



Arriving in North Rhine-Westphalia.

First steps to finding your way
in our community.



Welcome to North Rhine-Westphalia!

“ Your journey here has been long and difficult. You are seeking shelter and new prospects in Germany. I am glad that you have arrived in North Rhine-Westphalia. All beginnings are difficult and that is why we would like to provide you with help and advice.

North Rhine-Westphalia is a federal state characterised by its diversity. This is something we are proud of. Over four million people in North Rhine-Westphalia have roots in other countries. And North Rhine-Westphalia is a federal state in which a willingness to help others is a priority. In addition to the official points of contact outlined in this brochure, you will meet people who will help you on a voluntary basis and offer you a wide range of assistance and support.

In this brochure you will find information on the points of contact you can or must visit first and on where you can seek advice and support. In addition, important terms that you will come across in everyday life are explained. You will also find sources of information that might be of interest to you.

This brochure is designed to help you get started, to find your way around here and to feel at home as quickly as possible. The people of North Rhine-Westphalia will be only too happy to help you.



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Minister of Labour, Integration and Social Affairs
of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
1 Registration in Your Town	10
2 Residence	12
3 Social Benefits	14
4 Current Account	22
5 Children and Family	24
6 Language and Culture	26
7 Training and Work	28
Further Information	32
Glossary	36
Editorial Information	42

Introduction

This brochure has been prepared for you.

The information in this brochure is targeted at you as a refugee if

- you have arrived under a **Humanitarian Reception Programme**  run by the Federal Government and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia or
- you have been recognised in Germany as being entitled to asylum or as a refugee in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, or have been granted subsidiary protection, or
- your application for asylum has not yet been processed and, as a person seeking protection, you intend to stay in Germany for a longer period and, **after your reception** at a federal state facility for refugees, you have **already been assigned to a town / city**. This especially applies to you as an asylum seeker for the period in which your application for asylum is being processed if you originate from a particularly dangerous country such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq or Eritrea and are likely to be granted a residence permit.



Information for family members

The aim of this brochure is not only to help newcomers get off to a good start. We also wish to give you as family members or friends some guidance on how you might be able to help.

Under a Humanitarian Reception Programme, you can take care of a few things before a planned arrival. There are tips on each page as to the issues that can be clarified before your relatives arrive in Germany.

One thing at a time

This being a new country for you, some things might seem strange or even a bit complicated to you at the beginning. This brochure explains what you have to know to find your way in North Rhine-Westphalia. In addition to information on registering in North Rhine-Westphalia, you will find valuable information on seeking employment and learning German, as well as many other interesting facts.

Simply follow the steps in this brochure, one after another. We have provided a checklist for some of the steps to help you remember all the required documents. Seek individual advice if you are not in possession of these documents.

Words and terms marked in bold and in colour will be explained again at the end of this brochure.

Seek advice and support

You will undoubtedly have many questions, not all of which can be answered by reading this brochure. Whether you need help filling in forms, dealing with agencies and authorities, seeking advice/counselling in times of distress, looking for language courses, schools and **child day care** ^[40] or finding doctors/hospitals, there are various advice centres in the town or city where you now live which will be pleased to help you.

You can visit one of the following advice centres and, if you wish, take your relatives along with you:

Individual counselling and active support can be obtained from the staff of the **Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants (MBE – Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer)** ^[40]. If your application for asylum is still being processed, please contact a **social counselling centre for refugees (counselling for refugees)** ^[38].

The **Youth Migration Service (Jugendmigrationsdienst)** ^[39] is dedicated to supporting young people between the ages of 12 and 27. It can provide you with individual counselling on issues of relevance to you in your new environment. To help you rapidly gain a foothold, you will be given particular support in the areas of education, training and choice of occupation.

Many towns and cities have a **Municipal Integration Commissioner and / or Municipal Integration Centres** ^[40] that will also be pleased to assist you with any questions or difficulties you may have and to put you in touch with the person who can help you.

These Integration Centres can also tell you who to contact with regard to matters concerning your children and who can assist you with translations.

Associations and organisations such as the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO – Workers' Welfare Association), Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK – German Red Cross), Diakonie (Social Welfare Organisation of the Protestant Church in Germany), Caritas Germany, Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Association of Welfare Organisations) or local Refugee Councils not only provide assistance for people experiencing all kinds of distress but also offer migrants a wide variety of social support. **Migrants' self-help organisations** also provide helpful support at local level.

