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EDITION

# Living and Working in

# Germany

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# Living & Working in

# Germany

● A Survival Handbook ●



Edited by Pamela Wilson



Survival Books ● Bath ● England

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Survival Books Limited  
Office 169, 3 Edgar Buildings, George Street, Bath BA1 2FJ, UK  
 +44 (0)1225-462135,  info@survivalbooks.net  
 www.survivalbooks.net and www.londons-secrets.com

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# What Readers and Reviewers Have Said About Survival Books:

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# Important Note

Germany is a diverse country with many faces – a variety of ethnic groups, religions and customs, as well as continuously changing rules, regulations, exchange rates and prices. A change of government in Germany can have a far-reaching influence on many important aspects of life, although it isn't as dramatic as in many other countries (the Germans are far too sensible to disrupt life and commerce simply for ideological reasons). We cannot recommend too strongly that you check with an official and reliable source (not always the same) before making any major decisions or taking an irreversible course of action. However, don't believe everything you're told or read – even, dare we say it, herein!

Useful addresses and references to other sources of information have been included in all chapters and in **Appendices A to C** to help you obtain further information and verify details with official sources. Important points have been emphasised, in **bold** print or boxes, some of which it would be expensive, or even dangerous, to disregard. **Ignore them at your peril or cost!**

## NOTE

Unless specifically stated, a reference to a company, organisation or product doesn't constitute an endorsement or recommendation. None of the businesses, products or individuals listed in this book have paid to be mentioned.



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# Publisher's Notes

- ◆ Frequent references are made in this book to the European Union (EU), which comprises Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the EU countries plus the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, plus Switzerland (which is an EFTA member but not a member of the EEA).
- ◆ Before reunification, the former East Germany or the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or *DDR*) comprised the states of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Saxony and the eastern part of Berlin. The remaining 11 federal states (see map inside the back cover) comprised the Federal Republic of Germany (*FDR*), which is now the name of the whole of Germany.
- ◆ Times are shown with the suffix am (*ante meridiem*) for before noon and pm (*post meridiem*) for after noon (see also **Time Difference** on page 285).
- ◆ Prices should be taken as a guide only, although they were mostly correct at the time of publication. Unless otherwise stated, all prices quoted usually include value added tax (*Mehrwertsteuer/MwSt* or *Umsatzsteuer/Ust*) at 19 per cent. To convert from other currencies to euros or vice versa, see  [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).
- ◆ His/he/him also means her/she/her (please forgive us ladies). This is done to make life easier for both the reader and the editor, and isn't intended to be sexist.
- ◆ The German translation of many key words and phrases is shown in brackets in *italics*.
- ◆ All spelling is (or should be) British and not American English.
- ◆ Warnings and important points are printed in **bold** type.
- ◆ The following symbols are used in this book:  (telephone),  (fax),  (Internet) and  (email).
- ◆ Lists of **Useful Addresses**, **Further Reading** and **Useful Websites** are contained in **Appendices A, B** and **C** respectively.
- ◆ For those unfamiliar with the metric system of **Weights & Measures**, conversion tables are included in **Appendix D**.
- ◆ A physical map of Germany is included in **Appendix E** and a map showing the states (*Länder*) is included at the end of the book.



Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria

# Introduction

Whether you're already living or working in Germany or just thinking about it – this is **THE** book for you. Forget about all those glossy guidebooks, excellent though they are for tourists; this amazing book was written particularly with you in mind and is worth its weight in *Wurst*. Furthermore, this fully revised and completely re-designed 4<sup>th</sup> edition is printed in colour. *Living and Working in Germany* is intended to meet the needs of anyone wishing to know the essentials of German life – however long your intended stay in Germany, you'll find the information contained in this book invaluable.

General information isn't difficult to find in Germany (provided you speak German) and a multitude of books is published on every conceivable subject. However, reliable and up-to-date information in English, specifically intended for foreigners living and working in Germany, isn't so easy to find, least of all in one volume. This book was written to fill this void and provide the comprehensive practical information necessary for a trouble-free life. You may have visited Germany as a tourist, but living and working there is a different matter altogether. Adjusting to a different environment and culture and making a home in any foreign country can be a traumatic and stressful experience – and Germany is no exception.

