

Germany.  
Right in the middle of it.

A GUIDE TO LIVING AND WORKING IN GERMANY



Living and working  
in the heart of Europe



**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**

Zentrale Auslands-  
und Fachvermittlung (ZAV)

## **IMPRINT**

### **Publisher**

German Federal Employment Agency (BA)  
International Placement Services (ZAV)

### **Editors**

BW Bildung und Wissen Verlag und Software GmbH  
and Marion Rang, International Placement Services  
(ZAV), responsible

### **Translation German – English**

Karen Scott-Leuteritz, Nuremberg

### **Publishing house**

BW Bildung und Wissen Verlag und Software GmbH,  
Nuremberg, [www.bwverlag.de](http://www.bwverlag.de)

### **Image credits**

Title, 3, 10, 14, 23, 28, 31, 33, 41, 43:  
[www.panthermedia.net](http://www.panthermedia.net), 2, 5, 6, 8, 13,  
15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 25, 29, 34, 36, 38, 39: private,  
9: Ferdinand Schmutzer, public domain,  
12: Nadine Dilly, 17: Gret Widmann, public domain,  
21: mhm/maria.com.de, 27: Daniel Lwowski,  
35: Ruth Kappus/Getty Images

The publishing house BW Bildung und Wissen Verlag  
und Software GmbH would like to thank all the people,  
companies and institutions that provided photographs  
free of charge.

All rights reserved. Reprint – also in extracts – only  
with the approval of the editor and only with sources.

### **Download (free of charge):**

[www.zav.de](http://www.zav.de)

### **Issue**

May 2013



**With the support of the European Union.**

The responsibility for the content of this publication remains with the publisher. The European Commission is not liable for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# Contents

<b>Right in the middle of it.</b> <b>Living and working in the heart of Europe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Applying for a job in Germany</b> May I work in Germany? · How do I find a job in Germany? · What does a job application look like in Germany? · What should I expect in the job interview?	<b>5</b>
<b>Working in Germany</b> The employment contract · Working hours · Wages and salaries · Holiday · Tax · Social security · Protection against dismissal · Self-employment · Unemployment benefit	<b>16</b>
<b>Living in Germany</b> How do I find a flat? · Money and financial transactions · Vehicles and driving licences · Cost of living	<b>25</b>
<b>When the family comes too</b> Childcare and nursery schools · Single parents · Schools, training and higher education	<b>34</b>
<b>The German language</b> Regional dialects · Learning German · Useful phrases	<b>38</b>
<b>Information and advice</b>	<b>43</b>

# Right in the middle of it. Living and working in the heart of Europe



*“After a period spent working in Germany you’re worth your weight in gold for the companies in your home country. You have not only enhanced your skills and gained up-to-date knowledge, but also strengthened your intercultural and linguistic competences.”*

**Ina Rosenow**, Job Placement Officer at the ZAV and EURES adviser

Germany has a mild climate, a regionally diverse cuisine that is not, however, particularly renowned for its sophistication, and when you want to go for a stroll in the evening the shops have already closed. The Germans can think of much more exotic locations as a holiday destination than their own country. However, that is often viewed differently from outside the country: according to the German Tourist Board, there were more than 68 million international overnight stays in Germany in 2012, and the trend is rising. The world is queuing up to visit Germany, and we Germans think that is great.

A trip to Berlin or walking in the Alps is one thing, living and working in Germany is quite a different matter. It means completely submersing yourself in another culture and getting to know the country and its people thoroughly in order to open up new professional opportunities or to advance your career.

You’ve been contemplating this? Then we will help you to make a decision. We, the International Placement Services (ZAV), are the contact partner within the German Federal Employment Agency for the international labour market and help German companies recruit foreign workers together with the local employment agencies.



## Typically German!

Our European neighbours consider the Germans to be well organised, precise and slightly pedantic but also reliable, amiable and sociable. Modernity, creativity and progress are associated with Germany, too. That was the outcome of the “Nation Brands Index”, an international survey that is conducted once a year and asks more than 25,000 people about the strength and attractiveness of the image of a total of 50 nations.

For further information go to [www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de) (in 19 languages) and [www.deutschland.de](http://www.deutschland.de) (in 8 languages).

Did you know...

## **Germany. A good place for experts**

There are more than 41 million people employed in Germany. Nonetheless there is a lack of qualified professionals in certain sectors and regions. In order to counteract this shortage of skilled workers, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and the Federal Employment Agency have launched the Qualified Professionals Initiative. This campaign is intended not only to provide information about the skill shortage but also to mobilise potential at home and abroad at the same time. The demand for labour cannot be met solely with Germany's current workforce. That is why attracting labour from other countries is a major element of the Qualified Professionals Initiative. Instruments such as the "EU Blue Card Germany" are intended to make it easier for foreign workers to enter the German labour market. The multilingual Internet portal "Make it in Germany" welcomes international skilled workers and provides useful information on the subject of living and working in Germany.

### **Links on the Qualified Professionals Initiative Portal of the Qualified Professionals Initiative:**

[www.fachkraefte-offensive.de](http://www.fachkraefte-offensive.de)

### **EU Blue Card Germany:**

[www.bluecard-eu.de](http://www.bluecard-eu.de)

### **The "Welcome to Germany" portal for qualified professionals from abroad:**

[www.make-it-in-germany.com](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com)

# Applying for a job in Germany

## MAY I WORK IN GERMANY?

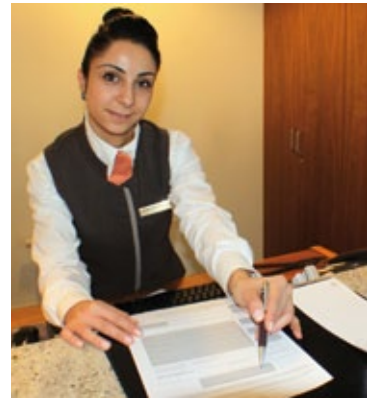
We look forward to people who are adventurous, curious and determined to overcome any hurdles. That's why we make it easier for you to come.

If you come from a country within the European Union, or from Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Iceland, you can live and work in Germany without any restrictions. However, transition regulations apply to the new EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania.

Although their citizens do not require a visa, until the end of 2013 they do require an EU work permit. This is issued by the ZAV on application. The ZAV will also help you apply for a work permit or permission to access the labour market.

All other foreigners require a visa if they wish to stay for a long duration. For this you should contact the German mission in your home country before entering Germany. Exceptions apply to citizens of Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Israel, Japan and the Republic of Korea: they can also apply for the necessary residence permit in Germany from the responsible aliens authority (**Ausländeramt**).

How quickly and uncomplicated your work permit can be issued depends to a considerable extent on your occupation. At the moment engineers in the fields of metal construction, mechanical engineering, mechatronics, technical research and development, construction and utility systems as well as skilled workers in the fields of energy and air conditioning technology, and computer specialists are particularly in demand, as are fully qualified doctors and health-care personnel. With the new "EU Blue Card Germany", highly qualified professionals from countries outside the EU can gain access to the German labour market more easily.



*“ Here in Germany there are more career development opportunities than in my home country. I enjoy working in a large, well-known company. My employer made my start in Germany very easy for me and helped me with forms and visits to the authorities. Everything was very well prepared.”*

**Viktoriya Takvorova** comes from Bulgaria and works as a Junior Guest Service Agent at the Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center.



“For young unemployed skilled workers funding is available from the special programme “MobiPro-EU”. This can be used, for example, to refund travel costs or to pay for a German language course if they have already found a job.”

**Christian Spelter,**  
Job Placement Officer at  
the ZAV

Specialists from other service sectors, such as the hotel and catering industry, also have good chances. If you would like to know how much demand there is for your vocational qualifications in the German labour market, then you can find out from the ZAV. You can contact ZAV Information Services at +49 228 713-1313.

State recognition is only required for a few professions in Germany. These include doctors, teachers and nurses. You can find out how to have your qualifications recognised and the responsible authorities for this on the Internet at [www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de) and at [www.anabin.de](http://www.anabin.de).

