

Germany.  
Right in the middle of it.

A GUIDE TO LIVING AND WORKING IN GERMANY



Living and working  
in the heart of Europe



**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**

Zentrale Auslands-  
und Fachvermittlung (ZAV)

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October 2011

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## Right in the middle of it:

Living and working in the heart of Europe

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



“ Many companies are already using the opportunities that the European economic area offers in order to gain qualified personnel from abroad.”

**Gerald Schomann**, Team Leader, International Placement Office at ZAV

Germany has a mild climate, a regionally diverse cuisine that is not, however, particularly renowned for its sophistication and – when you want to go for a stroll in the evening – the shops have already closed. The Germans can think of much more exotic locations as a holiday destination than their own country. However, that is often viewed differently from outside the country: according to the German Tourist Board, there were more than 56 million international overnight stays in Germany in 2008 alone, and the trend is rising. The world is queuing up to visit Germany, and we Germans think that is splendid.

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

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



## Typically German!

Our European neighbours consider the Germans to be well organised, precise and slightly pedantic but also reliable, amiable and sociable. That was the outcome of a survey conducted by the Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung market research company among around 12,000 citizens in Germany, France, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic and Turkey.

For further information go to [www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de) (in 17 languages) and [www.magazine-deutschland.de](http://www.magazine-deutschland.de)

Did you know ...

# Applying for a job in Germany

## MAY I WORK IN GERMANY?

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

If you come from a country within the European Union, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Iceland, you can live and work in Germany without any restrictions. However, transition regulations apply to the new EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania. Although their citizens do not require a visa, they do require a special labour permit. Although their citizens do not require a visa, they do require a special labour permit. It is issued by the ZAV. ZAV will also help you apply for a labour permit or permission to access the labour market.

All other foreigners require a visa if they wish to stay for a long duration. For this purpose you should contact the German mission in your home country. An exception applies to citizens from Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Israel, Japan and the Republic of Korea: they can also apply for the necessary residence permit in Germany from the responsible immigration authorities.

How quickly and uncomplicated your labour permit can be issued depends to a considerable extent on your profession. At the moment engineers, scientists and computer specialists are particularly in demand, as are fully qualified doctors and healthcare personnel. Specialists from other service sectors also have good chances, such as from the hotel and catering industry. If you would like to know how much demand there is for your vocational qualifications in the German labour market, then you can find out from ZAV. You can contact ZAV Information Services at +49 (0) 228 / 7 13 13 13.



“ Do you want to work in Bavaria or on the Baltic Sea? Experienced personnel are particularly welcome in the catering industry – especially during the summer season.”

**Sascha Schmitt,**  
Job Placement Officer at ZAV

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

### THEY ARE GERMANY

For some years now, **Ich + Ich** have been among the most successful artists in German pop music. It is the combination that makes the duo unique – both visually and acoustically. The one “Ich” is Adel Tawil, a Berlin-born musician with Egyptian and Tunisian roots. The 31-year-old first took show business by storm as a teenager with “The Boyz”. A chance meeting with Annette Humpe in 2004 led to her becoming the second “Ich”. For some decades, the singer, producer and songwriter has been one of the most influential representatives of recent German music history (“Ideal”, “Humpe und Humpe”). The two artists share the tasks: she writes the lyrics and he mostly sings them, with the result that Ich + Ich regularly storm the charts. Annette Humpe now prefers to keep a safe distance from the stage, since despite all her experience there is one thing she has never been able to overcome: her enormous stage fright.



### HOW DO I FIND A JOB IN GERMANY?

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

However, don't just restrict your search to job offers advertised by the Federal Employment Agency. Many companies also publish their job vacancies in online job portals. In fact the Internet is



Did you know ...

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

... is a very true German saying, even if Germany provides some of the best medical care in the world. Nowhere else in the world are there so many doctors per capita as here and the quality of the healthcare also enjoys an excellent worldwide reputation. Patients in Germany particularly benefit from the simple access to medical services. You can get outpatient and stationary treatment quickly and easily – and that is largely irrespective of your income, insurance status or place of residence.

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

playing an ever increasing role in Germany when looking for jobs, whether via network portals such as [www.xing.de](http://www.xing.de) or announcements made on the companies' own websites.

As before, an important source remains the electronic or printed job pages provided by the newspapers. Browse through the specialist journals, weekly newspapers and the weekend editions of the daily newspapers, including through their websites. Larger companies, in particular, like to publish their job vacancies under the 'Personnel' or 'Career' sections on their company homepages.

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



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

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

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

Find out about your desired employer - the Internet makes this easy for you. The job advertisement will tell you whom to write to. If no name is mentioned, find out on the company's website or give them a call. For want of a better alternative you could always resort to the very general "Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren" ("Dear Sir or Madam"). Particularly with speculative job applications, however, you should make the effort to find out the right person to contact.

“ If we employ foreign workers, that globalises the company a little bit more. We are very quick to integrate new colleagues, regardless of their nationality - for the simple reason alone that we are very keen to see how they think and act.”

**Isabell C. Krone** is head of the Personnel Department at Tele Atlas Deutschland GmbH & Co. KG in Harsum near Hanover



“ *Many of our hospitals and care homes are looking for healthcare and nursing personnel. We are delighted to receive applications from abroad. We will be pleased to inform you about the requirements!*”

**Maria Jaschkowitz,**  
Job Placement Officer at ZAV

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

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

The CV should be clearly laid out with complete information. Don’t just list the corresponding years for your previous occupations (e.g. 2001–2005) – you need to list the months as well (e.g. 01/2001–06/2005). You will also need to list periods of unemployment and other periods when you have not worked (e.g. due to military service, illness, sabbaticals, etc), since gaps in the CV will be viewed critically.

