



# DUAL CAREER HANDBOOK

Insights for  
Dual Career Couples



---

# Inhalt

Welcome to the  
Max Planck Society! ..... 4

## 1

What does dual career  
actually mean? ..... 6

## 2

What does the Max Planck  
Society offer in the area  
of dual career? ..... 8

## 3

Further information and  
contact details ..... 10

3.1 International Offices ..... 11

3.2 Diversity ..... 11

3.3 Family Office ..... 12

3.4 Health Management and  
Mental Health (OHM) ..... 13

3.5 Brochure "Living and Working  
in Germany" ..... 13

## 4

The labour market  
in Germany – your  
opportunities ..... 14

## 5

How important are German  
language skills? ..... 18

## 6

Job search and suitable  
application strategies ..... 20

6.1 How to expand professional  
networks strategically ..... 22

6.2 Identification of regional  
prerequisites ..... 23

6.3 German language course  
as a career booster ..... 24

6.4 Use of job portals ..... 25

6.5 Protection against  
discrimination in Germany ..... 26

## 7

### Your application documents are your best advertisement ..... 28

- 7.1 The cover letter ..... 30
- 7.2 The curriculum vitae (CV) ..... 31
- 7.3 The application photo – still a way to win favour..... 32
- 7.4 Certificates and documents ..... 33
- 7.5 Letters of recommendation and references ..... 34
- 7.6 Current trends in job applications ..... 34

## 8

### The job interview – show your authentic side! ..... 36

- 8.1 Preparation ..... 37
- 8.2 Procedure ..... 39
- 8.3 Mentality in the job interview ..... 40
- 8.4 Special features of virtual job interviews ..... 41

## 9

### Money, money, money – salary and salary negotiation ..... 42

- 9.1 Salary ..... 43
- 9.2 Salary negotiation ..... 45

## 10

### Onboarding – your starting period in the organization ..... 48

## 11

### Alternative occupations – creativity in career development ..... 52

- 11.1 Voluntary work ..... 54
- 11.2 Self-employment and working as a freelancer ..... 55
- 11.3 Further education ..... 57

## 12

### What do I need to bear in mind about work culture in Germany? ..... 58

- 12.1 Punctuality ..... 60
- 12.2 Hierarchies, structures, processes ..... 60
- 12.3 Accuracy ..... 61
- 12.4 Communication and feedback ... 61
- 12.5 Work and private life ..... 61

## 13

### Dual Career Networks ..... 62

- 13.1 Further useful networks ..... 64

---


# Welcome to the Max Planck Society!



The Max Planck Society (MPG) extends a very warm welcome to its new employees and their immediate family members, including partners and children. The well-being of its employees, both professionally and privately, is a core value of the organization. MPG offers services in areas such as work-life balance and occupational health management in order to support the needs of each individual as best as possible.

If a new position requires relocation, this usually also affects the partner's professional situation. In some cases, this may involve switching to mobile working or seeking new career opportunities in the future location. This may often be particularly challenging, even for highly professional staff. Language barriers, cultural differences, illnesses and personal and family commitments may all present additional challenges. This is where the Dual Career Service steps in. Therefore, in addition to other MPG offerings differentiated by target groups, extensive information on subjects such as the job market in Germany, application strategies and documents, networks, and other career options has been compiled in this handbook.

The MPG invites you to seize the opportunity presented by the new location to further your professional development and define an application strategy that is adapted to the region. We wish you every success!

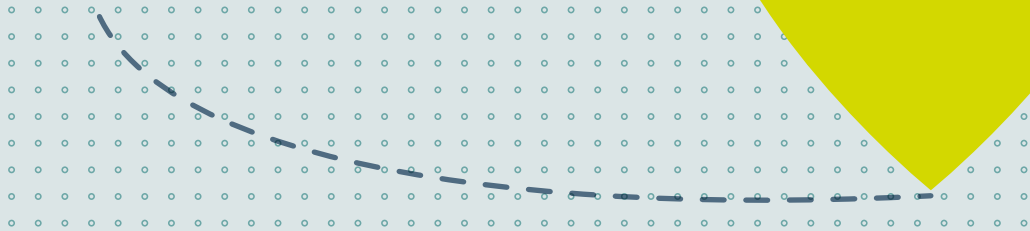


नमस्ते



Hola

# 1 What does dual career actually mean?



A dual career couple is a partnership in which both partners are usually highly qualified and pursue their own career goals independently of each other. At the same time, their shared family life can also take centre stage for them and play a significant role in their career planning.

The Max Planck Society offers its employees various services related to the reconciliation of career and family life, childcare, care giving, and mental health. And the MPG wishes to be open and supportive not only to its employees, but also to their respective partners.

To ensure a successful change, the Dual Career Service advises and supports them in planning and implementing their careers at their new location. In this way, the service also influences employee satisfaction. Equal opportunities, diversity and respectful forms of interaction all contribute significantly to an open welcome culture.



# 2

What does the Max Planck Society offer in the area of dual career?



There are various dual career offerings available, which may vary depending on the target group and location. There is a central Dual Career Counselling Service for specific target groups, and the Institutes provide support through their local networks as needed.

Depending on the requirements, the target group, and the location, central or Institute-based counselling may contain the following aspects:

- Analysis of the German or regional labour market
- Identification of career options within and/or outside science
- Establishing contact with potential employers in the region
- Counselling on application strategies, application documents, and professional networks
- Information about further training opportunities and regional Dual Career Networks.

For more information, please contact the Dual Career & Welcome Officers at Administrative Headquarters:

✉ [dualcareer-welcome@gv.mpg.de](mailto:dualcareer-welcome@gv.mpg.de)

Website: [mpg.de/24885930/dual-career](https://www.mpg.de/24885930/dual-career)

Furthermore, employees can also address their concerns to those responsible at their respective Institutes. You will find further information on the respective International Offices responsible for you under 3.1, "International Offices."

---

# 3

## Further information and contact details



MPG offers its employees a wide range of services relating to both their professional and personal lives, some of which also apply to their partners.

### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

In many cases, international employees can turn to the International Office or a designated contact person at their Institute. These individuals have excellent networks and can provide assistance with many matters relating to the international employee's stay and work in Germany. They provide guidance and support throughout the entire stay and make a very significant contribution to the MPG's welcome culture. Issues concerning partners and children are also given consideration here and can be brought to the attention of the International Offices through the employees.

Here you will find topical information from the International Offices and a list of the corresponding Office per Institute:

[mpg.de/23563703/die-international-offices](https://www.mpg.de/23563703/die-international-offices)

### 3.2 DIVERSITY

A work environment characterized by diversity, respect, and inclusiveness is an important concern for the MPG. The MPG has been a member of the nationwide Diversity Charter since 2010, and its Code of Conduct summarizes corresponding fundamental values, complemented by the MPG-specific understanding of diversity. Measures promoting equality, equal opportunities, diversity, respect, and inclusion are continuously being further developed.

Support services and reporting offices are available in the event that conflict or misconduct arises, which, given the interaction of different people and cultures, cannot be ruled out.

In addition, there are local and central representations for employees with severe disabilities, as well as isolated local Diversity Groups and Diversity Officers.

Here you will find an overview of the reporting offices of the MPG:

[mpg.de/report-misconduct](https://www.mpg.de/report-misconduct)

Further information on the MPG's understanding of diversity as well as on diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities are available here:

[mpg.de/797963/diversity-inclusion](https://www.mpg.de/797963/diversity-inclusion)

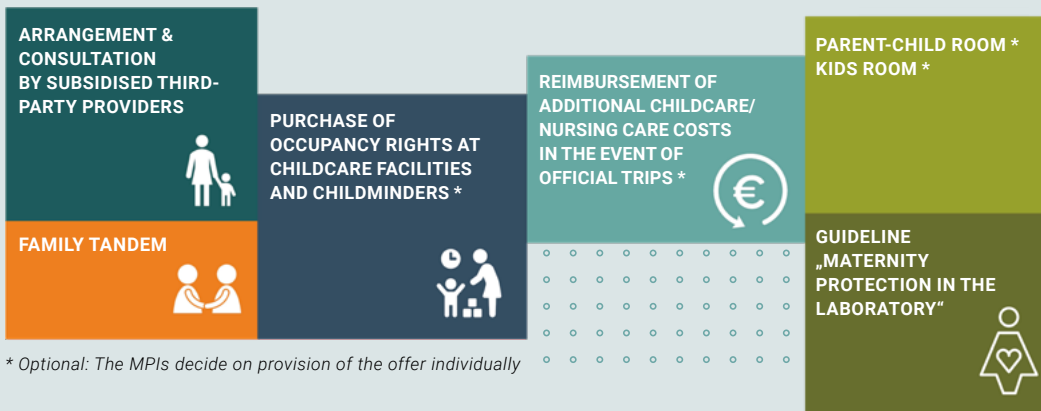
[mpg.de/8332885/equal-opportunities](https://www.mpg.de/8332885/equal-opportunities)

### 3.3 FAMILY OFFICE

Family friendliness enjoys high priority. The Family Office, which is part of the Administrative Headquarters, deals with legal, strategic, and conceptual issues relating to the reconciliation of career and family life for the entire Max Planck Society. It has developed a comprehensive programme and is available to the Institutes at any time as an advisory body for issues relating to specific topics.

