

guideline for applicants in germany

BAHNHOF



The **German Indian Startup Exchange Program (GINSEP)** is a non-monetary platform initiated by the German Startups Association and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) to strengthen and foster exchange between India and Germany in the startup space and support Indian and German startups in their efforts to gain access to the respective other market.



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intro

The German economy has been steadily growing over the past few year with excellent job opportunities for international qualified professionals. Especially professionals with a tech background are in dire need in Germany and its growing tech startup ecosystem. This mainly concerns the fields of medicine, engineering in mechanical and vehicle construction, electrical engineering, IT and software development as well as programming. More than 50% of companies see the lack of qualified professionals as the greatest threat to their business development, compared to 16% in 2010. The German government has realised the need for international professionals and in 2020 enacted the 'Skilled Workers Immigration Act' which expands the framework for the immig-



ration of skilled workers from countries outside the European Union to Germany. Companies that have already identified suitable international staff and would like to go through the visa and recognition process more quickly can request an accelerated procedure for skilled workers from the foreigners authorities in Germany. The basis of an expedited procedure is an agreement concluded between the company and the foreigners registration office which includes powers of attorney and obligations for the employer, the qualified professional and the relevant authorities and describes the course of action including the parties and the deadlines.¹ All the bodies involved have to work towards tighter deadlines. However, already since 2012, highly qualified foreign professionals can join the German labour market in shortage occupations such as the STEM fields via the Blue Card EU. A national of a non-EU country can apply for the Blue Card EU for Germany if he or she has a German or a recognised foreign university degree or a foreign university degree comparable to a German university degree and has an employment contract with a gross annual salary of at least €56,800 (in 2021). In the so-called shortage occupations such as natural scientists, mathematicians, engineers, doctors and IT specialists, an employment contract with a minimum gross annual salary of €44,304 is required.

Especially among Indian professionals, Germany has gained traction and is among the most popular destinations to immigrate. Notably the German tech startup ecosystem is in need of experienced tech professionals and an increasing number of startups are employing staff from across the world. The document on hand provides a hands-on guide for Indian tech professionals seeking a job in the German startup ecosystem. Despite an overview of the German tech startup ecosystem, the guide also provides a variety of tips and tricks on how to find a suitable tech job in the startup ecosystem in Germany. It gives insights into the general living conditions of the country and what to expect when moving to Germany.

the german tech startup scene



germany's diversity is influencing regional startup hubs

Germany with its 83 million citizens is one of Europe's leading tech startup powerhouses. In 2020, Germany attracted \$5.4 billion in venture capital, despite the corona pandemic. This is an almost 100% increase compared to the previous year. Some of the rising stars are companies like Lilium, which aspires to develop the world's first fully-electric vertical take-off and landing jet, or Raisin, a pan-European marketplace for savings.² While North Rhine-Westphalia leads in terms of startup numbers by federal state, Berlin, the metropolitan region Rhine-Ruhr, Munich and Hamburg remain the startup hotspots in Germany. Berlin has also become visible in the world and is currently ranking number 16 in the Startup Genome's 2020 Ranking. From Munich in the far south up to Hamburg in the north. Every region has its own unique startup ecosystem. Each of the cities/regions are heavily influenced by local conditions. While Munich is home to car manufacturers like BMW, insurance companies like Allianz or the chemical industry with businesses like Linde, Berlin on the other side is benefitting from its cultural diversity. With its four big universities which alone have over 100.000 students, Berlin is deeply influenced by the education sector. According to the recent Startup Monitor, 73% of the local founders in Berlin think that the proximity to the university landscape has a positive impact on the startup ecosystem. The Hamburg startup ecosystem is especially dominant in the fields of Mobility, Automotive and Logistics. This does not come as a surprise given Hamburg's rich trade history and the fact that Hamburg is home to Airbus and Lufthansa at the same time. Each of the cities/regions in Germany offer different opportunities for international tech professionals seeking a job in a German startup.

