YOUR POCKET GUIDE TO GERMANY

For international researchers
A warm welcome!

Here are a few important things you should know if you are thinking about moving to Germany. You will soon see that starting a new life here as a researcher or academic is not all that hard. We are sure you will soon feel at home in Germany.

But why not take a look for yourself! We look forward to welcoming you.
ENTRY AND RESIDENCE
Come to Germany. We will make it easy for you.
As an EU citizen, you can travel to Germany and work here as a researcher. If you are an international researcher who is already working or doing a doctorate in the EU, you can also conduct research for a certain period of time in Germany without the need to apply for an additional residence permit.

If you are not from the EU and do require a visa, there are various types of residence permits – depending on what you wish to do in Germany – that you apply for together with your visa.

They allow you to come for research purposes or to complete a (doctoral) degree course or give you a settlement permit for highly-qualified workers or an EU Blue Card.

You will have to meet certain conditions: you will either need a hosting agreement from a recognised research institution, confirmation of admission from your university or a specific job offer. In addition, you will have to prove that you can cover your own living expenses.
You are an international researcher? Then special visas are available that will make it simple for you to come to Germany and work here.

Are you working as a researcher in an EU country? Then it will be easy for you to move to Germany.

TIP

Information and application forms can be obtained from Germany’s diplomatic missions in your home country or from the website of the Federal Foreign Office: www.diplo.de
SOCIAL SECURITY
Rest assured: you will be properly covered in case of need.
A comprehensive system of social security is in place to protect you in Germany: on your way to work, if you fall ill, or if you lose your job. Pension insurance will provide for you in old age, or will help you if you are no longer able to work.

Social security contributions are laid down by law and deducted directly from your salary. You will normally not have to pay them if you are on a scholarship. The exception is health insurance: everyone who lives in Germany must have health insurance.

Having health insurance in Germany means that you need not worry if you get sick. A stay in hospital and any necessary treatment will be paid for. And if you are an employee, you will continue to receive sick pay – no matter whether you have statutory or private health insurance.
Social security benefits at a glance

**Pension insurance:** rehabilitation services, a pension in the event of reduced earning capacity, in old age and for your surviving dependents

**Unemployment insurance:** employment search services and supportive measures, unemployment benefit

**Health insurance:** medical treatment, medicines, sick pay

**Accident insurance:** costs of treatment and a pension in the event of an accident at work or work-related illness

**Long-term care insurance:** outpatient care, residential care, care aids

Source: www.deutsche-rentenversicherung.de
You have to apply for your pension. You can also submit your application to the German Pension Insurance from abroad.

People who have worked in different European countries are subject to European law. It determines for example how insurance contribution periods are added together to calculate a person’s pension entitlement.

Germany has social security agreements in place with around 20 countries.
Pension

If you are employed as a researcher, you will automatically have pension insurance in Germany. Depending on the length of time you were insured in Germany, you will normally receive the German pension – even after you return to your home country. If not, you can generally get your pension contributions refunded.

If you are an EU citizen, you can have the periods in which you made pension contributions in Germany counted towards your pension entitlement in your home country when you return. This is also the case if you are from a country with which Germany has signed a (social security) agreement. Periods in which you were insured there, or in another EU country, can also be added to your pension entitlement in Germany.

If your home country is neither an EU member state nor one of the countries with which Germany has a social security agreement, the periods in which you paid German insurance contributions will not normally be taken into consideration there. If this is the case, you should seek advice from your insurance provider in your home country.
You deserve to make a good living.
What you will earn as a researcher in Germany will naturally depend on your specific situation – for example on your research profile and your experience. However, your expertise as a researcher or academic will be highly valued in Germany, and will therefore bring you a good salary.

State universities and publicly-financed research institutions will pay you in line with – or on the basis of – predefined salary scales. Professors may receive various additional payments on top of their basic salary, for example for particular responsibilities that are negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Germany has a federal system. The individual federal states are responsible for paying their university lecturers and academic staff. Consequently, salaries vary from one state to another.

Salaries in industry can differ considerably from those in academia. If you are employed at management level, no set pay scale will normally apply to you, so you will negotiate your own salary.
How much does a professor earn?

Junior professor: 4,200–4,900 euros
Professor: 4,900–6,200 euros
Senior professor: 5,900–7,000 euros

Monthly basic salary, gross, rounded  Source: Deutscher Hochschulverband, 2018

How much does a postdoc earn?

Postdoctoral researcher: 4,300–4,400 euros
Head of independent junior research group: 5,000–5,700 euros

The example shows the gross basic salary for academic staff according to the collective agreement applicable in most of Germany’s federal states.

Monthly basic salary, gross, rounded  Source: Tarifgemeinschaft deutscher Länder, 2018
Normally, a person on a scholarship will not have to pay any tax in Germany. Germany has a dual taxation agreement in place or is negotiating such an agreement with more than 130 countries.

Filing a tax return allows you to declare any expenses and thus get some of the tax you have paid returned to you.
As a general rule, you will be required to pay German tax if you live and work here for more than six months. If you are employed by a university, research institution or company, income tax will be deducted directly from your salary. The rate of income tax will depend on how much you earn, whether you have any dependents and which tax class you choose.

Germany has dual taxation agreements in place with many countries to ensure that you are not required also to pay tax in your home country, or to determine how academics are taxed. Your HR department or local tax authority will know which regulation applies to you.

If you come to Germany on a research scholarship you will normally be exempt from tax. However, you should discuss this with your scholarship provider and also check whether your scholarship will be liable to any tax in your home country.
Life in Germany is relatively inexpensive: if you compare the cost of living in big cities in Germany with that in other cities around the world, you will find that it is fairly low.

