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Finding a Rechtsanwalt — Costs, Beratungshilfe, and Tips

How to find the right lawyer in Germany, what an initial consultation costs, and when you can get Beratungshilfe.

Deutsche Begriffe: Rechtsanwalt | Anwaltskammer | Beratungshilfe | Prozesskostenhilfe | Erstberatung | Rechtsschutzversicherung

When do I need a Rechtsanwalt?

In many situations, legal help is useful or even necessary:

- **Residence law** — visa rejected, deportation threatened, family reunification
- **Employment law** — termination, unpaid wages, warning letter
- **Tenancy law** — notice to vacate, rent increase, utility bill settlement
- **Social law** — Bürgergeld, child benefit, housing allowance rejected
- **Criminal law** — police summons, criminal charges
- **Family law** — divorce, custody, alimony
- **Asylum law** — asylum application, lawsuit against rejection

Important deadline: For a **termination in employment law**, the lawsuit must be filed with the labor court within **3 weeks** — otherwise the termination is valid, even if it is illegal!

Where do I find a lawyer?

Online search

- **Anwaltauskunft** (anwaltauskunft.de) — official search by the German Bar Association (DAV)

- **Anwalt.de** — large portal with ratings and specializations
- **Rechtsanwaltskammer** (brak.de) — lawyer search by postal code and legal field
- **Google Maps** — search "Rechtsanwalt [specialization] [city]", read reviews

Specialized lawyers

- **Fachanwalt für Migrationsrecht** — for residence, visas, asylum
- **Fachanwalt für Arbeitsrecht** — for termination, wages, warnings
- **Fachanwalt für Mietrecht** — for rental contracts, utility disputes
- **Fachanwalt für Familienrecht** — for divorce, alimony, custody

Tip: "Fachanwalt" is a protected title — only lawyers with special qualifications and experience may use it.

Lawyers who speak your language

- Many law firms employ **multilingual lawyers** (Turkish, Arabic, Polish, Russian, etc.)
- On anwalt.de and anwaltauskunft.de you can filter by **languages**
- Alternatively: bring your own **interpreter** (clarify costs beforehand!)

How much does a Rechtsanwalt cost?

Initial consultation

- Since 2006, the initial consultation for consumers is limited to a **maximum of 190 € net** (226.10 € gross) (§ 34 RVG)
- Many lawyers offer a **free preliminary assessment** by phone or email
- **Important:** Ask about costs beforehand!

Attorney fees

Fees are governed by the **Attorneys' Remuneration Act (RVG)** and depend on the **value in dispute**:

Value in dispute	Typical attorney costs
€1,000	approx. €150-250
€5,000	approx. €400-700
€10,000	approx. €700-1,200

Value in dispute	Typical attorney costs
€25,000	approx. €1,200–2,000

Alternatively, a **fee agreement** (hourly rate) can be made — typically: 150–350 €/hour.

Beratungshilfe — Lawyer for 15 €

If you have low income, you are entitled to **Beratungshilfe**:

Requirements

- **Low income** — e.g. Bürgergeld, housing allowance, minimum wage
- **No legal protection insurance** for the relevant legal field
- **No other reasonable help** (e.g. tenants' association, union)

How to apply?

1. Visit your local **Amtsgericht** (no appointment needed, in person)
2. Apply for a **Beratungshilfeschein** — bring ID and income statements
3. Go to the **Rechtsanwalt of your choice** with the certificate
4. You only pay a **fee of 15 €**

What does Beratungshilfe cover?

- Legal advice
- Out-of-court representation (e.g. letters to landlord)
- **Not:** representation in court (that's what Prozesskostenhilfe is for)

Prozesskostenhilfe (PKH)

If it comes to court proceedings and you cannot afford a lawyer:

Requirements

- **Low income**
- The lawsuit has **prospect of success** (court will review)
- The legal claim is **not frivolous**

What does PKH cover?

- **Court costs** (in whole or in part)
- **Attorney costs** (in whole or in part)
- For installment payments: maximum 48 monthly installments

How to apply?

- File an application with the **competent court** (forms available online or at court)
- Documents: income statements, bank statements, rental contract, official notices

Important in employment law: At the **first instance**, each party pays their own lawyer — even the winner. Legal aid is particularly important here!

Rechtsschutzversicherung

A **Rechtsschutzversicherung** (legal protection insurance) covers attorney and court costs:

- **Cost:** approx. 20-40 €/month (depending on coverage)
- **Waiting period:** usually 3 months after contract conclusion
- **Typical areas:** traffic law, employment law, tenancy law, private law
- **Not covered:** intentional crimes, already ongoing disputes

Tip for employees: Union members often receive **free legal protection in employment law**.

Tips for working with your Rechtsanwalt

- **Bring all documents** — contracts, letters, notices, emails
- **Organize chronologically** — helps the lawyer and saves time (= money)
- **Mention deadlines** — many legal steps have strict deadlines
- **Be honest** — the lawyer is bound by professional secrecy
- **Grant written power of attorney** — the lawyer can then act on your behalf
- **Put fee agreement in writing** — before work begins

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