FAQs – Preparing a successful research stay in Germany

Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

Research in
Germany
Land of Ideas

Welcome to the Land of Ideas!

Would you like to work on first-class research projects in an inspirational setting? Hundreds of well-equipped university institutes, renowned research facilities and innovative companies offer interesting opportunities in Germany. At German research institutions you can look forward to collaborating with international teams or conducting your own research independently. Furthermore, the working language is frequently English. Some 30,000 scientists and scholars from countries all over the world are currently supported by German funding organisations.

Science and research enjoy a high status in the Land of Ideas. Germany's Federal Government increased its spending on research and development from 9 to almost 13 billion euros between 2005 and 2011 – a rise of 42%. International mobility and knowledge transfer are of crucial importance for a country that is recognised worldwide for its research achievements. Meeting global challenges, such as climate change, energy efficiency and preventive medicine, can only be accomplished by a truly international research community. The Federal Government is actively supporting forward-looking projects in these fields with its High-Tech Strategy 2020 – and foreign researchers are always welcome.

You will find more information about Germany's diverse research landscape and funding opportunities on our website at:
www.research-in-germany.de

This brochure is intended to inform international researchers about research and career opportunities in Germany. We look forward to welcoming you to a German research institution in the near future.

14 questions and answers about your research stay in Germany

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1. What research opportunities does Germany offer?

Germany is one of the world's leading research nations. It offers excellent conditions for carrying out your research projects with highly qualified colleagues and staff at public and private universities, non-university research institutes and in industry.

RESEARCH AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Over 380 higher education institutions in Germany offer numerous opportunities for research. They range from large general universities with interdisciplinary Collaborative Research Centres to universities of applied sciences with application-oriented projects to Leading-Edge Clusters consisting of universities, research institutions and companies. The strength of university research lies in its thematic and methodical breadth, whereas universities of applied sciences specialise more in application-oriented research.

NON-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Alongside research in higher education there is also a broad spectrum of non-university research that is conducted at private and public institutions. Hundreds of non-university research institutions, institutes, academies, foundations as well as state and federal institutions offer excellent working conditions for scientists and scholars. A central role is played here by the four large, government-funded research organisations:

- Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft
  www.fraunhofer.de
- Helmholtz Association
  www.helmholtz.de
- Leibniz Association
  www.wgl.de
- Max Planck Society
  www.mpg.de

The institutes of the Max Planck Society concentrate especially on basic research in innovative fields. The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft focuses more strongly on applied research. The Helmholtz Association is a community of 18 scientific-technical and biological-medical research centres which provides large-scale equipment and an appropriate infrastructure for national and international research groups. The main emphasis at the 86 institutions of the Scientific Community Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is on demand-oriented and interdisciplinary research. They are involved in numerous collaborative projects with companies, public authorities and higher education institutions.

You will find brief profiles of the large research organisations and more information about the German research landscape at:
www.research-in-germany.de/research_landscape

Information about more than 19,000 institutes at German universities and non-university research institutions can be searched according to geographical, subject and structural criteria using the Research Explorer at:
www.research-explorer.de

INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

Companies also offer interesting research projects. They finance a large proportion of research and development in Germany. Germany spends roughly 70 billion euros a year on research and development, of which more than two-thirds is provided by and spent in industry. While universities and non-university research institutions spend some 23 billion euros a year on research and development (R&D), German industry invests roughly 47 billion euros – of which the automotive industry alone accounts for 15 billion euros. Industry therefore provides jobs for tens of thousands of researchers.

More information about major areas of research:
www.hightech-strategie.de/en
www.research-in-germany.de/research_areas

The Research in Germany newsletter informs its readers about the latest research findings, international collaborative projects and research policy in Germany. You can subscribe to the newsletter at:
www.research-in-germany.de/newsletter

FACTS AND FIGURES

- More than 380 higher education institutions
- Approx. 750 government-funded research institutions
- Approx. 30,000 foreign researchers receive funding in Germany
- Some 549,000 people work in research and development, including 337,000 in industry
- Total R&D expenditure: roughly 70 billion euros (industry: 47 billion euros, higher education institutions: 13 billion euros, non-university research institutions: 10 billion euros)
- R&D's share of GDP: 2.8%

2. What funding opportunities are available?

RESEARCH FUNDING IN GERMANY

The diversity of the German research system is also reflected in its funding. Research at universities, other higher education institutions and non-university research centres is, for the most part, publicly funded. However, THIRD-PARTY FUNDING from industry also plays a role. Private foundations, such as the Fritz Thyssen Foundation or the Gerda Henkel Foundation, actively support education and research. In addition to this, the EU – with Germany as its most important contributor – also supports research in Germany through its Research Framework Programme. However, the largest investor in research and development – roughly two-thirds of total research spending in Germany each year – is private industry. More information on research funding:
www.research-in-germany.de/funding

HIGH-TECH STRATEGY

Global challenges, such as climate change, demographic change, the spread of disease, securing the world's food supply and the limited supply of fossil fuels and energy resources require innovative and sustainable solutions. Germany launched its High-Tech Strategy in order to pioneer research in these important areas. The Federal Government is funding important key technologies and supporting the improvement of innovation-relevant framework conditions to realise this strategy. Accordingly, expenditure on education and research is intended to rise to 10% of gross domestic product by 2015. More information:
www.hightech-strategie.de/en

FUNDING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS

Highly qualified researchers have access to a broad spectrum of funding opportunities ranging from support for research trips to the funding of entire research projects. Many scientific organisations and research institutions support highly qualified researchers with project funding, scholarships and prizes. Funding opportunities also exist for cooperation between international research institutions and German organisations. Some 30,000 foreign researchers in Germany are currently receiving support from German funding organisations.

