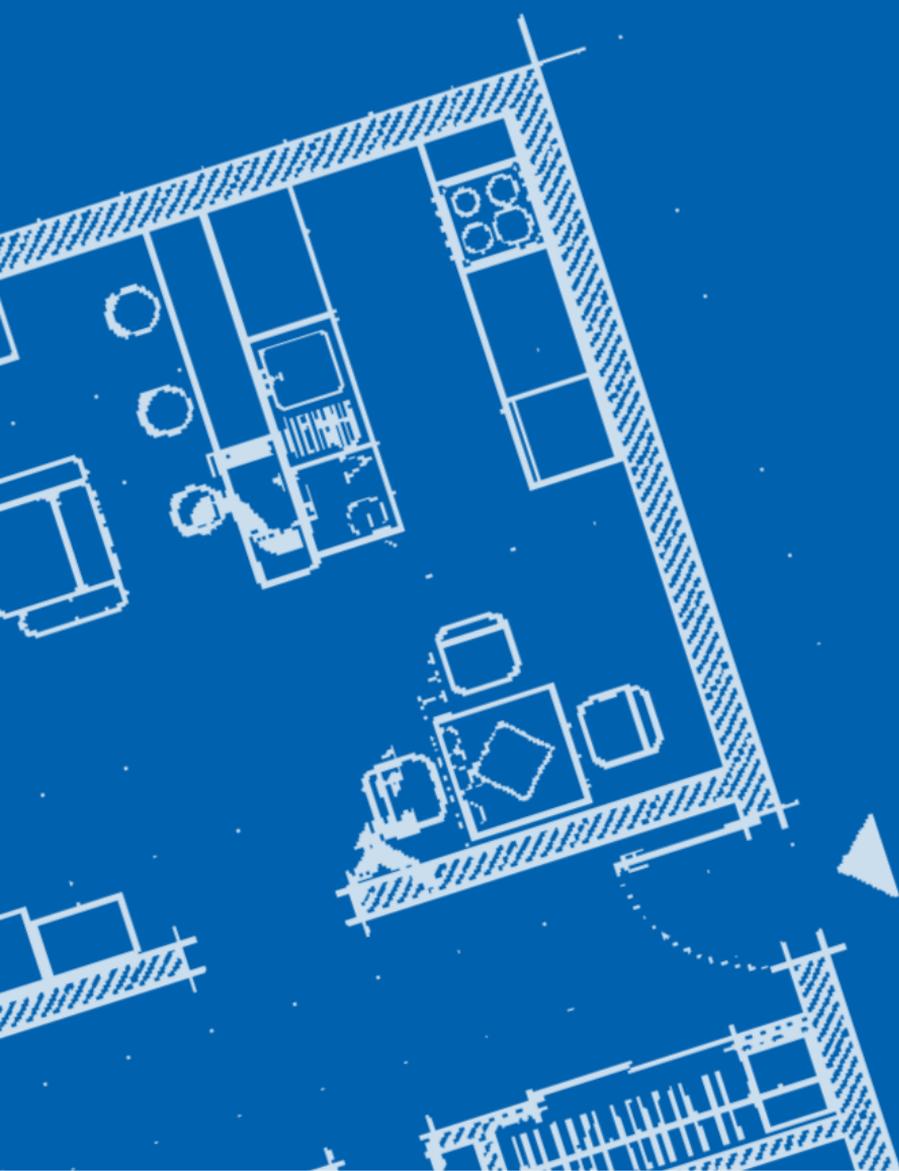


Information for refugees and  
for refugee assistance  
for rent and living in Bonn

