Employing Nursing Staff from Abroad: Entry Options and Regulations

It pays to recruit nursing professionals from abroad. Find out what you need to consider and where you can get assistance.

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Recruiting nursing professionals from abroad: what needs to be considered?

If you want to recruit a nursing professional from abroad, the first step is to find out exactly which country you want to recruit from. The process varies depending on whether you are recruiting from an EU or non-EU country. Unlike Germany, many countries require an academic education to become a nurse – **professional recognition** therefore plays an important role. Nurses from EU and **EFTA** member states generally receive automatic recognition of their foreign qualifications.

Requirements for nursing specialists from third countries

Nurses from third countries need an individual assessment to have their professional qualifications recognised. They have to go through a so-called **recognition procedure**. If there are substantial differences, they must undergo an adaptation programme. You can find more information in our section "**Recognition of foreign qualifications**" and on the "**Anerkennung in Deutschland**" portal.

Here is a summary of the requirements for international nurses:

- **Recognition of foreign professional qualifications**: The competent recognition body in Germany checks whether the foreign professional qualification – which can also be a higher education qualification – is equivalent to the corresponding German reference profession "Pflegefachfrau/-mann, Pflegefachperson". There are two options: International nurses can either have an **equivalence assessment** carried out, or they can waive this and complete an adaptation programme directly. Applications for the recognition of professional qualifications must be submitted to the competent body in the **federal state** in which the employment is to take place. The German recognition granted there is valid throughout Germany.
- **Licence to practise a profession:** The profession of a **nurse** is regulated in Germany. Those wishing to work in healthcare professions in Germany therefore require a state **licence to practise** their profession. As a rule, the following formal requirements must be met in addition to the recognised professional qualification:
  - **German language skills**: at least level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
  - **Physical aptitude for the profession**: a medical certificate from Germany or the applicant's country of origin,
  - **Certificate of good conduct**: a certificate of good conduct or standing from the applicant's country of origin or from the German police is required as proof that the applicant has no criminal record and is trustworthy.

Visas and residence permits for third-country nationals

Nationals of countries outside the EU and EFTA require a **residence title** to work as a nurse. Depending on the outcome of the recognition procedure, international nurses have the following options:

- **Work visa for qualified professionals**: If the foreign professional qualification has been fully recognised and the competent body in Germany has agreed to issue a licence to practise the profession, nurses from third countries can apply for a **visa or residence permit to take up qualified employment** under Section 18a of the Residence Act [AufenthG]. This type of **visa** can only be issued if the applicant fulfils the professional requirements (full recognition and licence to practise the profession) and can provide evidence of a concrete offer of employment as a nurse in Germany.
  Note: The **EU Blue Card** does not apply to nursing professionals.

- **Visa for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications**: If the procedure for the recognition of professional qualifications results in partial recognition and the applicant can therefore undergo **refresher training** in Germany, a **residence title for the purpose of having a foreign professional qualification recognised** is required in accordance with Section 16d of the Residence Act [AufenthG].

Tip: Expedite your entry

You can speed up the entry process by applying to the competent foreigners authority for the **fast-track procedure for skilled workers**.

Recruiting nursing trainees from abroad: what rules apply?

There are special requirements for foreign applicants to train as health professionals in nursing:

- **Intermediate school-leaving certificate**
- **German language skills**: depending on the federal state where the training will take place, the applicant needs German language skills at level B2 or B1 according to the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**

- **Physical aptitude for the profession**: a medical certificate from Germany or the applicant's country of origin (can be submitted after entry)
- **Certificate of good conduct**: a certificate of good conduct or standing from the applicant's country of origin or from the German police is required as proof that the applicant has no criminal record and is trustworthy.

(Future) trainees from EU or EFTA countries can enter Germany and start their training without a special **residence permit**. Persons from third countries require a **visa or residence permit for vocational training** according to Section 16a of the Residence Act [AufenthG].