Religious communities of the different religions can be found in many German towns and cities. Whether Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic or Protestant communities, many of them provide support for migrants in your town/city. If you would like to know more, feel free to ask a religious community in your area. Local advice centres will also provide you with further information.

Women who have been traumatised by violence can receive counselling and support from special **women's support facilities** ³⁸, such as women's counselling centres and rape crisis centres, and can be provided with secure accommodation in a women's shelter.

Persons experiencing difficulties with their sexual identity should ask the social counselling centre for refugees (counselling for refugees) to provide them with the details of a local **self-help group**.



1



REGISTRATION IN YOUR TOWN

What do I have to do?

 **Go to the Town Hall in the town where you are now living.**

You should go there at once because there is a Citizens' Services Office (Bürgerbüro) in the Town Hall. There you will learn which local agencies you need to contact first and where to find them, for example the Aliens Office (Ausländeramt), Residents' Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt), **Social Security Office (Sozialamt) and Housing Office (Wohnungsamt)** .

Why do I have to go to the Town Hall?

Once you have moved into accommodation in your town, you are obliged to have yourself registered with the **Residents' Registration Office (Citizens' Services Office)** ³⁷ in the Town Hall. If you are living in an **accommodation facility** ⁴⁰, it is possible that you have already been registered with the Residents' Registration Office. Consult your local accommodation facility.

The Residents' Registration Office will issue you with a **Registration Certificate (Meldebescheinigung)** ⁴⁰ for submission to other authorities and agencies.



What do I have to bring along?

- Birth certificate, certificate of marriage or civil partnership, as applicable
 - Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Visa
 - If available, a Certificate of Registration as an Asylum Seeker (Bescheinigung über die Meldung als Asylsuchend – BüMA)
 - Confirmation from your relatives if you are living with them or
 - a certificate from your landlord if you are renting accommodation
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RESIDENCE

What do I have to do?

👉 Go to your local Aliens Office (Ausländeramt) .

If you have submitted an application for asylum and are in possession of a Certificate of Registration as an Asylum Seeker (BüMA), or if you have already received a temporary residence permit (Aufenthaltsgestattung), you should go to the Aliens Office without delay.

If you have arrived on a visa, you should go to the Aliens Office as soon as possible but, at the latest, before your visa expires.

Why do I have to go to the Aliens Office?

At the Aliens Office you can settle everything concerning your residence. You need an official permit to stay in Germany. This document includes precise information on the purpose of your stay in Germany and whether you are permitted to work here.

As an asylum seeker, you will initially receive a provisional identity document (Certificate of Registration as an Asylum Seeker – BüMA) or a temporary residence permit. In connection with this, the Aliens Office will also inform you about where you may stay in Germany.



What do I have to bring along?

- Birth certificate, certificate of marriage or civil partnership, as applicable
 - Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Visa
 - If available, a Certificate of Registration as an Asylum Seeker or temporary residence permit
 - If available, any documents you may have connected with your admission to the Humanitarian Reception Programme
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SOCIAL BENEFITS

What are social benefits?

Germany has a comprehensive social security system for various life situations. Depending on your personal situation, the benefits may vary and different authorities may be responsible for you. You should contact your local advice centre in order to find out which benefits are available to you.

The following paragraphs provide an initial overview.

If you are an asylum seeker, you will receive benefits in accordance with the **Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungs-gesetz)** ³⁶ from your town's **Social Security Office** ⁴¹.

If you are not yet allowed to work or have not found a job and do not have any other financial resources, you can apply for social benefits at your local **Job Centre** ³⁹.

If you are unable to work because you are permanently ill or older than 65, you can apply for social benefits at your local **Social Security Office** ³⁹.



NOTE:

If you have arrived within the framework of the Humanitarian Reception Programme of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia for Syrian Refugees, you will be subject to special regulations. Your relatives or other persons have submitted a formal obligation letter (Verpflichtungserklärung) for you before your arrival in the Federal Republic of Germany. In doing so, they have committed themselves to bearing some of the costs of your stay, above all accommodation and living costs. This does not, however, include costs arising through illness, pregnancy, childbirth, the need for long-term care or through disability, because you are entitled to state benefits to cover these costs.

Accommodation – What do I have to do?

If your family members or friends are already living in North Rhine-Westphalia, and if you have arrived here within the framework of a Humanitarian Reception Programme, your family and friends will already have organised accommodation for you. If this is not the case, or if you are an asylum seeker, you initially have the possibility, and indeed obligation, to live temporarily in an accommodation facility of your town.

