



Faire Anwerbung
Pflege Deutschland

Fair Recruitment
Healthcare Germany

Version: December 2023

Information

for labour migration to healthcare professions in Germany



Living and Working in Germany: Guidance and Decision Support
for Internationally Recruited Nurses

Written by:
Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe Wilhelmine Lübke Stiftung e.V.
Michaelkirchstraße 17-18 • 10179 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 / 2218298-0 • Fax: +49 30 / 2218298-66
E-Mail: info@kda.de • Web: www.kda.de



Kuratorium
Deutsche Altershilfe



Faire Anwerbung
Pflege Deutschland

Fair Recruitment
Healthcare Germany

Contents

1.	Off to Germany?!	3
2.	Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany	4
2.1	Settings of Healthcare Professionals in Germany	4
2.2	Nursing Professions in Germany – Vocational Qualifications and Educational Pathways ...	5
2.3	Tasks of Nurses.....	6
2.4	Everyday Nursing in German Healthcare and Nursing Institutions	7
2.5	Professional Development Opportunities in Nursing in Germany	8
2.6	Professional and Trade Associations	9
3.	The Process of Your Economic Migration: Procedures and Process	10
3.1	Pathways to Economic Migration: Recruitment & Placement	10
3.2	Procedures & Process for Your Labour Migration: Possibilities for Entering Germany	11
3.3	Subsequent Immigration of Family Members	13
3.4	The Recognition Procedure.....	15
3.5	Language in the Context of the Recognition Process	16
3.6	Preparation for Employment: Rights & Obligations of Employees	17
4.	Arriving & Living in Germany	20
4.1	Social Security in Germany – Health Insurance	20
4.2	Migration & Integration Advice Infrastructure	21
4.3	Political, Social, Religious and Cultural Opportunities.....	22
4.4	Neutral advice and other support	23
5.	Imprint	25



1. Off to Germany?!



Have you completed vocational training or a degree in nursing and are considering continuing your professional career as a nurse in Germany? You may have been approached by a Personnel service agency or a language school about the option of working as a nurse in Germany.

In recent years, the possibilities for nurses from other countries to migrate to work in Germany have increased. The worldwide shortage of skilled workers is also noticeable in Germany. In future, around 307,000 nursing positions will be unfilled and an additional 130,000 geriatric nurses will also be needed. This results in a need for around 500,000 nurses by 2035. The increasing demand for nurses calls for new solutions for healthcare and nursing facilities. As a result, Germany sees increased opportunities in international labour migration of nurses.

What does this mean for you as a nurse who wants to work in Germany?

The shortage of skilled workers will increasingly encourage more employers from the broad occupational field of healthcare and nursing to recruit nurses from abroad. To ensure that hospitals and care facilities can continue to provide care in the future, the skills you bring with you to Germany as a nurse are of great importance. Labour migration can be promising for you and provide career development opportunities. However, it is also a lengthy process that should be carefully considered and planned.

After careful research, you can decide for yourself whether you want to work as a nurse in Germany in the future. If you are well informed before you set off for Germany, you can prevent complications and delays. Several factors play an important role in choosing your future workplace. For example, these include the state of the labour market, but also the professional development opportunities as a nurse in the respective region.

This brochure contains detailed information on conditions in Germany. On the next pages, you will get an initial overview of your options as a nurse who would like to work in Germany. Special features of nurses in Germany are discussed as well as the procedures and processes of labour migration, with which you will have to deal. It also provides information on arriving and living in Germany with helpful tips and further links.

Consider this brochure as an introduction to further research. Please do not rely on simplistic or generalised descriptions or promises. The more information you obtain from trustworthy sources, the better prepared you will be for living and working in Germany.

Have fun exploring your possibilities as a nurse in Germany!

You can find out more here:

You can find out about the labour market situation in the field of nurses in Germany on the homepage of the Federal Employment Agency („Bundesagentur für Arbeit“): statistik.arbeitsagentur.de



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

2.1 Areas of work for nurses in Germany



Nursing as a profession is not practiced in the same way all over the world. Both the areas of activity and the working environment of nurses differ worldwide. For example, there are also some distinctive elements in Germany. This chapter gives you an initial idea of what this can mean for you. You will also learn the basics about working as a nurse in Germany.



Here's what you should know:

You should know in advance that healthcare professionals in Germany work in different settings:

- Inpatient acute care (for example, in hospitals)
- Inpatient long-term care (for example, long-term care facilities)
- Outpatient care (for example, outpatient care for private individuals at home)
- Medical rehabilitation (outpatient & inpatient)
- Palliative care (outpatient & inpatient)

Primary care facilities in close cooperation between nurses, doctors and other health professionals as a first point of contact in care do not exist in Germany. The first point of contact is usually the general practitioner. On the other hand, nurses are only employed in primary care in exceptional cases. The main areas of work of other nurses are mainly in hospitals, long-term inpatient care facilities or outpatient care services.

Another distinctive element in Germany is the separation between the acute care of people with diseases and traumas and the long-term care of people with a permanent need for care. These special features result in differences for your future field of activity, your everyday nursing routing work and your co-operation with other healthcare professions. These differences are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.4.



You can find out more here:

Further information on healthcare professions in Germany can be found on the information portal of the Federal Government: [Make it in Germany](#)

The Integration through Qualification Network (IQ Network) has also compiled a [dossier on all aspects of care](#) in Germany.



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

2.2 Nursing Professions in Germany – Vocational Qualifications and Educational Pathways

Here's what you should know:

For a long time, nursing professions in Germany involved purely vocational training. Even today, vocational qualification is still predominantly the form of training. Only approx. one to two per cent of all nurses in Germany currently have a degree in nursing¹. Since 2020, there has been a uniform professional qualification with the title "Nurse" as „Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“. This profession is regulated by the Nursing Professions Act ("Pflegeberufegesetz" PflBG). This vocational qualification imparts comprehensive nursing skills. The competences acquired here are intended to enable them to care for people of different age groups in different fields of health care.