At the end, it is a good idea to list the languages you can converse in well. The usual categories are: ‘Muttersprache’ (native speaker), ‘verhandlungssicher’ (business fluent), ‘fließend’ (fluent) and ‘Grundkenntnisse’ (basic knowledge).

The person reading your application will also want to learn about you as an individual. Thus your personal interests can also project a positive image of yourself. For instance, you can highlight your social commitment.

Your certificates and references provide testimony to your expertise and experience. You will need to include all certificates in your application that qualify you for the job you are applying for. If job references are not usual in your own country, then it is best to mention that in the corresponding sections in the CV. Don’t forget to

Engineer from Italy lands at aircraft supplier in Hamburg

## “I’ll advise my friends to do this”

He was looking for a job online and found EURES. With his new degree under his belt, Erasmo Benna from Piedmont came across an advertisement on the European job portal EURES, posted by ZAV in cooperation with the University of Padua, seeking aircraft engineers for the Hamburg area. Without hesitation, Erasmo Benna applied. “I was open to the idea of working in another country, because part of my upbringing took place abroad, I enjoy visiting other countries and I speak English and French quite well. Germany interested me because German developments in the field of mechanical engineering have a great influence on the international aircraft construction industry.”

In February 2008, staff from ZAV and personnel managers from Hamburg-based aircraft construction companies travelled to Venice in order to meet the applicants. Despite having to compete against 250 rival applicants, Erasmo Benna was able to secure the job. In April 2008, he signed his contract with the company AEROTEC. His new employer provided him with a free apartment, so that he could take his time and look for accommodation at his own pace. In his first four weeks in Germany, he was able to concentrate exclusively on his private German course during working hours; afterwards, he attended regular evening courses.

This is quite a success story, as the Italian only completed his degree at the age of 34. His studies, which he completed at Turin Polytechnic and the University of Bristol, had to be put on hold for several years when his wife, an architect, lost her job. This meant that Benna had to earn a living for them both, so he worked as a policeman.

Erasmo Benna says that taking the step of moving abroad was something he would definitely do again. “The organisational support from EURES and ZAV regarding my job placement was very good. I will also advise a number of my friends to take this step. Good things must be shared.”



The new employer helped **Erasmo Benna** to find his feet in Hamburg. AEROTEC provided the 35-year-old with an apartment while he was settling in and he was able to concentrate entirely on his language course.

include any further training certificates. Depending on the situation (for example when applying to smaller companies), it is worthwhile having your references and certificates translated into German.



### THEY ARE GERMANY

**Sebastian Koch** is one of Germany's most all-round actors. He became known to the German film and TV audiences as a specialist for historical figures, and is now also known to an international audience as the leading man in "Black Book" and in the Oscar awarded "The Lives of Others". The 47 year old prefers to play complex roles in European productions as opposed to the nasty German in Hollywood films: "I was never interested in that", he told the online film magazine blackfilm.com. He lives in Berlin and has a daughter. He generally sees himself as a freedom-loving individual, as he emphasized in an interview with the WELT: "For me freedom comes second, immediately after love. Freedom is one of our most important human rights."

Normally it is sufficient to provide your school-leaving and university certificates, as well as references or certificates of employment for companies or establishments where you previously worked. However, if you have any other aces up your sleeve – such as other certificates, awards, foreign internships – then don't hesitate to mention them. After all when you make an application, you are advertising yourself.

It is a good idea to include a certificate supplement describing your vocational qualifications. The Europass certificate supplement ([www.europass.cedefop.eu.int](http://www.europass.cedefop.eu.int)) outlines the course content and the typical range of occupations accessible with each certificate. It also includes information on the type of vocational training, the grade scale and the knowledge, skills and competencies you have acquired. The Europass website also provides useful templates that

enable you to structure your CV and describe your language skills and international work experience in an internationally comparable style. This enables you to shape your application in a more informative manner.

If you have an academic background, it is worthwhile contacting your university or college first. These will frequently provide you with more detailed information and explanations of the certificates. If you include these with your job application, this will help your prospective German employer make a more precise assessment of your skills and expertise.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN THE JOB INTERVIEW?

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

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

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



“*‘Made in Germany’ is still a top seller when it comes to employers, products and brands. And quite rightly so in my opinion, as employees from our European neighbours can also benefit from the excellent education and training in German companies.*”

**Isabella Schale** is a manager at SCS Personalberatung in Frankfurt am Main



Did you know ...

## Germany's media world

In Germany, there probably isn't a single newspaper kiosk that doesn't provide a veritable forest of publications. Special interest magazines appear to be conceived, researched, written and printed for every imaginable target group, however small (from tree nurserymen to yacht owners), even if they are only published in limited editions. When it comes to informing or entertaining yourself, there seems to be no limits to what is available.

And that applies not just to print media. Per cable or satellite it is possible to receive dozens of radio and TV channels from around the world, and with digital even hundreds. There are channels with and without commercial breaks, special interest channels, children's television, news channels – in fact there's something for everybody. However, although the protection of media diversity is prescribed by law in Germany, the diversity of Germany's immigrant society is only slowly making its mark in the editorial rooms: almost every fifth citizen in Germany has an immigrant background, but only every fiftieth journalist.