👉 Please contact the Social Security Office or the Housing Office in the Town Hall of your town if you are searching for other accommodation or want to know if you are entitled to receive housing allowance (Wohngeld).

If you have found other accommodation, you are obliged to have yourself registered with the Residents' Registration Office in the Town Hall (see Step 1 – Registration). There you will receive a Registration Certificate for your current home address. If you have been assigned to an accommodation facility and have moved there initially, please enquire at this facility if you have to go to the Residents' Registration Office (see Step 1 – Registration) or if your data has already been forwarded to the Residents' Registration Office. It is essential that you inform your Aliens Office and the Federal Office for Migration und Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) ³⁷ of your new address without delay.

Health care – What do I have to do?

👉 If you are ill, you should first go to a local physician.

If you have toothache, you should see a dentist. Children and adolescents are treated by paediatricians. If necessary, these physicians will refer you to a specialist or even to a hospital.

Where can you find a local physician or hospital?

The link ➡ www.gesundheit.nrw.de/content/e224/e349 will lead you to the Gesundheitsportal NRW / Medizinische Versorgung (NRW Health Portal / Medical Care).

Enter the region and then the town where you are staying. The portal lists local physicians and hospitals. It also offers the possibility of searching in a specific language.

If you are an asylum seeker, the town where you are staying will pay for any medical treatment you may need until your application for asylum has been processed. This comprises the necessary treatment of acute illnesses and pain conditions including the provision of medicines and bandaging material. In addition, medical services connected with pregnancy and childbirth will be paid for, as well as the recommended preventive check-ups and vaccinations for you and your children.

If you want to see a physician or dentist for medical or dental treatment, you must first obtain a medical treatment voucher at your town's Social Security Office, unless you have already received a health card.

If you have had an accident or your pain is so severe that you cannot wait, you may go directly to a physician or a hospital. In this case, the physician or the hospital is obliged to provide emergency medical care.

You will receive the medical treatment voucher or health card at your town's Social Security Office. If you have any further questions, please contact local advice centres such as the Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants (Migrationsberatungsstellen für erwachsene Zuwanderer) or a counselling centre for refugees (Flüchtlingsberatungsstellen). The same applies if you have arrived here within the framework of the Humanitarian Reception Programme of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia for Syrian Refugees.

If you have not submitted an application for asylum, you have to obtain **health insurance** . Statutory or private health insurance will pay the treatment costs if you are ill. This includes, but is not limited to, medical services in case of pregnancy as well as for the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of illnesses (medical / dental treatment, medication, hospital treatment, medical rehabilitation services). Therefore, you should become a member of one of the many health insurance schemes as soon as possible. Your relatives, or staff of the advice centres mentioned in this brochure (e.g. the Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants and counselling centres for refugees), can help you select a health insurance scheme.

Child allowance – What do I have to do?

In Germany, families with children usually receive financial support from the government. This **allowance** ³⁹ is intended specifically for child support and is normally paid until the child reaches the age of 18.

But there are also exceptions to this rule. Seek advice from the Job Centre, the Social Security Office or the **Family Benefits Office (Familienkasse)** ³⁷ to find out whether you are entitled to child allowance.

👉 You can submit an application for child allowance at your town's Family Benefits Office.



NOTE:

There are other cases where you are entitled to social benefits, e.g. parental allowance. In addition, you may receive financial support during pregnancy, if you are a single parent, or for the initial furnishing of an apartment. Contact the Job Centre or the Social Security Office in your town.



What do I have to bring along to the Social Security Office, the Housing Office, the Family Benefits Office, the Job Centre, the health insurance company or the medical consultation?

- To the physician: Medical treatment voucher from the Social Security Office, proof of identity (birth certificate, passport or passport replacement papers) and vaccination card, medical certificates, medical records, if you have them
- Birth certificate, certificate of marriage or civil partnership, as applicable
- Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
- Visa
- Home address with proof
- Registration Certificate from the Residents' Registration Office
- Certificate of Registration as an Asylum Seeker or temporary residence permit
- **Electronic residence permit**  or passport replacement papers from the Aliens Office
- If available, proof of income and / or assets

- If already available, proof of health and long-term care insurance including proof of the level of contribution payments
 - If available, any documents connected with your admission to the Humanitarian Reception Programme
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4



CURRENT ACCOUNT

Why do I need a current account?

