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Social participation and language courses

Information for refugees with disabilities
and their families from the project
Empowerment Now and the group
Now! Nicht Ohne das Wir



What are my rights in Germany?

Many refugees with disabilities and their families face significant challenges when they arrive in Germany: How can they get support and help? They have many questions about the support system in Germany. They also want to know what rights they have to support and assistance. But often they cannot find information in their own language.

That's why there are now six brochures with information in nine languages. We inform you about your rights to support and the different types of support available. And we answer questions about the support system in Germany. "What information would I have wanted when I arrived in Germany?" This question was important to us when we wrote up the information.

You are not alone!

There are many counselling centres in Germany. You can get advice there. Always seek support!

Why should I go to a counselling centre?

Counselling centres can help you apply for support services or if your application is refused. After receiving advice, you will better understand your needs and options, and get the right support services.

Counselling centres

[Supplementary Independent Participation Counselling Centre \(Ergänzende unabhängige Teilhabeberatung, EUTB\)](#)

[Migration Counselling Centres of Welfare Associations \(Migrationsberatungsstellen der Wohlfahrtsverbände\)](#)

For questions about health care, medical rehabilitation and care, you can contact the [Independent Patient Counselling Centre Germany \(Unabhängige Patientenberatung Deutschland, UPD\)](#).

You can also contact disability associations, the Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt), the Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit) or the Integration Office (Integrationsamt). They are often close to you.

There are even more counselling services in many federal states. It's best to get information at your place of residence.

Social participation and language courses

Participation in life and society is a guiding principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. People with disabilities should be able to plan and manage their lives independently and responsibly. This applies both to their home and to their environment outside the home.

In Germany, the state provides services for social participation. These services are intended to enable or make it easier for people with disabilities to equally participate in life. Social participation services are part of integration assistance. Integration assistance is defined in Social Code IX (Sozialgesetzbuch IX).

We provide an overview of social participation services, especially those related to appropriate housing and the right to personal assistance. We also have information about language courses. Social participation also means getting involved in the community, for example in self-help groups. You will find tips on this at the end of the booklet.

What services are there for social participation?

For example

Housing services (Section 77 of Social Code IX)

These services will help you to find housing that meets your needs. With these services, you can adapt your home, pay for disability equipment and maintain your home according to your needs.

Personal assistance services (Section 78 of Social Code IX)

To enable a person with a disability to manage their daily life independently, the state provides support services through an assistance service. For example, someone will help you with household chores, life planning, leisure activities and participation in community life and culture.

Special-needs educational services for early intervention for children not yet in school (Section 79 of Social Code IX)

These services include all educational aids that help a child with disabilities to develop and realise their personality. For example, social pedagogical and special-needs educational assistance, psychological and psychosocial assistance and counselling for parents or other persons who raise the child.

Services for the acquisition and maintenance of practical skills and knowledge (Section 81 of Social Code IX)

For example, a person with a disability learns household activities, prepares for work life, improves language and communication skills. Some people with disabilities undergo mobility training to learn how to travel safely without assistance or receive basic training for the blind.

Communication and understanding (Section 82 of Social Code IX)

These services enable or facilitate communication with the environment for people with hearing and speech impairments, especially through sign language translation and other communication aids.

Mobility services (Section 83 of Social Code IX)

People can receive mobility services if their disability limits their participation in social life. These services include transport through a driving service, assistance in purchasing a car or obtaining a driving licence.

Aid (Section 84 of Social Code IX)

Aids for social participation include communication aids and mobility aids for leisure activities, as well as items for daily living that are not part of medical rehabilitation. These include sports prostheses, a sports wheelchair, an accessible computer, a mobile phone, a bicycle or a car.

The Social Participation Act (Gesetz zur sozialen Teilhabe) does not specify how many services are approved. This is checked and decided by the authorities for each person who applies for services. They take into account the individual's personal circumstances and life situation. The authority assesses the measure as "appropriate" and "necessary".

Am I entitled to social participation services?

If you are a recognised refugee, a person entitled to asylum or a person entitled to subsidiary protection, you are entitled to benefits for social participation. In addition, people with a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) under Section 24 of the Residence Act can apply for social participation services.

Who else can receive social participation services? This includes asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for at least 36 months and who receive similar benefits under Section 2 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz).

Who is not entitled to social participation benefits?

These are asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for less than 36 months. However, the Social Welfare Office can approve services according to Section 6 para. 1 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz), e.g., for assistance. The office can approve the services if

- the person with a disability needs them to ensure their health,
- a child with a disability has special needs.

