



## Being Trans in the AFS Program from Germany Abroad

### Trans and AFS

For AFS, the diversity of individual personalities is just as important as cultural and linguistic diversity during program participation. That's why we're really excited that you want to go on your exchange experience with us! We consider the diversity of gender and sexual identities a great benefit for our organisation. To make sure that your experience abroad goes as smoothly as possible, there are a few things you should know and clarify in advance.

### General Information

- You're the **expert of your situation**, your identity counts – no matter how you choose to express your gender in everyday life.
- Please answer the following questions and send your answers to the AFS office or QueerExchange. Your answers (or parts of them) will then be forwarded to your AFS chapter, seminar organisers, and your AFS host country.
  1. *Which name and pronoun(s) should be used to refer to you?*
  2. *Who may/should know what? May/should anyone explicitly not be informed?*
  3. *The shared rooms and bathrooms at seminars are usually separated by binary genders. Which gender would you like to be placed with if possible?*
- Please note, however, that **formal information** (e.g., from your passport) must be provided to AFS in your host country.
- AFS has started to train full-time staff and volunteers on the topic of transidentity. Still, it's possible that some people don't know enough (yet). Please assume good will, even if other people ask you uncomfortable questions or are (too) curious, but be sure to know that you don't have to explain anything if you don't want to.
- Try to learn important vocabulary in advance, as **explaining yourself** in a foreign language is complicated and can lead to more misunderstandings. Keep in mind that trans people in other cultures may live more openly or not as openly as in your country and that other prejudices may be existing.

### Changing Name and Civil Status

- Germany's Self-ID law sets a three-month waiting period between the application and the actual appointment for the change of name and legal gender. Submit your application as early as possible or after your participation in the programme. If you



are under the age of 18, your parents or legal guardians need to approve the application.

- The legal name has to be used on official documents such as visa papers / airline tickets, but AFS will use your chosen name on all other documents.
- Your passport photo should be as up-to-date as possible, especially if you apply for a change of civil status and name after your program participation, to minimise confusion on part of border personnel when entering and leaving the country. The Supplementary ID Card of dgti e. V. can be helpful here.
- If you change your name after your visa / airline ticket has been issued and your visa / ticket needs to be reissued, this can cause additional costs and take time.

### Are you planning or have you already started medical treatment?

- Since AFS health insurance doesn't cover **hormonal treatment**, please clarify in advance with your doctor and health insurance company (1) how you can take and/or get hormones abroad, but also (2) how, for example, how you can control the hormone level abroad or switch from puberty blockers to opposite-sex hormones. Note that testosterone as a controlled substance is usually not allowed to be imported into other countries without restrictions.
- **Costs for psychotherapeutic support, which is required by law in Germany**, are not covered by AFS health insurance during participation in an AFS program. Therefore, your treatment can't simply be continued. It's up to you to determine whether it's possible to continue your therapy abroad at your own expense.
- As part of a medical form required by AFS, you will be routinely asked if you're currently receiving psychological care. Because of this, you'll probably need to discontinue your psychotherapeutic treatment a few months before departure and provide a letter in English for the AFS partner country explaining that treatment is required by law but that you're psychologically stable.
- If you're planning to have gender affirming surgery, remember that psychotherapeutic treatment usually has to be continuous for six months in order for the surgery to be covered by the German health insurance after your return. Discuss this with your therapist.
- You're required to inform your host family and the AFS office if you're taking any medication.
- If you're feeling unwell, see a doctor and get a check-up, even if you think it might be side effects of the hormonal treatment.

*Status: March 2025*