The term "Pflegefachmann" / "Pflegefachfrau" thus replaces the three previous professional titles with a focus on different age groups:

"Paediatric nurse", "Nursery nurse" and "Geriatric nurse".

At the same time, the possibility of a course of studies to become a nurse („Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“) was also introduced throughout Germany. Previously, this was only possible via individual exemplary locations. Since 2020, a nurse can therefore acquire a Bachelor's degree as a nurse („Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“) via a so-called primary qualifying course of study. The first graduates are expected in 2023.

Nursing professions such as Advanced Practice Nurses (e.g. Community Health Nurses, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Nurse Practitioners) with a Master's degree are only very sporadically and model-like spread. Individual examples are in acute inpatient care – especially at university hospitals. In primary care, nurses are only active within the framework of exemplary projects (see Chapter 2.5).

You can find out more here:

Further information on nursing training in Germany can be found here, for example:

www.pflegeausbildung.net

Further information on primary qualifying courses as a nurse („Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“) in Germany: <https://www.pflegeausbildung.net/alles-zur-ausbildung>

¹ Meng, Peters & Dorin (2022): Initial analyses of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education (BIBB) nursing panel: An up-to-date overview of nursing degree programmes leading to professional qualifications. Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), Bonn. Accessed at: <https://datapool-bibb.bibb.de/htmlpages/780291.html>



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

2.3 Tasks of Nurses

The areas of activity and responsibility of nurses in care differ internationally. In connection with the dominant vocational nursing education in Germany, there are major differences from other health systems in which nursing professionals work.

Here's what you should know:

As a nurse you care for and look after people in every phase of life. Their tasks include a wide range of nursing activities. These include (based on the training objective):

- Evaluation & determination of individual care needs & planning of care,
- Organisation, design & control of the care process,
- Performing care & documenting the measures applied,
- Analysis, evaluation, assurance & development of the quality of care,
- Evaluation of needs & performance of preventive & health-promoting measures,
- Counselling, guidance & support for people in need of care in their individual dealings with health, illness, independent living & everyday life skills with their social caregivers,
- Maintaining, restoring, promoting, activating and stabilising the individual abilities of the people being cared for as part of rehabilitation concepts and in the event of cognitive impairment,
- Initiation of immediate life-saving measures until the doctor arrives & implementation of measures in crisis and disaster situations.

However, you may no longer be allowed to carry out activities in Germany that you have previously carried out independently.

Basic nursing activities have a high priority in German hospitals and care facilities and their understanding of nursing care. Therefore, the following activities are not exclusively carried out by nursing assistants or relatives, but also belong to a large extent to the area of responsibility of a nursing professional:

- Personal hygiene
- Nutrition
- Mobility
- Preventive measures (prophylaxis)
- Promoting independence

You can find out more here:

You can find additional information about this topic here, for example at:

Short description of a nurse's duties from the Federal Employment Agency („Bundesagentur für Arbeit“) berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de

Short description of paediatric nurse from the Federal Employment Agency („Bundesagentur für Arbeit“) berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

2.4 Everyday Nursing in German Healthcare and Nursing Institutions

Not only the skills and tasks, but also the daily nursing routine of a nurse are different worldwide. Other structures and processes at the ward, nursing standards and protocols or the design of interprofessional cooperation can create uncertainty and irritation at the very beginning.

The following section gives you an insight into possible special features.



Here's what you should know:

There is no such thing as **"care"** as a unique position in Germany. Each facility has developed its own structures, procedures and routines to ensure the best possible care for their specific conditions. The daily nursing routine differs primarily between specialist areas, the facilities and the working environment. In addition, there are diverse regional differences and state-specific regulations. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify overlapping structures that often differ from the daily nursing routine of other countries.

Differences between hospital and inpatient long-term care from a nursing perspective:

Everyday nursing in **hospitals** is geared towards the acute care of illnesses, ailments or injuries of people of all ages. Nurses work in direct patient care on the wards or in functional areas, such as an operating theater or the emergency room. To treat patients, the nurses work daily with doctors and sometimes also with other health professionals.

In contrast, **inpatient long-term care** provides care for people who are no longer able to manage their everyday life on their own. This concerns people with long-term physical or cognitive impairments, such as people with dementia related diseases or multimorbidity. They usually live in these institutions for a long period of time. Therefore, the people to be cared for are also referred to as "residents". Everyday care is geared towards maintaining and supporting independent living. Cooperation with doctors takes place only in case of medical need. These are mainly outpatient general practitioners and specialists. The institutions usually do not employ their own doctors. Residents go to hospital for more complex medical treatment.

In both professional fields, care is supported by nursing assistants, trainees and colleagues in care and assistance professions as well as volunteers. Support from relatives, on the other hand, is less prominent. Relatives usually only make regular visits to these facilities and occasionally take on nursing activities during their stay.

Division of Labour in Patient Care

The division of labour may differ from your nursing experience: As a rule, each nurse takes on the same tasks in care. Functional care with a fixed division of tasks is rare. Each nurse has the same responsibility for care. Different from a Senior Nurse, a Ward Manager is not always involved in patient care. They have rather a coordinating role and, for example, take care of scheduling.



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

Working Hours

Each institution has different working time models. The majority of nurses in Germany work part-time with partly individual solutions for working time. Nevertheless, nursing in Germany takes place predominantly in a three-shift model: In most cases, there are early, late and night shifts in addition to additional intermediate shifts.

2.5 Professional Development Opportunities in Nursing in Germany

Labour migration to Germany for nursing offers you various career opportunities. There are many opportunities for continuing education and training in the field of nursing in Germany.



Here's what you should know:

Further training and continuing education opportunities

If you are recognised as a nurse in Germany (see Chapter 3.3), a wide range of further training and continuing education courses is available for you to expand your nursing skills.