²Sifted, 2020, ³Startup Monitor 2020, ⁴Startup Genome, 2020

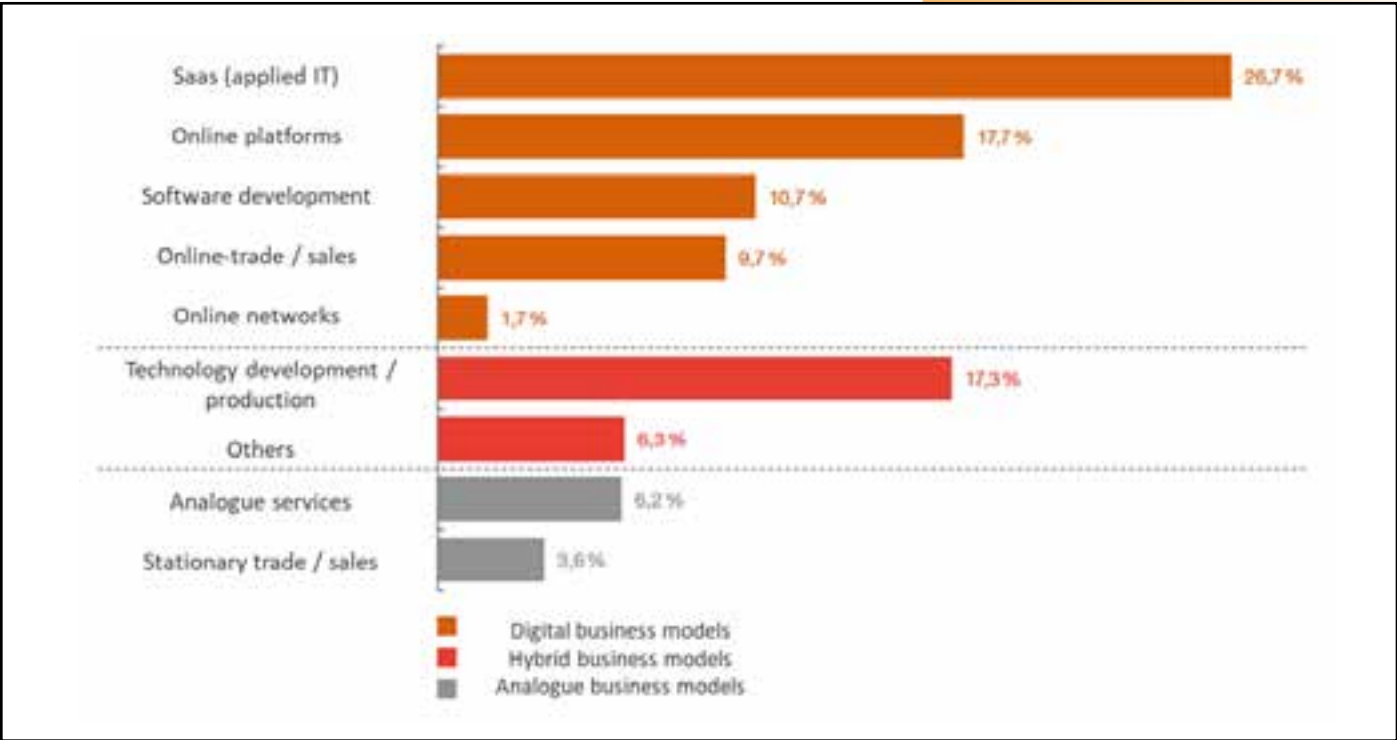
... IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GERMANY AND THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM of each individual city and region in order to identify the region that most suits your career path, visit our [GINSEP map](#). We have experts located in almost every bigger city in Germany that can tell you more about the startups located in this region and suitable career opportunities as an international tech professional.

tip!

ict is the dominating sector in germany

The German startup ecosystem is active in various sectors with the ICT sector leading the ranking. More than 31.8% of startups are active in the ICT sector. German startups are living the digital transformation as the recent German Startup Monitor indicates. More than two-thirds of startups surveyed for the reports assign themselves to a digital business model (66.6%). With a year-on-year increase of 3.9 percentage points, software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications are in particular popular as a business model. 26,7% of startups with a digital business model work in this field, followed by 17.7% developing online platforms and 17.3% active in the technology development/production field.