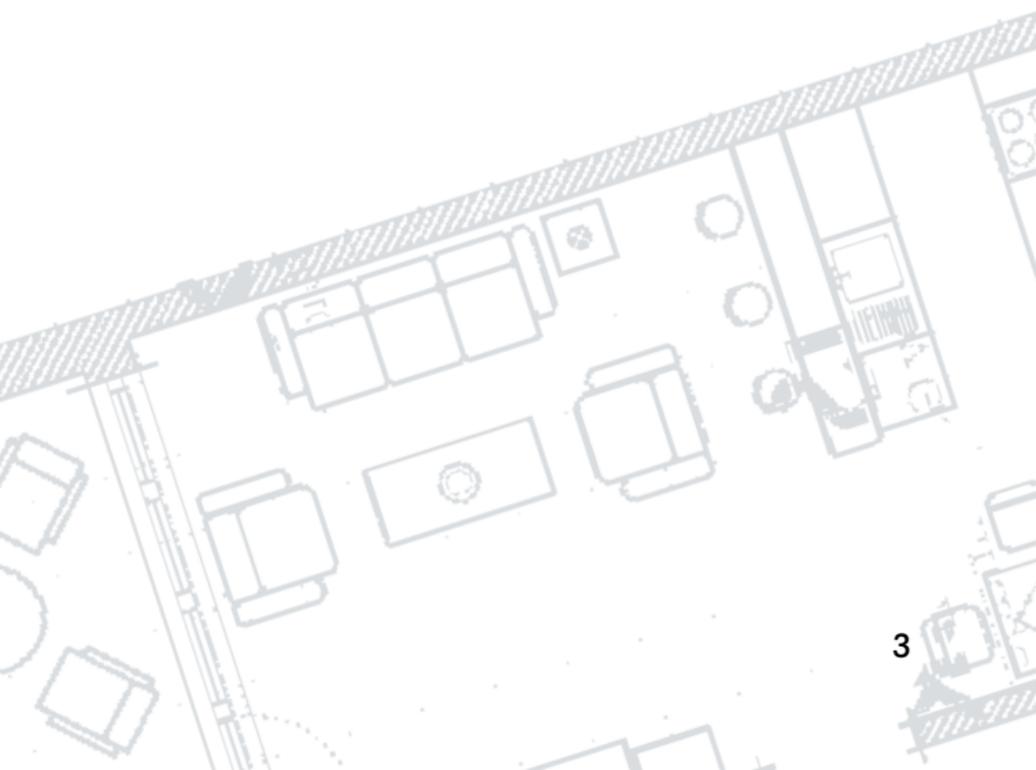


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Once refugees have successfully passed the asylum procedure, it is finally time for them to live in their own home! But the search for accommodation is often not easy and the same questions arise again and again for all those affected: How can I find an apartment? Who pays the rent if I don't have my own income? Who can I contact if I have questions?

The Integration Office of the City of Bonn (= Stabsstelle Integration der Stadt Bonn), in cooperation with the Office for Social Affairs and Housing (= Amt für Soziales und Wohnen) and the Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr Tenants' Association (= Mieterbund), has compiled some information to help both refugees themselves and volunteers from refugee aid organisations.



## When can I rent my own apartment?

Until a decision has been taken on their asylum application, refugees live in first reception facilities or in communal accommodation. There are only a few exceptions where it is possible to move into one's own home before any decision has been taken regarding the asylum application. If the asylum procedure has been successfully completed, you can move into your own apartment.

The residence requirement (= Wohnsitzauflage) must be observed in the process. This means that you can only move to another city with prior authorization. As a rule, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (= Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge = BAMF) issues an official decision on the asylum procedure informing the applicant about the residence requirement. It is also possible to obtain information from the Immigration Office (= Ausländerbehörde) about whether a residence requirement exists. This can only be revoked in a few cases, for example if you have a job in another city or want to move to your family who are living in another city. A relocation must always be requested in advance.

If you want to move within North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), you must contact the district government of Arnsberg. If you want to move to another federal state, the immigration office in your new city is responsible for your relocation authorization.

