

Mobility across Europe



Education in Germany



GD Bildung und Kultur
Programm für lebenslanges Lernen



GD Bildung und Kultur



Bundesagentur für Arbeit

Zentrale Auslands-
und Fachvermittlung (ZAV)

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Comment on the readability of the texts

In order to make the texts easier to read, we generally use only the male form. The statements apply equally to women and men, however.

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Germany as an Education Country

With over 500 million citizens, the European Economic Area (EEA) is the world's largest labour market. Residents are free to cross the borders between the countries: every member of the labour force in an EU country can work in any other member state and may not be discriminated against compared with workers from the host country. Transitional regulations with restrictions on the free movement of workers still exist between some countries.

In the long term a European educational area is also to be created. So far a number of framework conditions and targets have been formulated at European level which form the basis for national reforms. The so-called Copenhagen Process, which was launched by the EU education ministers in 2002, initiated the harmonisation and international comparability of vocational training. By implementing the objectives of the Bologna Process, which was launched in 1999, the higher education systems have been converted to the bachelor's and master's degree structure. All of the countries involved continue to develop necessary concepts in order to push the higher education reform further forward.

This booklet provides you with an overview of the German education system. We show you what options for higher education, initial and further training you have in Germany and what requirements you must fulfil in order to apply. This publication can also help you to plan a stay in Germany for educational purposes. It lists contacts and sources of further information and provides useful tips to help you to settle in.



” *With my training, part of which I am doing in Germany, I will have better opportunities on the labour market later on – both in Germany and in Poland. I am improving my language skills in the company on the one hand and in the bilingual lessons at vocational school on the other hand. In addition I am getting to know the German culture.*

Anita Kowalczyk, Polish trainee training as a specialist in the hotel business, Eberswalde

” *What I would particularly like to emphasise about my university studies in Germany is the international atmosphere at the university. I have been able to communicate and work together with students from different countries, which has broadened my horizon and greatly improved my language skills. In addition, everything is very well organised here: lecturers' office hours, online-campus, course materials and library stocks.*

Olesia Berezenska, Ukrainian master's student on the course "European studies: language, literature, culture" at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

” *I wanted to come to Germany above all because this country is well-known for the quality of the work performed here. Through my further training with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation) I have come to understand how management can be combined with ethical issues. And I have got to know an exciting country with a lot of history and culture.*

Howard Costan, USA, participant in the Parliamentary Sponsorship Programme, which is run by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Parliament.

LEARNING AND WORKING IN GERMANY

Germany is an attractive host country for anyone who wants an international future. A study published by the British Council in March 2011 provides proof of this, for example, placing Germany at the top of the list, above Australia, Great Britain and China, with regard to the internationalisation of higher education. The study compares eleven countries with regard to access to higher education and the quality and reputation of the qualifications, and assesses the support for students from other countries.

Germany – a popular country for studying

Vocational training, too, is a success story in Germany, however: a broad range of courses which are geared towards practical requirements. The individual courses are regularly adapted to technological and social developments and offer good career development prospects. In eastern Germany firms often search desperately for trainees and recruit some of them abroad. It is also possible to gain a partial or additional qualification in Germany, for example as part of a trainee exchange programme.

In addition to this there is a wealth of further training courses aimed at broadening and adapting your knowledge and skills, some of which lead to state-recognised qualifications, thus ensuring career development.

Vocational training, university studies or further training also lead to interesting career prospects. In the long term, skilled workers have excellent opportunities on the German labour market, especially in the fields of science and technology. According to predictions made in a McKinsey study in 2010, the shortage of skilled labour will become more pronounced from 2015 onwards.

The German Education System

Education has traditionally always been highly valued in Germany. The federal states are each responsible for their own education system. It is public and freely organised, state-funded and largely free of charge. Colleges, universities, initial and further vocational training are open to everyone as long as they have the required school qualifications and educational certificates.

In recent years the education debate has flared up repeatedly in Germany, in particular as a result of the PISA studies, the international student assessment studies conducted by the OECD. These studies have been carried out every three years since the year 2000. The initially sobering results led to progress in education policy. After all, where the future is concerned, Germany sees its main tasks in producing well-trained specialists in order to be able to survive in worldwide competition in the medium to long term.

GENERAL EDUCATION

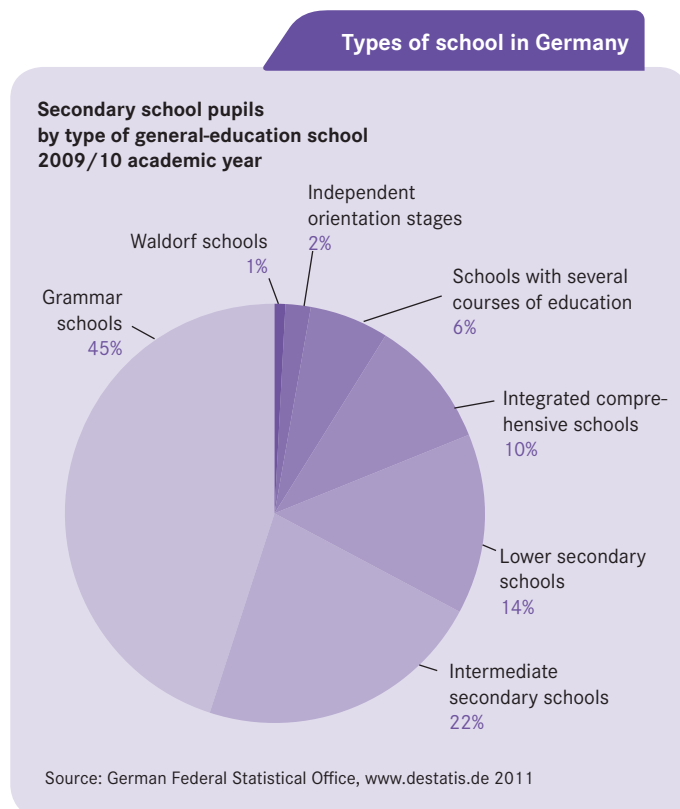
About 93 percent of all five-years-old go to a pre-school kindergarten.

From the age of six children in Germany are required to go to school, though several states have lowered the starting age for compulsory schooling by one or two years. All children go to primary school for four years (six years in the states of Berlin and Brandenburg). At the end of primary schooling the school recommends the type of secondary school for which the pupil is suitable.

Types of secondary school

There are three different types of secondary school available to school pupils depending on their marks and achievements

at primary school: lower secondary school (Hauptschule), intermediate secondary school (Realschule) and grammar school (Gymnasium). Comprehensive schools, (Gesamtschulen), which combine two or three types of secondary school, and the so-called “orientation stages”, which are independent of any school type, are possible alternatives.



All types of schools cover the eight years of compulsory education. In principle it is possible for pupils to change to a different school type if they find the school too easy or too difficult. Special schools are available for children with disabilities or special needs.

Lower secondary and intermediate secondary schools

Lower secondary school generally ends after 9th grade with the lower secondary school leaving certificate; alternatively in some federal states pupils can gain the qualified or extended lower secondary school leaving certificate. This improves access opportunities for all further school and vocational training courses. Pupils at lower secondary school learn the general basics, such as spelling, expression, basic foreign language skills, mathematics and science, which are required for practical vocational training. Pupils who have gained a lower secondary school certificate often opt for vocational training in craft and industrial occupations such as baker, hairdresser, production mechanic or painter and varnisher.

The aim of intermediate secondary school is to prepare pupils to meet the requirements for more sophisticated training occupations by the end of 10th grade. Examples of such occupations are challenging technical or commercial occupations or administrative jobs in the clerical grades of the civil service.

Grammar school

The majority of pupils go to grammar school. This school leads to the upper secondary school leaving certificate, the “Abitur”, after an additional two to three years of schooling. As a result of the reforms for a shortened, eight-year grammar school (G8), the upper secondary school leaving certificate is gained after twelve years of schooling in most federal states. Some states wish to retain the 13th grade for upper secondary school pupils in the medium term: North-Rhein Westphalia and Hesse have introduced transitional regulations until 2013, Rhineland-Palatinate and Schleswig-Holstein until 2016.

HIGHER EDUCATION

All possible career paths are open to those who have gained their upper secondary school leaving certificate: university studies or vocational training, whereby university studies offer the highest formal level of professional qualifications. For detailed information about studying at universities, universities of applied sciences or colleges of art, see the chapter “Studying in Germany”.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Pupils from lower and intermediate secondary schools are restricted to vocational training but can gain further qualifications in the course of their working life.

There are two alternatives for vocational training: dual training at vocational school and in a company or training at a full-time vocational school. For further information on this subject, see the chapter “Vocational Training in Germany”.

