

5th  
EDITION

Living and Working in

# Germany



The best-selling, most accurate and most frequently updated book about living in Germany

Edited by David Hampshire

# Living & Working in Germany

● A Survival Handbook ●



Edited by David Hampshire



Survival Books ● Bath ● England

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Finally, a special thank you to the many photographers – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring Germany to life.

## The Editor

David Hampshire's career has taken him around the world and he has lived and worked in many countries, including Australia, France, Germany, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Panama, Singapore, Spain and Switzerland.

David is an authority on living and working abroad, and is the author or co-author of over 30 titles, including *Living and Working in Australia*, *Living and Working in Britain* and *Living and Working in Spain*. He is also the author of many books about London including *London for Foodies, Gourmets & Gluttons*, *London's Secrets: Museums & Galleries* and *London's Peaceful Places*.

David now lives in Dorchester, England with his partner Alexandra.

## About Survival Books

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"If I were to move to France, I would like David Hampshire to be with me, holding my hand every step of the way. This being impractical, I would have to settle for second best and take his books with me instead!"

**Living France**

"We would like to congratulate you on this work: it is really super! We hand it out to our expatriates and they read it with great interest and pleasure."

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"I found this a wonderful book crammed with facts and figures, with a straightforward approach to the problems and pitfalls you are likely to encounter.

The whole laced with humour and a thorough understanding of what's involved. Gets my vote!"

**Reader (Amazon)**

"Get hold of David Hampshire's book for its sheer knowledge, straightforwardness and insights to the Spanish character and do yourself a favour!"

**Living Spain**

"Rarely has a 'survival guide' contained such useful advice – This book dispels doubts for first time travellers, yet is also useful for seasoned globetrotters – In a word, if you're planning to move to the US or go there for a long term stay, then buy this book both for general reading and as a ready reference."

**American Citizens Abroad**

"It's everything you always wanted to ask but didn't for fear of the contemptuous put down – The best English language guide – Its pages are stuffed with practical information on everyday subjects and are designed to complement the traditional guidebook."

**Swiss News**

"A must for all future expats. I invested in several books but this is the only one you need.

Every issue and concern is covered, every daft question you have but are frightened to ask is answered honestly without pulling any punches.

Highly recommended."

**Reader (Amazon)**

"Let's say it at once. David Hampshire's *Living and Working in France* is the best handbook ever produced for visitors and foreign residents in this country; indeed, my discussion with locals showed that it has much to teach even those born and bred in l'Hexagone. It is Hampshire's meticulous detail which lifts his work way beyond the range of other books with similar titles. This book is absolutely indispensable."

**The Riviera Reporter**

"Covers every conceivable question that might be asked concerning everyday life – I know of no other book that could take the place of this one."

**France in Print**

"It was definitely money well spent."

**Reader (Amazon)**

"The ultimate reference book – Every conceivable subject imaginable is exhaustively explained in simple terms – An excellent introduction to fully enjoy all that this fine country has to offer and save time and money in the process."

**American Club of Zurich**

# Important Note

A diverse country with many faces, Germany has a variety of ethnic groups, religions and customs, as well as continuously changing rules, regulations, exchange rates and prices. A change of government in Germany can have a far-reaching influence on many important aspects of life, although it isn't as dramatic as in many other countries (the Germans are far too sensible to disrupt life and commerce simply for ideological reasons). We cannot recommend too strongly that you check with an official and reliable source (not always the same) before making any major decisions or taking an irreversible course of action. However, don't believe everything you're told or read – even, dare we say it, herein!

Useful websites and references to other sources of information have been included in all chapters and in **Appendix A** to help you obtain further information and verify details with official sources. Important points have been emphasised, in bold print or boxes, some of which it would be expensive, or even dangerous, to disregard. Ignore them at your peril or cost!

## Note

**Unless specifically stated, the reference to any company, organisation or product in this book doesn't constitute an endorsement or recommendation. None of the businesses, organisations, products or individuals have paid to be mentioned.**

# Contents

## 1. FINDING A JOB

---

17

Brexit	17
Germany & the European Union	18
Economy	19
Employment Prospects	20
Unemployment	21
Industrial Relations	21
Work Attitudes	21
Working Women	22
Qualifications	23
Government Employment Service	24
Recruitment Agencies	25
Casual Work	26
Seasonal Jobs	27
Training & Work Experience	29
Salary	30
Self-employment	31
Working Illegally	31
Language	31

## 2. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

---

35

Employment Contracts	35
Salary & Bonuses	36
Working Hours & Overtime	37
Relocation Expenses	38
Insurance & Pensions	39
Holidays & Leave	40
Education & Training	43
Unions & Works Councils	44
Other Terms	45

## 3. PERMITS & VISAS

---

49

Brexit	49
Visas	49
Residence Permits	52
Work Permits	54

## 4. ARRIVAL

---

59

Immigration	59
Customs	59



Registration	61
Church Tax	61
Income Tax Card	62
Embassy Registration	62
Finding Help	62

## 5. ACCOMMODATION

---

65

Temporary Accommodation	65
German Homes	65
Garage or Parking Space	68
Moving House	69
Estate Agents	70
Rented Accommodation	71
Additional Costs	75
Buying Property	75
Heating & Hot Water	78
House Rules	78
Inventory	79
Electricity	80
Gas	82
Water	82
Rubbish & Recycling	83

## 6. POSTAL SERVICES

---

87

Business Hours	87
Letter Post	88
Parcels	89
Express Post	90
Collection & Delivery	90
Post Office Banking	91
Paying Bills	91

## 7. COMMUNICATIONS

---

95

Emergency Numbers	95
Installation & Registration	95
Using the Telephone	96
Service Providers	97
Charges	98
Bills	98
Public Telephones	99
Mobile Phones	100
Internet	101

## 8. TELEVISION & RADIO

---

105

Television Standards	105
Television Channels	106
Cable Television	107
Satellite Television	108
TV Programme Guides	109
Television & Radio Licence	109
DVDs	110
Radio	110