MAJOR RESEARCH FUNDERS

The most important research funders – especially for international researchers – are the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Research Foundation (DFG), as well as the large non-university research organisations. They offer numerous programmes to foreign researchers: the Max Planck Society and the Helmholtz Association alone support more than 11,000 foreign researchers – from postgraduate students to experienced senior scientists – through the award of scholarships or research positions.

You will find brief profiles of all research funding organisations at:
www.research-in-germany.de/funding_organisations

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT FOUNDATION

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation promotes international cooperation between top German and foreign researchers. The foundation maintains a steadily growing alumni network, which currently includes over 25,000 Humboldtians of all disciplines – including 47 Nobel laureates – in more than 130 countries around the globe. Every year the Humboldt Foundation enables more than 2,000 researchers from all over the world to conduct research in Germany. The Humboldt Foundation was established by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953. The foundation is funded by the Federal Foreign Office as well as other federal ministries and national and international partners.
www.humboldt-foundation.de

DAAD

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the world's largest funding organisation for the international exchange of students and researchers. Since its foundation in 1925, the DAAD has supported more than 1.5 million researchers in Germany and abroad. It is a non-profit association funded by German higher education institutions and student bodies. Its activities go far beyond the award of scholarships: the DAAD promotes the internationalisation of German higher education, strengthens German studies and the German language abroad, supports developing countries in building strong institutions of higher education and advises decision-makers in the fields of cultural, education and development policy. Most of its operating budget is funded by the German Federal Government. In addition to the head office in Bonn and a second office in Berlin, the DAAD maintains a network of 15 offices and more than 51 information centres all over the world.
www.daad.de

DFG

The German Research Foundation (DFG) is the central, self-governing research funding organisation in Germany. The DFG was established in 1951 following the amalgamation of the Notgemeinschaft der Wissenschaft, which was founded in 1920, and the Deutscher Forschungsrat. Its affiliates are research-intensive higher education institutions, non-university research institutions, scientific associations and the academies of sciences. The DFG focuses especially on supporting junior researchers and international cooperation in all its programmes. The DFG has an annual budget of over 2 billion euros. It receives most of its funds from the Federal Government and the German LÄNDER.
www.dfg.de

3. How can I find a research position?

Experienced researchers are in high demand in Germany – at universities, research institutes and in industry. The country offers international researchers numerous career and research opportunities. International researchers can gain experience in Germany through scholarships, research stays or visiting professorships. They can also apply for an advertised position as a research associate or (JUNIOR) PROFESSOR. Researchers at German universities or non-university research institutions work either as permanent members of staff, as participants in THIRD-PARTY FUNDED research projects or as research fellows funded by a scholarship. The funding organisations that support stays by foreign researchers include the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Research Foundation (DFG) (see also Question 2).

Career opportunities for researchers do not only exist in higher education. Tens of thousands of researchers are employed in the R&D sector of German industry, which offers a broad range of career opportunities. Depending on industry, company and research profile as well as individual expertise, researchers can assume diverse duties and qualify for the most varied posts. The Research in Germany website offers target group-specific information on careers in Germany: **www.research-in-germany.de/career**

JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

Higher education institutions publish information about current job vacancies on their websites. You will find the addresses of higher education institutions and their departments as well as details of contacts for international researchers in a database maintained by the German Rectors' Conference:
www.higher-education-compass.de

You can also conduct searches of current job advertisements in the Euraxess database:
www.euraxess.de/en
> Job Search

EMPLOYMENT WEBSITES

The Internet offers numerous job exchanges that facilitate the search for employment in the fields of science and research. Job websites like Academics which specialise in vacancies in science and research will help you in your search. You will find the English-language website at:
www.academics.com

The range of vacancies presented by the German-language Academics website is much more extensive. Furthermore, it is the leading careers website for the German-speaking countries with an average of over 700 job ads from the fields of science and research:
www.academics.de

Research in Germany has compiled a list of the major research employment exchanges:
www.research-in-germany.de/jobs

The DAAD offers a special database of doctoral positions for doctoral students:
www.phdgermany.de

FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

The Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) informs highly qualified international employees about job opportunities in Germany. You can receive assistance in finding a job from International Placement Services (ZAV):
www.zav-auslandsvermittlung.de/deutschland

WHAT SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE?

