

# Working in Germany

Information for  
international students  
at Goethe University



# 1. Work permits for international students

Under **certain conditions**, international students are allowed to work in Germany. Often, this is necessary for additional funding. But be aware that it is not possible to finance all of your studies with a sideline job. Try to find jobs during the lecture-free periods so that working does not unnecessarily prolong your studies.

We recommend that students work **no more than 10-15 hours per week** so that there is sufficient time for studying. If possible, wait until the end of your first semester in Germany before looking for a job. This way you will be more able to estimate how many hours of work per week you can manage parallel to your studies.

**Tip:** Your jobs should get more demanding over the course of your studies and be related to your field of study.

## 1.1. What rules apply to non-EU students?

For students from non-EU countries and (until 2020) for students from Croatia

- You are allowed to work for 120 full days or 240 half days in one calendar year.
- This includes voluntary internships, even if they are unpaid. (As of 2015, a compulsory minimum wage of €8.50 applies in Germany, including voluntary internships of a minimum of three months!)
- It does not include so-called “mandatory internships“ proscribed by the study regulations! The Immigration Office requires the following documents as evidence: - a valid passport - a confirmation by the university (your faculty) that the intended internship is a mandatory part of your studies - an internship contract, or a draft thereof, containing a detailed description of your work and how much you get paid per month.
- Students can take part-time jobs such as student assistant or research assistant or as a tutor at the university or another academic institution without being limited by the rule of 120 full days or 240 half-days. This includes organisations in some way connected to the university (e.g. *Studentenwerk*), provided that the work is related to the studies.
- Furthermore, with permission by the *Arbeitsagentur* (Federal Employment Agency), students can take employment that advances their studies for up to 20 hours a week. For this, the *Ausländerbehörde* (Immigration Office) requests a corresponding confirmation by the university as well as a draft contract.
- If you are taking a language course, or are enrolled in the *Studienkolleg* (preparatory college) in order to pass the entrance examination, there are particularly strict rules: you may only work during the lecture-free period in the course of the first year of preparatory studies, and only if both Immigration Office and Federal Employment Agency give permission.

## 1.2. What rules apply to students from the EU and the EEA?

Students from EU countries (except Croatia) and from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (and Switzerland):

- Citizens of member states of the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA) are treated as equivalent to Germans in work-related issues.
- These students can work as much as they like without having to apply for any permits.
- It is recommended not to work more than 20 hours per week. If students work more than 20 hours per week (or earn more than €450 per month), they have to pay up to 9.35% of their pay into the pension insurance scheme.
- Students who work more than 20 hours per week during the lecture period cannot participate in the student health insurance scheme (except for short-term work of a maximum of 3 months or 70 working days respectively).
- The situation regarding **students from Switzerland** is not quite clear. It is best to make enquiries at the relevant Immigration Office.

## 1.3. Special rules for students from Croatia:

- Croatia joined the EU in 2013; however, for the time being this does not include the free movement of Croatian workers.
- At the latest in 2020, Croatian nationals will have free access to the German job market.
- Until then, students from Croatia have to comply with the same rules as students from non-EU countries. Croatian nationals have to apply for work permits with the *Arbeitsagentur* (Federal Employment Agency).

### **Further information:**

DAAD brochure on German employment law (as of 2012)

[www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/stipendien/formulare/ifa\\_info\\_employment\\_en.pdf](http://www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/stipendien/formulare/ifa_info_employment_en.pdf)

DAAD „Earning money“

[www.daad.de/deutschland/in-deutschland/arbeit/en/9148-earning-money/](http://www.daad.de/deutschland/in-deutschland/arbeit/en/9148-earning-money/)

Deutsches Studentenwerk „Working during studies“

[www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during\\_your\\_studies/jobbing/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during_your_studies/jobbing/)

Study-in.de „Earning money during your studies“

[www.study-in.de/en/plan-your-stay/job-and-career/part-time-job\\_26928.php](http://www.study-in.de/en/plan-your-stay/job-and-career/part-time-job_26928.php)

## 2. Taxes, social security contributions and employment contracts

In Germany, taxes and various social security contributions are automatically deducted from your pay. However, the regulations regarding students are quite generous – you pay either nothing or only little.

### 2.1. What is a tax identification number and when do I need it?

- As a rule, if you work in Germany, you need a tax ID number (*Steuernummer*), which is used to administer all tax-related issues.
- The tax office (*Finanzamt*) of the municipality where you live assigns your tax ID to you.