## HOW DO I FIND A JOB IN GERMANY?

If you are still living abroad, you can find out from the ZAV what jobs are currently on offer and whether you could be suitable for them. If you are already resident in Germany, you can contact your local employment agency ([www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) > Partner vor Ort).

However, don't just restrict your search to vacancies advertised by the Federal Employment Agency. Many companies publish their job openings in online job portals, for example at [ec.europa.eu/eures](http://ec.europa.eu/eures).

In fact the Internet is becoming increasingly important in Germany when looking for jobs, whether via network portals such as [www.xing.de](http://www.xing.de) or via job openings advertised on the companies' own websites.

The job vacancies in electronic or printed newspapers continue to be an important source. Browse through the specialist journals, weekly newspapers and the weekend editions of the daily newspapers or their websites. Larger companies, in particular, also like to publish their job openings under the 'Personnel' or 'Career' sections on their company homepages.

And finally, as everywhere else in the world, private and personal contacts to companies and their associates often provide a lot of help. "There's a job going at XY company – isn't that something that might interest you?" – If you start networking as soon as possible, you might hear this question earlier than you expect.



## WHAT DOES A JOB APPLICATION LOOK LIKE IN GERMANY?

A written job application consists of a cover letter, the curriculum vitae and copies of the most important certificates and references; samples of work may also be needed. A photo is still generally required in Germany for a complete application. Your prospective employer may already have specified what they want in terms of documents in the job advert.

For online applications – which are also becoming more usual in Germany – you will need to send your documents as compact PDF files.

Find out about your desired employer – the Internet makes this easy for you. The job advertisement will tell you who to write to. If no name is mentioned, find out on the company's website or give them a call. For want of a better alternative you could always resort

### The Job of my Life

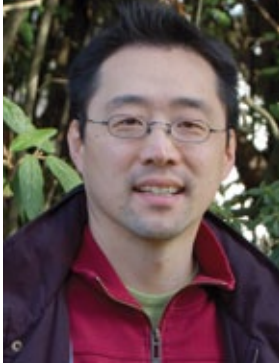
#### The support programme “MobiPro-EU”

The special programme for the “Promotion of Occupational Mobility of Young People Interested in Vocational Training and of Unemployed Young Professionals from Europe” (MobiProEU) was launched in 2013. In this way the Federal Government supports the following target groups from other European countries:

- young people who wish to complete a vocational training programme in Germany
- young professionals who wish to take up qualified employment in Germany

The programme responds on the one hand to the high level of youth unemployment within the EU and on the other hand to the imminent shortage of skilled manpower in Germany. The ZAV is responsible for allocating the funds.

**For further information about the support options go to**  
[www.thejobofmylife.de](http://www.thejobofmylife.de)



“Throughout Germany there is great demand for medical and healthcare personnel and doctors. These occupational groups can find attractive employers and interesting work in clinics and hospitals or in establishments providing care for the elderly.”

**Shin-Daniel Cho**, Job Placement Officer at the ZAV and EURES adviser

to the very general “Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren” (“Dear Sir or Madam”). Particularly with speculative job applications, however, you should make the effort to find out the right person to contact.

The cover letter should comprise one DIN A4 page and should briefly and concisely explain why you are looking for a job, why you are interested in the work offered and why you consider yourself the most appropriate person for the job. Try to point out why you want to work in Germany. Conclude the letter with the hope of being able to introduce yourself in person – and of course with: “Mit freundlichen Grüßen” (“Yours faithfully”).

In Germany, the curriculum vitae, which should be no longer than two pages, lists your education and training, professional experience and the successes you’ve achieved. The sequence should be in reverse order, i. e. the latest data should be mentioned first. Although most personnel managers are quite proficient in English, it is better to write in German. Always begin with your contact details and then structure your CV according to your school education and vocational training (“Schul- und Berufsausbildung”) and previous employment (“Berufstätigkeit”).

The **europass** enables you to present your qualifications, skills and competences in a way that can be understood throughout Europe. This creates transparency. You can find detailed information on the official **europass** website: [www.europass-info.de](http://www.europass-info.de).

The CV should be clearly laid out with complete information. Don’t just list the corresponding years for your previous jobs (e. g. 2008–2011) – you need to list the months as well (e. g. 01/2008–06/2011). You also need to list periods of unemployment and other periods when you have not worked (e. g. due to military service, illness, sabbaticals etc), since gaps in the CV will be viewed critically.

At the end, it’s a good idea to list the languages you can speak well. The usual categories are: ‘Muttersprache’ (native speaker), ‘verhandlungssicher’ (excellent command), ‘fließend’ (fluent) and ‘Grundkenntnisse’ (basic knowledge). Your personal interests can also project a positive image of yourself, for instance if you are involved in social activities.

## THEY ARE GERMANY

**Albert Einstein** (1879-1955) is probably the most famous physicist of all time and is considered a genius par excellence. Already during his schooldays he shone with his good marks and, contrary to what has often been claimed, he was not a bad pupil. As a young man, Einstein, who was born in Ulm, already began to write theoretical treatises. At the age of 26 he gained a doctorate in physics for his thesis "A New Determination of Molecular Dimensions". With his masterpiece, the theory of relativity, he paved the way for modern physics. His groundbreaking insights brought him worldwide fame. In 1921 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. Besides his services to science, the pacifist Einstein advocated world peace all his life. After Hitler seized power he turned his back on Germany for ever and lived in Princeton, New Jersey from that time onwards. When asked about his outstanding talent, he once said, "I have no special talent, I am only passionately curious."



Your certificates and references provide evidence of your expertise and experience. Include in your application all certificates that qualify you for the job you are applying for. If job references are not usual in your own country, then mention this in the corresponding sections in the CV. Don't forget to include any initial and further training certificates. Depending on the situation (for example when applying to smaller companies), it may be a good idea to have your references and certificates translated into German and certified.

Normally it is sufficient to provide your school-leaving or university certificates, as well as references or certificates of employment from companies or establishments where you previously worked. However, if you have any other aces up your sleeve – such as other certificates, awards, foreign internships – then don't hesitate to mention them.



Did you know...

## Great climate

In Germany, the central European climate determines the weather conditions and the mood of the people. If the forecasts of climate researchers are anything to go by, the mood should not be too bad during the next few decades: it is actually supposed to be getting warmer from the North Sea to the Alps. According to unanimous forecasts, we will soon be experiencing Tuscan-like weather conditions with drier summers, warmer winters and spells of abundant rainfall in between. However, there is a high price to be paid for being able to do without pullovers and long johns. Climate change is upsetting the balance of flora and fauna and also has consequences for mankind. In Germany, climate change is a major issue. The start of the age of renewable energy and energy efficiency, known as the “Energiewende” or energy turnaround, is proof of that. Products on this growth market are exported throughout the world by German firms.

After all when you make an application, you are advertising yourself. It is a good idea to include a certificate supplement describing your vocational qualifications. The **europass** certificate supplement ([www.europass.cedefop.eu.int](http://www.europass.cedefop.eu.int)) outlines the course content and the typical sectors and occupations accessible with each certificate. It also includes information on the type of vocational training, the grade scale and the knowledge, skills and competences you have acquired. The **europass** website also provides useful templates that help you to structure your CV and describe your language skills and international work experience in an internationally comparable style. This enables you to make your application more informative.

If you have an academic background, it is worthwhile contacting your university or college first. They can frequently provide you with a diploma supplement describing the degree and your qualifications in detail. If you include this with your job application, your prospective German employer can make a more precise assessment of your skills and expertise.

## **WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN THE JOB INTERVIEW?**

You have been invited to attend a job interview? Congratulations! You now need to prepare yourself. Unless you are told otherwise, the interview will probably last one or two hours. It is worth enquiring whether the employer is prepared to pay the travel costs. It is important to be punctual and to dress appropriately: a suit and tie are generally suitable for men, while a ladies' suit with a skirt or trousers is appropriate for women. At least you can't go wrong with such clothing.