*Living and Working in Germany* is a comprehensive handbook on a wide range of everyday subjects, and represents the most up-to-date source of general information available to foreigners in Germany. It isn't simply a monologue of dry facts and figures, but a practical and entertaining look at German life.

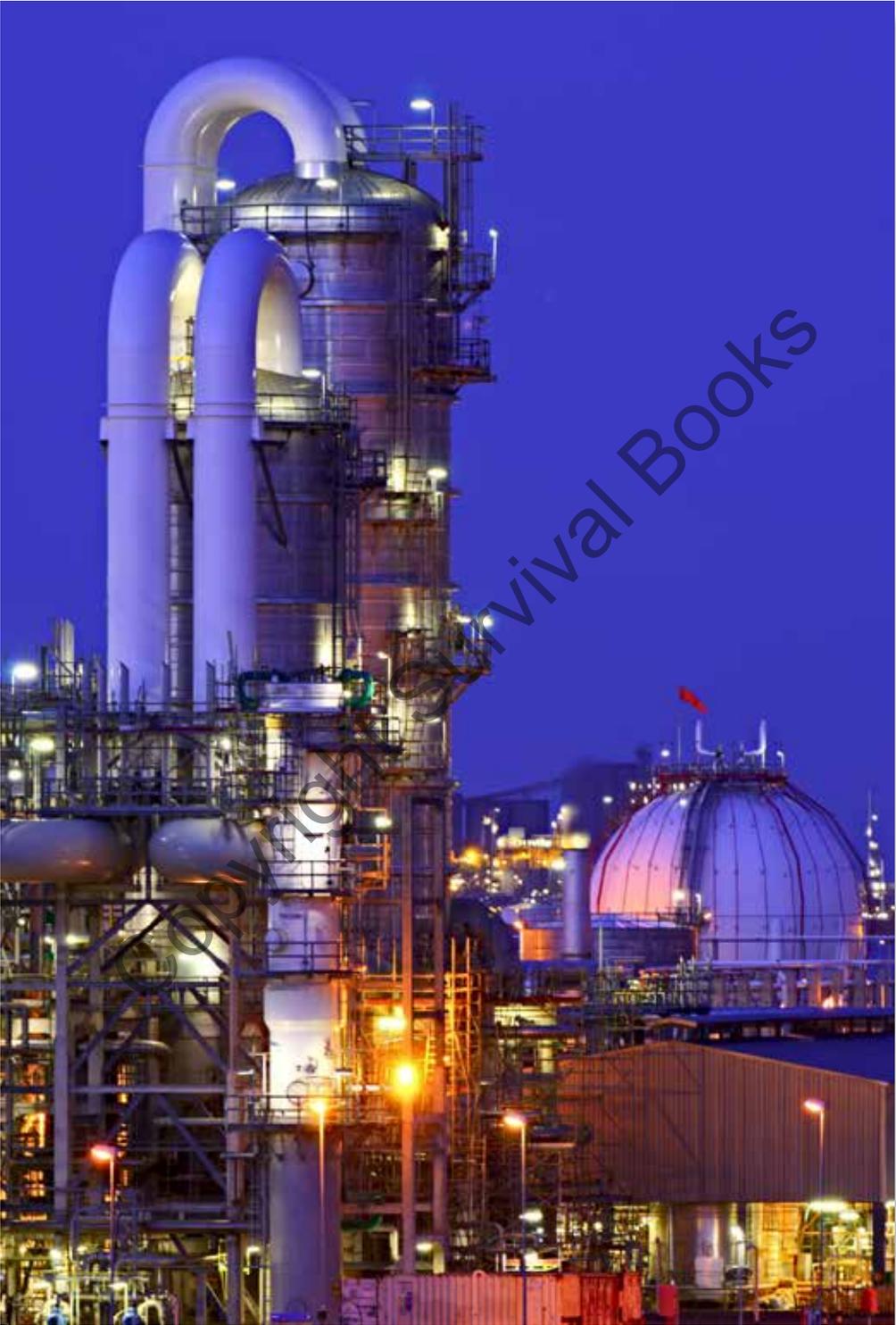
Adapting to life in a new country is a continuous process, and, although this book will help reduce your beginner's phase and minimise the frustrations, it doesn't contain all the answers. (Most of us don't even know the right questions to ask!) What it **will** do, however, is help you to make informed decisions and calculated judgements, instead of uneducated guesses. **Most importantly, it will help save you time, trouble and money, and repay your investment many times over.**

Although you may find some of the information in this book a bit daunting, don't be discouraged. Most problems occur only once, and fade into insignificance after a short time (as you face the next half a dozen!). The majority of foreigners in Germany would agree that, all things considered, they love living there. A period spent in Germany is a wonderful way to enrich your life and hopefully please your bank manager. We trust that this book will help you to avoid the pitfalls of life in Germany and smooth your way to a happy and rewarding future in your new home.