Lifelong learning

You don't stop learning after vocational training or university studies: further vocational training offers diverse possibilities to extend your own skills and knowledge and to adapt them to new requirements. Specialisation or advanced further training can improve your labour market opportunities.

For further information on the German education system, see: www.bildungsbericht.de

Instruments for comparing education and training

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED EDUCATION – EQF, ECVET AND EUROPASS

The education ministers of the EU nations have decided that the different education systems should join together in the long term to form a common European educational area where educational qualifications will be comparable across borders.

The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** allows different occupational qualifications to be compared at eight levels. To this end the member states link their qualification systems to the EQF levels. This will make it easier in future for employers and educational institutions to assess a foreign applicant's skills. Until now, applicants have been able to document their qualifications, but comparisons were frequently not possible.

The **European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)** is still in development. It is intended to help people who begin vocational training in one country and wish to continue it in another one. The national traditions in vocational training vary considerably and cannot be standardised even in the long term. One reason for this, for example, is that in Germany many health sector occupations are taught at schools but in other countries they are taught at colleges. A German motor vehicle mechatronics technician learns his occupation at vocational school and in a company, his French counterparts are trained solely at school. An exchange rate is therefore needed for the “currency of education”. ECVET is intended to provide for comparability with the aid of credit points.

To date, the **Europass** is the most important instrument for documenting occupational experience and making it understandable abroad. It consists of a set of documents which make it possible for people to present their foreign language skills, their CV and their time spent abroad in an internationally comparable form. The Europass also includes the Europass Certificate Supplement and the Europass Diploma Supplement. Information about the Europass can be found in many languages on the Internet under <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>. On the same website you can also find the National Europass Centres (NEC) responsible for your home country.

Vocational Training in Germany



Two thirds of all school leavers in any year apply for vocational training at a school or in a company, while one third go to university. School leavers who have gained their upper secondary school leaving certificate (Abitur), too, often opt for vocational training. One reason for this is the good reputation of Germany's vocational training system. Many occupations that require a college or university degree in other countries are taught via vocational training in Germany.

A vocational qualification is seen as the foundation for a successful career biography in Germany. Even if an individual does not go on to work in the occupation for which he or she originally trained, the vocational qualification is the key to other opportunities on the job market. This is because the qualification is proof of the intellectual and social skills that are essential for success in working life.

More than 350 training occupations

Vocational training is always tied to a specific occupation: there are some 350 recognised training occupations. Every year new occupations are created or obsolete training syllabi are updated. Particularly the areas of information technology, media and services have seen the creation of many new occupations in recent years.

Most school leavers apply for vocational training in a company or for so-called "dual vocational training". It is called "dual" because the training takes place in parallel at two locations: in companies the trainees learn the practical fun-

damentals, while the theory is taught at vocational school. The Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz) regulates the rights and obligations of the firm providing the training and those of the trainee.

Training at full-time technical school

Besides the dual system of training, there is school-based vocational training at special full-time technical schools. Here all subjects are taught in classes, supplemented by extended periods of work experience. In particular social and caring occupations, such as childcare workers, nurses for the elderly and medical nurses, are taught at full-time technical schools. Technical occupations, such as information technology assistants or medical-technical

assistants, are also taught there.

Own initiative is important

Choosing an occupation and looking for a trainee position require independence: school leavers have to find their own training position. The application process involves timely research of firms that provide training, writing applications, meeting deadlines and presenting oneself at job interviews. Full-time technical schools, too, make selections from among their applicants. As the number of applicants is generally greater than the number of places available, competition in certain regions or occupations can be intense.

New and modernised training occupations

Training occupations (a selection)	came into effect
Optician	01.08.2011
Bookseller	01.08.2011
Precision machinist	01.08.2010
Geomatician	01.08.2010
Media technologist for printing	01.08.2011
Shipping manager	01.08.2011
Technician in heavy duty fabric goods manufacturing	01.08.2011
Technical product designer	01.08.2011
Technical systems designer	01.08.2011
Tourism agent (agent for private and business travel)	01.08.2011

DUAL TRAINING

In the dual system the trainees have a double role: they are both students and employees. They sign a training contract with the company. There the trainees learn the practical side of the occupation, working under the supervision of experienced colleagues. They also attend vocational school one or two days a week, where basic theory is taught. One third of the curriculum is made up of general subjects such as German, English or social studies. Two thirds of the subjects are job-specific.

Depending on the occupation, vocational training lasts two to three and a half years. If the student has a good educational background or performs particularly well, the length of the course can be shortened if approved by both the training company and the vocational school.

The trainees take their final examination at the chamber responsible for their occupational group. The professional associations in trade crafts and in industry are known as chambers. They award professional licences and influence training

and examination guidelines. The content and structure of the examinations are standardised throughout Germany.

Early entrance to the working world

One of the great advantages of dual training is its proximity to the labour market. The aim is to train qualified specialists with the skills and qualifications required for a changing working environment. The emphasis on the practical side of training ensures that the trainees are taught what is really in demand in the working world.

For many trainees, payment for training is very important, as the idea of financial independence from their parents – at least partially – is attractive.

The payment increases with each year of training and amounts on average to approximately a third of the starting salary for a trained specialist. The actual earnings depend in particular on the collective agreement – this contains the conditions negotiated between employee and employer associations, which regulate working hours and pay. Wages differ depending on the occupation and the region.

Interview with Angela Thormann, head of the project “German-Polish Vocational Training in the Hotel and Catering Business” at the BBV in Eberswalde

Mrs Thormann, through your project you know both the German and the Polish vocational training systems well. What makes vocational training in Germany interesting?

Definitely its practical relevance and activity-oriented emphasis. In Poland, for example, there is no in-company or dual vocational training as it is known in Germany. There vocational training takes place at schools and is therefore on the whole more theoretical, with work placements in the third or fourth year of school. The good reputation of German vocational training can therefore be explained by the fact that the trainees are better able to acquire skills in a practical way in a company environment.

What is required of applicants from outside Germany?

The willingness to learn in another country. They have to get involved in the culture, to respect typical characteristics and to have sufficient command of the language, otherwise it is little use applying. Especially when someone wishes to gain a qualification in Germany, since in that case he or she has to sit the examination for the vocational qualification at one of the chambers of commerce and industry.

What is special about your project in this respect?

Our project is unique in Germany because in our bilingual, cross-border training course the trainees gain two recognised vocational qualifications: the Polish hotel technician and the German specialist in the hotel business. This provides access to two labour markets with all their career development prospects. As the Polish students and the German trainees are taught together in certain training modules and live together in a boarding school, they learn to be flexible and are able to develop a large degree of intercultural competence, virtually living an intercultural life.



That sounds challenging. What career prospects do the Polish trainees have after completing the course?

On the German labour market they have roughly the same chances as their German counterparts, on the Polish labour market they have a definite head start. After all they are fully trained specialists with international experience and have been tried and tested at different learning venues. Due to the different emphases of the training courses they have acquired a broader spectrum of skills and knowledge. Young Polish people who have completed these courses are employed, for example, in four-star hotels on the Baltic Coast. Some of them have begun degree courses in tourism or the German language in Poland. This is because when they gain their qualification as a hotel technician they also gain the Polish certificate of aptitude for higher education.

Training pay in selected occupations in 2010

Training occupation (in-company)	Duration of training (months)	Average pay in western Germany	Average pay in eastern Germany
Baker	36	500 Euros	390 Euros
Clerk (IH)	36	781 Euros	708 Euros
Chemical laboratory technician	42	809 Euros	713 Euros
Electronics technician – specialising in information and telecommunications technology	42	544 Euros	407 Euros
Information technology specialist (all disciplines)	36	794 Euros	736 Euros
Hairdresser	36	451 Euros	269 Euros
Industrial cleaner	36	634 Euros	465 Euros
Specialist in the hotel business	36	601 Euros	473 Euros
Industrial clerk	36	813 Euros	747 Euros
Industrial mechanic	42	841 Euros	803 Euros
Office communications clerk	36	781 Euros	708 Euros
Freight forwarding and logistics services clerk	36	650 Euros	417 Euros
Retail merchant	36	714 Euros	634 Euros
Cook	36	601 Euros	473 Euros
Motor vehicle mechatronics technician (all disciplines) (trade)	42	609 Euros	493 Euros
Painter and varnisher (all disciplines)	36	421 Euros	388 Euros
Mason	36	916 Euros	725 Euros
Mechatronics fitter	42	843 Euros	823 Euros
Designer of digital and print media (all disciplines)*	36	854 Euros	no data available
Medical assistant	36	573 Euros	573 Euros
Metal worker (all disciplines)	42	575 Euros	407 Euros
Systems electronics technician (trade)	42	544 Euros	407 Euros
Carpenter	36	536 Euros	397 Euros
Sales assistant	24	667 Euros	591 Euros
Milling machine operator	36	851 Euros	827 Euros

Source: Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), collectively agreed training pay in 2010

School qualifications determine opportunities

In principle the dual training system is open to anyone. Formally, no school qualifications are required. In practice, however, the situation on the training market is different. Although the supply of training positions has increased again substantially in the past two to three years, school leavers with higher school qualifications continue to have better chances of getting the training position they desire. School leavers from lower secondary school (Hauptschule) have the least choice but can compensate for this with good marks.