At the same time, Artificial intelligence (AI) is on the rise among German startups. For almost 43% of the startups survey for the German Monitor the technology has a clear influence on their business model. The relevance of virtual and augmented reality (6.6%) and blockchain as well as blockchain technology (3.7%) are rated significantly lower by the startups. Many startups still do not see these technologies as central factors for their business model.⁵



⁵Startup Monitor, 2020

germany, a destination for international founders and professionals

Startups in Germany are international in every aspect: Over 20% of the founders surveyed for the German Startup Monitor have an immigration background and the proportion of foreign employees is about 26%. Especially Berlin with 20.8% and the Rhine-Ruhr area with 17.2% have high numbers of foreign startup founders. Berlin and Munich are particularly international in terms of finding employment: Startups in these two cities employ a particularly large number of foreign staff – in Berlin English already dominates as the working language. Both cities also have the highest share of employees from non-European countries. Additionally, as of 2020 Berlin and Munich are also the two cities in which startups plan many new recruitments in the coming 12 months. These two cities thus are also increasingly becoming hotspots for international tech professionals. Startups in Germany are not only international in terms of founders and employees but are also increasingly looking outside of Germany for new markets. 66.1% of German startups are planning to internationalise in the coming 12 months, despite challenges imposed by the corona virus. While most startups are looking at the European Union as an expansion market, bigger startups are more commonly striving to explore global markets.



tip!

We have compiled a few resources that help you to gain more information about the different startup ecosystems in Germany and to identify potential startup employers in your dream location:

- **Berlin** startup-map.berlin
- **Frankfurt** startupgenome.com
- **Karlsruhe** www.startupbw.de
- **Munich** www.munich-startup.de
- **Rhine-Ruhr Area** www.nrwinvest.com



getting a tech job in germany's startup ecosystem

identifying the right job opportunities

Finding a job abroad can be tiresome and a long process. Experience shows that the processing of employment visa can take up to six months in any German consulate in India. In particular, getting a timely appointment to submit the papers has been a challenge in the past. However, the 'Skilled Workers Immigration Act' is seeking to accelerate the visa process in the future.

There are two routes to score a tech job in Germany, depending on your current career path and life circumstances. The first path is slightly longer but is an option if you are early in your career. You could decide to obtain a bachelor or master degree in Germany. Almost all universities in Germany offer free graduation programs and in the meanwhile, there are plenty of courses being conducted in English, especially in Germany's so-called 'Universities of Applied Sciences'. Universities of Applied Sciences are more practical in nature than tradition universities and can be found even in smaller cities in Germany.

tip!

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is your go-to address when it comes to planning your studies in Germany. You can find an excellent overview of the different universities and subjects as well as requirements and the application process here: www.daad.de

Once you graduate from any recognised German university you will get an 18-months residence permit to find a job. However, the job needs to correspond to your university degree obtained in Germany. Each university may have their own career service or website supporting you in identifying a job. However, you should also attend regular job fairs such as the [Tech Job Fair](#) or other events such as conducted by [Tech Meetups](#) to identify tech jobs in startups or regular businesses. [Eventbrite](#) is another source that can help you in identifying events that seek bridging the gap between tech professionals and startups.

You can also go for the direct route in identifying a tech job in Germany. There are various job portals seeking to help you in identifying your dream job. You can either find a startup job on some of the more common job portals such as stepstone or monster or use job platforms only for startup jobs. We have listed some of the most well-known platforms for you in the box on the right side.

There are also a few Indian companies that have specialised in supporting Indian professionals to find a job abroad. [Y Axis](#) does not only have a job portal but also supports in resume writing, visa application, etc.



tip!

... **The German startup Educaro with an office in Bangalore also offers end-to-end support for your journey to Germany.** Besides helping you to identify a university or a job placement, they also offer support with all bureaucratic and administrative hurdles as well as provide German language classes conducted by native speakers. For more information visit [Educaro's website](#).

P.S.: Educaro is also part of the GINSEP network and can be reached directly via the [GINSEP map](#).

