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FIVE REASONS TO STUDY IN GERMANY

German universities offer good conditions in which to study – at relatively low cost. You can learn about further advantages of studying in Germany here.

1. High-quality teaching and research

Numbering around 400, German universities offer excellent opportunities for learning and research.

The British magazine Times Higher Education ranks eleven German universities among the world's 200 best. International students also rate German universities highly: in a 2012 survey, a good 85 per cent of the international students surveyed stated that they were satisfied with the quality of the teaching. And more than 90 per cent praised the high standard of equipment of German university laboratories.

2. Attractive international courses

German universities also offer a large number of Bachelor's and Master's degrees and doctorates aimed at international students. Depending on the university and availability, the students can take these courses in English or French, for example.

In 2014 about 301.000 international students were enrolled at a German university. This corresponds to a share of 11.5 percent among all students in Germany. Most of them come from China followed by the Russian Federation, India and Austria.

Interested? Then take a look at the German Academic Exchange Service database: <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/international-programs/en/>. There, you will find further information about the courses, sorted by field of study, degree/level, language, location and duration. For 2015, 660 international courses are listed in the fields of life science and information technology alone. There are 412 engineering courses and 132 in the field of medicine.

3. Low fees

Unlike many other countries, no tuition fees are charged for undergraduate degrees at public universities in Germany.

The university year is usually divided into two semesters. Since the winter semester 2014/2015, students nationwide are exempt from paying the tuition fees. Merely a semester fee must be paid, an amount results between 100 and 300 euros. In other words, German universities offer sound academic training for relatively low costs.

To live on, students in Germany need around 800 euros per month on average. You can earn something towards this by getting a student job. You will find more information about this on the Make it in Germany Web site under "Five steps to studying in Germany". You may have the possibility of receiving money in the shape of a scholarship. You will find information about scholarships on the Make it in Germany Web site under "Five steps to studying in Germany".

4. Good career prospects

Studying at a German university could be your first step towards a career in Germany. Because German companies are looking for university graduates in a variety of sectors – especially in the fields of engineering, medicine, the life sciences and information technology.

You are advised to build contacts with suitable companies – for example by means of an internship – during your course of study. With your German degree, you can score points with

internationally operating companies, since by moving to Germany you have proven that you are flexible and keen to learn, and that you are at ease in an international environment.

Studying in Germany can also pay off financially. Just remember that salaries differ from sector to sector and the amount depends on different factors such as the need on the labour market for certain qualifications or professional experience. On average, university graduates aged between 25 and 30 earned a gross salary of 3,537 euros in 2010. Salaries usually rise the more professional experience you have, and so the 30-35 age category were earning an average gross salary of 4,768 euros a month. Students of mathematical and technical subjects, including information technology, have better salary prospects compared with the average for graduates.

Remember that as a rule, company employees have to pay social contributions and are protected by unemployment, health, nursing care, pension and accident insurance. In this case, the contributions are deducted directly from your salary. You can find out more about social security in Germany here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/guide/social-security

You can find current job offers in the job exchange on the "Make it in Germany" Web site.

5. High quality of life

Life in Germany is very good. If you study here, you will not only find Europe's most dynamic economy. Germany is also a very safe country, with a high standard of living, a rich cultural history and a very diverse population.

The country also has an excellent infrastructure at the centre of Europe as well as numerous opportunities for recreational activities.

Also, at university you can do much more than just study: you can join a university sports club or theatre group, or engage in social or political activities. You can also go to university parties, music festivals, to the cinema or to night clubs with other students. You will soon make friends and through them get to know the country where you are studying even better. You will find some tips about this on the "Make it in Germany" Web site under "Five steps to studying in Germany".

FIVE STEPS TO STUDYING IN GERMANY



As far as learning and coming into contact with children of their own age is concerned, your children will be well looked-after in Germany's nurseries and schools. Find out about what's on offer.

1. Check out the conditions

Looking for a place to study? If so, a German university could be a sound choice. Sound academic training and the international atmosphere will make your student days in Germany unforgettable. We explain the best way to put your plan into action here.

Getting your school and university diplomas recognized

If you want to study in Germany, you need a qualification that gives you university entrance qualification – that is, a diploma that allows you to take up studies in your home country. In Germany, this diploma is then verified to see whether it is comparable to a German diploma giving access to higher education. Many foreign diplomas are now recognised as equivalent. You can look up which of your home country diplomas this applies to and whether or not you need to take further examinations to gain access to higher education on the German Academic Exchange Service database.

If you have already completed a course of study in your home country and want to do a Master's degree in Germany, for example, you should get your degree recognised beforehand. This is the task of the German International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) at the university of your choice. You will find the addresses on the German Academic Exchange Service Web site. The database of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (<http://anabin.kmk.org/anabin-datenbank.html>) will also provide information about whether your diploma is recognised.