More than half of trainees in banks, insurance companies and tax consultancy firms have upper secondary school qualifications. Such qualifications are generally also required for challenging technical occupations in the field of IT. School leavers with an upper secondary school leaving certificate account for the majority of all trainees in occupations that are popular among young people, for example in event technology or media design. Apprenticeships in the commercial sector and the electrical and electronics sector are most frequently given to school leavers with intermediate school qualifications. School leavers with a lower secondary school

certificate have good opportunities in occupations such as baker, hairdresser or painter and varnisher.

Help with career choice can be found under: www.planet-beruf.de and www.berufswahl.de

Requirements vary from company to company

The variety of training positions is reflected in the variety of requirements and the application procedure. Larger companies test their candidates in assessment centres, while in small crafts businesses selection is often based on the personal impression made by the applicant. Almost all employers want trainees with good school marks in German and mathematics. In the commercial sector or in jobs involving contact with international customers, English language skills are important.

Although the training market is congested, don't be disheartened. There are always some trainee positions left unfilled because companies are unable to find suitable applicants. This often happens in training occupations that are not so popular or if the company is not so well-known or is in an unattractive location. Interesting niches can be discovered off the beaten track.

SCHOOL-BASED VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Some occupations in the social, care, commercial and technical sectors are taught at full-time vocational schools. These occupations include commercial assistant, occupational therapist, dietary consultant or foreign language secretary. The trainees attend school for two to three years. However, this does not mean that only theory is taught. Compulsory work placements in companies are generally integrated into the syllabus. The content and scope may vary from state to state, but the final examinations at the end of the training course are equivalent.

Full-time vocational schools

Full-time vocational schools teach a wide range of subjects: they teach fully school-based training occupations in fields such as industry and commerce or administration. In addition full-time vocational schools provide access to higher education by teaching the subjects required for the entrance examinations for universities of applied sciences.

The selection of the right full-time vocational school depends primarily on the chosen occupation. Another factor is the choice of a private or a state school. In contrast to the dual system, students in school-based vocational training are not paid. Instead, they have to pay school fees, which vary according to the institution and the training course. State schools are generally less expensive, but private schools boast smaller classes and better mentoring. In the case of private schools it is important to find out whether the training course only leads to a certificate or to a state-recognised qualification. State approval means that the syllabus and the examination are based on the national standards for the occupation. Only schools that fulfil this condition are permitted to advertise with state approval. Tips on how to find a school can be found in the chapter “Planning Vocational Training”.

At schools for health care occupations the trainees train for health care occupations which do not require a university degree. These occupations include for example nurse, midwife or physiotherapist. Many of these schools are linked to hospitals, both in terms of organisation and premises, so the theoretical and the practical training are provided in one location.



Admission requirements vary

The schools have different education requirements for the applicants depending on the occupation. The admission requirement is generally a lower secondary school certificate or an intermediate secondary school certificate, in some cases entrance qualifications for universities of applied sciences are required. It is also important to meet the deadlines when applying for a place. Information about the courses offered, the costs and the requirements must be obtained from the individual schools.

A major advantage of school-based vocational training is that the trainee does not enter into any obligations with an employer. This means that it is possible to undertake practical parts of the training abroad. For example, the Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus in Berlin, a college training childcare workers, requires students to do work placements in companies, one lasting five months and two lasting three months each. Periods abroad can easily be integrated into these phases with the support of the school.

Vocational education and training regulations

DYNAMIC OCCUPATIONS AND TRAINING

The technical innovations of recent years have led to changes in many occupations. Accordingly, the curricula of the vocational training courses have to be adapted to **the needs of the labour market**.

The **Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)** analyses occupational practice and derives changes to the occupations from their findings. As a result new training occupations have been developed in recent years, in the service sector in particular. Classic occupations have been modernised: motor vehicle mechanics, for example, are now motor vehicle mechatronics technicians.

The **Vocational Training Regulations** stipulate the syllabus and the occupational title, guaranteeing that the training is standardised across Germany.

The **Vocational Training Act** provides the legal framework for this.

Further information: www.bibb.de

PLANNING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Before opting for vocational training in Germany you need to answer the following questions:

What is required of me?

The advantage of the German dual vocational training system is that it does not have formal access requirements. In competition with other applicants the most important factor is good school qualifications. For purely school-based training school qualifications are a precondition. The Europass Certificate Supplement (see explanation on page 5) is a useful instrument for translating your own school report for German employers and institutions.

In order to participate successfully in vocational training, trainees also need good to very good German language skills. Training is conducted in German in companies, at vocational schools and technical schools; the exams are also held in German.

How do I apply?

Most training courses start on 1st August or 1st September. Major companies and banks often advertise their positions a full year before the start of training. Anyone interested in a position is expected to submit a full written application. In Germany a full application includes a cover letter, a CV in table form with a photograph of the applicant and the last school report. If available, job references, work placement reports and any other certificates, for example regarding language or computer skills are also appreciated.

How can I find a training position with a company?

Initiative is the key to finding a training position. The Internet can be helpful in your research. Here is a list of the most important websites which can help you to find a training position:

- www.arbeitsagentur.de and jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de: the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit - BA) is the central point of contact for people looking for training positions or jobs as well as for employers with vacancies to fill. The Federal Employment Agency's "JOBBÖRSE" is the largest online jobs portal in Germany.
- www.planet-beruf.de: the Federal Employment Agency's Internet portal for lower secondary school pupils introduces vocational training courses and occupations and provides information about choosing a career and applying for training positions and jobs.
- ec.europa.eu/eures: EURES is the multilingual portal on occupational mobility in Europe. It contains lots of information about Germany, for example about initial and further training.
- www.ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de: the German chambers of industry and commerce provide a bulletin board for training positions in the dual system.

Large companies often publish their training vacancies on their own websites. It's worth looking there, too.

How can I find a place on a school-based training course?

You can look for school-based training opportunities in the Federal Employment Agency's portal for initial and further training, "KURSNET" (kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de). We recommend that you first look up the exact title of your chosen occupation in "BERUFENET", the Federal Employment Agency's A-Z network of occupations (berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de). Under the menu item "Stellen- und Bewerber-suche" (vacancy and applicant search) "BERUFENET" then provides a link to "KURSNET", where schools are displayed for the chosen occupation and sorted by region. The professional associations can also help you look for training opportunities. BERUFENET shows the professional association for the selected occupation under the menu item "Informations-quellen" (sources of information).



Europe-wide exchange network

LEONARDO DA VINCI – MOBILITY CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

31 countries have united in the LEONARDO DA VINCI EU programme to promote occupational mobility on an international level. The project supports the exchange of trainees, employees and teachers involved in vocational training. The EU awards grants for this purpose. These grants cannot be applied for individually. An agent is required, such as a company, an association, a school or chamber. Information about current projects is available from the responsible National Agencies for Leonardo.

For a list, see <http://ec.europa.eu> > Policies > Culture, education and youth > Education and training programmes > Leonardo da Vinci.

What will training cost?

Training in the dual system is free of charge, the employers even pay the trainees a wage. In contrast, some full-time technical schools charge fees. You should look closely at these costs as well as the requirements. Anyone who obtains a training position or does part of their training in Germany via the EU-funded Leonardo da Vinci programme receives a grant for their travel and living expenses.

Is German training recognised in my home country?

The international recognition of partial vocational training courses has been difficult until now. In the long term the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET – see explanations on page 5) is intended to solve this problem, but it is still in development. In practice, applicants from outside Germany therefore generally opt for a short work placement lasting only a few weeks, or they complete their entire training in Germany. What trainees learn during a work placement can be documented in the Europass (see also page 5). The company or institution in the trainee's home country which is responsible for the exchange completes the forms. Those who complete their entire training in Germany receive a state-recognised certificate just like any German trainee.

Who organises exchange programmes?

There are lots of small-scale, regional exchange projects which make it easier to take the step across the border. It is worth asking vocational schools, professional associations or at the local town hall whether there are partnerships abroad.

Many projects receive funding from the EU LEONARDO DA VINCI programme (see information below). So it is also possible to enquire at the National Agency for Leonardo in your home country about what programmes there are in your region.

