

Advice and Information for Foreign Workers in Germany

Each foreign research fellow is offered an 18-month employment contract by the host institution (museum). Like German employees, their monthly salary is subject to income tax and social security. However, there are important matters to consider which may not seem obvious at first when hiring a foreign researcher or curator. In the following, we provide an overview of the various points, which may or may not be relevant in your particular case. For more information, visit www.ausländerrecht.de or contact the Alien Registration Office in your city.

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1. Passport

As a fellow, you need a valid passport or equivalent official ID to enter Germany. **Your passport must be valid for the entire period of your stay in Germany.** Depending on where you come from, German authorities may require that your passport be valid three months longer than the duration of the programme. To avoid unnecessary problems, always write your name in the same way on all important documents.

2. Birth and marriage certificates, vaccination card

When you apply for a residence permit (*see section 4*), the authorities often ask to see your *original* birth certificate, and if married, your original marriage certificate. If you have a vaccination card, please bring it with you to Germany. It can prove helpful if you get sick.

3. Entry visa

Generally all citizens of non-EU/EEA countries require an entry visa for Germany and a residence permit to live here for longer than three months. For specific information, please contact the Cultural Section at the diplomatic mission of the Federal Republic of Germany in your home country or country of current residence. You can also find additional information about the entry visa requirements on the website of the Federal Foreign Office: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de>. If you come from a non-EU/EEA country, you should apply for an entry visa at the responsible German diplomatic mission in your home country, or country of current residence. The visa must be issued for the place in Germany where you intend to begin your stay.

Please note that the visa section at many diplomatic missions accept applications by appointment only. We recommend making an appointment well in advance as it may take several weeks until a slot is available. The German foreign diplomatic missions (embassies and consulates) are authorized to issue visas to scholars and scientists who are selected for research-based employment by the Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut and financed by the host museum with

funding provided by the Federal Cultural Foundation. Visa processing can take several weeks. Therefore, consider this delay when making your travel arrangements. You will be issued a **D-visa**, (usually valid for 90 days) which entitles you to enter and legally reside in Germany for a three-month period. Do not apply for a different type of visa, because some visas cannot be extended. You will have to apply for your “final” residence permit at the Alien Registration Office in your place of residence in Germany. With this permit, you may enter and leave the country as often as you wish.

Do not travel to Germany on a tourist visa! Holders of tourist visas are only permitted to remain in Germany for three months and may not extend their visa. If they wish to stay longer, they have to fly back home at their own expense and apply there for a proper visa.

Exceptions:

If you are a citizen of an **EU-member state, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland**, you may enter Germany without an entry visa. When you register at your place of residence, you will also be issued a residence permit (freedom of movement certificate) as a formality. Please inquire at your Resident Registration Office as to which agency is responsible for issuing you a residence permit.

If you are a citizen of **Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea or the United States of America**, you may enter Germany with a valid passport. However, you will have to apply for a residence permit from the responsible Alien Registration Office in your town or city within three months of arriving in Germany. Therefore, we strongly recommend applying for a residence permit as soon as possible.

Note:

Special visa rules apply to fellows from the *People’s Republic of China* and the *area of jurisdiction of the German embassy in Moscow*, Russian Federation.

Residence permits issued by the responsible Alien Registration Offices in Germany entitle the holders to leave and re-enter Germany as often as they wish and – in accordance with the Schengen Convention – visit the following countries (for up to 90 days every six months): Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. If you plan on visiting one of the Schengen States mentioned above during the first 90 days of your research stay, please indicate this on your visa application form. The German diplomatic mission will then determine whether it can issue you a so-called “hybrid visa”. Please notify your host institution immediately if you anticipate a delay in getting your entry visa and starting your employment in Germany on time.

4. Residence permit

After arriving in Germany, you have to notify your local Resident Registration Office (usually in the city hall or Stadthaus) of your new address in Germany. Registration forms are available at the Resident Registration Office or, in some cases, as a download on the website of the municipal administration. German law also requires that you **apply for a residence permit** at the Alien Registration Office **before your entry visa expires**. Because processing can take several weeks, we recommend applying for a residence permit shortly after arriving in Germany. The authorities generally ask to see the following documents:

- Certificate of registration confirming your place of residence in Germany, issued by the Resident Registration Office (*see section 6*)
- Proof of health insurance cover in Germany
- In some cases, a health certificate, issued by a licensed doctor in Germany. Many towns in Germany have their own “Gesundheitsamt” (health office) which offers medical examinations at a relatively low cost. Because a health certificate is not necessary for all applicants, we recommend that you inquire at your local Alien Registration Office first. Foreign health certificates are generally not recognized in Germany.
- Valid passport (*see section 1*);
- In some cases, your **original** birth certificate;

- Current biometric passport photo;
- Statement from the museum confirming the purpose of your stay, duration of the programme, copy of the employment contract
- Completed application form for a residence permit (forms available at the Alien Registration Office). If you fail to provide all the required forms, the Alien Registration Office will not be able to issue or grant an extension to your residence permit. If you cannot speak German well enough, a mentor or colleague, who is familiar with the procedures, will accompany you to these agencies.

