

International Onboarding Information

Arriving in Germany – starting at DLR



Visa and residence permit

The most important issues for international newcomers moving to Germany in order to take up employment will be the potential need for a visa and/or a residence permit and learning about the processes that must be followed. Please find comprehensive and up-to-date information on:

<https://www.euraxess.de/germany/information-assistance/entry-conditions-and-visas>

Accommodation

It is advisable to start looking for accommodation as early as possible. Accommodation in larger German cities is often harder to find than accommodation in smaller cities and will most likely also be more expensive. The best way to find a flat is via online-platforms.

Usually, if you rent a flat in Germany, the flat will be unfurnished. If a flat is being let fully or partially furnished, the rent will often be substantially higher than for unfurnished flats. Additionally, some flats will require tenants to purchase their own kitchen or new tenants will be asked if they would like to purchase the kitchen from the previous tenant.

It is also important to know the difference between “Kaltmiete” and “Warmmiete”. Whereas “Kaltmiete” only includes rental costs without utilities, services and extras, “Warmmiete” may include heating and other fees. Make sure you understand what costs are included in your “Warmmiete”.

Many landlords require applicants to complete a questionnaire about themselves (“Mieterselbstauskunft”) including information about potential tenants’ income and employment status. A deposit consisting of up to three months’ “Kaltmiete” rent will often be required by the landlord to cover any potential damage to the rented flat.

Residents’ registration office (“Einwohnermeldeamt”)

If you are moving to Germany for a longer period of time, you will need to register your new address at the local residents’ registration office (“Einwohnermeldeamt”).

Generally, you will need to register a new address soon after having moved to a new flat (generally within two weeks of moving). It is not possible to register your address before you have moved into your new accommodation. Registration needs to take place in person.

Make sure you check the website of your responsible local residents’ registration office in order to make an appointment and to find out about the relevant documents that you should bring to the appointment with you.



In addition to your passport or valid identity document, you will need to bring a “Wohnungsgeberbescheinigung” signed by your landlord. This is a confirmation from your landlord about letting the apartment to you also certifying the exact date when you moved in. The form is often available to download on the website of the respective “Einwohnermeldeamt”.

Please take care of the mandatory requirement to register within the applicable registration deadline following the date you move in. Check with the local residents’ registration office in advance to know what deadlines apply to you. Generally, if no appointments are available before the application deadline, it is important to have signed up for an appointment by the end of the applicable deadline in order to avoid having to pay any fines.

There are only a few exemptions to the registration requirements. The local registration office responsible for your place of residence can inform you whether any exemption is applicable to your stay.



Health/Medical treatment

In Germany you will find a high-standard health care system and a high density of doctors' practices.

In general, it is a legal requirement in Germany for everyone to have health insurance coverage. There are two types of health insurance in Germany: statutory health insurance and private health insurance. If you have an employment contract and earn more than a certain amount a year (2023: 66,600 Euro) you will be able to choose between public and private health insurance. Both offer a specified minimum coverage that is required by law, but private insurances may offer extra services. Most employees in Germany have statutory health insurance.

If you need medical treatment, the first person to consult is a general practitioner (“Hausärztin/Hausarzt”). If you have German statutory health insurance, you will receive an electronic European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Each time you need to see a doctor, you need to bring this card with you. A general practitioner can also refer you to other specialised doctors and can also be consulted in cases of psychological problems. Other types of health insurance will generally provide you with a card or document to prove that you are insured.

In case you have a medical emergency and need an ambulance, call 112 from anywhere in Germany.

Arriving with family

If you want to bring your children to Germany, you should know the following:

For children under the age of six, there are several care options. Children under the age of three can be cared for in crèches or by daycare providers.

From the age of three, children in Germany usually go to a daycare centre (“Kindergarten”) until they start school. However, registration for daycare facilities can only take place if you already have a residence in Germany and generally only when your children are also registered in the respective city. Registration for all daycare facilities takes place at the municipal youth welfare office or via a corresponding online portal of the city. The fees vary depending on the city and usually also take the level of a child’s parents’ or guardians’ income into account. Admission dates are generally 1 August or 1 September of each year, depending on the federal state. Enrolling children for care during the year at other times can be a challenge. In general, it is difficult to obtain a place in daycare, therefore it is important to register your children as early as possible.

School attendance is compulsory in Germany from the age of six. Public schools in Germany are free of charge. Enrolment usually takes place directly with the schools. For registration, it is important to remember to bring the child's personal documents, such as ID and birth certificate. Please note that classes in elementary school are usually only held in the morning. Afternoon care must be arranged and paid for separately. Additionally, parents and guardians are usually charged for any mealtimes or snacks taken at school.

Child benefit (“Kindergeld”)

As a foreign national in Germany with a valid residence permit, it might be possible to apply for child benefit if certain conditions are met. Some of the most important conditions to be considered are the type of residence permit you have and where your child lives/children live.

Bank account

If you are staying in Germany for a significant period of time, it is generally a good idea to open a bank account as quickly as possible. Once you have opened a current account, the bank will normally provide you with a debit card and a PIN. Your debit card and PIN are normally sent to your postal address in two separate letters. In this context, please note that in Germany, important documents will often be sent to your postal address. To ensure that you are able to receive these documents, it is important to have your own name on a mailbox. Also make sure to read all written letters you receive via post carefully.

Though most banks offer similar services, you should compare the conditions as account fees and opening hours can often vary between banks. In order to be able to open an account, you will generally need to present your passport or identity card and often your registration confirmation from the residents' registration office. Some banks will also require you to present your visa or residence permit and/or your German tax-identification number.

All information contained in this document is general in nature only and is not intended to give legal advice as it does not take into account specific circumstances of individuals. If you need reliable specific advice, you should always consult a suitably qualified professional. The information represents the status as of October 2023. DLR e.V. aims at providing timely and accurate information. If you detect any error or misleading information please feel free to bring this to DLR's attention and DLR will try to correct it. Mistakes may occur and DLR does not assume liability for relevance, accuracy and completeness of the information provided.