6.1 | Visa and Entry

Nationals of EU States, the European Economic Area 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 your national identity card. If you intend to stay in Germany for more than three months and move into a flat (share) you must register at the “Einwohnermeldeamt” (Residents’ Registration Office) after entering the country (see Chapter 6.2).

Nationals of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and the USA

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 three months or for the purpose of employment you will require a residence permit. You can either apply for this once you have entered Germany (see Chapter 6.3) or before you do so by applying to the German diplomatic mission for the relevant visa.

Online application form

If you only need a visa for a short visit of up to 90 days (Schengen Visa) you can complete the application form online by accessing the address given below. When you have filled in the form completely you must print it out and present it to the German diplomatic mission in person together with all the other application documents required.

http://visa.diplo.de > English
Nationals of all other non-EU States (third-country nationals)

Short visits lasting up to three months
If your research stay in Germany is not scheduled to last longer than 90 days in a six-month 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 period of three months, nor can they be re-designated for other purposes. You will have to leave Germany at the end of three months at the latest.

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 euro. When completing the application for the Schengen Visa please be sure to state “scientific work” or “research” as the purpose of your stay. The Schengen Visa entitles you to move freely between and stay in any of the so-called Schengen States, i.e. the states that have signed the Schengen Agreement.

Visa exemptions for short visits
Nationals of some countries are allowed to enter Germany for visits of up to three months without a visa. You can find a list of these states on the website of the Federal Foreign Office. Please note, however, that you will not be able to apply for a residence title for a longer stay once you have entered Germany and that you will have to leave the country after three months at the latest. If you are planning a longer stay you must apply for a German visa that will allow you to stay in the country for an extended period while you are still in your own country or current country of residence.

Visits lasting more than three months
If you are planning to stay in Germany for more than three months you must apply for a National Visa for Germany (D-Visa) from the German Embassy or Consulate while you are still in your own country or current country of residence. This type of visa cannot be extended and only entitles you to stay in Germany for a maximum of three months. You would then have to return to your own country at your own expense and apply for the right visa there. The same applies to members of your family. The National Visa entitles you to stay in Germany and travel throughout the Schengen States for up to 90 days within a six month period.

To apply for a D-Visa you will usually require the following documents:
- Passport (please ensure that your passport is valid for at least three months longer than the duration of your intended stay)
- Proof of your intended activity (e.g. fellowship, employment contract, letter of invitation or hosting agreement from the university)
- Proof of your intended activity (e.g. fellowship, employment contract, letter of invitation or hosting agreement from the university)
- Adequate health insurance cover
- Details of proposed accommodation in Germany
- Marriage and birth certificates of family members
- Application form (available from diplomatic missions)
Depending on the individual Embassy, the documents required may differ. Please contact the respective 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 three months. Once you have entered Germany, you must present the visa to your local ‘Ausländerbehörde’ (Foreigners’ Registration Office) to register and apply for a residence permit (see Chapter 6.3). A National Visa is linked to a specific purpose. This could be studying (e.g. a doctoral candidate on a fellowship), employment (e.g. a research associate) or research (e.g. a postdoctoral researcher on a fellowship or employment contract).

Inviting visitors
If you would like to invite a guest to visit you in Germany such as a member of your family who needs an entry visa, it will be necessary to prove in the application that sufficient financial means are available for the duration of their visit. If the guest is unable to provide this proof themselves, you can pledge to cover all the costs ensuing from the stay in Germany. You can submit this formal obligation to the ‘Bürgerdienste International’ where you will be issued with a document that the visitor can use as evidence of financial support when applying for a visa.

6.2 | Registering at the “Einwohnermeldeamt” (Residents’ Registration Office)

Everyone who moves into a house or flat in Germany is obliged to register, including visitors who are staying for more than three months. So within a week of entering the country or moving house you will usually have to register yourself and any members of your family accompanying you at the 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 10.5.).