Large organisations that arrange exchanges in the field of vocational training include the Deutsch-Französische Sekretariat für den Austausch in der beruflichen Bildung (German-French Office for Vocational Training Exchanges, www.dfs-sfa.org) or Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung (InWEnt) gGmbH (Inwent - Capacity Building, Germany, www.inwent.org). The latter, for example, is responsible for programmes between Germany and Great Britain (Training Bridge), the Netherlands (programme: Band) or Norway (programme: Gjör Det).

Initial Vocational Training Portrait – Corsin Feltscher, a trainee from Switzerland on an exchange in Germany

It was Corsin Feltscher's boss Renate Merkle who gave him the idea of taking part in a one-month trainee exchange programme. She had heard of the 'xchange' programme, which organises work placements abroad for apprentices (<http://www.xchange-info.net/>). The future metalworker from Chur in Switzerland was all for the project. xchange quickly found a firm in Germany that also wanted to organise a work placement abroad for one of its trainees.

The 17-year-old spent four weeks in Germany, working in the training firm, a metalworking company in Todtenweis near Augsburg, living in his exchange partner's home and attending vocational school with him. Although the two trainees had never met before, they got on well immediately. In a few months Corsin's exchange partner will join him in Switzerland.

Corsin Feltscher was also made welcome and was well looked after in the firm: his colleagues gave him a tour of the firm and showed him the machines and production plant so that he was able to manage very well after a short induction period. Although the exchange firm is smaller and quieter than his training firm at home, many of the work steps are similar. The training as a metalworker in Germany hardly differs from that in Switzerland anyway – the framework curricula are virtually identical. "Only in Germany we went to vocational school several times a week, in Switzerland vocational school classes are only on one day per week," the trainee explains.

Corsin Feltscher would take part in an exchange like this one again any time. "I gathered lots of occupational and personal experience. I got to know new cities, for example, while assembling a metal object in Munich city centre."



Nonetheless he cannot imagine living and working in Germany for a longer period of time: he simply loves his Swiss home too much for that. However, he is enthusiastic about the German mentality: "The Germans are more fun and more relaxed than you think."

Studying in Germany



In 2008 some 3.3 million people worldwide moved abroad to go to university or college, an increase of 23 percent compared with 2005. 7.3 percent of these people opted for a German college or university. 244,776 foreign students were enrolled at colleges and universities in Germany in the winter semester of 2009/2010.

Whether for new students, for students on Bachelor's or Master's courses, or for junior post-graduate researchers – Germany as a place to study has a lot to offer its foreign guests. According to a study published in March 2011 by the British Council, Great Britain's international organisation for education and culture, German universities have grown far more attractive for foreign students in recent years. More and more courses are held in English. Tuition fees are very low and no higher than for German students. The study also highlighted the legislation that allows foreign students to work in Germany. This means that a stay in Germany can not only broaden your horizon but can also increase your chances of an attractive career.

State-run or private, research or practical orientation?

Students in Germany can choose between about 400 state-recognised universities (as of 2011), which are divided into

different types. The universities are open to anyone with the required school qualifications.

The introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degree courses reduced the differences between the individual types of univer-

Foreign students

at German colleges and universities by subject area, in the winter semester of 2008/2009

Field of studies	Share as %
Languages and cultural studies	20.2%
Sport	0.5%
Law, economics and social sciences	26.4%
Mathematics, sciences	17.3%
Medicine / health sciences	5.7%
Veterinary medicine	0.3%
Agriculture, forestry and nutritional science	1.9%
Engineering	22.2%
Art	5.4%

Source: Deutsches Studentenwerk/HIS (German National Association for Student Affairs), 19th social survey

sity. In the meantime students at universities no longer enjoy so much freedom when choosing their combinations of subjects, majors and classes. And at many universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) just as much research is being conducted as at the more traditional academic universities.

Besides the state-recognised institutions, there are also 102 approved private universities. Some of them have an excellent reputation because they have an international orientation and good contacts to industry, and are able to teach the students in small study groups. This has its price, however, which ranges between € 1500 and € 10,000 per semester. Private universities often conduct less research and offer a narrower range of subjects.

At universities great importance is attached to basic research. The studies therefore focus more on theory. To study at a university you need good upper secondary school qualifications entitling you to go on to higher education ('A' levels, baccalaureate etc.). Universities continue to offer a wider range of subjects. The arts and classic professional subjects such as medicine, law and teaching are only taught at universities.

Universities of applied sciences have caught up

At universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) the students work towards high-quality, academically-oriented qualifications. The degree courses are characterised by a high level of practical relevance and a strict timetable. Most of the lecturers are from industry and prepare their graduates for a specific field of work. The range of courses on offer is often restricted to fields such as economics, technology or media.

In cooperation with local companies, practical experience is also provided. To study at a university of applied sciences you also need upper secondary school qualifications, though

Academic studies and vocational training

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG COOPERATIVE STATE UNIVERSITY

The Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University developed from the universities of cooperative education located in that federal state and has in the meantime achieved full university status. The distinctive feature is that those interested in a place at this university first have to apply to a company or a social institution and sign a vocational training contract. The study courses have a dual structure, with students studying parallel to a course of vocational training, and guarantee a high level of practical orientation. The advantage of studying at this university is that students are paid a monthly allowance.

the level is slightly lower than for traditional academic universities. In Germany the certificate of aptitude for studies at a university of applied sciences can be gained after twelve years of schooling or also via vocational training, depending on the federal state.

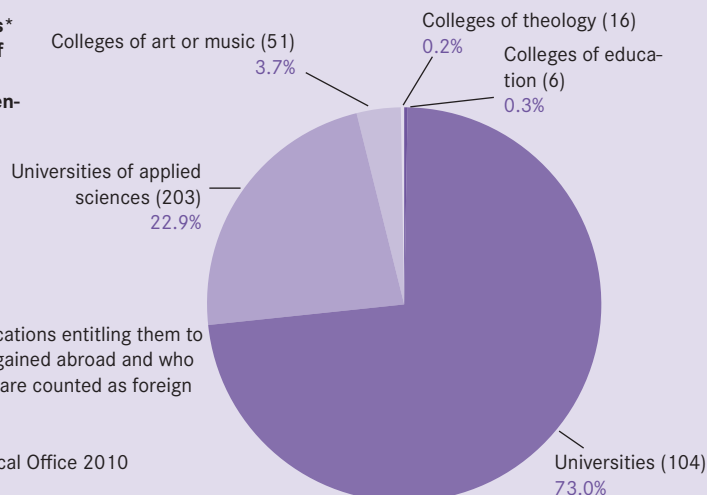
Art, music and theology

In addition to the two main groups of higher education institutions, there is another branch of higher education with special admission requirements: colleges of art and music and academies of film. Future artists, directors, singers and orchestra musicians study at these institutions. They all have to demonstrate a particular talent by submitting samples of their work or passing an entrance examination. It is not uncommon to have to apply repeatedly to different colleges and to wait a long time to gain a place.

Colleges of theology train parish priests and clergymen, teachers of religious education and church employees. However, some of these institutions also provide advanced academic training in social or caring occupations. As these colleges are supported by the churches, religious denomination may be important for admission.

Universities are most popular among foreign students

Proportion of foreign students* as % in the winter semester of 2009/10
Number of institutions in parentheses



* Students whose school qualifications entitling them to go on to higher education were gained abroad and who have come to Germany to study are counted as foreign students.

Source: German Federal Statistical Office 2010

HIGHER EDUCATION OPTIONS FOR FOREIGNERS

In principle, all college and university courses in Germany are open to citizens from other EU countries. Anyone who fulfils the necessary admission requirements can apply for and, if necessary, enrol for a first degree course, postgraduate studies or a doctorate. Students who only wish to come to Germany for one or two semesters and want to be absolutely sure that their achievements will be recognised towards their degree course opt for an international course of studies or a double Bachelor's degree course. It is of course also possible simply to come to Germany to study for one semester as a guest student. If you wish to do a dual course of studies you first have to sign a training contract with a company.

Partial studies in Germany

Most students come to Germany for a study visit lasting one or two semesters. The easiest way to do this is to look for degree courses with integrated periods spent abroad in the context of international higher education partnerships. The conditions of study for these courses generally include one or two semesters at a partner institution in Germany. In the case of so-called "double Bachelor's degrees", graduates gain two qualifications. In these courses the student completes part of his studies in his home country and part in Germany.