There are also considerable variations within Germany, however: life in a major city in the west of Germany is far more expensive than in a small town in the east of the country. This is mainly due to the costs of renting and buying a home.

Naturally, this will depend to a large extent on the location of the house or flat, and how it is equipped. As a rule of thumb, you can assume that you will have to spend roughly a third of your income on a place to live.

When planning your stay, you may also find it useful to know that German households spend on average around 450 euros per month on food and clothing. In total, you can expect to spend around 2,480 euros on living expenses.
How much does life in Germany cost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place to live</td>
<td>877 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>335 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>342 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure, culture</td>
<td>258 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture, household goods</td>
<td>150 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants, hotels</td>
<td>142 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>108 euros</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>99 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>62 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>18 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>90 euros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2,481 EUROS

Private consumer spending per month per household

Source: Destatis, 2016
We will do everything we can to make your loved ones feel at home.
Bringing your family

Germany’s regulations are very family-oriented: your spouse or partner and your children can join you and will receive a residence permit. This also means that your spouse or partner will be able to work in Germany.

This is true regardless of whether you come to Germany as a researcher or scientist, on an EU Blue Card or as a highly-qualified worker. And of course this also applies if you are already an EU citizen. In this case you and your dependents benefit from the EU’s freedom of movement policy.

Your family can also join you even if you are still studying for a doctoral degree. In this case, however, certain requirements have to be met – your spouse or partner will for example need to have a basic command of German.
You can bring your spouse or partner and children to join you.

Your partner is allowed to work. All this requires is a residence permit.

The Federal Employment Agency is the first place your partner should go if he or she is seeking work in Germany:

www.arbeitsagentur.de

Dual career centres also provide support for your spouse or partner – they are available at more than 40 universities in Germany. To find out which these are, visit the website of the Dual Career Network Germany:

www.dcnd.org
Each child over the age of one is entitled to childcare.

There are international schools in many cities. For more information, visit the website of the Association of German International Schools: agis-schools.org

2 out of 3 schools are all-day schools.
Family

Child care and schools

Your children will also be taken care of: from the age of one, they are entitled to a place in a nursery (kindergarten) or with a childminder. Your older children will be able to attend good schools, most of which operate on a full-day basis. Many cities also have international private schools.

In Germany, school is compulsory for children aged six and over. Depending on the federal state you live in, they will be required to attend for nine or ten school years. Pupils who then choose not to stay on at school to take exams like the Mittlere Reife (intermediate school-leaving certificate) or Abitur (higher education entrance qualification) will have to attend a vocational school – usually for a period of three years.

State schools are free of charge.
Support for families

Families need support, which is why all kinds of legal and financial help are available to make life somewhat easier for parents. Child benefit, for example. You will receive this monthly payment – if you live and work in Germany – for each of your children.

After the birth of their child, parents can spend up to three years on parental leave. During this time, their job will be safe until they return.

If you or your partner wish to look after your child yourself and want to reduce your working hours or stay at home full-time for this purpose, you are entitled to parental allowance for a period of up to 14 months. This amounts to roughly two-thirds of your net income; at least 300 euros and 1,800 euros at the most.

The situation is somewhat different if you are still studying for a doctoral degree. You should contact your local family benefits office to find out if you are entitled to child benefit:

www.familienkasse.de
You can opt to take parental leave until your child’s third birthday.

Each of your children will receive child benefit – roughly €200 per month.

The parental allowance is available for up to 14 months.
LIVING IN GERMANY
Life is good in Germany. Come and see for yourself!
Feeling at home

Beginning a new life in a new country is never easy. And of course there are all kinds of things to get used to. But as you will discover, there are plenty of good reasons why you will soon feel at home in Germany.

Germany is one of the world’s safest and freest countries. It is a stable democracy and its administrative and governmental bodies function well. Life is good here, yet the cost of living is comparatively low.

Naturally, you will want to know how and where you will live. You do not necessarily have to buy your new home. It is perfectly normal to rent a flat or house in Germany, and there is a wide range of high-quality rental housing. That said, it is important to know that it is not always easy to find a good and affordable place to live, especially in big cities.

To enjoy life to the full in Germany, it is important to be able to communicate with the locals. At work you should be able to get by perfectly well in English, but speaking at least a little German will help you deal with everyday situations.
Germany is one of the world’s safest and freest countries.

Many cities compile overviews of typical local rents. Known as Mietspiegel, they can be found online.

Half of the Germans rent their homes. Tenants’ rights are well protected here.

We speak 

ENGLISH

Germany is among the world’s top ten countries when it comes to English proficiency levels.
Interested in finding out more? Then click here:

www.research-in-germany.org
We specialise in answering any questions you may have as an international academic or researcher. Our portal provides you with information about career planning, funding opportunities and potential employers.

www.euraxess.de
Euraxess provides information and assistance to mobile researchers. The portal contains practical information concerning professional and daily life in Germany, as well as information on job and funding opportunities.

www.make-it-in-germany.com
This is the official multilingual online portal for skilled professionals from abroad. It explains how you can make your move to Germany smoothly and successfully – from preparatory measures in your home country to your arrival and initial steps in Germany.
Disclaimer This booklet is aimed primarily at international academics wishing to live and work in Germany, either as researchers (pursuant to § 20 AufenthG), on an EU Blue Card (pursuant to § 19a AufenthG) or as highly-qualified professionals (pursuant to § 19 AufenthG). (EU citizens enjoy freedom of movement in the EU in any case.) As a rule, special conditions apply to doctoral students from abroad. The information provided here is very general in nature and makes no claim to be complete. It is also possible that different conditions will apply to you. The information is not legally binding and Research in Germany accepts no liability for the content presented in this document.