## 9. EDUCATION

---

113

Adapting to the System	114
Language	115
State Schools	116
Private Schools	123
Apprenticeships	124
Higher Education	125
Distance Learning	129
Evening Classes	129
Learning German	130

## 10. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

---

133

Trains	133
City Trains, Trams & Metros	139
Buses	140
Ferries	142
Cable Cars & Funiculars	142
Taxis	142
Airline Services	142

## 11. MOTORING

---

147

Importing a Vehicle	148
Technical Inspection & Emissions Test	149
Registration	150
General Operating Licence	150
Vehicle (Road) Tax	151
Buying a Car	152
Driving Licence	153
Insurance	154
Road Signs	157
Speed Limits	158
Alcohol & Drugs	158
Rules of the Road	159

Winter Driving	159
German Drivers	160
Motorcycles	161
Parking	162
Fuel	163
Car Hire	164
Road Maps	165
Motoring Organisations	165
Rules for Pedestrians	166

## 12. HEALTH

169

Emergencies	170
Accidents	170
Hospitals & Clinics	171
Doctors	172
Medicines & Chemists	174
Dentists	175
Opticians	175
Childbirth	176
Counselling & Social Services	177
Home Nursing Services	177
Deaths	178

## 13. INSURANCE

181

Insurance Companies & Agents	182
Insurance Contracts	182
Social Security	183
Health Insurance	185
Long-term Care Insurance	186
Unemployment Insurance	186
Work Accident Insurance	188
State Pension	189
Private & Supplementary Health Insurance	191
Supplementary Pensions	191
Household Insurance	192
Third Party & Legal Insurance	193
Holiday & Travel Insurance	194

## 14. FINANCE

197

Cost of Living	197
German Currency	198
Importing & Exporting Money	199
Banks	200
Mortgages	204

Income Tax	204
Value Added Tax	211
Capital Gains Tax	212
Inheritance & Gift Tax	212
Wills	213

## 15. LEISURE

---

217

Tourist Offices	217
Hotels	217
Hostels	219
Self-catering Accommodation	220
Caravanning & Camping	220
Festivals	221
Theme Parks	222
Museums	223
Gardens, Parks & Zoos	223
Cinemas	224
Theatre, Opera & Ballet	225
Concerts	225
Social Clubs	226
Discos & Nightlife	226
Casinos & Gambling	228
Bars & Pubs	228
Cafés	230
Restaurants	231

## 16. SPORTS

---

235

Aerial Sports	236
Cycling	236
Fishing	237
Football	238
Golf	239
Health Clubs	240
Hiking	240
Racket Sports	241
Skiing	242
Swimming	243
Watersports	244

## 17. SHOPPING

---

247

Opening Hours	247
Prices & Bargain Shopping	248
Shopping Centres & Markets	248
Department & Chain Stores	249

Supermarkets & Hypermarkets	250
Food	251
Alcohol	252
Clothes	255
Newspapers, Magazines & Books	256
Furniture & Furnishings	258
Household Goods	259
Laundry & Dry Cleaning	260
Home Shopping	260
Shopping Abroad	261
Receipts	262
Consumer Protection	262

## **18. ODDS & ENDS**

---

**265**

Citizenship	265
Climate	266
Crime	267
Geography	268
Government	269
Legal System	271
Marriage & Divorce	272
Military Service	274
Pets	275
Police	277
Population	278
Religion	279
Social Customs	280
Time Difference	282
Tipping	282
Toilets	283

## **19. THE GERMANS**

---

**285**

## **20. MOVING HOUSE OR LEAVING GERMANY**

---

**293**

Moving House Within Germany	293
Leaving Germany	294

## **APPENDICES**

---

**315**

Appendix A: Useful Websites	297
Appendix B: Weights & Measures	300
Appendix C: Useful Words & Phrases	304

## **INDEX**

---

**309**

# Author's Notes

- ◆ Frequent references are made in this book to the European Union (EU), which comprises Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK (at the time of writing!). The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the EU countries plus the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, plus Switzerland (which is an EFTA member but not a member of the EEA).
- ◆ All times are shown using the 12-hour clock; times before noon are indicated by the suffix 'am' and times after noon by 'pm'.
- ◆ Prices should be taken as a guide only, although they were mostly correct at the time of publication. Unless otherwise stated, all prices quoted usually include value added tax (*Mehrwertsteuer/MwSt* or *Umsatzsteuer/Ust*) at 19 per cent. To convert from other currencies to euros or vice versa, see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).
- ◆ His/he/him also means her/she/her (please forgive me ladies). This is done to make life easier for both the reader and the author, and isn't intended to be sexist.
- ◆ British English and spelling is used throughout this book.
- ◆ Warnings and important points are printed in **bold** type.
- ◆ A list of Useful Websites is contained in **Appendix A**, Weights & Measures in **Appendix B** and Useful Words & Phrases in **Appendix C**.
- ◆ A physical map of Germany is included inside the front cover and a political map showing the states (*Länder*) is inside the rear cover.



Schloss Belvedere, Weimar

# Introduction

Whether you're already living or working in Germany or just thinking about it – this is **THE** book for you. Forget about all those glossy guidebooks, excellent though they are for tourists; this amazing book was written particularly with you in mind and is worth its weight in *Wurst*. Now in its 5th edition, *Living and Working in Germany* has been fully revised and updated and is intended to meet the needs of anyone wishing to know the essentials of German life. However long your intended stay in Germany, you'll find the information contained in this book invaluable.

General information isn't difficult to find in Germany (provided you speak German) and a multitude of books is published on every conceivable subject. However, reliable and up-to-date information in English – specifically intended for foreigners living and working in Germany isn't so easy to find, least of all in one volume. This book was written to fill this void and provide the comprehensive practical information necessary for a trouble-free life. You may have visited Germany as a tourist but living and working there is a different matter altogether. Adjusting to a different environment and culture and making a home in any foreign country can be a traumatic and stressful experience – and Germany is no exception.

*Living and Working in Germany* is a comprehensive handbook on a wide range of everyday subjects, and represents the most up to date source of general information available to foreigners in Germany. It isn't simply a monologue of dry facts and figures, but a practical and entertaining look at German life.