## Who pays the rent if I don't have sufficient income?

If you want to rent an apartment and do not have sufficient income, you must contact the Jobcenter. There, it will be clarified whether the Jobcenter will pay the rent (basic rent + utilities). It is important to clarify this question before signing the lease, as the Jobcenter does not backdate rent payments. If the Jobcenter is to pay the rent, the following conditions apply for the number of persons, size of the apartment and maximum amount of rent:

Persons in the household	Guideline gross rent (basic rent + utilities)	Adequate minimum living space
1	487 €	35,0 m <sup>2</sup>
2	620 €	45,5 m <sup>2</sup>
3	760 €	56,0 m <sup>2</sup>
4	901 €	66,5 m <sup>2</sup>
5	1.041 €	77,0 m <sup>2</sup>
6	1.181 €	87,5 m <sup>2</sup>
7	1.321 €	98,0 m <sup>2</sup>
8	1.461 €	108,5 m <sup>2</sup>

This table shows the maximum rent – **excluding** heating costs! However, the indicated living space is only an approximate guideline. If you find an apartment with rent costs within this financial framework, then the Jobcenter will pay the rent and reasonable heating costs.

The Jobcenter may also cover relocation and renovation costs, for which a separate application must be made to the administrator. In addition, the Jobcenter initially pays the deposit (security deposit for the landlord), although this money must be paid back monthly in instalments.

If you find an apartment that is above the maximum rental price, the Jobcenter will only pay the specified maximum rental price. You will have to pay the remainder and all other costs (e. g. deposit, utilities, heating costs, initial equipment and relocation costs).

If the Jobcenter agrees to the rental offer and a lease contract has then been signed, the rent is generally paid by the tenant to the owner. The Jobcenter can also make a direct transfer of the entire rent (basic rent + utilities) to the landlord. To allow this, you have to sign a **declaration of assignment**. To see how this might look, click here: [www.acquisas.de/vsk/1\\_abtretungserklaerung.pdf](http://www.acquisas.de/vsk/1_abtretungserklaerung.pdf).



Please inform the Jobcenter immediately of any rental price changes made by the landlord!

## Additional support for people who have low earnings or low income

Since living space in Bonn is very expensive, more and more people are applying for housing benefit (= Wohngeld). Housing benefit is called a financial subsidy from the city of Bonn for rent and can be applied for if you are not a customer of the Jobcenter or do not receive benefits according to the Asylum Seeker Benefits Act (= Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz). You can find out whether you receive this subsidy from the **Office for Social Affairs and Housing (= Amt für Soziales und Wohnen), Stadthaus, Berliner Platz 2, floor 3 C, telephone 0228 – 77 29 30** or e-mail **wohngeld@bonn.de**.

The subject of housing allowances and other social benefits is very complex. Further information can be found on the website of the Integration Office (= Stabsstelle Integration) **[www.integration-in-bonn.de](http://www.integration-in-bonn.de)**

Those who have little money or receive benefits from the Jobcenter have the option of living in social housing. These are flats that are cheaper and only available to people with little money. In order to rent social housing, you need a so-called Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS i. e. certificate confirming entitlement to housing). You can apply for this at the **Office for Social Affairs and Housing (= Amt für Soziales und Wohnen), Stadthaus, Berliner Platz 2, floor 3 B, telephone 0228 – 77 24 54**.

The rent must always be paid on time each month by the third working day of the month! If you do not do this, you can be given a warning by the landlord. A further warning can lead to a notice of termination of your lease on the apartment!



## How do I find an apartment?

The best way to find an apartment is to look on the Internet or in local newspapers. A big help can be support from refugee helpers or friends who already know Bonn and have good German language skills. If you are looking for an apartment, you can also contact the Housing Agency (= Wohnungsvermittlung) of the City of Bonn (**Amt für Soziales und Wohnen**), **Stadthaus, Berliner Platz 2, floor 3 B, telephone 0228 - 77 29 37** and ask to be put on an urgency list for apartments, but to be put on the list you need a Wohnberechtigungsschein (residence entitlement certificate). It is best to apply for a Wohnberechtigungsschein and at the same time go to the housing agency - both are on the same floor in the town house (= Stadthaus). The urgency list is very long, so it is essential that you continue to look for an apartment independently.

