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Nebenkosten — Additional Housing Costs in Germany

Nebenkosten are operating costs for apartments in Germany, including heating, water, and waste disposal, typically costing €2.50-3.50 per m² monthly and settled annually.

Deutsche Begriffe: Nebenkosten | Betriebskosten | Nebenkostenabrechnung | Warmmiete | Kaltmiete | Betriebskostenverordnung | Heizkosten | Warmwasser | Müllabfuhr | Hausmeister | Grundsteuer | Gebäudeversicherung | Schornsteinfeger | Allgemeinstrom | Treppenhausreinigung | Heizkostenverordnung | Belegeinsicht | Nachzahlung | Guthaben | Verwaltungskosten | Instandhaltung | Mieterbund | Nebenkostenprivileg

Nebenkosten — what they are and how much they cost

Nebenkosten (additional costs, formally **Betriebskosten**) are the ongoing costs of maintaining a building that a landlord can pass on to the tenant. What exactly can be added is determined by the **Betriebskostenverordnung (BetrKV)** regulation — and for the costs to be binding, **they must be listed in the rental agreement.**

Net rent (Kaltmiete) + Nebenkosten = gross rent (**Warmmiete**) — this is the amount you actually pay each month. When searching for an apartment, always look at Warmmiete, not just Kaltmiete.

What can be added (umlagefähig)

- **Heating and hot water** (Heizkosten, Warmwasser) — the largest item
- **Cold water and sewerage** (Wasser, Abwasser)
- **Waste disposal** (Müllabfuhr)
- **Cleaning and lighting of common areas** (Treppenhausreinigung, Allgemeinstrom)
- **Caretaker, ground maintenance** (Hausmeister, Gartenpflege)

- **Building insurance** (Gebäudeversicherung)
- **Property tax** (Grundsteuer)
- **Elevator, chimney sweep** (Aufzug, Schornsteinfeger)

> **Change from July 2024:** landlords **can no longer** add cable TV fees through Nebenkosten (abolition of the so-called Nebenkostenprivileg).

How much does it cost

On average **€2.50-3.50 per m²** per month, but the amount depends on the building and region.

Example for 60 m²:

- Nebenkosten: €150-210/month
- Kaltmiete €700 + Nebenkosten €180 = **Warmmiete €880**

Remember that in addition to Nebenkosten when moving in, you'll also pay a deposit (Kaution), and sometimes a broker's commission.

Heating billed according to consumption

Under the Heizkostenverordnung, at least **50-70% of heating costs** must be billed according to actual consumption (verbrauchsabhängig), not just square footage — so saving heat actually reduces your bill.

Nebenkostenabrechnung — annual settlement

Once a year you receive a settlement. The landlord has **12 months** from the end of the settlement period to deliver it (§556 BGB). **After this deadline, the right to demand additional payment expires** — but overpayment must still be refunded to you.

- **Overpayment (Guthaben)** → refund
- **Underpayment (Nachzahlung)** → additional payment (can be several hundred €)

How to check the settlement

- 1.** Compare consumption with the previous year.
- 2.** Check that all items are umlagefähig (see below).
- 3.** You have the right to inspect original receipts (Belegeinsicht).
- 4.** You have **12 months** from receiving the settlement to raise objections (Einwendungen).

What landlords CANNOT add

- Management costs (Verwaltungskosten)
- Repairs and maintenance (Instandhaltung, Reparaturen)
- Loan installments and bank fees

Unsure? The Mieterverein/Mieterbund will help verify the settlement.