



Vocational training in Germany

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FIVE REASONS FOR DOING A DUAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSE

Doing a dual training course is twice the fun, because it alternates practice and theory. Once you have completed your training, a variety of career prospects are open to you.

1. Twice the fun – with theory and practice

Vocational training in Germany offers a lot of variety. It combines theory and practice right from the start.

You will receive on-the-job training at a company, while one or two days a week, or several weeks at a time, are reserved for vocational school where you will learn about the theoretical principles that serve as the basis for your work. This dual system combining theory and practice will give you an ideal start into your job.

2. Young talent is in high demand

As companies across all industries are currently on the lookout for trainees, your chances of securing a place in a vocational training programme are excellent.

In the year 2013 alone, about 33,500 positions in vocational training could not be filled. Further information on how to successfully apply to a company can be found in the guide to “Vocational training in Germany”.

3. Learn and earn

When you start a vocational training programme in Germany you will be earning money from day one.

Companies will pay you a salary for the work you do as part of your course.

4. Good chances of being offered a permanent job

Vocational training may be your ticket to a career on the German labour market. Around two thirds of all trainees get a permanent job with their companies after completing vocational training.

Upon completion of your programme you will be fully qualified in your profession and earn good money – and you will benefit from the fact that you already know your company, its operations and your colleagues.

5. Good career Prospects

Vocational training makes you fit for the future. Professionals with a vocational qualification are in high demand on the German labour market.

In some fields, candidates with a vocational qualification are even more sought after than university graduates. Start a career in Germany! We are looking forward to your application. And who knows, maybe one day you will set up your own business and take on trainees yourself.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN GERMANY – HOW DOES IT WORK?

In Germany there is a special way of learning a trade: the dual vocational training system. As part of the dual system, you will attend classes at a vocational school and receive on-the-job training at a company. Learn here how the dual vocational training system works, what other forms of training are available and how good your chances are of finding a job on the German labour market.

The dual vocational training system

One way of training for your future occupation in Germany is by pursuing a dual vocational training programme. Such programmes offer plenty of opportunity for on-the-job training and work experience. Programmes usually last between two and three and a half years and comprise theoretical as well as practical elements. You will spend one or two days a week, or several weeks at once, at a vocational school (called Berufsschule) where you will acquire the theoretical knowledge that you will need in your future occupation. The rest of the time will be spent at a company. There you get to apply your newly acquired knowledge in practice, for example by learning to operate machinery. You will get to know what your company does, learn how it operates and find out if you can see yourself working there after completing your training.

This combination of theory and practice gives you a real head start into your job: by the time you have completed your training, you will not only have the required technical knowledge, but you will also have hands-on experience in your job. There are around 350 officially recognised training programmes in Germany, so chances are good that one of them will suit your interests and talents.

Employment prospects for students who have completed a dual vocational training programme are very good. This is one of the reasons why this kind of training is very popular with young Germans: around two thirds of all students leaving school go on to start a vocational training programme.

Vocational training and pay

In Germany, students pursuing a vocational training programme receive a monthly salary from the company they work for. On average a trainee earns around 795 Euros gross. Depending on occupation and region, your salary may be higher or lower. For example, mechatronics engineering trainees earn 950 Euros gross per month on average. The salary you receive as a trainee increases with each year of training you complete. Part of your wages will be deducted for social security contributions. If you earn more than 8,354 Euros per year, your income will be subject to income tax.

The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) has published a list of occupations and the respective salaries you receive as a trainee. Our guide to “Vocational training in Germany” contains further information on additional financial support that is available to trainees. Take a look and find out whether you might be eligible.

Stages of dual vocational training

Dual training programmes usually start on 1 August or 1 September each year. They comprise on-the-job training at a company and classes at a vocational school (Berufsschule). Classes include German, English and social studies. Around two thirds of the classes specifically focus on subjects that are important for your future occupation. During your training programme, you are entitled to at least 24 working days or

four weeks of annual leave. However, you may only take your leave during school holidays.