Your partner as an employee of the MPG may contact their respective **Institute administration**, which can point towards specific local information and measures. You will find more information on specific measures, and the Family Office's areas of responsibility on the following page: [mpg.de/11723196/work-life-balance](https://www.mpg.de/11723196/work-life-balance)

## Family measures at a glance



### 3.4 HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH (OHM)

The physical and mental well-being of all employees is a decisive factor in employee satisfaction at the MPG and is therefore highly valued. Occupational Health Management (OHM) aims to maintain and strengthen the employees' physical and mental health. For this reason, the Planck Academy offers appropriate target group-specific programmes and provides individual advice to the Institutes.

You will find further information on the following website:

📄 [mpg.de/24885953/health-management](https://mpg.de/24885953/health-management)

Employees can also get free help in dealing with professional or personal problems and issues that affect their well-being at work. The Fürstenberg Institute offers an immediate advisory service (EMAP) by telephone, online, or in person around the clock in German, English, Spanish, Russian, and many other languages.

This offer at no cost is also available to you as a partner living in the same household. Please indicate at the beginning of the conversation for identification purposes that you are a family member of a MPG employee. Please note:

The counselling can also be conducted anonymously. This must be mentioned at the beginning of the conversation and instead of your real name, a pseudonym can be used.

Specific information about this service offering can be found here:

📄 [mpg.de/16344036/counselling-and-mental-health](https://mpg.de/16344036/counselling-and-mental-health)

### 3.5 BROCHURE “LIVING AND WORKING IN GERMANY”

A brochure containing important information about living and working in Germany has been produced for international employees. It is also available online for you:

📄 [mpg.de/4311252/living-and-working-in-germany.pdf](https://mpg.de/4311252/living-and-working-in-germany.pdf).

Here you will find information on a range of topics, including the right of residence, finding accommodation and managing finances, as well as leisure activities and culture in Germany.

CHRISTIANE  
NÜSSLEIN-VOLHARD  
FOUNDATION  
(independent)



# 4

## The labour market in Germany – your opportunities

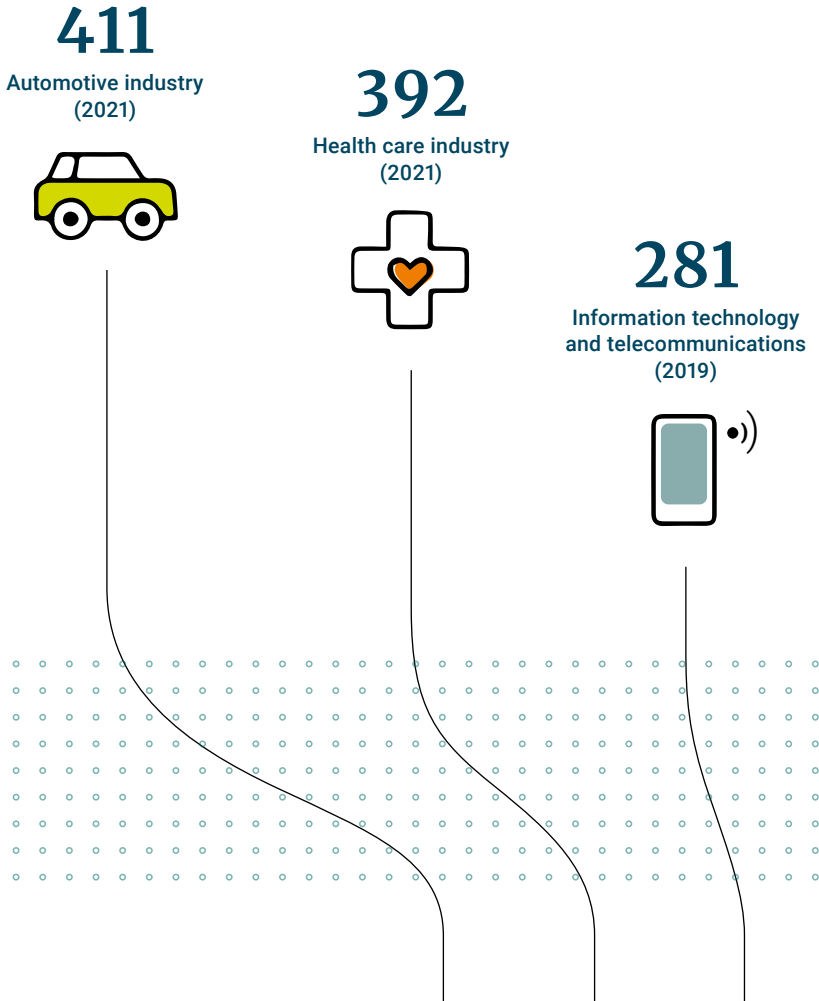


The German labour market offers highly qualified individuals a wealth of opportunities. This is all the more significant given that the unemployment rate is relatively low, and there has been a shortage of skilled workers for several years, a situation which is continuing to worsen. According to the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, this particularly applies to the STEM sector, as well as to production and manufacturing, the skilled trades, and the area of construction and building services engineering. Professions in teaching and education as well as in the health sector, especially nursing and geriatric care, are also affected. For this reason, German policy aims to recruit highly qualified professionals from other countries – possibly a good starting point for you.

The following chart, provided by the Ministry of Economics, shows the industrial sectors in Germany with the highest turnovers. Most of these sectors are constantly looking for skilled workers to support their steady growth.

## Germany's largest industries

Turnover by sector of industry in billion euros, whole year



© Federal Ministry  
for Economic Affairs  
and Climate Action  
(as of January 2023)

In 2023, spending on research and development in Germany reached a new high (source: Federal Statistical Office)

📄 [destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Research-Development/\\_node.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Research-Development/_node.html).

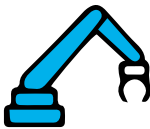
At the same time, Germany boasts a well-networked and dense research infrastructure. You will find an interactive map of university and non-university research locations in Germany on the website of the Federal Statistical Office:

📄 [destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Forschung-Entwicklung/Karte-Wissenschaftsstandorte.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Forschung-Entwicklung/Karte-Wissenschaftsstandorte.html) (in German only).

"HowToGermany" also provides information about the German labour market and its special features: 📄 [howtogermany.com/jobs/](https://www.howtogermany.com/jobs/)  
Likewise "I am Expat": 📄 [iamexpat.de/career](https://www.iamexpat.de/career)

# 229

Mechanical and  
plant engineering  
(2019)



# 220

Chemistry and  
pharmaceuticals  
(2021)



# 182

Electrical engineering  
and electronics  
(2020)



5

How important  
are German  
language skills?



The lingua franca of the working world in Germany varies greatly depending on the industry. Thus, English can generally be assumed to be the common language of science and the IT industry. However, in many other areas, an excellent knowledge of German is essential. Some positions require a minimum level of German language proficiency. You should be able to prove this with an appropriate certificate. The International Officers at the Institutes of the respective partners can provide you with information about good language schools in the region.

Applications should be written in the same language as the corresponding job advertisements. In the case of unsolicited applications, this should be considered accordingly.

# 6

## Job search and suitable application strategies



Many strategies lead to a new job. For instance, there is a wide range of job portals where vacancies are advertised. In particular, public employers are required by law to advertise their vacant positions externally. This makes the job market in this sector very transparent. In addition, many job advertisements already indicate salary ranges. However, a large number of vacancies can also be found on what is known as the “hidden job market.” Here, networking contacts and/or recommendations are particularly helpful, especially for management positions.

There are numerous special features, particularly when applying for jobs in the scientific area. The German Association of University Professors and Lecturers [*Deutscher Hochschulverband*] has compiled a wealth of information on application procedures, appointments, and the associated negotiations in science:

➤ [hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere](https://hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere) (in German only)

In the following, you will find a number of tips to help you develop your personal application strategy.