Like anywhere in the world networks or so called 'Vitamin B' play an important role in finding a job. If you have previously worked with German tech companies, you can try to reach out to them to identify job opportunities. You could also reach out to the huge Indian diaspora in Germany that is organised in different networks. Some of these are:

- [The German-Indian Business Forum](#)
- [German-Indian Round Table](#)
- [Let's bridge IT](#)
- [Indian Entrepreneurs Forum](#)

General job platforms:

- www.stepstone.de
- www.monster.de
- www.indeed.com
- www.glassdoor.com

Social networks:

- www.linkedin.com
- www.xing.com

Platforms specially made for students:

- www.absolventa.de
- www.jobteaser.com
- www.campusjaeger.de

Jobs in startups:

- www.gruenderszene.de
- www.angel.co
- www.startuplist.de
- startupsucht.com
- germanystartupjobs.com
- www.startus.cc
- www.eu-startups.com

Regional startup job platforms:

- berlinstartupjobs.com
- www.munich-startup-jobs.com

Platforms specially made for tech jobs:

- germanitjobs.com
- www.honeypot.io
- relocate.me

writing the perfect job application

Once you have found your perfect startup job, it is time to write the application. You usually need a CV and a cover letter to apply for a job. However, Germans prefer also supporting documents such as reference letters by your previous employers or university degree certificates. Unlike the Indian CV template which mostly start with an executive summary and uses the functional format, Germans prefer CVs with a passport picture and in a reverse-chronological order with the most recent experience coming first.

5 useful tips

- Make sure that during the time of application your LinkedIn or any other profile that demonstrates your experience is up to date. An increasing number of employers are looking out for these.
- Once you have decided for Germany as a country to start or continue your career, start learning German. As finding a job takes time, it is the perfect time to polish your German skills. While startups often are more flexible and English has become the dominant language in the Berlin's startup ecosystem, most German companies still have German as their main language.
- For the perfect application you need two things: A covering letter (about 1 page) and a Curriculum Vitae (CV) (max. 2 pages). However, many employers in Germany also like to see your references from previous employers and your university degrees. If you send these along, it significantly increases your chances of finding a job.
- Qualifications and degrees from Germany and India differ. Make it as easy as possible for your potential employer to understand your CV. Do not use abbreviations not common in Germany or try to explain them. There are lots of sample German CVs out there.
- Unlike in India, Germans still prefer a passport picture on the CV. Indian CVs also often start with an executive summary which is not quite common in Germany. German recruiters also favour candidates with no gap in their CV. If there is, please explain why!

tip!

...The German startup **meetra** is supporting Indian tech professionals in integrating in the German labour market. On their website you can find a lot of useful tricks while applying for a job in Germany including hand-picked job announcements. They also provide support in evaluating and improving your application, offer career workshops and career coaching as well as personal assistance to navigate the German bureaucracy and the visa process.

While English CVs and cover letters are more and more accepted, especially among startups, we recommend writing your CV in German and get it proofread by a native speaker.

meetra has summarized how a perfect CV and cover letter looks like in two blog articles:

- [Creating a CV that will convince recruiters in Germany](#)
- [How to write the perfect cover letter](#)

however, we have summarized it for you once more in the table below:

The CV

- A Curriculum vitae (or CV) is basically a list of your career so far. Here you are not supposed to write plain text. It is enough to compile your previous jobs in bullet points and to briefly describe your tasks there.
- Besides your professional career also your education is a matter of interest. Put your university or school education in a separate list in your CV with the most recent experience on top. You can also give your focus of study and your final score.
- Germans are very particular about the formatting. Do not use different fonts and try to avoid typos in your CV.

**The Cover Letter**

- The Cover Letter is the first thing your future employer will see about you, so better impress! Most importantly you should describe why you would like this specific job at this specific company.
- You should start your cover letter with addressing the recruiter/contact person (if the person is mentioned online). Also, do not forget to explicitly name the job you are applying for to avoid confusion.
- A Cover Letter is always an actual letter to write in continuous text. So, do not use bullet points.

The CV

- Most important about a CV is the structure! Most applicants are sticking with the following structure:
 - Name, address, contact details (mail, phone number)
 - Professional experience
 - Education
 - Language skills
 - Special skills and interests
 - Certificates

tip!**... for certificates:**

Germans love structure. So maybe provide a brief table of contents for the certificates the recruiter can expect.

... to find suitable Cvs:

You are not alone! Feel free to get inspired by the structure and design other applicants used for their CV.