The job interview is usually held with two people: a specialist manager and an interviewer from the personnel department; sometimes there are other people in addition. You will first be asked to introduce yourself. You may be asked to present yourself using a flipchart or whiteboard – so try and make the most of this opportunity. As long as you don't deviate from the facts in your CV, you can't go wrong. But do try to recount more than just the bare facts: speaking freely enables you to focus on specific aspects in greater depth, to underline successes and to create an overall positive impression through your personality.



## THEY ARE GERMANY

**Kaya Yanar's** breakthrough as a comedian came in 2001 with the TV show "Was guckst Du?!" ("Whaddaya lookin' at?!"). The format was awarded the German TV Prize and the German Comedy Prize. Yanar's special field is so-called ethno-comedy, in which he makes fun of different nationalities and cultural differences with a twinkle in his eye. Already as a child he loved visiting Greek or Italian school friends: "I always found it enriching to get involved with different cultures." Some of the characters he plays, such as the Indian Ranjid or the Turkish bouncer Hakan have achieved cult status. In his new stage show "Around the World", which goes on tour in autumn 2013, the self-appointed globetrotter among the comedians takes his audience on a search for paradise on earth. Away from the spotlights and TV cameras, the 39-year-old promotes integration issues and is a sponsor of a school project "Schools without racism – schools with courage".

All this also applies when you are invited to an assessment centre together with other candidates. In this case the applicants are directly compared with one another. Be aware of this competitive situation and be prepared for group discussions.

What will your prospective employer pay particular attention to in the selection interview? First and foremost he will want to establish whether you will actually be capable of performing the job advertised and what knowledge and skills you possess. But they also want to ascertain how the company would benefit from your personality and whether customers, colleagues and senior principles would enjoy working with you.

Foreign skilled workers are in demand

## Good developers are in demand

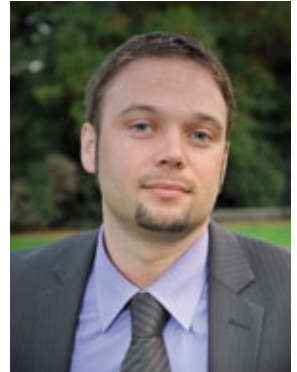
“It’s very difficult to find suitable staff on the German labour market, especially in the field of development. We’re able to meet our needs by hiring skilled workers from abroad,” as Jens Reisdorf knows. That is why his firm began to look beyond Germany’s borders and to seek skilled personnel abroad via the ZAV (International Placement Services). In the end the firm took on two of the three candidates suggested by the ZAV.

The two employees – one from Serbia, the other from Brazil – brought their families with them to Germany. For Jens Reisdorf this is an important factor for a successful start in Germany: “If the family comes to Germany too, it’s easier to get started than if you sit on the sofa alone in the evenings after work.” The company, too, helps its employees to settle in, providing them with advice and support at the beginning. Already before the new employees arrive, the company had looked for accommodation. Colleagues provided help with the visits to authorities.

“Germany has a lot to offer,” says Jens Reisdorf: “Clear structures, for example in issues such as health care or employment protection, ensure a high standard of living.”

A win-win situation develops for both parties – the company and the skilled workers from abroad. While the employers are able to fulfil their demand for qualified professionals, the employees gather international experience and specialist knowledge in Germany. In this way they boost their status on their native labour markets if they decide to return to their country of origin one day.

Jens Reisdorf is happy to have found two valuable employees: “Our two new members of staff are absolutely reliable and highly motivated.”



**Jens Reisdorf** is marketing and sales manager at UplinkIT in Kaiserslautern.



Did you know...

## Germany's media world

In Germany, there probably isn't a single newspaper kiosk that doesn't provide a veritable forest of publications. Special interest magazines appear to be conceived, researched, written and printed for every imaginable target group, however small (from plant nursery gardeners to yacht owners), even if they are only published in limited editions. Anyone looking for information or entertainment will find that there seem to be no limits to what is available. And more and more kiosks sell foreign publications, including daily newspapers in different languages.

And this doesn't only apply to print media. Via cable or satellite it is possible to receive dozens of radio and TV channels from around the world, and with digital reception even hundreds. There are channels with and without commercial breaks, special interest channels, children's television, news channels – in fact there's something for everybody. However, although the protection of media diversity is prescribed by law in Germany, the diversity of Germany's immigrant society is only slowly making its mark in the editorial rooms: almost a fifth of Germany's citizens have a migrant background, but only one in fifty journalists.



Just be yourself! Don't be submissive but don't show off, either. Demonstrate that you are interested in your interview partners but don't limit yourself to questions that could be easily answered by reading the company's website. You will make the best impression with a healthy mixture of self-confidence and curiosity about the company and the work.

#### Important links

##### **Information on accessing the labour market:**

[www.zav.de](http://www.zav.de)

[www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

(in the section 'Entry and residence')

[www.bluecard-eu.de](http://www.bluecard-eu.de)

##### **Five steps to working in Germany:**

[www.make-it-in-germany.com](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com)

##### **Recognition of occupations:**

[www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de)

[www.europass.cedefop.eu.int](http://www.europass.cedefop.eu.int)

[www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net)

##### **Database with job vacancies within the EU/EEA:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/eures>

##### **Federal Employment Agency's job portal:**

[www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)

##### **Online job portals provided by major national newspapers:**

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ): [www.fazjob.net](http://www.fazjob.net)

Süddeutsche Zeitung: [www.laufbahner.de](http://www.laufbahner.de)

##### **Tips for applying for jobs in Germany:**

[www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) > Bürgerinnen und Bürger > Arbeit und Beruf > Arbeits-/Jobsuche > Bewerbung



*“From careers advice and tips on applying for jobs through to placement with an employer – the ZAV helps you to get started in Germany!”*

**Ralf Czadzeck**, Job Placement Officer at the ZAV, careers adviser and EURES adviser

# Working in Germany



“From the Baltic Sea right down to the Black Forest, the hotel and catering industry offers lots of interesting prospects – especially during the peak season.”

**Gitte Richter**, Job Placement Officer at the ZAV and EURES adviser

The Germans work longer each week than most other Europeans. German employees spend an average of 40.6 hours a week at their workplace – and are thus ranked third among the hardest working Europeans. This was the finding of a report published by the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) in 2011. At the same time, the report also reveals that compared to other European countries, the Germans enjoy an above-average amount of holiday.

The legendary industriousness of the Germans is therefore relative. In other respects, too, work in Germany does not differ much from work anywhere else in Europe. Nevertheless, we want to take a look at the most important aspects.

## THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

The exact nature of your job is detailed in the employment contract. Read through it carefully and ask, should there be anything that is not clear or does not tally with verbal agreements. After all you have to sign it so that it is legally binding. Therefore you should always insist on a written contract, which is also normal in Germany. If you are not issued with an employment contract, then you should be wary – ask the corresponding professional association or your local employment agency.

The employment contract regulates both your rights and obligations and those of your employer. The most important aspects are the description of your duties and payment, the duration of your probationary period, the working hours, workplace, your salary and agreed fringe benefits, as well as work breaks and holiday regulations. The employment contract often refers to an applicable collective agreement that has been concluded between the responsible employers' association and the respective trade union. Should you wish to, you can take a look at it (ask your employer or the company's works council).

## THEY ARE GERMANY

Born in the town of Calw in Württemberg in 1877, **Hermann Hesse** is one of Germany's best-known authors. Already as a child he stood out due to his exceptional power of imagination. However, in his youth Hesse also increasingly attracted attention owing to his rebellious character, which he retained all his life. As a result of this his parents sent him to a mental institution as an educational measure. While there, he furiously appealed to his father with the words, "I am beginning to wonder 'who' is mad in this affair." After leaving school, Hesse worked in bookshops in Tübingen and Basel, publishing his first works at the same time. He made a name for himself as an author with the novel *Peter Camenzind*. This also led to a breakthrough in financial terms and he was able to make a living from his writing. Numerous other works followed, the most successful of which include *Unterm Rad* (*Beneath the Wheel*), *Der Steppenwolf*, *Demian* and *Narziß und Goldmund* (*Narcissus and Goldmund*). In addition to many other awards, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946 for his complete works. In 1962 Hesse suffered a stroke and died.