Your teachers, instructors and colleagues will give you all the support you need during your programme. After the first half of your training programme, you will sit an examination to assess what you have learned at school and how you have been able to apply this knowledge at your company. You will also sit final exams at the end of your training. As a rule, exams are held in German. If you pass your final exams, you stand a good chance of starting a successful career in a German business.

School-based vocational training

School-based vocational training differs from dual training in that you will spend less time training at a company. You will learn theory and practice of your future occupation at a vocational school, called either Berufsfachschule or Berufskolleg. This will be complemented by extended periods of on-the-job training at a company or social institution where you can apply the knowledge you acquired at school. This form of vocational training is very common in nursing, in the design/creative industry, and in the fields of business and engineering.

School-based vocational training usually lasts between one and three years. It is offered by state and private schools. Private schools often charge fees. In contrast to dual training programmes, you will not receive a salary during school-based vocational training. The only exception is healthcare/nursing where trainees will work in hospitals or nursing homes for extended periods of on-the-job training. These trainees will receive a salary for the entire course of their training programme. For example: as a trainee nurse you will earn 956 Euros/month gross in your first year, 1,017 Euros in your second, and 1,118 Euros in your third year.

Further information on the requirements for starting school-based vocational training in Germany is available under “Do I qualify for vocational training in Germany?”.

Dual vocational degrees

A dual vocational degree (ausbildungsintegriertes duales Studium) is a special form of degree programme. It integrates studies at a higher education institution such as a university or Berufsakademie and on-the-job training at a company. This means that you will obtain both a degree and a recognised professional qualification. This kind of integrated dual degree course is particularly common in the areas of business and engineering (e.g. business studies, mechanical engineering or IT).

In contrast to regular university degree programmes, dual vocational degrees do not primarily focus on academic studies. In addition to the theory that is taught at a higher education institution or Berufsakademie, students also undergo on-the-job training at a company. This provides them with the necessary work experience that opens up excellent career opportunities. Moreover, students receive a salary like any other trainee during the time they work for their company.

Dual vocational degree programmes usually last between three and five years. In most cases, the vocational part is limited to two years to make sure that there is enough time for the academic part. You can only participate in this kind of degree course if you have the required entrance qualification for German universities. The first step is to apply at a company that will be responsible for your practical training. Then you enrol for a degree course at the university your company cooperates with.

A list of dual vocational degree courses including companies that offer traineeships is available on the “Ausbildung Plus” portal. Simply enter “ausbildungsintegriertes duales Studium” in the search field. Please make sure to apply early, as these degree courses are very popular.



DO I QUALIFY FOR A VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSE IN GERMANY?

If you want to learn a trade in Germany, there are certain requirements you have to meet. For example, you may need a long-term visa in order to stay in Germany for the entire duration of your vocational training. Which specific requirements apply to you depends on the country you come from. In addition, you should have adequate German language skills.

Visa

Citizens of the EU, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway or Switzerland

You are welcome to start vocational training in Germany any time. You do not require a visa for entering Germany or starting a vocational training programme. If you would like to live in Germany, all you need to do is register as a resident at a local registry office (called *Einwohnermeldeamt* or *Bürgeramt*). Further information on this subject can be found in our guide to Living in Germany.

Citizens from other countries

You are welcome to start vocational training in Germany any time. In order to do so you will need a visa. You can apply for a visa at the German mission in your country. To be granted a visa, you have to meet the following criteria:

- ▶ You have found a vocational training place with a German company.
- ▶ The German Federal Employment Agency has approved your vocational training because there are no German candidates or candidates from a privileged country (such as an EU country) for the respective position. Candidates holding a school-leaving certificate from a German school abroad are exempt from this provision. Furthermore, your employment conditions must not be different from those of German employees.

When applying for a visa you have to prove that you are capable of paying for your living, no matter if you are pursuing a dual or

school-based vocational training course. This is particularly important when you start a school-based training programme, because on most of the programmes you won't be earning money.