In Dortmund it may be the case that registering your place of residence is part of the same procedure as registering under immigration law. Therefore depending on your nationality, the procedure may vary.
Nationals of EU States, the European Economic Area and Switzerland

If you are a national of an EU State or the European Economic Area, you will register at the "Einwohnermeldeamt" (Residents' Registration Office). This registration will automatically entitle you to freedom of movement. If you no longer require freedom of movement, you can deregister. In order to register at the Residents' Registration Office you will need:

- "Wohnungsgeberbestätigung" (landlord’s confirmation)
- a passport or equivalent document

Nationals of all other non-EU States (third-country nationals)

With regard to nationals of all other states, registering your place of residence is part of the same procedure as registering under immigration law and is done at the "Ausländerbehörde" (Foreigners’ Registration Office) (Team: visa matters, foreign students and experts, EU) (see Chapter 6.3). At registration you will receive the following, irrespective of whether you register at the Residents' Registration Office or the Foreigners' Registration Office:

- "Meldebescheinigung" (certificate of registration), which you will need in order to extend your residence permit, for example, or to open a bank account.
- "Steueridentifikationsnummer" (Tax Identification Number), which will be sent to you by post after registration. If you are in employment you must then forward this number to the regional authority handling salaries and pensions ("Landesamt für Besoldung" , LBV).

After registering, you can apply for a "Polizeiliches Führungszeugnis" (Police Clearance Certificate) at the Residents’ Registration Office – irrespective of your nationality. In Germany, this is required for public service employments.

6.3 | Residence Permit

In order to fulfil your obligation to register (see Chapter 6.2) and before your entry visa runs out you must apply for a residence permit at your local "Ausländerbehörde" (Foreigners’ Registration Office). This is usually issued electronically in the form of a card (eAT). If you are a national of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea or the USA and not only entered the country without a visa but intend staying in Germany for a longer period of time you will also have to apply for a residence permit within three months of entering the country.

The German Rector’s Conference has drawn up a detailed overview of the various residence titles with regard to criteria like target group, conditions for granting a residence permit, duration/limitation, subsequent immigration of spouses and unmarried children. See the link above.

INSIDER INFO:

You can make an appointment at the service centre by phone or online.

www.buergerdienste.dortmund.de > Kontakt
0231 50-11140

If you relocate within Germany you must re-register. Please ensure that the names of all registered family members are clearly visible on the doorbell.
You will usually have to present the following documents to the Foreigners’ Registration Office:

- Completed application form
- "Wohnungsegeberbestätigung" (landlord’s confirmation)
- Completed application for a residence title (available at the Foreigners’ Registration Office)
- Valid passport (please ensure that your passport is valid for at least three months longer than the duration of your intended stay) as well as a copy of your passport, visa and proof of entry
- Biometric passport photo (please observe the requirements set out by the Federal Foreign Office)
- Fellowship award letter, employment contract or hosting agreement from 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
- Biometric passport photo (please observe the requirements set out by the Federal Foreign Office)
- Completed application form
- Biometric passport photo (please observe the requirements set out by the Federal Foreign Office)
- Completed application for a residence title (available at the Foreigners’ Registration Office)
- Valid passport (please ensure that your passport is valid for at least three months longer than the duration of your intended stay) as well as a copy of your passport, visa and proof of entry
- Biometric passport photo (please observe the requirements set out by the Federal Foreign Office)

Probationary certificate

It takes about four to eight weeks to issue an electronic residence title. Should your residence title expire during this period, a "Fiktionsbescheinigung" (probationary certificate) must be issued. This is a temporary substitute document that is usually valid for three months.

There are three different types of probationary certificate:

- "Duldungsfertigung", "Erlaubnisfertigung" and "Forfstbindungsfertigung". If you have applied for your extension in good time and now have to wait for the card to be issued, you will usually be given a "Forbstandsbindungsfertigung" (probationary certificate) (§81.4) because your old residence permit will continue to be valid until you receive your new card.