But the service is a so-called discretionary service (Ermessenleistung). It means that the authority may approve the service, but the person with a disability has no legal right to it.

Who pays for social participation services?

Social participation services complement other services, such as medical rehabilitation or education participation services. It means that the payer will only agree to social participation services if your support needs are not covered by other assistance.

Various payers fund social participation services, for example:

Payers for integration assistance (Träger der Eingliederungshilfe)

For recognised refugees, asylum seekers and people with subsidiary protection

Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt)

For asylum applicants, people with tolerance permit (Duldung) and people with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act

Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt)

For children and young people with mental disabilities

Need-based housing

People with disabilities in Germany have the right to appropriate accommodation in housing. If you are not provided with appropriate accommodation, you should seek advice and file a complaint.

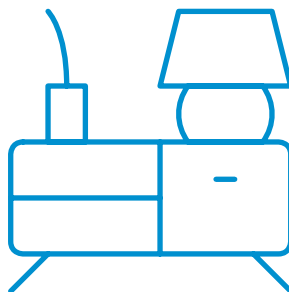
Living in First Reception Centre (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung “EAE”)

In most cases, the authorities place refugees in First Reception Centres immediately after their arrival in Germany. Refugees with disabilities can be exempted from the obligation to live in a First Reception Centre. However, they have to prove that their accommodation is not accessible (Section 49 para. 2 of the Asylum Act, termination of the residence obligation). They can then apply to move to suitable accommodation.

Private accommodation

People who use a wheelchair and have a degree of disability (Grad der Behinderung, GdB) of at least 50, as well as people with visual impairments or care level 4 (Pflegegrad), are entitled to more living space. This entitlement is also known as an additional housing need.

In Germany, a home of 45 to 50 square metres is considered adequate for one person. An additional 15 square metres is allocated for each additional person. People with disabilities who have a right to additional housing needs are entitled to up to 15 square metres of additional living space.



Personal assistance

People with disabilities in Germany have a right to an assistance service. However, they must be able to prove that they need regular support for at least five hours a day. The amount of assistance depends on their needs: from a few hours a month to 24 hours a day.

Assistance can be provided for

- care (e.g., personal hygiene, showering, dressing, going to the toilet),
- support in the household (e.g., with cleaning, cooking or shopping),
- kindergarten or daycare centre,
- school (school support),
- work (work assistance),
- your leisure activities (e.g., excursions, theatre, cinema, museum, sports, travel companions),
- assistance for parents with disabilities and their children (parental assistance).

Who pays for personal assistance?

In Germany, various payers cover assistance. The payer responsible depends on your residence status and the type of assistance service. Sometimes more than one payer is responsible.

Who are the main payers?

Health insurer (Krankenkassen)

For recognised refugees, asylum seekers and people granted subsidiary protection, e.g., for domestic help and care

Payers for integration assistance (Träger der Eingliederungshilfe)

For recognised refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, e.g., for parental assistance or assistance with leisure activities

Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt)

For asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) as well as persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act, e.g., for care assistance

Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt)

For children and young people with mental disabilities

Access to language courses

Learning German is important. If you speak German, you will do better in Germany, can talk to others, know your rights and will be able to work. For immigrants in Germany, there are so-called integration courses. Integration courses consist of a language course and an orientation course. In the language course, you will learn German; in the orientation course, you will learn about German history and culture, but also about rights.

Would you like to take part in an integration course? Then submit an application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge “BAMF”). You can do this online or at a regional office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. There you will receive an authorisation certificate with which you can look for a course in your area. Important: The course provider must be authorised. You can find more information in [Handbook Germany](#).

If you are unable to take part in an integration course because of your disability, the authorities will exempt you from attending the integration course. But we recommend you: take advantage of the offers so you learn German.

What language courses are available for people with disabilities?

For refugees with disabilities, there are integration courses tailored to their needs. In these courses, people learn at a slower pace and in small groups. Sometimes the classroom and learning materials are made accessible. Unfortunately, these courses are not available in all places.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, for example, offers integration courses for people with visual or hearing impairments. You can find such language courses in the [BAMF Navi](#), an online search engine for integration and vocational language courses in Germany. There you can filter by criteria such as location, time, level or target group.

For **people with limited mobility** who use a wheelchair or walking frame, for example, there are barrier-free integration courses.

Most organisations run integration courses for **people with hearing and visual impairments** that specialise in educational programmes for people with hearing or visual Impairments. In addition to language skills, participants learn skills such as Braille or how to use aids. These courses usually have fewer participants and last longer. In our [Roadbox](#), we have listed some providers of integration courses for people with hearing and visual impairments. There are also other organisations, such as the [Deaf Refugees Communities](#) and [German Federation of the Blind and partially Sighted \(DBSV\)](#), that offer language courses for people with disabilities. There you can learn the language or improve your German language skills. However, the courses are not integration courses.