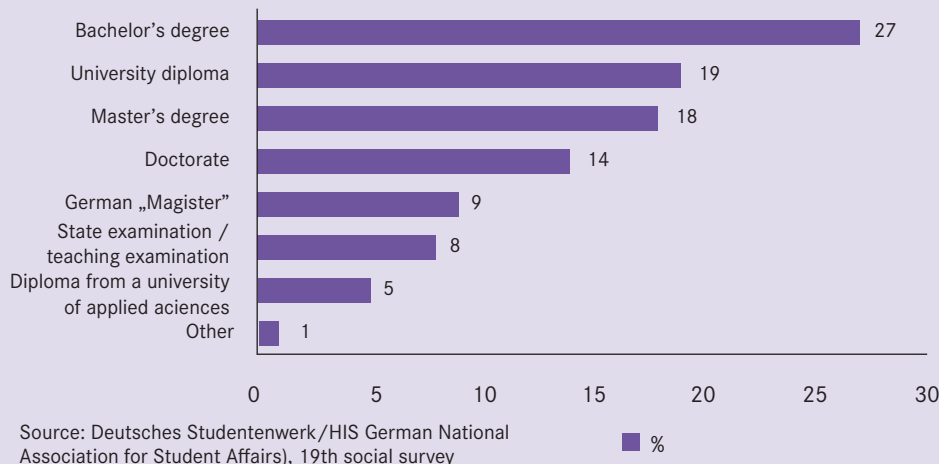
For students who want to study in Germany on their own initiative, it is especially important that their work and achievements are recognised at their home university. Thanks to the internationalisation of qualifications and the ECTS credit transfer system (see box on page 16), this is seldom a problem. In such cases, too, you should ensure that you go to a university or college that has a partnership.

There are various ways to plan a semester at a German university or college. Exchange programmes can be useful. EU scholarship programmes, such as ERASMUS, support students during their time abroad. For more information, see the chapter "Planning Higher Education in Germany".

First degree courses

The condition for admission to a first degree course is that the applicant has school qualifications equivalent to Germany's general upper secondary school leaving certificate (Abitur), the subject-specific certificate of aptitude for higher education or the certificate of aptitude for a university of applied sciences. You can find out which certificates from abroad are recognised as equivalent in Germany via the database of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer

Foreign students who were working towards a qualification in Germany in 2009



Austauschdienst – DAAD), which was created together with uni-assist e.V. On the webpage www.daad.de/deutschland/wege-durchs-studium you can find the required information under the headings "admission > admission data base".

For applicants from European countries the following rule of thumb applies: if your school qualifications qualify you for admission to higher education in your home country, your certificates will also be sufficient for admission to German colleges or universities. If your school qualifications are not sufficient, you will have to take an assessment test in Germany. You can prepare for this test by taking one of the state-run preparatory courses at a so-called "Studienkolleg" (www.studienkollegs.de).

However, admission to higher education does not only depend on your school qualifications. Owing to the large numbers of applicants in popular subjects, the colleges and universities have developed internal admission restrictions and selection procedures. These vary from one institution to another and may even differ between faculties. The average grade on your school-leaving certificate is generally of importance. Students who are short-listed, for example, have to write an essay explaining their reasons for wanting to study or are interviewed by a professor. You should ask the institution concerned which procedures they use. Some courses of study also require the applicant to complete work placements, either before or during the degree course. Vocational training may also be recognised.

For some degree courses, such as medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry or pharmacy, national admission restrictions apply. Applicants do not have a free choice of university for these courses. Instead, they have to apply for a place via the Foundation for Higher Education Admission (Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung (www.hochschulstart.de)). This institution then allocates the candidates to the available places throughout Germany. Further information on the subject of

applications and enrolment can be found in the chapter “Planning Higher Education in Germany”.

Qualifications

In the course of the Bologna Process, the German higher education system was reformed fundamentally and adapted to European standards. In the meantime the majority of Germany’s traditional higher education qualifications have been replaced by modular degree courses and international qualifications. Syllabi and faculties have also been re-defined. After six semesters students are able to gain a Bachelor’s degree, qualifying them for the working world. Alternatively, it is possible to study for a further two to four semesters in order to gain a Master’s degree, which is required for an academic career.

In the winter semester of 2010/2011 some 82 percent of all degree courses (11,500 of a total of 14,100 courses) at German universities and colleges had been converted to the modular structure. At universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) the process is virtually complete. The majority of university degree courses that have not been converted lead to state examinations (Staatsexamen) or to religious qualifications (just under 1,900). This concerns in particular degree courses in law, medicine, pharmacy and theology. In virtually all teaching courses the state examination has been replaced by Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees.

Post-graduate studies

If you have already completed a degree in your home country, you can continue your academic education in Germany with post-graduate studies. The range of post-graduate courses has increased considerably since the introduction of Master’s degree courses. However, not all first-degree qualifications are recognised. The examinations office (Prüfungsamt) of the respective faculty makes the decisions on this issue. This applies to both German and foreign students. As for first-degree courses, there is no standardised procedure for allocating places on courses.

Doctorates

Young researchers have the possibility to continue their academic career in Germany with doctoral studies. The classic method is via individual mentoring by a doctoral supervisor at a university or research institution. Alternative methods have been developed to make doctorates more attractive for foreign applicants. Some universities have set up “graduate schools” based on the Anglo-American model, which offer special courses intended to promote talented researchers. The International Max Planck Research Schools run by the Max Planck Society have similar aims. In addition the DAAD and the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft - DFG) also offer various programmes for doctoral students.

Making higher education achievements comparable

THE EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION SYSTEM (ECTS)

Course work and performance by students at colleges and universities in the European Higher Education Area should be comparable and recognised when changing from one institution to another, even across national borders. That is why the ECTS credit transfer system was developed. It measures the work required for one course unit or module in credits. The student is awarded the credits when he or she passes an examination for the course or module.

The ECTS assumes that students have to achieve 60 credits per academic year, which is equivalent to between 1,500 and 1,800 hours of work. A Bachelor’s degree is therefore equal to 180 ECTS credits, a Master’s degree requires a further 120 credits.

A good overview of the various paths to a doctorate can be found under www.daad.de/deutschland/forschung.

Dual studies

Dual degree courses are a special form of higher education which is an ideal combination of academic and practical training. In this type of course the students sign a training contract with a company or work there during intensive periods of practical training and enrol at university at the same time. During the semester they attend university and during the semester break they work at the company and take the required examinations in the occupation for which they are training. After completing such a combined course of training and education students gain both an academic title and a state-recognised vocational qualification. As in dual vocational training the employer pays a training allowance. Depending on the agreement he may also pay the university fees.

Most dual degree courses are in the fields of business and technology. Bank clerks or industrial clerks, for example, can study business administration at the same time, while electronics technicians receive a theoretically sound education in engineering. More than 850 such dual courses combining practical training and university studies can be found in the database of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung):

www.ausbildungplus.de.

A dual degree course requires early planning and application to a company. Demand generally exceeds the number of places available. On average 50 school leavers apply for each place. In some cases large companies may receive over 1000 applications for one combined vocational training and higher education place. The employment prospects are excellent. Companies offer this type of training because they want to bind skilled staff to them at an early stage. Most students are offered jobs by their training company after completing their studies.

PLANNING HIGHER EDUCATION IN GERMANY

There is a lot to consider before deciding to study in Germany. What organisational steps are necessary? Is your financial situation okay? And who can help if you are in doubt? The answers to these questions can be found in this chapter.

How do I find the right college or university?

Choosing a college or university requires a lot of thought. There are lots of important criteria: the range of subjects on offer, the academic reputation and the size of the institution or an attractive location. Many foreign students concentrate on well-known universities such as the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, the Berlin University of Technology or the Universities of Heidelberg and Stuttgart when applying for places. However, there are some 400 other colleges and universities.

A good overview of the higher education landscape can be found on the multilingual Internet pages www.daad.de/deutschland/hochschulen, www.studienwahl.de or www.study-in.de, some of which have easy-to-use search functions. It is also possible to look up the profiles of the German higher education institutions and the courses they offer on the Higher Education Compass of the German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz - HRK): www.hochschulkompas.de.

How do I apply for a place?

The first contact point at a college or university is the Central Student Advisory Office (Zentrale Studienberatung). This office provides advice about the different subjects in person or by telephone. The advisory staff also provide assistance with the necessary organisational steps.

The procedure for applying to a university depends on the subject chosen.

The contact point for courses with national admission restrictions is the Foundation for Higher Education Admission (Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung). This body also selects the students in certain subjects on behalf of individual institutions. In this service procedure it groups together the local selection procedures of the institutions involved. On the Internet site www.hochschulstart.de you can find out which institutions and subjects are concerned. It is also possible to submit an online application via this website.

The International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of the chosen university, university of applied sciences, college of art or music is responsible for all other courses. This office deals with the applications from foreign students in all of the subjects offered by the institution and provides information about the necessary formalities and the regional admission restrictions.