---

## 6.1 HOW TO EXPAND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS STRATEGICALLY

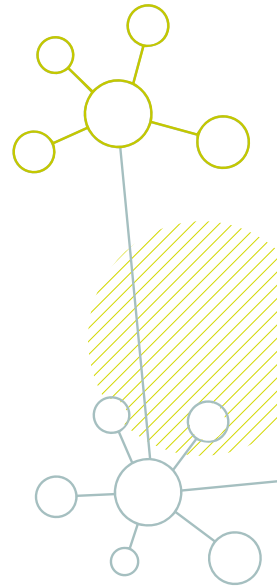
A professional network is one of the most important prerequisites for successful career development. It gives you the opportunity to exchange professional ideas, obtain information and support each other, both online and in person. In this context, it definitely makes sense to tackle professional networking strategically and across different channels. Besides social networks like LinkedIn, and in Germany also Xing, professional events such as trade fairs, topic-specific conferences organized by professional associations, continuing education courses, and career days offer excellent opportunities to make new professional contacts. But also events in a private setting can often inspire and pave the way to an expanded network.

### Analysis of the actual state

As with the application process, the first step is to assess yourself accurately and set goals for your project. What exactly do you want to achieve? How would you describe the position you are looking for? Where do you stand now? What are your special skills, talents, and experiences? The more specifically you formulate these points for yourself, the better you will be able to build a meaningful network. The self-assessment is followed by an analysis of the already existing network. This means taking stock of your existing contacts, assigning them to the appropriate areas and defining the respective relationships (e.g. whether they are casual or close contacts).


### Defining objectives

After you have compiled this list, you can start thinking about which people in your current network could possibly help you take the next step in your career. You can then broaden your perspective and explore which additional contacts could be particularly profitable for you, as well as the areas in which you should generally expand your network. All of this should be done with the overarching goal of finding employment in mind.



### Strategy development

What is the best way for you to proceed in this regard, and which networks and events could help you get in touch with relevant people?

- 
1. The best approach is to focus on a few particularly relevant individuals, networks, and events, and to prepare your contact with them in great detail. Think about how you will approach important people, what your objectives are exactly, and what you have to offer and how you could help the person in particular. It may seem particularly challenging to make contact with people you do not yet know. In this case, it may be helpful to think in advance about whether there are any mutual contacts or other points of connection, such as the same field of study, university or interest in a particular topic. When making contact, make it clear what the point of reference is, what your concern is, and, if possible, why a conversation could be of interest to both sides. Even if you don't know the person you contact, many people will be happy to help if you explain that you are looking for new contacts in a specific field because you have only recently moved to the region, for example.
  2. During the conversation, try to gain a precise understanding of your counterpart's concerns and area of work, and offer constructive suggestions where possible. While not every conversation will immediately provide information about job vacancies, it can still be valuable for expanding your network and gaining insights into the industry. If appropriate, ask for other interesting contacts in the field.
  3. Last but not least: Have fun! Maintain your existing and new contacts in your own way. One simple possibility is to send congratulations on birthdays, holidays, promotions, or job changes. You can also forward interesting articles or information that you think the person in question might be interested in, to show that you are visible and helpful.

## 6.2 IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL PREREQUISITES

As each region has its individual labour market, industry focus and networking opportunities, a region-specific approach tailored to your interests is particularly valuable. (Re)activate professional contacts who could help you with information or recommendations in your job search in your new place of residence.

---

Identify specific potential employers in your area and create a list of links to their job websites. Visit these sites regularly and subscribe to them based on your search profile. Regional Dual Career Networks may also be able to help you. For more information, please refer to Chapter 13 “Dual Career Networks”.

### 6.3 GERMAN LANGUAGE COURSE AS A CAREER BOOSTER

Sign up for a German language course – even beginner-level skills may improve your chances of being hired and highlight your motivation. Consider which type of teaching would be suitable for you. In addition to the appropriate language level, the teaching method is also important, as is the individual fit. The main differences between language courses are in terms of course duration, group size, focus and location. If you already have good language skills, courses with a specific focus on a particular topic or an internationally recognized certificate exam, as well as conversation courses, are a good way to develop your skills. Basic knowledge can be built up well in main, long-term, or intensive courses. Individual and small group lessons are very effective, provided you are sufficiently motivated and you set aside the right amount of time. If you would like to learn the language at a moderate but steady pace and possibly also make contact with other internationals, a regular group course is a good choice. Finally, there is still the decision of whether lessons are taught virtually or on site. Here, you can proceed according to your own preferences and personal possibilities. Although a virtual course offers more flexibility, linguistic subtleties are better conveyed in person.

The Federal Government offers various websites providing information about language courses and corresponding funding.

Make it in Germany:

[make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/learn-german/language-classes](https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/learn-german/language-classes)



Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

[Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge]:

🔗 [bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Bildung/Sprachkurs/sprachkurs-node.html](https://bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Bildung/Sprachkurs/sprachkurs-node.html)

In addition, German language courses are offered free of charge in some cases:

Goethe Institute: 🔗 [goethe.de/en/spr/ueb.html](https://goethe.de/en/spr/ueb.html)

Adult Education Centre [Volkshochschule]:

🔗 [vhs-Lernportal – Willkommen im vhs-Lernportal](#)

Free online German language courses and a placement test for initial self-assessment can also be found on the website of the Deutsche Welle, Germany's international broadcaster:

🔗 [learngerman.dw.com/en/learn-german/s-9528](https://learngerman.dw.com/en/learn-german/s-9528)

## 6.4 USE OF JOB PORTALS

Research the best job portals for you; depending on your professional group or industry, there are numerous digital platforms and also newsletters that you can subscribe to. For example, the job boards on LinkedIn and Xing are good options.

The Federal Employment Agency offers a general job search portal:

🔗 [arbeitsagentur.de/jobsuche/](https://arbeitsagentur.de/jobsuche/) (in German only)

For searching for jobs in the public sector:

🔗 [jobs-beim-staat.de/](https://jobs-beim-staat.de/) (in German only)

Various private providers also operate job portals (in German only) that post a wide range of vacancies:

Stepstone: 🔗 [stepstone.de/](https://stepstone.de/)

Indeed: 🔗 [de.indeed.com/](https://de.indeed.com/)

Monster: 🔗 [monster.de/](https://monster.de/)

Glassdoor (here you will find job offers as well as information on average salaries and employer reviews):

🔗 [glassdoor.de](https://glassdoor.de)

---

English-speaking jobs in Germany can be searched for specifically here:

🔗 [englishjobs.de/](https://www.englishjobs.de/)

🔗 [expatino.com/](https://www.expatino.com/)

🔗 [thelocal.de/jobs](https://www.thelocal.de/jobs)

Jobs with a sustainable or social context:

🔗 [goodjobs.eu/](https://www.goodjobs.eu/) (in German only)

Academic jobs can be found here, for example (all in German only):

🔗 [academics.de/](https://www.academics.de/)

🔗 [hochschul-job.de/](https://www.hochschul-job.de/)

🔗 [akademischestellen.com/](https://www.akademischestellen.com/)

Industry-specific job portals are listed here (in German only), for instance:

🔗 [merkur-startup.de/gruenderwissen/  
die-besten-branchenspezifischen-jobboersen/](https://www.merkur-startup.de/gruenderwissen/die-besten-branchenspezifischen-jobboersen/)

Another good idea is to keep an eye on job vacancies in regional newspapers or check the job portals of supra-regional newspapers. The job market section of the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, for example, features many job offers in science and research: 🔗 [jobs.zeit.de/](https://www.jobs.zeit.de/) (in German only).

In addition to the examples mentioned, there are many other portals you can use.



## 6.5 PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN GERMANY

Since the introduction of the General Act on Equal Treatment [*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz – AGG*] in Germany in 2007, the AGG has been considered an essential legal basis for protection against discrimination in the workplace and other areas of society. The AGG aims to prevent discrimination based on personal attributes such as ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, age or sexual identity, and to enable equal participation for everyone. In addition, Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the German Basic Law states the following very clearly: “No person shall be favoured or disfavoured because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or

political opinions.” In Germany, the “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (UN CRPD) has been implemented into national law through various legal regulations and measures such as the Federal Participation Act [*Bundesteilhabegesetz*]. Employers are under an obligation to provide a barrier-free workplace. Assistive technology or software can often be made available to make work easier (e.g., screen reading programmes, special keyboards, or speech recognition software).

Since its introduction, the AGG has generally had a profound impact on the German labour market, as it obliges employers to avoid discrimination and promote an inclusive work culture. At the federal level, organizations are regularly encouraged to bring their personnel policies and practices into line with the principles of the AGG. There are often specific supervisory bodies and internal offices that monitor compliance with the AGG and can initiate legal action if necessary. The main points of contact for those affected include, for example, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency [*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*] ([antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/homepage/homepage-node.html](https://antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/homepage/homepage-node.html)) and the local offices in the Federal States, which offer support and advice. Important for you: Anti-discrimination protection applies from the moment the application process begins!

In addition, many organizations employ gender equality and disability officers. These officers provide advice and are often present at job interviews to ensure a fair and non-discriminatory selection process.

