

Welcome to Berlin

Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin für Materialien und Energie (HZB)

This booklet was made by doctoral researcher representatives 2018

HZB Helmholtz
Zentrum Berlin



Disclaimer

This document is not an official publication of the HZB and is only a product of the HZB doctoral researcher representatives. This booklet provides information collected from experiences of other doctoral researchers and HZB cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of its content. For any inquiries about this handbook, please contact the current representatives whose email address is at the end of the booklet.

Content

- ▶ Introduction 4
- ▶ Accommodation 5
- ▶ Registration 7
- ▶ Taxes 8
- ▶ Banking 9
- ▶ SCHUFA 10
- ▶ Health insurance 11
- ▶ Transport 12
- ▶ Enrollment 14
- ▶ Other useful info 15
- ▶ Very important! 16



Welcome aboard!



First of all CONGRATULATIONS!

If you are reading this you have probably just received a confirmation that you are about to become one of our doctoral researchers here at HZB. We are happy to have you here and to make your start as smooth as possible we wrote a short instruction what your first steps should be.

Now that you are to become a part of our crew you should complete the following list:

- ▶ Get a place to stay
- ▶ Sign a contract
- ▶ Register at the local resident's registration office (Einwohnermeldeamt)
- ▶ Open a bank account, if you don't have a European Euro bank account
- ▶ Get German health insurance

Accommodation

Before you come to Berlin you have to find an accommodation. This is probably the most important step since every next move you take towards settling down in Berlin relies on your residence address. If you don't have a friend or a relative you can stay with we suggest you find a temporary room/flat.

If you are looking for a permanent place have in mind that most apartments are not furnished. Pay attention whether the rent stated on the site is Kaltmiete (only include the rent without utilities) or Warmmiete (includes costs such gas, water, heat and waste collection)

You are required to pay a deposit and it is usually 2-3 Kaltmieten. Many landlords also ask for an income statement for the last three months, motivation letter, copy of your ID, copy of your work contract, certificate of employment, evidence of having been a reliable tenant (ask your current landlord) and SCHUFA (credit rating in Germany).

Accommodation

Here are few suggestions to help you find a new home in Berlin.

For stays from 1 month (minimum) up to 2 years, HZB employees receive special conditions in the guest house:

<https://igafa.de/en/guest-houses-ibz/>

Alternatively, you can try some of the many websites for renting short or long-term:

Short term accommodation:

<https://www.airbnb.com/>

<https://wunderflats.com/>

<https://www.wimdu.com/>

Long term accommodation:

<https://www.wg-gesucht.de/> <https://www.studenten-wg.de/>
<https://www.immobilienscout24.de/> <https://www.degewo.de/>
<https://www.howoge.de/> <https://www.ebay-kleinanzeigen.de/>
<https://www.immowelt.de/>
<https://www.berlinovo.de/en/page/berlinhas-lot-offer-our-furnished-apartments-too>
<https://berlin.homecompany.de>
<https://www.thehomelike.com/en/lp/remberlin/>
<http://www.boarding-spreepolis.berlin/>

Student offers that might be available to others:

Studentendorf in Adlershof: <http://www.studentendorfberlin.com/adlershof/service>

Studentendorf in Schlachtensee: <http://studentendorf-berlin.com/schlachtensee/service>

Registration

Once you found an apartment and moved to Berlin you need to register yourself. You need to book an appointment in your nearest Bürgeramt in first two weeks of your arrival. HZB can assist you with the registration and later with a police record certificate and a residence permit. For this contact respective HR manager/administrator when you arrive.

If you would like to book an appointment yourself, here is the link:

<https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/120686/>

There, you will find required documents, forms you and your landlord need to fill in and all useful information. Have in mind that you are required to bring some documents such as civil status certificate which you obtain from administration from your home town.

About two weeks after your registration you will receive your tax identification number through the post. The amount of taxes a person needs to pay depends on your living circumstances, salary and your dependents. HZB takes care of your taxes so you don't have to, but if you want to find out how much money of your salary will be approximately deducted we listed tax classes below.

Taxes

Tax classes are defined by the tax authority:

- I Single, widower, divorced without children
- II Single parents (single, widower, divorced with children)
- III Married single-earners or dual earner when one of the partners has a right to be in tax class V. For couple with one being lower (class V) income and other higher income class III.
- IV Married double earners when both earn similar amount
- V See tax class III
- VI For employees with a second, additional job

Net amount calculator: www.brutto-netto-rechner.info

If you have any questions regarding your taxes you can visit the Finanzbehörde:

<https://www.berlin.de/sen/finanzen/steuern/finanzaemter/>

If you do not receive your tax ID in about 4 weeks from the registration, you need to apply for the number again via this site:

https://www.bzst.de/EN/Private_individuals/Tax_identification_number/notification_idnr/notification_idnr_node.html

Banking

In order to receive your salary you need to have a bank account. Usually, to open a bank account you will need your passport, proof of accommodation and employment agreement. However these rules may differ from bank to bank and some banks do not require you to be registered to open an account. Here is a list of several banks in Berlin

<https://www.sparkasse.de/> <https://www.commerzbank.de/>

<https://www.berliner-volksbank.de/homepage.html>

<https://www.deutsche-bank.de/pk.html>

<https://www.dkb.de/> <https://www.revolut.com/en-DE>

<https://www.n26.com/en-de/>

SCHUFA

Many landlords will ask you to provide them with SCHUFA in order to rent a flat.