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

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



#### Important links

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

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

(in the section 'Welcome to Germany')

##### **Recognition of professions:**

[www.berufliche-erkennung.de](http://www.berufliche-erkennung.de)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ *Medical experts from Germany and abroad work together in many places in Germany in order to ensure healthcare of the highest quality.* ”

**Ralf Czadzeck,**  
Job Placement Officer at ZAV

# Working in Germany



“ *The German health system is one of the best in the world. That is not least thanks to our foreign colleagues. Our hospitals offer excellent training and working opportunities for doctors and qualified specialists from all over the world, both in healthcare and in laboratory and medical technology.* ”

**Arist Hartjes** is Managing Director of Johanniter Hospital in Gronau (Lower Saxony)

The Germans work longer each week than most Europeans. German employees spend an average of 41.2 hours a week at their workplace – and are thus ranked seventh among the hardest working Europeans. This was the finding of a study from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) in Dublin, which was published in 2008. On the other hand, the study also reveals that compared to other European countries, the Germans enjoy an above-average amount of holiday.

Thus the legendary industriousness of the Germans is relative. Also in other respects the work in Germany does not differ much from the work anywhere else in Europe. Nevertheless, we want to focus on the most important aspects.

## THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

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

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

## THEY ARE GERMANY

It is thanks to the most-capped player **Birgit Prinz** that women's football has also found a place in the hearts of Germany's male players and fans alike. At eight, she was already better than most of the boys at kicking the ball. At just 16, she joined the national team. With seven goals in six games, Birgit Prinz, who was born in Frankfurt, was crowned "top scorer" during the football World Cup in 2003. She won the honorary title of "World Footballer of the Year" three years in succession, and for eight years running, she was German Footballer of the Year. Despite receiving a large number of attractive offers from foreign clubs, she remains a devoted player of 1. FFC Frankfurt. Together they have advanced to the most successful European women's football club of the last ten years. As well as completing her psychology degree, the twice world champion and five-time European champion has one ultimate goal before the end of her unprecedented sporting career: She would like to defend the World Cup title a second time in her own country and be a part of it when Germany writes its second "Summer Fairy Tale" with the women's football World Cup of 2011.



## WORKING HOURS

Although the working week mostly varies between 38 and 40 hours in accordance with collective agreements, the Germans work 41 hours a week on average. Flexible working time models are often available (flexitime arrangements), which to a certain extent enable you to schedule your working hours yourself. Management executives and senior employees with higher incomes are expected to work overtime without being paid additional remuneration. In other occupations, on the other hand, special bonuses are paid for night or holiday work, for example in the health sector, security industry and in shift work.



“*The mechanical engineering and electronic industries are important pillars in our economy. Qualified engineers from abroad help to increase our competitiveness.*”

**Annette Kaiserauer,**  
Job Placement Officer at ZAV

## WAGES AND SALARIES

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

The average gross monthly income for full-time employees is currently € 3.450. A qualified engineer earns on average € 4.340 a month before tax, a doctor between € 6.500 and € 8.000, and a hairdresser around € 1.500. Even 20 years after the reunification, the wages and salaries in Germany's eastern federal states are still considerably lower than in the west, whereby the cost of living in the eastern federal states is also accordingly lower. Employers often pay additional Christmas bonuses and holiday pay; how high they are and when they are paid are specified in your employment contract. Some companies also pay commission and there is sometimes a 13th or even 14th monthly salary.

## HOLIDAYS

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



## Organic? What else!

Germany provides the largest market for organic produce within the EU. In Germany, living an organic lifestyle is an increasing social trend. The desire for animal-friendly husbandry practices, low pollutants, healthy food and locally produced products are the most frequent reasons why Germans are increasingly opting for organic produce. In the meantime they are available not just in specialised organic food shops but also in every supermarket. However, the turnover in organic produce dropped for the first time during the first six months of 2009. This has been put down to the financial crisis, since in Germany organic produce is still more expensive on average than products without organic labels. Nevertheless, 85 per cent of all households in Germany have purchased at least one organic product during the first six months of 2009.

Did you know ...



**Maria Kovacheva** already learnt German at school – twenty years later she now knows why. The ‘R’ sounds funny when it rolls across her lips, and sometimes she has difficulty finding the right words, but “I’ll also get better at that.”

Doctor would like to develop herself further

## A ‘citizen of the world’ in Sauerland

“Without the language, living abroad isn’t like your best friend but your mother-in-law,” says Maria Kovacheva. Although her German had got rather rusty after not having used it for twenty years, she was able to communicate with the Germans right from the start. That made things easier for her in the beginning. She does not feel homesick for Bulgaria but instead is delighted about her new life in Germany – even with the damp weather.

At the age of forty, Maria Kovacheva has dared to take a courageous step. In summer 2008, she moved from Dobritsch in Bulgaria to Iserlohn in Sauerland. She justifies this move very pragmatically: “I’ve learnt everything there is to learn in Bulgaria. Now I would like to develop myself further as a doctor in Germany.” The cheerful assistant doctor does not like resting on her laurels.

The job application and the job interview at the ‘Märkische Clinics’ in Letmathe went well. As a result the head of the clinics, Dr. Ulrich Müller, invited her to work there for a probationary period. Everything worked out well and Maria Kovacheva was awarded an employment contract. However, in order to be able to live and work in Germany, she still had to collect together many different documents and forms. The International Placement Services (ZAV) helped her here and organised the paperwork. “That really reassured me,” says Maria Kovacheva.