For most of the financial benefits you receive from agencies and authorities, you will need a bank account so that the money can be transferred. If you are working, your wage / salary will also be transferred to this **current account**  38.

What do I have to do?

👉 Open a current account at a bank or savings bank (Sparkasse).

What can your relatives do beforehand?

They can obtain information on the costs and services of the various banks or savings banks.



What do I have to bring along?

- Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Electronic residence permit or passport replacement papers from the Aliens Office
 - Registration Certificate from the Residents' Registration Office
-

CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Children below school age

Children under 6 may be cared for in a day-care centre. Children between the age of 1 and the start of school are legally entitled to a place in a childcare facility. For further information, contact the Municipal Integration Centres (Kommunale Integrationszentren) or your local Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt).

Children of school age

In Germany, **school attendance** ⁴¹ is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 18. School attendance is free of charge.

Children of school age must be enrolled at a school as quickly as possible. Some schools cater for children just starting school by providing special classes in which the children mainly learn German.

What do I have to do?

👉 In all questions of child day care and school attendance, seek advice from the Municipal Integration Centre, the Youth Welfare Office or the Family Centre (Familienzentrum).



What do I have to bring along?

- Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Electronic residence permit or passport replacement papers from the Aliens Office
 - Birth certificates of the children
 - Home address with proof
 - Registration Certificate from the Residents' Registration Office
-

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

There is a range of programmes for learning German language and culture to help you communicate as quickly as possible. This is important as it will enable you to take greater control of your life.

On integration courses, which are offered throughout the country, you can learn German and receive information about the country's legal system, history and culture, as well as the values that are important in Germany. Your opportunities for participation depend on your status as a refugee.

What do I have to do?

👉 For information on the opportunities available to you and on German language courses, contact the above-mentioned advice centres.

What can your relatives do beforehand?

They can obtain information on language and integration courses. Contact the above-mentioned advice centres for more information.



What do I have to bring along?

- Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Electronic residence permit or passport replacement papers from the Aliens Office
 - Birth certificate
 - Home address with proof
 - Registration Certificate from the Residents' Registration Office
-

TRAINING AND WORK

Vocational training

Vocational training  is a good basis for finding a job. In Germany there is a wide range of professions, with approximately 330 recognised as requiring training.

Vocational training under the dual system is the most frequently conducted form of vocational training. Under the dual system, training takes place both in a company and at a vocational college. While training, you already work in your company and become familiar with all the activities. A vocational training course under the dual system is free of charge. As a trainee, you already earn your own money (training allowance). A training course takes between 2 and 3-and-a-half years, depending on the vocation. After completing your training, you have a good chance of finding a job or remaining with your company.

What do I have to do?

👉 In order to start training, you have to apply for a training placement.



NOTE:

If you start in-company training, you do not need the approval of the **Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit)** ³⁶. If you undertake a period of **work experience (Praktikum)**, this will give you an opportunity to learn more about a vocation and a company. You do not need the Employment Agency's approval for this either.

Employment

Starting work is an important step on your way towards feeling at home in your town. However, some regulations must be observed, and it is often not so easy to find a job.

What do I have to do?

👉 **Ask the Aliens Office in your town if you are allowed to work in Germany with your residence permit.**

Employment Agencies and Job Centres offer plenty of information on topics regarding the labour market, looking and applying for a job, working-time models and childcare, as well as – under certain conditions – qualifications and possible financial support. You can also find these agencies in your town.

If your application for asylum has not yet been processed, you will have to contact the Employment Agency. If you already receive financial benefits from your local Job Centre, this centre will also support you in your search for employment.

In order to take up employment, it is sometimes necessary for the qualifications you have obtained at home to be reviewed and recognised in Germany. This will always involve comparing your qualification with the corresponding German qualification.



What do I have to bring along?

- Passport or passport replacement papers (proof of identity)
 - Electronic residence permit or passport replacement papers from the Aliens Office
 - Birth certificate
 - Home address with proof
 - Registration Certificate from the Residents' Registration Office
 - If available, documents regarding your vocational qualification and employment
 - If you apply for a training placement, you will also need a covering letter, your curriculum vitae and relevant certificates
-

Further Information

Is there anything left to do?

There are certainly many more things to do, such as having your driving license recognised, documents translated and certificates and vocational qualifications recognised. You can work through these points step by step. The above-mentioned advice centres will also be pleased to help you with these matters.

Information on the Internet

➔ www.bamf.de

The website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) provides general information for migrants, including information on the Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants (MBE – Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer).

