you with many questions! [www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de](http://www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de)

#### WHERE CAN YOU FIND HELP?

When we were new in Germany, we all tried different ways to find help. Here, not everyone talks to each other on the streets. But, if you ask, you will usually get an answer. That's how we did it:

- The easiest way is to ask anyone and then, if necessary, just keep asking others until you get an answer. For example, we asked people on the street where to go shopping and the bus driver how to get to the **▷ counselling centre**.
- We researched a topic and then talked

to as many people as possible about it. This is one example of how you can achieve your goals. You can also work together with other people like we do at Youth without Borders (JOG). [www.jogspace.net](http://www.jogspace.net) and [www.facebook.com/jogspace](http://www.facebook.com/jogspace)

- You can use Facebook and other social media to find out about young people and other groups meeting around your city or near you. This is one example of how to find someone to practice German with.
- You can ask your teachers or social workers **▷ school social workers (Schulsozialarbeiter/in)** at school, to help you find a counselling centre or **▷ Tutoring lessons (Nachhilfeunterricht)**. We are sure your classmates have a few tips for you as well. Just ask.
- For specific information, you can also do an internet search, for example. In the internet you can find counselling centres or doctor's offices near you.

**Counselling centre** = a place where you and your family can get independent information and support.

**TIPP:** This is how you can search for youth counselling centres online:

"Beratungsstelle" + "Jugendliche" + (the name of the area/city/town where you and your family live)

In the same way, you can find counselling centres on various other issues you might have. It can be helpful to ask a trusted person you know to recommend a counselling service - this way you will know that the service is good and helpful.

#### WHAT DO YOUTH MIGRATION SERVICES DO?

Youth migration services (Jugendmigrationsdienst) help young newcomers to settle in well and help them with some of their problems. For example, they give advice for questions about:

- school, apprenticeships, and university
- leisure, sports, and cultural events
- residency
- debt issues

...and they can help you find a suitable counselling centre for other questions!

You can find youth migration services everywhere in Germany. They also have an online service, where you can find out about any counselling centres near you:

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

**School social worker** = a person working at your school who is there to help with students' questions and problems.

**Tutoring** = here you will get help with schoolwork, for example, when learning German or when you want to prepare for an exam. You can find tutoring in many youth centres and at the youth migration services.

## WHAT IS CHILD AND YOUTH WELFARE?

In Germany, we have a "Child and Youth Services Act" (Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz). It applies to all children and young people and their families, regardless of how long they have lived here and their **▷ residency status**.

	Residency authorisation /proof of arrival	Temporary suspension of deportation	Residency permit	Families from "safe countries of origin"	Currently living in an initial reception facility
Does child and youth welfare apply to me?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The job of child and youth welfare is to support you:

- So that you can develop freely and can achieve your goals.
- So that you can have the same chances and opportunities as all other children in Germany.

- So that you can see your parents, even if they have separated.
- So that you are protected from danger and can live safely.
- So that you can express your opinion freely and be able to say what you really want to.

And the child and youth welfare services must support your parents, so that they can organise the life of your family well.

**TIP:** What does the youth welfare office (Jugendamt) do? Visit this link to find out more.: <https://handbookgermany.de/de/rights-laws/youth-welfare-office.html>

You can find more information on **residency status** and different residency papers on page 43 and page 44.

## WHAT IS THE YOUTH WELFARE OFFICE AND WHAT CAN IT DO FOR YOU?

The youth welfare office is a **▷ government office** that you can find in every city and district. The youth welfare office must carry out the tasks listed in the "Child and Youth Services Act".

You can always go to the youth welfare office when, for example,:

- you have questions or troubles.
- you have problems with your family.
- you have difficulties at school, for example, with reading, or if you find it difficult to sit there all day.

Your mother and father can also get assistance from the Youth Welfare Office, for example:

- A woman or a man can help your mother and father to organise the tasks of everyday life, for example, with visits to the doctor. There are many other forms of support, which are called "child-rearing assistance or the socio-economical provision" (Hilfe zur Erziehung).

**Agency/authorities** = a state institution that implements the laws.

**Day-care centre** = a place where children can play together from when they are 1 year old and until they get to school. They are looked after there.

- If your mother is pregnant or you have younger siblings, there is "early childhood support" (Frühe Hilfen) for families with young children up to three years of age.
- Your younger siblings also have the right to placement in a **▷ day-care centre (KiTa)** from their first birthday until they start school. They can spend a few hours a day there, giving you and your parents time to learn German, for example.
- If your parents are having problems with each other, are fighting, and maybe want to separate.

If you are under 18 and you came to Germany on your own without your parents, then the youth welfare office is responsible for you. They have to ensure that you are well cared for. For your situation, we have another brochure, where you can find a lot of important information: [www.kommgutun.info](http://www.kommgutun.info)

Even if you are over the age of 18, you have the right to support from the youth welfare when you need help and advice.

## WHO CAN HELP YOU DEAL WITH THREATS AND VIOLENCE?

No one has the right to hurt you or to coerce you to do anything that harms you or others. There are different forms of violence and coercion. For example, some young men and women are forced to steal, to beg for money, to sell drugs, to prostitute themselves or work instead of going to school. Some young people are beaten, others are pressured with threats against their families. Some young men and women experience sexualised violence from strangers or someone you know well, for example, a family member.