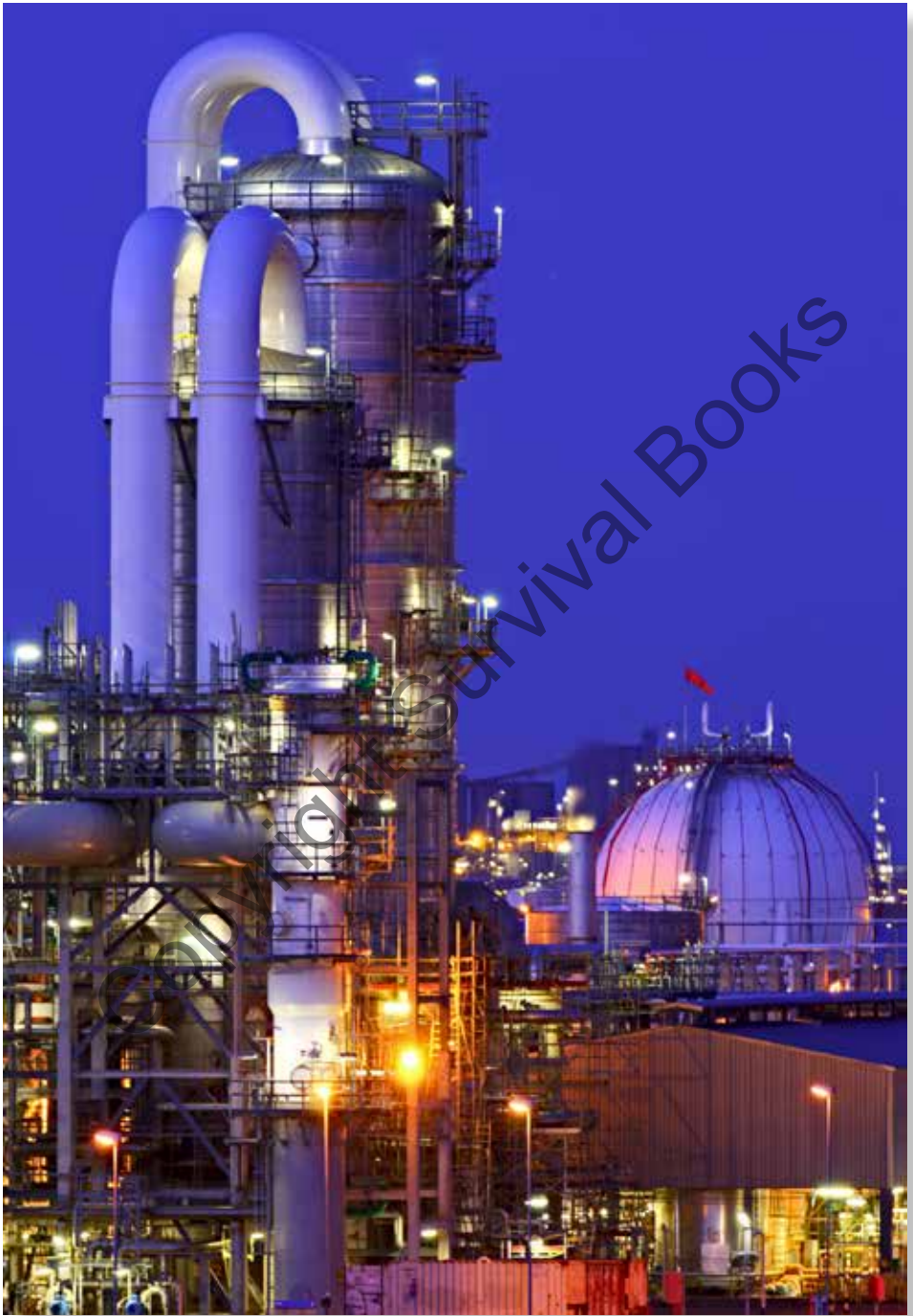
Adapting to life in a new country is a continuous process; this book is designed to help reduce your 'rookie' phase and minimise the frustrations, although it doesn't contain all the answers. What it **will** do, however, is help you make informed decisions and calculated judgements, instead of uneducated guesses. Most importantly, it will help save you time, trouble and money, and repay your investment many times over.

Although you may find some of the information in this book a bit daunting, don't be discouraged. Most problems occur only once, and fade into insignificance after a short time (as you face the next half a dozen!). The majority of foreigners in Germany would agree that, all things considered, they love living there. A period spent in Germany is a wonderful way to enrich your life and hopefully please your bank manager. We trust that this book will help you avoid the pitfalls of life in Germany and smooth your way to a happy and rewarding future in your new home.

**Viel Glück! (good luck!)**

David Hampshire  
July 2017





# 1.

## FINDING A JOB

**F**rom the outside the German labour market may look completely self-sufficient, but in 2015 it was estimated that the country needed to add some 400,000 skilled migrants to its workforce annually – to compensate for an ageing population and low birthrate – in order to maintain its economic strength. Today, Germany has one of the OECD's lowest barriers to immigration for skilled workers, although long-term labour migration is low in comparison with many other countries and many employers seldom recruit workers from outside Germany. Without significant immigration, the working-age population is likely to fall from around 50 million in 2015 to somewhere between 34 and 38 million in 2060, according to government estimates. The influx of refugees in recent years – who lack vocational training or a degree (or German language proficiency) – aren't expected to plug the labour gap, at least in the short term.

If you're a national of a European Union (see below) country, you'll be on an equal footing with the locals in the job hunt, although you may need to speak German. Americans and others without the automatic right to work in Germany must meet visa and work permit requirements (see **Chapter 3**) in order for a prospective employer to justify hiring them in preference to an EU national. In practice, however, if you have skills that are in demand you'll have little problem finding work in Germany, even if you don't speak fluent German.