With a smile on her face, the doctor recounts her bumpy start, but she does not complain about the bureaucracy. On the contrary: “I like the rules and order in Germany,” she says, since this creates reliability, which is the basis for working together. She very much emphasises the word ‘together’.

What should you bring with you to Germany? Courage and openness, then the integration will also work out, she replies. No doubt Maria Kovacheva’s carefree approach has also helped her, as has her experience in international research projects: “I feel like a citizen of the world”.

## TAX

If you earn more than € 8.004 a year, you have to pay tax on your income. The employer deducts the tax due from your agreed gross earnings along with social security contributions.

Example: A single female employee without children who earns € 25.000 a year must pay € 2.899 income tax plus a solidarity surcharge of € 159.44 (for economically developing the eastern federal states). Fathers and mothers have to pay less. The amount of tax you pay partly depends on the tax class you are classified in based on your living situation (ranging from Tax Class I for childless singles to Tax Class VI for second jobs). Your tax liability increases as your income increases: this gradation is called progression in Germany.

Your tax class is indicated on your tax card. You receive this after registering with the pension or health insurance. You should give this card to your employer as quickly as possible. When the year is completed, you should submit an annual tax declaration to the tax office. Because you can deduct any actual expenditure from the tax, the tax office may pay you some money back. You can also submit the tax declaration online. PC programs or tax advisors will help you with this.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

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

With health insurance you can choose between a variety of different public health insurance funds up to a gross yearly income of € 44.550. Your employer will register you with your desired insurer. You will then receive a health insurance card, which you will be asked to present each time you visit a doctor or go into hospital.



“ I've lived in Germany since the age of 16 and feel at home here. I'm very satisfied with the working conditions and the social system. One aspect that I feel is particularly good is the integration of foreigners and the openness towards them, particularly from the citizens of Cologne.”

**Gerardus Hendrikus van Oort**  
from the Netherlands works as  
a waiter in the Maritim Hotel in  
Cologne



“ An impressive aspect of Germany is its high-calibre education and training opportunities. The working environment here is geared towards exchanging ideas. The readiness to support knowledge networking and cooperation at the international level makes Germany particularly attractive for high achievers.”

**Dr. Claudia Lindberg** heads the ‘National Contact Point for Space’ at the German Aerospace Centre in Bonn

The contributions for the health insurance (about 8.2 per cent of your gross monthly income, whereby your employer pays 7.3 per cent) are deducted from your salary. A small contribution is also paid for statutory nursing care insurance. Important for parents: If your family members have very little or no income, they are covered by your insurance.

For each first-time visit to the doctor in each quarter of the year, you and your family members must pay a consultation fee of € 10.00. If you are prescribed medicines, you may have to pay a small contribution to their costs.

If your gross yearly income is consistently above € 44.550, you can take out private health insurance for you and your family. The contribution you pay is determined by your individually insured risks. Your employer pays a contribution to this.

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

Contributions to the statutory pension insurance currently amount to 19.9 per cent of your gross monthly income and are only deducted for amounts up to the contribution assessment ceiling (West Germany € 5.500, East Germany € 4.800). For incomes exceeding this ceiling, no contributions are deducted. The employee and the employer share the costs. The employee and employer also each pay half of the monthly contribution to statutory unemployment insurance, which is currently 2.8 per cent of the gross income.

## **PROTECTION AGAINST DISMISSAL**

Unless otherwise agreed in the employment contract or collective agreement, the employment relationship can be terminated by both sides with a minimum notice of four weeks (in the probation period: two weeks) to the middle or end of a calendar month. More stringent employment protection legislation applies to companies

with more than five employees. It restricts the dismissal of employees with particular rights of protection (e. g. during pregnancy or illness).

### THEY ARE GERMANY

**Cacau** learned to play football on the street like many Brazilian children. As a young boy in Santo André, Claudemir Jeronimo Barreto – otherwise known as Cacau – developed those strengths, which have made him into the unpredictable footballer he is today: being equally skilled with both feet, his speed and his excellent striking skills. At the moment VfB Stuttgart benefits from his talent. The striker's childhood dream to become a professional footballer remained a distant prospect for a long time. His family wasn't able to finance his sport studies; Cacau scraped a living as a snack vendor and helping out as a bricklayer. Not until a friend took him with him to Germany, did the tides turn: In 2000 he was able to audition for Türk Gücü München and got his first contract. He now has a German passport and is even a German national player. Cacaus' motto is: "Treat people how you expect to be treated by others." The father to a daughter makes no secret of his belief in God even on his official homepage – unusual for a football star.



### SELF-EMPLOYMENT

If you wish to become self-employed in Germany, you need to carry out some careful planning. There is always a risk involved in setting up your own business. You will need to discuss your business plan with an expert consultant. You can find helpful addresses at the end of this section.



## Did you know ...

### Great climate

In Germany, the central European climate determines the weather conditions and the mood of the people. If the forecasts of climate researchers are anything to go by, the latter should not be too bad during the next few decades: it is actually supposed to be getting warmer from the North Sea to the Alps. According to forecasts, we could already be experiencing Tuscan-like weather conditions with dry summers, warm winters and prolonged rainy spells within ten years.

However, there is a high price to be paid for being able to forego pullovers and long johns. The climate change is upsetting the balance of flora and fauna and also has consequences for mankind. In Germany, climate change is considered to be a major issue. This is testified by the successful innovations of the German wind power and solar energy industries, which are exported throughout the world.

## UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

If you have paid unemployment insurance contributions for one year, you are entitled to unemployment benefit. You should inform your local Federal Employment Agency office on the very same day that you have been dismissed. With fixed-term employment contracts, you should contact the office by phone or in person three months before the contract terminates and inform them that you will become unemployed. The amount of unemployment benefit you receive depends on many different factors. You can find information on this on the Internet ([www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) > Bürgerinnen und Bürger > Arbeitslosigkeit > Arbeitslosengeld) or ask your advisor at your local Federal Employment Agency office.



### Important links

#### Information on social security:

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

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

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

[www.ihk.de](http://www.ihk.de), [www.ahk.de](http://www.ahk.de), [www.kfw-mittelstandsbank.de](http://www.kfw-mittelstandsbank.de),  
[www.existenzgruender.de](http://www.existenzgruender.de)

“Germany will also need a lot of qualified specialists in future – we welcome foreign applicants.”

Patrick Nellessen, International Placement Office for Skilled Specialists at ZAV

# Living in Germany



“ German hospitals are equipped with diagnostic equipment that is much more modern than that in Poland. That benefits all of us: the patients can expect quick and optimum treatment for their illness and we nurses are able to learn all sorts of new things.”

**Izabela Strzelecka** comes from Poland and works as a nurse in the Dr. Horst Schmidt Clinic in Wiesbaden

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

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

## HOW DO I FIND A FLAT?

The weekend property sections of the daily newspapers and property websites on the Internet are filled with flat listings with cryptic codes such as 2ZKDB/Blk or KM550+NK. Before spending too much time trying to decipher what they mean, get a knowledgeable friend or colleague to translate them for you. You can also hire an estate agent, which does incur additional costs. It may actually be cheaper and quicker to place your own ad.

In Germany, rental flats are generally rented without furniture. Sometimes you can take over existing furniture or fittings from the previous tenant on payment of compensation. It nevertheless takes a lot of effort to find a cheap rental flat, particularly in large cities. It is often a matter of luck: “I’ve heard there should be something free soon.” Thus you should tell as many people as possible about your flat hunting and don’t focus on any specific district of the city. For singles, shared flats provide an excellent alternative. In cities with large student populations, you can often rent flats on a temporary basis from flat-sharing agencies called Mitwohonzentralen.

You will receive the tenancy agreement from the estate agent or directly from the landlord. You will often be asked to pay a security deposit equivalent to two months' rent. This will be refunded on termination of the tenancy agreement. If you are considering buying an apartment or house, then you will need to budget for estate agency fees. These range between three and five per cent of the purchase price.

#### Checklist

### Living and working in Germany

- You need to register at the local Registration Office in your district and make sure that they give you a tax card.
- Open a current account with a bank, and inform your employer of your bank code and account number.
- On moving into your new apartment, register with the local utility company to ensure that you have, for example, electricity and hot water supplies. Your landlord will help you with this.
- Register your vehicle at your local Vehicle Registration Office.
- Register your TV set and radio with the GEZ, which is the TV licence fee-collecting agency. Forms are provided for this purpose in banks and local administrative offices for citizens. If required, make sure you have a cable, satellite or digital connection.
- Check your private insurance cover. Do you have liability and accident insurance that is valid for Germany?



### THEY ARE GERMANY

One could say **Hildegard von Bingen** was the first modern German woman. The intellectual Benedictine and ambassador of German mysticism (1098 – 1179) managed to live out a new role as a woman in a patriarchal medieval society. Her Works addressing religion, medicine, music, ethics and cosmology helped her to her status as the most prominent woman of the Occident back then. Indeed she was honoured as a saint while she was still alive. Even today she inspires people, as the 2009 cinema success of her biography „Vision“, with Barbara Sukowa (left) in the leading role, showed. A well-known wisdom of hers: “Before completing your Works, take a good look into your heart”. Hildegard of Bingen was canonised 500 years ago; however she has still not been acknowledged as a Doctor of the Catholic Church, although women’s groups and associations have been demanding it for the past 30 years.

### MONEY AND FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

In order to pay the rent and receive your wages or salary, you need to open an account with a bank. You need to go along with your pass, residence certificate from the registration office and a pay statement from your employer to any institute of your choice. There you should make a request to open a current account and apply for an EC card. This will enable you to withdraw money from all cash dispensers. Your bank will inform you of the precise terms and conditions of business on opening the account.

### VEHICLES AND DRIVING LICENCES

In Germany you are only permitted to drive a registered licensed vehicle, and only if you have the correct papers with you, i.e. a valid driving licence and the vehicle registration documents. You should register your car as quickly as possible at the nearest Vehicle Registration Office. There you will be asked to prove that the car belongs to you (using the vehicle ownership document, called a



## Automotive industry

Due to the global recession, the worldwide automotive industry has faced its worst ever crisis in 2009. In Germany, the hastily introduced 'car scrappage scheme', called the Abwrackprämie, did not really provide that much help. This government bonus was granted to car owners – provided that specific prerequisites were met – if they scrapped their old car and replaced it with a new or recently registered car. Nevertheless, a recent study shows that Germany is still the most competitive and stable manufacturing base in the world for the automotive industry. In addition to football and barbecuing in summer, cars still count among the Germans' greatest passions. It is no coincidence that along with the German Football Association, the German Automobile Club (ADAC) boasts the largest number of members. The Germans invest considerable time and money in their cars, including in the cars' fittings and appearance. The car tuning industry is booming, as is the classic car market. Nevertheless, when it comes to buying cars, reliability and petrol consumption are ultimately much more important to Germans than boosting their 'street cred' and having a powerful engine.