Also, think about whether taking up studies in parallel to a job is a feasible option for you. This kind of course is available either part-time, full-time or by distance learning. By doing this,

you can gain professional experience in Germany as well acquiring theoretical training. You will find out more about this on www.hochschulkompass.de (German).

You do not have a recognised school-leaving diploma? A preparatory course is the solution

Even if the diploma from your home country is not equivalent to a German diploma giving access to higher education, you still have a chance of studying in Germany. Before taking up your studies, you must take a preparatory course at a Studienkolleg. These university-run centres for international students provide language teaching and teaching geared to the subject you have chosen to study. Courses usually last a year. If you pass the end-of-year examination, you will be entitled to apply for a higher education course in that subject. You will find out more on the Preparatory Courses in Germany Web-site: www.studienkollegs.de

Attend your first language courses

If you apply for a course which is taught in German, you will have to prove that you know enough of the language. The most current certificates of proficiency include the DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber) and TestDaf (Test für Deutsch als Fremdsprache) certificates for German as a foreign language. Since February 12, 2016, the exam "telc Deutsch C1 Hochschule" is also accepted for admission to a German-language course at all German universities and colleges. Both are equally well recognised. For courses taught in English, you do not normally have to prove that you have any knowledge of German. Even if you have attended a German school abroad or a preparatory course, you are not obliged to take this examination.

Regardless of what you study, you are advised to have a command of German corresponding to level B2. That will help you to make yourself understood without anyone else's help, whether out shopping, at the foreign nationals' registration office or at the doctor's. Moreover, it will make it easier to have a social life and will raise your career prospects if you stay on in Germany.

If you want to take a German exam while still in your home country, you can do so in one of the 158 Goethe Institutes worldwide, for example. You will find the address of the nearest Institute to you on our interactive world map, "local contacts". You can find out more about language examinations on www.study-in.de.

Getting a German diploma recognised abroad

Hopefully, you will like life in Germany so much that you will want to stay here after you have finished studying. However, if you do subsequently decide you want to work in another country, you can rest assured that German Bachelor's and Master's degrees are recognised on the international labour market. This is not the case with the Staatsexamen, the exam you take when you study law, medicine or pharmacy or teacher training. That is why you should check in advance which courses of study offer good job prospects in Germany and abroad. The German Academic Exchange Service, can help you to find the right course and a suitable university.

Enough money to live and to study

Doubtless one of the most important questions for you is how you are going to finance your studies in Germany. Money-wise, you need to plan ahead for two things

- ▶ **Semester and tuition fees:** The universities in Germany do not charge tuition fees for undergraduate courses. Merely a semester fee must be paid. This includes the contributions for Studentenwerk (Student Union) and AstA (student self-government). Depending on the university, the amount is between 100 and 300 euros. Often with the payment of semester due students also receive a semester ticket for local public transport.

Note: for international courses – Bachelor's or Master's courses in English, for example – other rules may apply. If you wish to take this kind of course, first ask exactly whether you have to pay fees and, if so, how much. You will find the most salient information about more than 1,550 international courses of study for the year 2013/2014 on the German Academic Exchange Service Web site.

- ▶ **Living costs:** German students spend an average of around 800 euros per month. Of this, nearly 300 euros go towards paying the rent and around 165 euros on food. Depending on the place where you study and whether you are married or single, or have children, you will need either more or perhaps less.

Inquire about scholarships

Would you like to fund your studies by means of a scholarship? In Germany, numerous institutions provide this kind of financial aid on a monthly basis to students who meet specific conditions. These may either involve good marks, or even social commitment. However, you need to be aware that in Germany, scholarships are rarely granted from the first semester. Students in later semesters and PhD students from abroad can apply for a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service. Some private institutions also support foreign students. You can find out more about the possibilities of funding by the German Academic Exchange Service or other selected funding bodies for international students on its Website.

Apply for a place on a course

There are two ways to apply for a place on a course of study: at numerous universities, you can apply through a special body called Uni-Assist e.V.: <http://www.uni-assist.de/uni-assist-mitglieder.htm>. You can find out which universities this applies to on the Uni-Assist Web site. If there is no Uni-Assist at the university of your choice, you can send your application directly to the university. You can find out the address of your chosen university from the list of German universities.

If you want to start your course in the winter semester, you generally have to apply by July 15 at the latest. To start a course in the summer, you usually have to submit your application by January 15 of each year. Different conditions

and application deadlines may apply for certain courses. For example, for many subjects you will need to have achieved certain grades, or take an Entrance examination. You can find out more about this on the Web site www.hochschulstart.de [German].

2. Make preparations

You've found a place on a university course in Germany? Congratulations! Now is the time to start making preparations. Here, we explain what arrangements you need to make while still in your home country.

