

Dr. ISHIJIMA Mai

My research

My research seeks an optimized legal system to register a person's gender through comparative legal studies. Legally registered gender does not only determine a person's legal status such as legal parent-child relationships but also functions for various other purposes such as prevention of discriminations. Most legal systems premise that legally registered gender matches to the biological sex of the registered person; in Germany, as in Japan, one's gender is registered at the time of birth based on their physical characteristics. On the other hand, the German Constitution protects a person's gender identity, and legal recognition of one's gender identity on their civil status is a constitutional need. Giving consideration to this premise and constitutional requirement, my research aims to identify an appropriate method to register gender while taking the various purposes of its use into account.

Advice on preparing to go abroad

I recommend you to check on your visa application early on. If you apply for a visa or switch the type of a visa in Germany, you may need to make an appointment with the immigration office several months in advance. You may also have to visit the immigration office several times. When you sign up for health insurance, make sure your warranty covers what you need to acquire a visa. For the accommodation, the international office of your host institution would support you. You can also rent a room in a shared apartment (*Wohngemeinschaft*) or communicate directly with a house owner. There are online services available for mobile phone or opening/managing a bank account. If you plan to use a Japanese bank account, I recommend you to apply for an online banking service before coming to Germany.

Advice on problems that may arise when living abroad

Although at the beginning I used English to communicate with my colleagues at my host institution, learning German helped me to broaden my research capabilities. Learning the local language(s) would be helpful, especially if your research is in the humanities/social science field. Being able to communicate in the local language also expanded my reach through understanding research presentations of others or participating in everyday conversations. The language skill also helped me to acquire daily information related to the pandemic.

Regarding the accommodation, mind that cases of fraud were reported; when they ask

for some sort of payment before the contract, suspect a fraud. After moving, you must register yourself with your address at a civil office (*Anmeldung*). Do not forget indicating your name at your door/mailbox as soon as you move in. Otherwise, you might miss parcels and important documents addressed to you. In the worst case, it could be sent back to the sender.

What is it like living abroad?

The people in Mainz are warmhearted and have offered me a lot of help. My research colleagues are quite enthusiastic and give astonishing discussions about researches they are interested in. They encourage me each time when I joined scientific discussions with them. Even after switching our academic communications to online due to the pandemic of the novel virus, staying in Germany still has a significant meaning to me and my research, since I am surrounded every day by academic communications, opportunities, conversations, information, and materials that I would never be able to reach from Japan.

What is good about your receiving a Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad?

More than anything, I am grateful to be in an environment where I can concentrate on my work, that is highly conducive to my research. Being able to participate in discussions about German law in Germany is quite stimulating. I became bitterly aware of that the information on German law I could obtain in Japan was quite limited when it comes to its speed, content and volume. Because of the funding which I receive from JSPS, I do not have to put any financial burden on my host institution in Germany. This helped me to choose the host institution flexibly. My current host institution is an ideal place for my research. Being blessed with fellow researchers, I am able to advance my research in the environment that is most suitable for the study I want to work on.