Germany supports international researchers with numerous scholarships and grants for research projects or visits. A good overview of existing programmes is available here:
www.research-in-germany.de/funding_programmes

You will find a list of relevant funding databases here:
www.research-in-germany.de/funding_databases

In addition to useful information for foreign researchers who would like to come to Germany, the Euraxess website and the DAAD scholarship database also provide information on a wide range of funding databases. Programmes can be searched by various criteria such as the researcher's country of origin, subject area or desired form of support:
www.funding-guide.de
www.euraxess.de/en
> Funding Database

4. What legal requirements must I meet?

EU CITIZENS

Citizens of the European Union and the European Economic Area (EEA) do not require a residence document (Aufenthaltstitel) to enter and stay in Germany. They only need to register with the Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt) at their place of residence and will then enjoy employees' freedom of movement – in other words, they do not require a permit to take up employment. (Employees' freedom of movement is currently still restricted by a transitional arrangement for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania, which acceded to the EU in 2007. Therefore, they should contact the Federal Employment Agency for information about their current status.)

You can obtain more information about working and living in Germany from the Federal Employment Agency and the European Union:
www.zav-auslandsvermittlung.de/deutschland
http://ec.europa.eu/eures

RESEARCHERS FROM NON-EU COUNTRIES

If you intend to come to Germany for longer than three months, a so-called scientific visa provides a RESIDENCE PERMIT (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) to work as a researcher. The prerequisite for this is that you have concluded a hosting agreement with a RECOGNISED RESEARCH INSTITUTION (anerkannte Forschungseinrichtung). This entitles you to work on a specific research project or as a teacher (see also Questions 6 and 7). A residence permit for researchers is granted for at least one year, unless the research project is of a shorter duration.

The Blue Card for highly qualified personnel is a new development. Graduates and highly skilled workers who can present a contract of employment and proof of a gross annual income of roughly 44,800 euros (just under 35,000 euros in the case of certain shortage occupations) can work in Germany for between one and four years with a Blue Card. Holders of a Blue Card can already receive a settlement permit after two to three years.

JOBS FOR PARTNERS

If your spouse comes to Germany with you, the scientific visa also entitles him or her to work in Germany. For more information on this subject, visit:
www.bamf.de/forschungsaufenthalte
(in German only)

If you enter Germany with a national visa, as a rule your partner will require the approval of the Federal Employment Agency to take up employment. He or she will require a residence document that entitles him or her to take up gainful employment (in other words, your partner must also have entered the country with an appropriate visa). Additionally, your partner must present a concrete offer of employment to the Aliens' Authority (Ausländeramt), which will then be checked and approved by the Employment Agency. This process can take several weeks or even months.

A leaflet published by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) offers useful information about the scientific visa and the relevant requirements:
www.bamf.de/forschungsaufenthalte
> Download (in German only)

General information and service contacts:
www.bamf.de

RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

The Recognition in Germany website provides up-to-date information about the legal requirements and procedures for professional recognition. If you gained a vocational qualification outside Germany and would like to have it recognised, this is where you will easily find the organisation responsible for dealing with your individual case.
www.recognition-in-germany.de

POTENTIAL EARNINGS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Potential earnings at public universities and research institutions vary depending on qualifications and the position concerned. Many academic and research staff members in Germany are employed on the basis of temporary work contracts. As a rule, staff at public universities are paid in accordance with the COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT for the civil service of the LÄNDER (TV-L) or collective agreements based on it, while staff at publicly funded non-university research institutions are generally paid on the basis of the collective agreement for the federal civil service (TVöD). Accordingly, a research associate with a higher education qualification earns a monthly salary of between roughly 3,100 and 4,400 euros gross, depending on experience and pay group, and an experienced postdoctoral researcher or senior scientist in a full-time post earns up to 4,900 euros gross a month. Depending on Land and pay group, professors at public higher education institutions receive a basic monthly salary of 3,600 euro (W1 – JUNIOR PROFESSORS), 4,360 (W2) or 5,300 euros (W3). Where applicable, these figures can be increased by family supplements and performance-related pay.

The website of the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers provides important information and advice on the subject of remuneration:
www.hochschulverband.de
> Infocenter (in German only)

More information on money matters is also available from:
www.academics.com
> Career Advice > Salaries in Science and Research

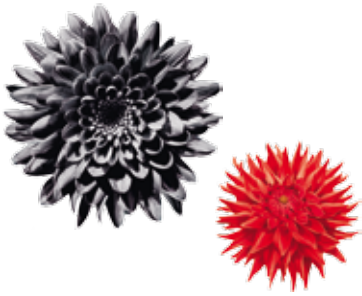
AM I LIABLE TO PAY TAX?

People who come to Germany with a research scholarship are usually exempt from taxation. It is advisable, however, to consult the scholarship provider on this subject. You should also clarify whether you may become liable to pay tax on the scholarship in your home country.

If you have a contract of employment with a higher education institution or research institution, you must – if you work in Germany for longer than half a year (183 days) – pay normal taxes and SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS. Income tax is paid directly to the government by the employer. The level of taxation depends on income, family status and tax category.