Assistants in nursing from third countries: Regulations on employment

Are you looking for auxiliary nursing and care staff? It is also possible to employ staff in care activities that require less than the three years of specialised vocational training required by federal law. This includes activities based on state-recognised vocational training, in particular as healthcare and nursing assistants, geriatric care assistants and care assistants, for which training of at least one year is required in Germany.

The entry and work visa will be issued if the following requirements are met:

- The applicant has completed training as an assistant in nursing in Germany or has a recognised foreign qualification. Other provisions of the relevant national law, in particular those relating to the use of professional titles, must also be complied with.
- The **Federal Employment Agency (BA)** has approved the employment as an assistant in nursing under **Section 22a of the Ordinance on the Employment of Foreigners** (BeschV). The BA also checks working conditions (working hours, pay, etc.).
- If the assistant in nursing is over 45, they must earn a certain minimum salary for employment in Germany or provide proof of adequate pension provision. In 2026, this minimum salary is **€55,770**.

You will find more information on rules governing residence in the "**Special regulation for assistants in nursing**" visa section.

Placement and recruitment projects in the care sector

Are you considering seeking additional support with the recruitment process? In our section "**Recognise placement agencies**, you will find basic information about private and state-run agencies in Germany.

Private sector recruitment agencies

Do you work in the private recruitment sector, or would you like to use the services of a private recruitment agency as an employer? Please note the following **information from the Federal Employment Agency (BA) on the placement of healthcare staff from abroad**. Persons from countries on the "**WHO health workforce support and safeguards list**" may not be recruited for employment in the healthcare and nursing professions in Germany – except by the Federal Employment Agency (BA) (**Section 38 of the Ordinance on the Employment of Foreigners** [BeschV]). This prohibition also includes placement in nursing **training** programmes in Germany. The list was updated in 2023 – the next revision will take place in 2026.

List of government recruitment projects (expandable)

Good to know: Funding opportunities

Since July 2023, the Care Support and Relief Act [PUEG] has also provided a legal basis for the partial **refinancing** of such projects. It is also possible to combine the costs of a B2 language course in Germany with an adaptation programme (preparatory course for the knowledge test or adaptation period) and to refinance them via education vouchers from the Federal Employment Agency (BA). The Skills Development Opportunities Act [QCG] also makes it possible to receive wage subsidies for periods of absence. Find out about specific funding opportunities, which may vary from federal state to federal state.

Step by step: how to recruit nursing professionals from abroad

Check the options: Use our **Quick check for employers** to enter your needs and go through the feasible options step by step.

Seek guidance: To find out more about skilled immigration, contact your **local employer service** (AG-S) or the **International and Specialised Services (ZAV)** of the Federal Employment Agency (BA).

EURES – the **European Job Mobility Portal** – can also help you find skilled workers from the EU/EFTA.

Post your vacancy in the **"Make it in Germany" job listings** to specifically attract international skilled workers.

Recruitment or support projects (see below) can also help interested companies find the right skilled workers.

International applicant profiles: health, published by the Federal Employment Agency (BA), presents a selection of highly motivated health professionals who are currently living abroad but would like to work in Germany.

Welcome Culture & Integration Toolbox

If you have decided to recruit nurses from abroad and want to integrate them into your organisation in the long term, a corporate integration management concept is essential. For this endeavour, you may use the **"Welcome Culture & Integration" Toolbox** (only available in German), which offers institutions or companies guidance based on 15 requirement fields.

Information on the web

Federal Employment Agency (BA)

Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe Wilhelmine-Lübcke-Stiftung e.V. (KDA)

"Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany" quality seal
Adaptation period for international nursing professionals (INGA Pflege)

German Agency for International Healthcare Professionals (DeFa)

Guidance, support and quality assurance for the immigration of qualified nurses from abroad

Pflegenetzwerk Deutschland

Successful integration of international skilled workers
"Welcome Culture & Integration" Toolbox

Print page

URL: https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/looking-for-foreign-professionals/entering/admission-labour-market/nursing-and-care-professionals
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