

# Welcome to Germany!

Important information about starting a job in Germany



**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**

*Make it in Germany*

Working in Germany: the official website  
for qualified professionals

# Welcome to Germany!

**We are pleased that you have found a job in Germany and wish you every success in your new job. This flyer provides answers to frequently asked and important questions about starting a job in Germany<sup>1</sup>.**

## **What special features apply to working hours in Germany?**

As a matter of principle, an employment contract contains compulsory information about working hours. A full-time job in Germany usually comprises between 35 and 40 hours each week. You may not work more than 48 hours each week according to the German Working Hours Act. This may be increased to 60 hours each week if the average working hours of 8 hours each workday are not exceeded within a period of six months. Normally, employees work from Monday to Friday. The law permits work on all workdays (Monday to Saturday) as well as night work and shift work. In some sectors, e.g. health care, working on Sundays and public holidays is also permitted. In many sectors writing down, or technically recording, the beginning, end and duration of working time is a legal requirement. If you have any questions about how this is implemented at your company, please contact your contact person at the company.

## **How many holidays can I take each year?**

According to the German Federal Holiday with Pay Act, you are entitled to paid holidays and paid public holidays. The entitlement to holidays is at least 4 weeks each year. If you work 5 days each week, for example, this is at least 20 days' holiday each year. If a so-called collective agreement applies at your company, it may be that more holiday days have been agreed there and that you are therefore also entitled to more holidays. You must co-ordinate with the company in good time the days on which you intend to take holidays.

## **Will I be paid appropriately? When do I receive the money?**

Wages can vary depending on qualifications, industry, region and company size. The Wages Atlas of the German Employment Agency, for example, provides an overview of the average income in your profession. From January 2021, the statutory minimum wage applicable throughout Germany will be

EUR 9.50 (gross) each hour and from July 2021, EUR 9.60 (gross). Wages are usually paid by the 15th of the following month at the latest. However, other arrangements can be agreed in the employment contract you enter into with the company.

## **What happens if I am ill?**

If you fall ill and cannot work because of this, you undertake to inform the company immediately of the incapacity for work and the likely duration. If the incapacity for work lasts longer than three calendar days, you must provide the company with a medical certificate of the incapacity for work and the likely duration no later than the following workday. The company may also require the medical certificate to be submitted earlier (please refer to your employment contract or ask your company). If the incapacity for work lasts longer than the period stated in the certificate, the employee undertakes to present a new doctor's certificate. Employees subject to social insurance are covered by health insurance in Germany and receive statutory insurance benefits. You and the company pay pro rata contributions to pension, unemployment, health and long-term care insurance each month, which are deducted directly from your gross wages and are not paid to you. If you are employed by your company for more than four weeks and become ill, the company will continue to pay your wages for six weeks. After that, you receive sick pay from the health insurance fund.

## **How long will my employment relationship last? What happens if the employment relationship is terminated?**

In many cases, employment contracts are (initially) entered into for a fixed term. If you receive a fixed-term contract, this time limit must be stated in the contract. Often, a probationary period is also agreed, which usually lasts six months. During this period, you or the company can terminate the employment relationship by complying with a shortened period of notice. After the agreed probationary period, statutory notice periods and statutory protection against dismissal apply. Notice of termination can be given by either party. It must be formulated and signed in writing (not by e-mail). In principle, the employment relationship continues until the end of the notice period, i.e. until then an obligation to show up for work also applies.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this is exclusively a summary of general information. Individual advice about employment law cannot be given here.

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In the case of a fixed-term employment contract, the employment relationship ends without notice on the date agreed in the contract.

**What can I do if I want to quit my job and the company demands repayment by me of costs incurred in conjunction with my recruitment from abroad?**

The Federal Employment Agency works within the scope of its possibilities to ensure that in its own projects, in particular in bilateral placement agreements with partner countries to recruit skilled workers abroad, the companies waive corresponding company loyalty clauses with repayment obligations. The repayment of costs to the company may nevertheless be permitted in some cases. Such a repayment is, at all times, subject to conditions: a repayment agreement must be in place which, for example, was set out in the employment contract or in an additional agreement. In addition, only costs that were incurred for your professional development can be reclaimed. At the same time consideration must be given to how long the employment relationship has been in place. Every case is different. Therefore, each situation must be considered individually. In such cases, you can get support from trade unions or lawyers, for example. If costs are incurred, you will have to pay them yourself.

**Who can help me if I have questions? Where can I get support?**

The Citizens' Helpline of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs can provide you with information and advice about the subject of employment law. It can be reached by telephone from Monday to Thursday on ☎ **030/221 911 004**. In addition, the page of the Equal Treatment Agency for EU Employees provides an overview of the current advice bureaux in Germany: ➞ **[www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de](http://www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de)**. There you can filter by language and topic to find the right advice centre for your concern. They will advise you free of charge. Personal counselling is also available to workers from third countries, i.e. countries that are not members of the EU, including via the Fair Integration programme. You will find information on this subject and about employment rights and obligations at: ➞ **[www.faire-integration.de](http://www.faire-integration.de)**.

You can also get support and advice about labour law issues and problems from trade unions or lawyers, above all lawyers specialising in labour law. You will be required to pay for the cost of legal advice yourself.

**i Where can I obtain more information?**

You can obtain more information about your rights and obligations, for example, on the page of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and on the websites of some unions. Please visit the website

➞ **[www.make-it-in-germany.com](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com)** or call the Hotline or chat on ☎ **+49(0)30-1815-1111** for an additional source of information for your questions.

If you have any questions, including about this flyer, please visit the **Virtual Welcome Center of the Central Foreign and Specialist Placing** of the German Employment Agency, which is available in German and English:

☎ **+49 (0)228 713-1313**

✉ **[zav@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:zav@arbeitsagentur.de)**

🌐 **[www.zav.de](http://www.zav.de)**

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**Herausgeberin**

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Einfach QR-Code mit  
Smartphone scannen.