5.1 Visa and Entry

In order to enter Germany, you usually need a visa and, for a longer stay, a residence permit. You should apply to the German foreign mission in your own country or current country of residence for your visa at the earliest possible opportunity. If in doubt, please always ask at a German foreign mission whether you need a visa. This is the only place where you will be given legally-binding information.

If your marital partner and child/ren are intending to accompany you it is recommendable to apply for visas for everyone at the same time even if they are only going to join you in Germany at a later date. Please note that many Visa Sections only accept applications if you have made an appointment in advance and that processing applications can take several weeks. So do make an appointment as soon as possible and enquire which documents you have to bring with you.

Nationals of the EU, the EEA and Switzerland

If you are an EU national or come from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland you will not normally need a visa. You may enter Germany on a valid national identity card or valid passport. If you intend to stay in Germany for more than 90 days you must register at the “Einwohnermeldeamt” (Residents’ Registration Office) within two weeks (see Chapter 5.2. and 5.3). Swiss nationals staying for more than 90 days must apply for a “Residence Permit-Switzerland”.

Insider Info: If you are in receipt of a publicly-funded fellowship from a German funding organization, such as the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation or the DAAD, you are exempt from paying fees both for your visa and your residence permit.

Visit the website of the Federal Foreign Office for information on visa requirements, entry regulations and addresses of German Missions abroad:

www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN
If you are a national of one of these states, you do not need a visa to enter Germany. However, for visits lasting more than 90 days you will require a residence permit which you can apply for once you have entered Germany (see Chapter 5.2 and 5.3).

Visas for short stays

National and residence permit

In order to obtain a Schengen Visa, you will have to prove that you will be able to support yourself financially during your stay in Germany. For all Schengen States you will also be obliged to provide evidence of travel health insurance cover amounting to at least €30,000.

If you are planning to stay in Germany for more than 90 days, you must apply to a German foreign mission for a National Visa (D-Visa) while you are still in your own country or current country of residence. Please note that this applies even if you are already staying in another European Union country.

Visa exemptions for short visits

Visa exemptions for short visits

The Schengen States:

- Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey

Visits lasting more than three months

The National Visa entitles you to stay in Germany or to travel to other Schengen States for a maximum period of 90 days within a 180-day period.

To apply for a D-Visa you will usually require the following documents:

- Passport (please observe the regulations regarding validity, date of issue etc.)
- A recent photograph
- Travel documents (any previous Schengen Visas)
- Proof that you will be able to support yourself financially if this is not evidenced by the documentation above
- Details of your proposed accommodation in Germany
- Marriage and birth certificates of family members
- Academic form (available from diplomatic missions)
- Adequate health insurance cover
- The National Visa entitles you to stay in Germany or to travel to other Schengen States for a maximum period of 90 days within a 180-day period.

For stays that are to last longer than 90 days within a 180-day period, a Schengen Visa will usually be all you need to enter the country (C-Visa). However, you should bear in mind that Schengen Visas cannot be extended beyond the three-month period, nor can they be re-designated for other purposes. You will have to leave Germany at the end of 90 days at the latest.

Adequate health insurance cover

Adequate health insurance cover

The Schengen Visa entitles you to move freely between and stay in any of the Schengen States, i.e. the states that have signed the Schengen Agreement.

The Schengen Visa entitles you to stay in Germany for visits of up to 90 days without a visa. Schengen States cannot be extended beyond the three-month period, nor can they be re-designated for other purposes. You will have to leave Germany at the end of 90 days at the latest.

If you are planning to stay in Germany for more than 90 days, you must apply to a German foreign mission for a National Visa (D-Visa) while you are still in your own country or current country of residence.

Proof of your intended activity (e.g. fellowship, employment contract, letter of invitation or hosting agreement from the university)

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If you are planning to stay in Germany for more than 90 days, you must apply to a German foreign mission for a National Visa (D-Visa) while you are still in your own country or current country of residence.

Proof of your intended activity (e.g. fellowship, employment contract, letter of invitation or hosting agreement from the university)

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The National Visa entitles you to stay in Germany or to travel to other Schengen States for a maximum period of 90 days within a 180-day period.

To apply for a D-Visa you will usually require the following documents:

- Passport (please observe the regulations regarding validity, date of issue etc.)
- A recent photograph
- Travel documents (any previous Schengen Visas)
- Proof that you will be able to support yourself financially if this is not evidenced by the documentation above
- Details of your proposed accommodation in Germany
- Marriage and birth certificates of family members
- Academic form (available from diplomatic missions)

Depending on the individual Embassy, the documents required may differ. Please contact the relevant diplomatic mission at the earliest opportunity in order to ascertain which documents you will need for your visa application.