The Germans take great pride in their role as leaders of the European economy and champions of industrial productivity and engineering excellence. The title of engineer (*Ingenieur*) carries considerable prestige, and degrees and other qualifications are proudly displayed on business cards and letterheads. Education is highly prized in Germany, and many engineers in industry have doctorates. (It's common for engineers to become company bosses.) German national apprenticeship and

on-the-job training programmes are the envy of the world – and, for good reason – German workers are renowned for their high levels of skill, efficiency and productivity.

In the '60s and '70s, the Federal Republic recruited large numbers of foreign workers, euphemistically called 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiters*), mostly from Mediterranean countries, in response to labour shortages. Many guest workers stayed on as long-term residents and by 2015 there were over 3 million foreigners employed in Germany, the largest national groups being from Turkey, the states of the former Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy. At the same time, over 16 million people with an immigrant background were living in Germany, around half of whom had German citizenship. These numbers have been swelled in the last few years by over a million refugees and illegal immigrants.

### BREXIT

The most important consideration for British citizens planning to live or work in Germany is

Britain's historic decision to leave the European Union (EU) – termed Brexit (British Exit) – in a referendum held on 23rd June 2016. The actual mechanism to leave the EU began with the invoking of Article 50, which took place on 29th March 2017, leading to a two-year 'negotiation' period after which the UK will no longer be a member of the EU (unless a transitional period is agreed).

Leaving the EU won't just affect the UK's relationship and trade with the EU and the 27 other member countries, but it will also influence the relationship between England and the other countries that make up the United Kingdom (not least Scotland, which voted to remain in the EU, and Northern Ireland, which has a land border with the Republic of Ireland, an EU member). It will also have far-reaching consequences for Britain's future European and world trade relations, exchange rates, cost of living, laws, and – not least – the ability of Britons to live, work and study in Germany and other EU countries (and German citizens to live and work in Britain).

The ramifications of the UK leaving the EU will no doubt take some years to become apparent, but a certain amount of turmoil is expected in the short to medium term. However, the immediate Armageddon forecast by the remain campaign didn't materialise (although the pound predictably fell sharply in value against the Euro and the \$US), but the uncertainty regarding future trading arrangements with the EU has caused anxiety among many businesses. However, many experts and analysts believe that the UK could eventually be better off economically as an independent nation able to make its own trade deals.

## GERMANY & THE EUROPEAN UNION

Germany was one of the six founder members of the European Community (now the European Union or EU) in 1957, along with Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The German government has been a driving force behind the extension of EU membership to poorer countries in eastern and southern Europe, including its neighbours the Czech Republic and Poland, who joined in 2004 along with Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. The latest additions to the EU were Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

In 2017, the EU members comprised Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the EU countries plus the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, plus Switzerland (which is an EFTA member but not a member of the EEA).

Nationals of all EU states (except for Croatia, who must wait until 2020) have the right to work in Germany or any other member state without a work permit, provided they have a valid passport or national identity card and comply with the member state's laws and regulations on employment.

All EU nationals are entitled to the same treatment as German citizens in matters of pay, working conditions, access to housing,

vocational training, social security and trade union rights, and their families and dependants are entitled to join them in Germany and enjoy the same rights.

There are, however, still barriers to full freedom of movement and the right to work within the EU. For example, certain jobs in various member countries require job applicants to have specific skills or vocational qualifications. The EU has developed a general system for the recognition of professional and trade qualifications and guidelines for mutual recognition of qualifications (see below). Nevertheless, there are restrictions on employment in the civil service, where the right to work may be limited in individual cases on grounds of public policy, national security or public health. Differences persist among the various German states regarding the civil service status of some occupations, particularly teachers and health professionals.

## ECONOMY

Germany is one of the world's wealthiest countries and emerged from the economic crisis as Europe's shining star, with one of the highest per capita gross domestic product (GDP) levels in the EU at around US\$45,000. It's also the world's second-largest exporter (previously the world's largest exporter), and its inflation rate, although rising, is among the lowest in industrialised countries.

Thanks in part to its generous social security system, along with the distaste of Germany's wealthy classes for conspicuous consumption and their tendency to understatement, extremes of wealth and poverty aren't as apparent as in many other European countries. Cynics may claim that it's difficult to become rich in Germany because of the high tax rates, particularly on income from 'speculative'

activity; and it's true that those who've made fortunes have almost invariably built them through hard work over a long period, and that people rarely become millionaires 'overnight'. There's also somewhat less stigma attached to receiving social security benefits than in many other countries, and the state benefits system provides a reasonable, if not exactly luxurious, standard of living for those who fall on hard times (although more people fall through its safety net than casual observers notice).

The Germans are justifiably proud of their successes in what they refer to as a 'social market economy'. Less *dirigiste* than their French counterparts, German governments have fostered competition in the marketplace and encouraged enterprise among individuals and businesses. However, the government exercises considerable control over business, both by direct regulation and through high taxes on income and capital; its purpose is to protect economic equilibrium by promoting price stability, high employment, balanced imports and exports, and continuous growth.

Germany's success over the last 60 years has been largely due to the rise of small and medium-size companies (SMEs) – the *Mittelstand* – family-owned and operated industries often established after the Second



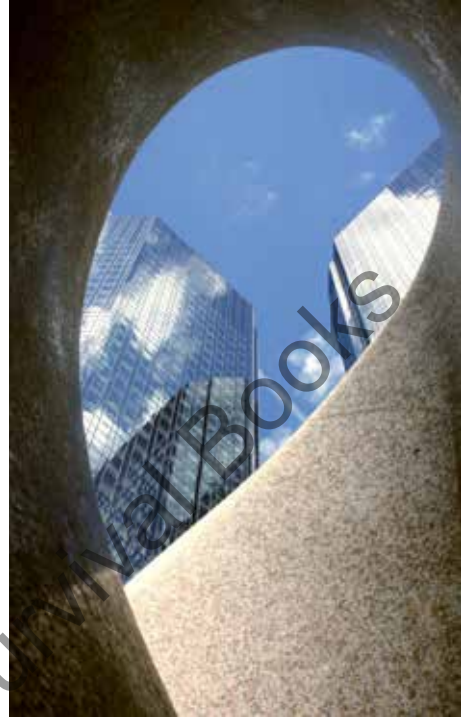
World War. Many medium-size companies employ Germany's legendary engineering skills to produce high quality industrial products famous throughout the world.

