

Shifting Base to Germany: The lived experience of our Volas and Volos

In Germany, working in steps doesn't always work and one must do multiple things simultaneously. So, instead of going step-by-step, the onboarding into Germany should be divided into phases. Also, no two experiences are the same, and hence, might require a bit of self-digging to find out which solutions work for you the most. This might be really annoying at times, but in the end, getting settled into life in Germany in a way makes one resilient to a lot of things.

Phase 1: Before arriving in Germany

- Get the visa, create a travel itinerary that works for you
- Look for housing: both initial and longer term
- Get travel insurance that is valid from your date of travel until at least a month after you arrive in Germany. This is helpful as sometimes it takes a while to get registered on German health insurance for a variety of reasons.
- Get yourself acquainted with apps that you would need for your life in Bonn: VRS (local transport), Deutsche Bahn, CovPass and/or CoronaWarn
- Check if your COVID vaccine is valid in Germany and what rules apply for your country of origin
- Prepare the documents and be ready to depart!
- Good to check German translations for services that you would need the most: Apotheke, Krankenhaus, Notruf (see what you need and pick).
- Carry some cash that you might need for the first month. Calculate extra expenses like deposit for flat, initial setup costs like clothing, utensils, furniture, sim card, devices etc.

Phase 2: Once in Germany

- Get an appointment at the Stadthaus online for your registration (Anmeldung)
- Get a document named 'Wohnungsgeberbestätigung' from your landlord which is crucial to get registered.
- Once registered, you will receive a letter from the Finance Office (Finanzamt) saying 'Steuernummer' (Tax ID) and be put into a 'Steuerklasse' or tax category. Check online to see which category fits you.
- Once registered, go to a bank of your choice to open an account. For Sparkasse, you don't even need to be registered to open an account. Remember to inform them your Steuernummer, sometimes it goes automatically but not always.
- Get an appointment with the foreigners' office (Ausländerbehörde) for your residence permit ASAP as this takes the longest to finish processing.
- Additionally, in Germany there is mandatory health insurance. That means that the trainees have to pay for their health insurance in Germany themselves. Contact DW People department for advice on health insurance, social insurance and pension insurance.

There are a range of insurances that we could get in Germany, but what you need varies from others. The most common ones are Privathaftpflichtversicherung (private liability), Hausratversicherung (housing), Berufsunfähigkeitsversicherung (inability to work), Rechtsschutzversicherung (legal). Check which ones you need and choose a plan/company of your own.

Every time you change addresses, inform the city by going to the Stadthaus for a re-registration (Ummeldung). If you move out, do a deregistration (Abmeldung).