➔ www.mik.nrw.de/themen-aufgaben/auslaenderfragen.html

The website of the Ministry of the Interior and Municipal Affairs (Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales) of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia contains information connected with aliens law.

➡ www.jmd-portal.de

The Youth Migration Services (JMD – Jugendmigrationsdienste) offered by the Youth Social Work (Jugendsozialarbeit) are primarily tasked with providing social educational support to young people with a migrant background during the transitional period between school, training and work.

➡ www.kommunale-integrationszentren-nrw.de

The Municipal Integration Centres' Statewide Coordination Agency (LaKI – Landesweite Koordinierungsstelle Kommunaler Integrationszentren) coordinates the work of Municipal Integration Centres in NRW. They combine the fields of education and integration.

➡ www.freiewohlfahrtspflege-nrw.de

With their facilities and services, members of the independent welfare organisations in NRW offer the whole spectrum of social assistance on a non-profit basis. They are characterised by different ideological and religious motives and objectives.

➡ www.fnrnw.de

This website contains a directory („Netzheft“) of the Refugee Council for NRW (Flüchtlingsrat NRW e.V.), which lists all the advice centres, initiatives and individuals involved in the work for refugees in NRW. The website of the Refugee Council for NRW provides comprehensive information.

➡ www.arbeit.nrw.de

Here you can find a lot of information about looking for a job, training, financial support during training and employment as well as information on the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications and also on advice centres and agencies that can provide information and support.

➡ www.berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de

Information on the different careers is provided on the above website and at

➡ www.handwerk.de and at ➡ www.bibb.de

➡ www.handwerkskammer.de/service

For free training placements refer to the above page or to

➡ www.ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de or to

➡ www.jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de

➡ www.meine-zukunft-nrw.de

Here you can obtain additional information on training, as well as information leaflets, available in the following languages: German-English, German-Turkish, German-Greek, German-Russian, German-Italian and German-Arabic.

➡ www.make-it-in-germany.com

This multi-lingual portal informs specialists about their career opportunities. The website has a hotline, „Working and Living in Germany“ (+49 (0)30-1815-1111), which offers advice in English on the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications.

➡ www.bq-portal.de/de/seiten/rechtliche-grundlagen-0

Information portal for foreign vocational qualifications (BQ portal)

➡ www.frauen-nrw.de

North Rhine-Westphalia offers wide-ranging assistance to girls, women and their relatives who are affected by physical, psychological or sexual violence and seek information, advice or refuge.

The following link provides women affected by violence with information on where to seek help in NRW:

➡ www.mgepa.nrw.de

The helpline „Violence against Women“, which offers 24/7 telephone advice in a number of languages, can be found at:

➡ www.hilfetelefon.de/aktuelles.html

For women's counselling centres in your town, refer to

➡ www.frauenberatungstellen-nrw.de

➡ www.kita.nrw.de

This website is a guide to early childhood education. It provides information on nearly 10,000 child day-care centres and contact details of child day-care providers, the Family Centres and the 186 Youth Welfare Offices in NRW.

Glossary

Below is a list of all the important terms marked in bold in this brochure, together with a brief explanation of these terms.

Aliens Office

This agency can be found in most towns and districts and enforces the law concerning aliens. Its tasks include granting and extending residence permits and issuing other residence authorisations and passport replacement papers.

Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act

The Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act stipulates the amount and form of benefits that asylum seekers and certain groups of migrants may claim in Germany so as to ensure a necessary level of support (e.g. food, accommodation, medical treatment during illness and pregnancy etc.).

Child Allowance

The Federal Republic of Germany assists child support and welfare through the payment of child allowance. The amount of allowance paid depends on the number of children you have and on their age. As a rule, parents may receive child allowance until their child turns 18. If the child attends a training course, entitlement to child allowance is extended until the child turns 25, but not beyond this age. You can submit an application for child allowance at your town's Family Benefits Office (see also Family Benefits Office).

Child Day-Care Facilities

Until your children reach school age, they may attend a child day-care facility. These facilities are the best way to further your child's language skills and development. There are many options for childcare in Germany. Information is available from Youth Welfare Offices, welfare associations, Family Centres, Municipal Integration Centres and churches.

Compulsory School Attendance

School attendance is compulsory for children living in Germany. As a rule, children of 6 and older are taught in one of a number of different types of schools, depending on the child's individual abilities. Attendance at a state-run school is free of charge.

