Professional Requirements to Start a Business

To be able set up a business in a certain sector in Germany, you must provide several documents of proof, for example specific qualifications. Learn here what might be important.

General requirements

There are a small number of general legal requirements for setting up a business in Germany. For example, you must be of age, i. e. you have to be at least 18 years old. Another requirement is that you must have never been banned from practising the profession you intend to set up a business in. Such a prohibition can be imposed by courts after serious criminal offences.

Before setting up your own business, you must register your planned activity. You can do this either at the **trade office** (Gewerbeamt) or the tax office (Finanzamt) – depending on whether you intend to work on a **self-employed basis (gewerblich) or as a freelancer (freiberuflich)**. For some professions, you must prove that you do not have a criminal record. For that purpose, EU citizens residing in Germany can usually apply for a “European Certificate of Good Conduct” at their local **Residents' Registration Office**. If you are from a non-EU country, you must obtain comparable proof from the competent authorities in your home country.

Additional information on the formalities you have to go through as you set up your business is available **here**.

Qualifications

If you want to set up your own business, you should have professional skills related to your business idea. For some professions, you need to provide evidence of your qualifications by presenting appropriate degrees to set up a business in your preferred profession in Germany. This applies, for example, to start-up businesses in the health service, legal advice and educational sectors, but also in the skilled trades. If you acquired your qualification abroad, you must apply for recognition of your qualification. As soon as your qualification is recognised as equivalent to the respective German qualification, you can set up a business in your profession. You can find out how the **recognition procedure** works for various professions in the "**Recognitionn of Qualifications**" section. Please note: Even qualifications acquired in the European Union are not automatically recognised.

Skilled trade professions

Special rules apply to skilled trade professions: For some skilled trades, it is not enough to have learned the trade in question. When setting up a new business, you need a master craftsperson's certificate (Meisterbrief), which you can obtain by completing **further training**. If you can present a foreign **non-academic vocational qualification** that is deemed to be equivalent to the master craftsperson's examination, you can independently practice a skilled trade that is subject to authorisation. This includes the following trades (non-exhaustive list): mason bricklayers and concrete construction workers, road builders, painters and lacquerers, precision mechanics, electrical engineering technicians, carpenters, butchers, opticians, etc. If, however, you hold a non-academic vocational qualification which is equivalent to the regular German qualification without a master craftsperson title, you can obtain your master craftsperson title through appropriate further training. In the "**Vocational Training in Germany**" section, we have summarised the different options you have to attain a title of master craftsperson (Meistertitel).

Regardless of your non-academic vocational qualifications, you should also be proficient in commercial matters. In special seminars or workshops, you may learn methods of bookkeeping, price calculation and cost accounting or brush up on your knowledge.

Knowledge of the German language

If you are setting up your own business, it is important to be proficient in the German language: Many official papers and documents are available in German only, and your customers and business partners will expect to be able to contact you in the local language. Find out more about your options for learning German **here** and on the websites of the **Goethe-Institut**.

Personal qualifications

Last but not least, you should ask yourself if you are ready to be your own superior. To assess your personal prerequisites, you can complete this **online test** (available in German only). If you have any doubts, it may also be worth seeking advice from a start-up expert.

Information on the web

Recognition in Germany

Find out about procedures for having your non-academic vocational qualifications recognised

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