You don't have to attend a special language course for blind or hearing-impaired people if you don't want to. You can also take part in an integration or vocational language course if it meets your learning needs. However, make sure that the course room and learning materials are accessible to you.

For **people with cognitive impairments**, there are regional offers in Berlin, Bremen and Oldenburg, for example. However, these are only language learning offers. For people with cognitive impairment, there is still no integration course.



Can't find a language course near you?

If you cannot find a language course in your area, you can apply to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for relocation assistance to attend a course in another federal state. To qualify, you must show that

- you could not find a course place in your place of residence or
- the move is necessary for other important reasons.

In addition, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees will reimburse travel costs if the journey to the language course is more than 45 minutes each way. To do this, you must submit an application and present your travel tickets.

There are also providers of integration courses that offer accommodation in a boarding school. This means that it is possible to spend the night there. This means you don't have to move and you don't have a long journey to the integration course. In order for the costs of your accommodation to be covered, you must submit an application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

Participation in social life

There are several ways in which you can participate in social life. We have listed a few offers here, but there are many more. Find out about suitable offers for you at a counselling centre near you.

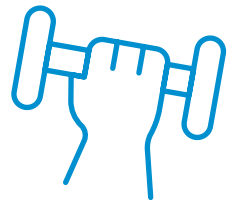
Self-help and self-advocacy groups

People in similar life situations meet in self-help groups. They exchange ideas and support each other. [Nakos](#) or [Selbsthilfenetz](#) will help you find a self-help group in your area. Here are some examples of self-help groups: [Mina – Leben in Vielfalt e.V.](#) (Turkish and Arabic, Berlin); [Handicap International](#) (Ukrainian, online), [Die Sputniks e. V.](#) (Russian, nationwide).

In self-advocacy groups, people work together to defend their interests and rights. They want to make a difference in society and politics. For example, refugees with disabilities and their family members can join the [group NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir](#). One activity pursued by the group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” was, for example, to participate in the creation of these booklets.

Sports offers

There are sports offers for people with disabilities all over Germany. Many clubs offer inclusive formats – whether wheelchair rugby or blind tennis, swimming, a hike at the weekend or membership in the fan club of a football team. You can find out about the available services at a counselling centre in your area.



On the website of the [German Disabled Sports Association \(Deutscher Behindertensportverband\)](#), you can also search online for suitable offers in your area.

Music offers

Music is a universal language. Many inclusive choirs are happy to welcome new voices, and ensembles invite people to join in. Music can also be a good way to practise German. You can find out about inclusive music offers in your area at a local counselling centre.



Information for refugees with disabilities and their relatives is a series that has published on:

1



[The first steps after arrival in Germany](#) – Information on the most important points of contact after arriving in Germany

[The support system for people with disabilities](#) – Information on participation benefits, social benefits versus participation benefits, application for aids, recognition of a disability

2



3



[Health, rehabilitation and care](#) – Interesting facts about entitlement to medical care, rehabilitation and nursing care and about the health insurance system

[Support system for family members of children with disabilities](#) – Information on the right to education, care and support

4



5



[Social participation and language courses](#) – Which services strengthen your participation in life in Germany? Information on integration courses, accessible accommodation and support

[Applying for and getting benefits](#) – Everything you need to know about the main state benefits and how to apply for them

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Who are “we”?

We are the “Empowerment Now” project of the organisation Handicap International and the self-advocates of “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir”. We are committed to improving access to information for refugees with disabilities and their families. The members of the group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” have experienced how difficult it is to get support and help in Germany. That’s why they want to share their knowledge. Also with you.

About the group

NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir:



“NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” is the self-advocacy of refugees with disabilities. We are refugees ourselves and we have disabilities. Since our arrival in Germany, we have been confronted with barriers. But in our group we find understanding and solidarity. We support each other and work together for an inclusive society.

We work for a better life for refugees with disabilities and their families in Germany. The self-advocacy group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” is supported by Handicap International as part of the “Empowerment Now” project.



About the “Empowerment Now” project

With “Empowerment Now”, Handicap International supports the self-advocacy of refugees with disabilities and their families. Together with the group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir”, we advocate for the rights and interests of refugees with disabilities. We are committed to systematically addressing the concerns of refugees with disabilities – from accommodation, to access to accessible language courses, to inclusion in the labour market.

The “Empowerment Now” project is funded by:



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration
Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus