

Instruction Sheet for Integration Course

for new immigrants who are entitled or obliged to attend the integration course, as well as foreigners with long-term residency in Germany who are obliged to attend the integration course

Dear Co-citizen,

In accordance with the Residency Act, you are entitled to, or are obliged to, attend an integration course once.

What is an integration course?

The general integration course consists of a language course with 600 hours and an orientation course organised over 100 lesson hours. The language course consists of modules of 100 lesson hours each. The first 300 lesson hours are called the basic language course, while the subsequent 300 lesson hours represent the follow-on language course.

In the language course you learn the vocabulary you need to speak and write in everyday situations. This includes contact with authorities, conversations with neighbours and colleagues, writing letters and completing forms.

The orientation course informs you about life in Germany and provides knowledge about the legal system, the culture and the recent history of Germany.

There are also special integration courses, for example for women, parents, young people as well as for participants who cannot yet read or write properly. These courses last for 1.000 hours. If you learn particularly quickly, you can attend an intensive course. This lasts for only 430 hours.

The course provider carries out an assessment before the beginning of the course to decide which is the right course for you and which module you should tackle first.

Taking the final examination

The final examination consists of a language test and the test relating to the orientation course. If you can prove in the language test that you have a sufficient command of German, and if you pass the test relating to the orientation course, you have successfully completed the integration course and are awarded the "Integration Course Certificate".

If you were not successful, you will only be given a certificate confirming the results you achieved.

Participation in the final examination is free of charge.

Advantages of attending the integration course

Immigrants from a country that does not belong to the European Union must meet certain requirements if they wish to obtain an unlimited right of residence in Germany. Among other things, they must have an adequate command of the German language as well as basic knowledge

of the legal and social system and of living conditions in Germany. These requirements have been met when such persons have successfully completed the integration course. Moreover, this also allows them to acquire German citizenship earlier if desired.

The knowledge of the German language acquired in the integration courses also makes everyday life easier in Germany and improves immigrants' chances on the labour market.

Registration for the integration course

If you are entitled or obliged to attend an integration course, you will receive written confirmation (Certificate of Eligibility) from the Aliens' Office or the office responsible for unemployment benefit II. At the same time you will also be given a list of the course providers that offer integration courses near your place of residence.

Please register with a course provider as soon as possible and present him with the Certificate of Eligibility. If a date is specified in the Certificate of Eligibility under "The eligibility to participate or requirement to participate is valid until...", then you must register with a course provider by no later than this date.

The course provider must then notify you of the probable date of the beginning of a course. The course should start within six weeks of the date of your registration. The course provider must let you know if no course is due to start within these three months. You can then decide yourself whether you wish to wait longer or prefer to register with a different course provider. In this case the course provider must return your Certificate of Eligibility.

Due participation in the course

You should participate in the course in due form in order to achieve the goal of the integration course. This means regularly attending classes and taking part in the final examination. Due participation in the course is also important for you if you wish to receive a travel allowance or repeat the lesson hours of the language course at a later date. Your course provider will provide you with written confirmation of your participation at your request.

In general, it is only possible to change course provider upon completing a section of the course.

Costs for the integration course

You must pay the course provider a contribution of €1.95 for every lesson of the integration course. This amount is to be paid at the beginning of each module of 100 hours and before the orientation course. If you do not attend classes, the contribution to costs for the lessons you have missed cannot be refunded. If you have no income of your own, the person who is obliged to pay for your maintenance must pay your contribution to the costs.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees may exempt you from contributing to costs if you find it difficult to pay the contribution because of your low income. You must apply in writing to the regional office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees responsible for you (see list of addresses).

Please enclose verification of your financial need (copy of the relevant certificate, such as a notification of unemployment benefit II, social benefits, housing benefits, student loan [BAFöG],

child allowance, benefits pursuant to the Act on Benefits for Asylum Seekers, exemption from day care fees, exemption from radio and television licence (GEZ) fees, local social ticket, etc.). Please submit the application before you begin the course, if possible.

If you receive unemployment benefit II and have been obliged by the responsible office to attend an integration course, you are automatically exempted from contributing to costs. In this case you do not need to submit an application to the regional office of the Federal Office..

Reimbursement of the contribution to the costs

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees can reimburse you for 50% of the contribution of the costs which you have already paid if you have successfully taken the final examination after 8 December 2007. However, this only applies if no more than two years have passed between the issuance of confirmation of eligibility to attend the course and the completion of the final examination. You will have to file an application to the competent regional office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in order to receive reimbursement.

Travel expenses

You will be reimbursed for the necessary travel expenses if you receive unemployment compensation II (Arbeitslosengeld II) from the competent office and were obliged to attend an integration course. If the Federal Office has granted you an exemption from paying the contribution to the costs, you will generally receive an allowance for the travel expenses. In any case, however, the location of the course must be more than 3 km from your place of residence in order for you to be eligible for this. As a basic principle, you will only receive expenses for travel to the course provider located nearest you. Please check with your course provider to see whether you will have to file an application for travel expenses with the competent regional office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

In principle, travel expenses can only be paid upon due participation in the course.

Repeating the follow-up language course

If you were unable to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of German in the language test, you will be able to repeat up to 300 lesson hours on a one-time basis. This also requires you to have attended the lessons regularly.

Participation in the language test is not necessary if you are attending a literacy course.

You will have to file an application to the competent regional office of the Federal Office in order to repeat the lesson hours.

Notes on obligation to attend the course

If you have been obliged to attend an integration course by the Aliens' Office or by the office responsible for unemployment benefit II, you must apply to the course provider for an integration course as quickly as possible and attend the course in a proper manner.

If you do not do so, this may have the following consequences for you, among other things:

- It may influence the decision concerning the extension of your residence permit.
- If you receive social assistance, the payments may be reduced.
- If appropriate you may be called on by the Aliens' Office to pay the contribution to costs in the amount of 1,95 euro per lesson for the entire integration course in advance in one sum.
- A fine may be imposed.

Your course provider must notify the Aliens' Office or the office responsible for unemployment benefit II if you do not attend the integration course in a proper manner.

Other things you need to know

⇒ All of the application forms mentioned in this instruction sheet are available from the course provider, your local immigration office or the competent regional office of the Federal Office. You can also find the forms on the internet site www.bamf.de.

The instruction sheet contains the most important information for your participation in the integration course. Your course provider will provide you with information on further details.

Please also note the offers of the immigration consultation offices and the youth immigration services. These offices will assist you with applications, answer questions you may have and address your problems, and can find a suitable integration course for you. You can find out where immigration consultation offices and youth immigration services in your vicinity are from your local immigration office, the competent regional office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees or on the internet at www.bamf.de.

Please note that you will not be covered by statutory accident insurance while you are attending an integration course.