

Instruction Sheet for Integration Course

for immigrants who already have long-term residency in Germany time, citizens of the European Union, nationals of an EEA country as well as German citizens who do not have an adequate command of German

Dear Co-citizen,

If you already have long-term residency as an immigrant in Germany, or if you are a citizen of the European Union, or a national of an EEA country, or if as a German you do not have an adequate command of the German language, you can submit an application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for authorisation to attend an integration course.

Children, adolescents and young adults who are still attending school cannot take part in the integration course.

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 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 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.

Authorisation by the Federal Office to attend the integration course, and registration with the course provider

Please fill in the application for authorisation to attend, fully and legibly. You can also consult a course provider near you to help you to submit your application. Then send the application to the regional agency of the Federal Office responsible for your place of residence.

When you are authorised to attend an integration course, you will receive written confirmation from the Federal Office (Certificate of Eligibility). At the same time you will also be given a list of the course providers that offer integration courses near your place of residence.

Your authorisation to attend the integration course is valid for one year. In the letter of confirmation, under "Authorisation is valid until ...", you will find a date up until when you can register for an integration course with a course provider. You should therefore register with the office mentioned to you if applicable and submit your Certificate of Eligibility there. If no office was mentioned to you, register as soon as possible with a course provider of your choice.

To ensure prompt participation in a course, the Federal Office can send you to a particular course provider.

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. In the event of a change in course provider the old course provider must return your Certificate of Eligibility.

Please bear in mind that your right to participate lapses if for reasons for which you are responsible you do not begin the integration course within at least one year of your registration or interrupt participation in the course for longer than a year.

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 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 permissible to change course provider upon completing a section of the course. Changing is only possible in the event of the existence of special circumstances, especially

in the event of a move, a change between part-time and full-time courses, to make it possible to look after children or to take up an apprenticeship or gainful employment after conclusion of a course section.

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.

You can be exempted from contributing to costs if you receive unemployment benefit II or social assistance, or 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 compensation 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 submit the application during the course, the cost exemption can in general not be granted retrospectively from the beginning of the course.

Childcare

If you need childcare to attend an integration course, please contact the course provider. It will inform you of the existing care possibilities.

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 first 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

If you were exempted from payment of the cost contribution by the Federal Office, you can get an allowance for your travel costs to the integration course. The allowance is granted in the form of a flat-rate per course day. However, this is conditional on the course location being at least 3 km away from your flat. You must submit an application to regional centre of the Federal Office responsible for the travel cost allowance.

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 of the language course on a one-time basis and take the

language test again free of charge. However, this 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 with the competent regional office of the Federal Office in order to repeat lesson hours.

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. 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.