If you would like to work in intensive care or in the operating theatre, for example, there is the possibility of continuing specialist training in the areas of intensive and anaesthesia care or oncology.

Further opportunities for professional development include further training and continuing education in kinesthetics or wound care. Address your wishes to your (future) employer to clarify existing training opportunities at an early stage.

Compared to courses of study for qualification as a nurse, management courses of study are very common in Germany. They usually build on the vocational training as a „Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger/-in“ or „Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“.

If you are interested in continuing your studies in Germany, you should inquire in advance whether all the prerequisites for taking a course of study have been met. It may be that your professional qualification (including a Bachelor of Science in Nursing) does not entitle you to enroll in a Master's degree program. This is related to the professional recognition of your professional qualification in Germany. You can find additional information in Chapter 3.3.



You can find out more here:

You can find an overview of your options here, for example:

Opportunities for further training and continuing education from the Federal Employment Agency („Bundesagentur für Arbeit“): berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de

Information on qualification and further training opportunities as a carer in Germany: www.pflegeausbildung.net as well as www.pflegestudium.de



2. Information about the Career Field: Healthcare in Germany

2.6 Professional and Trade Associations

Here's what you should know:

A professional association is a free and independent representation of interests. The members of a professional association have the same or a related profession. With the help of the association, the interests of an occupational group can be brought together and it is easier to assert demands against employers or the public.

The healthcare sector in particular is characterised by interprofessional cooperation with other healthcare professionals. A commissioned representation of the interests of nurses can help to assert their interests against other healthcare professionals and contribute to the further professionalisation of care.

The interests of internationally recruited nurses are also important to such a professional association. In order to bring these together and to defend their rights, some internationally recruited nurses in Germany are joining forces.

However, it should be noted that in Germany there is no obligation to be a member of a professional association. As a result, not all nurses in Germany are organised for professional policy purposes. There is no professional register of registered nurses in Germany either.

The professional associations are committed to the future of the nursing profession and have defined the following priorities:

- Adapting the training and further training of nurses to current requirements,
- Make nursing more attractive as a field of study with the aim of equalisation with doctors and an upgrading of the nursing profession,
- Intergenerational communication, improvement through closer collaboration between all healthcare stakeholders, patients and carers,
- Sustainable working conditions through better integration and digitalisation.

You can find out more here:

In Germany, there are a large number of professional associations for the nursing sector. Some selected professional associations for nursing professions can be found here:

German Nursing Council
www.deutscher-pflegerat.de

German Professional Association for Nursing Professions
www.dbfk.de

German Society for Specialist Nursing and Functional Services
www.dgf-online.de

German Professional Association for Geriatric Nursing
www.dbva.de

Nursing Association of the German Red Cross
www.rotkreuzschwestern.de



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

3.1 Pathways to Economic Migration: Recruitment & Placement



Labour migration to Germany is a process that requires good planning and entails bureaucratic hurdles. The following chapter gives you an overview of the steps and procedures to be followed. It begins with the first steps in your country of origin and extends to permission to work as a nurse in Germany.

Here's what you should know:

In the wake of the increasing shortage of skilled workers, more and more German healthcare and nursing companies are striving to recruit nurses worldwide. There are various ways for companies to do this: A distinction is made between **state-organised recruitment** and **private-sector recruitment**.

State-organised recruitment

Nurses with a professional qualification acquired abroad can be contacted by the **Central International and Specialist Placement Agency („Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung“, in short: ZAV)** of the Federal Employment Agency, even before an equivalence of the professional qualification acquired abroad with a reference occupation has been established. These are specific bilateral agreements between countries with a view to intensifying intergovernmental cooperation.

Such mediation arrangements were also used, for example, in the context of the **Triple Win** project. Since 2013, the **German Society for International Cooperation („Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit“ (GIZ))**, together with the ZAV, has organised the process of recruitment, preparation and arrival of internationally recruited nurses as an overarching process. Project locations of Triple Win are among others Bosnia and Herzegovina, Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, Jordan or Kerala (India).

Private-sector recruitment

In addition to state-organised recruitment, German healthcare and nursing companies also have the option of independently recruiting nurses from other countries and attracting them to Germany for labour migration. They can either organise this recruitment process themselves or they can hire a recruitment agency to take over the recruitment process, partially or entirely. Increasingly, therefore, the health and care companies or recruitment agencies are starting to take notice of you. You may have already been approached by them or have heard of other reports on experiences from persons in your field.

In addition, you also have the opportunity to carry out your own immigration and recognition procedure and to **start looking for a future employer in Germany** on your own. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees („Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge“ (BAMF)) supports you in finding a suitable healthcare and nursing company in Germany via the [Working and Living in Germany hotline](#). The following section (Chapters 3.2 to 3.4) explains in more detail which procedural steps you must go through to enter Germany and gain professional recognition.

You can find out more here:

You can find more information on your options for labour migration on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF): www.bamf.de and on the website of "Make it in Germany": www.make-it-in-germany.de



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

3.2 Procedures & Process for Your Labour Migration: Possibilities for Entering Germany

To enter Germany as an internationally recruited nurse from a third country, you need a visa based on a residence permit. This permit is awarded to you for the purpose of your stay. If you wish to continue your professional activity as a nurse in Germany, this is usually the "stay for the purpose of gainful employment" in accordance with §18 of the Residence Act (AufenthG).

However, before you can work as a nurse in Germany, it is imperative that you undergo a recognition procedure (see Chapter 3.3). If your nursing qualification is not recognised immediately, you first enter for participation in a recognition measure. For this purpose, you will be issued with a temporary residence permit for the purpose of professional recognition in accordance with § 16d of the Residence Act (AufenthG).