Today, Germany is the largest national economy in Europe and world's fourth-largest by nominal GDP. In 2016, it recorded the highest trade surplus in the world of \$310 billion, making it the biggest capital exporter globally and the world's third-largest exporter with 1.21 trillion euros. The service sector contributes around 70 per cent of total GDP, industry around 29 per cent and agriculture less than 1 per cent. The country's top exports include vehicles (Germany is the third-largest producer of cars in the world, including Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Opel, Porsche and Volkswagen), machinery, chemicals, electronics and electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, transport equipment, iron and steel, food and drink, and rubber and plastics.

## EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

Although English is the *lingua franca* of international commerce and may help you to secure a job in Germany, the most important qualification for anyone seeking employment is the ability to speak fluent German. Most Germans study English at school and although only a small proportion are fluent, they're sufficiently competent to make a native command of English less of an advantage in the job market without complementary skills or experience. To find employment in Germany usually requires special qualifications or experience in a field or profession that's in demand.

The public education system is geared toward producing highly skilled workers through on-the-job training and apprenticeship programmes, as well as a large academic elite. By the time a German has earned his qualifications he has considerable



experience of the profession or trade he's entering. However, there are many fields and occupations where training programmes haven't kept up with demand and if you have experience in one of these you'll have good job prospects, even without initially speaking German.

Germany has a huge shortfall of engineers and other skilled workers, which is estimated to be holding back the country's growth by around 1 per cent. Mechanical engineering and civil engineering (including architecture) are the principal areas of demand, with tens of thousands of vacancies, while qualified professionals are also highly sought in fields such as IT, natural science (biologists, chemists and physicists) and education. Other areas where there's a shortage of qualified staff include the automobile, chemical, health and machine tool industries.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Unlike much of the rest of the EU, where the average unemployment rate was 8.5 per cent, in early 2017, Germany's unemployment rate was just 3.8 per cent (the lowest since 1980). The number of unemployed was stable at 1.7 million while the number of employed was almost 42 million. The youth unemployment rate was 6.6 per cent, its lowest level since July 1992. Compared with the rest of Europe, Germany has enjoyed very low unemployment rates in the last almost 70 years, averaging just 5.63 per cent from 1949 until 2017; unemployment reached an all time high of 11.50 per cent in April 1950 and a record low of 0.4 per cent in March 1966.

However, the figures mask a sharp disparity between the regions of the former Federal Republic ('West Germany') and those of the erstwhile German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik/DDR*) or 'East Germany', now called the *Neue Länder*, where the unemployment rate is nearly double that of the former West Germany.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

In the last 60 years, relations between the unions and employers' organisations have tended to be cordial and constructive, with both sides willing to compromise in the interest of saving or creating jobs. However, the more stressful economic climate of recent years has eroded this consensual approach, which has been exacerbated as pay gaps have widened and working conditions deteriorated. With fewer income raises in Germany, strikes are becoming more frequent than previously, and in recent years have mainly involved public and service sector workers, including train drivers, teachers, post office workers and airline staff.

Like many other aspects of German society, the right to strike is strictly controlled by law

and civil servants (*Beamte*) aren't forbidden to strike. Germany has a number of large, powerful national unions, which negotiate regional contracts with employers' groups representing specific industries. A regional contract is binding on all companies within that industry and region, irrespective of whether they're part of the employers' group or not.

All businesses with more than a few employees may establish an elected works council (*Betriebsrat*), comprised of worker representatives, who've an advisory role in management affairs. The works council must be consulted on all significant management decisions, including the hiring and firing of key executives, lay-offs and plant closures, and must be regularly informed about the state of a business. Individuals serving on a works council enjoy privileges and guaranteed job protection under labour laws, while in larger companies representatives of the works council are guaranteed a certain number of seats on the board of directors. They may work closely with local unions but aren't required to be members themselves. Under certain circumstances works council decisions can override those of regionally organised trade unions.

German managers and executives rarely take work home and they almost never work at weekends, which are sacrosanct.

## WORK ATTITUDES

Traditional German companies – particularly small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), whose owner-managers comprise a recognised social class called the *Mittelstand* – often have a strict hierarchical structure with formalised relations between management and workers. Jobs and job titles are often strictly defined

by regional industry contracts, with legal distinctions between workers and management. Neither group is keen to take on responsibilities outside their defined duties. Experience, maturity and loyalty are highly valued, and the frequent changing of jobs as a way of increasing your salary or promotion prospects is rare. However, this is beginning to change, particularly in high-tech industries and multi-national companies.

It's expensive to hire and fire employees in Germany, and the works council (*Betriebsrat*) often has the right to review candidates and offer suggestions regarding personnel decisions, even where upper management positions are involved.

The process of hiring new employees (particularly managers and executives) and making business decisions is slower in Germany than in many other developed countries. This is due more to the various levels of review and approval required than to indecision. On the other hand, snap decision-making is considered suspect, and German managers generally prefer to rely on careful planning and a rational, considered approach to solving problems. As a result, many foreigners, particularly Americans, find that they must adjust to a slower pace of working life in Germany.

Many businesses close for two or three weeks during the summer, and employees are generally expected to take the bulk of their annual leave during this period.

Many union contracts stipulate the closing dates each year to coincide with the region's school holiday calendar.

Time spent in the office or on the job is generally highly productive, with little or no time wasted on socialising or idle chatter, except during official (and short) break periods. Socialising with colleagues is usually done primarily in formal settings such as the annual company outing, holiday gatherings and other events.

## WORKING WOMEN

The number of women in employment in Germany – over 70 per cent of all women aged between 20 and 64 – is higher than in most other EU nations (only the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries have a higher rate), although most jobs are in the low-wage and temporary work sectors. Overall women earn some 25 per cent less than men and the percentage of working-age women pursuing full-time jobs (around two-thirds) has been stagnating well below the EU average.