You are not alone! There are counselling centres that can help you, and places where you can find protection if you are threatened or persecuted. Counselling centres can also support you if you are worried about a friend.

Find a person you trust and tell them about your experiences and fears. This could be a teacher, a school social worker, a doctor, an employee of the youth welfare office, youth migration services, the police, a neighbour, or a friend. A trusted person will listen to you and help you to find a suitable counselling centre in your area.

*"Life for every child should be like a story that they wish to write."*

*"As you follow your own path, you create your own universe."* Leen Kat., 18, Wiesbaden, active with JoG, comes from the world.



**TIPP:** If you need support, help, or protection, the youth welfare office is required by law to help you. Every federal state has its own HELP HOTLINE for children and young people. There, you can talk about your problems and fears anonymously and get help. 

For YOUNG PEOPLE:  
"Number for your sorrows" 116111

For GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN:  
08000 116 016

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

POLICE: 110

# 6. RESIDENCY – WILL MY FAMILY AND I STAY IN GERMANY?



## WHAT DOES RESIDENCY MEAN?

Many people come to Germany for a better and safer future. Unfortunately, many people in the world can't freely choose where they live. If you and your family want to stay in Germany, (or travel to another country in Europe and live there) you need a permit. If you get a permit is based on the decisions of government offices.

## WHY DOES IT TAKE SO LONG TO GET A RESIDENCY PERMIT?

Until the government offices make a decision on your residency status, a lot of time may pass. How long depends on a lot of factors. For example, which country you are from and what kind of history you have; how long you have lived in Germany; whether you go to school in Germany; whether or not you have found a job, apprenticeship or attend university here; if you have travel documents; and whether you are healthy. Sometimes the government offices make a mistake and that too can take time to fix. Waiting can be difficult, but it is still important that you focus on learning a new language, school, and your other goals!

## WHICH GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES ARE IMPORTANT?

### THE BAMF

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is a government agency. If your family applies for asylum in Germany, an employee of the BAMF will interview your parents. They decide whether your family will get asylum, refugee protection, or subsidiary protection.

Furthermore, the BAMF always checks if your country of origin is not safe for you and your family, and you will be able to stay in Germany while they check.

The BAMF will inform your family as well as the Office of Immigration about its decision.

### THE OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION

Every city and district has an Office of Immigration. If your family has not applied for asylum yet, you can apply for temporary suspension of deportation or other residency papers. If you applied for asylum through BAMF, the Office of Immigration will give you a temporary residency permit. When a decision has been made on the asylum application, the Office of Immigration will

*Government offices/government authorities* = a state institutions that implement the laws. For example, the Office of Immigration and the BAMF.

give you a residency permit, in line with the information they have received from BAMF. The Office of Immigration will also add a **▷ work permit** to your residency papers for temporary suspension of deportation or residency permit, and decide on whether or not you are allowed to travel to another federal state (**▷ residency restriction/Residenzpflicht**).

Appointments at the Office of Immigration are important, but can be exhausting at times. Your family has the right to be accompanied by someone of your choosing.

## 6.1 YOUR FAMILY HAS THE RIGHT TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM!

### WHO IS A REFUGEE AND WHAT EXACTLY IS ASYLUM?

All people fleeing from war or conflict in their home country can request protection here. This is called "applying for asylum". Germany also recognizes other reasons for seeking refuge as well. For example: sexual exploitation of young women, homosexuality, forced marriage, religious reasons.

A refugee is a person who has fled their home country. In Germany, there are several forms of "refugee protection" that offer different rights. When you apply for asylum you may receive "asylum", "refugee protection", "subsidiary protection", or "deportation protection".

**Work permit** = the permission to work or to start company-based training.

**Residency restriction** = a restriction placed on your freedom of movement by the Office of Immigration.

## WHAT PAPERWORK IS THERE IN THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE?

Asylum	Refugee protection	Subsidiary protection	Deportation ban	Obstacle precluding removal
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Refugee passport	Refugee passport	National passport or passport replacement	National passport or passport replacement	Temporary suspension of deportation status
↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
Residency permit for 3 years	Residency permit for 3 years	Residency permit for 1 to 3 years	Residency permit for 1 to 3 years	A few weeks or months

These residency papers can be renewed at the Office of Immigration. Whether or not an extension is possible, depends on various things. This can be the case if, for example, the situation in your country of origin or your family's circumstances in Germany have changed. A determination will be based upon the assessment of a government office.

A **▷ consultation on asylum hearings (Asylverfahrensberatung)** and a **▷ lawyer (Anwalt/Anwältin)** can help you to understand your situation and clarify your prospects.

**Consultation on the asylum hearings** = here your family will receive information about the asylum hearing. You can also get help and support with contacting government offices, preparing for the hearing, reading through letters and notices, and planning your next steps in Germany.

**Lawyer** = can represent your family when dealing with authorities (such as the BAMF, the Office of Immigration). They can help you to enforce your rights. They can also sue another person for you, if someone in your family has been wronged. A lawyer can take the letters from the authorities and write complaints. They are there for you and your family through all negative legal developments, for example, when a bad letter arrives or you are in danger of being deported. A lawyer can also accompany you to your asylum hearing (Anhörung.)