Here's what you should know:

The Skilled Workers Immigration Act („Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz“ (FEG)) has opened up the possibility for internationally recruited nurses to speed up their entry procedures. This is regulated by § 81a of the Residence Act (AufenthG). Do you have a specific job offer? In this case, employers can apply for a **"fast-track skilled worker procedure"** for you against payment of a fee.

Fast-Track Skilled Worker Procedure:

In the accelerated skilled labour procedure in accordance with Section 81a AufenthG for Section 18 and Section 16d AufenthG, the immigration authority plays a key role together with the employer. Both are responsible for coordinating and bundling all application procedures and the respective (central) immigration authority is the central point of contact in the process. In addition, it assumes the examination of all applicable requirements and the initiation of the procedure for recognition, employment permit and visa issuance. The authorities involved are bound by relatively short time limits throughout the procedure. Overall, the fast-track procedure for skilled workers usually does not last longer than four months. However, it should be noted that the authorities must comply with these deadlines only if all the necessary documents are available.

For example, the exact deadlines in the procedure are explained step by step on the pages of [Make it in Germany](#).

As an alternative to the fast-track procedure for skilled workers, there are three other entry options:

- (1) The "regular entry procedure" according to §18 or §16d of the Residence Act (AufenthG) or
- (2) Entry as part of a recognition partnership (from March 2024) or
- (3) Entry on the basis of a mediation agreement of the Federal Employment Agency according to § 16d para. 4 AufenthG within the framework of state-organised recruitment (see Chapter 3.1).

Regular Entry Procedure according to §18 or §16d of the Residence Act (1)

In contrast to the accelerated skilled worker procedure, the applications in the regular entry procedure are not bundled at the (central) immigration authority, but are applied for and performed by you as a skilled worker at the German embassy in your home country. The deadlines for the authorities involved are much longer. The recognition and residence procedure must therefore be initiated separately from each other at the relevant competent authority.

As a qualified nurse abroad, you can submit the application for recognition to your local recognition authority before you enter Germany (for more information, see Chapter 3.3). The result of the recognition procedure decides on the residence permit and the issuance of the visa.



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

A) Entry for the Purpose of Recognition in accordance with § 16d of the Residence Act

If you are granted partial recognition of your professional qualification as part of the recognition procedure, an entry visa in accordance with § 16d AufenthG must be applied for at your German foreign representation in your country of origin (German embassy or consulate general).

Once you have arrived in Germany, an application for a residence permit pursuant to § 16d (3) AufenthG must be submitted to your local immigration authority in Germany on the basis of your entry visa.

B) Entry for the Purpose of Gainful Employment in accordance with § 18 of the Residence Act

If you are granted full recognition of your professional qualification as part of the recognition procedure and you meet the linguistic requirements (see Chapter 3.5), you can apply for an entry visa in accordance with § 18 AufenthG at your German foreign representation in your country (German embassy or consulate general).

Once you have arrived in Germany, an application for a residence permit pursuant to § 18 AufenthG must be submitted to your local immigration authority in Germany on the basis of your entry visa.

It should also be noted during the regular entry procedure that you must already have a concrete job offer from your prospective employer in Germany before entering the country. As a rule, a fixed employment contract is not required.

You can also find more detailed information as well as other prerequisites and deadlines in the regular procedure on the pages of [Make it in Germany](#).

Entry as part of a recognition partnership (2)

From March 2024, the recognition partnership will make it possible to obtain a residence permit to practice your nursing profession and to perform the necessary recognition procedure only after entry, without the need for a partial equivalence decision. The granting of a visa is linked to the obligation between you and your future employer to apply for recognition after entering the country and to actively pursue the procedure.

Entry on the basis of Mediation Agreements with the Federal Employment Agency (3)

There has also been the possibility of entering Germany within the framework of mediation agreements of the Federal Employment Agency with employment services of selected countries of origin. This option is legally stipulated in § 16d para. 4 of the Residence Act (AufenthG). The visa issued for entry does not require a completed individual recognition procedure. This differs from the procedures mentioned above.

You can find out more here:

For more information on the fast-track skilled worker procedure, please visit the homepage of [Make it in Germany](#).

The [Working and Living in Germany hotline](#) also supports the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees („Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge“ (BAMF)) in the regular entry procedure.

Detailed information of the IQ network for entry within the framework of mediation agreements can be found here: [German version](#) or [English version](#).



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

3.3 Recognition Procedure

The nursing profession of the nurses („Pflegefachmann“/ „Pflegefachfrau“) is a "regulated profession", which means that education and training are prescribed by the state. In order to be able to work as a nurse in Germany, you need a state permit to use the German professional title of a nurse („Pflegefachmann“/ „Pflegefachfrau“). For this permission, internationally recruited nurses must meet two requirements:

- (1) The equivalence of the nursing qualification with the German nursing qualification (= **professional recognition**) and
- (2) language skills required for the exercise of the profession (see Chap. 3.5).

Only when both requirements (1+2) have been met will internationally recruited nursing professionals be granted a licence to use the professional title "Pflegefachmann" / "Pflegefachfrau" (in short: **professional practice permit**).



Here's what you should know:

Milestones for obtaining a licence to practise - Application for recognition of the equivalence of your nursing qualification acquired abroad

There are two ways to do this:

A) As explained in Chapter 3.2, you should apply for recognition of the equivalence of your nursing qualification acquired abroad before you enter Germany. The application is submitted to the local competent authority for professional recognition at your future place of work in Germany. In the fast-track procedure, the recognition procedure is automatically initiated and forwarded by the immigration authority to the competent authority.

When you submit an application, care must be taken to **specify a reference profession**. This corresponds to the German equivalent of your nursing qualification acquired abroad: As a rule, this is German vocational training as a „Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“ according to the Nursing Professions Act (PfIBG).

Until 2024, the reference profession of the old professional profile as a „Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger/ in“ may also be possible.