For further information on visa requirements and the documents you need for visa applications, please contact the German mission in your country. The addresses of the German missions abroad can be found on our interactive "Germany local" world map.

You would like to work in another job while pursuing vocational training? You are allowed to work up to ten hours per week in a job that is not related to your vocational training. For example, you may work at a restaurant while training as a mechatronics engineer.

School-leaving certificates

What kind of school-leaving certificate you need for taking up vocational training in Germany depends on the occupation and programme you're interested in:

- ▶ **Dual vocational training:** You do not need a school-leaving certificate in order to start training at a company in Germany. Each company decides at its own discretion which qualifications their candidates need. However, if a company has several candidates to choose from, a school-leaving certificate, good results and adequate German language skills may be the key to getting the place. At BERUFENET (German) you can check your chances of getting a place as a trainee in your preferred occupation. First of all, search for the occupation you want to train for. Then click on "Ausbildung" to find out more about the admission requirements for your chosen training programme.

- ▶ **School-based vocational training:** In order to be admitted to a course at a Berufsfachschule or Berufskolleg you will need to have completed general education and provide a school-leaving certificate from a school equivalent to either a Gymnasium or Realschule. For some vocational training programmes you also need to prove that you already have some work experience in that area [e.g. through an internship]. Furthermore, some training programmes may have minimum age requirements. More detailed information on admission requirements for various vocational training programmes is available at BERUFENET [German].
- ▶ **Dual vocational degrees:** In order to be admitted to a dual vocational degree combining academic studies and training in a company, you need a university entrance qualification. In addition, you have to sign a training contract with a company.

Recognition of school-leaving certificates

In order to find out whether you meet the requirements for a specific vocational training course, you should have your school-leaving certificate recognised. The recognition process establishes which German qualification your school-leaving

certificate corresponds to, e.g. whether it is equivalent to a certificate from a Realschule or a German university entrance qualification. This will also make it easier for German companies to assess your qualifications. Find out who is responsible for recognising your school certificates in Germany here: <http://anabin.kmk.org> [German]

If you merely want to translate proof of your school education or work experience and present it in a clear and understandable form, you may want to try the europass.

Language skills

You are not required to provide proof of your German language skills if you want to pursue vocational training in Germany. However, you should be aware that communication at your vocational school and the company where training takes place will be in German. Thus, your German language skills will need to be quite good or even advanced to be able to train in Germany. Use our interactive world map “Germany local” to locate a German language course in your country of origin. Further information on language courses in Germany can be found in our guide to “Living in Germany”.



FIVE TRAINING PROFILES AT A GLANCE

Vocational training in Germany will give you a head start into your career. We'd like to introduce you to five types of vocational training in jobs for which German companies are currently trying to find staff.

Mechatronics Engineer for Air-Conditioning/Refrigeration

Mechatronics engineers for air-conditioning and refrigeration work in companies that build and fix air-conditioning/refrigeration systems in supermarkets, offices, hospitals or other buildings.

Course contents:

What are the different methods of joining components? How do you read assembly drawings and circuit diagrams? These are some of the fundamental questions trainees will deal with at the beginning of their training. In the next stage, they will learn how to make complex air-conditioning and refrigeration machinery and systems ready for operation and how to maintain and repair them. Additionally, they will become specialists on cost-efficient and eco-friendly operation of air-conditioning and refrigeration systems.

Does this description sound good to you? Then you might be interested in a vocational training course in mechatronics engineering.

Special requirements:

Working with (flammable) cooling agents demands great care and attention. Mechatronics engineers need to be highly flexible as they will be working on site in different places and environments. However, this also means that you will have a lot of variety in your job. If on top of that you have some mechanical skills and are technically-minded, this will definitely help you master the challenges of this occupation.

Places of study:

This is a dual vocational training course. The theory is taught at a vocational school (Berufsschule), while practical training takes place at a craftsman's workshop or an industrial company.