## WORKING HOURS

Although the working week mostly varies between 37 and 40 hours (average: 37.7 hours) according to collective agreements, the Germans actually work an average of almost 41 hours a week. Flexible working time models are often available (flexitime arrangements), which enable you to schedule your working hours yourself to a certain extent. Management staff and senior employees with higher incomes are expected to work overtime without being paid additional remuneration. In other occupations, on the other hand, special bonuses are paid for night or holiday work, for example in the health sector, the security industry and in shift work in firms.



“Any high-tech company wanting to join the Champions League has to increase its strength with Europe’s best minds.”

**Harald Wilde**, Human Resources Director at dSpace in Paderborn

## WAGES AND SALARIES

There are industry-related minimum wages in many economic sectors, for example in the construction industry. Otherwise the wages are negotiated as part of collective bargaining between trade unions and employers’ associations. If there is no collective agreement in your sector, you have to negotiate your salary with your employer yourself. Rates exceeding collectively agreed pay scales are often paid for highly sought after specialists. Those who have worked longer for a company generally earn more than new recruits.

The average gross monthly income for full-time employees was 3,340 euros at the end of 2012. The highest average wages were earned by employees in the energy supply sector (4,518 euros), the banking and insurance sector (4,545 euros) and the information and communication sector (4,467 euros). The lowest average gross monthly wages (2,203 euros) were paid in the catering sector. Even 22 years after reunification, the wages and salaries in Germany’s eastern federal states are still considerably lower than in the west, whereby the cost of living in the eastern federal states is lower, too. Employers often pay additional Christmas bonuses and holiday pay; how high they are and when they are paid is specified in your employment contract. Some companies also pay commission and there is sometimes a 13th or even a 14th monthly salary.

## HOLIDAY

Every employee in Germany is entitled to paid annual holiday. The statutory minimum holiday entitlement each year is currently 20 days (for a regular five-day week) or 24 days (for a six-day week). However, the usual standard period in companies is generally longer than this and ranges between five and six weeks of regularly paid holiday. You only gain full entitlement to holiday after being employed for six months. Nevertheless, don’t hesitate to ask your employer should you require a few days off work beforehand for urgent reasons.

## TAX

If you earn more than 8,130 euros a year, you have to pay tax on your income. The employer deducts the tax due from your agreed gross earnings along with social security contributions.

Example: A single female employee without children who earns 25,000 euros a year must pay 2,837 euros income tax plus a solidarity surcharge of 156,03 euros. (The solidarity surcharge was introduced in 1991 by the Federal Government at that time to cover the costs of reunification. The money is not earmarked for specific purposes, however.) Fathers and mothers pay less. The amount of tax you pay depends on the tax class you are classified in, which is based on your living situation (ranging from Tax Class I for childless single people to Tax Class VI for second jobs). Your tax liability increases as your income increases, which is known as tax progression in Germany.

During the course of 2013 the new electronic income tax card (elektronische Lohnsteuerkarte – ELStAM) will be introduced throughout Germany. This replaces the paper document that was previously issued once a year. In future, when you start a new job your employer will only ask for your date of birth and your tax identification number. You are automatically given this number when you register with the local authority. When the year is over, you submit an annual tax declaration to the tax office. Because you can deduct some of your actual expenditure from the tax, the tax office may pay you some money back. You can also submit your tax declaration online. There are PC programs, associations for assistance with income tax (Lohnsteuerhilfvereine) and tax advisors that will help you with this.

Successful new beginning for Russian IT specialist

## Here it's the quality that matters

In August 2012 Nicolai Tcarapkin began his new job as a software developer at DASGIP AG in Jülich. "Before that I worked in South Korea for two years and applied for several jobs in Germany from there. Via the ZAV job placement service it finally worked out. My profile matched my new employer's requirements exactly." After being accepted for the job, the Russian citizen first needed a visa from the German embassy in South Korea. In Germany, Nicolai Tcarapkin then applied for the EU Blue Card. "It all went pretty smoothly. In August last year the new residence permit for people wishing to take up employment was introduced in Germany and I fulfilled all the criteria."

Under these conditions it was also possible for his family, who had initially come to Germany on tourist visas, to stay here permanently. "We decided to live in Germany as my wife had completed a DAAD scholarship in Germany. I often visited her there and we both really liked the country and its culture." Owing to her study visit in Germany, his wife speaks German very well. He himself attended a language course at the Goethe-Institut in his home country, Russia, for one and a half years and continued improving his language skills when he was in Germany. There were therefore no communication problems, he was even able to conduct his job interview in German.

The Tcarapkin family are very happy with their life in Jülich: "We had no trouble integrating. The area here is very international because of the research centre and we made friends very quickly." With regard to his work, too, Nicolai Tcarapkin appreciates his adopted country: "In Germany there is a particular focus on the quality of the products. Creative and independent working methods are encouraged in order to achieve the best possible result. I'm able to play a bigger part in the development than I would in South Korea or Russia."



**Nicolai Tcarapkin** is a software developer at DASGIP Information and Process Technology GmbH.

## THEY ARE GERMANY

**Maria Höfl-Riesch**, who has been on skis since her early childhood, already celebrated her first major successes as a junior and managed to win a total of five junior championship titles. In her biography, “Geradeaus: Höhen und Tiefen meines Lebens” (“Straight ahead: the ups and downs of my life”), which was published in 2012, Germany’s best alpine ski racer describes how she was able to keep up her strength and the necessary resilience even during difficult times. For despite bad luck with injuries she has always managed to climb back to the top. At the peak of her career, the high-flyer has won virtually every trophy that exists in alpine skiing since 2009: 2 World Cup titles, double Olympic gold medals and the overall World Cup title. Outside of sport, too, Maria Höfl-Riesch cannot be stopped: social commitment is a matter of course for her despite, or perhaps because of, her success. That is why she is an ambassador of the Laureus Foundation as well as supporting the Franz Beckenbauer Foundation and the campaign “Ein Herz für Kinder”.



## SOCIAL SECURITY

As an employee in Germany, you are a member of the national social security system. This comprises statutory health, nursing care, accident, pension and unemployment insurance. As soon as you are registered as insured, you receive a social security number. You must pass this number on to your employer and keep it in a safe place at home so that you do not lose it.

If your gross annual income is 52,200 euros or less, you will be compulsorily insured with one of the many different public health insurance funds. Your employer will register you with your preferred insurer. Shortly afterwards you will receive a health insurance card, which you will be asked to present each time you visit a doctor or go into hospital.



“Recruiting doctors is very difficult, particularly for hospitals in rural regions. The recruitment of foreign doctors is therefore becoming increasingly important.”

**Jürgen Reintjes**, LVR-Klinik  
Bedburg-Hau

The contributions to health insurance (about 8.2 per cent of your gross monthly income - your employer pays a further 7.3 per cent for you) are deducted from your salary. A small contribution is also paid for statutory nursing care insurance. Important for parents: if your family members have very little or no income, they are covered by your insurance at no extra charge.

For a number of services, such as medicines prescribed by a doctor, necessary medical aids or devices, or in-patient care, you generally have to pay a small contribution towards the costs.

If your gross yearly income is consistently above 52,200 euros, you can take out private health insurance for you and your family. The contribution you pay is determined by your individually insured risks. Your employer pays a contribution towards this.

Statutory accident insurance is paid by your employer on your behalf. This insures you against all work-related accidents including on the direct way to and from the workplace and on business trips.

Contributions to the statutory pension insurance currently amount to 18.9 per cent of your gross monthly income and are only payable on income up to the contribution assessment ceiling (western German states 5,800 euros, eastern German states 4,900 euros). No contributions are deducted from income exceeding this upper limit.