**Viel Glück! (good luck!)**

*Survival Books*

February 2011



# 1.

## FINDING A JOB

**G**erman workers enjoy high salaries, with generous benefits and job protection mandated by the state, thanks to years of negotiation and co-operation between employers and national trade unions. Finding a job in Germany, however, is anything but plain sailing for most foreigners, despite a recent fall in unemployment. If you're well qualified and experienced, and have perseverance and a measure of luck, you'll find that openings in various sectors do exist. At the bottom end of the scale are jobs that most Germans aren't willing to do (being unemployed in Germany is often considerably more comfortable than being fully employed on a low wage), although the number of foreigners willing to do them has increased.

If you're a national of a European Union (see below) country, you'll (at least theoretically) be on an equal footing with the locals in the job hunt. Americans and others without an automatic right to work in Germany must meet visa and work permit requirements (see **Chapter 3**) in order for a prospective employer to justify hiring them in preference to an EU national.

The Germans have for half a century taken great pride in their role as leaders of the European economy and champions of industrial productivity and engineering excellence. The title of engineer (*Ingenieur*) carries considerable prestige, and degrees and other qualifications are proudly displayed on business cards and letterheads. Education is highly prized in Germany, and many engineers in industry have earned doctorates. (It's common for engineers to become company bosses.) German national apprenticeship and on-the-job training programmes are the envy of the world, and for good reason. German workers are renowned for their high levels of skill and efficiency.

In the '60s and '70s, the Federal Republic recruited large numbers of foreign workers, euphemistically called 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*), mostly from Mediterranean

countries, in response to labour shortages. Many guest workers stayed on as long-term residents, so that by the end of 2009 there were over 2.7m foreigners employed in Germany, the largest national groups being (in diminishing order) those from Turkey, the states of the former Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy. The now defunct German Democratic Republic recruited a number of Vietnamese workers, several thousand of whom now live and work in what was formerly East Germany.

Nowadays, from the outside, the German labour market looks completely self-sufficient, with none of the shortages of unskilled labour of the type that made the *Gastarbeiter* necessary, and German companies involved in international markets don't have to look to foreigners for general language skills, as local schools turn out enough individuals fluent in English and other foreign languages.

### GERMANY & THE EUROPEAN UNION

Germany was one of the six founder members of the European Community (now the European Union or EU) in 1957, along with Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The German government has

been a driving force behind the extension of EU membership to poorer countries in eastern and southern Europe, including its neighbours the Czech Republic and Poland, who joined in 2004 along with Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. The latest additions to the EU were Romania and Bulgaria in 2007.

In 2010, the EU members comprised Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the EU countries plus the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, plus Switzerland (which is an EFTA member but not a member of the EEA).

Nationals of 'old' EU states (pre-2004) have the right to work in Germany or any other member state without a work permit, provided they have a valid passport or national identity card and comply with the member state's laws and regulations on employment.

Nationals of new EU states must apply for a work permit, but after one year may be eligible for an unrestricted work permit. All EU nationals are entitled to the same treatment as German citizens in matters of pay, working conditions, access to housing, vocational training, social security and trade union rights, and their families and dependants are entitled to join them in Germany and enjoy the same rights.

There are, however, still barriers to full freedom of movement and the right to work within the EU. For example, certain jobs in various member countries require job applicants to have specific skills or vocational qualifications. The EU has developed a general system for the recognition of professional and trade qualifications and guidelines for mutual recognition of qualifications (see below). Nevertheless, there are restrictions on employment in the civil service, where the

right to work may be limited in individual cases on grounds of public policy, national security or public health. Differences persist among the various German states regarding the civil service status of some occupations, particularly teachers and health professionals.

## EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

To find employment in Germany takes special qualifications or experience in a field or profession where demand matches or exceeds supply. Unless you're seeking a position in the upper echelons of a multi-national organisation, one which has connections with an English-speaking country, certain scientific or academic areas in which English is the *lingua franca*, or in a sector such as engineering where demand greatly exceeds supply, it's essential to have at least a good working knowledge of German. Fluency is always highly desirable. Most Germans study English at school and, although only a small proportion are fluent, enough are sufficiently competent to make a native command of English less of an automatic advantage in the job market, unless you have complementary skills or experience.

The free public education system is geared toward producing highly skilled workers through on-the-job training and apprenticeship programmes, as well as a large academic elite. By the time a young German has earned his qualifications, he has considerable experience of the profession or trade he's entering. Surprisingly, however, there are still some areas where training programmes haven't kept up with demand and, if you have experience in one of these, your prospects of finding a job may be good, without initially speaking German.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry has announced that Germany has a shortfall of some 400,000 engineers and other skilled workers, which is holding back the country's growth by around 1 per cent. Mechanical engineering and civil engineering (including architecture) are the principal areas of demand, with around 55,000 and 40,000 vacancies respectively. Qualified professionals in these and other highly sought after fields such as IT, natural science (biologists, chemists and physicists) and education (professors) are eligible under the German Immigration Act, 2005

to receive permanent residence immediately (the usual waiting period is five years for non-EEA nationals), provided that they have a firm job offer and obtain permission from the Federal Labour Office. Other areas where there's a shortage of qualified staff are the automobile, chemical, health and machine tool industries.

Although most opportunities are in western Germany, resolute job seekers with much-needed management and organisational skills, and the patience to effect lasting change, may find opportunities in eastern areas.

In order to find a job in Germany, it's important to have a positive reason for living and working there – being fed up with your boss or your job isn't the best motive for moving there. It helps if you can show that you have friends or family in the area, or the experience of living or working abroad. Having a genuine interest in German culture or specific aspects of German society can give added credibility to the job search, as well as greatly enhancing your stay in the country.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Unlike much of the rest of Europe whose average unemployment rate was at 10 per cent in July 2010, Germany's rate of unemployment has been steadily declining. In August 2010, it stood at 7.6 per cent, a moderate decrease from 2009 (8.2 per cent). However, this figure masks a sharp disparity between the regions of the former Federal Republic ('West Germany') and those of the erstwhile German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik/DDR*) or 'East Germany', now called the *Neue Länder*, where the unemployment rate is nearly double that in the former West Germany: 11.5 per cent compared with 6.6 per cent. The southern states of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg have the lowest unemployment rates at around 4 and 4.7 per cent respectively.

In the old *DDR*, everyone had the right to a job by constitutional decree, so most state-run companies (and the vast majority were state run) were vastly overstaffed. Unemployment soared in the wake of the closure, reorganisation and privatisation of these companies, and the entire population had to be re-educated in free enterprise, market economics and competitive management

techniques. Despite the strides made in the east since reunification, there's still a lingering sense of 'foreignness' between the *Ossis* (residents of the former East Germany) and the *Wessis* (those from the former West Germany), which is likely to persist for some time.

In both parts of Germany, massive 'over-production' of qualified people in many occupations adds to unemployment; there simply aren't enough new jobs created each year to absorb the influx of highly trained, highly skilled workers into the labour force. Official statistics show that around half a million foreigners are in the ranks of the unemployed.

## ECONOMY

Germany is one of the world's wealthiest countries, and is emerging from the economic crisis as Europe's shining star, with one of the highest per capita gross domestic product (GDP) levels in the EU, at US\$40,875. It's also the world's second-largest exporter (previously the world's largest exporter), and its inflation rate (1 per cent in the 12 months to August 2010) is among the lowest in industrialised countries.

Thanks in part to its generous social security system, along with the distaste of Germany's wealthy classes for conspicuous consumption and their tendency to understatement, extremes of wealth and poverty aren't as apparent as in many other European countries. Cynics may claim that it's difficult to become rich in Germany because of the high tax rates, particularly



on income from 'speculative' activity; and it's true that those who have made fortunes have almost invariably built them up through hard work over a long period, and that people rarely become millionaires 'overnight' in Germany. This minimises social resentments. There's also somewhat less stigma attached to receiving social benefits than in many other countries, and the state benefits system provides a reasonable, if not exactly luxurious, standard of living for those who have fallen on hard times (although more people fall through its safety net than casual observers notice).

