FAQs Infant childcare
January 2020

1) Who can apply?
Only postdocs (Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service – TVÖD) and doctoral students with a funding contract of the MPIs (including those established in foreign countries) or of the IPP and the Max Planck Institutes for iron and coal research are entitled to apply. Under the Postdoc Guidelines, postdocs are scientists who have obtained their doctorates and who, after doing so, initially remain in research and usually pursue a career in science. The postdoc phase serves to enable scientific profiling and qualifications, as well as the development of the ability to conduct independent research. The postdoc phase is time-limited, with different periods of time being customary in different disciplines (usually 4-6 years after conferral of a doctorate). The MPG employs postdocs under temporary contracts, which are funded either by internal Institute budgets or by project-specific grants. It is important that a Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service should be in place.
You can also use employee group A06 as a guide. Permanent employees are not postdocs within the meaning of the Guidelines.

2) Since when has it been possible to apply?
Following the extension of the pilot project, fundamentally new applications must be submitted from January 2020.
The applicant must either
- already have a child aged between 3 and 12 months, or
- be expecting the imminent birth of a child (the application cannot be submitted before the start of the maternity protection period).

Since fundamental discussions are currently still being held on the future of the pilot project, a number of things need to be taken into account in the application procedure:
- You can already now submit your application - provided all application requirements are met - until the end of your child's 12th month of life (maximum 10 months).
- However, the grant will only be revocable for this entire period. This applies in particular to the funding amount paid out after 30 June 2020. There is no entitlement to support.
- Before the end of 30 June, your institute will receive a message as to whether and for how long the grant can continue to be paid out. The further payment will then be made automatically by your institute.

3) Criteria regarding verifiable working hours
Both parents must work to a certain extent (see application form; the part-time requirement is at least 19.5 hours).
- As a general rule, special cases will be decided restrictively.
- For example, the following individuals do not fulfill the criterion:
  - a job-seeker, a part-time student, persons on parental leave (not working part-time during parental leave), Persons taking language courses, unless the language course is taught every day, lasts for a significant period of time and is pursued with a view to taking up a previously planned, specific employment.

The corresponding employment of both parents must take place during the funding period.

4) What are the requirements for charging babysitting costs?
The caregiver must be able to present a formal (i.e. properly made out) invoice. Background:
Childcare expenses are only refundable if
a) the services are based on clear and unambiguous agreements that have been effectively concluded under civil law,
b) they correspond in content to what is usual between non-related parties, and
c) they are actually implemented as agreed.

The received payments constitute income from self-employed activity and may (depending on the level of other income) result in liability for income tax and where applicable VAT. Therefore, they must always be made by bank transfer.

5) Who is considered a life partner?
This is normally the child’s caregiver living in the same household, i.e. the person who might actually be eligible for childcare support. This does not include a father living far away from the child’s mother, for example.
6) What should be submitted as the life partner’s proof of earnings?
Confirmation from the external employer for the period of the application should be submitted and will be placed on file. Any changes should be reported immediately.

7) What proof of earnings does a self-employed person have to submit?
A copy of the business registration and a brief note from the self-employed person indicating the nature of the work and stating the weekly working hours.

8) Can the services of an au pair be refunded?
This will be decided on a case-by-case basis and at discretion. The applicant should enclose the au-pair contract showing the daily or weekly childcare hours excluding weekends. Deductions may however be applied, since the au pair will not normally devote all their working time to childcare alone.

9) What if childcare costs vary from month to month?
The requested monthly amounts must be entered on page 2 of the application form, indicating the specific months concerned.
Note: The month in which the child reaches the age of 36 months can be charged for as a whole month.

10) What costs cannot be reimbursed?
No allowance will be paid for meals or other expenses. Where applicable these must be deducted from the requested rate.

11) What is the procedure if claimants already receive childcare benefits under the Social Security Code?
The MPI must advise claimants that they have to disclose the allowance received from the MPG to the social welfare office and that their social benefits may be reduced as a result.

Basically:
The MPI reviews the application to ensure it is complete and admissible, i.e.:

- It carries out a final check to make sure it contains the correct information and is justified before it is forwarded to Administrative Headquarters
- This is certified by the signature of the Gender Equality Officer and the Head of Administration (page 2 of the application form)
- and notified to the Managing Director (see check box on page 2 of the application form).

After the application is submitted, Administrative Headquarters merely checks that funds are available. If funds are available, the MPI will be advised that the application has been provisionally approved.

The MPI may then disburse the funds after submission of the invoice amounts by applicants. The MPI thus makes such payments in advance of Administrative Headquarters.