Duration:

3.5 years

Pay:

Year of training	Pay in Euros
1. Year	500 to 534 Euro
2. Year	550 to 588 Euro
3. Year	600 to 636 Euro
4. Year	650 to 685 Euro

Pay: gross salary before tax and deductions for social contributions; **source:** Federal Employment Agency, last update: September 2014

Industries:

- ▶ Mechanical engineering and tool manufacture
- ▶ Supply and installation
- ▶ Food and beverage industry

Further information on Germany's leading industries is available here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/industry-profiles

Your perspectives after completion:

- ▶ Employment in a company offering assembly, operation and maintenance/repair of air-conditioning, refrigeration and heat pump systems
- ▶ Specialisation as cold storage warehouse operator, assembly technician, service technician, quality inspector or supervisor
- ▶ Acquiring additional qualifications such as IT or foreign language skills
- ▶ Continuing vocational training to become a master craftsman or fully qualified engineer

Here you will find further information on this profession:

- ▶ Federal Employment Agency (German)
- ▶ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (English, German, French)

www.make-it-in-germany.com

Geriatric nurse

As a geriatric nurse you will care for and support elderly people who need help with their daily routines and in everyday life. In addition, you will ensure basic medical care.

Course contents:

At a school for nursing care trainees acquire comprehensive knowledge in order to prepare them for their job of caring for the elderly. This includes knowledge about healthcare and living in old age, the ability to reliably assess a patient's health status and first aid. At a later stage, trainees also learn the fundamentals of mental care and providing patients with their medication. In addition, they get to apply this knowledge in practice; this involves caring for elderly patients but also giving advice to relatives.

Does this description sound good to you? Then you might be interested in a vocational training course in nursing.

Special requirements:

As a geriatric nurse you will have to take care of quite a number of elderly people. Therefore, you should have a good memory and be flexible. Nursing requires empathy so that you can understand and respond to the needs and concerns of the people you look after. As you will be dealing with people most of the time, your German language skills need to be particularly good for this job.

Places of study:

Geriatric nursing trainees attend theory classes at a school for nursing, while practical training takes place at a home for the elderly or a hospital, for example.

Duration:

full-time programmes 3 years; 3.5 years when aiming for an additional qualification; up to 5 years part-time

Pay:

Year of training	Pay in Euros
1. Year	956 Euro
2. Year	1,078 Euro
3. Year	1,118 Euro

Pay: gross salary before tax and deductions for social contributions; pay corresponds to the collective agreement for trainees in public service (TVAöD) – special provisions for nursing care; **source:** Federal Employment Agency, last update: December 2014

Note: Private education institutions in particular may charge fees for vocational training courses. How high these costs are depends on the individual institution. Here you can find institutions that offer your desired vocational training course in your region: <http://kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de/kurs/>

Industries:

- ▶ Home care nursing
- ▶ Nursing homes or hospitals

Further information on Germany's leading industries is available here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/industry-profiles

Your perspectives after completion:

- ▶ Employment in a hospital, home care nursing, or in nursing homes or hoes for the elderly
- ▶ Specialisation as home care nurse, stoma nurse, geriatric care advisor, or nursing home manager
- ▶ Acquiring additional qualifications such as IT or foreign language skills
- ▶ University degree, e.g. in nursing

Here you will find further information on this profession:

- ▶ Federal Employment Agency (German)

Train operator

Train operators operate passenger and freight trains.

Course contents:

At the beginning of your training, you will learn everything about trains, right down to the individual components they are made of. This ensures that you will have the necessary technical knowledge that enables you to operate trains safely. After all, as a train operator you will be responsible for the safety of your passengers or for the freight your train carries. You will also learn how to shunt trains. Upon completion of your training you will also be able to check railcars and make them ready for operation. In addition, you will acquire knowledge about signalling, operating IT systems and the railway system infrastructure.

Special requirements:

Operators of locomotives, railcars and other vehicles have a big responsibility. For this job you really need to be able to concentrate. You should also be technically-minded and have some mechanical skills in order to be able to carry out maintenance and inspection work on trains and machinery.

Places of study:

This is a dual vocational training course. The theory is taught at a vocational school (Berufsschule), while practical training takes place at a craftsman's workshop or an industrial company.