The Germans are justifiably proud of their successes in what they refer to as a 'social market economy'. Less *dirigiste* than their French counterparts, German governments have fostered competition in the marketplace and encouraged enterprise among individuals and businesses. However, the government exercises considerable control over business, both by direct regulation and through high taxes on income and capital; its purpose is to protect economic equilibrium by promoting price stability, high employment, balanced imports and exports, and continuous growth.

A good deal of Germany's success over the last 60 years has been due to the rise of medium-size companies (SMEs) – family-owned and operated industries often started after the Second World War. Many medium-size companies made excellent use of German engineering skills to produce high quality industrial products known and sold around the world.

The reunification of Germany in 1990 carried an enormous price tag, particularly given the government's decision to integrate the two radically different economies as quickly as possible.

After the reunification, much of the infrastructure of the former East Germany had to be rebuilt, with concepts of efficiency and profitability introduced into what for the previous 50 years had been a centrally planned economy. The one-for-one exchange rate agreed for the Ostmark and the Deutschmark

meant that the East lost its considerable export markets and competitive edge in Eastern Europe, while any incentive to invest in eastern Germany was lost because there was no economic advantage to it.

Among the many unpleasant surprises to hit western Germans on reunification was the damage done to the environment in the east. Pollution of the air, water and land was even worse than many had suspected, and the cost of the clean-up operation, combined with the creation (almost overnight) of an elaborate benefit structure in the former *DDR*, has meant that taxes in Germany, on business and personal income as well as capital, are now among the highest in Europe. This further restricts the ability of businesses to create and sustain employment.

This lack of foresight as to the financial implications of reunification, coupled with the constraints imposed by the euro, left the German government in a difficult situation which led to heavy borrowing and a huge national deficit. German companies were forced to put expansion on hold, transfer parts of their operations to cheaper countries, contract out, or in some cases, go bust.

At the start of 2009, Germany was hit with its worst recession since World War II, when the country's GDP fell by around 6 per cent. The present administration (elected at the end of 2009) implemented a €50bn stimulus plan to boost economic growth and to protect several sectors (e.g. banking) from downturns and a huge increase in unemployment. Germany came out of the recession in the second and third quarters of 2009 with its fastest growth rate in 20 years, mostly due to manufacturing exports and steady consumer demand, but remained strapped with a whopping deficit of €42.8bn (3.5 per cent of GDP) in August 2010 – over double the 2009 deficit.

In 2009, Germany lost its title of *Exportweltmeister* to China, and became the second-largest exporter in the world with over €816bn in exports in 2009 – over half of which went to other EU countries (62.7 per cent to Europe as a whole), 6.7 per cent to the US, and some 4.5 per cent to China – and the world's second-largest importer. In the first quarter of 2010, Germany's trade



surplus was a healthy €17.2bn. Statistics show that by August 2010, Germany's exports had already risen 26.8 per cent from August 2009. German products are world renowned for their quality, reliability and state-of-the-art engineering. They rarely compete on price, but nevertheless provide good value for money.

Manufacturing and service industries predominate, and Germany is the third-largest producer of cars in the world (including Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Opel, Porsche and Volkswagen). In 2009, 3.43m cars were exported, primarily to the UK, the US, Asia and Italy. Other major sectors include chemicals, iron and steel, transport equipment, electrical machinery, generators, machine tools, communications equipment and food and drink. Agriculture, forestry and fishing form a relatively small part of the economy, employing 2 per cent of the workforce and contributing just 1 per cent of gross national product (GNP), yet Germany is almost 90 per cent self-sufficient in food. Service industries, on the other hand, account for almost 70 per cent of all employment.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

With fewer income raises in Germany, strikes are becoming more frequent than previously. Like many other aspects of German society, they're strictly controlled by laws and regulations, and civil servants (*Beamte*) aren't forbidden to strike. Germany has a number of large, powerful national unions, which negotiate regional contracts with employers' groups representing specific industries. A regional contract is binding on all companies within that industry and region, whether they're part of the employers' group or not, although it has recently been proposed that companies should be allowed to negotiate wage rises according to their financial situation.

In the last 60 years, relations between the unions and employers' organisations have tended to be cordial and constructive, with both sides willing to compromise in the interest of saving or creating jobs. The more stressful economic climate of recent years is, however, threatening to erode this consensual approach.