The Self-Determination Act [*Selbstbestimmungsgesetz*] came into force on 1 November 2024. With the law now in effect, it is possible to change one’s gender and first name by simply submitting a declaration to the Registry Office. This innovation particularly benefits transgender, intersex and non-binary individuals, as it strengthens their right to respect for their gender identity. (You will find more information on this page of the Federal Government: [bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/selbstbestimmungsgesetz-2215426](https://bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/selbstbestimmungsgesetz-2215426)) (in German only).

Overall, the AGG is an important step towards making the labour market in Germany more inclusive. It supports both employers and employees in actively combatting discrimination and promoting equal treatment.

# 7 Your application documents are your best advertisement



When applying for a job in Germany, you will typically require a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, references and supporting documents. Depending on the industry, you may also need letters of recommendation or work samples. As a rule, all documents should be compiled in a single PDF document and sent by email to the specified address. In some cases, application documents must be uploaded to the employer's corresponding portal.

Although it is already customary in other countries to send job applications without a photo or first name to promote equality, this is not common practice in Germany.

---

You will find further information and assistance regarding the application process in Germany here, for example, on a website run by the Federal Government:

📄 [make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/job/application](https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/job/application)

Information on German application standards is provided by the Federal Employment Agency:

📄 [arbeitsagentur.de/arbeitslos-arbeit-finden/bewerbungstraining/bewerbung-schreiben](https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/arbeitslos-arbeit-finden/bewerbungstraining/bewerbung-schreiben) (in German only)

You will find tips geared specifically towards academic careers here:

📄 [hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere/richtig-bewerben](https://www.hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere/richtig-bewerben) (in German only)

## 7.1 THE COVER LETTER

The cover letter provides the employer with their first impression of you, so it should be written and designed appropriately for the industry. Depending on the occupational profile, a visually appealing design, skilful wording or even just a short, concise text may be important. This tendency is closely associated with the desired activities, meaning that in some areas of work, the cover letter may be considered a brief work sample, whereas in others, it plays hardly any important role.

In terms of content, you should present yourself in an authentic way, demonstrating your motivation for taking the position and providing examples to illustrate why you are the right person for the job. Get information about the respective employers beforehand. What are the company's mission and culture? Embrace this spirit and show that you can identify with this attitude. And last but not least, take a very close look at the job advertisement. What are the specific duties and requirements of this position? What areas of this role are a good fit for your experience so far, and where do you think there is room for development? Write positively about yourself while remaining honest and authentic.



## 7.2 THE CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

The central part of your application is your CV. Even when skimming through applications, readers can assess applicants' suitability for the advertised position. This is where your accumulated knowledge, skills, and experience from the various stages of your career have been compiled. The CV should be uniform and clearly structured, and should not exceed two pages. Depending on the industry, there are different approaches here as well. For example, a CV can be visually broken up and sorted according to core competencies. However, in Germany, it is customary to list work experience, internships and completed education in chronological order, beginning with the most recent. Often, the CV also includes information about honorary positions and other skills, such as language skills and IT expertise.

Ideally, however, the list should not only consist of dates and job titles, but also include a brief overview of the activities and achievements in each position or, in the case of education, the final grade and main subjects studied.

The CV should be adapted flexibly depending on the role applied for, as not all of your experience and skills may be relevant for every position. Include all points that are relevant to your position or to avoid gaps, but refrain from including unnecessary information. If there are any gaps in your CV, i.e., periods of several months during which you were neither in education nor employment, this may raise questions among employers.

At this point, it is important to explain these aspects of your life creatively and truthfully – in your CV or during the job interview. These gaps, for example, may have served further personal or professional development. Identify the positive aspects of this period for yourself and describe the corresponding benefits in a professional context. Did you care for family members? What skills did you demonstrate and learn in the process? Were you dismissed? How did you deal with it, how did you develop further? Were you unemployed? How did you manage to stay on top of your game professionally? Show your motivation and competence. Of course, you are under no obligation to disclose any intimate details. You can simply state that the break was due to health reasons. The status quo is then important. Show that you are currently fit for work.



---

With all this information, however, your CV should always be instructive, concise, and relevant in terms of content.

You will find examples and templates for CVs online from many private providers. This includes the following (in German only):

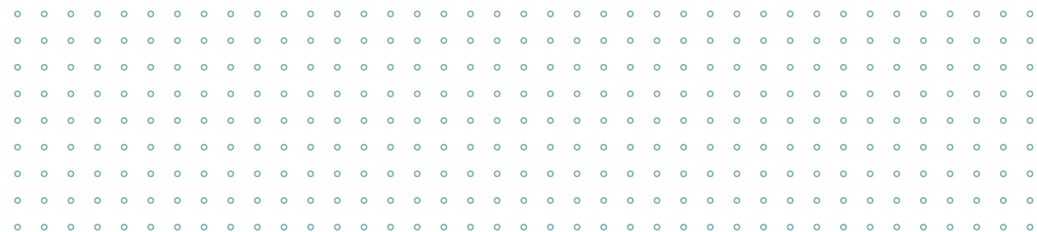
- 🔗 [karrierebibel.de/lebenslauf-beispiele/](https://www.karrierebibel.de/lebenslauf-beispiele/)
- 🔗 [lebenslauf.de/vorlagen/](https://www.lebenslauf.de/vorlagen/)
- 🔗 [canva.com/de\\_de/lebenslaeufer/vorlagen/](https://www.canva.com/de_de/lebenslaeufer/vorlagen/)
- 🔗 [mein-studium-karriere.de/bewerbung/bewerbungsunterlagen/lebenslauf-lebenslauf-vorlagen/](https://www.mein-studium-karriere.de/bewerbung/bewerbungsunterlagen/lebenslauf-lebenslauf-vorlagen/)

Some universities also provide examples of CVs on their websites:

- 🔗 [fu-berlin.de/sites/career/\\_ressourcen/Bewerbung\\_Ressourcen/Vorlage-Lebenslauf.pdf](https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/career/_ressourcen/Bewerbung_Ressourcen/Vorlage-Lebenslauf.pdf)
- 🔗 [schiemann.jura.uni-koeln.de/sites/strafrecht\\_schiemann/Mitarbeiter\\_Innen/CV-Koeln.pdf](https://www.schiemann.jura.uni-koeln.de/sites/strafrecht_schiemann/Mitarbeiter_Innen/CV-Koeln.pdf)
- 🔗 [spst.fb06.uni-mainz.de/files/2018/07/Lebenslauf-Vorlage-Homepage-JGU.pdf](https://www.spst.fb06.uni-mainz.de/files/2018/07/Lebenslauf-Vorlage-Homepage-JGU.pdf)

### 7.3 THE APPLICATION PHOTO – STILL A WAY TO WIN FAVOUR

In Germany, it is still common practice and generally recommended to include a suitable photo with your application. It should be professionally taken and show you wearing smart business attire. Here, too, it is important to take industry-specific differences into account. You can insert the photo into your CV, for example, or attach it separately.



## 7.4 CERTIFICATES AND DOCUMENTS

In your CV, you should provide evidence for each stage of your career, including copies with your application. This includes any training certificates, employment references, and other qualifications.

### Recognition of certificates

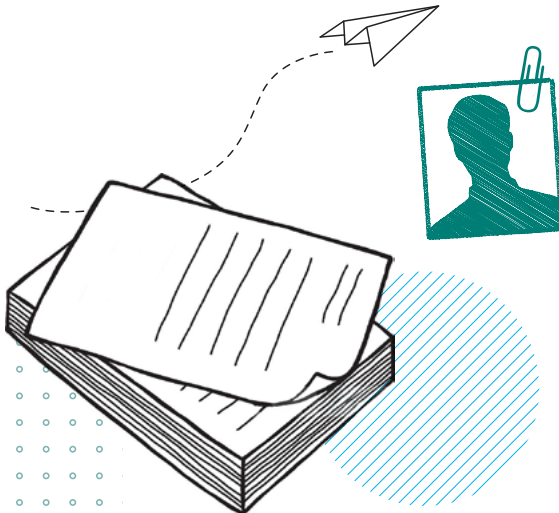
Foreign educational qualifications and university degrees generally require official recognition in Germany. You can obtain these through the relevant recognition procedures, which vary depending on your degree and where you obtained it. Further information on the procedure, duration, and options can be found on the following pages of the Federal Government's website:

📄 [make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/recognition/procedure](https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/recognition/procedure)

📄 [anerkennung-in-deutschland.de](https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de)

The information portal of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz*] on foreign educational qualifications can be found here:

📄 [anabin.kmk.org/](https://www.anabin.kmk.org/) (in German only)



---

## 7.5 LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION AND REFERENCES

In some cases, letters of recommendation are already requested in the job advertisements. These should be written in German or English and, for example, be written by former supervisors.

