

Change to the church tax deduction when joining the church

If you join or re-join a church, you are obliged to pay church tax. The procedure for this is largely automated.

Competent Department

- [Bremische Evangelische Kirche](#)
- [Katholischer Gemeindeverband Bremen Infopunkt URBI](#)

Basic information

If you join or re-join a tax-collecting religious community, you must pay church tax in accordance with the church tax laws of the federal states, as a surcharge on your income or wage tax (wage church tax). The employer must therefore withhold not only income tax but also church tax from the employee's wages and pay it to the tax office each time wages are paid. The corresponding procedure for deducting church tax is largely automated. You therefore generally do not have to do anything else to meet your church tax obligations once you have declared your employment.

The religious communities themselves regulate how and with which office the church membership is to be declared. Church affiliation is recorded by the registration authorities of the federal states and can only be changed by them. The tax authorities have no influence on this. This is important, for example, if the authorities have incorrect data.

The registration authorities inform the Federal Central Tax Office (BZSt) of any changes in church affiliation and the corresponding date. The BZSt stores the electronic wage tax deduction features (ELStAM) in a database. The stored data also includes features for the deduction of church tax.

The BZSt makes the ELStAM available to the employer for automated retrieval free of charge. The ELStAM are decisive for the withholding of church tax by the employer in the tax deduction procedure, i.e. the employer is bound by them and does not need to check the question of church tax liability.

Requirements

- personal declaration of joining or re-joining the church to the religious community
- the individual requirements depend on the respective religious community

What documents do I need?

- You do not need to submit any documents.

Procedure

You submit the declaration of entry or re-entry to the respective religious community.

- The religious community informs the relevant registration office. The information is stored there and forwarded to the Federal Central Tax Office.
- The Federal Central Tax Office informs the tax offices.
- No application or notification to the tax office is required, as the data is forwarded to the employer by the registration authorities via the Federal Central Tax Office.

Legal bases

- [§ 39e Absatz 3 Einkommensteuergesetz \(EStG\)](#)

What deadlines must be paid attention to?

There are no deadlines.

How long does it take to process

If you join or re-join a religious community, the change in the church tax deduction feature becomes effective for tax purposes on the 1st of the month following the month of joining.

Example: If you join a church on 04.07., this becomes effective for tax purposes on 01.08.

What are the costs?

There are no costs for you.