**The paperwork needed for Asylum hearings are explained on the next page (page 44). You can also find tips about the "determination of departure deadlines" and the "border crossing certificate" on page 46.**

## IMPORTANT PAPERWORK AND TERMS IN THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

**Aufenthaltsstatus (Residency status)** = your legal status in Germany.

**Proof of arrival** = the residency status you receive prior to submitting a formal asylum application.

**Residency permit** = the type of residency status you receive while your asylum application is being processed.

**Acquiescence** = this is a reluctant acceptance of your presence in Germany granted by the Office of Immigration. With this, you will get a "temporary suspension of deportation." You and your family may receive this, if a family member living with you is very ill and cannot travel. You may also receive an acquiescence in order to complete your vocational or school education. An acquiescence can always be extended until the need for its extension ends (completion of school or vocational training/recovery or end of illness/ procurement of missing travel documents) or you receive another type of residency permit. Once the reason for extension ends, an acquiescence cannot be extended and it can be cancelled.

**Asylum** = generally refers to a safe place where you and your family are protected from dangers such as persecution. All people in Germany who are, for example, politically persecuted in their country of origin, are entitled to seek asylum. For people that are threatened by war and persecution, there are various forms of protection, such as, "refugee protection", and "subsidiary protection".

**"Getting asylum", "getting refugee protection" and "getting subsidiary protection"** = mean that your family gets permission to stay in Germany for the time being. After that, it will be decided if you can stay forever. You can stay for a year or for three years.

**Prohibition of deportation** = means that it is too dangerous for you and your family in your country of origin. This can be, for example, because a family member living with you has a disease that cannot be treated there. In this case, you will receive a residency permit for one year, after which it will be decided if you and your family can stay longer.

**Obstacle to deportation** = indicates that you and your family cannot leave Germany due to a specific obstacle. This may be due to missing travel documents or if a family member is too sick to travel. As long as the deportation ban is in place, you will receive an acquiescence for your stay in Germany.

**A residency permit** = a permit granting citizens of other countries permission to live in Germany for the time specific. The length of permitted stay is printed on the document.

*„Take it easy! Never give up!!!“*

Mohammad Hasib Taheri



## WHAT ARE THE “ESTABLISHED GRACE PERIOD FOR DEPARTURE” AND THE “BORDER CROSSING CERTIFICATE”?

It could be that you and your family will receive a document that contains an “established grace period for departure”. This means that your family has to leave Germany by a certain date. If your family does not leave Germany by this date, the Office of Immigration can demand your deportation. However, the grace period for leaving Germany can also be extended.

In addition to the “grace period for departure”, your family will receive a “border crossing certificate”, also called “GÜB”. This document will allow you to leave Germany voluntarily, before the end of your grace period. During your voluntary depart-

**IMPORTANT:** Even if you have a “set departure deadline” and a “border crossing certificate”, the Office of Immigration still have to give you a “temporary suspension of deportation”. You and your family should definitely get help from an asylum counselling centre or a lawyer. They can explain to you what your other possibilities are.

ture, the border patrol or a representative of Germany, will take the GÜB as proof of your departure.

## APPLICATION FOR ASYLUM: YES OR NO?

If your family would like to apply for asylum in Germany, you should seek advice beforehand. The consultation on asylum hearings can talk to your family about your situation. It is important that you understand the proceeding as best you can and agree to the conditions.

## HOW DOES AN ASYLUM PROCEEDING WORK?

If your family has applied for asylum, you will receive a letter from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) while your case is being processed. This letter will contain the date for your ▷ “asylum hearing”. Your family must attend this interview. The hearing is an important interview that can take up to several hours, during which you will be asked many different questions. The BAMF interviewer will want to know

**Asylum Hearing** = an interview with a BAMF employee during your asylum proceeding

**Protocol** = a document noting everything you and your family said during the interview

**Official Decision Notification** = is a document containing a decision. In this case, it contains a decision on your asylum application.

why your family came here; the route you took to get to Germany; and why you can not return to your country of origin.

If you personally experienced persecution in your country of origin and need protection, you can have a separate asylum hearing without your parents. Starting at age 6, you are allowed to explain your reasons. You can find more information on page 52.

After the interview, your family will receive another letter from the BAMF with a ▷ *protocol (Protokoll)*. There, you will find the answers you gave during the interview. If something is wrong or missing in this protocol, your family must inform the BAMF immediately.

You may have to wait some time until you receive a response from BAMF. Often it takes a few months until you receive an ▷ *official decision (Bescheid)*. This will either be positive or negative.

If you receive a negative decision, your family must react quickly. There is very little time to file a ▷ *lawsuit (Klage)* challenging the decision. At the same time, you will need to inform yourself quickly of other residency options you have. Even if the decision is pos-

**Lawsuit** = this is now you challenge a legal decision. For example, if your family has received a negative decision on your asylum proceeding, you can appeal against it. Usually this is done together with a lawyer and must be submitted as soon as possible.

