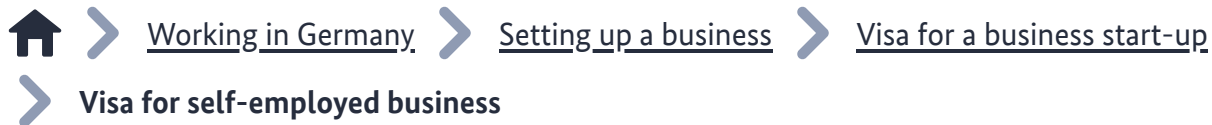


Visa for self-employed business

Do you wish to set up a commercial business in Germany? To do so, you will need a specific residence permit. Find out about the requirements down below.



In Germany, there are two ways of setting up your own business: you can either work as a freelancer (*Freiberufler*) or set up a business as a self-employed entrepreneur (*Gewerbe*). Find out more about the best approach for you in the article on [types of new businesses](#).

If you would like to set up a business as a self-employed entrepreneur, you will have to apply for a **residence permit** for the purpose of **self-employment**. To obtain this permit, you must fulfil a number of general criteria and the following additional [requirements](#), which you should ideally cover in your [business plan](#) in a convincing way:

- There is commercial interest or regional demand for your products or services.
- Your business activity is likely to have a positive impact on the German economy.
- You have secured financing for your business by way of capital or a loan commitment.

[Advisory services](#), such as business associations located in your target region, will help you assess whether you fulfil the requirements listed above.

Did you graduate from a German university, or do you have a residence permit for the purpose of research?

If you would like to set up a business related to your **academic degree** or your research activities, you will also have to apply for a residence permit for the purpose of self-employment. You do not have to fulfil the

requirements above.



Requirement: secured livelihood and retirement provision

You have to be able to make a living in Germany. If you are older than 45 years of age, you will moreover have to prove that you have adequate pension provisions.

Term of your residence permit

If your business idea is successful and you are able to make a living for yourself and your family, you can have your residence permit extended, which is initially limited to a maximum of three years. After only three years, you can obtain a **settlement permit**, which will allow you to settle down in Germany for an unlimited period.

Fees

When you apply for a **visa**, a residence permit, a settlement permit or an extension of these documents, you generally have to pay a fee. The amount depends on your location, the duration and the purpose of your stay. A residence permit will cost you a maximum of €100 while a settlement permit will cost €147 at most. As a rule, the fee for visas is €90. Please consult the competent **foreigners authority** or mission abroad about the fees you can expect.

Documents

When you apply for a residence permit, you generally have to present the following documents:

- Completed application form
- Valid passport
- **Business plan**
- Proof of health insurance

- **Researchers and academics**: current employment contract
- Graduates from German universities: copy of your academic degree
- People over the age of 45: proof of adequate pension provisions

It would be sensible to also submit documents on the following topics:

- Your references
- Your entrepreneurial experience



Note: Individual requirements may apply when submitting your application

This list is not exhaustive or universal, since the documents you require will depend on the circumstances of your individual case. The best approach is to contact your mission abroad or foreigners authority before you apply and ask them for an information leaflet. That is where you can find out about your requirements for proof of health insurance as well. Your mission abroad or foreigners authority will be able to determine whether your pension provisions are adequate.

Information on the web

Start-up Portal

Requirements under residence law

BMWK 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



Print page



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

Date: 2026-09-24 20:21:22 GMT