



Do I need a visa?

Here you can find out whether you need a visa to be self-employed in Germany.

[Home](#) > [Working in Germany](#) > [Setting up a business](#) > [Visa for a business start-up](#)
> [Do I need a visa?](#)

In Germany, people with good business ideas are in demand. Find out below whether you require a [visa](#) to set up your business, and which other regulations may apply.

Citizens from the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland

Welcome to Germany. You can benefit from the freedom of establishment, meaning that you do not require a visa or [residence permit](#) to set up a business here.

Citizens from other states

In order to set up a business in Germany, you will need a residence permit for the purpose of [self-employment](#) (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis zur Ausübung einer selbständigen Tätigkeit*). If you are already in Germany and hold a residence permit for another purpose or a visa which was granted explicitly for the purpose of self-employment, and if you have already planned your business and laid down your business plan in writing, you can apply for a residence permit for the purpose of self-employment at the [foreigners authority](#). Additional information on planning your business and drawing up a business plan is available [here](#).

Are you still residing in your home country?

In this case, you will need to apply for a visa for the purpose of self-employed occupation at your local competent German mission. The points of contact in your home country can be found on our “[Local contacts](#)” map.

Before you apply, you should ask the competent German mission about the documents you will require. You can also find support at the [German Chambers of Commerce \(IHK\)](#) [↗](#) and at German Business Associations abroad. Similarly, institutions in the place where you intend to take up residence may be able to help – for example the Chambers of Industry and Commerce or the “[Welcome Centers](#)” which have been set up in some German states.

The [German mission abroad](#) will send your visa application to the foreigners authority at your future place of residence in Germany. The immigration authority will involve other agencies and professional associations, if necessary. Processing your application will normally take two to four months. Depending on the outcome, the German mission abroad will decide whether it can grant an entry visa for the occupation you would like to pursue. The entry visa is generally valid for a period of three months, and once you are in Germany, it will need to be converted into a term residence permit by the immigration authority. You will not require an entry visa if you are a citizen of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or the United States of America. Citizens of these states can enter Germany without a visa and will then have to apply for a residence permit within three months.

A residence permit for the purpose of self-employment will allow you to set up a self-employed or freelance business in Germany. Find out [here](#) what kind of business set up is most suitable for you.

Information on the web

Start-up Portal

[Requirements under residence law](#)

BMWi Authority Finder

[The Authority Finder will guide you to the right local public authorities and agencies for your requirements](#)

Recognition in Germany

[Information on the recognition of foreign non-academic vocational qualifications and a list of contact points](#)



URL: <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/setting-up-business/visa/general>

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