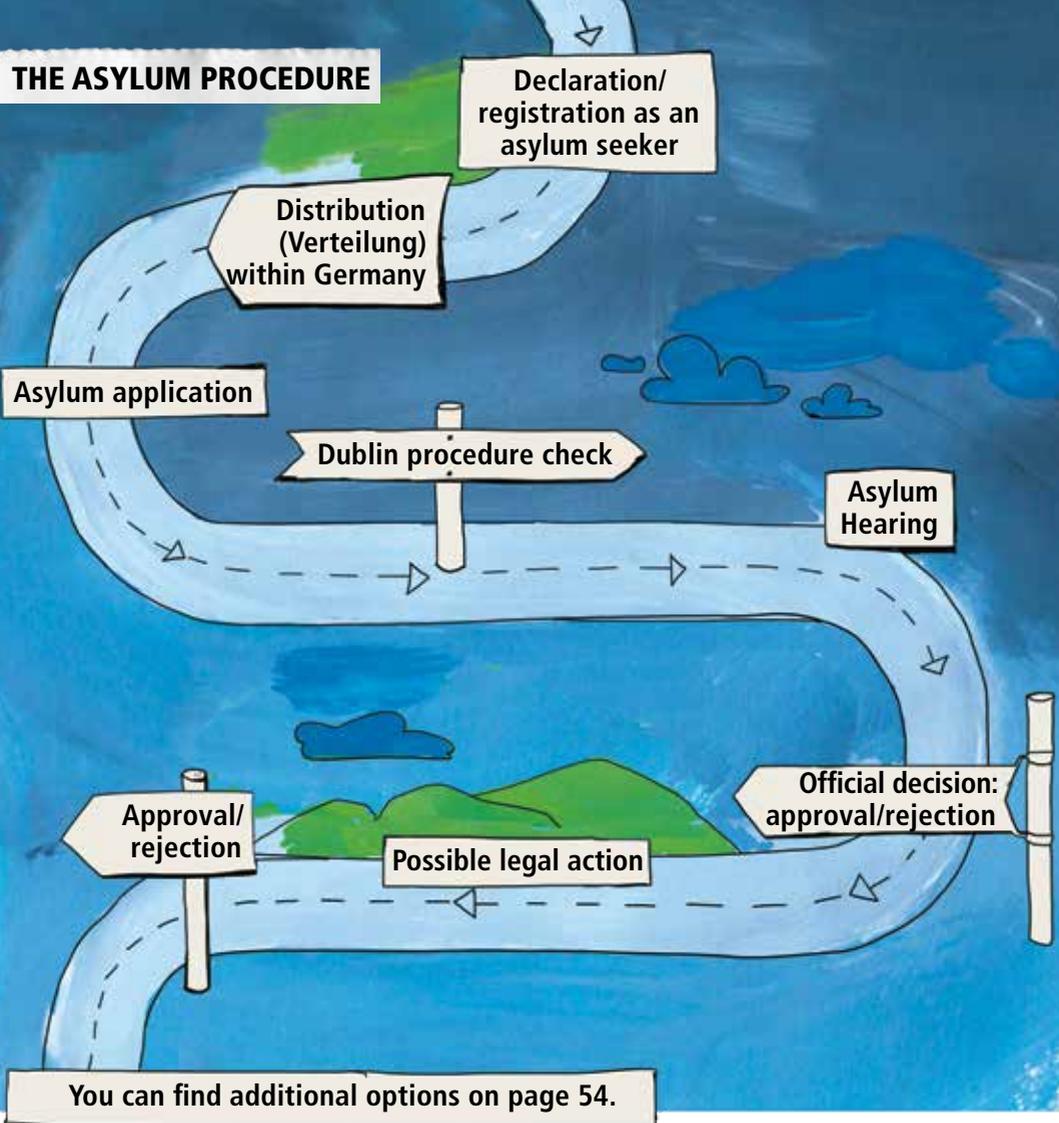
itive, you should get a consultant for asylum proceedings to look over it and plan your next steps.

The whole asylum proceeding is complicated and it's important that your family seeks for help from a lawyer or a consultant on the asylum hearings. Especially for the interview – called the hearing – your family should be well-prepared. Your family should discuss all letter and correspondances from BAMF and the Office of Immigration with a consultant on the asylum hearings.

**TIP:** Here your family can find A CONSULTANT FOR ASYLUM HEARINGS and LAWYERS:  
[www.proasyl.de/beratungsstellen-vor-ort](http://www.proasyl.de/beratungsstellen-vor-ort)  
[adressen.asyl.net](http://adressen.asyl.net)  
[www.fluechtlingsrat.de](http://www.fluechtlingsrat.de)

**TIP:** Here you can find videos in many languages that explain the asylum hearing during the asylum proceeding. Make sure you still speak with consultant before your asylum hearings.  
[www.asylindeutschland.de/de/film-2](http://www.asylindeutschland.de/de/film-2)

## THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE



In this image, you can see how the asylum proceeding works. At many points in this process, you have to wait: sometimes, before you can even make an application; until the hearing; and other times, until you receive a decision. You will definitely have to wait if you appeal the decision in  $\triangleright$  court (*Gericht*).

**Distribution** = Germany will decide where you and your family will live during the asylum proceeding. Unfortunately, you can not choose where you will go. If you have family living in Germany or elsewhere in Europe and you would like to be close to them, please let your case worker know. However, it may not happen immediately. If you are able to move, the BAMF and the Office of Immigration must be aware of your new address. If not, they will not be able to send you your letters!

## WHAT IS THE DUBLIN PROCEDURE?

Germany is a member of the European Union (EU). Throughout the EU, there is a law called the Dublin Regulation. It regulates which country people are allowed to stay in after fleeing to Europe. Many people have to return to the country via which they entered the EU. Before BAMF checks whether or not you and your family can stay in Germany, they first check to see whether or not you must return to another EU country. However, there could also be reasons that speak against you and your family living in that country. In that case, you can stay in Germany. You will need a lawyer to clarify your situation.