DOUBLE TAXATION AGREEMENTS exist with a large number of countries to prevent foreigners being taxed simultaneously in Germany and their country of origin. These agreements define where taxes have to be paid. Additionally, there are agreements with a number of countries on the taxation of researchers. Which agreements apply has to be determined in each individual case. The human resources department of your employer or the tax office should be able to provide assistance on this matter.

You will also find more information and answers to frequently asked questions at:
www.euraxess.de/en
> Services > Incoming > Taxation



5. Do I need a good command of German?

English is the working language at many research institutions and university institutes – especially in the natural sciences. Most researchers are fluent in the English language and communicate in English in international academic settings. Depending on subject area and institution, however, it can be necessary to speak German. That is definitely useful: anyone who wants to get to know Germany and its culture better should acquire basic knowledge of the German language – preferably prior to arrival.

The Goethe-Institut, the globally active cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany, offers professional German courses for foreigners in 90 countries around the world as well as in Germany itself. If you are unable to attend a language course, you can also learn German in a distance learning course at the Goethe-Institut – supported by a personal tutor. Similar online courses are offered by Deutsch-Uni online and Carl Duisberg Centren:
www.goethe.de
www.deutsch-uni.com
www.carl-duisberg-deutschkurse.de

The DAAD also offers links and information on a wide range of German course:
www.learn-german.net

ENTRY AND RESIDENCE

6. Do I need a visa to enter Germany?

Germany is a member of the European Union. EU citizens do not need a permit to enter and stay in Germany. Citizens of several countries – including the USA, Japan and Switzerland – can also apply for a RESIDENCE DOCUMENT after entering the country. Essentially, citizens of all other countries require a visa to enter Germany (although there are exceptions for short stays by citizens of specific countries).

Different types of visa are required depending on the duration and nature of stay. A "Schengen visa" is sufficient for a short stay of less than three months (however, this cannot be extended).

Anyone who wishes to remain in Germany for longer than 90 days and work must apply for a "national visa" that entitles the holder to take up gainful employment (exemptions apply to EU citizens and citizens of the EEA STATES and Switzerland). A tourist visa is not sufficient for this purpose.

As an international researcher you should apply for a "scientific visa", which is simultaneously issued with a RESIDENCE DOCUMENT for research purposes. One prerequisite for this is the conclusion of a contract (or a hosting agreement) with a RECOGNISED RESEARCH INSTITUTION. As a rule, you should also be able to provide proof of a net minimum income of roughly 1,700 euros a month (see Question 4).

Visa requirements may vary depending on one's country of origin and intended duration of stay. The German diplomatic mission in your country can provide precise information on this. You will find an overview of the visa regulations, answers to FAQs on the subject and a table of countries on the website of the Federal Foreign Office:
www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN
> Entry & Residence > Visa regulations

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Submit your visa application in good time. If you are applying for a visa that entitles you to a long stay or to take up employment, you should reckon with a processing time of several months.

- If your partner or your children are accompanying you, you should submit applications for yourself and your family members at the same time – even if your family will only arrive several weeks after you.

- Many visa offices only accept visa applications by appointment. You should therefore arrange an appointment as early as possible and find out which documents you will need to present.

- If you wish to work in Germany, do not enter the country on a tourist visa. Such visas cannot be amended or extended.

- You will find the addresses and important information about German diplomatic missions on the website of the Federal Foreign Office:
  www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN
  About us > German Missions Abroad

7. What must I do after entering the country?

Germany has a system of compulsory resident registration. Everyone must register with the local authorities. After arriving, your first trip should take you to the local Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt) or Citizens' Service Centre (Bürgerservice). This also applies to EU citizens. If you come from a country that is not a member state of the EU or the EEA, you must also visit the local Aliens' Authority to apply for a residence permit. Researchers who have a contract with a recognised research institution can – under certain circumstances (e.g. minimum income) – apply for acceptance in accordance with §20 of the Residence Act (Researcher Directive). If this applies to you, then you and your family are subject to less stringent rules with regard to residence and employment (see Questions 4 and 6).

The Blue Card also enables graduates and highly skilled workers who can present a contract of employment with a specified minimum income to work in Germany for up to four years.

You will need to present various documents to obtain a residence permit, which generally include a registration certificate (Anmeldebescheinigung) from the Registration Office, proof of funding (e.g. contract of employment with details of your monthly salary or a scholarship certificate) and proof of health insurance cover.

HEALTH INSURANCE

If you enter Germany on a visa, you will have to prove that you have health insurance cover – also as a scholarship holder. The inhabitants of Germany are insured by either a statutory (89%) or private (11%) health insurance fund. Health insurance funds pay the costs of medical treatment, medicines, hospital stays and check-ups. The contributions to the health insurance fund are paid by employees and employers. Employees (up to a certain income), trainees, students, pensioners, etc. are obliged to have COMPULSORY STATUTORY HEALTH INSURANCE. If you are not subject to this statutory obligation – for example, because you exceed the relevant income threshold – you can insure yourself with a private health insurance fund or under certain circumstances apply for voluntary cover with a statutory health insurance fund.