All businesses with more than a few employees may establish an elected works council (*Betriebsrat*), comprised of worker representatives, who have an advisory role in management affairs. The works council must be consulted on all significant management decisions, including the hiring and firing of key executives, lay-offs and plant closures, and must be regularly informed about the state of a business. Individuals serving on a works council enjoy privileges and guaranteed job protection under labour laws, while in larger companies representatives of the works council are guaranteed a certain number of seats on the board of directors. They may work closely with local unions but aren't required to be members themselves. Works council decisions can override even those of regionally organised trade unions under certain circumstances.

## WORK ATTITUDES

Traditional German companies – particularly small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), whose owner-managers comprise a recognised social class, called the *Mittelstand* – often have a strict hierarchical structure with formalised relations between management and workers.

Jobs and job titles are often strictly defined by regional industry contracts, with legal distinctions between workers and management. Neither group is keen to take on responsibilities outside their defined duties. Experience, maturity and loyalty are highly valued, and the frequent changing of jobs as a way of increasing your salary or promotion prospects is rare. However, this is beginning to change, particularly in high-tech industries and multinational companies.

It's expensive to hire and fire employees in Germany, and the works council (*Betriebsrat*) often has the right to review candidates and offer suggestions regarding personnel decisions, even where upper management positions are involved.

The process of hiring new employees (particularly managers and executives) and making business decisions is slower in Germany than in many other developed countries. This is due more to the various levels of review and approval required than to indecision. On the other hand, snap decision making is considered suspect, and German managers generally prefer to rely on careful planning and a rational, considered approach to solving problems. As a result, many foreigners, particularly Americans, find that they must adjust to a more deliberate pace of working life in Germany.

German managers and executives rarely take work home, and they never work at weekends, which are sacrosanct. Many businesses close for two or three weeks during the summer, and employees are generally expected to take the bulk of their annual leave during this period. Many union contracts stipulate the closing dates each year to coincide with the region's school holiday calendar.

Time spent in the office or on the job is generally highly productive, with little or no time wasted on

socialising or idle chatter, except during official (and short) break periods. Socialising with colleagues is usually done primarily in formal settings such as the annual company outing, holiday gatherings and other events.

## WORKING WOMEN

Women in Germany comprise around 45 per cent of the workforce and generally enjoy legal protection from discrimination in the hiring process. However, around a third of the female workforce works only part-time, compared with just 3 per cent of men. There are a number of laws designed to protect women (*Frauenarbeitsschutz*) from dangerous jobs, excessive overtime or late working. Maternity leave is generous, and time off for family duties (including caring for sick children) is a basic legal right. This can work against women, as many employers are reluctant to hire women of child-bearing age for jobs involving lifting, for example, which would have to be modified during pregnancy (and the law requires a female employee to notify her employer as soon as she knows she's pregnant). Other employers may fear losing a key supervisor or manager to extended maternity leave at a crucial point in the business cycle.

Women don't have professional and salary equality with men. There are still few top-level women managers and executives, women are paid on average some 25 per cent less for the same work and they continue to hold the majority of part-time and lower paid jobs, as in other countries. On the other hand, women are well represented in the political sphere in Germany (i.e. Angela Merkel) and there's an active women's movement. Around 55 per cent of entrants to German universities are women, but far fewer women complete the rigorous business and engineering programmes required



for managerial and executive positions. Women in management fields may have some difficulty establishing credibility with older, more 'traditional' bosses or colleagues.

Young women eager for high-paying employment in Germany have been tempted by organised criminal gangs promising jobs, only to find themselves part of prostitution or 'white slavery' rings.

## QUALIFICATIONS

A remarkable number of jobs are regulated, at least to the extent of requiring a formal qualification. Most qualifications involve a training programme lasting at least two years, with or without supervised on-the-job experience or a formal apprenticeship. Germany has a world-renowned apprenticeship system and offers its young people a dizzying array of training programmes when they finish their school careers. (The system of job-related qualifications is so pervasive that you may hear Germans making jokes about how even jobs such as toilet attendant or road sweeper require a two-year training programme these days.) Qualifications can be highly specific, making it difficult to change jobs unless you've taken a supplementary training programme meeting the particular requirements of the new job. Employers are required by law to provide continuing training for employees, and a company's annual educational plan must be approved by its works council.