National visas are usually issued for a period of 90 days. Once you have entered Germany you must present this visa to your local „Ausländerbehörde“ (Immigration or foreigners’ Office) to apply for a residence permit (see Chapter 5.3).
5.2 Registering at the Residents’ Registration Office

Everyone who moves into a house or apartment in Germany is obliged to register. So within two weeks of entering the country you and any family members accompanying you will have to register at the “Einwohnermeldeamt” (Residents’ Registration Office) responsible for the area in which you live. One of the questions on the registration form refers to your religious faith. The reason for this is that in Germany religious communities are entitled to use the services of the Tax Office to collect “Church Tax” (see Chapter 9.5).

At the Residents’ Registration Office you can:
• Acquire a “Meldebescheinigung”: This is a paper confirming that you have registered. You will need official proof of registration if you wish to open a bank account.
• Apply for a “Steueridentifikationsnummer”: When you register you will automatically be applying to be issued with a Tax Identification Number which is valid for your entire lifetime. It will be sent to you by post about two weeks after registration. If you have an employment contract this number must be forwarded to the Landesamt für Besoldung und Versorgung (LBV) via the HR Department responsible for you.
• Acquire a “Polizeiliches Führungszeugnis”: As part of recruitment procedures for public service positions, a Certificate of Good Conduct is required. It should immediately be sent to your employer.

Transferring/cancelling registration
If you move house during your stay you will have to go to the local Residents’ Registration Office at your new place of residence to register your new address. When you leave Germany at the end of your research visit you must cancel your registration at the Residents’ Registration Office.

5.3 Residence Permit

Before your entry visa runs out you must apply for a residence permit at your local “Ausländerbehörde” (Immigration Office).

If you are a national of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea or the USA and not only entered the country but intend staying in Germany for longer periods of time you also have to apply for a residence permit within 90 days of entering the country.

We recommend you to submit your application as soon as possible after having registered at the Residents’ Registration Office (see Chapter 5.2). You will usually have to present the following documents to the Immigration Office:
• Completed application for a residence permit (available at the Immigration Office)
• Valid passport (please observe the required validity)
• Biometric passport photo (please observe the requirements set out by the Federal Foreign Office)
• Fellowship award letter, employment contract or hosting agreement with the university stating the amount of the monthly fellowship or salary as proof that you can support yourself financially
• Proof of health insurance cover valid in Germany
• For marital partners/children: German or English translations of marriage and birth certificates
• Fees (dependent on residence permit and duration)

Insider Info:
The Welcome Center staff (see Chapter 3.1) can make appointments for you at the Residents’ Registration Office and the Immigration Office at short notice and accompany you to the official appointments, if desired.
Employment Law Regulations

As a foreigner, if you want to work in Germany you usually require a residence permit which allows you to pursue gainful employment. You have to apply for it at the Immigration Office in the place you are staying, often as part of the visa procedure.

In some cases, the Immigration Office itself then has to seek the approval of the Federal Employment Agency; however, this does not apply to research staff at universities and research institutes, guest researchers, technical staff employed in a guest researcher’s research team or staff teaching language skills at universities. These positions do not require the approval of the Federal Employment Agency. The Immigration Office itself is entitled to issue authorization allowing you to pursue academic activity and enter this authorization in your residence permit.

If your marital partner is not an academic but would like to work in Germany a work permit will be issued automatically in combination with the residence permit for accompanying family members.

In Germany, there are different types of residence permits which are defined in the Residence Law. The criteria for issue vary as do the rights connected with the relevant titles. A decision as to which residence title is appropriate for which applicants depends on duration and purpose of the stay. Comprehensive information on the various residence titles can be obtained on the Welcome Center website. The Welcome Center staff will also be glad to give advice by telephone, e-mail, or in an individual meeting.

Freedom of Movement for Nationals of Member States of the EU, the EEA and Switzerland

If you are a national of a Member State of the EU or the EEA, you will need a valid passport or identity card to enter and remain in Germany. Any members of your family who come from third countries will require a residence card which must be obtained from the Immigration Office.

Swiss nationals who wish to stay for more than 90 days merely have to apply to the Immigration Office for a declaratory residence permit.

In Bonn:
The “Ausländeramt” (Immigration Office) is responsible for issuing residence permits.

Insider Info
The welcome portal “Make it in Germany” offers detailed information on the topics “Discover Germany”, “Working”, “Living” and “Learning”. From preparations at home right through to your arrival and first steps in Germany – you can make it successfully!

www.make-it-in-germany.com/en

Overview of Residence Permits
An overview of residence permits can be found on the Welcome Center website:
www.welcome-center.uni-bonn.de
Service and Advice > Visa and Residence

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