The employee and the employer share the costs. They also each pay half of the monthly contribution to statutory unemployment insurance, which is currently 3.0 per cent of the gross income.

## PROTECTION AGAINST DISMISSAL

Unless otherwise agreed in the employment contract or collective agreement, the employment relationship can be terminated by either side with a minimum period of notice of four weeks (two weeks during the probation period) to the middle or end of a calendar month. In companies with more than five employees, however, the Dismissal Protection Law applies. This restricts the dismissal of employees with particular rights of protection (e. g. during pregnancy or illness).





## **The best illness is the one we don't get ...**

... is a very true German saying, even if Germany provides some of the best medical care in the world. The number of doctors per capita is above average compared with other OECD countries and the quality of the healthcare also enjoys an excellent worldwide reputation. Patients in Germany particularly benefit from the simple access to medical services. You can get outpatient and stationary treatment quickly and easily – and largely irrespective of your income, insurance status or place of residence.

Medical care is well organised throughout Germany, even outside of the usual consulting and opening hours, at night, at the weekends and even during the holiday periods. Specialists also praise the care provided for chronically ill people and the regular precautionary medical checkups. Of course all that costs money. That's why there have been ongoing discussions for some time about reorganising the German health system, whereby everybody agrees that its quality should not suffer.

Did you know...

## **SELF-EMPLOYMENT**

If you have a business idea and wish to become self-employed in Germany, you should carry out some careful planning beforehand. Setting up a business requires thorough preparation, which includes drawing up a business plan. Discuss your business plan with an expert consultant. You can find helpful addresses at the end of this section.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT**

If you have paid unemployment insurance contributions for at least 12 months during the past two years, you are entitled to unemployment benefit. You should inform your local employment agency of your dismissal on the very same day that you are dismissed. In the case of fixed-term employment contracts, you should contact the employment agency by phone or in person three months before the contract terminates and inform them that you are seeking work. The amount of unemployment benefit you receive depends on many different factors. You can find information on this on the Internet ([www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) > Bürgerinnen und Bürger > Arbeitslosigkeit > Arbeitslosengeld) or ask your advisor at your local employment agency.

### **Important links**

**Information on social security:**

[www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de](http://www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de)

**Information for those thinking of becoming self-employed:**

[www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) > Bürgerinnen und Bürger > Arbeit und Beruf > Existenzgründung

[www.ihk.de](http://www.ihk.de), [www.ahk.de](http://www.ahk.de), [www.zdh.de](http://www.zdh.de), [www.kfw.de](http://www.kfw.de),  
[www.existenzgruender.de](http://www.existenzgruender.de); [www.exist.de](http://www.exist.de)

# Living in Germany

The first thing you need to do as a newly resident citizen in Germany is to register with the Registration Office. That will make you a full standing member of your community, entitling you to vote in local and European elections, though not in federal state and parliamentary elections.

When you register, you must report your address in Germany. That assumes that you have already found your own flat or have found temporary accommodation with friends or family.

## HOW DO I FIND A FLAT?

The weekend property sections of the daily newspapers and property websites on the Internet are filled with flat listings containing cryptic codes such as ZKDB/Blk or KM 550+NK. Before spending too much time trying to decipher what they mean, ask a knowledgeable friend or colleague to help you. You can also hire an estate agent, though this involves additional costs. It may actually be cheaper and quicker to place your own ad. Noticeboards in supermarkets or universities may also be helpful in the search for accommodation.

In Germany, rental flats are generally rented without furniture. Sometimes you can take over existing furniture or fittings from the previous tenant on payment of compensation. It nevertheless takes a lot of effort to find a cheap rental flat, particularly in large cities. It is often a matter of luck: "I've heard there should be a flat available soon". So you should tell as many people as possible that you're looking for a flat and don't focus on any specific district of the city. Shared flats (Wohngemeinschaften) provide an excellent alternative for singles. In cities with large student populations, you can often rent flats on a temporary basis from flat-sharing agencies called "Mitwohnzentralen".

You will receive the tenancy agreement from the estate agent or directly from the landlord. You will often be asked to pay a security deposit equivalent to two months' rent. This will be refunded on



*“German firms are very interested in their foreign employees settling in quickly. They help them with organisational matters such as moving home or searching for a flat. In order to be happy in one's private life in Germany, too, it's a good idea, for example, to join some clubs and associations.”*

**Carlos Schaaf y Garcia,**  
Job Placement Officer at  
the ZAV

termination of the tenancy agreement. If you are considering buying an apartment or house, then you will need to budget for estate agency fees, real estate transfer tax and legal fees. These costs amount to between 8.5 and 11 per cent of the purchase price.

## **MONEY AND FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS**

In order to pay the rent and receive your wages or salary, you need to open an account with a bank. You need to go to the institute of your choice with your passport and a certificate of residence from the registration office. There you should ask to open a current account and apply for an EC card. You can use this to withdraw money from all cash dispensers. Your bank will inform you of the precise

### **Checklist**

#### **Living and working in Germany**

- You need to register at the local Registration Office in your district. After you have registered, you will receive your tax identification number from the Federal Central Tax Office (Bundeszentralamt für Steuern - BZSt). You must inform your employer of this number.
- Open a current account with a bank, and inform your employer of your bank code and account number.
- Before moving into your new apartment, register with the local utilities companies to ensure that you have, for example, electricity and hot water supplies. Your landlord will help you with this.
- Register your car at your local Vehicle Registration Office.
- Register your household with the payment service of the TV and radio stations ARD, ZDF and Deutschland-radio at [www.rundfunkbeitrag.de](http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de). If required, make sure you have a cable, satellite or digital connection.
- Check your private insurance cover. Do your insurance policies also cover the risks in Germany?

## THEY ARE GERMANY

**Silbermond** – that’s Stefanie Kloß, Andreas Nowak, Johannes Stolle and Thomas Stolle from Bautzen in the region of Upper Lusatia in Saxony. They have been making music together since 1998, first as a school band called JAST (made up of the band members’ initials). After deciding to write German song texts, they needed a new name. They finally opted for “Silbermond”, as this name “can stand for so much, for night, for romance, for things that are changeable”, says Thomas, the guitarist. In 2003 the pop-quartet signed their first recording contract. Since then they have achieved a lot: they have stormed the charts with singles such as “Symphonie”, “Das Beste”, “Irgendwas bleibt” or “Krieger des Lichts”. Silbermond has long conquered Germany’s pop heaven, scooping up numerous music prizes, including the MTV Europe Music Award as the Best German Act, and winning a Bambi in the category “Pop National”. Encouraging young newcomer bands is something that is particularly important to them. They have this tip for them: “You have to trust your gut instinct and be bold – and it has to be fun and feel good.”



terms and conditions of business on opening the account. Many banks also provide the opportunity to open a current account online.

## VEHICLES AND DRIVING LICENCES

In Germany you are only permitted to drive a registered licensed vehicle, and only if you have the correct documents (known informally as “die Papiere”) with you, i. e. a valid driving licence and the vehicle registration documents. You should register your car as soon as possible at the nearest Vehicle Registration Office. There you will be asked to prove that the car belongs to you (using the vehicle ownership document, called a ‘Fahrzeugbrief’) and that you have taken out third-party car insurance (electronic insurance confirmation number).



Did you know...

## Automotive industry

German car manufacturers and their suppliers compete globally and invest in new technologies on an unprecedented scale. Germany's automotive industry sets standards throughout the world with its innovative mobility concepts and safety systems, its optimisation of conventional drives to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and its research and development in the field of electromobility. And cars are still one of the Germans' greatest passions - besides football and barbecues in summer. It is no coincidence that along with the German Football Association, the German Automobile Club (ADAC) boasts the largest number of members. The Germans invest a lot of time and money in their cars, including in the cars' fittings and appearance. The car tuning industry is booming, as is the classic car market. Nevertheless, when it comes to buying cars, reliability and petrol consumption are ultimately much more important to Germans than boosting their 'street cred' and having a powerful engine.

