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Registering a Birth in Germany — Standesamt, Deadlines and Documents

How to register your child's birth in Germany at the Standesamt: deadlines, required documents, and special considerations for foreign parents.

Deutsche Begriffe: Geburtsurkunde | Standesamt | Geburtsanzeige | Vaterschaftsanerkennung | Sorgeerklärung | Geburtsbescheinigung

Why do I need to register the birth?

Every birth in Germany must be registered **within one week** at the competent **Standesamt** (registry office of the place of birth). This is required by law (§ 18 PStG — Personenstandsgesetz). Without registering the birth, your child will **not receive a Geburtsurkunde** (birth certificate), and without it you cannot apply for child benefits, register your child with health insurance, or apply for a passport.

Who is responsible?

- If the child is born in a **hospital** or **birthing center**, the facility usually automatically forwards the birth notice to the Standesamt.
- For a **home birth**, parents must register the birth themselves at the Standesamt.
- The competent authority is always the **Standesamt of the place of birth** (not the place of residence!).

What documents do I need?

Married parents

- **Geburtsbescheinigung** (birth certificate) from the clinic (you receive this after birth)
- **Identity cards** or passports of both parents

- **Marriage certificate** or certified extract from the marriage register
- For foreign marriages: **Apostille** or legalization + certified translation

Unmarried parents

In addition to the documents mentioned above:

- **Vaterschaftsanerkennung** (acknowledgment of paternity — can be declared before birth at the Standesamt or youth welfare office — recommended!)
- **Sorgeerklärung** (joint custody declaration for unmarried couples — submit to youth welfare office)
- **Geburtsurkunde** (birth certificate) of the mother

Foreign parents — Special considerations

If one or both parents **do not have German citizenship**, you will additionally need:

- **Residence permit** or visa (a copy is usually sufficient)
- **Geburtsurkunde** (birth certificates) of both parents with certified German translation
- Possibly a **certificate of single status** or **certificate of capacity to marry** from the home country
- For some nationalities: **name declaration** (if the family name is determined by the law of the country of origin)

Tip: Contact the **Standesamt before the birth** to find out which documents you need in your specific case. This will save time and stress after the birth.

Procedure for birth registration

Step 1 — Obtain the Geburtsbescheinigung

The hospital or midwife will issue you a **Geburtsbescheinigung**. This contains the date, time and place of birth as well as information about the child and parents.

Step 2 — Visit the Standesamt

Go to the **Standesamt of the place of birth within seven days** after birth. Many hospitals have a **branch office of the Standesamt** that you can use on-site.

Step 3 — Obtain the Geburtsurkunde

The Standesamt will issue the **Geburtsurkunde** (birth certificate). You will typically receive:

- **3 birth certificates** (for parental allowance, child benefits, health insurance)
- An **international birth certificate** (on request, useful for foreign authorities)

Fees are approximately **12 € per certificate**. The first certificate for parental allowance is free.

Name law — What name will the child have?

Married parents

The child receives the **married name** (joint family name) of the parents.

Unmarried parents

- If the mother has **sole custody**, the child receives the mother's surname.
- With **joint custody**, parents can choose whether the child will have the mother's or father's surname.
- The decision must be made **within one month** after birth.

Foreign parents

If both parents have the same foreign nationality, the **name law of the country of origin** can be applied. In some countries, for example, the child receives both surnames. Consult the Standesamt about this.

Acknowledgment of paternity — Important for unmarried couples

If the parents **are not married**, legally only the mother is initially considered a parent. The father must **expressly acknowledge paternity**. This can be done:

- At the **Standesamt** (free)
- At the **youth welfare office** (free)
- With a **notary** (fee-based)
- At the **district court** (in case of dispute)

Recommendation: Acknowledge paternity **before the birth**. This way, the father will be directly entered in the birth certificate, and you save yourself an extra visit to the office.

Joint custody

Unmarried parents can file a **Sorgeerklärung** (joint custody declaration) at the **youth welfare office** to obtain **joint custody**. Without a custody declaration, only the mother has custody rights.

The Sorgeerklärung:

- Is **free** at the youth welfare office
- Can be filed **before or after birth**
- Must be **personally signed by both parents**
- Is valid **indefinitely**

Nationality of the child

A child born in Germany receives **German nationality** if:

- At least one parent **has German nationality**, or
- At least one parent has **lived lawfully in Germany for 8 years** and holds a **Niederlassungserlaubnis** (permanent residence permit) or comparable residence title (§ 4 Abs. 3 StAG)

Otherwise, the child receives the **nationality of the parents**. In this case, you should register the child at the **consulate** of your country of origin.

After the birth — Next steps

After registering the birth, you should submit the following applications:

What	Where	Deadline
Child benefits	Familienkasse (Family benefits office)	Retroactively up to 6 months
Parental allowance	Elterngeldstelle (Parental allowance office)	Retroactively up to 3 months
Health insurance	Your health insurance company	Immediately (retroactive from birth)
Child passport	Citizen's office / Town hall	As needed
Registration at consulate	Consulate of your country of origin	Varies by country

Frequently asked questions

What happens if I miss the deadline?

If the birth is not registered within 7 days, the Standesamt may impose a **fine**. In practice, this rarely happens, but you shouldn't rely on it. For hospital births, the clinic usually takes care of timely registration.

Can I change the child's first name later?

You can change the first name **within one month** after birth. After that, a name change is only possible in exceptional cases and is fee-based.

Do I need an interpreter?

If you don't speak German, bring an interpreter with you or ask the Standesamt in advance about interpretation services. Some registry offices offer consultations in multiple languages.

--- As of: March 2026. All information without guarantee.