Greetings from the yellow castle

Good morning, dear colleagues and a very happy week to you all!

I hope you are enjoying this wonderful summer. Here are a couple of announcements, ideas and pieces of advice again:

1) **Data privacy and security regulations**
There has been a change in EU law leading to stricter data privacy and security regulations. You might have received post about this from your rental agencies, banks, or other organisations requiring you to give them some personal details. If you have received forms about this that you do not understand, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will help you complete these. Most of these forms basically simply ask you to give permission that the organisation in question may have your information and may pass it on to a third party, for example that your rental agency may give a plumber your phone number, should you call them and ask them for help with a burst pipe in the bathroom.

2) **International Office**
We have had a couple of problems with people getting a residence title restricting the permissible number of working hours again the past month. Please make sure that you take a letter **form HR and not from your department** when you go to the Foreigners’ Office and make it clear to them that the **work contract is your main reason for being here.** If you say that your studies are the main purpose of your time here in Germany, you get a student residence permit rather than a residence permit for an employee. This does not only have consequences for the number of hours you are allowed to work, but also for issues such as child benefit. Also pass on this information to any international members of staff you know and who are not on our mailing list.

Also, pay attention to the validity dates of your current residence permit and already now make an appointment to fall within about four weeks before the title becomes invalid, so that you do not have to struggle with and stress about it two days before you actually have to leave the country. HR will provide you with the necessary documents to go there, provided that your contract is extended. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have questions about this.

Spouses can join you for the length of your stay, provided that you are here for more than one year. Should your residence title be valid for less than twelve months, spouses can only join you for 90 days as a visitor. The necessary forms to apply for either type of residence title are available at the foreigners’ Office. Unfortunately, they do not make these available online.
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3) **Contact**
Speaking of the mailing list above: If you know anyone who is not on the list and who would like to be on it, please ask them to contact me. Also, when you leave us, just give me a sign, so that I can take you off the list and so that I can cry into my teacup.

Also, following our unsuccessful attempt at a barbecue, I would like to organise another event. Seeing that the weather is what weather is supposed to be: unpredictable, I would like to keep it on the safe side and go somewhere where we have the option of being inside or outside. “Planetasol” is nicely tucked under the wing of the VHS – almost in the middle between the City site and the Westerberg site. Who would like to join me there for cocktails and snacks on Friday, 20 July, at 18:00? Please let me know by Monday, 16 July, so that I can reserve tables for us.

4) **Settling in Germany**
I had some questions about what to do, if you would like to find a job and settle in Germany. Elke Bertke and Sabine Mehlmann from ZePrOs offer advice on this issue. They will also be willing to organise an information session, if there is enough interest. Let me know whom of you would like to hear more about networking in Germany and about entering the German job market.

From personal experience, I can tell you that your supervisor can – if he or she wishes to – be very helpful in getting you in contact with possible future employers in academia. Furthermore, going to conferences and establishing networks there makes a lot of sense. Finally, if industry or any field outside academia is more your cup of tea, writing open application to different companies that tickle your fancy can be helpful. Please note the conventions for CV writing in Germany, though. One interesting aspect for instance is that you need to add your picture and not just the one you took of yourself on that beautiful and sunny day outside in the park using your mobile phone. Go to a professional photographer and ask him or her to take a picture for an application.

5) **Insurances**
I also had interesting questions about insurances. One is obliged to have the following insurances in Germany:

a) Health insurance
b) Unemployment insurance
c) Pension insurance
d) Nursing care insurance
e) Casualty insurance

As an employee of the university, you have all these insurances. In addition to these, you can take out more insurances, such as household insurance and personal liability insurance.
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It is advisable, but not compulsory, to have personal liability insurance, should you cause damage to someone else’s property or even accidentally harm someone. I spoke to an insurance broker who told me that it is possible to get a good personal liability insurance for about EUR 60,00 per year.

Furthermore, should you be travelling outside the EU for work purposes, it is advisable to have extra health coverage. Unfortunately, the university does not take over the costs for the extra health insurance. They do pay costs of medical care happening in a non-EU country during working hours (provided that you officially applied for the business trip), but it takes time to get the money and things become tricky if you get injured outside of work hours. Apparently the ADAC has excellent packages for health insurance during visits to non-EU countries. Booking your flight with a credit card also usually gives you health coverage in a non-EU country. If you are uncertain about this, contact your credit card company and make sure you are on the safe side. Also, you can always turn to me, if you need some clarification on these issues.

Naturally, traveling privately to a non-EU country leaves the whole responsibility for insurances with you.

The official application for a business trip also gives you other forms of insurance coverage, such as casualty insurance etc. This is why it is so extremely important to file an official application before you go on a business trip. The form for this is available on the Intranet.

1) Room available
Finally, Maja Kutlaca is going abroad for a bit. If you know of anyone who might be looking for a place to stay and who likes cats, please contact Maja. Rent is more than fair.

My goodness, now this was a mail that got loaded with all kinds of serious issues! This is one more reason to show up for cocktails and colourful snacks – or whatever you would prefer to have – on 20 July. Each person will pick up their own tab, but we will take good care to create a very relaxing atmosphere as a group.

Warmest regards,
Debbie