This means that foreign researchers are automatically insured if they have a contract of employment. Those who do not must either insure themselves (usually with private health insurance) or prove – for example, if they come from an EU country – that they have insurance cover. In any event, you should check with your employer or scholarship provider to determine whether your existing health insurance cover is sufficient.

Information about the German health insurance system is available from:
www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de/en

or the website of the Federal Ministry of Health:
www.bmg.bund.de/krankenversicherung
(in German only)

SOCIAL INSURANCE

As a rule, anyone who concludes a contract of employment with a research institution in Germany must pay the CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL INSURANCE laid down by law. The social insurance is an insurance fund under public law. It is based on the principle of contributions and benefits and is a social institution for general welfare. Contributions are shared between employer and employee. They are automatically deducted from the employee's salary by the employer and paid to the insurance fund. As a rule, scholarship holders are not liable to contribute to social insurance (with the exception of health insurance). Citizens of countries that have concluded a social insurance agreement with Germany should check whether their insurance cover extends to employment in Germany.

You will find an overview of the bilateral social security agreements outside the European Union on the website of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:
www.bmas.de/EN
> Our Topics > International Affairs

PRACTICAL TIPS

- A RESIDENCE PERMIT is always temporary. The residence permit for researchers is issued for at least one year, unless the research project has a shorter duration. Remember to apply for an extension in good time.

- Accident and liability insurance is recommended in addition to COMPULSORY HEALTH INSURANCE. Many companies offer combined health, accident and liability insurance.

- It is advisable to clarify any open questions with your own health insurance provider prior to entry to ensure that insurance cover exists from your first day in Germany.

- Even for short stays you should open a current account. That can be very practical, for example, for handling scholarship payments.

8. How can I find a place to live?

You should give yourself enough time to find a flat or a house in Germany. Especially in large and popular (university) cities like Munich and Hamburg it is important to begin searching for accommodation early on. Particularly if you are entering the country with your family, you should begin looking for accommodation before your arrival.

For short trips alone or for the first few weeks of a longer stay, there may be a possibility of finding accommodation at a university guesthouse. However, such options are very limited. Private guesthouses, boarding houses or furnished rooms offer a good alternative. Universities or individual institutes often already have contacts and may be able to help you find something suitable.

You will need more time if you are looking for a flat or house to rent. Finding suitable accomodation can take several weeks, especially in metropolitan areas and large cities. As a rule, the weekend editions of regional daily newspapers have a large real-estate section that advertises offers on the local housing market. Posting your own “accommodation wanted” ad can frequently be successful.

The Internet offers a large number of search options. There are a whole series of websites that facilitate targeted searches for rented flats and houses or furnished rooms according to different criteria. As a rule, however, these services are only available in German.

Advice and information on finding accommodation is also offered on the website of the advisory centre for internationally mobile researchers:
www.euraxess.de/en
> Services > Incoming > Accommodation

PRACTICAL TIPS

- You should start looking for a place to live in good time. The demand for accommodation in university towns is high, especially at the beginning of the semester.

- Your family should only follow you once you have found suitable accommodation. For a transitional period – if the university guesthouses are full – you could live in a private guesthouse, a hotel or boarding house.

- If you are already in Germany, you can search the NOTICE BOARDS at your local university for offers of accommodation.

- If you decide to use an estate agent to find accommodation, ask about the fees first. Costs of up to two months' net rent plus value-added tax can accrue.

- Rents are usually advertised in Germany as "Kaltmiete", which means literally "cold rent" or net rent. In other words, additional charges for heating, water, electricity, refuse collection, etc. will also have to be paid.

- Landlords often require a deposit (up to three months' net rent) that will be refunded to you when you move out.

- You should find out in advance which city districts or quarters have the infrastructure you need, such as schools, childcare centres or bus and tram links.

- INTERNATIONAL OFFICES and WELCOME CENTERS at universities can also help you find accommodation. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) offers a database with details of all International Offices at German universities:
  www.daad.de/io

LIVING IN GERMANY

9. What modes of transportation are available?

Germany's infrastructure is among the best in the world. Over 230,000 kilometres of roads (including 12,800 kilometres of autobahn), 38,000 kilometres of rail and 27 larger commercial airports provide fast access to the whole country. Additionally, all larger towns and especially university towns generally have a well-developed public transport system – the underground rail system is usually the fastest and most efficient way of getting around German cities. Most university towns also have an extensive network of cycle paths. Freiburg, for example, has more than 400 kilometres of cycle paths and the bicycle is the city's second most popular means of transport.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Although Germany is considered a country of car drivers, most towns – especially university towns – have good bus, suburban rail and underground networks. You can usually access timetables as well as connection and price information over the Internet. Economically priced weekly and monthly season tickets quickly pay for themselves compared to buying tickets for single journeys – or buying a car. It is often possible to receive a Jobticket, a discounted season ticket for local public transport, through your employer.