Duration:

3 years

Pay:

Year of training	Pay in Euros
1. Year	732 Euro
2. Year	792 Euro
3. Year	851 Euro

Pay: gross salary before tax and deductions for social contributions; **source:** Federal Employment Agency, last update: September 2014

Industries:

- ▶ Road and rail traffic (freight and passenger railway companies)
- ▶ Mining, metal production, foundry, railcars (industrial railways in coal mining, iron and steel production or rail car manufacturing)

Further information on Germany's leading industries is available here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/industry-profiles

Your perspectives after completion

- ▶ Employment at a railway company
- ▶ Specialisation in staff allocation
- ▶ Acquiring additional qualifications such as IT or foreign language skills
- ▶ Continuing vocational training to obtain a higher vocational qualification in engineering, business administration or as a bachelor professional (Fachwirt)

Here you will find further information on this profession:

- ▶ Federal Employment Agency (German)
- ▶ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (English, German, French)

Industrial Electronics Engineer

Industrial electronics engineers fit and repair electrical devices, machinery and plant equipment that are used for industrial purposes. They carry out repairs in offices and factory workshops and show operators how their equipment works.

Course contents:

To ensure that plant equipment in production halls operates smoothly and safely, the electricians have to be fitted correctly. Industrial electronics engineers learn how to assemble components, measure electrical parameters and check control systems. Upon completion of their training they will also be capable of programming machine controls and know how to design and run electronic installations.

Does this description sound good to you? Then you might be interested in a vocational training course in Industrial Electronics Engineering – Automation Technology.

Special requirements:

Designing circuit plans does not only require spatial sense, but also drawing skills. In addition, you should have adequate numeracy skills because you will also have to calculate electrical parameters. You should also be technically-minded and have some mechanical skills that enable you to handle electronic systems.

Places of study:

This is a dual vocational training course. The theory is taught at a vocational school (Berufsschule), while practical training takes place at a craftsman's workshop or an industrial company.

Duration:

3.5 years

Pay:

Year of training	Pay in Euros
1. Year	814 to 860 Euro
2. Year	869 to 911 Euro
3. Year	925 to 980 Euro
4. Year	978 to 1,038 Euro

Pay: gross salary before tax and deductions for social contributions; **source:** Federal Employment Agency, last update: September 2014

Industries:

- ▶ Mechanical engineering and tool manufacture
- ▶ Power supply
- ▶ Automation technology

Further information on Germany's leading industries is available here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/industry-profiles

Your perspectives after completion:

- ▶ Employment at a company that builds, operates and maintains/repairs complex machinery and equipment
- ▶ Specialisation in e.g. quality assurance, customer service or production
- ▶ Acquiring additional qualifications such as IT or foreign language skills
- ▶ Continuing vocational training to become a master craftsman or fully qualified engineer

Here you will find further information on this profession:

- ▶ Federal Employment Agency (German)
- ▶ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (English, German, French)

Engineer for sanitary, heating and air-conditioning systems

Engineers for sanitary, heating and air-conditioning systems lay the basis for fitting heating and air-conditioning systems as well as water pipes, sinks and toilets. This involves planning, building and maintaining pipes and connections.

Course contents:

At the beginning, trainees choose one of the following specialisations: water, ventilation, heating, environmental engineering or renewable energies. All trainees learn how to work with metal and plastics, i.e. drilling, screwing and welding techniques. This will not only enable them to maintain and repair systems, but also to give confident advice to customers. Upon completion of their training, they will also be able to operate control systems and deal with system disruptions..

Special requirements:

This training programme requires good numeracy skills because you will have to calculate material requirements and technical parameters. Drawing skills are also required because you will have to draw design plans. Additionally, you should also be able to deal with customers and focus on service.

Places of study:

This is a dual vocational training course. The theory is taught at a vocational school (Berufsschule), while practical training takes place at a craftsman's workshop or an industrial company.