### 2.2. Income tax

- **Tax allowance:** If you do not earn more than **€8,820** over the course of the year (2017 figures), you do not pay taxes / the tax office will reimburse you after checking your tax return.
- **Note:** If you have a student job, you often do not have to pay any taxes. Usually these are so-called mini jobs / €450 jobs, for which no taxes are payable.
- Every employee in Germany must pay taxes. The amount depends on how much you earn and on your tax bracket. The taxes deducted over the course of a year are considered advance tax payment. After the end of the calendar year, you file your income tax return; the tax office checks this and then decides whether you are reimbursed for some of the taxes already paid, or whether you have to pay some more. The taxes are calculated based on the average income during a calendar year; therefore, if your income varies from month to month, it is likely that your tax return will result in a reimbursement.
- **Please note that** in Germany there are different tax brackets. Your tax bracket is determined based on your marital / family status and e.g. the number of jobs you hold. *If you are in tax bracket I (e.g. unmarried, no children) you are exempt from paying income tax if your income is below approx. €940/month; if you are in tax bracket VI (e.g. as a rule when you have two jobs at the same time but with different employers) you have to pay income tax no matter how much you earn.*

### 2.3. Pension insurance

- Every employee in Germany who is subject to mandatory social security contributions must pay part of their income to the state pension insurance scheme. Normally this amounts to 9.35% of the income.
- **Mini jobs** with an income of no more than €450 are exempt from these contributions provided that an exemption has been applied for (page 2 of the questionnaire on social security). Otherwise, 3.7% of gross income is due. Reduced rates apply to income between €450 and €850 per month or if the job amounts to up to 20 hours per week.

## 2.4. Health insurance / care insurance

- As a rule, even if you work, you are insured as a student, not as an employee. That means that you pay the student tariff offered by your health insurance (applies to students up to the age of 30 or until their 14th subject semester).
- However, if you work more than 20 hours per week, you may be subject to a different health insurance premium. Clarify this with your employer!
- If you are not sure, contact your health insurance to ask for advice before accepting a job.
- Further information is available in the flyer "Health & insurance".

## 2.5. Unemployment insurance

- As a rule, students do not have to pay unemployment insurance if they are in minor employment / mini job (*geringfügig beschäftigt*) or work as a student trainee. However, this also means that they cannot claim unemployment benefits if they lose their job.

## 2.6. Working during the semester break (lecture-free period)

- There are special regulations for work during semester breaks.
- Jobs during the semester breaks are subject to tax. If the job is limited to the semester break, you can work more than 20 hours per week.
- Short-term jobs of up to 3 months or 70 working days are exempt from social security contributions, provided that they pay no more than €8.50 per hour. If the hourly pay is above this amount, the exemption applies only if you do not earn more than €450 per month.

## 2.7. Independent contractors, contracts for work and labour, free-lance work

- **Caution:** International students who are not from an EU or EEA member state are not permitted to engage in self-employed work!
- Sometimes students are offered work on a free-lance basis. If you work as a free-lancer, you do not need an income tax card. You file your taxes directly with the tax office.
- In this case, your customer or principal usually asks for an invoice, or you agree on a contract for work and labour.
- Money thus earned is not taxed in advance. However, you have to notify your income to the tax office the end of the year and must file an income tax return.

## Further information:

Brochure “*Jobben und Studieren*“ (german pension insurance—*Deutsche Rentenversicherung*)  
[www.deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/232696/publicationFile/54365/tipps\\_fuer\\_studenten.pdf](http://www.deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/232696/publicationFile/54365/tipps_fuer_studenten.pdf)

Minijob Zentrale (centre for mini jobs)  
[www.minijob-zentrale.de](http://www.minijob-zentrale.de)

Taxes and contributions (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*)  
[www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during\\_your\\_studies/jobbing/taxes\\_and\\_contributions/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during_your_studies/jobbing/taxes_and_contributions/)

Employment contracts (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*)  
[www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during\\_your\\_studies/jobbing/employment\\_contracts/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/during_your_studies/jobbing/employment_contracts/)

## 3. Finding a student job

You can find job offers for students here:

- The *Studentenwerk Frankfurt's* (student services) **job placement services** or Career Center  
[stellenmarkt.studentenwerkfrankfurt.de](http://stellenmarkt.studentenwerkfrankfurt.de)  
[www.careercenter-jobs.de](http://www.careercenter-jobs.de) (look for part-time or sideline jobs)
- On **notice boards** on campus; here you may also find offers from organisations or private persons outside university, and you can also put up your own notice if you have a special skill to offer (e.g. piano lessons, language lessons, ...)
- Via **online job exchanges**:  
*Arbeitsagentur* (federal employment agency) - [jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de](http://jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de)  
*Jobmensa* - [www.jobmensa.de/studentenjobs](http://www.jobmensa.de/studentenjobs)  
*Connecticum* - [www.connecticum.de](http://www.connecticum.de)  
*Studentjob* - [www.studentjob.de](http://www.studentjob.de)  
*Kalaydo* - [www.kalaydo.de/jobboerse](http://www.kalaydo.de/jobboerse)
- In the **classified sections of local and regional newspapers and magazines** such as *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Frizz*, *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Saturdays & Sundays) – these usually also have an online presence. You can also place your own advertisement or job-seeking post; however, you'll have to pay a fee (starting at approx. €30). So perhaps you want to start by advertising via the university's notice boards or in supermarkets instead.
- Jobs at the **university's institutes**, libraries or other facilities are much sought after and can complement your studies in an ideal way. If you are interested, ask about positions of student or research assistant and tutors at your institute's or faculty's office. Some institutes have email newsletters and send out offers, so sign up to stay informed. Also check notice boards outside libraries, lecture halls and the cafeteria. There you can find many offers for sideline jobs.