In Germany there are often flat-sharing communities (= Wohngemeinschaften, WG) in which individuals live together. You share the common rooms (bathroom, kitchen and maybe living room) but everyone has their own bedroom! Flat-sharing communities have the advantage that you can share the costs, get to know other people and for example learn German faster.

## What do I have to pay attention to concerning flat advertisements?

- ▶ It is important to read the advertisements very carefully and to view the apartment so that you can be sure what you are renting.
- ▶ You should insist on seeing the apartment you want to rent.
- ▶ Also, everything in the apartment should be checked carefully.
- ▶ Deposit or rent will only be paid once everything has been carefully clarified and the rental agreement has been signed.
- ▶ A verbally agreed rental contract is not secure. This is not recommended! A written rental agreement is an important basis for tenants and landlords.

If you are asked for a mediation fee for an apartment, this is usually not legal!



Apartment advertisements contain a lot of information. The following checklist shows what you should be aware of:

## Checklist

- ▶ Amount of the rent (this is the basic rent without additional costs)
- ▶ Amount of additional costs (i. e. costs for water and heating, sewage and garbage fees, and maybe more)



If the additional costs are particularly low, you should be prepared for an additional payment. If you use less water/electricity etc than you paid for, you will get your money back at the end of the year. The Jobcenter will then receive this money. You are not allowed to keep it.

**Be aware:** Electricity, internet and telephone are not included in the additional costs and must be paid additionally

- ▶ Amount of the deposit (the deposit is a security deposit for the landlord and may not exceed three months' rent, in other words, three basic rents without additional costs)
- ▶ Graduated rent (meaning that the rent is regularly increased)



- ▶ It is essential to check the duration of the rental agreement: In most cases, temporary rental agreements cannot be terminated before the end of the rental period.

Make sure that a follow-up rental agreement on a new apartment are organised well in advance.



- ▶ Social housing (can only be rented with a Wohnberechtigungsschein / WBS)
- ▶ Renovation obligation: Is there a reference to this in the apartment advertisement?

Renovation obligations are regulated by law. It is therefore essential that you check the housing advertisement and rental agreement carefully and seek advice if anything is unclear



## How do I respond to an apartment ad?

If you have found an offer on the Internet or in the newspaper, call the landlord to arrange a viewing appointment. You can also send an e-mail. Since a lot of people usually respond to an ad, it helps if you write or say something personal about yourself in the e-mail or on the phone. If you would like to move into the apartment with your family, give a short note on how many family members would be moving in with you.

## Tips when viewing apartments

- ▶ Usually several or many interested people come to the date of the apartment viewing. Nevertheless, you should take your time to look at the apartment and introduce yourself to the landlord in person in order to leave a good impression.  
Important: Be on time!
- ▶ Please bring along all relevant documents to the viewing! (Copy of passport, proof of income or Jobcenter confirmation).
- ▶ If you are interested in the apartment, you often have to fill out a so-called self-disclosure form. Here you can see what a self-disclosure form looks like and what information the landlord usually wants to have:  
[www.wohnungsboerse.net/files/Mieterselbstauskunft.pdf](http://www.wohnungsboerse.net/files/Mieterselbstauskunft.pdf)

## I have received approval for an apartment. What is the next step?

Before you sign the rental agreement, you need to take care of other documents, such as:

- ▶ A SCHUFA information sheet (this is information about the creditworthiness of the tenant and can be applied for online. The landlord can see from this information that the potential tenant has no debts).
- ▶ Certificate of exemption from rent debts (available at the social welfare office)
- ▶ Jobcenter rental transfer certificate or income certificate for self-paying tenants
- ▶ Copy of residence permit

In addition, it is important to check whether the lease agreement refers to renovation obligations. It should be noted in the lease whether the apartment was freshly renovated before you moved in. If it is unclear, have the landlord's claims checked by an expert.