## WHY DO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY HAVE TO MOVE SOMETIMES?

During and sometimes after the asylum proceeding, you and your family may have to

move, again and again, to different towns or cities and live in different accommodations. These different types of accommodation have names like  $\triangleright$  *Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung* (initial reception facility) and  $\triangleright$  *Gemeinschaftsunterkunft* (shared accommodation). These accommodations are very different from one another. Some families can also move into an apartment, but that is complicated.

For some families, everything happens very quickly and the whole asylum proceeding takes place in one facility. This may be the  $\triangleright$  *Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung* (initial reception facility), a  $\triangleright$  *Besondere Aufnahmeeinrichtung* (special reception facility, an  $\triangleright$  *Ankunfts-zentrum* or *AnkerZentrum* (arrival center), or something other type of facility entirely.

Again, your family should definitely seek advice on this topic.

*Gericht* (court) = is a state institution, a place where legal questions or concerns are clarified through existing laws. This includes, for example, the question of whether or not a negative decision in an asylum proceeding was right. Courts also decide whether or not someone has committed a crime and if or how they should be punished. If you and your family disagree with a government decision, you can go to court with a lawyer and ask for the decision to be checked. You may get a different decision as the court works independently from government offices.

*Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung* (initial reception facility), *Besondere Aufnahmeeinrichtung* (special reception facility), *Landeseinrichtung* (state reception facility), *Ankunfts-zentrum* or *AnkerZentrum* (arrival center) = these are a few of the facilities where people arriving to Germany seeking asylum, may live. Most people live in one of these facilities for the first six months, sometimes less. People arriving from so-called "safe countries of origin", must live here until they receive a residency permit or leave Germany entirely.

*Gemeinschaftsunterkunft* (shared accommodation) = this is one type of accommodation where people who have applied for asylum may live, when they are no longer required to live in an "Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung", "Besondere Aufnahmeeinrichtung" or "Ankunfts-zentrum".

**IMPORTANT:** You and your family have the right to information. You have the right to understand your situation as well as to seek an independent and free counselling service in a language that you understand. Throughout the asylum procedure, you have the right to hire a lawyer; this costs money.

### BANS AND SANCTIONS – WHY DO THEY EXIST?

There are many rules for people who apply for  $\triangleright$  *asylum* in Germany. What these rules are depends largely on your  $\triangleright$  *residency status* and how long you and your family have been living in Germany.

It may be that your parents are not allowed to work and you are not allowed to do certain types of vocational training because you do not have a  $\triangleright$  *work permit*. It is possible that your family will not receive cash for purchases, but items, such as pre-made

meals. These are called  $\triangleright$  *Sachleistungen* (benefits in kind).

It may also be that you are not allowed to move freely around Germany and that you can't choose where to look for an apartment  $\triangleright$  *Wohnsitzauflage* (fixed residency).

In certain situations, the Office of Immigration demands that you obtain passports from your country, for example. If you do not comply with the demands, the Office of Immigration can impose certain  $\triangleright$  *Sanktionen* (sanctions). For example, reduce the money you receive, or restrict your work permit so that you can not do vocational training.

Not all rules apply to you. You and your family should check with a counselling service to see which rules apply to you, how long they apply, and whether you can do anything to change them.

### WHAT ARE "SAFE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN"?

Germany has declared some countries as "safe countries of origin". For people from these countries, Germany assumes that

there is generally no reason to request asylum. The German government says that people from these countries can return to their home country, are safe there, and need not fear persecution. This is a political decision and does not mean that all people are really safe there. There are often minorities who are oppressed, discriminated against, or persecuted.

Get some advice on whether, instead of applying for asylum, you should apply directly to the local Office of Immigration for a residency permit due to a  $\triangleright$  *Abschiebungsverbot* (deportation ban). This is possible and someone will examine whether there are grounds for you to stay. You can find more information about this on page 57.

If you are from a "safe country of origin" and have already applied for asylum, definitely seek help from a consultant for asylum proceedings. If you receive a negative decision in the asylum proceeding from the BAMF, there is little time for action and to find other options to stay. For this, you will need support.

**Abschiebungsverbot (deportation ban)** = means that it is now too dangerous for you and your family in your country of origin, e.g. because someone in your family has an illness that cannot be treated there. In this case, you will first get the right to stay for one year, then it will be decided whether you may stay longer.

**TIP:** Together with other young people, you can fight against rules like these, discrimination, prejudices and for the right to stay: Check out "Youth without borders"! [www.jogspace.net](http://www.jogspace.net) and [www.facebook.com/jogspace](http://www.facebook.com/jogspace)

**IMPORTANT:** You and your family could have individual reasons to seek asylum, even if you come from a "safe country of origin". Talk to a counselling service to find out if your country is defined as a "safe country of origin" and to find out more about the asylum procedure.

You and your family have the right to information. You have the right to understand your situation and find independent and free counselling in a language you understand. During this whole process you have the right to get a lawyer, but this will cost money.

*Asyl (Asylum)* = explained on page 44.

*Aufenthaltsstatus (residency status)* = your legal situation in Germany.

*Beschäftigungserlaubnis (work permit)* = the permission to work or to do an apprenticeship.

*Sachleistungen (benefits in kind)* = if you don't get money, but ready-made food, cleaning supplies, washing powder etc.

*Residenzpflicht (residency restriction)* = if you cannot move freely around Germany.

