



# ***TIPS FOR APPOINTMENTS AT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES***

***Stay cool!***



**Flüchtlingsrat**  
Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.

EN

# TIPS FOR APPOINTMENTS AT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

*Stay cool!*

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## HINT

For better readability, only the female form was chosen for personal designations. However, the information applies to all genders



# TIPS FOR APPOINTMENTS AT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

## *Stay cool!*

This guide provides information on your rights during appointments with government agencies and offers tips for successful outcomes.

## 1. Documenting appointments

Write down when and what you did at which authority. This way, you can provide evidence that you have submitted applications and attended appointments.

### 1.1 Take note of the following information:

- › *Why were you at the authority? What was the subject of the appointment?*
- › *Time and date of the appointment*
- › *Name of the authority and location of the appointment*
- › *Name of the government employee*
- › *Room number of the government employee*
- › *Names of accompanying persons (if applicable)*
- › *Which documents did you submit or present?*
- › *Which documents did you sign?*

Take a photo of the nameplate on the office door of the employee with your mobile phone. You can also record this information as a voice message on your phone.

It's advisable to attach a copy of the documents you submitted or presented to your notes.



## 2. Accompanying person for the appointment

During an appointment with a government agency, you speak for yourself. However, you have the option to bring a companion, such as a support person or a representative, to your government appointment. This person can act as a **support** or **authorized** representative (according to §14 VwVfG).

### 2.1 Advocate

The support person can be, for example, a friend, a social worker, or an interpreter. A support person can speak on your behalf while you are present, but only if you explicitly agree and do not contradict their statements.

If the support person wants to obtain information on your behalf without your presence, they will need a confidentiality waiver from you. This may be necessary, for example, if the support person needs to make a phone call to a government agency on your behalf. A confidentiality waiver is a document signed by you, confirming that the government employee is allowed to discuss your situation with your support person.

#### ➡ Confidentiality Waiver Template:

<https://fluechtlingsrat-thr.de/arbeitshilfen/antragshilfen> (under "other")

### 2.2 Authorized representative

An authorized representative, for example, can be a lawyer. They act on your behalf. An authorized representative can represent you before the authority and submit applications on your behalf, even if you are not present. A person is only authorized when they have a power of attorney from you. A **power of attorney** is a document signed by you, confirming the representation.

Authorized representatives have the right to access files. **Access to files** means that, upon request, the authority must present your file to you or your authorized representative or send a copy of it.



## 3. Appointment Preparation

### 3.1 Discuss the appointment beforehand

When bringing a person to the government appointment, it is helpful to coordinate and discuss beforehand. What tasks should the accompanying person undertake on your behalf?

Should they simply be present, take notes, provide translation, or also ask and answer questions on your behalf?

### 3.2 Inform yourself

Inform yourself about your rights and obligations towards government authorities. Read various brochures and texts on the internet that are relevant to your question. Make sure to rely only on information from reputable websites. Trustworthy websites are often associated with counseling centers such as Diaconia, Caritas, or parity, refugee councils, or government ministries.

The more you know, the better you will understand the actions of the authority. This will enable you to argue more effectively and advocate for your rights.

➔ **Here you can find information about migration and asylum in different languages:**  
<https://www.fluechtlingsrat-lsa.de/informationen/>

## 4. During the appointment

### 4.1 Who will interpret

The official language in Germany is German. You have the right to bring your own interpreter to the appointment (as mentioned under „support person“). However, you are not obligated to bring an interpreter even if the authority requests it.



For important decisions that affect your rights, the authority must ensure that you understand everything. This is especially true for oral hearings that take place before issuing a written decision. It is common for children to interpret for their parents in everyday situations, but this can lead to problems and should not be a long-term solution. Children can be overwhelmed and frightened by important questions, especially when it comes to serious residence-related issues that affect the entire family.

- ➡ **The project SiSA – Interpreting in Saxony-Anhalt provides contact with volunteer translators and interpreters.**

<https://www.lamsa.de/projekte/sisa-sprachmittlung-in-sachsen-anhalt/projektbeschreibung/>

## 5. Submitting an application

### 5.1 Always submit your applications in writing.

When submitting an application to an authority, the authority must either accept the application or inform you of the other authority where the application should be submitted. You should also inquire whether the application is complete and correct. The authority is obligated to provide guidance and advice regarding your question.