- Parking spaces are rare and expensive in town centres, particularly in cities and large metropolitan areas. You have to reckon with regular traffic jams and delays during rush hours. Alternatives like using the bus, rail or bicycle are usually the cheaper and faster way of getting around the city centre.

- If you only occasionally need a car, in larger cities you can take advantage of car sharing services. Such services allow you to share a car with other people and only collect one when you actually need it. You can find a list of locations with the various offerings on the Bundesverband CarSharing website: www.carsharing.de

- Driving licences from an EU or EEA STATE retain their validity. All other driving licences are only valid for a limited period. If you come to Germany from a non-EU or non-EEA COUNTRY to live, you will need a German driving licence after six months.

10. How high is the cost of living in Germany?

The cost of living can vary considerably depending on the city, region or state in which you live. Among other things, it depends on whether you live in a large university city or a small town. Living in eastern Germany is also usually cheaper than living in the west. According to international comparisons, however, the cost of living in German towns and cities is relatively low.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Statistically, the average private household in Germany has 2,965 euros (former territory of the Federal Republic: 3,111 euros, new LÄNDER and east Berlin: 2,328 euros) in income and revenues at its disposal.

- As a proportion of income, the biggest single item of household expenditure is rent and housing: Germans pay an average of 731 euros a month for housing, energy and maintenance (West: 765 euros, East: 584 euros).

- The second largest item of household spending is the cost of a car and public transport (car purchase, operating and repair costs, tickets, etc.): Germans spend an average of 328 euros a month (West: 340 euros, East: 275 euros).

- Many towns and cities compile comparisons of standard local rents in a “rent index” (Mietspiegel). According to the current rent indices, the net rent for a 60- to 90-square metre, relatively modern flat in an average residential area of Berlin costs 6.80 euros per square metre. A similar flat in Munich costs between 9.30 and 10.37 euros. In Dresden, on the other hand, you only have to pay an average net rent of 5.44 euros per square metre for a modern flat in an average or good location. As a rule, municipalities also publish their rent indices on the Internet.

11. Culture and leisure – what else does Germany offer?

The moderate climate, varied landscapes, idyllic towns and villages and bustling metropolises make Germany a pleasant, interesting and dynamic place to stay. UNESCO has selected 36 cultural and natural monuments as World Heritage Sites and 14 national parks, 16 biosphere reserves und over 100 nature parks represent the beauty of Germany's natural landscapes. Enormous forest areas in the south and west or extensive lakelands in the northeast of Germany, the Alps in the south and the Wadden Sea in the north are just some of the many attractive landscapes that are well worth a visit.

Going shopping or visiting cultural monuments, enjoying a good meal or simply letting the time pass in a café – if you're more interested in city life, you won't be disappointed. The capital Berlin is one of the world's most trendy cities to visit. And the Hanseatic city of Hamburg with its port and the Alster, Reeperbahn and Jungfernstieg is one of the world's most beautiful metropolises. The carnival strongholds of Cologne and Mainz lie on the legendary Rhine with the Loreley and its medieval castles. And in the south lies the metropolis of Munich, which attracts tens of thousands of visitors not only for the Oktoberfest. In the east, Dresden with its classical heritage and Leipzig with its lively, young arts scene have advanced from insider tips to tourist magnets. But even towns like Münster in Westphalia, Trier with its Porta Nigra and Konstanz on Lake Constance have their attractions.

You can browse through a wide range of information, links and videos at:
www.research-in-germany.de/discover_germany
www.discover-germany.diplo.de

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Germany's legal tender is the euro (1 euro = 100 cents). You can withdraw cash from a cash dispenser around the clock with an EC card or an international credit card.

- Retail prices – whether in restaurants, shops or at service stations – are final prices. They include value-added tax. Normally, although it is not obligatory, customers in restaurants and bars give a roughly 10% tip.

- The electricity supply is 230 volts.

- Emergency telephone numbers are: 110 for emergency services and police; 112 for fire brigade and rescue service.

- Opening times – generally shops are closed on Sundays and public holidays. There are exceptions for pharmacies, some service stations, sales outlets for travel goods at train stations and airports as well as bakeries and florists. There are usually no statutory shop closing times on weekdays, although that does not apply in some LÄNDER where shops must remain closed between 10pm and 6am on workdays. Generally, however, most shops close at 8pm, while supermarkets in cities are sometimes open to 10pm or midnight.

FAMILY

12. Are childcare services available for my children?

Family support is an important subject in Germany. All 3- to 6-year-old children have a right to a kindergarten place. From 2013 onwards this right will also be extended to include children under three. Children under the age of three are looked after in creches. There is strong demand for childcare services, especially for smaller children, and sometimes there are waiting lists for places.

The opening times range from only mornings (until midday) until late afternoon (4 to 5pm) in the case of all-day kindergartens. Special workplace kindergartens offer extended childcare services that match working hours.

In addition to public institutions, there are also a large number of kindergartens run by private or church organisations. Kindergarten fees are fixed by individual municipalities or INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS and can vary considerably.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- If you need childcare for your children, you should start looking for a place early – if possible, before your arrival. Especially all-day childcare and creche places for the very young are in great demand. Depending on the circumstances, you may have to go on a waiting list.