Women in Germany comprise around 45 per cent of the workforce and generally enjoy legal protection from discrimination in the hiring process. However, around a third of the female workforce is part-time, compared with just a few per cent of men.

There are a number of laws designed to protect women (*Frauenarbeitsschutz*) from dangerous jobs, excessive overtime or late working. Maternity leave is generous, and time off for family duties (including caring for sick children) is a basic



legal right. This can work against women, as many employers are reluctant to hire women of child-bearing age for jobs involving lifting, for example, which would have to be modified during pregnancy (the law requires a female employee to notify her employer as soon as she knows she's pregnant). Employers may also fear losing a key supervisor or manager to extended maternity leave at a crucial point in the business cycle.

Women make up the majority of university graduates in Germany but don't have professional and salary equality with men. There are few top-level women managers and executives and they continue to hold the majority of part-time and lower paid jobs (as in other EU countries). On the other hand, women are well represented in the political sphere in Germany (i.e. Angela Merkel!) and there's an active women's movement. Around 55 per cent of entrants to German universities are women, but far fewer women complete the rigorous business and engineering programmes required for managerial and executive positions. Women in management fields usually have difficulty establishing their credibility with older, more 'traditional' bosses or colleagues.

## QUALIFICATIONS

A remarkable number of jobs in Germany are regulated, at least to the extent of requiring formal qualifications. Most qualifications involve a training programme lasting at least two years, with or without supervised on-the-job experience or a formal apprenticeship. Germany has a world-renowned apprenticeship system and offers its young people a dizzying array of training programmes when they finish their school careers. (The system of job-related qualifications is so pervasive that you may hear Germans making jokes about how even jobs such as toilet attendant or road sweeper

Information about qualifications can also be obtained from the European Commission website ([http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/professional-qualifications/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/professional-qualifications/index_en.htm)) and from [www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/guide/recognition](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/guide/recognition).

require a two-year training programme these days.) Qualifications can be highly specific, making it difficult to change jobs unless you've taken a supplementary training programme that meets the requirements of the new job. Employers are required by law to provide continuing training for employees, and a company's annual educational plan must be approved by its works council.

- ◆ Germany abides by the EU's general system for recognition of diplomas and qualifications, which means that if your field of work is regulated in Germany you must have your qualification formally recognised before you're allowed to work in that field. This obviously applies to professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers, but recognised qualifications are required to work in many other fields as well, for example as an electrician or computer technician or in the building trades.

Generally speaking, in order to have your home country qualifications formally recognised in Germany you must contact the competent authority (usually a guild, trade association or professional society) for your trade or profession. They will provide you with their requirements, which usually involve the submission of your diploma, certificate or other documentation confirming your training or work experience. You must be able to show that the qualification from your home country is equivalent to the German one, in terms of both duration and subject matter. If there are significant differences in the practice of



your profession between the two countries, you may be asked for evidence of mastery of specific areas considered significantly different. This can take the form of job experience, an aptitude test or additional training. Under German law, the competent authority has four months to respond positively to your application; no response after this period is legally equivalent to a refusal, but you're entitled to know the reasons for any negative decision.

All EU member states issue occupational information sheets containing a common job description with a table of qualifications. These cover a large number of professions and trades and are intended to help someone with the relevant qualifications seek employment in another EU country. You can obtain a direct comparison between any EU qualification and those recognised in Germany from the *Zentralstelle für Ausländisches Bildungswesen* ([www.kmk.org](http://www.kmk.org)) and from [www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de).

In the UK, information can be obtained from the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK ([www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk)), the National Agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide.

## GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The German Federal Labour Office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)) – also known as the BA, Arbeitsagentur or, colloquially, the *Arbeitsamt* – provides a wide range of employment-related services through some 180 agencies and around 600 offices nationwide. The Arbeitsagentur publishes lists of jobs available throughout Germany and abroad, and provides vocational training,

assessment and re-integration services for disabled people, and vocational guidance for students and others. It also administers various benefit programmes related to employment, compiles labour statistics and conducts market and labour research.

The Arbeitsagentur provides its services free to both job seekers and employers. If you're already in Germany, you can pick up a copy of its weekly magazine, *Markt und Chance*, at any of its offices. This publication contains job vacancies and a 'jobs wanted' section, where job seekers can place adverts, and you can find similar information on the Arbeitsagentur website. The Arbeitsagentur has a department for foreign applicants seeking work in Germany, called the Zentralstelle für Arbeitsvermittlung (ZAV), which also handles placements for Germans abroad.

There's also a European Employment Service (EURES) network, members of which include all EU countries plus Norway and Iceland. Members exchange information regularly on job vacancies, and local EURES



offices have access to extensive information on how to apply for a job, and living and working conditions in each country. The international department of your home country's employment service can put you in touch with a Euroadviser, who can provide advice on finding work in Germany. Euroadvisers can also arrange to have your personal details forwarded to the Arbeitsagentur. The European Commission website (<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage>) contains information about EURES and EURES-related agencies in European countries.

Bear in mind, however, that EURES isn't the fastest or the most efficient way of finding a job in Germany, especially from abroad. As can be expected, national employment services give priority to their own nationals, and jobs aren't generally referred to EURES or other national agencies until after all prospective local candidates have been considered.

## RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

In addition to the Arbeitsagentur, many intermediaries post vacancies in German newspapers as 'employment consultants', mostly for management level jobs. In the larger cities there are branches of many of the major international executive recruitment companies or 'head-hunters' (*Kopffäger*); Michael Page, Korn/Ferry and Heidrick & Struggles all maintain offices in Germany, although they don't normally accept CVs except in response to a specific vacancy.

There's a variety of small to medium-size recruitment agencies in the UK and US that specialise in international placements. Agents advertise in daily and weekly newspapers and trade magazines but don't mention the client's name, not least to prevent applicants from approaching the company directly, therefore depriving the agency of its fat fee!