Within the Schengen Area or on a direct flight to your own country, it is possible to travel on the strength of this kind of probationary certificate and you will be allowed to re-enter Germany at any time. Whilst you are using a probationary certificate, however, it is recommendable to enquire at the foreign mission (Embassy/Consulate) of the country to which you will be travelling, whether you might incur any problems with entry and exit.

"Freizügigkeitsersatzbrief" (Freedom of Movement permission)

States in the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland

If you are a national of an EU Member State, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland you need a recognised, valid passport or equivalent document (personal identity card) in order to enter and stay in Germany. You are not required to obtain a visa or residence title.

During the first three months after entering the country, you have unrestricted right of residence. After this, you will need Freedom of Movement permission, confirming that you fulfil the freedom of movement requirements.

Within the Schengen Area or on a direct flight to your own country, it is possible to travel on the strength of this kind of probationary certificate and you will be allowed to re-enter Germany at any time. Whilst you are using a probationary certificate, however, it is recommendable to enquire at the foreign mission (Embassy/Consulate) of the country to which you will be travelling, whether you might incur any problems with entry and exit.

"Fiktionsbescheinigung" (probationary certificate)

If your requirements for freedom of movement are fulfilled, the right of residence exists by law. There is no specific certificate to this effect but the requirements must be fulfilled and proof presented to the Residents’ Registration Office (Source: www.duesseldorf.de/auslaenderamt/eu-service).

Settlement permit

A settlement permit is an unlimited residence permit which allows the holder to pursue gainful employment. In certain cases, if the applicant is highly qualified, a foreigner coming to Germany may be issued with a settlement permit immediately after entering the country. As a rule, however, foreigners are only entitled to a settlement permit if they have spent five years in the country. You can ask at the Foreigners’ Registration Office.

For more information and forms, go to www.dortmund.de/auslaenderamt.
6.4 | Employment Law Regulations

As a foreigner, if you want to work in Germany you usually require a residence title which allows you to pursue gainful employment. You have to apply for it at the Foreigners' Registration Office in the place you are intending to stay, often as part of the visa procedure. In some cases the Foreigners' Registration Office itself has to seek the approval of the Federal Employment Agency; however, this does not apply to academic personnel at universities and research institutes, visiting researchers or technical staff employed in a visiting researcher's research team. These positions do not require the approval of the Federal Employment Agency. The Foreigners' Registration Office itself is entitled to issue authorisation allowing you to pursue academic activity and enter this authorisation in your residence permit.

If your husband or wife is not an academic but would like to work in Germany she or he will usually require the approval of the Federal Employment Agency. You will have to apply at the Foreigners' Registration Office for the type of residence permit that allows the holder to pursue gainful employment and also present a concrete job offer. Marital partners who are in possession of a residence permit stating family reunification (according to § 30 of German residence law) may pursue gainful employment without seeking advance approval from the Federal Employment Agency.

Academic activity during a short visit

If you work at a university in an academic capacity for no more than three months in a twelve-month period this does not count as employment in terms of the residence law. This usually means that you are not obliged to seek the approval of the Foreigners' Registration Office for this activity.

Nationals of the EU, European Economic Area and Switzerland

If you are a citizen of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland you enjoy the right to freedom of movement for workers. You do not need approval in order to pursue gainful employment. Citizens of new EU Member States are usually only given full freedom of movement rights after a transitional period. Like nationals of third countries, they still require a residence permit which allows them to work in Germany. For academics from new Member States (with a degree from a university or university of applied science) special regulations may apply.

"Das Akademische Viertel"

A special feature of German universities is the so-called "Akademisches Viertel" - literally: academic quarter. It means that seminars and activities often begin a quarter of an hour later than stated in the university calendar; they are then marked "c.t." (cum tempore). If they begin on the hour they will be labelled "s.t." (sine tempore).