5. Fees

Fellows are regarded as employees, and as such, are required to pay the normal fees for an entry visa for purposes of gainful employment (category D or D+C) in accordance with § 52 sect. 5 sentence 1 no. 1 AufenthV. Furthermore, fellows must pay a fee for a residence permit in Germany, and its extension, in accordance with § 52 sect. 5 sentence 1 no. 2 (about 110 euros).

6. Registering and unregistering at your place of residence in Germany

You must notify the Resident Registration Office within **one week** of finding an apartment in the town/city of your host institution (*see section 4*). If you change your place of residence during your stay in Germany, you must also notify the local Resident Registration Office of your new address. You are also required to **unregister** yourself at the Resident Registration Office before leaving Germany at the end of your stay. Registration forms are available at the Resident Registration Office, or in some cases, as a download on the website of the municipal administration.

7. Passport photos

The German authorities will only accept biometric passport photos which meet the current legal requirements. You can have photos taken by professional photographers who are familiar with the biometric photo requirements. Or alternatively, you can take biometric photos of yourself using a photo machine, typically found at shopping centres and railway stations.

8. Status as a guest researcher

During your research stay, you will carry out a research project in cooperation with the scientific host institution (museum) of your choice and are regarded as an employee of the museum. For its part, the museum is obliged to guarantee the same conditions for your security and protection as it does for the other researchers employed there.

9. Health and liability insurance, legal protection insurance and other types of insurance

Fellows must have adequate health insurance cover for the **entire duration of their stay in Germany** starting from the very first day. Your local Alien Registration Office will ask to see confirmation of health insurance cover before it will issue you a residence permit. As a fellow employed at a museum, it is necessary to obtain health insurance with a provider in Germany as soon as you have signed your employment contract. We recommend the Techniker Krankenkasse (TK) which offers new members a simple process: Your employer gives you a one-page form to sign and then takes care of registering you with the health insurance provider.

Please note that if you happen to fall ill or have an accident, neither the Federal Cultural Foundation nor the host institution can pay for any incurred expenses. Also bear in mind that outpatient and inpatient treatment is extremely expensive in Germany.

To bridge the time it takes to obtain cover through a public health insurance provider in Germany, most foreign visitors rely on their health insurance from home at the beginning of their stay. Health insurance providers in most countries continue insuring their customers during visits abroad for up to three months. Therefore, if you have health insurance cover in your home country, please obtain a **written** statement from your insurer that your cover is valid in Germany. If you come from an EU/EEA member state (EEA includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), then the following applies for visits lasting longer than three months:

If you are covered by a public health insurance provider in your home country, your provider can give you Form E106 upon request. With this form you can register with a public health insurer in Germany. Before traveling to Germany, fill out Form E106, include your mailing address in Germany, and send it

to the public German health insurer of your choice. It will cover the cost of any necessary medical treatment in Germany and then invoice your health insurance provider in your home country for reimbursement. If you get sick, your health insurer in your home country is only obliged to cover the cost of **necessary** medical treatment in Germany which cannot be postponed until you return home (according to the terms in your insurance policy). If this is not the case, you **have to** take out a private travel health insurance policy in Germany.

You should be aware that everyone in Germany is liable for damages which they cause to third parties. Many people in Germany have **private liability insurance** which covers the costs of incidental damage.

The Hanse-Merkur Gruppe (<http://www.h-weissenbach.de/>) offers special liability insurance policies to foreign guest researchers. We recommend contacting your insurance company **before** travelling to Germany to clarify this matter. You should send your application directly to the insurance provider or branch office – not to the museum. Insurance cover only exists if you transfer the insurance premium to the insurance company's account as soon as you come to Germany or authorize the company in writing to debit the sum from your account.