Apply for a visa

If you are a national of an EU country, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland, you do not need a visa. All other international students require a visa to study in Germany. You should apply to a German mission in your home country for your student visa. You will find the address of the nearest mission to you on our interactive world map, "local contacts". Besides presenting the notification of admission from your university, you must also prove that you are able to pay your student and Living costs in Germany. At present, this means that you must be able to prove that you have 8,640 euros a year at your disposal. Alternatively, you can ask friends or family members in Germany to submit a "declaration of commitment" (Verpflichtungserklärung) to the foreign nationals' registration authority (Ausländerbehörde) on your behalf. In this case, you might not have to prove that you have savings of your own when applying for a visa. Moreover, you will need health insurance. Depending on which country you come from, you will have to present additional documents. This is why it is advisable to ask the German mission in your home country what documents are required. You will find out more about the question of visas on the Web site of the German Foreign Office and on the Web site of the German Academic Exchange Service. Once in Germany, you then have to apply for a residence permit.

Take out health insurance

Before you even leave your home country, you must take out health insurance which is recognised in Germany for the early period of your stay there. This is because you need to have health insurance in order to apply for a preparatory course or to enrol at a university. Once you have enrolled at the universi-

ty, you can switch to the mandatory German health insurance scheme. You will find more help on choosing health insurance on the advice pages of the Deutsches Studentenwerk Web site.

Find accommodation

Many students in Germany live in student residences. The rooms are reasonably priced and you can quickly make friends there. This is why places in student residences are much sought-after and not easy to get. If you want to rent one of these rooms, apply to the accommodation office of the respective student association (Studentenwerk) at your university before coming to Germany. It will provide information about room availability and rent. The new German Academic Exchange Service's Accommodation database will help you in your search for a student residence at your chosen university and full information about how to apply. Also, you will find the addresses of the student associations on the Web site internationale-studierende.de. The International Office (or Akademisches Auslandsamt) of your university will also be of help to you. You can find out more about looking for accommodation in Germany on the Make it in Germany Web site under Guide to "Living in Germany" as well as on the Web site of the German Academic Exchange Service.

Prepare to enroll

Have you already obtained admission to a university? Remember that you will only be able to make use of all the services of your university, such as the library, once you have enrolled. You are normally expected to come in person to the university to enrol. Make careful note of the deadline by which you have to enrol. You will receive full information with the notification of admission, but you can also find it on the Web site of the German Academic Exchange Service.

If you want to know exactly what awaits you in Germany and whether other foreign students enjoyed life and university here, you can discuss it with them over the Internet. You will find lots of contacts on the Alumniportal Deutschland site. "Germany – new horizons" is a film by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) about studying and living in Germany! Six students from all over the world talk about their new home, the city where they are studying and the conditions for studying in Germany. You can view the video on the DAAD YouTube channel.

3. Arrival in Germany

Welcome to your new place of study in Germany. Before you attend your first lectures, a few more small matters need attending to – opening a bank account, for example. Here, we explain the best way to go about it.

Register your place of residence

In Germany, you have to register at the “residents’ registration office” (Einwohnermeldeamt) each time you move. You have one week to do this from the time you find somewhere to live. You can also register your new place of residence at the “citizens’ bureau” (Bürgeramt). You can find out the address of the residents’ registration office or citizens’ bureau from the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of your university. You will find the addresses of the International Offices on the Web Site of the German Academic Exchange Service: www.daad.de

Open a bank account

In Germany, you need a bank account to be able to pay things such as your rent simply and rapidly. That is why you should open a current account with a bank in Germany as quickly as possible. Most banks offer this kind of account free of charge for students. You will find further information, for example which documents you need to open a bank account, on the Make it in Germany site under Guide to “Living in Germany”.

Apply for a residence permit

If you travel to Germany on a visa, you will require a Residence permit to stay in the country for any length of time. To obtain one, you must register with your local foreign nationals’ registration authority within three months of your arrival in Germany. The best thing to do is to ask the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of your university which authority is responsible for you.

Attend language courses

Are you about to sit the DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber) or TestDaf (Test für Deutsch als Fremdsprache) language exams for German as a foreign language? If so, you can do some intensive pre-exam preparation on the Internet or by attending a language course. The German Academic Exchange Service has compiled a list of suggestions. Even if you are a student taking an international course in which English is spoken, you will need to speak German in your day-to-day activities. Numerous universities offer special German courses during holiday periods. You will find a list of these in the German Academic Exchange Service database. During term time, you can attend further German courses in addition to your course of study. What courses are on offer varies according to where you study. At the start of the semester, register at your university’s language centre. You can find out more about German courses that you can take in parallel to your course from the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt).

Getting off to a good start with your studies

To get off to a good start with your studies, you should first of all decide which modules you want to attend. The study and examination regulations of your course of study can be of help here, because, compared to other countries in Germany, you have to organise a lot yourself. If you feel unsure, you can make use of the advisory service offered by the student committee (Fachschaft) of your university department. The staff of your university’s International Office are also good people to ask for advice.