Higher Education Portrait – Damares Zimmermann, a Brazilian student of business administration

Damares Zimmermann's great-grandparents are one of the reasons why the 22-year-old Brazilian came to Germany to study. Like many inhabitants of Southern Brazil she, too, has German ancestors who emigrated to South America a long time ago.



Another reason is that in Brazil studying in Europe, especially in Germany, has an excellent reputation. It's no wonder then that she opted for Germany. As the pressure of competition on the Brazilian labour market is very high, Damares wanted to stand out from the mass of applicants due to her studies abroad.

She chose the University of Hamburg, where she has been continuing the business administration degree that she began in Brazil since 2009. In the meantime she is in her 6th semester and is currently writing her Bachelor thesis.

Before travelling to Hamburg, Damares obtained plenty of information about support and integration programmes. On arriving in Germany she was therefore able to get started straight away. She didn't have many bureaucratic obstacles to overcome, as her school qualifications were recognised without any problems and she had no trouble proving her knowledge of German after completing a one-year German course. In the meantime she doesn't even have any difficulty with specialist terminology, since "just like everything else in life you can learn that too if you really want to and try hard".

Although the German mentality is very different from that in Brazil, Damares soon got used to everyday life and is very happy in Germany today. What she really enjoys is meeting friends for a barbecue by the River Alster or playing sports. It was not until she came to Hamburg that she discovered her love for tennis.

For Damares Zimmermann Germany is a "beautiful and well-organised" country where you "can rely on the entire system" – whether it is the bus that is never late, or the reliable people you have to do with. That's why she can imagine staying in Germany after finishing her degree and working for example in management consulting, production or logistics.

Tuition fees

Federal state	Type of tuition fees	Amount of tuition fees	Other fees
Baden-Württemberg	from 1st semester (expected to be abolished as of winter semester 2011/12)	€ 500	€ 40
Bavaria	from 1st semester	€ 500	€ 50
Berlin	-	-	€ 50 + € 16 - 36
Brandenburg	-	-	€ 51
Bremen	only if the standard period of study is exceeded (and for external students)	€ 500	€ 50
Hamburg	from 1st semester (to be abolished as of autumn 2012)	€ 375	€ 50
Hesse	-	-	€ 50
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	-	-	up to € 50
Lower Saxony	from 1st semester (€ 600 - 800 long-term)	€ 500	€ 75
North-Rhine Westphalia	-	-	-
Rhineland-Palatinate	only for second degrees	€ 650	-
Saarland	only if the standard period of study is exceeded and for second degrees	€ 400	-
Saxony-Anhalt	only if the standard period of study is exceeded	€ 500	-
Saxony	only for second degrees (€ 500 is stipulated in the coalition agreement if the standard period of study is exceeded, date of introduction unknown)	€ 30 - 450	€ 25 - 150
Schleswig-Holstein	-	-	-
Thuringia	only if the standard period of study is exceeded	€ 500	€ 50

Some universities have commissioned uni-assist, the employment and service centre for international student applications, to select the applicants. You can find a list on the Internet under www.uni-assist.de. This service centre verifies the certificates of foreign students on behalf of the higher education institutions. If your college or university works together with uni-assist, you have to apply via the online platform. It is also possible to apply to more than one of the member institutions at the same time.

When you have received an offer of a place, you enrol at the university or college. Only then have you been accepted as a student and are entitled to begin your studies. The multilingual advice pages of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) provide lots of useful information about applications, admission and enrolment at German colleges and universities: www.daad.de/deutschland/wege-durchs-studium.

What certificates and proof of language skills do I need?

In order to be able to study in Germany, besides submitting a certificate entitling you to attend university you usually also have to demonstrate your German language skills. Some post-graduate courses conducted in English are an exception to this rule. You can either take the “German Language Test for the University Admission of Foreign Applicants” (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber - DSH) at your host university or the “TestDaF” test at one of about 400 test centres in Germany or abroad. You can find the addresses under www.testdaf.de. The certificates and language diplomas from the Goethe-Institut and the “Abitur” certificate from recognised German schools abroad are also accepted. The German authorities generally expect certified translations of foreign-language certificates and documents.

How much does studying in Germany cost?

The advantage of the German higher education system is that it is state-funded, with the exception of the private universities. Originally, attending university was therefore free of charge apart from a small administration fee, the so-called semester fee. In 2005 some federal states introduced additional tuition fees of between € 300 and € 500 per semester. This is quite low compared with other countries and with the costs at private universities. However, this financial factor can be quite important when choosing a college or university, as some federal states do not charge university fees.

The cost of living also differs depending on the location. The costs can vary significantly from region to region. The best thing to do is to find out about all issues of student life by looking at the social survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs (Deutsches Studentenwerk): www.sozialerhebung.de. An outline in English can be downloaded there.

What funding is available?

The best place to search for information on scholarships is the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - DAAD). They maintain a database of all funding programmes for studying in Germany. It can be searched specifically by country of origin and field of study: www.daad.de/deutschland/foerderung > scholarship database.

The DAAD also has its own scholarships with various objectives. Many support programmes are aimed at outstanding students who are selected by a commission.

An alternative to this is the mass funding via the EU ERASMUS programme. This fund is used to pay allowances of different amounts to compensate for the additional costs of the period spent abroad. ERASMUS students are also exempt from university fees. The ERASMUS coordinators at your home university are your contacts for application.

Which universities offer exchange programmes?

According to the German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz - HRK), German higher education institutions maintain more than 20,000 international cooperation agreements with approximately 4,100 colleges and universities abroad in over 140 countries. On the website www.hochschulkompas.de under "International Cooperations" you can find out which institutions in your country of origin offer guest visits to Germany.

One example of an extensive cooperation scheme is the Franco-German University (DFH). This association of universities in Germany and France offers bilingual degree courses. You can find information about the programmes at www.dfh-ufa.org. The International Lake Constance University (IBH), www.bodenseehochschule.org, and the University Confederation of Upper Rhine Universities (Eucor), www.eucor-uni.org, in the border region between Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have similar arrangements.



Will my time spent studying in Germany be recognised in my home country?

If you only complete part of your studies in Germany, your achievements are documented using the ECTS credit system (see box on page 16). These credits can be accredited to an equivalent Bachelor or Master's degree course. However, the ECTS system does not cover all cases. We therefore recommend that you discuss with your home university which degree course you should choose and which seminars and lectures you should take. Within existing higher education partnerships there are usually no problems regarding the recognition of achievements.

How a German higher education qualification is classified in your country of origin depends on the university

or on your future employer. Enquire beforehand at the office responsible for the recognition of foreign educational qualifications. You can find these offices in the information system for the recognition of foreign qualifications, of the Central Office for Foreign Education Systems (Zentralstelle für Ausländisches Bildungswesen) (www.anabin.de).

The "europass Diploma Supplement" (see box on page 5) can be useful for explaining your qualifications. This is an additional document, written in English, which is enclosed with your higher education certificate. It contains details about yourself, your qualification, results achieved and information about the national higher education system.

Interview with Alexandra Hach from the PIASTA team – Intercultural Living and Learning at the University of Hamburg

The internationalisation of higher education is moving ahead in Germany. What trends do you see here, Ms. Hach?

In Germany there is a great deal of interest in internationalising everyday student life. The German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - DAAD) is starting with a pilot project to support the integration of international students (PROFIN) and is motivating higher education institutions to create the corresponding structures. In principle we are moving away from the idea of "extra support". Programmes and events are targeted at both German and foreign students at the same time. We are focusing on learning together, asking what the two target groups are interested in. We have seen that integration succeeds better this way and students experience success in their studies more quickly. Moreover, intercultural training does not work in one direction only: in joint discussions the German students can also learn a great deal about other cultures, which can ultimately create an incentive for studying abroad.

How does the University of Hamburg support newcomers from abroad?

Our PIASTA integration programme contains a number of components aimed in principle at all students. They begin with the International Welcome Week, when a varied programme helps students to get to know Hamburg and the university and to make first contacts. In tandem partnerships pairs of students learn each others' native languages. The faculties also provide support, with student volunteers, known as buddies, helping newcomers for example when they move into the hall of residence or accompanying them on visits to the authorities. PIASTA is flanked by a website (www.uni-hamburg.de/piasta), which provides information about Hamburg and the university. It also contains an overview of our range of seminars, a list of contacts and a job and internship market.

And who can help with legal or financial matters?

Our International Department provides a free legal advice service run by lawyers and supports students with all kinds of applications. A frequent issue is residence permits for students from outside the EU. Or questions regarding how many hours students may work while studying or what needs to be taken into account when working on a freelance basis. The advice service is frequently contacted regarding financial issues.