Websites that regularly list vacancies in Germany include:

[www.careerbuilder.de](http://www.careerbuilder.de)  
[www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com)  
<http://de.theconstructionjob.com>  
<http://de.theengineeringjob.com>  
[www.expatsengineer.net](http://www.expatsengineer.net)  
<http://germany.xpatjobs.com>  
[www.jobnet.de](http://www.jobnet.de)  
[www.job-office.de](http://www.job-office.de)  
[www.jobpilot.de](http://www.jobpilot.de)  
[www.jobs.de](http://www.jobs.de)  
[www.jobscout24.de](http://www.jobscout24.de)  
[www.jobworld.de](http://www.jobworld.de)  
[www.monster.de](http://www.monster.de)  
[www.overseasjobs.com](http://www.overseasjobs.com)  
[www.stepstone.de](http://www.stepstone.de)  
[www.thelocal.de/jobs](http://www.thelocal.de/jobs)  
[www.toytowngermany.com/jobs](http://www.toytowngermany.com/jobs)  
[www.xpatjobs.de](http://www.xpatjobs.de)

In a few instances, agencies advertise directly in international publications to assemble a shortlist of potential job candidates. International companies may list management positions in Germany with recruitment agencies in the UK, particularly if they're seeking multi-lingual, highly experienced or mobile executives.

Most legitimate recruitment services charge the employer a fee based on the annual salary negotiated for the candidate. Fees can run to as much as 40 or 50 per cent of a year's salary, which the head-hunter may have to refund if employees don't survive the initial probationary period (anywhere from one to six months).

## Temporary Agencies

In addition to recruitment agencies for permanent positions, there are temporary employment agencies in Germany, such as

Manpower and Adecco, handling either all types of jobs or jobs in specific industries or fields only. To be employed by a temporary agency (*Zeitarbeitsfirma*), you must be eligible to work in Germany and have a social security number. You must usually register, which entails completing a form and providing a CV and references; you can register with any number of agencies. Always ensure that you know exactly how much, when and how you'll be paid. Deductions for income tax and social security are made from your gross salary.

Temporary jobs are also advertised in employment agent (*Arbeitsagentur*) offices, on notice boards in expatriate clubs, churches and organisations, in expatriate newsletters, newspapers and websites.

Because of the long annual holidays in Germany and generous maternity leave, companies often require temporary staff, and a temporary job can frequently be used as a stepping stone to a permanent position. On the other hand, companies may also use temporary agencies as a way of avoiding unlimited contracts, which are difficult and expensive to terminate due to strict German labour laws (see **Employment Contracts** on page 35). To find a temporary agency, look in the Yellow Pages under *Zeitarbeit*, *Personalvermittlung* or *Personalberatung*.

## Online Agencies

Nowadays there are many online recruitment agencies and 'job search' sites (simply Google 'jobs in Germany'). Some sites charge a subscription fee to access their vacancy lists, but many permit job seekers to view and respond to vacancies free of charge. It's also possible to post your CV online (again, usually free), but it's wise to consider the security

implications of this move; by posting your home address or phone number in public view, you could be laying yourself open to nuisance phone calls or worse.

Note that German sites (those ending .de) don't usually include an English-language version unless a major organisation is involved. However, if your German skills are still rudimentary, you can obtain a rough-and-ready translation using the 'Translate this page' feature on Google.co.uk or Google.com. You'll then be presented with an instant translation of the web page in question – although you shouldn't expect it to be idiomatic or even very accurate!

A useful website for anyone planning to work in Germany is 'Make it in Germany' ([www.make-it-in-germany.com/en](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en)), which also contains job listings.

## CASUAL WORK

Temporary or casual work (*befristete Arbeit*) is usually for a fixed period, ranging from a few days to a few months (or work may be intermittent). Casual workers are often employed on a daily, first-come, first-served basis. Anyone looking for casual unskilled work in Germany must usually compete with newly arrived Turks and eastern Europeans, who are often prepared to work for less money than anyone else (not forgetting one million refugees!). Many employers illegally pay temporary staff in cash without making deductions for social security, insurances and taxes (see **Working Illegally** on page 31), although casual work earnings are subject to the same taxes and other deductions as full-time employment.

## Mini-jobs

Labour law reforms in 2003 introduced the concept of the 'mini-job' or minor employment (*geringfügige Beschäftigung*), which allows

someone to earn up to €450 per month tax-free, although since January 2013 employers have been 'required' to pay retirement contributions (although they're voluntary). The employer pays a lump sum of 20 per cent (including health insurance, pension fund and wage tax), or 18 per cent in the case of domestic help (pension fund and health insurance).

Mini-job workers – estimated to number over 7.5 million – are mostly women and the elderly. These jobs were intended to legalise informal work in the fields of catering, retail, and domestic work, although they're also popular as second jobs. Mini-jobs are also offered by agencies, start-ups and larger corporations, seeking part-time professional help.

All German industries are allowed to offer mini job contracts, but the most common types of mini jobs are poorly paid (less than €7 per hour) and exist in a deregulated sphere largely outside the traditional job framework and without trade union recognition. They were originally intended for people in transition or who were waiting to get a 'proper' job, but some claim that they were principally designed to reduce the unemployment numbers to save politicians' blushes.

Mini-jobs alone aren't sufficient to cover your living expenses in Germany and don't qualify as valid job contracts for the visa application process.

## SEASONAL JOBS

Seasonal jobs are available throughout the year in Germany, the vast majority in the tourist industry. Many seasonal jobs last for the duration of the summer or winter tourist seasons – May to September and December to April respectively – although some are simply casual or temporary jobs for a number of weeks. Some fluency in German is necessary for all but the most menial (and worst paid)

jobs. Additional languages can be a huge advantage, particularly in the tourist industry, as Germany hosts visitors from around the world.

Seasonal jobs include most trades in hotels and restaurants, couriers and representatives, a variety of jobs in theme parks and holiday camps, tour guides, sports instructors, service staff in bars and clubs, fruit and grape picking, and other agricultural jobs.