Counselling for Refugees (Social Counselling Centre for Refugees)

Counselling centres for foreign refugees provide information and assistance on legal matters relating to asylum, residence and welfare. You can also receive counselling for any social, psychological, health-related or personal problems you may be experiencing. Consult the Refugee Council NRW e.V. brochure to find your nearest advice centre or psycho-social counselling service.

Current Account

Banks and savings banks offer current accounts, which are necessary for making non-cash payments since many financial transactions in Germany do not involve the exchange of cash. Money can be transferred to the account (e.g. cash or your salary / wage paid into the account) and debited from the account (e.g. expenditures such as rent). Please keep in mind that costs may be incurred.

Electronic Residence Permit

This credit card-sized document contains your personal data, your photograph, your fingerprints and any additional provisions pertaining to the cardholder. It contains information on the reason for and duration of your residence in Germany.

Employment Agency

The Federal Employment Agency is a public body responsible for helping people to find work and for disbursing certain state benefits, in particular unemployment benefit and child allowance. Its other tasks include promoting vocational and further training and providing careers advice.

Family Benefits Office

This is where you can apply for child allowance, provided that you and your child meet the necessary requirements. The Family Benefits Office can be found at the Employment Agency. For further information contact your local Town Hall administration or social counselling centre.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

The Federal Office performs a wide range of tasks relating to migration, integration and refugees. One of these tasks involves making decisions on the recognition of asylum applications, collecting the applicant's personal data and performing the prescribed identification measures. The Federal Office is also responsible for the government's Humanitarian Reception Programmes and integration courses, which consist of a language course and an orientation course.

Health Insurance

This form of insurance covers you in case of illness, since a visit to the doctor's or a stay in hospital can be extremely expensive.

Housing Office

This department of your town or district administration is responsible for matters related to housing and accommodation. The staff will help you find an affordable apartment and may pay housing allowance if you qualify.

Humanitarian Reception Programme

With these programmes the Federal Republic of Germany and thus also the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia assume responsibility for people from crisis regions by making it possible for them to stay in Germany (initially for a limited period).

Job Centres

Your local Job Centre is responsible for helping you cover the cost of living (including accommodation and heating), as soon as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has finished reviewing your case. You will also be given help to secure your livelihood using your own financial means. This will involve trying to find you a job.

Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants (MBE)

The Migration Advisory Service for Adult Immigrants provides advice tailored to your specific situation and needs. The MBE advisors of the independent welfare organisations will provide you with free help to settle into your new life in Germany. They will tell you, for example, where you can learn German and find work and whether your qualification will be recognised here. You will also receive information on finding an apartment and on which physician you may consult, on who will help you during pregnancy and also on health insurance.

Municipal Accommodation Facility

Towns provide residential space where people without their own accommodation can live for a limited period.

Municipal Integration Centres

Many towns and districts have established Municipal Integration Centres for the purpose of combining education and integration. These centres further develop education concepts and topics from the fields of health, industry and sport in educational facilities.

Registration Certificate

This is the official proof of your place of residence and is obtainable at the Residents' Registration Office.

Residents' Registration Office / Citizens' Services Office

This agency is responsible for maintaining a complete list of all the residents in a given municipality. The agency is also located in the respective municipality. You can register and de-register here and also have documents officially certified.

Social Security Card

This card proves that you are insured under the statutory social security system. It can ensure that you receive financial support if you become unemployed or retire. When you take up employment, you must show your employer this card if requested to. You will normally receive the card from your health insurance company.

Social Security Office

This department of your town or district administration provides social support, for example if you are unable to cover the cost of living, if you have a severe disability or if you need help on account of your age.

Vocational Training

Training under the dual system takes place both in a company and at a vocational college. It takes between 2 and 3-and-a-half years, depending on the vocation. A training contract is signed with the company. The trainee receives an allowance during the training period. There are also schools that specialise in vocational training such as full-time vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen) and technical colleges (Fachakademien), particularly for professions in the health sector.

Women's Support Facilities

These facilities offer advice and support to women who have been traumatised by violence. These include, in particular, women's shelters, women's general counselling centres, women's initiatives against sexual violence and specialised counselling centres for victims of human trafficking.

Youth Migration Service

The Youth Migration Services advise young immigrants from the age of 12 up to the age of 27. In NRW there are approximately 80 Youth Migration Services, so there is sure to be one near you. These services will help you with all matters related to education and training. Many of them also offer leisure activities for young people.

Editorial Information

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