Did you know ...



**Yordan Ivanov Pavlov** had long wanted to work in Germany. The 40-year-old taught himself the language skills which this called for.

### Metalworker from Bulgaria stops over in Bavaria

#### “I am a curious man”

It was on a visit to the Bulgarian employment office that he first learnt about ZAV and the so-called guest worker programme, which gives skilled workers from Eastern European countries the opportunity to work in Germany, in the occupation they trained in, for up to 18 months – regardless of the situation on the German job market. The goal of the guest worker programme is to enhance the professional and linguistic skills of the participants.

Yordan Ivanov Pavlov, a trained metalworker with several years of professional experience, had long dreamt of working in Germany for a while. This motivated him to spend twelve years teaching himself the German language and he continually improved his German by corresponding with penpals.

He applied to the guest worker programme and was accepted into a candidate pool. ZAV mediators presented his profile to potential employers. The company Arthur Loibl GmbH contacted Pavlov shortly afterwards. An agreement was soon reached and before long the 40-year-old signed his employment contract. Just two weeks later, he was able to start his new job in Straubing.

He feels at ease in the small East-Bavarian city, partly due to the fact that his employer and colleagues helped him a great deal in the first weeks, for example in his search for a nice flat. “I like working at the company Loibl. Much like in football, a strong team is important in the workplace as well. I feel comfortable with my role here in the team. And I am enjoying learning new things. I am a curious man.”

‘Fahrzeugbrief’) and that you have taken out car insurance. With used cars you also need certificates verifying the vehicle’s roadworthiness and compliance with exhaust emissions standards. You can obtain both of these from the German Technical Inspection Association (TÜV) or the German Vehicle Supervisory Association (Dekra). Many vehicle repair garages are also authorised to carry out these tests.

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

## COST OF LIVING

The lion’s share of your living costs probably goes into paying the rent on your flat. The rents are highest in major cities such as Munich, Hamburg and Düsseldorf with an average of € 11.50 per square metre. Rents are about half of this in small towns and in the countryside. In addition to the rent there are also service charges (for example for cleaning the building or the TV reception) as well as the costs for your water, electricity and heating consumption. These generally amount to almost a third of your monthly rent. Your tenancy agreement will provide details as to what is included in the service charges.

The cost of food and basic necessities is comparatively low in Germany. This is ensured by the stiff competition between supermarkets, department stores and individual retailers. Only 7 per cent value added tax is charged on many products (such as books and newspapers); otherwise the VAT charged is 19 per cent.



“Isn’t Germany considered to be the land of engineers? Our innovative technical expertise is without doubt. But what we now need is a new generation of technical experts that is thirsty for knowledge – best of all from all corners of the world.”

**Siegfried Baumeister** heads the ‘Human Resources and Organisation’ department at Voss Automotive GmbH in Wipperfürth



Did you know ...

## Leisure time

The Germans are devoted to their leisure time. Indeed, the Germans spend about a quarter of their income on leisure activities, and this trend is rising. After all, there are plenty of things to do. Per capita, Germany has the largest number of theatres in the world and, after Finland, the largest number of orchestras. There are more than 90.000 sport clubs, around 6.000 museums, more than 1.000 cinemas and around 70 amusement and theme parks. According to a recent survey, however, the most popular leisure activities in Germany are those that can be pursued at home: namely watching TV, reading and playing on the computer. Outdoor excursions and sport are lower down the list.

How much you spend on leisure activities depends entirely on your own needs and wishes. Even small towns have a lot to offer in terms of attractive pastimes. A pizza costs between five and eight euros, whereas an evening meal in a stylish restaurant could easily set you back 100 euros – of course in Germany the sky's the limit when it comes to prices, as is the same anywhere else. Opera and concert tickets cost around 30 euros on average while a visit to the cinema could cost around 10 euros. Museums and exhibitions often cost half of this. Prices vary between the western and eastern federal states, as they do between large cities and small towns.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile ensuring that you have savings to fall back on when you first arrive. Financial reserves for emergencies and unforeseen expenditure will protect you from having to hurriedly take out credit, which no bank will grant you anyway during the initial period, at least not without collateral.

#### Important links

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

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

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

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



“Germany is an international destination. For that reason alone we're keen to employ European staff who are fluent in various languages. That appeals to our international guests and ensures that they feel at home.”

**Katrin Ewald**, owner of the 'Der kleine Heinrich' inn in Glückstadt an der Elbe

## When the family comes too

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

Parents can claim child benefit for their children living in Germany until they reach the age of 18. It is granted on applying to the Federal Employment Agency. If your child is less than two years old, you can even obtain a child-raising allowance. You can obtain further details from your local authority.

### CHILDCARE AND NURSERY SCHOOLS

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

You can also obtain details about nursery schools and child minders from your local authority's youth welfare office.

If you need a babysitter, you can place an advertisement in local newspapers or community newsheets, leave a note in schools, church community halls or maternity centres, and browse through online babysitter portals.



## Natural monuments and buildings

Highest mountain in Germany	Zugspitze, which is 2.963 metres high
Largest island in Germany	Rügen, which covers 962 km <sup>2</sup>
Europe's widest beach	is on the German island of Amrum, where the 'kniepsand' extends up to a kilometre inland
Germany's largest inland lake	Lake Constance (covers 539 km <sup>2</sup> in total, of which 305 km <sup>2</sup> belong to Germany)
Longest river in Germany	Rhine, which is 865 kilometres long
World's highest church spire	Ulm Minster with its 161-metre-high steeple
Largest Gothic church in Germany	Cologne Cathedral

Did you know ...