- As an alternative to a place at a kindergarten or creche, your child can also be looked after by a child minder (Tagesmutter/Tagesvater). They usually care for several children in their own home and offer flexible childcare times and meals. As a rule, you can request a list of addresses of recognised childminders from the municipality or the youth authority (frequently also online).

- The Studentenwerk at many universities run their own childcare centres that can also be used by staff. Your local Studentenwerk will provide information about locations, opening hours and educational principles (frequently also online). More information is available at:
  www.studentenwerke.de

- International Offices and Welcome Centers at universities can also help you find a childcare place.

13. What is Germany's school system like?

In Germany children are obliged to attend school from the age of six for a minimum of nine years. Attendance at state schools is free of charge. As a rule, children attend a Grundschule (primary school) for four years. It is followed by different kinds of secondary school: Hauptschule (until year 9), Realschule (until year 10) and Gymnasium (until year 12 or 13). They differ in their academic requirements and their balance of theoretical and practical learning.

Alongside these school forms, there is also the Gesamtschule (comprehensive school) where students are taught together depending on their level of achievement. This makes transferring between the different school forms easier. At a Hauptschule, years 5 to 9 are compulsory, year 10 is voluntary. Students at a Realschule can be awarded a school-leaving certificate called a "Mittlere Reife" after completing year 10.

A Gymnasium provides a general academic education. Depending on the state, after 12 or 13 years of schooling students can receive a GENERAL HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRANCE QUALIFICATION. Usually lessons only take place during the morning, but increasingly all-day schools are being established, offering lunch and afternoon programmes.

A schools database organised by the German LÄNDER is offered by the German Education Server:
www.eduserver.de
> school education > schools > schools in Germany
(in German only)

You can find details of multilingual kindergartens and schools in Germany in the database of the Association for Early Multilingualism in Day Nurseries and Schools (FMKS) at:
www.fmks-online.de

The website of the Association of German International Schools (AGIS) offers links to international schools in Germany:
www.agis-schools.org

You will find schools in Germany that offer an International Baccalaureate (IB) programme here:
www.ibo.org

14. What kind of financial support is there for families?

Parents in Germany receive child benefit. A monthly allowance is paid for each child until the age of at least 18. It currently amounts to 184 euros for the first and second child, 190 euros for the third child and 215 euros for the fourth and any additional child. Under certain circumstances foreign parents can also apply for child benefit.

www.arbeitsagentur.de/EN
> Benefits > Child benefit

Citizens of foreign countries who live and work in Germany and have a settlement permit or a RESIDENCE PERMIT can apply for parental benefit (Elterngeld) after the birth of their child. As a result, the parent who interrupts his or her career to look after the child generally receives two-thirds of his or her last net income (a minimum of 300 euros and a maximum of 1,800 euros a month) for one year. Payment of parental benefit can be extended to 14 months if the second parent assumes the task of looking after the child for at least two months. The parental benefit offices of the LÄNDER are responsible for administering the scheme.

You will find information for foreign parents on a website run by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth:

www.familien-wegweiser.de
(in German only)

GLOSSARY

ALIENS' AUTHORITY (Ausländeramt/Ausländerbehörde) Local government agency that regulates all matters concerning foreigners' residence rights and residence documents. The Aliens' Authority in the district where you have or should have your primary place of residence is responsible for all residence rights matters.

BUNDESLÄNDER see Länder

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES (Sonderforschungsbereiche) University research institutions in which researchers work in an interdisciplinary manner within the framework of an outstanding multidisciplinary research programme lasting up to 12 years.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT (Tarifvertrag) Written contract between one or more employers or employers' associations on one side, and one or more trade unions on the other (parties to the collective agreement). It defines the rights and obligations of the parties and outlines the rules governing the content, conclusion and termination of contracts of employment as well as questions relating to the workplace and industrial relations.

Compulsory statutory health insurance
All employees and trainees are obliged to have health insurance cover. Membership of a statutory health insurance fund is compulsory for employees whose monthly pay is more than 400 euros but does not exceed the general earnings threshold for compulsory health insurance, which is currently 4,237 euros gross a month.

contributions to the social insurance see social contributions

Double taxation agreement Many countries have concluded agreements to ensure that taxpayers are not liable to pay tax more than once on the same income. These agreements regulate which income has to be taxed in which country.

EEA countries, EEA states Member countries of the European Economic Area (EEA). In addition to the EU member states, these include Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) This federal authority is primarily concerned with job placement and employment promotion. Its local offices are called Agenturen für Arbeit (Agencies for Employment). Essentially, International Placement Services (ZAV), an office of the Federal Employment Agency, must grant approval before non-EU citizens are allowed to work in Germany. Exceptions apply, among others, for highly qualified personnel and researchers.

General higher education entrance qualification (Allgemeine Hochschulreife) This qualification entitles students to begin a study programme at a German university. As a rule, the general higher education entrance qualification is awarded after the successful completion of the Abitur, the examination taken at the end of secondary school. Depending on the state

in which you live, it takes 12 or 13 years of schooling to complete the Abitur.