### 7.6 7.6 CURRENT TRENDS IN JOB APPLICATIONS

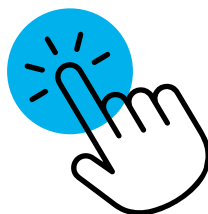
The following trends can currently be observed in application processes:

#### **AI-supported application procedures**

The use of AI-supported application procedures by HR managers is on the rise. This involves the use of digital screening tools or applicant tracking systems (ATS) to automatically sort and check the CVs they receive. These are programmed to filter out certain keywords and qualifications. Therefore, applicants should address the industry- and job-specific qualifications mentioned in the job advertisement, and include relevant keywords in their CVs. They should under no circumstances send out standardized mass applications. When it comes to CV parsing, machine-readable CVs always win. This means that you should avoid abbreviations, icons, and special characters, and instead use a simple layout that covers all the keywords in the job advertisement.

#### **One-click applications**

In this area, less emphasis is placed on job-specific requirements; instead, the focus is more on quantity. With a stored CV (and, if applicable, a standardized cover letter) on platforms such as LinkedIn, applications can be sent to numerous companies with a single click.



**Passive job applications are gaining in importance**

In passive job searching, also known as “passive job hunting”, candidates primarily use LinkedIn or Xing profiles to increase their visibility through posts and comments. HR managers use “active sourcing” to search for suitable employees in a targeted manner. In order to be found, it is important that one’s expertise is clearly presented and easy to find.

**Application videos**

Some companies request application videos for initial contact. These short videos are especially useful in creative professions and customer-oriented fields, as they allow you to present yourself authentically.

**Artificial Intelligence as an interview partner**

Chatbots or video assistants based on Artificial Intelligence are increasingly being used as interview partners to make the screening process for suitable applicants more efficient. Here, it is important to give clear and understandable answers and not to get lost in lengthy explanations. The majority of the tools perform analysis based on specific keywords. Here, too, it is important to remain authentic and not to disguise your personality.

**Conclusion:** The application processes are becoming faster, more efficient and more automated, which creates new challenges but also opportunities. And: these trends are fast-moving. Combine your job search, the preparation of your application documents, and your preparation for interviews with research into current and new trends to ensure you are always up to date.

You will find information on current trends and developments here, for example (in German only):

📄 [karrierebibel.de/bewerbung/](https://www.karrierebibel.de/bewerbung/)

📄 [news.kununu.com/bewerbung/](https://www.news.kununu.com/bewerbung/)

8

The job  
interview –  
show your  
authentic  
side!



If employers like your written application, the next step will be one or more personal interviews. Usually, the employer will first contact you by telephone to clarify any questions in advance and possibly arrange a second, longer interview. This can take place virtually or in person and requires specific preparation on your part.

### **8.1 PREPARATION**

Thorough preparation for the job interview is essential in order to make a convincing impression. Your demeanour should be open, confident and engaging, promoting not only yourself but also your interest in the organization and the position.

To come across as authentic, structured and convincing, the first step is self-reflection. A good way to do this is to ask yourself relevant questions and write down appropriate answers. Possible questions could be: "What defines me as a person?", "What are my specific competencies?", "What makes me a valuable employee?", "What specifically interests me about this organization?", "What interests me about this position?", and "How does my CV qualify me for this position?". What is the common thread? What would be the perfect job for me?

---

It is also a good idea to think in advance about how to answer typical questions in a job interview. Here, it is important to consider answers and provide evidence from your own life to support them. Questions from HR managers might include: "What are your strengths and weaknesses?", "Why should we recruit you?", "Tell us about a critical situation/conflict in your last job and how you dealt with it?", "What would your colleagues/supervisors say about you?", "Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?".

Of course, you should also have familiarized yourself as thoroughly as possible with the relevant organization and the advertised position. Take a look at the market, products, and trends in the relevant sector; it is also important to know who your competitors are in the industry. How do employers present themselves to the outside world? Is there any information about the inherent culture and mission? Try to develop a feeling for the internal etiquette.

Last but not least, carefully analyse the job advertisement and corresponding job profile once more. What could be the particular challenges and focal points of the work? What kind of person are they looking for, and who will be present at the job interview?

Use the mentioned questions as examples of how you can evaluate yourself and the advertised position. Feel free to add to them, and you will certainly think of other relevant topics to prepare for as you work through the exercise. The more often you submit applications, the easier this preparation will become.

You can practise how you will respond and present yourself to others well in advance, ensuring that you are both consistent and convincing. Besides considering the content, you should also pay attention to your non-verbal communication.

Your posture has a major impact on how you are perceived by others. Try to adopt a confident and open posture, being upright but natural. Avoid crossing your arms and turn toward the person you are talking to. Just like your posture, your voice should also radiate self-confidence. A clear, relaxed voice and a comfortable speaking pace are ideal.



For example, if you tend to have an agitated voice when you are nervous, you can work on this through breathing and speech exercises, as well as maintaining good posture.

The same applies to the choice of words: Adapt to the organization. If in doubt, you may prefer to choose a more sophisticated style of language. Before the interview, you should familiarize yourself with the internal corporate vocabulary and also know and correctly use key technical terms that are important for your area.

It is also important to choose your clothing carefully for a job interview. Every workplace has an official or unofficial dress code that you should adhere to. For example, look for relevant photos and information on the website. Otherwise, you can stick to the formal dress code by wearing a subtle business outfit.

## 8.2 PROCEDURE

In most cases, the traditional job interview consists of around five stages, which may vary depending on the context and the organization. The interview begins with a greeting, allowing for a relaxed start with some small talk – for example, about the journey. This creates a relaxed atmosphere, which you can also use to foster a friendly mood.

In the following stage of getting acquainted with each other, your interview partners will introduce themselves in more detail. This means that you will learn something about the respective function, the overall organization, and also about the advertised position. Be particularly attentive here, write down names and any questions that come to mind. Depending on the interview, you can ask initial questions here or save them for later in the interview. Stage three offers you the opportunity to introduce yourself and give an impression of your personality. Describe your motivation, your competencies, and your career history. Do this by speaking in a structured but free manner and by remaining authentic and friendly. You should definitely have prepared this brief and concise description of your career and profile in advance.

---

At this point, some questions will surely arise among your interview partners, which they may then ask you. If you are well prepared, you will already have answers ready for many of them. Should any questions surprise you, do not let yourself be thrown off balance, but remain calm and respond as best as you can. For this stage, you should also have prepared some questions to ask your interview partners. This demonstrates your interest and shows that you have done thorough research beforehand.

Once both sides have had the opportunity to ask their questions or when the time for the interview is coming to an end, the candidate is usually informed of the next steps in the application process and thanked for attending.

### **8.3 MENTALITY IN THE JOB INTERVIEW**

Certain behaviours are generally considered to be courteous in Germany and should be observed, particularly during job interviews.

Make sure you arrive for your interview on time, wearing appropriate clothing. Greet your interview partners with a firm handshake and maintain eye contact. When answering questions, be direct and give answers that are honest and precise. Do not pretend to have expertise in areas where you have no real knowledge. During the interview, you should adopt a professional yet friendly tone of conversation. Address the interviewer formally unless they offer to use informal language, which is unlikely at this stage. Furthermore, you should avoid interrupting your interview partners as much as possible, but nevertheless speak up actively.

In addition to the traditional job interview, there are other ways of getting to know each other during the application process.

These include assessment centres, group interviews and telephone interviews. You will find further information (in German only) on many career platforms, including here:

[📌 \*\*randstad.de/karriere/bewerbungsratgeber/vorstellungsgespraech/\*\*](https://www.randstad.de/karriere/bewerbungsratgeber/vorstellungsgespraech/)



#### 8.4 SPECIAL FEATURES OF VIRTUAL JOB INTERVIEWS

In many respects, virtual job interviews are similar to in-person interviews in terms of procedure and content. Nevertheless, there are a few special features that need to be taken into account in advance. On the one hand, it is important to prepare and test the technical requirements of the chosen platform for the virtual meeting, as well as the webcam, microphone, sound and stable internet connection, so that there will be no problems accessing the online meeting or during the meeting itself.

Secondly, you should also rule out other potential disturbances, such as those caused by family members. You should also consider what you are going to make visible via your webcam. A neutral, quiet setting with good lighting is usually best. Find a tranquil spot, position the camera at eye level, and make sure that your upper body is partly visible. Ideally, join the video call a little early so that you can relax and wait for the other participants to arrive. Then, looking into the camera, you can start the interview on a positive note. Last but not least: Listen very carefully, as in a virtual interview, what is said can more easily get lost than in personal contact.