The Cover Letter

- Oftentimes job applicants just use the same text for different companies repeatedly, that is the worst thing you can do since the recruiter will know how much effort you have put into this letter right away.
- Most importantly take your time and describe your motivation for the specific job. What helps a lot here is to get insights, so you get a feeling of the expectations of the company. Here their social media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn) and the company website will help.
- Another aspect you should think about is to stick out of the mass. Most likely you will not be the only person interested in the job. Why should the company choose you and no one else? Convince them with your unique skills and expertise set! Pick out 1-2 requirements from the job profile and outline how you will fulfil them.
- Last but not least, get your Cover Letter proofread. Grammar and spelling mistakes are the worst and can really cost you the job.



preparing for the job interview

Once you have applied, it is time to wait. Usually, German companies inform applicants about the status of their application. However, this may be slightly different in startups as their processes may not be as elaborated yet. If your application was successful, you will be invited for a job interview.

We have compiled seven handy tips on how to make the best out of this opportunity:

Do your homework:

In a job interview, there are many aspects you cannot influence. You cannot decide the questions you will be asked; you cannot decide the mood of the recruiter, but you can influence one thing: being prepared. You should be prepared as well as possible. So read the job advertisement again! What is required from you? Prepare for questions you are sure about to get asked and think about something innovative that distinguishes you from other candidates. Nothing is worse than silence after ordinary questions like: "Tell us about you!" or "Why did you apply for this job?". Also, it helps to get an understanding about the company you are applying for. What is the product/solution they are selling? How is the organisational structure? What processes are they going through at the moment? Read everything you can find about your future employer.

Practice:

Telling someone why you are the perfect match for the job might be a bit weird in the first place. But there is help: practice! Grab a friend of yours and let him or her play the recruiter. Here you can prepare as good as it gets for certain questions. Also, you are going to save a ton of time you are thinking about the answer in the real interview later.

Stand out of the mass:

Job recruiters are doing hundreds of interviews a year. Of course, they cannot come up with different questions all the time. Probably they also already know the most common answers. If you are answer-

ing to the question "What is your biggest weakness?" with "Impatience!", it is probably the answer recruiters have already heard 95%, so be the other 5% and answer innovative. For example, "Of course I have weaknesses, but they are of personal nature and will not interfere in my job."

Timing:

Just like everywhere else, timing during a job interview is important. Watch out that your answers are neither too long nor too short. The recruiter will spend 30-60min with you, so do not waste his or her time with too long answers. At the same time try to include what you would like to say.

Structure:

A common challenge is to keep a clear head while answering all the different questions. You are going to think about a lot of things, so make sure you are saying what you would like to present. Make some notes beforehand, so that you can structure your thoughts. Most recruiters do not mind if you take or have notes. On a side note, with a pen you always have something to hold on to.

Body language:

Body language is important and is a two-way road. Try to send as many positive signals as possible. While startups are more flexible in terms of dressing, a semi-casual look may be recommended. Sit opposite the recruiter in a natural pose that makes you feel comfortable but shows your future employer that you are interested in the interview. On the other side, try to read the body language of your counterpart. Is he/her looking at his/her wristwatch? Well maybe you have been answering too long. Is he/she looking annoyed? Adjust your strategy according to the body language of the person opposite to you.

Expect questions:

At the end of every job interview, the recruiter will ask you: "Do you still have any questions?" This is your time to shine! You can show your preparation and ask the questions you have prepared. Do not make the mistake of asking nothing here and miss out on this opportunity.

salary expectations

To provide your salary expectation is often already asked for in the initial application. Some job advertisements also give a hint on the salary. Obviously, this puts you under pressure in the first place, especially if you do not know the average salary to expect. Asking for too much salary, you might just seem rude. Asking for too less salary, your talent might get underestimated. So, it is all about the middle way! But how to get there?

First you need to distinguish between sectors. In some sectors, salary expectations are rather easy. They are developed by tariff unions and can just be found online. Classical sectors with tariff unions are the steel industry or public service.

As this guide is about finding a tech job in a startup, it is most likely that you do not fall under one of the tariff unions. On the bright side, with a tech background you are likely to secure a very good salary as tech experts are rare in Germany. A basic understanding of salary expectation can be found on platforms like [Kununu](#) or [Glassdoor](#). Do not forget that these are just average salaries and can differ significantly depending on the position you are aiming for.

