

German Radio and TV Tax

by Joerg Moddelmog

Germany has a strong public radio and TV tradition, e.g., ARD (*“Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands”* – Cooperation of Public-law Broadcasting Institutions of Germany, founded on June 10, 1950), ZDF (*“Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen”* – Second German TV Channel, first time on the air on April 1, 1963). In Germany private broadcasting companies have only existed since 1984. No commercials are allowed on public radio and TV after 2000 hours.

In order to help finance these public radio and TV stations, the German States agreed in the German Interstate Broadcasting Fee Convention (*“Rundfunkgebührenstaatsvertrag”*, RFGStV) to charge a fee. Since January 1, 1976, the GEZ (*“Gebühren-einzugszentrale der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten”* – Institution for the collection of charges for the pub-

lic-law broadcasting) collects the monthly fee.

As of April 1, 2005, the monthly fee (per apartment to include a POV) amounts to €17.03 for radio and TV/Internet-TV use and €5.52 for radio use. Payment of fees is mandatory for users who must register for use of radios and television sets.

However, persons holding SOFA status are **EXEMPT** from these fees and registration, in accordance with Article 60, paragraph 5(b) of the Supplementary Agreement (SA) to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). In response to a GEZ request, a *Statusbescheinigung* (Certificate of Status) should be sent, making reference to Article 60, paragraph 5(b) of the SA. Copies of military or civilian ID cards should not be sent to GEZ.

If your local national spouse has been paying these fees, he or she can demand to be reimbursed back to the date when he or she obtained SOFA status (by marriage); however, in no case shall a refund be given for a pe-

riod more than 3 years from the date of application (Art. 4, § 7, para. 4, RFGStV).

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