Visa for Self-Employment

Would you like to start a business in Germany? You can find the necessary information for your visa application here.

On this page

Visa for self-employment: setting up a business
Visa for self-employment: freelancers
Your prospects with a visa for self-employment

With a **visa** for **self-employment**, you can realise your start-up project in Germany. Depending on whether you are planning on setting up a business or working as a freelancer, different conditions may apply.

To find out whether you require a visa to enter Germany, please refer to the "**How do I apply for a visa?**" section.

Visa for self-employment: setting up a business

There are two ways to become self-employed in Germany. Either you set up a business or you work as a freelancer.

If you are looking to start a business, you may be eligible for a **residence permit** for self-employment in accordance with **Section 21 (1) of the Residence Act (AufenthG)**. The following requirements must be met and presented in your business plan in a convincing manner:

- There needs to be an economic interest in or a regional demand for your product or service.
- It is foreseeable that your company will have a positive effect on the economy.
- You are able to finance the implementation of your business concept with your own capital or through a loan commitment.
- If you are older than 45 years of age, this visa can only be issued if you can provide proof of adequate old age pension provisions.

If you are unsure whether you meet the requirements mentioned above, please contact an **advisory service**, for example, a business association based in your target region. They will be glad to assist you with your enquiry.

Facilitations for university graduates and researchers

Have you completed your academic degree at a German higher education institution, or do you hold a residence permit for research purposes? If your business start-up is related to the knowledge acquired during your studies or to your academic activity, you will still need a residence permit to carry out a self-employed activity; however, the remaining requirements for setting up a business do not apply to you. Only if you are older than 45, you will need to provide evidence of adequate retirement provision.

Visa for self-employment: freelancers

If you would like to work as a freelancer in one of the liberal professions, you are able to obtain a **residence title** for self-employment in accordance with **Section 21 (5) of the Residence Act (AufenthG)**. You may obtain the visa or the residence permit if you meet the following requirements:

- You can provide proof of sufficient funds to finance your projects.
- You have obtained any licences required to perform the job in question.
- You have sufficient financial means to cover your cost-of-living expenses.
- If you are older than 45 years of age, you must provide proof of adequate pension provision.

Do you meet the requirements mentioned above? Find out about the **visa and entry procedure** next.

Special regulations for self-employed artists

Special regulations apply to self-employed artists. Find more information on this topic in the "**Special regulation for artists**" section.

Video: experiences of a business founder

Your prospects with a visa for self-employment

The visa or residence permit for self-employment (applicable to both setting up a business and working in a liberal profession) is initially granted for up to three years. If your business idea proves successful and you are able to support yourself and your family financially, the residence permit can be extended.

Settlement permit for self-employed persons

If you are setting up your own business, it is possible to apply for a settlement permit after just three years. This entitles you to an indefinite stay in Germany. Self-employed freelances in a liberal profession may obtain a settlement permit after five years.

To find out how to turn your business idea into reality in Germany, please refer to the "**Starting a Business**" section.

Information on the web

Federal Foreign Office (FFO)

You can find out which visa you need in order to come to Germany with the Visa-Navigator.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

Centre of Excellence for Asylum, Migration and Integration in Germany

Print page

URL: https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-recognition/visa-types/other/self-employment
Date: 2026-11-11 15:52:09 GMT