Do foreign students have difficulties settling in?

At the beginning the students are bombarded with lots of different things at the same time. And the German language is also bound to be something of an obstacle. But with a little patience they find that it gets better day by day. As soon as they have set up a social network and passed their first exam they usually cope well. In our experience, misconceptions about studying in Germany are an exception. On the whole the student guests have obtained plenty of information and prepared themselves well beforehand. And some of them stay in Hamburg, marriage and career included.

Further vocational training in Germany

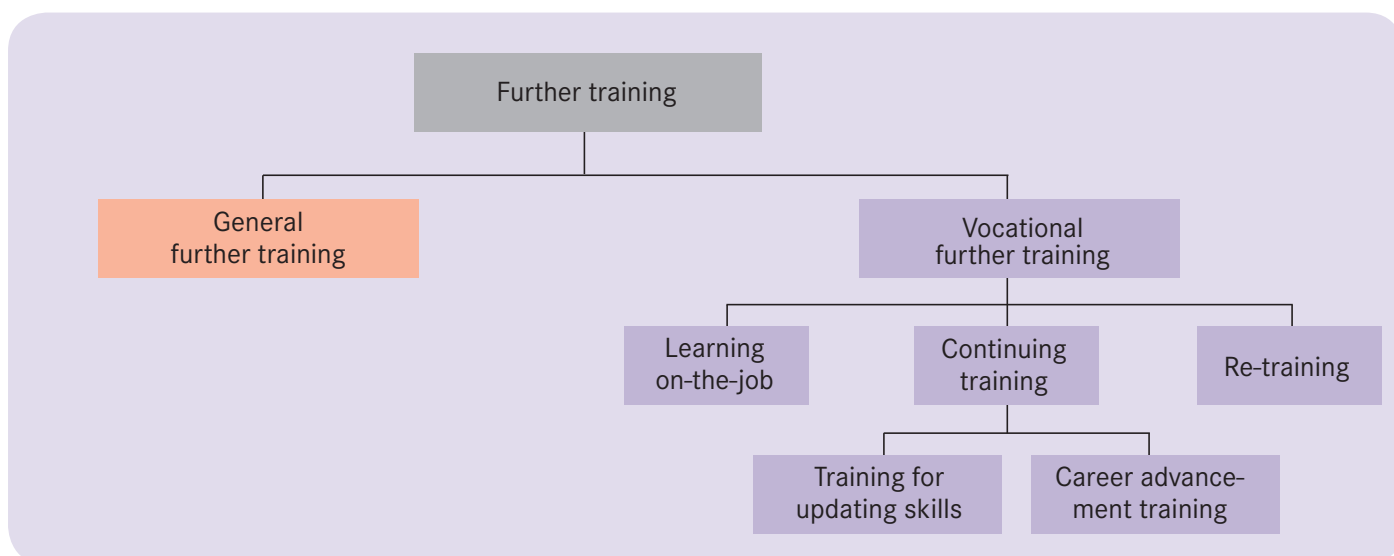


Lifelong learning is a characteristic of a modern knowledge society and means above all being willing to continue learning, both formally and informally. Whether it is a matter of brushing up or updating their own skills, adapting them to new requirements or moving up the ladder in their company – more and more employees are making use of the opportunities provided by further training.

The training provider market is varied: commercial companies, state institutions, economic and professional asso-

ciations, church bodies and charitable institutions all offer courses. Technical colleges and higher education institutions may also provide further training services.

All training courses that are not directly associated with one's occupation, such as health education, artistic or aesthetic education, courses on educational or legal issues, or language and rhetoric courses, are understood as general further training. Individuals can choose courses and seminars themselves from the wide range offered by the education and training providers.



FURTHER VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Further vocational training is always occupation-related and is characterised in Germany by openness, flexibility and constant adaptation to the demands of the labour market.

Most of the knowledge and skills are acquired on-the-job, new equipment and new work routines require constant learning. However, employees can also support their learning processes by means of external further training courses. Further training courses of this kind are often done on a part-time basis and participants receive an official certificate of participation. If further training is organised by a company for its staff, either via internal experts or external training providers, we speak of company further training. Retraining, i.e. a change to a different occupation, is a special form of further vocational training.

Career with regulated further training

All courses of further training which are regulated according to the Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz – BBiG) are particularly interesting for applicants from abroad. The courses in this area are standardised throughout Germany; their content, objectives and examination requirements are precisely defined.

As with the training occupations, the advantage of regulated further training is the qualifications, which are standardised throughout Germany and are awarded by the responsible chambers. The course contents are practice-oriented and the qualifications taught are actually in demand on the labour market. This is because the professional associations are often the course providers and they know exactly what is in demand.

The regulated further training courses are aimed at working people with recognised vocational qualifications who wish to continue their training. The aim of the further training may be to specialise in a particular field of work, for example from an elderly care nurse to a specialist psychiatric nurse for the elderly. Other regulated further training courses are associated with career advancement, which is why they are also known as advanced training for career advancement. These courses qualify the participants for jobs at middle management level. They include, for example, master craftsman, technician and specialists in various fields. It must be taken into account here that not all courses of occupation-specific further training are offered in all federal states.

The courses are either full-time courses or part-time courses taken while in employment and are held at technical colleges, special master craftsmen's colleges or also at private training establishments. Further training courses are subject to fees. Providers can be found via KURSNET (kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de).

Opposites in further training

Further training is	
either	or
general	occupational
individual	company-based
on-the-job	course-based
regulated by law	not regulated by law
for career advancement	for updating skills

On-the-job Master's degree course

If you are a university graduate, have found a job in Germany and are looking for new challenges, it is also possible to complete a Master's degree while working. Corresponding courses can be found on the Higher Education Compass of the German Rector's Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz) under www.hochschulkompas.de. To find a course go to the extended search, select "second stage" for "degree" and "providing further education" for "kind of Master".



Interview with Alfred Töpper, project manager of the further training test conducted by “Stiftung Warentest”

Mr Töpper, what aspects of the German further training system can be particularly highlighted?

Germany has a complex and comprehensive further training system with a great variety of qualifications and a high level of acceptance on the labour market. There are courses available for virtually every training need and every qualification level. Participation in further training measures is also documented formally, often by certificates, sometimes by examinations. The other side of the coin is that it is not easy to find the right course from the wealth of courses on offer or to recognise the value of a particular qualification. I recommend obtaining advice from one of the chambers or from another neutral institution.

How would you assess the reputation of further vocational training abroad?

As an integral part of vocational training, regulated further training enjoys a good reputation abroad as being thorough and exemplary. However, the system is also regarded as strongly formalised. In some federal states, for instance, it has not been adapted simply because it would not work there as the basis is missing.

How can foreign workers benefit most from the German further training system?

First, of course, by adapting to the German labour market, so that they really can perform the job they trained for here. In this respect I always understand adaptation as further development. By taking

a course of further training to adapt skills it is possible to overcome formal obstacles, for instance with regard to rules and regulations. One example of this is courses about safety regulations in the electrical sector. Or the AEVO certificate of aptitude as a trainer, which entitles the holder to train young people.

Does that mean that not all adaptation problems are so easy to solve?

That's right. For example, nurses who may have gained a degree abroad but do not have the qualification which is usual in Germany. In the meantime many things are undergoing a radical change: an attempt is being made to recognise vocational qualifications more rapidly by measuring competences and to adapt skills by means of supplementary training. What is important here is that the person concerned does not have to repeat his or her entire training. Because people would then prefer to drive taxis than to take upon themselves the effort of working in their original occupation.



PLANNING FURTHER TRAINING IN GERMANY

Unfortunately international comparability in further vocational training is not yet as well developed as it is in the fields of higher education or initial vocational training. Because the training providers and the occupational objectives are so varied, there are no centrally organised support programmes. Nonetheless we would like to give you some useful tips on how to go about taking further training in Germany.

How do I find the right further training course?

The KURSNET database provided by the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit - BA) contains more than 400,000 courses offered by approximately 17,000 training providers. Under kursnet.finden.arbeitsagentur.de you can research the addresses of training providers, and the contents, duration and costs of courses. In order to be able to work with KURSNET, you need to know the name of the German equivalent of your further training objective or the occupation you initially trained for.

BERUFENET, the A-Z network of occupations provided by the BA (berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de), helps you to gain an overview of the further training opportunities for a particular initial occupation.

A decision-making aid for choosing a course of further training is provided by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung - BIBB) in the form of a checklist to assess the quality of vocational further training. It can be downloaded from the Internet under www.bibb.de/checkliste.

What funding possibilities are there?