# 9

## Money, money, money – salary and salary negotiation



Towards the end of your application procedure, your salary will also become a subject of negotiation. Particularly in science and research, this is governed by public sector pay scales, which allow only limited leeway that you should definitely take advantage of. Positions not bound by a collective wage agreement offer possibilities for negotiation both upwards and downwards. Obtain information about the usual conditions for your field of work in Germany and negotiate accordingly. This is a common practice.

## 9.1 SALARY

When calculating salaries in Germany, there are a few special features to bear in mind:

Firstly, there is a clear difference between gross and net salary. Negotiations are based on the gross salary, which means that you will need to calculate your approximate net salary yourself. Social security contributions and taxes are already deducted from your gross salary, so you merely receive the corresponding net salary directly. The deductions are clearly stated on your payslip. You can get an idea of your future salary in advance by using a gross-to-net salary calculator. For example, with the salary calculator (in German only) from Stiftung Warentest [*foundation established in 1964 by the German federal parliament with the aim of helping consumers by providing impartial and objective information on goods and services*]:

📄 [test.de/Brutto-Netto-Rechner-So-viel-Netto-bleibt-uebrig-5557780-0/#id5946749](https://www.test.de/Brutto-Netto-Rechner-So-viel-Netto-bleibt-uebrig-5557780-0/#id5946749)

---

You will find further information on taxes and social security contributions here:

[make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/working-environment/salary-taxes-social-security](https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/working-environment/salary-taxes-social-security)

Secondly, German employment contracts are known for their relatively short working hours and numerous recreational and public holidays. You will usually find the relevant information in the job description. Public holidays are listed, for example here:

[publicholidays.de/](https://www.publicholidays.de/)

Currently, employees who work five days a week are legally entitled to a minimum of 20 days of recreational holiday. If you work fewer days, this amount is reduced proportionally. However, the majority of collective wage agreements and employment contracts grant a higher entitlement here.

You can get an initial overview of typical salaries in your field by consulting relevant salary comparisons (in German only). For example here:

[gehalt.de/](https://www.gehalt.de/)

In the public sector, salaries are graded according to the underlying collective wage agreement. You will find a corresponding wage calculator here:

[oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/](https://www.oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/) (in German only)



However, in addition to the salary itself, the long-term benefits of employment in Germany are also attractive. For example, contributions to health, long-term care, social security and pension insurance are generally paid in equal parts by employers and employees.

Information on statutory pension insurance in Germany can be found on the website of the German statutory pension insurance scheme [*Deutsche Rentenversicherung*]:

📄 [deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/DRV/EN/Home/home\\_node.html](https://deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/DRV/EN/Home/home_node.html)

You will find information about the statutory health insurance system on the following page on the website of the Federal Ministry of Health [*Bundesministerium für Gesundheit*]:

📄 [bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/themen/krankenversicherung/online-ratgeber-krankenversicherung/krankenversicherung/statutory-health-insurance-shi.html](https://bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/themen/krankenversicherung/online-ratgeber-krankenversicherung/krankenversicherung/statutory-health-insurance-shi.html)

Likewise, there is information on social long-term care insurance:

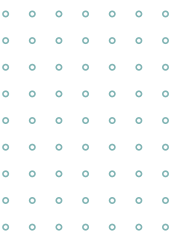
📄 [bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/themen/pflege/online-ratgeber-pflege/long-term-care-insurance.html](https://bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/themen/pflege/online-ratgeber-pflege/long-term-care-insurance.html)

In the area of social security, the Federal Employment Agency has created some relevant contents, for example here:

📄 [arbeitsagentur.de/int/en/for-people-from-abroad/social-insurance](https://arbeitsagentur.de/int/en/for-people-from-abroad/social-insurance)

## 9.2 SALARY NEGOTIATION

The first salary negotiation in your new job takes place as part of your application. At this stage, you do not have your own basic salary to use as a guide. However, previous positions and average salary figures for your field of work (see above) may give you an idea of where to start. The subject of salary negotiation itself is one on which one can acquire extensive knowledge in the areas of rhetoric, psychology, and market awareness. In general, thorough preparation is also necessary here. On the one hand, you should set yourself confident yet realistic goals. On the other hand, there are many ways to prepare for a negotiation meeting in terms of both content and rhetoric.



---

There are certain special considerations you should bear in mind, particularly in the academic field and during appointment negotiations. The German Association of University Professors and Lecturers [*Deutscher Hochschulverband*] has compiled some information on this subject (in German only):

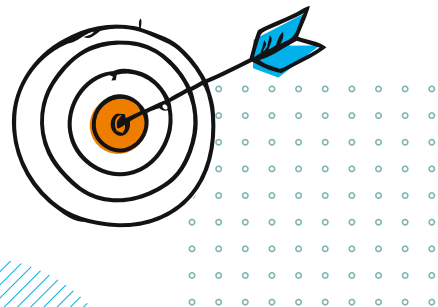
📄 [hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere/richtig-verhandeln](https://hochschulverband.de/leistungen/wiss-nachwuchs/faq-karriere/richtig-verhandeln)

### **Negotiation goal**

The first step in defining your goals is to analyse your market value. What are the industry- and job-specific salaries in the region? Do you have any special experience, training or similar that could influence your salary? If you have defined a salary range, aim for the upper limit and also define a lower limit that you do not want to fall below under any circumstances. Even if you do not communicate these values directly during the interview, they will give you guidance. Ideally, you should remain confident but realistic.

At this stage, you should also already consider other salary-related additional agreements and contract components that could give you more flexibility in the negotiations.

Pension schemes, bonuses, profit sharing, company cars, job tickets and employee benefits are just a few examples of what can be negotiated here. They have the potential to be a valuable addition to your salary. Similarly, staggering according to specific time periods or after the probationary period is an interesting option that you can consider.



**Content and rhetoric of the interview**

In addition, prepare yourself by conducting a comprehensive analysis of your own experience and knowledge. Specific examples from your professional career, such as completed projects or special skills, may emphasize your value. Make it clear what successes you have achieved and how these can benefit the organization. Every salary offer you make should be backed up with specific details about your competencies or reference figures that demonstrate your value to the organization. Make it clear why you are worth exactly this amount and how the organization can increase its profits through you.

One of the keys to responding confidently to counterarguments is mastering rhetorical techniques that allow you to present yourself clearly and convincingly. For example, start by indicating a comparative value that is at the upper end of the industry-standard salary range. In this way, you set a framework for the negotiation and demonstrate that your demands are realistic.

It goes without saying that you should treat your interview partners with respect, honesty and diplomacy. A positive interview atmosphere facilitates negotiations and also lays a good foundation for any subsequent interviews. However, do not accept the first offer immediately, but use your qualifications to highlight your value to the organization. Ultimately, the aim is to agree on a salary that is fair to both sides and reflects your market value and individual qualifications.

# 10 Onboarding – your starting period in the organization

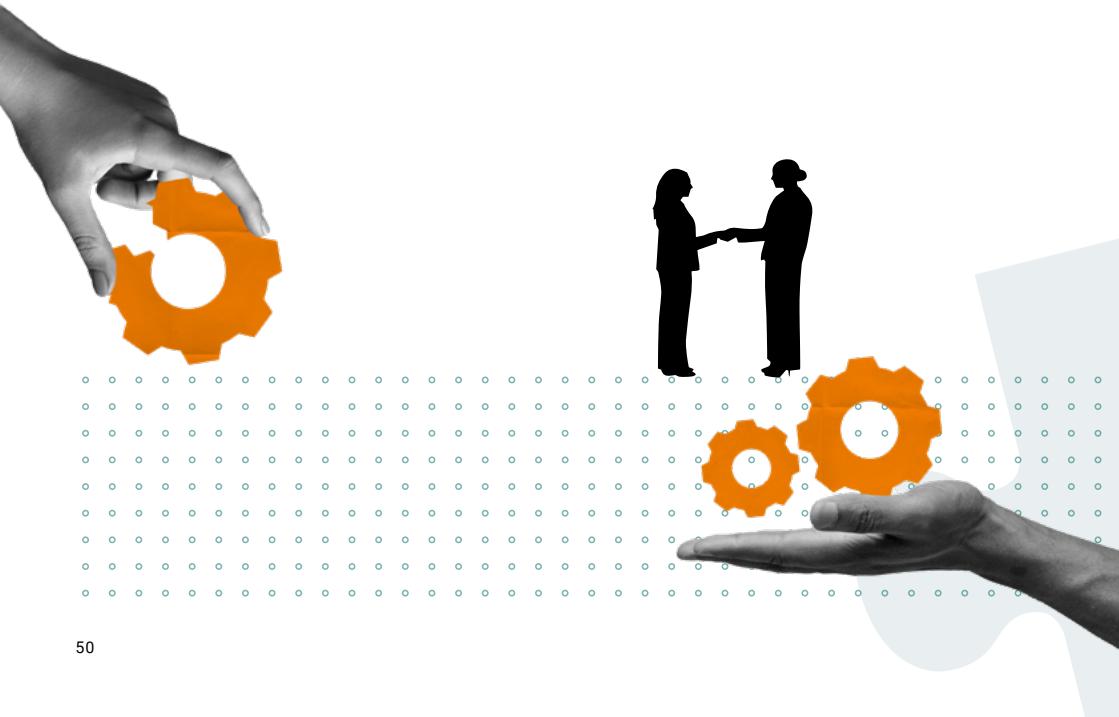


When you start a new job, it is usually the beginning of a very exciting time as you get to know the organization, your colleagues, your workplace and your tasks. Successful onboarding is key to ensuring you can quickly become operational and integrate into the organization and team. Depending on the organization, onboarding may vary greatly and should be thoroughly prepared in advance, especially by employers. But you yourself can also do a lot to establish good contacts, create a pleasant working atmosphere and contribute your competencies at an early stage.