## THEY ARE GERMANY

**Peter Fox**, born Pierre Baigorry, is one of the hottest German musicians, and has won the hearts of fans with his mixture of Hip Hop and Reggae. Peter Fox, a former piano maker, sold more than one million copies of his solo album “Stadttaffe” in Germany alone. In 2009, the 38-year-old won several Echo German music awards. “Schwarz Zu Blau”, in which the German-French singer expresses his love-hate relationship with Berlin, the city where he was born, is one of his greatest hits. “You are not beautiful, and you know it, your skyline is a mess, you look ugly even from far away, but the sun is just rising, and I know, whether I like it or not, that I need you to breathe ...”

## SINGLE PARENTS

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

## SCHOOLS, TRAINING AND FURTHER EDUCATION

For children living in Germany, compulsory education begins at the age of six. State schools are attended free of charge. You can also decide to send your children, however, to fee-paying schools run by private education providers. Towards the end of primary school level (i.e. after four or six years depending on the federal state), teachers will inform you about your child’s options for secondary level education and provide a recommendation. No doubt you wish to optimally foster your offspring’s aptitudes and interests. Together with your child and their teachers, you will need to decide between a ‘Hauptschule’ (secondary general school – until Year 9 or 10), a ‘Mittelschule’ or ‘Realschule’ (intermediate secondary school – until Year 10) and a ‘Gymnasium’ (grammar school – until Year 12). Another option in Germany is the ‘Gesamtschule’, a form of

Skilled foreign workers in demand in elderly care

## “Homesickness is only rarely a problem”

*How many staff from abroad does MÜNCHENSTIFT GmbH employ? What fields do they work in?*

Heidi Obermeier: About 470 staff from abroad work at MÜNCHENSTIFT. That's currently around 29 per cent of all employees. About 390 of those work in the care of foreign workers.

*How would you describe your experience with staff from abroad? How does MÜNCHENSTIFT GmbH benefit from employing foreign workers?*

Heidi Obermeier: Our experience has been positive. Foreign staff in particular stay with us long-term, they often make Germany their home and pursue their careers with us. This means that at MÜNCHENSTIFT they play a key role in ensuring qualified care in our facilities and domestic care services.

*Have you had any problems to speak of? If so, how do you help the colleagues?*

Heidi Obermeier: Sometimes intercultural conflicts arise between workers from different cultural groups and of course there are also some language problems. Integration problems are quite seldom, especially as people from Eastern and Southern Europe often have their own social structures in the city, such as other family members or friends who live here. Most of the problems can be successfully resolved. Only very rarely does the homesickness get so intense that it becomes an unsolvable problem.

*Continued on page 36*



**Heidi Obermeier** is responsible for applicant management and staff acquisition at MÜNCHENSTIFT GmbH. In this municipal institution's eleven facilities, 1,600 staff care for over 3,000 seniors. Information at [www.muenchenstift.de](http://www.muenchenstift.de) or [heidi.obermeier@muenchenstift.de](mailto:heidi.obermeier@muenchenstift.de).

### Skilled foreign workers in demand in elderly care

*How do the employees benefit from moving to Germany?*

Heidi Obermeier: Elderly care is relatively advanced in Germany, so a lot of them can learn new things here. People who have been trained in care-giving and medicine can put their existing specialist knowledge to good use. The work can also be financially appealing, particularly if – as is the case with MÜNCHENSTIFT – cheap accommodation can be provided, industry-standard wages are paid and open-ended employment contracts are put in place. This is often essential in order to financially support the family in the home country, for example. It gets even more appealing if, like with MÜNCHENSTIFT, language courses and other advanced training courses are offered and paid for.

*How do you go about finding suitable candidates?*

Heidi Obermeier: In addition to conventional advertising in newspapers, trade journals and the Internet, MÜNCHENSTIFT works intensively with the Munich Employment Agency (Arbeitsagentur München) and ZAV in Bonn and thus also with various foreign employment offices in the EURES network. MÜNCHENSTIFT also places great emphasis on training and continuing education, so as to provide for future generations of qualified workers itself.

*What tips would you give to anyone weighing up whether to move to Germany?*

Heidi Obermeier: They should prepare this step very thoroughly, which means already learning German in the home country if possible and, for example on the Internet, informing themselves about the situation in Germany, about the country, the people, the city they'd like to go to, the future employer and so on. It is also important to think about one's own desires, goals and feelings, so as to handle problems like homesickness more effectively.

comprehensive school that children can attend at least to Year 9 or 10 on completing primary school. In contrast to the conventional school system, with the 'Gesamtschule' system pupils with different abilities are taught within one school instead of being divided between different types of schools in accordance with their individual abilities.

On successfully attaining their school-leaving certificates at the upper secondary school level (Abitur), students are entitled to enrol at college or university. Here your child will be presented with a wide range of study programmes at private and state universities.

On attaining their school-leaving certificates at a secondary general school or intermediate secondary school, your children can either attend a higher-level school that prepares them for vocational work or academic studies, or they can undergo vocational training. The globally renowned vocational training system combines practical with theoretical content, whereby academic teaching in vocational schools alternates with instruction in companies.

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



“ I've always been interested in other cultures – particularly in the German culture. I'm Czech, work in Germany and consider myself to be European. That gives me an unbelievable feeling of freedom.”