Advantages for foreign doctors

## Consistently positive experiences

“Our hospital already hired a lot of foreign skilled workers in the past,” Jürgen Reintjes remembers, referring above all to the so-called guest worker movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when in particular South Korean nursing staff were recruited. Since the experience made at that time was excellent, it is natural for Jürgen Reintjes to look for suitable professionals abroad today too, especially doctors.

When recruiting foreign staff, the deputy personnel manager especially likes to take advantage of the International Placement Services (ZAV): “The ZAV has been regarded as a reliable partner for years now. They have enabled us to acquire qualified personnel by means of participation in job exchanges, e.g. in Greece, the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Austria.”

Currently his hospital has doctors of 21 different nationalities, including staff from Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria. At the LVR-Klinik Bedburg-Hau the foreign doctors are able to begin medical specialty training straight after completing their degree in medicine. This possibility does not usually exist in their countries of origin, as Jürgen Reintjes knows: “In Greece, for example, doctors have to wait between five and ten years before they can begin to train as a specialist.”

Furthermore, his international employees appreciate Germany as an economically strong country with modern structures, according to Jürgen Reintjes: “This includes social benefits such as maternity protection and parental leave, as well as family-friendly employers with flexible working-time options.”

For employers, too, it is well worth exploiting the foreign labour market. Hospitals and clinics that have problems with a shortage of staff, especially in rural areas, can meet their needs with staff from abroad, many of whom are highly qualified.



**Jürgen Reintjes** is deputy personnel manager at the LVR-Klinik Bedburg-Hau.

For used cars you also need an up-to-date certificate verifying that the vehicle has passed an inspection of roadworthiness and compliance with exhaust emissions standards. You can obtain this from the German Technical Inspection Association (TÜV), the German Vehicle Supervisory Association (Dekra) or any other authorised inspection authority. Many vehicle repair garages are also authorised to carry out these tests.

You can drive a car in Germany if you are the holder of a driving licence acquired in an EU Member State. However, restrictions that apply in your home country (such as an expiry date, provisional driving licences or driving bans) also apply here. Driving licences that have been acquired outside of the EU lose their validity six months after you have become resident. You will then need a German driving licence. Find out about the provisions that apply to you before your licence expires. You can obtain information from vehicle registration offices or from private driving schools in Germany.

## **COST OF LIVING**

The lion's share of your living costs probably goes into paying the rent on your flat. Rents are highest in major cities such as Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne, Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main. There the average rent for a 65 m<sup>2</sup> flat, excluding heating and additional costs, is between 7,39 euros and 9,74 euros per square metre (2012). The rent may be well in excess of this depending on the location and the features of the flat. Rents are about half of this in small towns and in the countryside. In addition to the rent there are also additional charges (for example for cleaning the building or for refuse collection) as well as the costs for your water, electricity and heating consumption. Calculate just under a third of your monthly rent for this. Your tenancy agreement will provide details as to what is included in the additional charges.

The cost of food and basic necessities is comparatively low in Germany. This is ensured by the stiff competition between the large retail chains and discount stores. Many products (such as basic foods, books and newspapers) are subject to a reduced rate of VAT of 7 per cent; otherwise the VAT charged is 19 per cent.





## Leisure time

The Germans are devoted to their leisure time. Indeed, they spend about a quarter of their income on leisure activities, and this trend is rising. After all, there are plenty of things to do. Per capita, Germany has the largest number of theatres in the world and, after Finland, the largest number of orchestras. There are about 90,000 sport clubs, a good 6,000 museums, more than 1,600 cinemas and some 100 amusement and theme parks. According to a recent survey, however, the most popular leisure activities in Germany are those that can be pursued at home: watching TV, reading and playing on the computer. Outdoor excursions and sport are lower down the list.

Did you know...

If you don't feel like cooking, no problem. You don't need a special occasion to eat out in Germany and it's a natural part of everyday life, at least in large towns and cities. There is a huge variety of culinary options. Down-to-earth food with regional and seasonal specialities as well as numerous international restaurants provide an alternative to cooking oneself to suit every taste. The prices for a meal out are comparatively reasonable. Opera and concert tickets cost around 30 euros on average while a visit to the cinema costs around 10 euros. Museums and exhibitions often cost half of this. Prices vary considerably between the western and eastern federal states, as they do between large cities and small towns.

Bear in mind that you can't think of everything in advance. To prevent unforeseeable expenses endangering your start, you should have a certain amount of money in reserve. Anyone who has to take out a loan in an emergency will generally have to accept poor credit conditions. Furthermore, reputable banks are very reluctant to grant loans, at least during the initial period of your employment.

#### Important links

##### **Links for new residents in Germany:**

Almost every town or community in Germany provides online information specially aimed at new residents. For example: [www.berlin.de/lb/intmig](http://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig)

The Internet portal [www.meinestadt.de](http://www.meinestadt.de) makes the search easier for all 11,255 towns in Germany.

##### **Temporary furnished accommodation:**

[www.mitwohnzentrale.de](http://www.mitwohnzentrale.de)



## Natural monuments and buildings

Highest mountain in Germany	Zugspitze, which is 2,962 metres high
Largest island in Germany	Rügen, which covers 962 km <sup>2</sup>
Europe's widest beach	on the German North-Sea island of Amrum, where the 'Kniepsand', a 15-kilometre-long sandy beach on the western coast, is up to one and a half kilometres wide in places
Germany's largest inland lake	Lake Constance (covering just under 539 km <sup>2</sup> in total, 305 km <sup>2</sup> of which belong to Germany)
Longest river in Germany	Rhine, 865 of the river's total of 1,238 kilometres flow through Germany
World's highest church spire	Ulm Minster with its 162-metre-high steeple
Largest Gothic church in Germany	Cologne Cathedral

Did you know...

# When the family comes too



**“** *International teams are an enrichment for any company. On the one hand old patterns of thought are broken down, on the other hand new, interesting approaches develop as a result of different cultures and perspectives.”*

**Dr. Maria Troniak,**  
Job Placement Officer at the  
ZAV and EURES adviser

For parents in Germany it is often not very easy to organise the course of the day to the satisfaction of all family members – particularly when both parents work. When one child is still in kindergarten but the other already goes to school, the week has to be very carefully planned through. Who fetches which child and from where? Who does the shopping? And who looks after a sick child? Nevertheless, many parents manage to pull off this feat day after day.

Parents can claim child benefit for their children living in Germany until they reach the age of 18. It is granted on application by the Family Benefits Office (Familienkasse) of the Federal Employment Agency. Moreover, parents can claim parenting benefit (Elterngeld) for a maximum of 14 months after the birth of a child. This compensates at least in part for the loss of income if a parent gives up work entirely or partially in order to look after the child. You can obtain further details from your local authority.

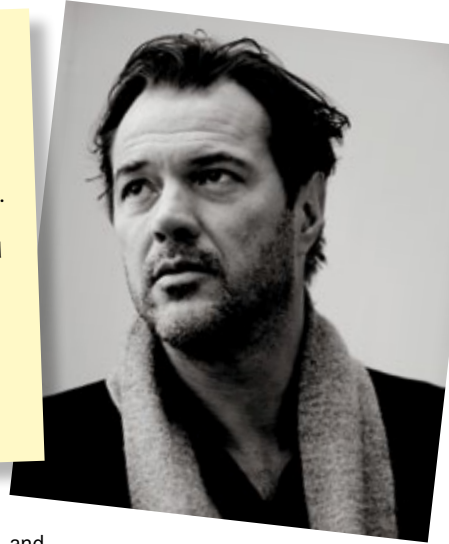
## **CHILDCARE AND NURSERY SCHOOLS**

There is a shortage of places in local authority and church-run nursery schools and after-school care centres, and there are frequently long waiting lists, especially in the western German states. For this reason, some companies and universities have set up their own kindergartens. And luckily, child minders are now available in every town and city who will look after your children in their own home and garden, and lovingly care for them. Ask other parents or your paediatrician if they can recommend someone.