Be proactive - enquire about student jobs or internships at companies or institutions where you might like to work later, or send an unsolicited application (an application that is not prompted by a specific job ad) to the company of your dreams. Ideally, you find a student job that advances your studies and prepares you for the profession you aspire to. This would offer two advantages – you earn some money and at the same time acquire skills and experience for your later career and job hunt. Employers appreciate it when students gain experience in a relevant area of work during their studies, and you are more likely to be invited for an interview with this kind of background.

### 3.1. What can I earn in a student job?

How much you earn with a sideline job depends greatly on your skills, the industry and the regional job market. For example, at the university you are covered by a higher tariff as a graduate student than as an undergraduate student. In 2015, Germany introduced a **minimum wage of €8.50/hour** with only very few exceptions (e.g. all mandatory internships and voluntary internships of less than three months).

### 3.2. What is a mini job?

Most sideline jobs for students in Germany are offered as so-called mini jobs/minor employment (also known as *450-Euro-Jobs* or *geringfügige Beschäftigung*). This refers to an employment relationship where you may not earn more than €450 per month. Under German law, no payment into health, care or unemployment insurance schemes is due for someone with a “minor employment“ job. It is possible to get an exemption from the pension insurance schemes. Note: You are permitted to have several mini jobs at the same time, but you should inform your employers about this and your income may not exceed €450.

You can get further information regarding mini jobs from the *Minijob-Zentrale*:

[www.minijob-zentrale.de](http://www.minijob-zentrale.de)

### 3.3. What is a *Werkstudent* (student trainee)?

Student trainees are full-time students who work for an employer and their job is not a mini job for up to €450. The **rule for student trainees** is that neither the student nor the employer pay contributions to health, care and unemployment insurance schemes, no matter how much money the student trainee earns. Only the contributions to the pension insurance scheme have to be paid. The amount of time a student trainee is permitted to work is limited to 20 hours per week – with a few important exceptions.

- **Work during the semester breaks:** During the semester breaks, there are no limits for the amount of time student trainees may work, irrespective of whether this is in addition to a regular job of up to 20 hours per week or exclusively in their capacity as student trainee.
- **Temporary employment for a maximum of three months:** Student trainees can also work more than 20 hours per week if it is agreed upfront that the job is limited to a maximum period of three months. This can be applied to several consecutive jobs, but only if the studies remain the student's main focus.

- **Work during lecture-free periods:** Students who have permanent employment but work only during lecture-free periods, i.e. above all at night or weekends, count as student trainees even if they work more than 20 hours per week. This applies for example to concierge or night watch jobs.
- A student trainee may work for more than 20 hours per week for the duration of almost **26 weeks** – to be precise, for 181 calendar days, which means 25 weeks and six calendar days. (This applies only for citizens of EU and EEA member states.)

## 4. Advice services offered by Goethe University

Goethe University offers a wide range of advice services related to work and career questions. Even if you are only considering a part-time job during your studies, or an internship, you should take advantage of these offers. For example, you can ask for your application and CV to be checked to ensure that they comply with common practice in Germany. You can get advice for a job interview, attend various informative events and much more!

### Career Service

Offers related to job orientation and career design for German and international students: individual consulting (career coaching, checking your application, coaching for tests), workshops and lectures (practical experiences, job orientation, training for applications, a good start to the job, qualifications for specific professional areas, seminars on life/work balance).

**There is also a special Career service for international students!**

[www.career.uni-frankfurt.de/59623356/International-Career-Service](http://www.career.uni-frankfurt.de/59623356/International-Career-Service)

Further information: [www.career.uni-frankfurt.de](http://www.career.uni-frankfurt.de)

### Career Center and *Arbeitsagentur* (federal employment agency)

The Career Center forms part of the Career Service to help students and graduates find jobs in cooperation with external partners from the business world. Furthermore, there are courses for additional qualifications, and career fairs. Both the Career Center and the *Arbeitsagentur* (federal employment agency) offer consultation hours in the *Hörsaalzentrum* (main lecture hall building, Campus Westend).

*Arbeitsagentur*: Mondays & Fridays 09:00-13:00

Goethe University Career Center: Mondays 14:00-17:00 and Thursdays 13:00-17:00

Further information: [www.careercenter-jobs.de](http://www.careercenter-jobs.de)

### General advice services of the *AStA Frankfurt* and the *DGB Jugend*

First-step advice on matters of employment law (for all students) in the AstA Campus Office (Campus Westend, white bungalow between the Casino and the PA building, room 7)

Further information: [asta-frankfurt.de/angebote/beratung-hilfe/campusoffice](http://asta-frankfurt.de/angebote/beratung-hilfe/campusoffice)