Independent organisations (freie Träger) Non-public sector bodies, such as (registered) associations, limited liability companies (GmbH) or foundations under civil law. Independent organisations are also active in the social work sector alongside public bodies (federal, state, municipal institutions). Important independent social work organisations include charitable organisations like welfare associations and youth associations.

International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) International Offices at universities are the first point of contact for international undergraduate students, doctoral students and researchers. They offer information about courses at the institution as well as support on matters of everyday life and work.
www.daad.de/io

Junior professor Career step on the path towards a professorship that enables independent research and teaching early on. Junior professorships are generally set up for six years, although a qualification review is carried out after three years. Junior professors are regarded as higher education teachers.

Länder The states that make up the Federal Republic of Germany. While most of the 16 German Länder are territorial states covering a large area, Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen are city states – in other words, cities that have the status of a Land. German Länder have their own sovereign rights and their own respective state parliament and state government. They contribute to the legislative process of the Federal Republic of Germany through the Bundesrat (Federal Council).

Leading-Edge Clusters (Spitzencluster) Research associations (e.g. of companies, research institutions, university institutes) that pool their strengths to generate benefits for all through a division of labour. The regional concentration of innovative players is a typical characteristic of these clusters.

Notice boards (Schwarze Bretter) Information surfaces – usually freely accessible – on which people can post notices, requests and offers.

Recognised research institution (anerkannte Forschungseinrichtung) Public or private research institutions that have been officially recognised by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Foreign researchers who wish to obtain a scientific visa – in other words, a residence permit for the purpose of research – must have a contract with a recognised research institution.
www.bamf.de

Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt) Local office where residents must register, re-register or deregister after changing address or arriving in Germany.

Residence documents Residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) or settlement permit (Niederlassungserlaubnis). If you wish to remain in Germany for any length of time, you will require a residence document. There are two different residence documents: the (temporary) residence permit and the (permanent) settlement permit. The residence permit is always issued for a specific period of time, but can be extended. Foreigners can only work in Germany if their residence permit explicitly allows it. The settlement permit is unlimited with regard to time and place and also entitles its holder to take up gainful employment.

Social contributions Payments made by employees and employers to finance the different branches of the

social insurance system. The employee's share is deducted from gross pay and paid to the respective health insurance fund by the employer. The level of contributions to the retirement pension, unemployment, long-term care and health insurance funds is determined by the Federal Government. Contributions to the statutory accident insurance are paid by employers alone.

Studentenwerk An organisation with offices at 58 universities which look after the needs of students in higher education institutions. They run refectories, halls of residence, childcare facilities and cafeterias and support student cultural initiatives. They offer psychological and social services and support students in crisis situations.

Third-party funding Monies acquired from public or private bodies in addition to the regular budget of a higher education institution to fund research and development or support new research talent and teaching. Third-party funding can be made available to the higher education institution itself, one of its bodies (e.g. faculties, departments or institutes) or individual researchers with full-time positions.

Welcome Center see International Office

Published by

DAAD
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service
Kennedyallee 50
53175 Bonn
Germany
www.daad.de

Project coordination

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Referat 523 – Marketing for Research

Publishing House

Frankfurter Societäts-Medien GmbH
Frankenallee 71–81
60327 Frankfurt
Germany

Editors

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Note

DAAD places special emphasis on using language that treats women and men equally. The grammatical male form is occasionally used alone in this publication purely as a means of improving legibility. Naturally, these terms are meant in a gender-neutral way.

Printed by

Brandt GmbH, Bonn
2nd updated edition, August 2012
Print run 20,000

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Any reproduction, even of extracts, should include appropriate source details.

This publication was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

About Research in Germany

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The following Research in Germany-publications are available at www.research-in-germany.de/downloads:

- "FAQs – Preparing a successful research stay in Germany"
- "FAQs – Doing a doctorate in Germany"
- "German Funding Programmes for Scientists and Researchers"
- "The German Research Landscape – Who does research in Germany?"
- "Discover the Future of Research. Now. Germany – Europe's leader in science"

We hope that our brochures will help you prepare your research stay in Germany. For more information about Research in Germany, please visit our website at www.research-in-germany.de and subscribe to our newsletter at:
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Cover: Dörthe Hagenguth/DAAD (2), Volker Lannert/DAAD (3);
Contents: Abbis/DAAD p. 38; Ausserhofer/Himsel/DAAD p. 38; Thomas Ebert/DAAD p. 33; Dörthe Hagenguth/DAAD p. 4, 27, 30, 33, 37, 41; tom-hanisch.de/Fotolia p. 22; Hofmann/DAAD p. 21; Hub/DAAD p. 21, 27; Kautz15/Fotolia p. 41; Volker Lannert/DAAD p. 4, 7, 11, 15, 16; Lichtenscheidt/DAAD p. 22; Dan Race/Fotolia p. 37; Marcel Schauer/Fotolia p. 30

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of Education
and Research

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