B) Entry and employment within the framework of a recognition partnership (so-called residence permit for employment with accompanying professional recognition): From March 2024, the recognition partnership will enable you to perform the necessary recognition procedure in parallel with the Federal Employment Agency (Section 16d (3a) of the Residence Act) only after you have entered Germany. In contrast to option A, in this case it is not necessary to initiate a recognition procedure or to have a decision on partial equivalence before entering the country. The granting of a visa is based on a commitment between you as a nurse and your future employer to apply for recognition after entry. The basic requirements for the recognition partnership are, in addition to the employment contract, the existence of a professional qualification that has required at least two years of training or a university degree (both must be recognised by the respective country of training), as well as German language skills at level A2. The residence permit is usually issued for one year and can be extended for up to three years.



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

Determination of Equivalence

To obtain professional recognition, your documents (certificates, diplomas, transcript of records, etc.) are first checked by the competent authorities in the "equivalence test" („Gleichwertigkeitsprüfung“). The theoretical and practical content of your education and training is compared with the content of German nursing education and training.

The nursing profession is not practiced in the same way in all countries. Education and training also differ. It is therefore possible that you may still lack certain training content that is a prerequisite for working as a nurse in Germany.

However, if you meet all the requirements, your professional qualification will be recognised. If you also have German language skills (see Chapter 3.5), you will receive a professional licence to practice as a nurse in Germany.

In many cases, however, there is still a lack of training content that you can make up for at the beginning of your stay in Germany. These are recorded in writing by means of an assessment notice (colloquially also referred to as a "deficit notice"). If necessary, it also specifies which content you still have to make up for with the help of a compensatory measure.

Measures to Compensate for Substantial Differences to Achieve Equivalence

There are two ways to compensate for the lack of training content ("deficits") by means of a compensatory measure. This is regulated by §40 paragraph 3 sentence 2 of the Nursing Professions Act (PflBG). As a nurse with a professional qualification acquired abroad, you have the right to choose between an **adaptation course** or a **knowledge test**:

Adaptation Course

In accordance with § 44 of the Training and Examination Ordinance for Nursing Professions (PflAPrV), the differences found in your degree are compensated individually in an adaptation course. The competent authority shall determine the duration and content of the adaptation course. In an adaptation course, the differences identified are made up for in a targeted manner. Adaptation courses usually consist of specialist lessons and practical assignments. It ends with a final discussion on the content of the course. Adaptation courses must be approved by the competent authority and may only be offered by state-recognised nursing schools and educational institutions.

Knowledge Test

The knowledge test is a state test according to § 45 of the Training and Examination Ordinance for Nursing Professions (PflAPrV). It consists of a practical part and an oral part. The knowledge test checks whether you have the necessary skills to practice the profession. It refers to the essential contents of German education. You can prepare for the knowledge test in special courses. The knowledge test may be repeated once.

Courses to prepare for the knowledge test are offered in Germany by various educational institutions. They are not regulated by law because they are not mandatory.

Innovative course concepts already include language training during the compensatory measures (e.g. through the cooperation of specialist and language lecturers; through language mentors during practical assignments or through accompanying language courses). These concepts often offer you the opportunity to familiarise yourself with your new workplace during the compensation measure (e.g. through practical assignments during the compensation measure).



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

Granting of Permission to Use the Professional Title – Professional Licence

Once any necessary equalisation measures in Germany have been successfully completed (=professional recognition (1)) and the necessary German language skills at the appropriate level (see section 3.5) have been demonstrated (2), you will receive permission to use the professional title "Pflegefachmann" / "Pflegefachfrau".

This professional licence enables you to pursue a qualified activity as a nurse in Germany. However, it should be noted that your qualification (e.g. a Bachelor of Science in Nursing) is virtually equated with German vocational training – it is equivalent to „Pflegefachmann“ / „Pflegefachfrau“. Since the German nursing qualification is predominantly equivalent to vocational training, you may not be entitled to pursue a further Master's degree with your degree recognised in Germany.

You can find out more here:

The IQ network has published a topic dossier on nursing with general [information on professional recognition of nurses](#).

Federal Institute for Vocational Training („Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung“ (BIBB)): [Information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in Germany](#)

Recognition in Germany:

[Federal Government Information Portal on the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications](#)

You can find out how you can have your professional qualification recognised and who is responsible for it using the recognition finder. [Here](#) you can find free advice centres.

Central Service Centre for Professional Recognition („Zentrale Servicestelle Berufsanerkennung“ (ZSBA)):

[Free advice and support in the recognition process](#)

As part of the [ProRecognition project](#), qualified nurses in 10 foreign countries are advised on professional recognition (including Vietnam, Brazil, Colombia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, and Ukraine).

3.4 Subsequent Immigration of Family Members

Here's what you should know:

Moving to Germany could mean that you have to leave your family in the country of origin for the time being during your recognition procedure in Germany. Talk to your future employer about existing opportunities to support family reunification (of spouse and minor children) in order to organise subsequent immigration of family members as quickly as possible. Employers can, for example, assist you in researching the exact requirements for family reunification or submitting official documents to the competent authorities.

The legal basis for family reunification is regulated in §27ff of the Residence Act (AufenthG). Family reunification is only possible if there is a registered marriage certificate and the income can cover the living expenses of the whole family.

You can find out more here:

Make-it-in-Germany offers internationally recruited nurses [information on family reunification](#) as well [as a step-by-step guide](#).

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees („Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge“ (BAMF)) also offers you an overview of the [possibilities of family reunification](#).



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

3.5 Language in the Context of the Recognition Process

As explained in Chapter 3.3, not only the recognition of the nursing qualification acquired abroad but also a certain German language level must be demonstrated for the granting of the professional licence. Only with this are you entitled to pursue an activity as a nurse in Germany.