Duration:

3.5 years

Pay:

Year of training	Pay in Euros
1. Year	500 to 529 Euro
2. Year	550 to 564 Euro
3. Year	600 to 631 Euro
4. Year	650 to 680 Euro

Pay: gross salary before tax and deductions for social contributions; **source:** Federal Employment Agency, last update: September 2014

Industries:

- ▶ Supply and installation
- ▶ Electrical installations

Further information on Germany's leading industries is available here: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/for-qualified-professionals/working/industry-profiles

Your perspectives after completion:

- ▶ Employment at companies fitting sanitary, heating and air-conditioning systems
- ▶ Specialisation in e.g. quality assurance, customer service, maintenance or production
- ▶ Acquiring additional qualifications such as IT or foreign language skills
- ▶ Continuing vocational training to become a master craftsman or fully qualified engineer

Here you will find further information on this profession:

- ▶ Federal Employment Agency (German)
- ▶ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (English, German, French)



GUIDE TO “VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN GERMANY”

You are interested in vocational training in Germany? Then our guide to “Vocational training in Germany” can help you. It gives you advice on how to choose a profession that is right for you, how to look for a place as a trainee, how to apply and much more. It also tells you where you can improve your German skills and which rights and obligations you have when training for an occupation.

Admission requirements

Visa, school-leaving certificates or language skills – there are certain requirements you need to meet before being admitted to a vocational training course in Germany. More detailed information on these requirements can be found under: “Do I qualify for vocational training in Germany?”.

Which profession is best for me?

It’s up to you: you can choose from currently around 350 occupations that require vocational training in Germany. To make sure you pick the one that is right for you, you should first of all think about what you enjoy doing and what you are good at: What subjects did you like at school? Do you like working with people? Do you like working on a computer or would you rather operate larger machinery or work with tools. As soon as you are aware of your own preferences, you can look for a suitable vocational training course. The Planet-Beruf portal and Beroobi are designed to help you with your decision. However, these two sites are only available in German. You can find further information on occupations and the training they require (in German and English) on the Web Site of The Job of my Life and in this portal under “Five occupations that are in high demand”. Additionally, you might also be able to get some information and career advice in your country of origin.

Looking for a place as a trainee

You have worked out which occupation is best for you? Then the next step is looking for a place as a trainee and applying for it. Depending on which occupation you have chosen, you

can find a place for your traineeship using one of the various online job markets for traineeships. Traineeships for a large range of occupations can be found in the Federal Employment Agency’s job listings. In the dropdown menu “Sie suchen” select “Ausbildung” and start your search. A list of places for traineeships for different occupations in companies around Germany will be displayed. If you are looking for vocational training in crafts, we recommend that you use the interactive map of the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (German). Simply click on a flag on the map and then select “Lehrstellenangebote”. This will take you to the regional job listings where you can search for traineeships, e.g. in mechatronics or electronic engineering. If you are looking for vocational training in the trade or commercial sector, we recommend the job site of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (German). An overview of different job sites according to industry and region can be found at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (German).

Please note: Make sure that you apply for a traineeship as early as possible. Many companies advertise vacancies for traineeships as early as one year in advance. Training usually starts in August or September.

Getting your application right

When you have found an occupation you are interested in don’t hesitate to apply. At Planet-Beruf.de you will find a step-by-step guide to writing applications for traineeships (in German). The site also tells you how to prepare for a job interview and what should be included in your employment contract. Further information on application procedures in Germany is available in our portal under “Applying for a job”.

Language courses

Obviously, you are not going to get far without an adequate command of the German language. After all, both at the company where you are going to train and at your vocational school communication will be in German. Some companies offer German language courses for young trainees from abroad or support their efforts to improve their German skills in some way or another. Thus, when you apply for a traineeship, we recommend that you ask in what way the company will support you in improving your German. Or you can already learn German in your home country, for example at a Goethe-Institut. Addresses of Goethe-Instituts can be found on our interactive “Germany local” world map.