If you aren't an EU national you must ensure that you're eligible to work in Germany by checking with a German embassy or consulate in your home country before you start looking for a seasonal job. The Arbeitsagentur has reduced the number of seasonal work permits it issues to non-EU nationals to encourage the hiring of Germans and other EU nationals, and non-EU nationals may find it difficult or impossible to secure seasonal work. There are, however, a number of international summer and holiday work programmes that offer work permits and placement assistance, particularly for students (see **Training & Work Experience** below).

Foreign students in Germany can usually obtain a temporary permit for part-time work during the summer holiday period and between school terms.



## Fruit & Vegetable Picking

As in many wine-producing countries, grape-picking is a popular late summer job in Germany, despite being boring, badly paid and back-breaking. The major vineyards are on the banks of the Rhine and Moselle rivers, where the harvest usually starts in mid- to late September, depending on the weather. Other fruits that need to be picked by hand include apples and pears, mostly in the south, e.g. Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. White asparagus (*Spargel*) is popular in Germany and around 90,000 tonnes are harvested annually. The asparagus season (*Spargelzeit*) starts in around mid-April and finishes on June 24th (mid-summer) Germany-wide.

Traditionally, farmers hired fruit pickers from southern and eastern Europe on a 'cash in hand' basis, but the government is cracking down on the use of illegal foreign labour, so in theory it ought to be easier to obtain a bona fide fruit-picking job.

## Holiday Camps & Theme Parks

For those who like working with children, German holiday camps offer a number of summer job opportunities, ranging from camp counsellors and sports instructors to administrative and catering posts. The school summer holidays aren't as long in Germany as in some other European countries, therefore the season is correspondingly shorter. There are a number of internet sites devoted to holiday camps and theme park jobs, such as [www.transitionsabroad.com/index.shtml](http://www.transitionsabroad.com/index.shtml), which lists job openings for the coming season.

Germany boasts a dozen or so theme parks (*Freizeitpark*), which all rely to a large extent on seasonal staff. The larger parks may provide on-site accommodation for employees (the cost is deducted from your wages). Positions range from maintenance and catering to performing in shows and pageants that form part of the entertainment. Check local newspapers from January or February for job advertisements for the coming summer season. April is a popular month for parks to hold auditions for performing roles. Theme parks also list employment information on their websites. The better-known parks are listed below.

- ◆ Europa Park Rust, Europa-Park-Str. 2, 77977 Rust/Baden (07822-77-0, [www.europapark.de](http://www.europapark.de));
- ◆ Hansapark, 23730 Siersdorf (04563-474-0, [www.hansapark.de](http://www.hansapark.de));
- ◆ Legoland, Legoland Allee, 89312 Günzburg (08221-700 700, [www.legoland.de](http://www.legoland.de));
- ◆ Moviepark, Warner Allee 1, 46244 Bottrop-Kichhellen (02045-899-0, [www.movieparkgermany.de](http://www.movieparkgermany.de));
- ◆ Phantasialand, Bergeiststr. 31-41, 50321 Brühl b. Köln (02232-36200, [www.phantasialand.de](http://www.phantasialand.de));
- ◆ Tripsdrill, 74389 Cleebrohn/Tripsdrill (7135-9999, [www.tripsdrill.de](http://www.tripsdrill.de)).

## Ski Resorts

While Germany isn't as well known for ski resorts and winter sports as its neighbours France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, it boasts many winter resorts. Cross-country skiing (*Langlauf*) is particularly popular in the Black Forest and parts of Bavaria, and there are many small inns and tourist centres catering to winter sports enthusiasts.

One of the best ways to find jobs in ski resorts is via the internet, e.g. [www.adventurejobs.co.uk](http://www.adventurejobs.co.uk), [www.coolworks.com](http://www.coolworks.com), [www.jobs-in-the-alps.com](http://www.jobs-in-the-alps.com), [www.natives.co.uk](http://www.natives.co.uk), [www.skijobs.net](http://www.skijobs.net) and [www.snowworkers.com](http://www.snowworkers.com).

## TRAINING & WORK EXPERIENCE

A number of organisations run trainee and work exchange programmes for students and recent graduates. For most programmes you must be aged under 30. Some arrange job placements, while others offer work permits for up to 18 months to applicants who find their own placement and meet qualification criteria. Principal programmes include the following:

- ◆ Technical and commercial students wishing to gain experience by working in Germany during their holidays can apply to the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) in over 60 countries ([www.iaeste.org](http://www.iaeste.org)). Applicants must possess a working knowledge of German and be enrolled at an educational institution as a full-time student of engineering, science, agriculture, architecture or a related field of study, or be undergraduates in their penultimate year of study aged between 19 and 30. In the UK, applicants should apply to IAESTE UK, c/o Education Section, British Council ([www.iaeste.org.uk](http://www.iaeste.org.uk)).
- ◆ The Association for International Practical Training (AIPT) provides a career development programme for university graduates and a student exchange

programme for US nationals. Both programmes require applicants to find their own internships or job placements but provide them with work permits for up to 18 months. For further information, contact the Association for International Practical Training ([www.aipt.org](http://www.aipt.org)).

- ◆ For students and those within a term of graduation, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) provides short-term work permits and job search support for over 30 countries, including Germany. CIEE programmes also include study and volunteer programmes. Contact the CIEE ([www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)) for information.
- ◆ AIESEC is a student-run, non-profit organisation that provides paid internships in business and technical fields in over 87 countries and territories, including Germany. You can contact the AIESEC chapter at your university for details of qualifications and application procedures. In the UK, contact AIESEC ([www.aiesec.co.uk](http://www.aiesec.co.uk)), which also contains contact information for other countries.
- ◆ For those with an interest in politics, the Bundestag provides an internship programme, which combines work and study in Berlin. Students and teachers interested in exchange opportunities should contact the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD, [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de)).
- ◆ *Transitions Abroad* magazine, targeted at Americans, is a good source of information about a wide range of educational and exchange programmes. Its website ([www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com)) contains country-by-country listings of programmes for studying, working, internships and volunteering, all in searchable form.
- ◆ The EU and EURES have a number of programmes for young people interested in training and work experience outside their home country. Contact your country's national employment services agency or the national trade association for the industry in which you wish to train, who may be able to put you in contact with a suitable German employer. Information about