Here's what you should know:

For the issuance of the visa for participation in a compensatory measure in Germany according to § 16d AufenthG, German language skills at level B1 are often sufficient. Further language skills can be developed in Germany.

The provisions of the linguistic requirements for granting a professional licence are currently being redesigned. In some federal states, a B2 nursing language exam must be taken. Initially, this specialised language test was introduced in Hamburg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, [Bavaria](#) and Rhineland-Palatinate (more [information here](#)). In other federal states, general German language skills at level B2 are currently sufficient. You need proof of the required language skills at the latest for the professional licence as a recognised nurse. Check with your competent recognition authority for the exact regulations.

Participation in vocational language courses as part of the recognition process in Germany can be funded, if necessary, via the "Regulation on the Professional German Language Promotion" – („Verordnung über die berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung" in short, DeuFöV). The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees („Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge" (BAMF)) is responsible for this. Employers can support you in obtaining information from the BAMF about possible funding opportunities.

How can I recognise a language school with good German lessons outside Germany?

Your personal motivation as well as your previous knowledge and experience of learning a language have an influence on your learning success. Equally important are the quality of the teaching and materials, the learning environment and the qualifications of your teacher. Various criteria can help you to identify a language school with good German lessons. The Goethe-Institut has compiled detailed recommendations that can give you [orientation when choosing your language school](#).

Digital Offers

In addition to conventional language courses, there are also digital support services for improving German language skills. For example, the following free services have been developed specifically for internationally recruited nurses:

One day German – in nursing

One day German – in nursing („Ein Tag Deutsch in der Pflege") is a free learning game from B1 for the German language in the nursing profession with exercises on communication, vocabulary, and structures, which are practiced with real nursing situations. Available [as online version and as app](#).

Educational games from the Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut tries to support language acquisition with language learning games such as [Undercover Mission](#) in the Hospital.



You can find out more here:

On the website of the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language, you will find a collection of materials for the area of nursing, which can help you with language acquisition. www.deutsch-am-arbeitsplatz.de



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

3.6 Preparation for Employment: Rights & Obligations of Employees

As an internationally recruited nurse, you have both rights and obligations when it comes to economic employment in healthcare in Germany. The following section is intended to provide an overview of them. Your future employment contract plays a central role in this, in which several aspects must be taken into account. Always read an employment contract with care and inform yourself about your rights and obligations as an employee in Germany before signing it.



Here's what you should know:

The **employment contract** is the legal basis for an employment relationship within Germany. It defines the rights and obligations of employees.

It is important that you receive the following information before or during the conclusion of the contract:

- Names of the contracting parties (your name and that of the company)
- Start and duration of the contract and applicable collective agreement
- Information on the probationary period, if applicable
- Place of work
- Job description (your tasks on site)
- Salary information
- Information on working hours in hours per week and holiday entitlement in days per year
- Information on mutual notice periods

If you are being recruited in Germany from abroad, the recruitment agency must inform you of these points before the employment contract is concluded. You can refuse a job offer. You can also negotiate individual amendments. This duty to provide information is prescribed by law. Agents who have not been awarded the "Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany" quality seal must also comply with this. Compare different job offers!

Since 2022, a collective agreement must be applied in the care sector. These regulate the level of wages. Framework conditions such as regulations on working hours, overtime, holidays etc. can also be set out in collective agreements. If you work as a recognised healthcare professional in Germany, the same regulations apply to you as to colleagues with a German professional qualification!

In a collective agreement, you will be categorised into a pay group and experience level based on your professional qualifications and experience. You will receive a salary in accordance with the pay scale for the specified classification. If you work for a public-sector employer, you are subject to the collective agreement for the public-sector care sector (TVöD Pflege). This can be viewed online. Collective agreements do not have to be published online but must be made available to you. The employment agency must also refer you to the collective agreement in the job offer.

Do not sign an employment contract until you have read and understood it carefully. Make sure you are well informed and compare the working conditions and remuneration.

Maximum Working Hours & Minimum Rest Periods – Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational health and safety is a priority in Germany to protect all employees. This includes, among other things, the obligation to observe maximum working hours and minimum rest periods. Employers are responsible for compliance. According to the Working Hours Act (ArbZG), a working day may not exceed an average of eight hours. However, an exception applies to nurses: The maximum daily working time can be more than eight hours and can be extended to up to twelve hours. After this above-average working time, employees must have at least eleven hours of rest.



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

Within this working time, there are also statutory break regulations (rest breaks). With a working time of six to nine hours, at least 30 minutes must be taken after work of more than nine hours 45 minutes. It should be noted that the break must be taken after six hours of work at the latest.

Rest periods must also be observed between two work shifts. Normally, this is at least eleven hours; the rest period can be reduced to ten hours in nursing. In this case, longer rest periods must be granted subsequently to compensate.

For work on Sundays and public holidays, substitute rest days must be granted within the following 14 days. Specifically, this means that as a nurse, you can be obliged to work for 19 days at a time.

Notice Periods:

Notice of termination may be given by either party: Both employees and employers may terminate the employment relationship. Deadlines must be adhered to in this context. The employment relationship is not terminated until the deadline has expired. The notice periods vary depending on how long the employment relationship has been in existence. In principle, a statutory notice period of at least four weeks applies in Germany, either from the 15th or the end of the calendar month. But caution: This statutory notice period only applies if you have been employed for more than six months.

All information about your notice periods, including during the probationary period, can be found either in your employment contract or in your collective agreement. Collective agreements can be obtained, for example, from institutions of the Joint Welfare Association („Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband“). If your employment or collective agreement does not contain any information about the notice periods, it is essential that you regulate these details in writing. Otherwise, the statutory provisions apply.