4. Settling in

You have found a flat or a room in a flat share and are enrolled for your first lectures – student life starts now. Here, we explain how to make friends quickly and also perhaps earn some money by working.

Student jobs and internships

Many students in Germany take on jobs during their spare time. For example, they work as research auxiliaries (or Hiwi for short) in universities, research institutes or the university library, or else as waiters or babysitters. Students from

abroad are also allowed to work while they study. Students from the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are allowed to work up to 20 hours a week during term time, like German students. During the holidays, they are entitled to earn an unlimited amount of money. Those who come from another country outside the EU are allowed to work 120 full or 240 half days during the year without the need for approval by the competent authority, the Federal Employment Agency. You will find out more about this on the Web site of the German National Association for Student Affairs (Deutsches Studentenwerk).

International students also have the possibility of doing an internship. This is a way of getting to know the world of work in Germany and of acquiring knowledge and building networks that could be of help later when looking for a job. If you have to do a compulsory internship as part of your course, you should get advice in plenty of time from experienced students, professors or the student committee of your department. They can give you tips on how to find an internship and which internships are useful for your field of study. The German Academic Exchange Service has compiled further information on this for you.

Making friends

At German universities, there are any number of ways to make friends fast. For example, international student groups organise welcome parties, excursions and regular get-togethers. Moreover, many universities offer a wide range of sports activities. You can find out what your university has to offer in the office of the student representatives or the AStA students union. There are also plenty of further tips about recreational activities on the Web site of the study-in.de.

Religion

Do you practise a religion and want to continue practising in Germany? No need to worry. In Germany, the constitution ensures religious freedom. There are religious student groups in many university towns and cities. On their own initiative, they organise such things as meetings where people can pray and practise their faith together, as well as meetings for interreligious dialogue. You can find out more about freedom of religion on the Make it in Germany Web site under "Introduction to Germany".

5. Prospects

Labour market prospects

Of course, your first priority for the moment is your course of study. But it does not do any harm to start thinking about afterwards early on. As a place to work, Germany offers interesting prospects.

Plan for your career after your studies

As a graduate of a Germany university, your prospects on the German labour market are good. Demand for students of life sciences, engineering, mathematics, information technology and medicine is especially high. Alternatively, after graduating you can either take a Doctorate in Germany, or set up your own business. You can find further information about career opportunities in Germany on the Make it in Germany Web site under "Studying in Germany – and after?". However, if you decide to return to your home country, you may under certain conditions be entitled to support: www.zav-reintegration.de/en

Visit a career centre

Many German universities have career centres that will help you get started on your professional career. The German Academic Exchange Service has put together information about the services available at German universities and numerous tips about searching and applying for jobs.

3 TIPS FROM A STUDENT

Francisco from Mexico came to Germany to study. Here he gives some advice for other foreign students.



1. Start gradually

Once you've decided to study in Germany, it's a good idea to prepare for this experience in small steps. For example, before I left Mexico I looked only at the websites of universities that offer the subject I wanted to study. There you'll find a great deal of information about applying for admission, too. The offices of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Goethe-Institut and German schools have also started to offer useful advice. Next, I gathered information from those around me: I asked myself, do I know someone who has studied in Germany? How did that person go about planning the experience? Once I was in Germany, I found the student advisory

service to be very helpful, and there was one piece of advice that I found to be especially useful: It's better not to take on a heavier course load than normal. Lectures last no more than an hour and a half, but at first you'll have to find out how much time you need to process what you've have learned.

2. Be proactive

It's always best to be as independent as possible. You only learn by trying things, even if that means making mistakes. To give you one example: I had a friend who helped me find an apartment, but I always made the telephone calls myself. At first, it didn't always go well. But then I knew what I had to do differently the next time.

3. Take advantage of study groups

At German universities, there are many opportunities to join study groups. You need to find out what your preferred learning style is, whether you'd rather study alone or with a group. But after I had acquired a certain foundation of knowledge, these groups helped me understand things that hadn't been clear to me. Whether you have questions about the subject matter or about a lecture, a seminar or a book: We all have something different to contribute, and pooling our knowledge benefits everyone.



STUDYING IN GERMANY – AND AFTER?

Are you studying in Germany and wondering what you'd like to do once you have completed your studies? Why not stay in Germany? Here, we present a few of the career prospects that are open to you.

1. Residence permits for postgraduates

Once you have completed your studies, you are cordially invited to put your specialist knowledge to good use in Germany. We explain about the applicable rights of residence here.