AVERAGE SALARY:

- Sales Engineer – €64,237 per annum
- Data Scientist – €60,793 per annum
- Information Security Analyst – €58,939 per annum
- Software Developer – €57,250 per annum
- Computer Systems Analyst – €56,959 per annum
- Web Developer – €49,871 per annum

Source: Glassdoor 2020/21

In general, there are several indicators that determine your future salary. It pretty much comes down to four questions that distinguish your salary: Company size, location, your qualifications and your practical experience.

• **Company size:**

The bigger the company, the better the salary. But working in a startup has other advantages: Lean hierarchies, lesser bureaucracy, and more innovation power. You might get more responsibilities quicker and oftentimes startups are more flexible when it comes to realising your individual career goals.

• **Location:**

Germany has been reunited for more than 30 years now. But the effects between East and West Germany are still visible, especially when it comes to salary. With similar qualification, you often get a bit lesser salary in the former East than in the West. This does not mean you should decide against East Germany. Cities like Dresden or Leipzig as well as Potsdam, which profits from its proximity to Berlin, are cities with high life standards. In terms of salary, the top three cities are Frankfurt am Main (73.200€), Munich (70.600€), and Stuttgart (68.000€). All these cities host big industrial players (e.g. Bosch, the German stock exchange, Daimler, Deutsche Bank, Lufthansa, etc.) and therefore have transformed these cities to salary leaders.

• **Your qualification and experience:**

ed on your university degree (master/bachelor/ PhD) and your experience obviously you can expect different salaries. According to payscale.com the average salary for a Bachelor degree is €43.000, for a Master degree €50,854€ and for a PhD €61.000.

tip1

... **Do not forget that all salaries potential employers tell you are brut amounts (before taxes).** In Germany, there are various levies that are deducted directly from the salary. Depending on your salary this can cut the money you see on your bank account every month almost to half. These levies in Germany are:

- Wage tax
- Solidarity surcharge (only for higher incomes since 2021)
- Church tax (if officially registered in the German church)
- Health insurance
- Pension insurance
- Long-term care insurance
- Unemployment insurance

While this seems much, it also offers you a range of benefits. You will have a health insurance that covers almost all your health-related issues. In case you lose your job, under certain conditions you are eligible to get unemployment money for a certain time to find a new job. Additionally, under certain circumstances you can get the pension insurance you have paid back, e.g. when you leave Germany.

tip2

Finding the right health insurance can be a pain. The Indian entrepreneur Samy Thiyagarajan has realised this need and founded Coracle in Hamburg. Coracle helps to find the right health insurance and offers a range of other services, especially for students such as opening a block account, etc.

More information can be found here: www.coracle.de

language

Language is key! While the startup landscape in Germany is getting more international and many startups have international staff, German is still often the language spoken on a regular basis. In Berlin you may still get around with English, but smaller cities do not offer this advantage. And as soon as you start working with customer, partners or clients, you will need German.

There are plenty of websites to learn German and some of them even are even free:

- hi.duolingo.com (free)
- www.babbel.com (71,88€/year)

You also have the official Goethe Institute Network in India, called Max Mueller Bhavan. They are the official institute to present German culture abroad and also offer language courses in Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Pune.

As already outlined earlier, [Educaro](#) is also offering language courses. It is advised to start learning German as soon as you know that you will go to Germany as it will help you to have a smooth transition into the country.

getting a visa

As indicated earlier there are two ways to get your dream job in Germany, a) by first studying in Germany and then finding a job or b) by directly going for employment opportunities. In any case you need a visa to come to Germany. Both routes have different visa requirements:

1. Studying in Germany

Study visa:

Obtaining a degree in Germany makes you eligible to apply for jobs afterwards. Germany also has a significant other advantage: Compared to many European countries, the living costs in Germany are relatively low and most universities offer degrees almost for free. You are eligible to apply for a study visa if you:

- Have been accepted from an officially recognised higher education institution in Germany
- Can provide proof of a secondary school diploma enabling you to study at a higher education institution, or proof of a recognised degree or diploma from a higher education institution,
- Can cover your costs of living for the duration of your studies. This can be done by way of a blocked account (with at least €10,332 per year; amount valid for 2021), scholarship or a declaration of commitment,
- Can proof language skills required for your study programme to the German Embassy or Consulate depending on the admission requirements for your study programme. You will generally need at least a B2 level in

accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

2. Finding employment in Germany

Job seeker visa:

In case you do not have a job yet and you want to look for a job in Germany, you can apply for a 'Job Seeker Visa' which is a long-term residency permit allowing you to find a job in Germany within six months. You are eligible for this visa category if you:

- Hold a bachelor/master's degree from a German university or an equivalent foreign degree,
- Have a minimum of 5 years of experience in your related field of study,
- Show proof that you have sufficient funds to cover your stay during the time you are in Germany,
- Have travel or medical insurance for your entire stay in Germany or until you get your Work Permit.

IT specialist visa:

Experts with practical work experience in the fields of IT and communication technology can apply for the 'IT Specialist Visa'. You are eligible for this visa category if you:

- Have an offer for a job in the IT sector in Germany,
- Have at least three years of experience in the IT sector over the last seven years and your professional experience adequately qualifies you for the job,
- Are being offered a gross salary of at least €51,120 (in 2021)
- Possess German skills at least at B1 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In individual cases, the need to provide proof of German language skills may

not be applicable if the language spoken at work is not German.

EU Blue Card:

The 'EU Blue Card' is another visa you could apply for. It has been designed for foreign academics seeking a qualified employment in Germany. The EU Blue Card is issued for the duration of your work contract, including 3 additional months, and is limited to a 4-year period. It is possible to be granted an extension if certain requirements are fulfilled. After 33 months, holders of the EU Blue Card may obtain a settlement permit. In some cases, a settlement permit can be issued after 21 months. For this, you need to be able to provide proof of the required language skills of at least a B1 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). You are eligible for this visa category if you:

- Have a German degree, a recognised foreign higher education degree, or a foreign higher education degree that is comparable to German higher education degree,
- Have a concrete job offer from a company in Germany,
- Can prove that the position is appropriate for someone with your qualifications (higher education degree),
- Are remunerated with a gross annual income of at least €56,800 (in 2021) for general jobs and €44,304 (in 2021) for jobs in the fields of mathematics, IT, natural sciences, engineering and human medicine.

Self-employment visa:

Another visa category is the 'Self-employment Visa' in case you would like to work as a freelancer in Germany. The residence permit is granted initially for up to three years but can be extended in case you can cover your cost.

You are eligible for this visa category if you:

- Can provide proof of sufficient funds to finance your endeavours,
- Have obtained any licenses required to perform the job in question,
- Are older than 45 years of age, you must provide proof of adequate old age pension provisions.

MAKE IT IN GERMANY

Realising how important international experts are for the German labour market, the Federal German Government launched the "Make it in Germany" platform. Besides having hands-on information about living and studying in Germany, the platform also hosts a comprehensive overview of the entire job market, providing information on professions in demand, job listings, applying for a job, visa, taxes, etc.

You can access the platform under the following link: www.make-it-in-germany.com

cultural differences

While Germany is known for its efficient work ethics and its official work culture, the new startup generation is setting new benchmarks. Vegetarian team lunches, yoga classes in the morning and bean bags to hang out are shaping the new working culture in Germany's startup ecosystem. A lot of startups are taking personalised approaches to make their staff happy and create a productive and encouraging environment. Additionally, hierarchies are flat in many German startups. And while the pay is often less compared to traditional big companies, startups offer a lot of opportunity to grow and cover new areas of intervention. No doubt, the working culture in Germany is getting more flexible but a few things will remain inherently important to Germans.

There is a German saying "Fünf Minuten vor der Zeit ist des Deutschen Pünktlichkeit" which translates to „being five minutes ahead of time is a Germans sense of punctuality". Indeed, punctuality is a very important and critical aspect in Germany's business culture. For Germans, it is a matter of respect to show up to meetings (be it virtual or in person) on time. If a meeting is scheduled at 10:00 AM, then someone who shows up at 10:05 AM is frowned upon. There will be no direct consequences of being late, but participants will have a negative impression of late comers which can potentially harm the business outcome.