Commitment and / or Repayment Clauses

The company has incurred costs for your recruitment. It is therefore understandable that he wants to keep you in his company for as long as possible. One possibility for this are so-called commitment and repayment clauses. These clauses are part of your employment contract. They describe certain obligations that employees have towards the company. In principle, such clauses are not prohibited. However, they must be formulated clearly and unambiguously. The commitment and repayment clauses must not unreasonably disadvantage you as an employee. These rules specifically stipulate that you are not allowed to change jobs for a certain period of time. You are "bound" to your workplace in time (= commitment clause). If you change jobs despite the respective regulations, you must expect the company to demand repayment of a certain amount (= repayment clause).

You should therefore pay particular attention to such commitment and/or repayment clauses and check whether the clauses are appropriate for you personally. Talk to your future employer about this. These clauses can be found in your employment contract or in supplementary documents. In case of doubt, a labour court can decide whether the commitment/repayment clause is valid. The validity of the entire employment contract does not depend on them however. You should therefore read the job offer and the employment contract carefully before signing the respective document. Think about whether the provisions therein and in particular the commitment and repayment clauses suit your personal ideas and your life! Ensure you understand which regulations have which consequences for you personally.



3. The Process of Economic Migration: Procedures and Process

Co-Determination and Active Participation in a Company:

In Germany, employees are entitled to co-determination and active participation within the decision-making processes of their company.

For public or private employers, you can contact the works council or personnel council. This is elected, institutionalised employee representation in companies and corporations. It represents the interests and perspectives of all employees vis-à-vis the management level. It is regulated by law that the works council can, among other things, promote the integration of foreign employees in the company and understanding between them and German employees, as well as apply for measures to combat racism and xenophobia in the company, Art. 80 Para. 1 No. 7 of the Works Constitution Act (BetrVG).

In church or charitable institutions, the organ for co-determination is called employee representation (MAV). Their elected members also represent the interests of the employees vis-à-vis the employers. Their tasks are comparable to those of works councils. The MAV is legally regulated in the employee representation laws: in the Church Act on Employee Representations in the Protestant Church in Germany (MVG-EKD) for the Protestant Church and in the Employee Representation Regulations (MAVO) in the Catholic Church.

You can find out more here:

www.make-it-in-germany.com

www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de

www.minor-kontor.de

If you are unsure about commitment and/or repayment clauses, independent German labour law lawyers can help you. It is possible to apply for counselling assistance and legal aid. This reduces your financial risk. The IQ Network's "[Fair Integration](#)" programme offers advice on this topic. See Chapter 4.4 for additional information.





4. Arriving & Living in Germany



4.1 Social Security in Germany – Health Insurance



Here's what you should know:

During your employment as a nurse in Germany, you are compulsorily insured under social insurance. In Germany, social insurance covers five statutory insurances that cover you in various cases of occurrence: illness, need for long-term care, unemployment, accidents and retirement. In return, you receive financial support from the insurance companies if, for example, you have had an accident or lose your job. In many cases of illness, your costs are covered in full.

Social insurance includes **statutory old-age pension insurance, statutory health insurance, social long-term care insurance, statutory accident insurance** and **statutory unemployment insurance**.

The obligation to take out insurance means that you are obliged to pay social security contributions when exercising an activity as an employee. These are usually automatically deducted from your salary, similar to taxes. The amount is a percentage determined by law. In other words, it depends on your salary. The contributions are paid into the budget of the insurance concerned.

Health insurance is compulsory in Germany, so you must register with a statutory health insurance fund. You are free to choose which insurance you want. There are currently [97 health insurance funds](#) in Germany (as of January 2023). The benefits of the respective health insurance are regulated on a federal basis and include all services that are medically necessary. There are differences between the funds in terms of contribution rates and additional benefits. By taking out health insurance, you are automatically also insured for nursing care.

Some special features of the respective insurance are described in detail here:

Old-Age Pension Insurance Details:

You pay into old-age pension insurance in order to receive a monthly pension after your period of employment. The amount of the pension is determined on the basis of your income during your employment. The years of contributions in Germany are counted here. In principle, pensions of the statutory old-age pension insurance are also paid abroad. This is the case if you emigrate again after your employment in Germany. However, there may be restrictions in certain individual cases. It is therefore important that you inform yourself about your individual circumstances in good time with the German old-age pension insurance.



4. Arriving & Living in Germany

Unemployment Insurance:

Unemployment insurance pays unemployed people a regular income for a certain period of time. In principle, you must have been insured for one year within the last two years during your professional activity and also look for work again.

You can find out more here:

For more information on social insurance, please visit the website of [Make it in Germany](#).

4.2 Migration & Integration Advice Infrastructure

Here's what you should know:

A wide range of migration and integration advice is offered in Germany. Some of the most important contact points can be found here:

Since 2005, the federal government has been promoting [migration advice for adult immigrants](#). This is an offer specifically designed for new immigrants.

[mbeon Migrationsberatung](#) is a digital service. It offers advice seekers the opportunity to use the mbeon-App to request chat advice. Questions about arriving in Germany, work and occupation, learning German, health and living can be clarified there. The use of the chat advice is free of charge, anonymous and data-secure. At the same time, the app and the [BAMF website](#) provide comprehensive information on migration as a first guide. In addition, there is the possibility to get personal advice in an MBE advisory centre.

[Fair Integration](#) is a nationwide counselling service for refugees and migrants who are not from the EU. The offer includes support for social and labour law issues. Through a practical selection of topics, you can learn a lot of interesting facts about aspects such as wages, working hours, vacations, notice of termination and health insurance.



4. Arriving & Living in Germany

In the counselling centres, you can find advice on specific issues relating to working conditions in a job, training and internship. Some counselling centres provide you with helpful tips and further information that will help you with your questions even before you start working in Germany. In many cases, you do not have to already work in Germany to claim support. The counselling centres also offer workshops such as integration or language courses. If you have any further questions about topics such as job search or residence status, you are referred to specialised counselling services and counselling institutions.