Students from non-EU states

Germany offers attractive residence permits which enable you to accept a job which befits your line and level of studies. You can obtain them in just two steps:

Step 1 – Residence permit while looking for a job: You can apply for an 18-month Residence permit from your local foreign nationals' registration office to look for a job that corresponds to your qualifications. During these 18 months, you may take up any kind of employment to support yourself and fund your job search. If you already found a job that corresponds to your qualifications before graduating, you can jump this step. You can apply for your Residence permit as soon as you have passed your final exam. To do so, you usually need:

- Your passport
- Your university degree: As issuing university diplomas can take some time, an official document from your university stating that you have successfully completed your studies will also suffice. The examination office of your department or faculty will issue this "Nachweis". The document must bear an official stamp.
- A document proving that you have health insurance: Contact your health insurance fund and ask them to issue a health insurance certificate for you.
- Proof that you have a means of supporting yourself (for example a bank statement or a document stating that you have been awarded a grant)

If you are not able to proof your ability to secure your liveli-

hood, a declaration of commitment might be an alternative solution. The guarantee covers all Living costs that incur during your stay in Germany. The contracting person must be solvent and creditworthy.

We recommend that you ask your local foreign residents' registration office which documents you need to bring with you before submitting your application. Some local offices provide information about this on the Internet too.

By the way: have you already returned to your country of origin after completing your studies? In that case, you are entitled to a six-month visa to be able to look for a job that corresponds to your qualifications in Germany. The condition is that you have a university degree and are able to support yourself while you stay in Germany. Please note that the visa entitling you to hunt for jobs does not entitle you to work. Once you find a suitable post, you can immediately apply for the appropriate Residence permit while, of course, remaining in Germany. You can apply for the visa to the German mission abroad in your area. They will tell you exactly which conditions you have to fulfill to be able to apply. You can find the addresses of the German missions abroad in your country on our "local contacts" world map.

Step 2 – Residence permit for taking up employment: As soon as you have a job offer which corresponds to your qualifications, you can choose whether you want to apply for a German Residence permit or an EU Blue Card for the next part of your stay. Various conditions are attached to both these residence permits. Depending on what you are planning to do in the future, either the German Residence permit or the EU Blue Card can be advantageous for you. If you intend subsequently to live and work in another EU state, the EU Blue Card may be more advantageous for you than the German Residence permit. As the choice of Residence permit largely depends on your personal situation, get the advice of your local foreign

nationals' registration office when you apply. Even if you just get a job offer for a part-time employment, a Residence permit can be granted to you. It is important that the expected salary secures all means of subsistence. The decision depends entirely on the local immigration authority. We recommend that you ask the foreign residents' registration office which documents you need to bring with you before submitting your application. Some local offices provide information about this on the Internet too.

The German Residence permit or EU Blue Card allowing you to take up employment is issued for a limited period first of all. If you continue to be employed and wish to have your permit extended, you will be able to do this without any problem. As early as two years after receiving your German or EU Blue Card Residence permit, you can apply for a permanent Residence permit – that is, a Residence permit without a time limit. Again, the condition is that you still have employment in Germany.

Are you planning to stay abroad for a lengthy period? If you have an EU Blue Card, you can usually stay abroad for up to twelve months without your Blue Card's becoming invalid. If you have a German Residence permit, you can usually stay abroad for up to six months without your permit's becoming invalid.

Whatever the case, you are recommended to talk with your local foreign nationals' registration office before leaving Germany for any length of time. If you are planning to spend more than twelve or six months abroad, you must obtain an authorisation from the foreign nationals' registration authority. Without this authorisation, you will not be able to enter Germany again if you have exceeded the period of twelve or six months.

Students from EU states

As an EU citizen, you can look for and accept employment in Germany without any restrictions.

2. Job-hunting

Your final university exams are behind you. If you want to stay in Germany, now is the time to start looking for a job if you haven't already. Most universities and your local employment agency will be able to provide some help. You'll also find a few tips here on this portal.

University services

Many of the 400 or so universities in Germany offer career services which will help you get a foot on the career ladder. These usually supply advice on choosing a career or help with how to apply, but may also provide seminars on public speaking, presentation skills or self-assurance. If you are not sure what documents you need to apply for a job in Germany, you can discuss your application directly with a member of staff of the career service. In addition, career services frequently broker contacts with companies by holding job fairs or recruiting days. Some universities also work with the local employment agency when advising graduates. Some of these local agencies offer a range of services specially geared to academics.

Local employment agencies

The employment agency in the town where you study will help you in your search for a job vacancy. In addition, you will be able to find out all kinds of information about the world of work in the agency's professional information centre. It is also a good idea to register directly on the Federal Employment Agency's Job Exchange: <http://jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de>

Tips on job-hunting

Various strategies could be of help to you in your search for a job:

1. Get active yourself and look for job offers that suit you: you can also submit your profile to the Federal Employment Agency so that interested employers can contact you. You will also find job offers in newspapers or on the Internet. Yet another possibility is to post a job ad yourself. We have compiled some information and tips on job-hunting in Germany.

The Job Listings will provide you with an overview of job vacancies in Germany.