**Veronika Kučerová** comes from the Czech Republic and works for MWM GmbH in Mannheim

#### Important links

**Family, family services:**

[www.familienhandbuch.de](http://www.familienhandbuch.de), [www.bmfsfj.de](http://www.bmfsfj.de)

**Child benefit:**

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

**Childcare, single parents:**

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

**Choosing schools:**

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

# The German language

Whether you are just looking to gain work experience or even work full time in Germany, it is essential that you have good language skills. The large supply of local labour means that foreigners who do not speak good German will have a hard time finding a job. At the most you might be able to get away with speaking English in the IT sector and in some specialist academic fields. Otherwise the first thing you will be asked is: “Do you speak German?”

Habseligkeiten, Geborgenheit, lieben, Augenblick, Rhabarbermarmelade – these were the German words chosen by an expert jury in 2004 as the ‘nicest German words’. Not everybody likes the German language, but the Germans themselves do: they consider their own language to be attractive, logical but also difficult. This was revealed by a survey conducted by the Institute for the German Language, which also showed that most Germans cultivate their dialects and tolerate foreign accents. As a newly arrived foreigner, Germans will usually respond with friendliness, or slight amusement, if the right word does not immediately come to mind or even if you can’t think what to say at all. After all, we know ourselves that our language is very difficult.

Therefore don’t hesitate until you are sure that your planned sentence will be grammatically perfect with correct pronunciation. Just say something. You will actually win over hearts and minds and achieve your objectives faster – and we will understand you anyway.

## REGIONAL DIALECTS

“Why can’t the verb come earlier?” Such questions are just as common among foreigners who learn German as their frequently disheartening first attempts at applying the freshly learnt language. “Ich hätte gern drei Brötchen.” Answer from the baker: “Moana Sie Semmln?” Honestly, they really do speak German in Germany. It is just that it sometimes sounds Bavarian, Swabian, Koelsch, Saxon or in really tough cases ‘Missingsch’ – a north German hybrid dialect that results when Low German speakers attempt to speak standard German.

It is often said that our language sounds ‘hard’. In many cases that might be true but strictly speaking the German language does not actually exist as such. There are many German languages, or to be more precise regional dialects, which even differ from one another within individual federal states.

## LEARNING THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

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



“Germany offers excellent conditions for foreign students. One thing that’s really great is that everything runs according to specific rules, and as long as you carry out your work properly, then everything functions excellently. At Software AG, I’m working in a very international environment – where the focus is not on the nationality but on the personal potential.”

**Petko Guglev** from Bulgaria is a student trainee at Software AG in Darmstadt



## Did you know ...

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

In the 1960s, ‘Sie’ was still the standard way of saying ‘You’. That is changing, however, thanks to globalisation and the high-speed Internet. In Germany, English is frequently spoken in international corporations and in research, so that the distinction made between the English ‘You’ and the German ‘Du’ is rapidly blurring.

One thing that always applies, however, is that adults always address each other in business life with ‘Sie’ when they do not know each other. ‘Du’ signals closeness and familiarity, whereby it should not be equated with friendship. The ‘Sie’ form, on the other hand, expresses distance and formality. Whether people generally ‘duzen’ or ‘siezen’ in companies depends on the corporate culture and the industry. In the media and advertising industries and in the IT sector, it is much more normal to address people with ‘Du’ than in banks, insurance companies and law firms. It is initially worthwhile noting when and how ‘Du’ is used in your working environment. In companies, the use of ‘Du’ is generally only ever offered by senior or older members of staff to more junior or younger members of staff. Attempting to offer this use in the converse direction could lead to embarrassing situations.

## USEFUL PHRASES

### At work

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### In the restaurant

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

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



“ As a French-German, born and brought up in France, I’m delighted to have received an internship with an internationally oriented company in Germany. I’m particularly impressed by the multilingual abilities of all my colleagues and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere.”

**Julien Cunze** is French and is currently completing an internship at IDS Scheer AG in Saarbrücken

**“Schmeckt’s?”/“Alles zu Ihrer Zufriedenheit?”**

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

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

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

## Underway

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

**“Immer geradeaus, und dann fragen Sie besser noch mal.”**

(“Keep going straight on and then you better ask again.”) The person you asked doesn’t really know either.

**“Fahren Sie bitte rechts ran!”** (“Please pull in to the right!”)

When a traffic policeman says this, you shouldn’t hesitate to comply. It is also a sure bet that the next demand will be:

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

## Visit to a public authority

**“Bitte weisen Sie sich aus.”** (“Please identify yourself.”) Show your pass or other form of suitable ID.

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

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

#### Important links

**Fachverband “Deutsch als Fremdsprache” (DaF)  
(German as a Foreign Language Association):**  
[www.fadaf.de](http://www.fadaf.de)

**Online portal for learning German as a foreign language:**  
[www.deutsch-als-fremdsprache.de](http://www.deutsch-als-fremdsprache.de)

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

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

## Information and advice

The first point of contact for your questions is the information centre of the International Placement Services on telephone number +49(0) 228/7 13 13 13. The team is available Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm. It is happy to send you information or, upon request, to give you the name of a personal contact partner for further advice. Please send questions by e-mail to: [zav-auslandsvermittlung@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:zav-auslandsvermittlung@arbeitsagentur.de).





## EURES – the European Job Mobility Portal

On the EURES portal you will easily and quickly find information about jobs and training offers in 31 European countries.

You can find useful information about living and working abroad and much more at <http://ec.europa.eu/eures>.

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

### GERMANY'S LARGEST ONLINE JOB PORTAL

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

### Your benefits at a glance

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