Schufa is the shorthand abbreviation of **Schutzgemeinschaft für allgemeine Kreditsicherung**, which roughly translates to “general credit protection agency.”

Your credit score is a measurement of how reliably you’ve met financial obligations like utility bills and credit card payments, and it’s used to decide how worthy you are of being granted further obligations like personal credit loans. Schufa is automatically created as soon as you register your address upon moving to Germany.

Here are websites where you can order it online:

- ▶ <https://www.meineschufa.de>
- ▶ <https://bonitaetscheck.immobilienscout24.de/>

Health insurance

In Germany you are required to pay for your medical treatment. For that reason you should find a health insurance company as soon as possible. You will also need health insurance employment registration.

You are free to choose your insurance company. A well know insurance company is for example TK (TechnikerKrankenkasse) (<https://en.tk.de>). It also has a local office in Adlershof. Usually to register with a Krankenkasse you need to fill out a registration form (ask HZB if they can help you with that) and you will also need a passport photo.

If you are coming as a student on a stipend and not a regular PhD contract you will most likely need to find a private health insurance.

After you applied for health insurance you will receive a health insurance card. You should present this card whenever you go to the doctor.

For more information about health insurance you can go to site

https://www.toytowngermany.com/wiki/Health_insurance

Transport

You will find that every part of Berlin is very well connected with each other with public transport. Depending of where you live you can use public transportation such as U-bahn, S-bahn, trams and busses. Berlin is also bike friendly so there are bike lanes everywhere. If you come by car, have in mind that most licenses last for 6 months if you do not have a German driving license. You might need to provide a German translation of your license or an international driving license.

There are three different zones in Berlin

- ▶ Zone A: Berlin's inner city within the S-Bahn ring.
- ▶ Zone B: Outside the S-Bahn ring to the city boundary.
- ▶ Zone C: Greater Berlin area (15 km around the city) including Potsdam.

Monthly ticket of AB zone is 84 euros. Once you enroll in University you will receive a free monthly ticket from them.

Here, you can find details how to get to HZB (Adlershof or Wannsee)

https://www.helmholtz-berlin.de/zentrum/kontakt/standort/index_en.html

Enrollment

Once you settle down with everything you may start the enrollment process. This is not necessary in the beginning, but by the time you approach the end of your thesis you should be enrolled at a University.

Each semester, you will be required to pay a semester fee. Have in mind that being a part of the University opens door to many benefits. You get free transportation card, discounts in mensa, many museums and sport centers, you have access to student flats, ...

There are many Universities in Berlin that you can choose from and several of them are listed below. However, you should talk to your supervisor before taking any steps towards enrollment.

- ▶ Free University of Berlin (*FU Berlin*) <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/index.html>
- ▶ Humboldt University of Berlin (*HU Berlin*) <https://www.hu-berlin.de/en/>
- ▶ Technical University of Berlin (*TU Berlin*) <https://www.tu-berlin.de/menue/home/>
- ▶ University of Potsdam <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/index.html>

Other useful info

Here is the list of several German phone providers:

- ▶ <https://www.vodafone.de/>
- ▶ <https://www.telekom.de/start>
- ▶ <https://www.o2online.de/>
- ▶ <https://www.base.de/>

HZB provides German and English language classes once you arrive if needed

All doctoral researchers receive a standard basic salary of 75% salary group 13 TVöD.

The HZB graduate center invites every new doctoral researcher for a Welcome talk to inform about all offers, programs and so on at HZB. If you are not invited to any talk two months after your start, you should please contact the office yourself.

https://www.helmholtz-berlin.de/jobskarriere/promotion/index_de.html

Very important!

Remember, you are not alone. Here, at HZB, a group of doctoral researcher representatives can help with any advice concerning your PhD life. But in order to help you and to inform you about all the nice events we prepare for everyone such as Stammtisch, DR retreat, Winter meeting and many more, we need to have your email. So please, once you arrive and receive your new HZB mail address, send us an email, so we can add you to the mailing list.

Doctoral representatives are elected every year at the PhD retreat. To see who are current doctoral representatives visit the website:

https://www.helmholtzberlin.de/jobskarriere/promotion/promovierendenvertretung/index_en.html

We hope that this little booklet helps you have a great start and we hope to meet you soon at one of our events!

Best,
Your doctoral researcher representatives DocTeam
docteam@helmholtz-berlin.de