

## Information sheet: Housing

The most important points:

- Are you a provisionally admitted foreigner (*vorläufig aufgenommene:r Ausländer:in*)? Would you like information on living in Canton Zurich?
- If you are receiving financial assistance from your municipality, you have no choice in where and how you would like to live.
- If you are allowed to look for an apartment, the municipality will determine how high the rent can be. You have no legal right to having your own apartment.
- It is possible to change to a different municipality under certain circumstances, for example if your journey to work is unduly long or a medical report provides special grounds.

### Basics

Provisionally admitted persons receive support in Canton Zurich according to asylum assistance (*Asylfürsorge*) rules. Each municipality determines how much money a provisionally admitted person receives. The municipalities decide how provisionally admitted persons live. Provisionally admitted persons who receive financial support from the municipality may not normally change to a different municipality.

### Support: Rent and living costs

The housing of provisionally admitted persons is organised differently in every municipality. In some municipalities provisionally admitted persons live in collective accommodation, i.e. in a centre (*Kollektivunterkunft*) with other people in the asylum system. Often they are not allowed to live in their own apartments and are required to live with other people in the asylum system. Persons living in collective accommodation receive less financial help. However, they do not usually have to pay for electricity, water, television/radio and rubbish collection.

There are also municipalities which pay the rent of private apartments for provisionally accepted persons. Every municipality determines how high this rent can be.

## **Is it possible to change to a different municipality?**

Provisionally accepted persons who receive financial support from the municipality cannot change municipalities without grounds. However, changes may be approved in individual cases. For instance, if a person in a wheelchair needs a wheelchair-friendly apartment and this is not available in the municipality, a request for a change of municipality can be made. This particular case would require a doctor's report, as detailed as possible.

A change of municipality can also be requested if the workplace of the person in question is located in a faraway municipality. The change can be approved if the person's journey to work is unduly long, or their working hours (e.g. shifts) are very late / very early. In such cases it is beneficial for the employer to contact the responsible social services office and express support for the change. Whether the request is approved or not depends on the municipality.

## **Changing to a different canton**

Changing to a different canton is possible for provisionally accepted persons only in rare cases, e.g. for *family unification purposes* or if the person provides proof of being *at serious risk*. In changes of canton for family reasons, as a rule only spouses, registered partners, domestic partners and underage children are considered. For other near relations, the relationship must be one of strong dependence. Changes of canton in cases of serious risk can be approved in exceptional medical circumstances, for example to enable access to specific medical services. Private conflicts (e.g. with ex-spouses) are not in the category of serious risk, according to State Secretariat for Migration practice.

The State Secretariat for Migration decides on changes of canton. Normally the agreement of both cantons is required.

At the end of 2021 it was decided that changes of canton will also be possible for provisionally accepted persons if they work in, or are undergoing training in, another canton. However, a change of canton in this case is only possible if the respective person is receiving no social assistance.

## What can I do if I am having problems in the area of housing?

The first step is to ask the responsible social worker for a personal discussion and to explain the situation in detail. For example, a provisionally accepted person living in collective accommodation (*Asylzentrum*) who is suffering from mental problems can use a doctor's report to explain to the social worker that they need rest on health grounds and therefore need their own apartment.

Sometimes it can be helpful to bring a person from another office or organisation to a discussion with the social worker. It is important, however, to get information in advance on current laws and guidelines.

Persons who are not satisfied with a decision made by the municipality may request a decree and then make a legal appeal against the decision. For help you may contact an independent advice office.

## Places to seek help

- Verein map-F Monitoring- und Anlaufstelle für vorläufig aufgenommene Personen [monitoring and contact point for provisionally accepted persons]:  
<http://www.map-f.ch>
- Zürcher Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende ZBA [Zurich advice centre for asylum seekers]:  
<https://www.zbasyl.ch>
- Unabhängige Fachstelle für Sozialhilferecht UFS [independent advice centre for social welfare law]:  
<https://www.sozialhilfeberatung.ch>