*Wohnsitzauflage (fixed residency)* = if you cannot choose yourself where you want to live.

*Sanktion (santion)* = penalty for doing something a government office believes is wrong.

## CAN YOU APPLY FOR ASYLUM WITHOUT YOUR PARENTS?

As a family, you apply for asylum together. Your parents go to all the official meetings and the interview (hearing) at the BAMF.

However, if you had reasons of your own to flee your country, or your family had to flee to protect you, it is important that you yourself have an interview at the BAMF. There may also be reasons for you to want to tell them your story yourself. Here are some examples of when this would be essential:

- if you have been or will be forced to get married against your will (Zwangsheirat or forced marriage),
- if you have been or will be forced to join the military or other military groups to work or to fight (Kindersoldat or child soldier),
- if you cannot stay with your family because you have experienced violence with them (Häusliche Gewalt or domestic violence),
- if you have been or will be forced to smuggle drugs or sell them or forced into prostitution (human trafficking),

- for girls: if your genitals will be circumcised (Genitalverstümmelung or genital mutilation).

You only have to go for an interview at the BAMF if you are ready for it and if you feel that you are able to handle it. You have the right to bring a person to the interview who can listen to you and support you. You can go there with your parents or another person you trust. You should prepare yourself well for the interview at the BAMF – for this, there are consultation services for the asylum proceeding.

In the interview at the BAMF there is always an **▷ Dolmetscher/in** (interpreter) who speaks your mother tongue.

If you do not understand the translation, you can say that you would like a different interpreter. If, as a girl, you would prefer a woman to do the interview and a woman to translate, you can also say so in the interview. In the same way, as a boy you have the right to a male interviewer and interpreter.

## WHAT ARE YOUR PROSPECTS FOLLOWING THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE?

There are various possibilities for a long-term stay in Germany. After a few years with a residency permit (usually three or five years) your family can get a **▷ Niederlassungserlaubnis** (settlement permit).

For the settlement permit, your family must show that you are able to live in Germany without much support from others. You can do this, for example, with a good command of the German language, having your own lease for a house or apartment, how old your parents are, as well as whether or not they are healthy and can work.. A counselling centre can help you and your family understand your possibilities and prospects.

**TIP:** Your family can find consultation services for asylum proceedings and lawyers here:  
[www.proasyl.de/beratungsstellen-vor-ort](http://www.proasyl.de/beratungsstellen-vor-ort)  
<https://adressen.asyl.net>  
[www.fluechtlingsrat.de](http://www.fluechtlingsrat.de)

**Dolmetscher\*in** (interpreter) = is a person who can speak several languages and translate important conversations or documents into the language you and your family understand.

**Niederlassungserlaubnis** (settlement permit) = is the permission to stay in Germany forever.

## 6.2 POSSIBILITIES AFTER A REJECTED ASYLUM APPLICATION AND AN INSTRUCTION TO LEAVE

A negative decision from the BAMF or the Office of Immigration is not a deportation notice, but the first negative decision on an application. Even government offices can make mistakes. You and your family can appeal their decision. The deadline for legal action against the negative decision is very short, sometimes only a few days. You will need counselling immediately, as well as a lawyer. They will support you and you can discuss the possibilities you still have.

**GET INFORMED** on the “petition proceeding”, the “hardship commission”, and “church asylum” at a counselling centre!

**TIP:** talk to other people about your situation, at school, at counselling service centers or at the youth centre, and get in touch with “Youth without borders”. Help from others will make even a tricky situation easier!

### WHEN DO YOU NEED HELP FROM A COUNSELLING CENTRE?

- if your family receives a refusal/ a negative decision from the BAMF or the Office of Immigration,
- if the Office of Immigration does not extend your temporary suspension of deportation or residency permit,
- if you receive a “grace period for departure” or a “border crossing certificate”, or fear you will be deported,
- if you have an application for residency for humanitarian reasons at the Office of Immigration (more information on page 57),
- if you have problems with the Office of Immigration because, for example, they won’t issue you a work permit.

In the case of negative decisions, there are always other possibilities: there is, for example, a “*Petitionsverfahren*” (petition proceeding) and the “*Härtefallkommission*” (hardship commission), and you can contact the media and politicians. There is also “*Kirchenasyl*” (church asylum).

It can be difficult to keep looking for new possibilities. But you are not alone. Together, we can do it.

### NEGATIVE DECISION, INSTRUCTION TO LEAVE, THREAT OF DEPORTATION – WHAT NEXT?

If your family receives a negative decision, you may not feel safe anymore. Some families receive a letter with a date by which they have to leave Germany. Sometimes, this can be only a few weeks or days away. At that point, you might be afraid. Maybe you don’t want to stay here anymore, because there are so many questions, so many rules, and everything is so uncertain and difficult.

You and your family are not alone. It is imperative that you find counselling and talk to others about your situation.

And, even if it’s difficult, try to focus on your everyday life. It’s exhausting and difficult, but as long as you don’t give up, with the support of your friends, school, carers, social workers, associations, advice centres, and many more people, you can find a way!

“Life is not easy, but don’t give up.”  
Nemat Bayat, I come from Afghanistan.