2. Came across an interesting employer while hunting around? Don't hesitate – apply for a job speculatively. You can find out what documents you need in order to apply here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/working/guide/applying-for-a-job

3. Internships or trainee posts offer you the advantage of getting to know a company and acquiring your first professional experience. The Federal Employment Agency Job Exchange is not the only place where you can hunt for internships or trainee posts; you might also find some in other job portals or on company Web sites. Whatever the case, it is always an advantage

to build up networks of contacts in your speciality during your studies which you can then look to when hunting for a job.

3. Self-employment: an alternative solution

Why not set up your own business? As a graduate of a German university, this is a possibility which is open to you. Here are a few tips to help you along the path to self-employment.

General information

As a graduate of a Germany university, you can run a business or work as an independent professional, for example as an engineer. You will find an outline of the independent professions here. If you come from one of the European Union member states or from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland, the principle of free movement of persons applies. Under your right of establishment, you are entitled to work as an independent professional in Germany.

Setting up your own business

If you are a non-EU citizen, in order to set up your own business you need a Residence permit allowing you to exercise a self-employed activity (selbstständige Tätigkeit).

You can apply for this to your local foreign nationals' registration office. We recommend that you ask which documents you need to bring with you before submitting your application. Some local offices provide information about this on the Internet too.

The law enacting the EU Directive on Highly Qualified Employment has greatly relaxed the conditions of eligibility. If the self-employed business you are planning to set up is related to what you learned during your studies, you will usually be granted a Residence permit. Once you have set up your business, you must register it with your local trade office (Gewerbeamt).

Initially, the Residence permit entitling you to Self-employment is temporary. If your business idea is successful and you are able to support yourself and your family, there will be no problem about getting your Residence permit extended. After just three years, you are entitled to a permanent Residence permit which entitles you to stay in Germany for an

unlimited period.

Working as an independent professional

If you want to be self-employed in one of the independent professions (freie Berufe), apply for a Residence permit that will allow you to exercise this kind of activity. To do so, you will usually need to supply your CV, your final examination diploma, a description of the activity you intend to take up and a financial plan. We recommend that you ask your local foreign residents' registration office which additional documents you need to submit. Initially, the Residence permit entitling you to work as an independent professional is temporary. If your business idea is successful and you are able to support yourself and your family, there will be no problem about getting your Residence permit extended. If you work as an independent professional, you do not have to register with the trade office (Gewerbeamt). However, you do have to register your activity with the tax office (Finanzamt).

Advice and funding

Whether you choose to work as an independent professional (freiberuflich) or by setting up your own business (gewerblich), Self-employment calls for thorough preparation. Take advantage of the services offered by your local chambers of trade and industry (Industrie- und Handelskammer, IHK) or trade corporations (Handwerkskammern, HWK). They provide a comprehensive range of services ranging from personal advice for your specific case to drawing up business and financial plans. You will find the key stages on the path to setting up a business here: www.existenzgruender.de

Technology-focused, knowledge-based start-ups require plenty of capital and the entrepreneurial risks are high. With the right business plan, you may be able to obtain government funding and start-up grants to provide yourself with some security. Inquire about which funding programmes apply to your project. You will find detailed information about setting up a business in Germany here: www.existenzgruender.de

4. Doctoral studies in Germany

Interested in research? In that case, doing a Doctorate in Germany might be the right choice for you. While you are studying for your Doctorate, you might be able to support yourself by working as a research assistant at a university, or by working for a company.

Residence permits

If you wish to pursue a scientific career at a German university or in a research institute, you do not need any special Residence permit if you are an EU citizen. If you come from another country, all you have to do is to have your Residence permit extended by your local foreign nationals' registration office. To do so, you will need your certificate of matriculation. Furthermore, you need to be able to prove that you have adequate health insurance and that you are able to support yourself. We recommend that you ask the foreign residents' registration office which documents you need to bring with you. Some local offices provide information about this on the Internet too.

Doctoral studies as a university employee

If you want to explore certain aspects of your studies in greater depth by doing a Doctorate, the best thing to do is to contact the professors concerned. That way, you will get first-hand information about your chances of doing a Doctorate in a given department – for example as a research assistant. You will also find openings for Doctorate studentships on the Web sites of the different universities. On the "PhDGermany" platform of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), German universities and research institutes publish doctoral positions which specifically address foreign candidates.

The „Research in Germany“ portal informs about doctoral studies in Germany and opportunities for funding and financing.

Doctoral studies with a company

Some companies will let you work at the same time as you conduct your doctoral research. In that case, you will be an employee of the company. However, you will be supervised

by university professors. Young researchers often use this option to help them onto the career ladder. You will find a list of companies in a number of different research areas on the "Research in Germany" portal.

Doctoral programmes

Doctoral programmes, research training groups and graduate schools provide further possible ways of embarking upon a scientific career. When taking part in such doctoral programmes or research training groups, you are often a member of a research team and have numerous supervisors. Moreover, university events such as colloquia are often part and parcel of the programme. In this online database of the DAAD, besides around 300 of these "structured" doctoral programmes you will also find a list of the international bachelor and master programmes: www.daad.de/international-programmes. The „Research in Germany“ portal helps you in finding the right doctoral studies programme.