You can also obtain details about nursery schools and child minders from your local authority's youth welfare office. If you need a babysitter, you can place an advertisement in local newspapers or community newsheets, put up a notice in schools, church community halls or maternity centres, and browse through online babysitter portals.

## THEY ARE GERMAN Y

**Sebastian Koch** is one of Germany's most versatile actors. He became known to German film and TV audiences as a specialist for German historical figures, and is now also known to an international audience as the leading man in "Black Book" and in the Oscar-winning "The Lives of Others". The 50-year-old prefers to play complex roles in European productions as opposed to the "nasty German" in Hollywood films: "I've never been interested in that," he told the online film magazine blackfilm.com. He lives in Berlin and has a daughter. He generally sees himself as a freedom-loving individual, as he emphasized in an interview with the WELT: "For me freedom comes second, immediately after love. Freedom is one of our most important human rights."



From 1 August 2013 onwards, parents who look after their one- and two-year-old children themselves at home and do not take advantage of daycare facilities receive a childcare allowance.

## SINGLE PARENTS

Anyone who raises a child alone is reliant on the support of friends and relatives – and it is precisely that which is missing at the beginning. Instead look for support from people who are in the same situation as yourself and get in touch with other single parents. Single parents can make contact through associations, self-help groups and their children's kindergarten or school.

## SCHOOLS, TRAINING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

For all children living in Germany, compulsory education begins at the age of six. State schools are attended free of charge. However, you can also opt to send your children to fee-paying schools run by private education providers. Towards the end of primary school level (i.e. after four or six years depending on the federal state), teachers will inform you about your child's options for secondary level education and will generally provide a recommendation. No doubt you wish to foster your offspring's aptitudes and interests as far as



**Antonio Prados Vilchez**  
is an electrical engineer at  
dSpace.

### Spanish engineer appreciates the German labour market

## Germany has long been my preferred destination

Antonio Prados Vilchez has been working in Germany for a good year now. So far he hasn't regretted his decision to leave his native country, Spain, and to venture a new beginning here. On the contrary, he feels very happy in his new surroundings. Since spending a holiday in Germany in 2006 he has been enthusiastic about this country: "I already liked the mentality of the people back then." What he sees as a major advantage for him as an employee is the social system, which he regards as very advanced. "In addition, there's an ideal field of work for me here as an engineer in particular, as Germany is often one step ahead in technological terms."

Prados Vilchez works for the hardware and software firm dspace at the headquarters in Paderborn. The first time that he had contact with his current employer was at an information event in Madrid organised jointly by the ZAV and the Spanish public employment service SEPE. The first interview took place straight away there, the second one was held in Germany. For his employer it was not particularly important that Prados Vilchez' German language skills were not so good at that time: "We conducted the two interviews in English. When I moved to Germany in February 2012, I was first released from work in order to attend an intensive language course. After a month I then started work while still learning German. My firm really looked after me," Prados Vilchez says, praising his employer.

At work he is integrated into an international team: "My colleagues come from Mexico and Romania. Paderborn itself is also very cosmopolitan due its many international employers." The biggest difficulty for him so far was looking for a flat; the only drop of bitterness is the fact that he is separated from his family and friends. "But here I have the opportunity to further my career and to live a financially independent life."

possible. Together with your child and their teachers, you will need to decide between a 'Hauptschule' (lower secondary school – until Year 9 or 10), a 'Mittelschule' or 'Realschule' (intermediate secondary school – until Year 10) and a 'Gymnasium' (grammar school – until Year 12). Another option in Germany is the 'Gesamtschule', a form of comprehensive school that children can attend at least to Year 9 or 10 after completing primary school. In contrast to the conventional school system, a 'Gesamtschule' brings together pupils with different abilities under one roof but teaches them at different levels according to their respective abilities, at least in some subjects.

Gaining an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (Abitur), entitles school-leavers to enrol at a university or other higher education institution. Here your child can choose from a wide range of degree programmes at state, church-run or private universities and colleges.

On attaining a lower or intermediate secondary school-leaving certificate, your child can either attend a higher-level school that prepares them for an occupation or academic studies, or they can undergo vocational training. The globally renowned dual vocational training system combines practical and theoretical content for some 340 recognised training occupations, whereby academic teaching in vocational schools alternates with instruction in companies.

So that your children can settle into their new schools quickly and successfully, they will often need additional motivation and support. In urban areas, bi-national or bilingual teaching is often offered with international remedial classes. Think of your first weeks and months working in Germany and give your child this opportunity.

#### Important links

**Family, family services:** [www.familien-wegweiser.de](http://www.familien-wegweiser.de),  
[www.familienhandbuch.de](http://www.familienhandbuch.de), [www.bmfsfj.de](http://www.bmfsfj.de)

**Child benefit:** [www.familienkasse.de](http://www.familienkasse.de)

**Childcare, single parents:** [www.elternimnetz.de](http://www.elternimnetz.de)

**Choosing schools:** [www.schulweb.de](http://www.schulweb.de),  
[www.privatschulberatung.de](http://www.privatschulberatung.de)

# The German language



“ I opted for a period of work abroad for career reasons. As my wife has German roots, the decision to come to Germany was easy for us. At EURES I found the job advertisement placed by my present employer and applied via e-mail.”

**Tauan Zimmermann** comes from Brazil and is a developer at UplinkIT in Kaiserslautern.

Whether you just want to do an internship or are seeking employment in Germany, good German language skills are essential for integration into the German labour market. In the IT sector and in some specialist academic fields or in branch offices of foreign firms, however, English is often the working language. Everywhere else the first thing you will be asked is: “Do you speak German?”

Habseligkeiten, Geborgenheit, lieben, Augenblick, Rhabarbermarmelade – these were the German words chosen by an expert jury in 2004 as the ‘nicest German words’. Not everybody likes the German language, but the Germans themselves do: they consider their own language to be attractive, logical but also difficult. This was revealed by a survey conducted by the Institute for the German Language, which also showed that most Germans cultivate their dialects and tolerate foreign accents. As a newly arrived foreigner, you will usually be met with friendliness, or perhaps slight amusement, if the right word does not immediately come to mind or even if you can’t think what to say at all. After all, we know ourselves that our language is very difficult. So don’t wait until you are sure that your planned sentence will be grammatically perfect with correct pronunciation. Just say something. You will actually win over hearts and minds and achieve your objectives faster – and we will understand you anyway.

## REGIONAL DIALECTS

“Why can’t the verb come earlier?” Such questions are just as common among foreigners who are learning German as their frequently disheartening first attempts at using the freshly learnt language. “Ich hätte gern drei Brötchen.” Answer from the baker: “Moana Sie Semmln?” Honestly, they really do speak German in Germany. It’s just that it sometimes sounds Bavarian, sometimes Swabian, Koelsch, Saxon or in really tough cases ‘Missingsch’ – a north German hybrid dialect that results when speakers of Low German attempt to speak standard German. It is often said that our language sounds ‘hard’. In many cases that might be true but strictly speaking ‘the’ German language does not actually exist as such. There



Getting a head start with experience abroad

## Creating an international atmosphere

As the human resources manager of an international company, Susanne Halbroth considers it very important that the staff is also multicultural: “The more international skilled employees we have, the more individual our service can be.” That includes the linguistic diversity, too. When dealing with guests it can only be an advantage if we have staff that speak several languages: “It sometimes happens that a cook from Thailand is called to reception because one of his fellow countrymen who speaks neither German nor English has a request. What is more, the foreign skilled workers of course know the cultural background and the mentality of their visiting countrymen very well.”

In order to make the start easier for the newcomers from abroad, the hotel provides for a comprehensive welcome culture, giving the new employees a mentor for a few weeks. They help them with both the specialist instruction and social integration. In addition, they have tips about living in Germany, also concerning leisure activities and shopping possibilities, and “simply take the new colleague with them to the cinema or the pub”, says Susanne Halbroth.