The tenancy agreement should be accompanied by a handover protocol in which the condition of the apartment is recorded. This prevents you from being held responsible for damage which was already present in the apartment.

Of course, every tenant is also obliged to keep the apartment in good condition!

Once the contract is signed by the landlord and the tenant, the deposit is transferred (paid). The deposit can also be paid in instalments over three months. This must be discussed with the landlord beforehand!

When you start renting, you also have to pay for electricity and the Internet. You can find comparison portals of the cheapest providers online. For more information please contact the [Verbraucherzentrale \(= German consumer advice center\), Thomas-Mann-Straße 2.](#)

In Germany you also have to pay so-called radio licence fees (= Rundfunkgebühren). This means that you have to pay money for television and radio, even if you don't have a television or radio.

Anyone who receives benefits from the Office for Social Affairs and Housing (= Amt für Soziales und Wohnen) or from the Jobcenter can be **exempted** from broadcasting fees, so that they do not have to pay the fee. You can apply for this exemption. The application can also be made online. You will find all necessary information on the following page:  
[www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen\\_und\\_buerger/informationen/empfaenger\\_von\\_sozialleistungen/index\\_ger.html](http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/buergerinnen_und_buerger/informationen/empfaenger_von_sozialleistungen/index_ger.html)

It is highly recommended that you have a liability insurance policy. If you accidentally damage or destroy someone else's property, liability insurance pays for the damage. Liability insurance costs between 40 and 120 € per year and can be obtained online.

## Where can I register my new address?

As soon as you have a new apartment and a new address, you must register your new address at the latest within two weeks after moving. This can be done at the [service center of the city of Bonn \(Stadthaus\), Berliner Platz 2](#). You can find out which documents are needed and how to make an appointment here: [www.bonn.de/rat\\_verwaltung\\_buergerdienste/buergerdienste\\_online/buerger-service\\_a\\_z/00551/index.html?lang=de](http://www.bonn.de/rat_verwaltung_buergerdienste/buergerdienste_online/buerger-service_a_z/00551/index.html?lang=de).

If you do not register within two weeks of moving, you will be liable for a fine and this may have negative effects on your residence status.



## What do I do if my family is allowed to live and stay with me?

If you live alone in an apartment and then your family is allowed to move in with you, it is important to consider the following: You must always ask the landlord first! Otherwise, you may receive a warning. In principle, the landlord must allow your immediate family (spouse and children, regardless of whether your children are of age or underage) to move into the apartment. Landlords may only say no if there would be too many people moving into the apartment. However, it must be clarified in each individual case how many people would be too many.

## What is a redirection order?

A redirection order automatically forwards parcels and letters from the old address to the new address for a certain period of time. A redirection order costs about 20 € and can be ordered online at <https://shop.deutschepost.de/shop/nachsenden-lagern/nachsendeservice.jsp>. During the period covered by the redirection order, the new address must be communicated to all authorities, offices, bank, savings bank, doctor, school, kindergarten and to your employer. Don't forget the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF= Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge)!

## Is there any financial help available for the purchase of furniture and other household appliances?

Yes, you can apply for financial help for the purchase of furniture and household appliances at the [Jobcenter Bonn, Rochusstr. 6 and 12 in Duisdorf, telephone 0228 – 85 49 0](#). For this, an application for initial equipment must be made. It is essential that the application is submitted before furniture or household appliances are purchased. The Jobcenter first checks which furniture and household appliances are already available and then calculates the financial subsidy available. There are also second-hand stores for refugees and other people in need. There, you can buy cheap furniture and household appliances, as well as clothes. A list of second-hand stores in Bonn can be found at: [www.integration-in-bonn.de/fluechtlinge-in-bonn/gebrauchte-kleidung-haushaltsgeraete-baby-und-kinderbedarf.html](http://www.integration-in-bonn.de/fluechtlinge-in-bonn/gebrauchte-kleidung-haushaltsgeraete-baby-und-kinderbedarf.html).