It is very helpful to have proof that you have submitted the application. For this, you have the following options:

- › **Option 1:** If you submit your application in person to the staff member of the authority, you can request a copy of the application. This copy should bear the official stamp of the authority and include the date of submission.
- › **Option 2:** You can send the application by mail as a registered letter with a return receipt.
- › **Option 3:** You can fax the application and keep the fax confirmation. After faxing, you can call the authority to inquire if the fax has been received. Make a note of the time of the call, the name of the person you spoke to,



and their contact number, or record them as a voice note on your mobile phone. However, please note that the fax confirmation and the phone call are not legally binding proof of receipt.

Write down the date and method of how you submitted the application. You can also record a voice note on your mobile phone.

## **5.2 Do not sign immediately.**

If employees present you with applications or forms to sign, you are not obligated to sign them immediately.

Ask if you can take the document home and submit it later. At home, you can take the time to read the document carefully. If you need more information, inform yourself about the content of the document and seek advice from a counseling center or lawyer. Afterward, you can submit the signed application by mail or during a personal appointment.

If you are unable to take the document home, ask if you can receive a copy of it. Additionally, you can take a photo of the document using your mobile phone.

If you were not allowed to take the document, make a copy, or take a photo, make a note of it after the appointment. In this case, inform your lawyer or a counseling center. It is highly unusual and not permissible for you to be denied a copy or the ability to create a copy of a document concerning you.



## 6. Decision on an Application

The authority can respond to a written application orally, in writing, or via email. However, you have the right to receive a written response, known as a written decision. It is advisable to mention this in your application. The written decision must provide a justification for the rejection of the application (according to **§ 37 VwVfG** and **§ 39 VwVfG**).

This written response can help staff members of counseling centers and lawyers understand the situation and provide you with support.

### 6.1 Processing time for applications

If applications are not processed for a long period of time (at least three months, or less under exceptional circumstances) without any valid reason, and inquiries with the authority have been unsuccessful, you may consider filing a **lawsuit for inaction** (according to **§ 75 VwGO**). Threatening the authority with a lawsuit for inaction can prompt them to finally process the application.

### 6.2 "Rechtsbehelfsbelehrung"

More information about dealing with administrative decisions:

<https://www.fluechtlingsrat-lsa.de/antragshilfen-musterklagen/>

(Templates for various types of lawsuits, applications, and objections)





## 7. Complaint about misconduct by government officials

You can file a complaint against specific behaviors of government officials. Prohibited behaviors include, for example, shouting at you during the conversation, locking the office door, or making racist remarks.

If you want to file a complaint against such behavior, you should create a written record of the incident.

- › ***When and where did the incident occur?***
- › ***Who was present?***
- › ***Who did or say what?***

You can write down the memory protocol or save it as a voice note on your mobile phone.

Filing an official complaint against government officials often takes a long time and may not always be successful. However, when many people complain about the same issue, the likelihood of improving the conduct of the authorities in the future is higher. While it is unlikely that there will be much change in your specific case, it may lead to a positive change for other affected individuals in the future. It is important to take action against misconduct.

Unfortunately, there is no specialized counseling center for these complaints.

If you need assistance, you can contact the Coordination Office for Anti-Discrimination Issues:

- ➔ **Support can be provided to you, among other things, when you file a complaint:**  
<https://www.fluechtlingsrat-lsa.de/kontakt/beschwerden/>

In cases of physical attacks or other forms of racist, right-wing, anti-Semitic violence, as well as severe threats, you can contact ezra for support.

- ➔ **MOB:**  
<https://www.miteinander-ev.de/mobile-opferberatung/>



## Standing together

Please feel free to share this information with your friends and acquaintances.

The more informed you are about your own rights, the easier it will be for you to advocate for them.

## Further informations

For questions regarding assistance with authorities and general support:

➔ **Flüchtlingsrat Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.**

*Ankommen & Bleiben.*

*Ehrenamt qualifizieren – Schutzsuchende erfolgreich integrieren*

Schönebecker Straße 82-84, 30104 Magdeburg

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<https://www.fluechtlingsrat-lsa.de/adressen-und-beratungsstellen/kontakte-landesweit/>

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