Punctuality is one of the highest regarded values, also in terms of adhering to timelines. If someone promises to send a set of documents until a specific time and date, be rest assured the people will have noted this down, either in their mind or their notebooks. If the documents do not arrive until the agreed time – again this will leave a bad impression. In general, it is advisable to always give a specific date and time to accomplish specific tasks. One should avoid "I will send this some time next week" or even worse "I will send this to you".

Furthermore, it is important to know that Germans value their spare time. Whereas Indians are willing to go out of their way and work longer hours, including on Saturday. This is why most large traditional German companies have a specified limits to their working hours. Those have been negotiated by workers unions and are usually applicable for all hierarchical levels – from workers to the mid-management level. The typical German work week is around 35-40 hours, Monday to Friday. Managerial level positions usually never work on Saturdays and Sundays. Typical office working hours are from 8AM to 5PM with one-hour lunch break.

On similar lines, keeping your word is very important for Germans. Germans do give high importance to promises/commitments given, or expectations risen by individuals or companies. They often base their level of trust and their willingness for cooperation on

whether people deliver on their promises.

Germans are known to take a lot of notes during meetings in order to be able to record and fulfil verbal agreements, but also to keep in mind what has been promised to them. It is not mandatory but taking notes during conversations and presentations is often interpreted as a sign of interest and care. Germans value detailed documentation and it is not uncommon that participants receive "Minutes of Meeting" after a meeting has been held.

One of the points most foreigners struggle with is the Germans directness. Especially when it comes to giving feedback, Germans tend to be very outspoken. Other cultures often tend to express criticism in a very soft and indirect way in order to not embarrass any involved individuals. This is not the case in Germany and businesspeople will mostly be straight forward if something is wrong or if there is something they do not like. This is not done in order to humiliate or dupe individuals but purely because Germans think that this way of approaching feedback will result in the best outcome and the fastest rectification of issues.

Most Germans are very much focused on details. Germans do notice and judge negatively, e.g. when there are typos in presentations. At the same time, most local businesspeople expect to get a multitude of documents, charts, graphics, tables and calculations covering technical as well as business aspects when getting into negotiations. Negotiating with Germans thus can be quite formal. For them to enter a business deal, all the bits and pieces need to be in place, clarified and written down. They expect nothing less from their business partners. Germans take analysis very serious, and information are usually reviewed and analysed several times before coming to a decision.

Overall, clear and honest, yet respectful communication is appreciated, and confrontation is not a problem. However, emotions should be carefully dosed. Germans are in general very particular when it co-

mes to separating business from personal life. While personal conversations between colleagues are quite common, Germans usually do not exchange too much personal and family stories with sporadic business partners. While in India there is a large focus on building personal relationships amongst business partners, Germans mostly base their business relationships on facts, figures and past performance. Exchanging a few polite phrases rather than personal details is appreciated and will do the trick.



What are the things people should keep in mind when looking for a job in a German startup?

People first of all should produce a super simple black and white CV when applying for jobs in Germany as most of the systems do not recognise designer CVs. Once you have secured a job, it is all about result. It is important that you fulfil KPIs and produce results.

voices from india



TEJAS SUTHRA

Partnership & Product Marketing,
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What were channels you used to find a job in a startup in Germany?

Since I was already in Germany, my professor helped me to find my current job as he recommended me to the startup. However, I am also sitting in a co-working space called 'Factory'. They have a huge network and I actively engage in this network to identify business contacts. For people who are looking for a job from India, I recommend updating their LinkedIn profile and actively reach out to startup founders via LinkedIn and e-mail outlining their qualifications.

What are the biggest cultural differences working for a German startup?

The way people communicate in Germany is different compared to India. Here I specifically refer to their English skills. Language is often a constraint, and one should definitely learn German to communicate

with everyone, including partners. Otherwise, the working culture here is pretty relaxed and hierarchies in startups are lean.

Do German startups pay competitive salaries?

It depends on the startup and the position. Product manager or data scientist positions are rare skills and are paid well, even in startups. In more general position most startups pay between 35,000 to 45,000. This may vary slightly between Berlin and Munich for example as life is more costly in Munich, thus people would slightly earn more there. However, I personally recommend Berlin as the city to live in, especially since there is a higher tolerance for English speakers.



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