For the human resources manager, this social component is a major factor in helping the foreign skilled workers to feel happy in Germany: “If we don’t manage to make the employee feel at home here in the first few months, the employment relationship will not last long.” The hotel includes the international staff in its long-term plans and wishes to work on their careers with them. And the employees themselves also benefit from working in Germany since “a period spent abroad is a plus point in many sectors – especially in the hotel and catering industry,” as Susanne Halbroth knows, having once worked abroad herself.



**Susanne Halbroth** is human resources manager at the Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center.

are many German languages, or to be more precise regional dialects, which even differ from one another within individual federal states.

## LEARNING GERMAN

‘Das Weib’ (woman) is a neuter noun, i. e. ‘sächlich’, but ‘die Sache’ (thing) is feminine, and why a brassiere is called ‘der Büstenhalter’ (i. e. masculine) is anyone’s guess. Despite what Germans claim, there appears to be no conceivable logic as to when the right article is ‘der’, ‘die’ or ‘das’. You will simply have to learn the right article and the subtleties involved with conjugations and declensions. That’s why it is best to come to Germany to take a language course. There are numerous courses on offer: at schools, universities, adult education centres, in private language schools and in many companies, particularly where many foreigners work.

## USEFUL PHRASES

### At work:

**“Morgen!”** (“Morning!”) Greeting on beginning the working day between Monday and Thursday.

**“Einen wunderschönen guten Morgen!”** (“A very good morning to you!”) Greeting on Friday morning in joyful anticipation of the coming weekend. Also used ironically at the beginning of the week or on arriving too late.

**“Na?”/“und – wie?”/“Wie geht’s, wie steht’s?”** Succinct but nevertheless friendly ways of saying “Wie geht es Dir/Ihnen?” (“How are you?”).

**“Mahlzeit!”** (“Enjoy your meal!”) This is the abbreviated form of the now antiquated “Gesegnete Mahlzeit!” – a typical greeting to colleagues on the way to the canteen, sometimes also used ironically.

**“Gute Besserung!”** (“Get well soon!”)

**“Schönen Feierabend!”** (“Have a nice evening!”) This is something you would say on leaving your workplace at the end of the working day.

**“Schönes Wochenende/Schönen Urlaub!”** (“Have a nice weekend/holiday!”) This is something you would say on leaving the workplace at the end of the week or on the last day of work before a boss or colleague leaves to go on holiday.



Did you know...

## **‘Du’ or ‘Sie’ – A very German issue**

In the 1960s, ‘Sie’ was still the conventional way to address someone. That is changing, however, thanks to globalisation and the high-speed Internet. In Germany, too, English is frequently spoken in international corporations and in research, so that the distinction between the English ‘you’ and the German ‘Du’ is rapidly blurring. One thing that always applies, however, is that adults always address each other in business life with ‘Sie’ if they do not know each other. ‘Du’ signalsises closeness and familiarity, though it should not be equated with friendship. The ‘Sie’ form, on the other hand, expresses distance and formality. Whether people generally use the ‘Du’ form or the ‘Sie’ form in companies depends on the corporate culture and the industry. In the media and advertising industries and in the IT sector, it is much more normal to address people with ‘Du’ than it is in banks, insurance companies and law firms. It is initially worthwhile observing when and how ‘Du’ is used in your working environment. In companies, the use of ‘Du’ is generally only ever offered by senior or older members of staff to more junior or younger members of staff. Attempting to offer this use in the opposite direction could lead to embarrassing situations.

### In the restaurant:

**“Wir hätten gerne einen Tisch für zwei/vier/x Personen.”** (“We would like a table for two/four/X persons.”) When entering a restaurant.

**“Würden Sie mir/uns bitte die Speisen-/Getränkete Karte bringen?”** (“We would like the menu, please.”)

**“Schmeckt’s?”/ “Alles zu ihrer Zufriedenheit?”** (“Tasty?”/ “Everything fine?”) These classic questions, which almost seem to be begging for a positive answer, are typically asked by your waiter once you have been served your meal.

**“Darf’s noch etwas sein?”** (“Would you like anything else?”) No doubt your waiter will ask you this if you have not ordered for some time.

**“Die Rechnung, bitte!”** (“The bill, please.”)

### Out and about:

**“Können Sie mir bitte den Weg zur Bismarckstraße/zur nächsten U-Bahnstation ... zeigen?”** (“Can you tell me how to get to Bismarckstrasse/the next underground station?”) In the event that you’re not quite sure where you are.

**“Immer geradeaus, und dann fragen Sie besser noch mal.”** (“Keep going straight on and then you’d better ask again.”) The person you asked doesn’t really know the way either.

**“Fahren Sie bitte rechts ran!”** (“Please pull in to the right!”) When a traffic policeman says this, you shouldn’t hesitate to comply. The next demand is usually:

**“Ihre Papiere, bitte.”** (“Your papers, please!”) This means you should show him your driving licence and vehicle registration documents.

### Visit to a public authority:

**“Bitte weisen Sie sich aus.”** (“Please show me some proof of your identity.”) Show your passport or other form of suitable ID.

**“Bitte reichen Sie die folgenden Bescheinigungen (umgehend) nach.”** (“Please provide/bring the following documents (as soon as possible.”)

**“Das ist leider nicht (ohne Weiteres) zulässig.”** (“Unfortunately that’s not (normally) permitted.”) Under certain circumstances, however, your wish might be granted.

#### Important links

**Federal Office for Migration and Refugees – Learning German:** [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)

**Language courses (abroad):** [www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)

**Language courses (in Germany):** [www.vhs.de](http://www.vhs.de)

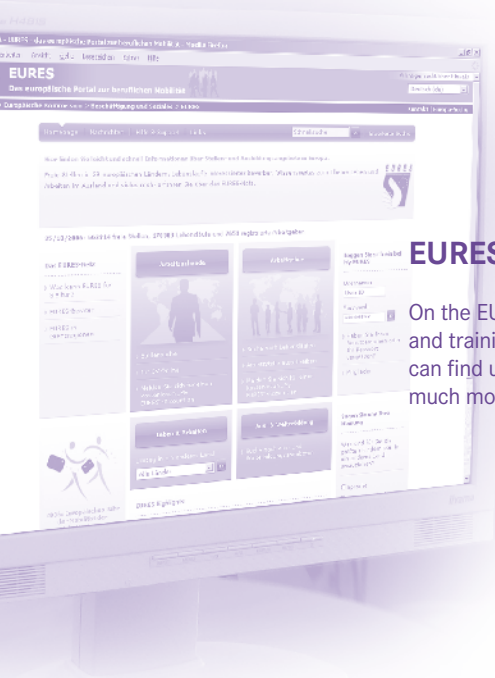
**Information about language examinations relevant for access to higher education:** [www.sprachnachweis.de](http://www.sprachnachweis.de)

## Information and advice

The first point of contact for your questions is the information centre of the International Placement Services (ZAV) on telephone number +49 228 713-1313. The team is available Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm and will be happy to send you information or, if necessary, to give you the name of a personal contact partner for further advice. Please send questions by e-mail to:

[zav@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:zav@arbeitsagentur.de).





## EURES – the European Job Mobility Portal

On the EURES portal you will find information about job vacancies and training places in 31 European countries easily and quickly. You can find useful information about living and working abroad and much more at <http://ec.europa.eu/eures>.

## The Job Exchange at [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)

### GERMANY'S LARGEST ONLINE JOB PORTAL

A quick search for jobs with the greatest amount of comfort and maximum flexibility: in the job and applicant pool at [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) you will find the job that suits you exactly.

### Your benefits at a glance

- ⇒ Individual access around the clock from anywhere with Internet access, also from smartphones
- ⇒ Simple and quick job searches in Germany and abroad
- ⇒ Access to a wide range of job vacancies
- ⇒ Suitable jobs sent daily by e-mail
- ⇒ Individual applicant profile and customised job search
- ⇒ Applications can be created and administered easily
- ⇒ Possible to reply directly to the employment agency and the employer
- ⇒ Application profile also published in other online job portals