## Here's to good neighborhood!

In Germany, there are statutory quiet periods between 22:00 (10 pm) and 06:00 (6 am). On Sundays and public holidays, an all-day quiet period applies.

Even outside quiet periods, it is common in Germany to be relatively quiet. In addition, most landlords have their own house rules which the tenants have to follow. The house rules relate to quiet periods, cleaning of the stairway areas or, for example, when and how shared rooms can be used. The house rules are often supplied with the lease, or you can ask the landlord about them.

## What are all the garbage cans for?

Waste separation is a very important topic in Germany and helps with environmental protection. If you do not separate the garbage, the bins will not be emptied, and you may have to pay a fine. Here you will find all relevant information about waste separation:

[www.integration-in-bonn.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Redaktion/Arbeitshilfen/2015\\_fb\\_getrenntsammlung\\_deutsch-web.pdf](http://www.integration-in-bonn.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Redaktion/Arbeitshilfen/2015_fb_getrenntsammlung_deutsch-web.pdf).

## I have problems with my landlord. Where can I get help?

If you have any questions about tenancy law, please contact one of the following offices:

- ▶ Legal advice on renting and living from the **Deutscher Mieterbund Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e. V. (= German Tenants' Association), Noeggerathstr. 49, telephone 0228 – 94 93 090**. If you want to get advice, you must join the German Tenants' Association Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr e. V.. Membership costs 90 € for one year. If you have problems as a tenant and receive services from the Jobcenter, the Jobcenter may – in certain cases – pay the membership fee for the Tenants' Association. In addition, one-time so called “short memberships” also exist. A short membership lasts two months, costs 25 € and includes legal advice.
- ▶ Advice on tenancy law from **Verbraucherzentrale NRW e. V., Thomas-Mann-Straße 2, telephone 0228 – 88 68 38-01**, on appointment only. An individual consultation on tenancy law costs 20 € for 15 minutes.
- ▶ Every Thursday from 16:00 (4 pm), a free **tenant consultation hour** takes place in the old town hall at the market, entrance Rathausgasse. Be there on time and put your name down on the list, then wait for your turn.

For every consultation, no matter where, be sure to bring all relevant documents (e. g. the rental agreement) and an interpreter if necessary.

## How do I end my apartment lease?

Those who receive benefits from the Jobcenter and want to cancel their apartment lease must first discuss the cancellation with the Jobcenter. But even if you pay the rent yourself, you must consider a few things:

- ▶ In the case of an unlimited rental agreement, the statutory notice period of 3 months always applies.
- ▶ If there is a shorter notice period in the unlimited rental agreement, the tenant has the right to give notice within this period.
- ▶ The landlord must receive written notice of termination at the latest by the third working day of the month.

### **Racism on the housing market**

Time and time again, there is talk of racist discrimination on the German housing market. A brochure showing how to react to such incidents is available from Doris Liebscher and Alexander Klose from the Anti-Discrimination Consultancy Brandenburg:

**[www.antidiskriminierungsberatung-brandenburg.de/sites/default/files/attachements/ADB\\_Broschuere\\_web.pdf](http://www.antidiskriminierungsberatung-brandenburg.de/sites/default/files/attachements/ADB_Broschuere_web.pdf)**



This information was compiled by the Integration Unit of the City of Bonn in cooperation with the Office for Social Affairs and Housing and the Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahr Tenants' Association.

If you discover any errors or would like to make a suggestion, please contact us:

**Bundesstadt Bonn**

**Stabsstelle Integration**

Altes Rathaus/Rathausgasse 5 – 7

53111 Bonn

Telephone 0228 – 77 53 77

(Hotline Flüchtlingshilfe)

E-Mail [integrationsbeauftragte@bonn.de](mailto:integrationsbeauftragte@bonn.de)

Internet [\*\*www.integration-in-bonn.de\*\*](http://www.integration-in-bonn.de)

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