## 6.3 OTHER WAYS TO STAY

For teenagers, young adults and families, there are three main alternatives for staying.:

### **RESIDENCY FOR WELL-INTEGRATED YOUNG ADULTS**

After four years in Germany, you can obtain the right to stay, even if your family's asylum application has been rejected beforehand. For this, you must be at least 14 years old and may not be older than 20 years. It is important, however, that you attend school or have already graduated from school. Your parents and siblings can then also receive a right to stay. But this is not always the case. The rules are very complicated. A counselling centre can help you and your family to understand the rules.

### **TOLERATED STAY FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

If you have placement in an apprenticeship with at least 2 years of training and are learning a profession; your parents can apply for a temporary suspension of deportation for the duration of this training. If the *Office of Immigration* agrees, you can not be deported. However, there are many rules determining if and which training courses you can get a temporary suspension of deportation for. A counselling centre can help you and your family to understand the rules.

### **RIGHT OF RESIDENCY REGULATIONS FOR FAMILIES WITH LONG-TERM SUSPENSION OF DEPORTATION**

Families who live together with children under 18 years of age can get a residency permit after six years with a temporary suspension of deportation. For this, the family must meet certain conditions. This is also complicated. If you have been in Germany for many years, ask a counselling centre to explain the conditions to you.

### **RESIDENCY FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS**

Other reasons to stay, **without or after**, a rejected asylum procedure may be that your family can't travel back to your country of origin. Maybe its not physically possible. This is not your fault. This can happen, for example if:

- there is no airport,
- your family can't get travel documents, even though they're trying and also the Office of Immigration cannot obtain travel documents,
- a person from your family is very ill and therefore cannot travel,
- ... or some other reason why the journey back can't happen.

In these cases, the Office of Immigration may grant a stay for humanitarian reasons. Your family can then get a residency permit after 18 months with a temporary suspension of deportation. This is also complicated, and your family should definitely seek advice.



*"Always stay strong."* Raafat F, 22 years old, from Syria, I live in Brandenburg.

The different residency papers are explained on page 43 and 44.

Office of Immigration = explained on page 42.

# 7. FAMILY REUNIFICATION



Families in Germany have the right to live together until the children are 18 years old. Unfortunately, there are laws that make it difficult for your family to come to Germany. Most important is the  $\triangleright$  *residency status* of the family member(s) who is/are already living in Germany.  $\triangleright$  *Familienzusammenführung* (family reunification) begins only after the asylum proceeding, that is when at least one member of your family has been granted the right to stay in Germany.

You can try it if a person from your family has been granted asylum or refugee protection. With subsidiary protection, there are only limited possibilities. With a temporary suspension of deportation there is no possibility of a family reunification.

For siblings under 18 years of age, it is complicated. Sometimes, the office of immigration requires that your family has a large space to live and enough money to support everyone. Sometimes, your family needs to be classified as a  $\triangleright$  *Härtefall* (hardship case). There are always special rules, so you need to go to a counselling centre for information on whether family reunification is possible for you.

## WHO CAN COME TO GERMANY?

According to the Asylum law, for family reunification, 'family' is not everyone who is related to you, but only married parents and their unmarried minor children. That is children under 18 years of age.

Here are a few examples that show who may come to Germany through  $\triangleright$  *family reunification*:

- If you and your mother are in Germany, your father and your siblings can come to Germany, if you were living together prior to arriving in Germany.
- If you're here with your father, your mother and your siblings under the age of 18 can come to Germany, if you were living together prior to arriving in Germany.
- If you're here with both parents, your unmarried siblings under 18 can come to Germany, if you were living together prior to arriving in Germany.
- If you came here with your aunt or uncle or someone completely different and you are not 18 years old yet, sometimes your parents and even your siblings under 18 can come as well.
- sometimes, close relatives can come as well, but that is very rare.

*Aufenthaltsstatus* (residency status) = your legal situation in Germany.

*Härtefall* (hardship) = a special situation with special needs, for which there are different rules.

*Familienzusammenführung* (family reunification) = a person has been granted a residency permit and is allowed to bring their husband/wife and their children under 18 years of age to Germany.

## HOW DOES FAMILY REUNIFICATION TO GERMANY WORK?

For family reunification, your father/ mother/ underage siblings must themselves submit an “Antrag auf Familienzusammenführung” or an Application for Family Reunification to a German embassy. They usually have to do this in the country where they live. However, there may be exceptions here as well.

The application should be submitted as soon as possible. In addition, the Office of Immigration must be informed of the application at the embassy. After a positive decision from the BAMF, your family has three months to do this. In these three months, the Office of Immigration in Germany must be informed. The process is very complicated and can take a long time. The best thing is to have a lawyer, or a counselling centre, explain to you exactly how it works. They can help you and your family take legal action against a negative decision.

**TIP:** You can find all the embassies and information about the application here:  
<https://familie.asyl.net/start>



## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES OTHER THAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION?

There are also other ways for people to come to Germany. For these, you need a ▷ *visa (Visum)*. The residency status of the people who are already in Germany is not important for this. But this is often difficult and costs a lot of money.

For example, people can come to Germany if:

- They have a student visa for studying at a university.
- They have a work visa for an apprenticeship or a job, especially for professions that have gaps needing to be filled in Germany.
- They have to get urgent medical treatment in Germany that is not available in their home country.
- They have worked abroad for Germany and are therefore in danger.
- Your family or friends of your family have enough money to pay for accommodation, health insurance, and ▷ *living expenses (Lebensunterhaltskosten)* for the person(s).