Information about health insurance policies:

- Insurance companies are not liable for the cost of treating illnesses and their consequences (i.e. not only chronic illnesses) which arise **prior** to the beginning of the policy. Because latent illnesses can become acute due to changes in climate, eating habits, etc. (e.g. kidney and gall stones), we strongly recommend undergoing a full medical examination (and treatment if necessary) before coming to Germany.
 - Most insurance companies will not cover the cost of pregnancy examinations and delivery if the pregnancy began before your stay in Germany. Before choosing an insurance plan, it might be a good idea to speak with your insurance company about its policy regarding pregnancy-related expenses should you get pregnant during your stay in Germany.
 - Specifically inquire about which types of treatment your insurance company does not cover (e.g. costs for routine or preventive check-ups, vaccinations).
 - Before being admitted to a hospital, consult with a representative from your health insurance provider about the necessary formalities and hospital costs which are eligible for reimbursement by your policy. As a precaution, you should immediately present your insurance certificate to the hospital and ask the staff to make payment arrangements with the insurance company directly. Please tell them that you are **not a private patient**, because the insurance company will not pay for premium services like accommodation in single or double rooms, or treatment by the head physician or “attending physicians”.
 - If you plan on taking trips abroad during your fellowship, ask your health insurance provider in advance whether you will need additional travel health insurance.
 - Changing health insurance providers during your stay in Germany can have unforeseeable consequences, and therefore, we strongly advise against it.
 - You may only receive a residence permit if you have health insurance cover effective as soon as you arrive in Germany.
 - Fellows may not be insured as students. Please make sure that you have adequate insurance cover at the start of your stay in Germany. But naturally, every fellow is free to choose the policy they desire as long as it provides adequate cover for the entire duration of their stay in Germany.
- It is also possible to take out **legal protection insurance** in Germany (motorists' legal protection). Such policies cover the costs for legal fees in case of litigation following an accident. Motorists' legal protection insurance not only covers you as the driver of the vehicle, but also as a passenger, pedestrian and cyclist.

10. Taxes, social security

Because fellows are considered employees (*see section 8*), your work on the research project is considered gainful employment and thus, subject to income tax. Not only is income tax taken out of your monthly earned income in Germany, but also a contribution to social security. Special rules may apply with regard to income taxation in your home country or country of current residence. If you are uncertain of your rights and obligations, we recommend consulting with a tax advisor in your home

country. Income tax and social security contributions are taken out of your monthly salary automatically by your employer (museum) and transferred directly to the German tax authority.

11. Contacts

If you have any problems during your stay in Germany, your host museum will help you get in contact with local agencies or experts. Do not hesitate to contact your mentor. The Federal Cultural Foundation also wishes to be immediately notified should fellows encounter major difficulties upon arriving in Germany or during their stay.

11.1. German host institution / museum

If you have any questions or concerns related to your project, you should speak directly with your German host institution and its staff. The Federal Cultural Foundation attaches particular importance to professionally integrating the fellows into the operations of the museum. It remains in constant contact with the host institution. The fellows become temporary members of the museum staff. The success of the programme largely depends on how well the rights and obligations of all parties have been defined and are respected. (*see section 8.*).

12. First days in Germany

We at the Federal Cultural Foundation hope you will understand that we have neither the capacity nor personnel to receive you when you arrive in Germany. We do recommend, however, that you inform your host institution of the exact time of arrival in advance. If you don't know where to stay during your first days in Germany, we recommend taking a room at a bed-and-breakfast or a guest room at one of your German colleagues' homes.

12. 1. Finding accommodation

Finding accommodation in Germany can often be quite demanding and time-consuming. The amount of available apartments varies significantly depending on the region and can be quite limited. Sometimes it's easier to take a furnished room which already includes the cost of electricity and utilities in the rental price. Short-term rentals are usually posted on the Internet.

http://www.immobilienscout24.de/de/finden/wohnen/wohnen_auf_zeit/index.jsp

Flat shares can also be a good alternative to renting an entire apartment on your own. Before arriving in Germany, we recommend writing to your host institution in Germany to ask whether they can help you find or arrange accommodation for you. You should expect to spend up to 40% of your monthly salary in Germany on your rent.

12.2. Opening a checking account

To transfer and receive payments electronically (salary, rent, insurance), we advise you to open a checking account at a bank in Germany. Many banks offer checking accounts with no monthly fees.

<http://www.banktip.de/rubrik2/13830/karten/Girokonto-Rechner.htm>

13. Summary

Please do not be intimidated by the mass of information provided here, because most procedures are formalized and well-organized in Germany. To ensure a successful start as a foreign guest researcher in Germany, we recommend taking these steps in the following order:

1. Apply for a D-visa at a German consulate (or embassy) in your home country
2. Finalize your contract with your employer (German museum) and register with a German health insurance provider
3. Find an apartment/room
4. Register at the Resident Registration Office in your town/city
5. Open a checking account in Germany
6. Register for a residence permit at the Alien Registration office (remember to bring along your passport valid for the entire stay, your employment contract or confirmation of your subsistence allowance, proof of health insurance cover, tenancy contract, biometric passport photo, fee)