Germany abides by the EU's general system for recognition of diplomas and qualifications, which means that if your field of work is regulated in Germany, you must have your home country's qualification formally recognised before you're allowed to work in that field. This obviously applies to professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers, but recognised qualifications are required to work in many other fields as well, for example as an electrician or computer technician or in the building trades.

Generally speaking, to have your home country qualifications formally recognised in Germany, you must contact the competent authority (usually a guild, trade association or professional society) for your trade or

profession. They will provide you with their requirements, which usually involve the submission of your diploma, certificate or other documentation confirming your training or work experience. You must be able to show that the qualification from your home country is equivalent to the German one, in terms of both duration and subject matter. If there are significant differences in the practice of your profession between the two countries, you may be asked for evidence of mastery of specific areas considered significantly different in your home country. This can take the form of job experience, an aptitude test or additional training. Under German law, the competent authority has four months to respond positively to your application; no response after this period is legally equivalent to a refusal, but you're entitled to know the reasons for any negative decision.

All EU member states issue occupational information sheets containing a common job description with a table of qualifications. These cover a large number of professions and trades and are intended to help someone with the relevant qualifications look for a job in another EU country. You can obtain a direct comparison between any EU qualification and those recognised in Germany from the *Zentralstelle für Ausländisches Bildungswesen*, Graurheindorfer Str. 157, 53117 Bonn (☎ 0228-501-0, 🌐 www.kmk.org).

In the UK, information can be obtained from the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (UK NARIC, Oriel House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, Glos, GL50 1XP, UK, ☎ 0871-330 7033, 🌐 www.naric.org.uk), the National Agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide.

Information about qualifications can also be obtained from the European Commission website (🌐 [http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/jobseeker/qualifications-for-employment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/jobseeker/qualifications-for-employment/index_en.htm)), relating to procedures for recognition of experience and qualifications.

## GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The German Federal Labour Office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, also known as the BA, Arbeitsagentur or, colloquially, the *Arbeitsamt*) provides a wide range of employment-related services through some 180 agencies and around 610 offices in Germany. The Arbeitsagentur publishes lists of jobs available throughout Germany and abroad, and provides vocational training, assessment and re-integration services for disabled people, and vocational guidance for students and others. It also administers various benefit programmes related to employment, compiles labour statistics and conducts market and labour research.

The Arbeitsagentur provides its services free to both job seekers and employers. If you're already in Germany, you can pick up a copy of its weekly magazine, *Markt und Chance*, at any of its offices. This publication contains job vacancies and a 'jobs wanted' section, where job seekers can place adverts. You can find similar information on the Arbeitsagentur website ([www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)). The Arbeitsagentur has a department for foreign applicants seeking work in Germany, called the Zentralstelle für Arbeitsvermittlung (ZAV), which also handles placements for Germans abroad. The main office of the Arbeitsagentur is at Regensburgerstr. 104, 90478 Nuremberg (☎ 0911-1790), while the ZAV is located at Villemomblenerstr. 76, 53123 Bonn (☎ 0228-7130).

There's also a European Employment Service (EURES) network, members of which include all EU countries plus Norway and Iceland. Members exchange information regularly on job vacancies, and local EURES offices have access to extensive information on how to apply for a job, and living and working conditions in each country. The international department of your home country's employment service can put you in touch with a Euroadviser, who can provide advice on finding work in Germany. Euroadvisers can also arrange to have your personal details forwarded to the Arbeitsagentur. The European Commission website ([http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm)) contains

information about EURES and EURES-related agencies in European countries.

Bear in mind, however, that EURES is rarely the fastest or the most efficient way of finding a job in Germany, especially from abroad. As can be expected, national employment services give priority to their own nationals, and jobs aren't generally referred to EURES or other national agencies until after all prospective local candidates have been considered.

## RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

In addition to the Arbeitsagentur, many intermediaries post vacancies in German newspapers as 'employment consultants', mostly for management level jobs. In larger cities, there are branches of many of the major international executive recruitment companies or 'head-hunters' (*Kopffäger*). Michael Page, Korn/Ferry and Heidrick & Struggles all maintain offices in Germany, although they don't normally accept CVs except in response to a specific vacancy.

There's a variety of small to medium-size recruitment agencies in the UK and US that