How to apply

If you want to obtain a position in a Research training group or if you want a university professor to supervise you in your doctoral studies, you usually have to apply. Read the instructions for applying for the different research programmes carefully. A standard application will include a CV showing your academic achievements and research work (for example, the content and mark of your master's thesis), your diplomas, and perhaps also your actual master's thesis and an outline of your proposed doctoral thesis. To be admitted to a German university as a doctoral student, depending on your line of study you need to have obtained a "Diplom", a "Staatsexamen", a "Magister" or a master's degree. Before applying, find out which conditions you have to meet to be admitted. The „Research in Germany“ portal explains how to successfully apply for a doctoral position in a German university step by step: <http://www.research-in-germany.org/de/karriere-in-der-forschung/infos-fuer-doktoranden/vorbereitung-und-voraussetzungen.html>.

5. Key organisations at a glance

There are numerous organisations in Germany which help

students and graduates. Here are some of the most important ones.

AIESEC

The largest international students' organisation, AIESEC offers regular contact meetings with companies at German universities. Companies which want to present themselves to potential new recruits are invited to take part. You have the chance of introducing yourself in person to potential employers at a number of meetings during the year. AIESEC is represented at 50 universities in Germany: <https://www.alumniportal-deutschland.org/en/>.

Alumniportal Deutschland

Alumniportal Deutschland is a free social networking site funded by the German government. The portal not only offers you a chance of keeping in contact with former fellow students and building your own network of contacts; it also lets you draw up a career profile with your qualifications and to hunt for vacancies or missions worldwide, including in your home country: www.alumniportal-deutschland.org/en.

Foreign nationals' registration offices

Your local foreign nationals' registration office will provide information about rights of residence once you have completed your studies and explain which regulations apply to you. You will find the registration office nearest to you on this Web site: www.bamf.de. Some local offices have their own Web site too.

Federal Employment Agency (BA)

The BA offers a wide-ranging list of different job exchanges in Germany sorted by sector. These include portals specifically for graduates in engineering and information technology, as well as for doctors and the health sector. You can find out more here: www.arbeitsagentur.de [German]. Moreover, on the BA's own job exchange page, you can look for internships, trainee posts or voluntary vacancies and, of course, jobs. To the job exchange [German].

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

On its Internet pages, the BAMF offers comprehensive information about rights of residence in German, English, Russian and Turkish.

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi)

The BMWi runs the EXIST grant programme for business start-ups to provide support for students, research scientists and university graduates when setting up knowledge-intensive technological companies. You can find out more here: The BMWi also has a number of information portals on setting up a business in Germany (in French, Turkish, Russian and Italian, as well as other languages: www.existenzgruender.de

You can find special tips for women wishing to set up their own business here: www.exist.de/DE/Prog
www.existenzgruenderinnen.de

In collaboration with other partners, the BMWi has also built the German-language portal nexus-change.org. This Web site provides information for young academics who are interested in company management.

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

The DAAD provides detailed information about studying and careers in research in Germany. The Federal Ministry of Education's "Research in Germany" platform, which is run by the DAAD, provides an insight into the research scene in Germany. In addition, you can find out about scholarship programmes directly on the DAAD Web pages and search for current offers to finance your doctoral studies. You will find a list of Academic Exchange Service offices here: www.daad.de

Chambers of Trade and Industry (IHK)

The chambers of trade and industry provide active support for new entrepreneurs. You can find out more here: www.dihk.de

IAESTE Deutschland

IAESTE – the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience – organises placements for students of engineering science and the natural sciences, as well as for students of agriculture and forestry. To the IAESTE Web site

Student organisations

On the Web site of the German National Association for Student Affairs, you'll find concise information about funding for graduates and bodies which grant scholarships to young scientists: www.studentenwerke.de

German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)

ZDH's advisory centre for the self-employed offers funding programmes for business start-ups as well as information and training events for entrepreneurs and people wishing to set up their own business (German). You can find out more about this here: www.zdh.de



“We’re there to make things more transparent”

INTERVIEW WITH AN INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Foreign students who come to university in Germany have a huge range of advisory services to choose from. Of the wealth of addresses available, the staff at the International Offices (Akademische Auslandsämter) know which is the right one to go to with your question. Daniela Simut-Perent, who is in charge of international students at Cologne University International Office, gives us an insight into her work.

What kinds of questions do you help foreign students with?

Often, the questions are about visas, residence and work permits, student funding or finding accommodation. Health insurance is another topic. And of course learning German and networking with other students.

What kind of support do you provide?