You can find out more here:

You can find general information about migration counselling here:

www.caritas.de

www.drk.de

www.der-paritaetische.de

Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community („Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat“)

www.bmi.bund.de

4.3 Political, Social, Religious and Cultural Opportunities

Here's what you should know:

In Germany, you can become politically, socially, religiously or culturally active in a variety of ways. The website of the [Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration](#) provides an initial introduction towards finding opportunities for participation and support.

There are also often communal integration officers at the local level who are committed to the social participation of all people living in Germany. They are central contact persons in the respective region and can network with other stakeholders, if necessary.

Social and cultural participation also enables migrants to organise themselves. Foreign representations of the respective region (embassies, consulates) often provide an overview of existing organisations and associations. In recent years, a number of groups of people who came to Germany as nurses have also joined forces.

Another important opportunity for this is provided by local religious communities / church congregations and music / sports or cultural associations at your place of residence.

You can find out more here:

Whether you want to enjoy music and theatre, go to a festival, folk festival or funfair – there is sure to be something for you somewhere in Germany. You can find information here:

www.deutschland.de

The Diversity Charter promotes the recognition, appreciation and inclusion of diversity in the world of work and offers a wealth of information and events in this area:

www.charta-der-vielfalt.de

The work of the Federal Agency for Civic Education focuses on promoting awareness of democracy and political participation through conferences, congresses, festivals, trade fairs, exhibitions, study trips, competitions, cinema seminars and cultural events as well as events:

www.bpb.de



4. Arriving & Living in Germany

4.4 Impartial advice and other support

Here's what you should know:

Regardless of the information you receive from your employer or agency, you also have the opportunity to obtain information from impartial counselling centres.

There is a large and wide-ranging counselling and support landscape in Germany, most of which also offers free and impartial help and advice.

Some of the programmes are listed here. Don't be afraid to take advantage of this – they can be very helpful in different situations.

You can find out more here:

Initial consultation also from abroad:

[Working and living in Germany hotline](#)

The "**Working and Living**" network (Netzwerk „Arbeit und Leben“) for advising foreign employees was founded for professional exchange, qualification and joint public relations. Advice is available in various languages (mostly German, English, French, Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian, Croatian, Russian, Turkish or Arabic).

www.arbeitundleben.de

Ban Ying Counselling Centre:

Ban Ying e.V. is one of the oldest women's projects against human trafficking in Berlin. It supports migrants who have experienced violence, exploitation or human trafficking in two ways. Through public relations work, further training for public authority employees, scientific evaluation and advocacy work, they are committed to equal participation of migrants in society. Migrants are supported in asserting their concerns and rights through social work counselling and support. In addition to the coordination and advice centre, there is also a refuge where trafficked women can be accommodated.

www.ban-ying.de

Handbook Germany provides answers from A-Z about life in Germany in the form of videos and texts. You can choose between these seven languages: German, Arabic, English, Persian, Turkish, French, Pashto and Russian. In Handbook Germany, you can find important tips, including on the topics of asylum, housing, health, work and education, daycare and study. On the local pages, you can also find a suitable contact person in your region. Here is an example: [How does the German care system work?](#)

Last but not least, we also recommend the [YouTube service of the German Trade Union Confederation](#) („Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund“ (DGB)) on employment law topics.

The IQ - Integration through Qualification funding programme aims to improve the integration of adults of foreign origin into the labour market. It is of central interest that vocational qualifications acquired abroad more frequently lead to sustainable and educationally adequate employment. The IQ networks thus offer numerous regional programmes: www.netzwerk-iq.de



Introducing the Quality Association

The quality association "Recruitment and Placement of Nurses from Abroad" („Anwerbung und Vermittlung von Pflegekräften aus dem Ausland e.V.") is committed to an ethically justifiable, fair and sustainable recruitment and placement of nurses who migrate to Germany.

It awards the RAL quality mark "Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany". Private recruitment agencies as well as health and care facilities that independently recruit nurses from abroad to Germany can apply for the quality mark. Whoever bears the "Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany" quality mark adheres to important principles. These requirements are broken down into quality ranges with individually verifiable indicators in a requirements catalogue. The catalogue of requirements is updated regularly.

Six Guiding Principles of the Requirements Catalogue



We are also dependent on your help for quality assurance and the further development of the requirements catalogue! You can view the current requirements catalogue in German and English [here](#).

If you would like to share your experience of placing a healthcare professional from abroad in Germany with us, you can send an email to ann-christin.wedeking@kda.de or info@faire-anwerbung-pflege-deutschland.de.

We look forward to your message!



Faire Anwerbung
Pflege Deutschland

Fair Recruitment
Healthcare Germany



Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium
für Gesundheit

aufgrund eines Beschlusses
des Deutschen Bundestages

5. Imprint

Information about Labour Migration to Healthcare Professions in Germany

Living and Working in Germany: Guidance and Decision Support for Internationally Recruited Nurses

Written by

Maike Zwergel

German Competence Centre for International Skilled Workers in the Health and Nursing Professions (Deutsches Kompetenzzentrum für internationale Fachkräfte in den Gesundheits- und Pflegeberufen (DKF))

December 2023

Updated & revised by

Debora Aust

DAREconsulting GmbH

Im Technologiepark 1

15236 Frankfurt (Oder)

Tel: +49 175 226 4572

E-Mail: info@dareconsulting.de · Web: www.dareconsulting.de

Publisher

Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe

Wilhelmine-Lübke-Stiftung e. V. (KDA)

Michaelkirchstrasse 17-18 · 10179 Berlin

Tel: +49 30 / 2218298-0 · Fax: +49 30 / 2218298-66

E-Mail: info@kda.de · Web: www.kda.de

Photos: © Adobe Stock

Suggested citation:

Zwergel, M. (2022): Information about Economic Migration to Healthcare Professions in Germany. Living and Working in Germany: Guidance and Decision Support for Internationally Recruited Nurses (2nd revised edition).