Visa = the permission to travel to another country

## WHAT HAPPENS IF A PART OF YOUR FAMILY IS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY IN EUROPE?

If your family is separated within ▷ *Europe (Europa)*, you have the right to live together in one country. There, mother, father and children under the age of 18 will be granted a common asylum proceeding.

Your family has to say immediately when applying for asylum that there are parts of the family in another European country and that you want to apply for asylum and live there together. Then the other European country decides whether it will take over the asylum proceeding for everyone. That can take a long time.

Usually children under 18 go to the country where their parents live. But if it is too dangerous for you and your family there, your asylum proceeding can also be carried out in Germany. Also, family reunification within Europe is complicated and you will need advice!

*Lebenshaltungskosten (cost of living)* = all the money needed for food, housing, and medical care for one person. That is about 800 € per month.

*Europa (Europe)* = the countries that together form the European Union, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF A PART OF YOUR FAMILY IS IN ANOTHER PART OF GERMANY?

If your family is separated within Germany, you have the right to live together in one place. There, mother, father, and children under 18 go through a common asylum proceeding. As soon as you apply for asylum, your family must say that a part of your family lives somewhere else in Germany. The authorities then decide where you will live together. That can unfortunately take a little while.

A counselling centre can help you to work together to live in one place.

8.

# PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH



## WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU'RE SICK?

You have the right to good health! If you are physically ill or if you have mental health condition, you can go to a doctor.

In some cities you can get an ▷ *insurance card (Versicherungskarte)* for this, in some you can get a ▷ *health insurance certificate (Krankenschein)*.

All people in Germany who are not yet 18 years old and all pregnant women should get all essential medical treatment paid for by the state.

With a health insurance certificate, it is sometimes more difficult to get an appointment. Sometimes you have to wait a few days for the health insurance certificate.

If you or someone in your family is ill and has problems getting the right treatment, get help from a counselling centre!

## WHICH APPOINTMENTS AND TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?

During your first days in Germany you will be examined by a doctor. If you are ill, you will be treated. You do not yet need an

insurance card for this.

If you are under 18 years old, you can go to a **special doctor for children Kinderarzt\*in (pediatrician)**.

All children up to the age of 6 go to a paediatrician regularly. Over the years, the pediatrician will do a series of Früherkennungsuntersuchungen (early detection examinations) called U1-U9. All children in Germany do this. During the early detection examination, the doctor checks whether the children and young people are developing well, if they are sick, and makes sure they do not have any underlying medical or mental conditions that need treatment. During the early detection examination, parents also get tips

Your **RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE** is part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Reception Directive, and the Child and Youth Welfare Act. It doesn't matter how long you've been in Germany and what kind of residency status you have.

*Versicherungskarte (Insurance card)* = is the name given to a card that you get so that the state can pay the costs when you are ill. Children can get these too, but your family has to go to the health insurance company and register you.

*Krankenschein (health insurance certificate)* = is the same as an insurance card, only it's made of paper. You also get it from your health insurance company so that you can get a medical examination if you are ill and the state will pay for it.

on who can help them if their children are often ill or have other problems.

If you have an insurance card, you can see a doctor without being sick. This is called a **“Vorsorgeuntersuchung” or a preventive medical check-up.**

For women and girls, there is the possibility to have a preventive medical check-up with a gynaecologist once a year. Pregnant women should have special pregnancy examinations. Gynaecologists are special doctors for women only. They are there for women if they are pregnant, if they have questions about contraception, or if something bad has been done to them.

#### **WHAT IS A PSYCHOLOGIST AND WHAT DO THEY DO?**

A psychologist can give you help if you're not feeling well, even if you're not really sick at all or if you're sick in a different way than usual. For example:

- when you can't sleep,
- when you're sad a lot,
- when you're scared,
- if you hurt inside, in your soul or heart or head,
- if you don't know who to talk to about your problems.

Violence and persecution that you may have experienced in your home country or when fleeing to Germany can lead to mental illness. Such illnesses can be treated at so-called “Therapiezentren für Flüchtlinge” or therapy centres for refugees. There are people there who only work with children and young people. They talk to you and together with you they look for ways to make you feel better. The treatments are free.

#### **WHAT HELP AND ADVICE CAN YOU GET?**

If you and your family can't understand your doctor, can you take along an interpreter who will translate for you. You can ask a person you know or ask a counselling centre for help finding someone for you.

In an **EMERGENCY:** Ambulance number 112

### **“THERAPIEZENTREN FÜR FLÜCHTLINGE” OR THERAPY CENTRES FOR REFUGEES**

Support with psychological problems and in critical situations.

You can find a list of contacts here:

[www.baff-zentren.org/mitgliedszentren-und-foerdermitglieder](http://www.baff-zentren.org/mitgliedszentren-und-foerdermitglieder)

### **“TELEFON-BERATUNG” OR COUNSELLING OVER THE PHONE**

For all questions and problems with children and teenagers:

0800 – 111 0 333

Online counselling for young people with

### **“SUIZIDGEDANKEN” OR SUICIDAL THOUGHTS**

[www.u25-deutschland.de](http://www.u25-deutschland.de)

In “Medibüros” you can get

### **“KOSTENLOSE GESUNDHEITSVERSORGUNG” OR FREE HEALTHCARE**

for people without health insurance papers:

[www.medibueros.m-bient.com](http://www.medibueros.m-bient.com)

**A PLACE FOR YOUR NOTES AND IMPORTANT NUMBERS**