At the start of the semester, we hold information sessions to explain organisational issues to the students. Also, in relation to questions about their subject, we send them to the appropriate advisory services in the faculties and departments. In our own consultations, we provide advice about organising the course of your studies, student funding and individual questions. On the issue of residence permits, for example, we explain what kind of proof of financial means is required by the foreign nationals’ registration authority: it might take the form of a Blocked account into which the student paid sufficient money while still in his or her home country, a notification of a scholarship, or a declaration of commitment by another person, usually someone living in Germany. In certain cases, we help students before they arrive in Germany in getting a visa and contact the German mission in their home country. Furthermore, we work closely with other organisations: in collaboration with us, for example, the City of Cologne foreign nationals’ registration authority has set up a student service to be able to respond more closely to the needs of this target group.

What support do you offer students once they have settled in?

First and foremost, we help students organise their studies properly. At German universities, students are relatively free to choose which modules and exams they take and when.

This why at our university there are plenty of places to help students plan. Every faculty provides advice with regard to the subjects. One feature peculiar to Cologne is the “Studentstart International” programme which helps international students from non-EU countries to get off to the best possible start with their studies. Besides some initial events by field of study, permanent components of the programme include advanced German courses, a course on intercultural awareness, a series of orientation events and a “student proficiency” course. This introductory programme to studying deals with very concrete questions such as: what is a seminar, or how do I present a piece of homework?

Who helps students find their way through this vast offer of student orientation?

We’re there to make things more transparent. We show students where to find the support they need. During our consultation sessions, we point students to specific services. If the topic is language, we show the numerous possibilities offered by our “German as a Foreign Language” department. If students have questions about writing academic papers or things such as fear of exams, we point them to the counselling offered by the faculties or to the Cologne University student association, the Studentenwerk.

And what about contact-building and recreational activities?

Besides the recreational activities open to all at Cologne University, there are also special offers for international students. For example, the international university groups which we have set up, made up of students from specific countries or regions of the world, hold information events, readings and music evenings where foreign students can get valuable tips

from fellow students from their home country and build contacts. In collaboration with the Cologne University student association, they organise events such as international cookery sessions, “Café Babylon” for language exchanges, and breaking fast together during Ramadan. We at the International Office organise excursions to help students learn about the geography and culture of Germany, while our TANDEM programme for language partnerships helps build up networks between international and German students.

What do you like about your job?

I love being able to help international students. It’s especially important when students are starting to give them the necessary information and also the feeling that they’re not alone. We’re delighted when students and alumni stay in contact with us and tell us about their successes, or get involved with helping “new” international students.

CONTACTS

If you have questions on visa regulations please contact the German missions. You can find the addresses of German missions abroad on our world map: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/making-it/germany-local

If you have questions on looking for a job in Germany or suggestions to improve the official website, you may use this contact form: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/contact

► **Federal Employment Agency**

The missions of the Federal Employment Agency, a public-service body in Germany, include finding placements for workers and providing Germany's official employment exchange portal. [German, English, French, Italian, Russian, Turkish]
<http://jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de>

► **Federal Foreign Office**

On the Federal Foreign Office Web site, you'll find information on immigration law and visa procedures, working and living in Germany and German foreign missions. [German, English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese]
<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de>

► **Federal Ministry of Finance**

On the Federal Ministry of Finance Web site, qualified professionals can find out more about German income tax rates and estimate their income tax using the interactive tax calculator. [German]
<http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de>

► **EURES**

The European Job Mobility Portal provides information about the conditions for living and working, as well as doing basic and advanced training, in numerous European countries including Germany. In the job exchange section, qualified professionals will find job offers from German companies. EURES is run by the European Union. [German, English, French, Spanish, Polish and other languages]
<https://ec.europa.eu/eures>

► **Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)**

One of the missions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is to help immigrants get settled in Germany. The Web site offers information about getting foreign diplomas recognised and tips on job-hunting in Germany. [German, English, Russian, Turkish]
<http://www.bamf.de>

► **Kompetenzzentrum Fachkräftesicherung**

[Centre of Excellence / Securing Qualified Professionals]

This centre of excellence provides information about which occupations in Germany are in urgent need of qualified professionals. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. [German]
<http://www.kofa.de>

► **Recognition of qualifications in Germany**

This information portal belonging to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research explains how qualified professionals can get qualifications that they obtained abroad recognised in Germany. [German, English]
<http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de>

► **Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB)**

Information about getting university and vocational diplomas recognised in Germany. [German]
<http://www.kmk.org/zab/anerkennung-im-beruflichen-bereich.html>

► **German Social Insurance**

This Web site explains about the German social security system, including health insurance and pensions. [German, English, French]
<http://www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de>

► **Goethe-Institut**

The Goethe-Institut – Germany's institute of culture – offers language courses in 92 countries, online courses, free drills and information about Germany and German culture. [German, English]
<http://www.goethe.de>

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Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
Public Relations
Dr. Christine Kahlen Scharnhorststr. 34-37
10115 Berlin, Germany
Telefax: +49 (0)30-18 615-5208
Internet: www.bmwi.de

Text

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