---

Particularly in larger organizations, there are already institutionalized processes for onboarding, which are communicated to you at the beginning, for example, by means of an onboarding plan. As a rule, this involves getting acquainted with certain people and departments, being introduced to technical tools, attending various internal training courses, and familiarizing yourself with the key tasks associated with your position. Following a successful onboarding process, you should have gained an understanding of the organizational culture, familiarized yourself with the people and networks relevant to your work, and become acquainted with your job responsibilities.

Find an appropriate level of proactivity for knowledge generation and be particularly attentive, especially during the first period. These initial contacts will influence your day-to-day working life, and you will have the opportunity to determine whether the position meets your expectations and requirements. It is precisely the organizational culture that you can best determine through interpersonal contact.



As everywhere else, the world of work in Germany is also based on certain labour law principles that apply at different levels. In this context, the regulations governing sick leave, maternity leave and parental leave, for example, are very specific. The Chamber of Industry and Commerce has compiled a summary of some labour law provisions:

📄 [ihk-muenchen.de/de/Service/Recht-und-Steuern/Arbeitsrecht/Bestehende-Arbeitsverhaeltnisse-Kuendigung-und-Sozialversicherung/](https://www.ihk-muenchen.de/de/Service/Recht-und-Steuern/Arbeitsrecht/Bestehende-Arbeitsverhaeltnisse-Kuendigung-und-Sozialversicherung/)  
(in German only)

The German Trade Union Confederation [*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*] also offers a good guide:

📄 [dgb.de/service/ratgeber/](https://www.dgb.de/service/ratgeber/) (in German only)

# 11 Alternative occupations – creativity in career development



Apart from taking up a job at the new location, there are many other opportunities to engage in meaningful activities that will benefit your career. Volunteering, working independently or as a freelancer, or pursuing relevant further education can help you advance your career and, in particular, expand your network. Dual careers, which often involve relocating internationally and facing the specific challenges that come with it, mean that partners need to be creative in shaping their own careers. At the same time, this presents a great opportunity.

Quite often, it is not possible to continue one's previous career path seamlessly at the new location. So how can an interesting career path be shaped that meets your own requirements despite this? Some creative solutions, some of which are (initially) stopgap measures, such as starting a freelance career, further training or voluntary work, offer powerful opportunities to realign one's professional activities. It is very important to recognize that continuing your career after moving to a new location can be challenging and may involve overcoming obstacles. Facing these challenges is something that almost all dual career partners have in common! Taking a break, experiencing an interruption or changing direction can also allow time for reflection and setting new goals, which often take a back seat in a tightly scheduled daily routine. This is where professional advice can help to focus on the opportunities rather than the obstacles. Which area have you always wanted to dedicate yourself to? What further training would really excite you? Is there a topic that you feel has been "left out" so far?

---

If you wish to take your career in a new direction, which direction could this be? Take advantage of the opportunities offered by a new location to reinvent yourself a little.

## 11.1 VOLUNTARY WORK

Engaging in voluntary work, i.e. work that is largely unpaid, may bring many long-term advantages. It may give you the opportunity to raise your profile and integrate social responsibility into your competencies. Depending on your field of work, it may also lead to valuable contacts – especially in a new region. In addition, doing voluntary work may help you continue to apply your professional knowledge and skills in an active way, while also enabling you to try out new areas of work. Last but not least, volunteering may help improve your language skills. At the same time, volunteering probably represents a certain break in your CV, which should be explained as meaningfully as possible. Ideally, you should find a voluntary position that suits you and your career in terms of content, context or personal interests, and which can be justified accordingly.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior [*Bundesministerium des Innern – BMI*] has created a comprehensive website on the subject of volunteering in Germany. It provides further information and helpful links to other institutions:

[bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/community-and-integration/social-cohesion-volunteering/social-cohesion-volunteering-node.html](https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/community-and-integration/social-cohesion-volunteering/social-cohesion-volunteering-node.html)

The BMI also provides information on ways to become involved in specific voluntary work (in German only):

[bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/buergerschaftliches-engagement/finden-sie-ihr-engagement/finden-sie-ihr-engagement-node.html](https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/buergerschaftliches-engagement/finden-sie-ihr-engagement/finden-sie-ihr-engagement-node.html)

The following websites also offer search functions for your own commitment (in German only):

📄 [govolunteer.com/](https://govolunteer.com/)

📄 [aktion-mensch.de/was-du-tun-kannst/ehrenamt/engagement-plattform](https://aktion-mensch.de/was-du-tun-kannst/ehrenamt/engagement-plattform)

📄 [tatendrang.de/](https://tatendrang.de/)

## 11.2 SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING AS A FREELANCER

Working on a self-employed or freelance basis is certainly particularly recommended for those who like to organize their own work, take matters into their own hands and prefer to be their own boss. In some cases, it also offers financial advantages. At the same time, there are also some risks associated with this form of working. Gather detailed information and, in any case, prepare thoroughly for possible self-employment.

The Federal Government's "Make it in Germany" website summarizes information on starting a business in Germany, which is specifically tailored to professionals from abroad:

📄 [make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/setting-up-business](https://make-it-in-germany.com/en/working-in-germany/setting-up-business)

The Federal Employment Agency also offers a brochure giving you guidance on starting your own business (in German only):

📄 [arbeitsagentur.de/datei/dok\\_ba035285.pdf](https://arbeitsagentur.de/datei/dok_ba035285.pdf)



---

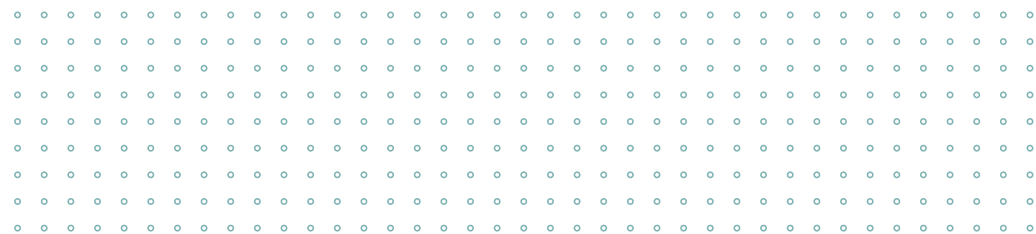
The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees [*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*] lists some basic summary information:

[bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/  
ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Arbeit/SelbstaendigeTaetigkeit/  
selbstaendigetaetigkeit-node.html](https://bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Arbeit/SelbstaendigeTaetigkeit/selbstaendigetaetigkeit-node.html)

The website of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy [*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie*] goes into greater detail, for example:

[existenzruendungsportal.de/Navigation/EN/Home/home](https://existenzruendungsportal.de/Navigation/EN/Home/home)

And even beyond starting a business or becoming self-employed, depending on your area of expertise, freelance work can be an interesting way to offer your knowledge and skills as services. This has the advantage of enabling you to continue your career with a certain degree of continuity. Furthermore, it should not be underestimated that freelancing, possibly combined with a web presence or a corresponding LinkedIn profile, may contribute enormously to one's own visibility. Contacts can also be established, developed and maintained, so that the customer base and references often lead to permanent employment. Freelancing can therefore serve as a bridge, particularly for expats and dual career partners, or open up new career paths as a completely different type of work. In addition to their professional expertise, freelancers are often required to have new skills, and it is precisely this creative freedom that makes the job profitable and fulfilling for many of them.



### 11.3 FURTHER EDUCATION

Would you like to expand your expertise? Or change direction? Or are you missing that one qualification you need for your dream job? Then further education may be the right option for you at first. So find out about further education programmes, suitable providers, and potential sources of funding.