Young people from the European Union may greatly benefit from the support programme “The Job of my Life”. If you meet the requirements for this programme, you get to participate in a German course. Further information on where else you can learn German can be found in our guide to “Living in Germany”.

Support programmes

There are several opportunities for receiving additional support during vocational training. An interesting programme for young people from the European Union is the support programme “The Job of my Life”. It offers language courses as well as financial support for moving and living in Germany. Citizens of the European Union aged 18 to 27 who meet the specified requirements are eligible for support. What do you need to do in order to participate in the programme you can find out here: www.thejobofmylife.de/en/faqs.html.

Your rights and obligations

Vocational training in Germany is regulated by law. This has many advantages for you, as the law serves to protect your rights. For example, the company you work for as part of your dual training course has to pay you a monthly salary and provide all the equipment that you need for training, such as tools or safety equipment. The law also stipulates that the tasks you are given at your company have to serve the goal of training you, in other words, your company is obliged to teach you the skills and expertise you need in your occupation.

Of course, the law also defines your obligations as a trainee towards your company. Your most important obligation is to learn. What does that mean? When you pursue a vocational training course, you are expected to really make an effort to learn your trade. For example, you have to attend classes at your vocational school on a regular basis or make sure that you call in sick at your company and provide a doctor’s note when you are ill.

Further information on your rights and obligations during vocational training is available from the Federal Employment Agency (German) and in a document entitled “Ausbildung und Beruf” published by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Moving and settling in

In order to really feel at home in Germany, there are a number of basics to sort out first. First of all, you need to find a place to live. Some companies provide trainees from abroad with accommodation. Others may help you find a suitable flat. The best thing to do is to ask your employer if they can help you. If you would rather look for a flat yourself, you can find some useful tips in our guide to “Living in Germany”.

Going out with friends, doing sports or going shopping – Germany offers plenty of opportunities for leisure activities that you can enjoy with your friends. Further information on this subject can be found in our guide to “Living in Germany”.

Vocational training – what next?

You may think it’s still early days, but have you thought about what you are going to do after you have completed your vocational training? Here are some opportunities you may want to consider:

- ▶ **Working for a company:** Many German companies are currently looking for qualified professionals. This means your chances of being offered a job with your company after you have completed your training are good. If your company doesn’t offer you a job or you prefer to gain some new experience elsewhere, your guide to “Working in Germany” will provide you with useful tips for job hunting. You can search for vacancies in the job listings of the Make it in Germany portal.

▶ **Continuing education and training:** If you feel that you still have potential to develop and would like to take on more responsibility, you should consider continuing with further training in order to obtain additional qualifications. This will give you the chance to specialise, to further your career or to start your own business. Which type of continuing education and training is available and most suitable for you depends on the industry and occupation you work in.

▶ **Crafts:** If you have trained as a craftsman, you have the possibility of training to become a master craftsman. This will lead to the German title of Meister which is an officially recognised qualification. Many people who have completed a continuing training course as a master craftsman work in leading positions or set up their own business. Furthermore, as a Meister you will be allowed to take on trainees yourself.

▶ **Engineering:** If you work in construction or mechanical engineering, you can pursue continuing training to become a certified engineer (staatlich geprüfter Techniker). Full-time training takes at least two years and involves classes at a higher vocational school (called Fachschule). At the end your training you will sit a state examination.

Furthermore, you have the opportunity to specialise in specific fields of your occupation. More detailed information on specialisations in your area of occupation is available at BERUFENET (German).

When you pursue continuing training to become a master craftsman or certified engineer, for example, you may be entitled to financial support in the form of a Meister-BAföG. You can find out if you are eligible at www.meister-bafog.info (German).

▶ **Studying:** After completing your vocational training you may also start a degree course at a higher education institution. For this purpose, you are usually required to hold a higher education entrance qualification – a school-leaving certificate that allows you to study at a higher education institution in your country of origin. There are exceptions, however: The German Meister qualification also entitles you to study any subject you like at German universities. If you do not hold the title of Meister, but have worked in your occupation for several years, you may be allowed to study certain subjects that are closely related to the vocation you trained for. The best thing to do is to ask the university you want to apply to what their specific admission requirements are.