If you are planning to take part in further vocational training, you must take a good look at the question of funding. Many school-based courses are subject to fees. In Germany there are therefore several support programmes, such as the financial assistance in accordance with the Advanced Training Promotion Act (Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz),

a grant for those wishing to train as a master craftsman, or the scholarships for talented vocational trainees. However, both of these schemes are only available to German citizens.

There is no EU funding programme dedicated specifically to further vocational training. However, it is worth enquiring about projects in your home country. The National Agencies for Lifelong Learning are responsible. You can find a list of addresses on the Internet under <http://ec.europa.eu> > Policies > Culture, education and youth > Education and training programmes > Leonardo da Vinci.

Who can help if I have questions?

In general you have to organise further training in Germany yourself. One exception to this is the teaching pro-

fession, where there are international further training courses. The Teacher Exchange Service (Pädagogischer Austauschdienst - www.kmk-pad.org) is responsible for this in Germany.

Otherwise, possible contacts are the professional associations, such as the regional Chambers of Industry and Commerce or the Chambers of Skilled Crafts. The addresses of the individual chambers can be obtained from the the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag - www.dihk.de) or the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks - www.zdh.de). You can find out from the National Agencies which institutions in your home country can help.

Further Training Portrait – Nikolaos Lafioniatis, a Greek doctor in Karlsruhe

Nikolaos Lafioniatis got around a lot even as a child: the 32-year-old was born in Birmingham, where his parents were studying. His primary school years were spent in Germany, near Stuttgart. After studying medicine at home in Greece he once again got itchy feet. Lafioniatis dreamt of working and taking further training at a large, scientifically up-to-date hospital. "German medicine and especially anaesthesiology are way ahead of the standards in Greece and enjoy an excellent, international reputation," he says. That is why he decided to continue his further training as an anaesthesiology consultant in Germany and travelled to Karlsruhe together with his wife, who is also a doctor, and his five-year-old son.

On the Internet he obtained information about vacancies for junior doctors and finally found a position at Karlsruhe Hospital. "I had reckoned with some bureaucratic hurdles, but it was easier than expected." Just one week after submitting all his documents he received his licence to practise medicine. He still does not know whether all of the qualifications he gained in Greece can be accredited to his studies in Germany and whether his further training can therefore be shortened. But that is of secondary importance for him: "I don't mind whether I will be a junior doctor for three or four more years. I want to be scientifically up-to-date. Further training as a consultant is an investment in the future." During their further training, junior doctors work in the various fields, such as paediatrics surgery or accident surgery, are in constant contact with the consultants and attend special seminars, for example about current subjects related to emergency medicine.



As this is not the first time he has lived in Germany, he is coping very well with the German mentality and language. What he especially likes is the fact that the work in German hospitals is so well organised. "For every clinical picture there are treatment plans which make the treatment easier for the doctors."

Nikolaos Lafioniatis can quite imagine staying in Germany with his family. He is confident that his son, too, will settle down well. From September onwards the boy will be going to kindergarten, and then "he will learn German easily. I know that from my own experience."

Getting Started

Living and working in a foreign country demands a high level of adaptability and willingness to accept new situations. This chapter provides a brief overview on the subject of living and working in Germany.

Living, learning and working in Germany

www.zav.de/arbeiten-in-deutschland

The International Placement Service (Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung - ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency provides information about working, living and learning in Germany.

For skilled workers who gained their vocational qualifications abroad, the ZAV has an advisory service for the recognition of qualifications. You can arrange an appointment via the ZAV Info-Centre: telephone: +49 (0) 228 7 13 13 13, e-mail: zav@arbeitsagentur.de.

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

EURES – the European portal for job mobility in Europe provides detailed information about the employment situation and living and working conditions in Germany.

Language skills

www.goethe.de

The Goethe Institute offers German courses in 80 countries and 127 cities worldwide.

www.meine-vhs.de

In Germany you can take a course in German as a foreign language. The Adult Education Centre (Volkshochschule - VHS) is the least expensive provider of such courses.

<http://www.daad.de/deutschland/deutsch-lernen/13856.de.html>

You can find information about German courses for students on the multilingual website of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst).

Public and cultural life

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de

The website of the Federal Foreign Office is a useful reference on all areas of public life.

www.magazin-deutschland.de

You can find interesting articles about politics, culture and the economy in the web-edition of Deutschland magazine, the foreign-language magazine of the Federal Republic of Germany.

www.kulturportal-deutschland.de

Information on exhibitions, opera, theatre, dance, concerts, readings and other cultural events.

Income and taxes

In general, salaries are transferred to your current account in the middle or at the end of the month. Income tax, solidarity tax, church tax where applicable, and the employee share of social security contributions (health, pension and long-term care insurance) and unemployment insurance contributions are deducted from your agreed gross salary and transferred directly to the responsible authorities by your employer.

You can convert gross salaries to net salaries under www.lohnspiegel.de. When calculating the taxable income, individual circumstances are taken into account. There are six income tax classes to which you are allocated according to your marital status and employment situation.

Social security

www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de

Here you can find information on all of the social security contributions. The German social security system consists of five pillars:

Statutory *unemployment insurance* guarantees a basic standard of living should you become unemployed.

Statutory *pension insurance* provides security for members in their old age and in cases of occupational invalidity or incapacity for work, as well as for their surviving dependents in the event of their death.

Statutory *health insurance* supports its members in ensuring and restoring health and alleviates the consequences of illness.

Statutory *accident insurance* restores the ability to work following an accident (at work).

Statutory *long-term nursing care insurance* guarantees financial assistance for people in permanent need of nursing care.

Health system

As soon as you sign a contract of employment and wish to start working in Germany you have to take out health insurance as an employee. Students, too, have to provide proof that they have health insurance.

Anyone who goes to a doctor has to pay a so-called practice fee of € 10 per quarter.

The medical emergency and on-call service (ärztlicher Not- und Bereitschaftsdienst) provides medical assistance at night, at the weekends and on public holidays. Go to a hospital or have the directory enquiries service put you through to the medical emergency service.

On the Internet pages of the statutory health insurance companies (overview under www.gesetzlichekrankenkassen.de) and the Federal Ministry of Health (www.bmg.bund.de) you can find information about the health system in Germany in several languages.

Information and Advice

Euroguidance

Euroguidance is a network linking all vocational education and training centres in Europe. Euroguidance promotes mobility by helping advisors and potential trainees to understand the options available to European citizens within Europe. You can find information on the Internet under

www.euroguidance.net.

PLOTEUS – the portal for courses throughout Europe

The aim of PLOTEUS is to help school leavers, students, job-seekers, workers, parents, careers advisors and teachers in their search for initial and further training opportunities in Europe. For information on the Internet see

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

Lifelong Learning Programme

The European Commission has combined its various initiatives in the field of general and vocational education and training into one single programme, the lifelong learning programme. This programme provides further training options throughout Europe for people at all stages of their lives. For further information see <http://ec.europa.eu/education> > Programm für Lebenslanges Lernen.

Information Centre of the International Placement Service (Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung - ZAV)

If you have questions about working and learning in Germany, you can contact the ZAV information centre directly. Call the hotline on +49 (0) 228/7 13 13 13. The team is available from Monday to Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. and will be happy to send you information material or to provide you with a personal contact for further advice (e-mail: zav-auslandsvermittlung@arbeitsagentur.de).

German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - DAAD)

The DAAD is responsible for all matters concerning studying in Germany. It can be contacted on +49 (0) 228/8 82-0. For information on the Internet see: www.daad.de > Informationen für Ausländer.

National Agency “Education for Europe” at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – BIBB)

The National Agency deals with all issues related to vocational education and training and further training. It is responsible for the EU LEONARDO DA VINCI and GRUNDTVIG programmes and for the Europass: telephone: +49 (0) 228/1 07-16 08, Internet: www.na-bibb.de, www.europass-info.de

Teacher Exchange Service (Pädagogischer Austauschdienst - PAD) of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the National Agency for EU school programmes

The Teacher Exchange Service is responsible for international initial and further training. It is affiliated with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and can be contacted on +49 (0) 228/50 12 91-3 19. Internet: www.kmk-pad.org

German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks e.V. - ZDH)

This association provides information about initial and further training in skilled crafts occupations and contacts to the responsible Chambers of Trade and guilds. Telephone: +49 (0) 30/2 06 19-310, Internet: www.zdh.de

Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag e.V. - DIHK)

The umbrella organisation provides contacts to the responsible regional Chambers of Industry and Commerce which offer advice on training. The DIHK also provides foreign-language brochures on advanced training for promotion and dual training. Telephone: +49 (0) 30/2 03 08-0, Internet: www.dihk.de

Bildungsorte und Lernwelten in Deutschland - Places of Learning in Germany

