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What needs to be done before you come to Germany?

→ Visa

In many cases, a visa is needed for entry into Germany. You can obtain this from the German embassy in your own country, but allow approximately two to three months for the application process. Visas for family members travelling with you should be applied for at the same time.

The addresses of the relevant German Consulates with details on the need for a visa for your country and further information on visa requirements can be found on the website of the Foreign Affairs Office.

www.auswaertiges-amt.de

Who does not need a visa?

Group A:

Citizens from the Member States of the European Union (EU), Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein do not require a visa.

Group B:

Nationals from Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and the USA do not require an entry visa.

Generally, a visa only entitles you to entry and residence of 90 days initially. If you are planning a longer stay, you must apply for a residence permit shortly after arrival. This also applies to nationals from Group B. For EU dependants, a 'freedom of movement' permit, instead of the residence permit, can be obtained relatively easily.

There are various visas depending on the length of your residence in Germany:

→ **The national visa** is valid for residence of more than three months – but only in Germany. If you are planning to travel from Germany to another country, mention this when you apply for your visa so that, if necessary, another or a different visa can be issued instead of the national visa. After entry, apply for a residence permit at the local foreigners' registration office with your visa.

→ **The Schengen visa** is only valid for residence of up to three months and cannot be extended. It is also bound by certain conditions, and as an applicant you must prove that your stay in Germany is financially secured. In addition, travel medical insurance is required for all Schengen states (with cover of at least 30,000 euros). With a Schengen visa, you may also travel to other Schengen states during your stay. Basically, the Schengen visa is more suitable for tourists, as it cannot be changed afterwards in terms of length or purpose.

→ There is also the so-called **researcher visa or “researcher” residence permit** (§ 20 of the Residence Act) specially for researchers. Only research facilities and universities expressly approved for this may take part in this scheme. This visa, designed primarily for researchers who bring their family with them, can be advantageous as it makes entry, residence and mobility within the EU easier; it is also easier for accompanying spouses to obtain a work permit, although an application must also be made.

The researcher visa, however, entails certain conditions: you must earn a certain minimum salary, and for a researcher visa to be granted an admission agreement must be made between the host institute and yourself. If you are eligible under the legal requirements of § 20, your institute will send you the admission agreement mentioned so that you can then apply for the visa for researchers at the relevant German Consulate.

Always note that when applying for any type of visa, the reason for your journey is for research purposes.