

## **Validity of residence permits**

In principle, residence permits legally **expire** if you leave the Federal Republic of Germany and do not return within **six months or a longer period defined by the Immigration Service**.

Applications for extension of the six-month period must be filed with the Immigration Service. Please file this application **before your departure**.

Extensions can normally be granted if you intend to leave the country temporarily and are in possession of a settlement permit, or if your stay outside federal territory serves the interests of the Federal Republic of Germany.

This extension is granted in the form of a **certificate** (Fee: €10) that may be required when reentering the country.

### **Exceptions**

Your settlement permit (i.e. existing unlimited residence permit or right of residence) will **not expire** if the following conditions apply:

- **Legitimate stays exceeding 15 years**

Your settlement permits will not expire if you have been legitimately resident on federal territory for at least 15 years and your livelihood is secured. This also applies to your foreign spouse or registered cohabitation partner, if you live with this person in a domestic partnership, this person is also in possession of a settlement permit, and their livelihood is secured. Proofs of health insurance cover and written confirmation that no welfare payments are being claimed must be submitted.

- **German spouses and registered common law spouses**

Your settlement permit will not expire if you are married to or living in a registered common law relationship with a German citizen and this marital or registered cohabitation relationship continues both abroad and after your return to federal territory.

The Foreigners' Authority issues a **certificate as proof** of the continued validity of the settlement permit. This certificate may be required when reentering the country. The fee for issuing the certificate is €10.