Do you want to study and work at the same time? You can do that in Germany, too. You can work and pursue a degree course in your spare time, study part-time or pursue a distant learning programme.

Further information on studying in Germany can be found in our section on “Studying in Germany”.

3 TIPS FROM A TRAINEE

Rodrigo from Spain has settled quickly into life in Germany. Here he gives some advice for other foreign trainees.



1. Get involved with the country and the people

My tip is to look ahead and get involved in your new life in Germany. You need to be open to the people and their way of doing things: to the food, the language and the mentality, even if lots of things seem strange and unusual at first. There's no point in comparing everything with home. But if you're open-minded and curious, you get to know lots of people. It's not a good idea to seek contact only with people from your own country or to travel home too often.

2. Go out and talk to people

If you're not coping with speaking German very well, you can take a German course too, or have private lessons. I think it's very important and helpful to dare to speak, even if you don't know the right words. You can practise, for example by going into a shop and asking for something in particular – even if you don't want to buy anything. Or you can talk to people on the street you think look friendly and ask them for directions, or a place to go out. You're already holding a conversation! So far I've had only positive experiences and I got to know some of my friends that way.

3. Adapt, but don't dissimulate

Relations between people in Germany are a bit more reserved than in Spain. I think it's important to adapt to the mentality a little. Even so, you shouldn't dissimulate, you can express your point of view. People respect you for that and it helps build an open, frank relationship with your co-workers.

“Be open to the people and culture.”

CONTACTS

If you have questions on **visa regulations** please contact the German missions. You can find the addresses of German missions abroad on our world map: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/making-it/germany-local

If you have questions on **looking for a job** in Germany or **suggestions to improve the “Welcome to Germany portal”**, you may use this contact form: www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/contact

▶ **Federal Employment Agency**

The missions of the Federal Employment Agency, a public-service body in Germany, include finding placements for workers and providing Germany’s official employment exchange portal. [German, English, French, Italian, Russian, Turkish]

<http://jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de>

▶ **Federal Foreign Office**

On the Federal Foreign Office Web site, you’ll find information on immigration law and visa procedures, working and living in Germany and German foreign missions. [German, English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese]

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de>

▶ **Federal Ministry of Finance**

On the Federal Ministry of Finance Web site, qualified professionals can find out more about German income tax rates and estimate their income tax using the interactive tax calculator. [German]

<http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de>

▶ **EURES**

The European Job Mobility Portal provides information about the conditions for living and working, as well as doing basic and advanced training, in numerous European countries including Germany. In the job exchange section, qualified professionals will find job offers from German companies. EURES is run by the European Union. [German, English, French, Spanish, Polish and other languages]

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

▶ **Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)**

One of the missions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is to help immigrants get settled in Germany. The Web site offers information about getting foreign diplomas recognised and tips on job-hunting in Germany. [German, English, Russian, Turkish]

<http://www.bamf.de>

▶ **Kompetenzzentrum Fachkräftesicherung**

[Centre of Excellence / Securing Qualified Professionals]

This centre of excellence provides information about which occupations in Germany are in urgent need of qualified professionals. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. [German]

<http://www.kofa.de>

▶ **Recognition of qualifications in Germany**

This information portal belonging to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research explains how qualified professionals can get qualifications that they obtained abroad recognised in Germany. [German, English]

<http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de>

▶ **Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB)**

Information about getting university and vocational diplomas recognised in Germany. [German]

<http://www.kmk.org/zab/anerkennung-im-beruflichen-bereich.html>

▶ **German Social Insurance**

This Web site explains about the German social security system, including health insurance and pensions. [German, English, French]

<http://www.deutsche-sozialversicherung.de>

▶ **Goethe-Institut**

The Goethe-Institut – Germany’s institute of culture – offers language courses in 92 countries, online courses, free drills and information about Germany and German culture. [German, English]

<http://www.goethe.de>

IMPRINT

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