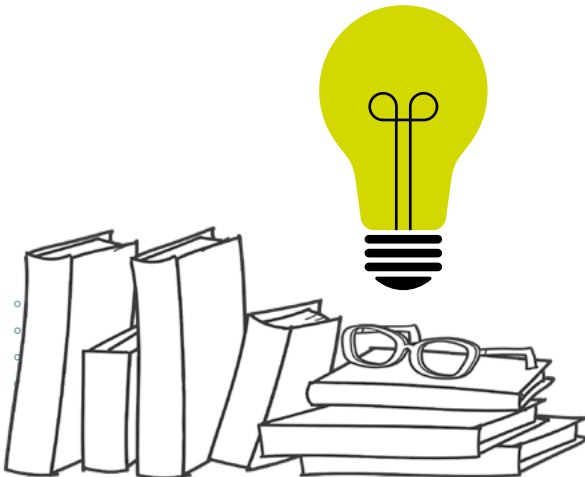
The Federal Employment Agency [*Agentur für Arbeit*] not only lists the various continuing education opportunities on its website, but also provides a tool for searching for continuing education courses:

📄 [arbeitsagentur.de/karriere-und-weiterbildung](https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/karriere-und-weiterbildung) (in German only)

📄 [arbeitsagentur.de/kursnet](https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/kursnet) (in German only)

📄 [mein-now.de/en](https://www.mein-now.de/en)

Taking a (distance learning) degree course, pursuing a doctorate or undertaking virtual further training could be good ways to make the most of this new phase in your career and expand your qualifications.



# 12 What do I need to bear in mind about work culture in Germany?



Defining a static culture along national borders is impossible. The nature of cultural developments and characteristics is far too dynamic and flexible to be defined by any set of universal terms. At the same time, there are quite noticeable regional differences in culturally influenced thinking and behaviour, and it may be helpful to familiarize oneself with the target culture when arriving and settling into the new environment. The German mentality is often described by a number of stereotypes, especially in the workplace. At this point, we would like to move away from a general description of German culture and focus on the norms commonly practised in the local work environment. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, too. Cultural trends remain fluid, especially given the noticeable current shift towards Anglo-American influences. Furthermore, stereotypes associated with Germany are not confined to Germany; they are also part of working cultures in many other countries.

---

In general, when arriving at a new workplace, it is important to allow for an open interpretation of the behaviour of your colleagues and superiors. Even in irritating situations, behaviour can often be explained by cultural factors. A good approach here is often to initiate an open dialogue and address the situation yourself in a friendly manner.

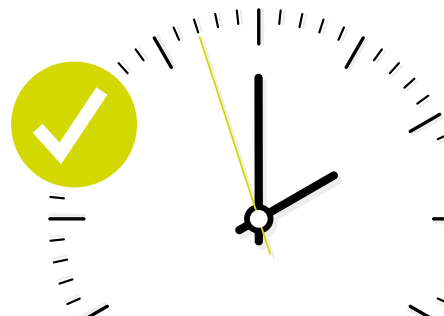
Nevertheless, there may be certain patterns that you encounter in the local working world, which we will describe below.

## **12.1 PUNCTUALITY**

Being on time is often seen as a sign of respect and professionalism, and therefore being late is seen as an affront. It is advisable to arrive for scheduled meetings at the agreed time and to notify and apologize if you are likely to be late. Being on time is often closely associated with reliability. Meeting deadlines and keeping agreements is usually a prerequisite. Moreover, the commencement of work is typically scheduled to begin at a relatively early time. Many employees start work between 7:00 and 9:00 in the morning.

## **12.2 HIERARCHIES, STRUCTURES, PROCESSES**

This preference for efficient action is also reflected in work routines. For the majority of procedures, there are established structures and processes that should be adhered to in all cases. When creating new areas of responsibility, it is also important to establish new, fixed routines. This strict orientation by guidelines is also evident in the understanding of hierarchy. In many places, hierarchies are still strictly regulated and communication must follow the hierarchy and not skip a level. However, in some industries and modern organizations, there has already been a shift towards flat hierarchies and agile working methods and models.



### 12.3 ACCURACY

The value of precise, detailed work is highly valued and expected in many areas. Established processes and structures should ensure a thorough work culture and efficiency. However, this is also dependent on factors relating to your place of work, for example whether the environment is modern and dynamic or traditional. In both cases, however, a measurable target is mostly set, which is taken into account throughout the entire process.

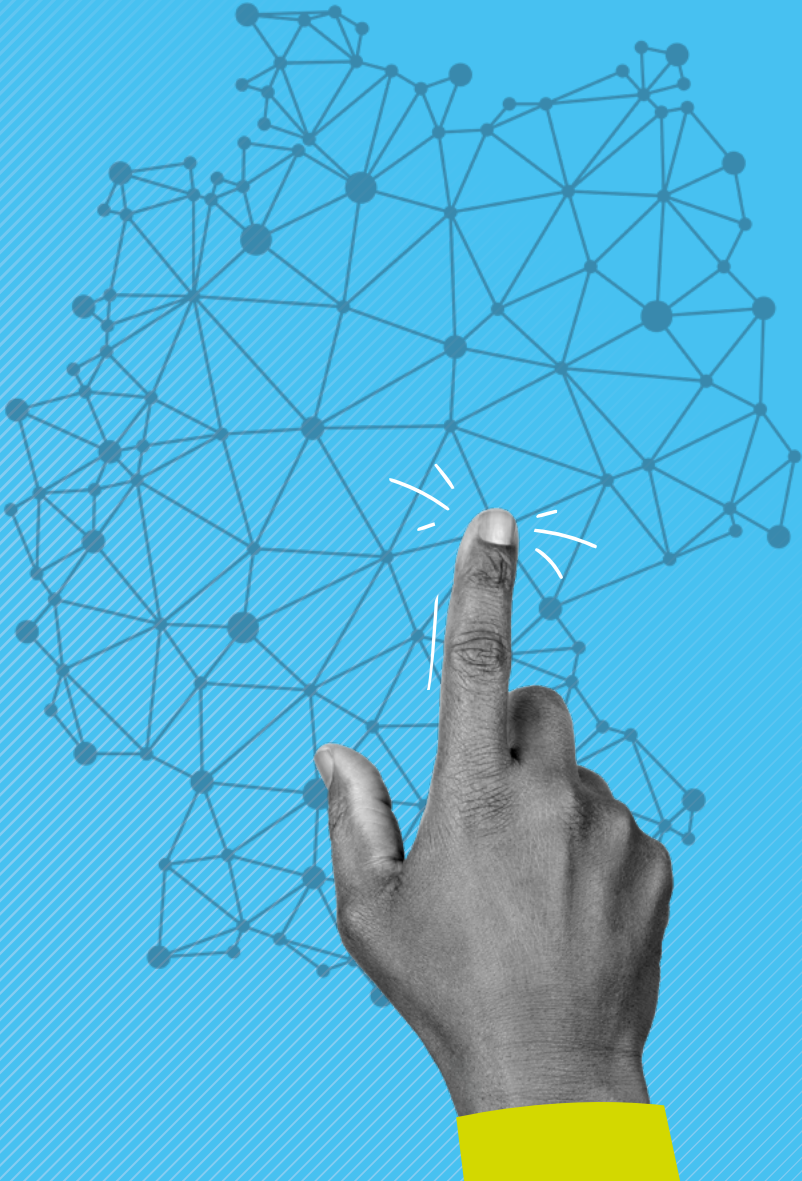
### 12.4 COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

In meetings and other professional situations involving the exchange of views and ideas, direct and expedient communication with a very factual focus is generally appreciated. In this way, the time spent on exchanging information should be used efficiently. Accordingly, it is considered particularly professional to focus solely on the designated topic and to deal with it in a rigorous manner. In this sense, objective criticism can be expressed directly and should not be taken personally by those it concerns. In contrast, correct work is taken for granted, which means that positive feedback is used relatively sparingly. In smaller groups, people greet each other with a firm handshake while making eye contact. A little sensitivity is needed here since the pandemic, as some people wish to avoid shaking hands for fear of infection and just seek eye contact instead. This is gradually establishing itself as a possibility. However, if someone has already extended their hand to you, it may be considered impolite not to accept it.

### 12.5 WORK AND PRIVATE LIFE

Many employees prefer to keep their professional and personal lives separate. Therefore, if you are not invited to your colleagues' private events immediately, it should not be interpreted as dislike or similar. Likewise, personal information is not shared with colleagues as often, but only factual information is discussed. However, in younger organizations, it is becoming increasingly common to combine private and professional conversations and activities. You will certainly develop a feel for the respective corporate culture during your first few months.

# 13 Dual Career Networks



The MPG is a member of the Dual Career Network Germany and is committed to its best practice quality criteria.

At the time of publication, there are around 20 regional Dual Career Networks in Germany. You can find out whether the Institute where your partner works is a member of such a network in your region by contacting the respective Institute Administration. However, you also have the option of registering with relevant networks on a private basis and taking advantage of certain offers.

#### For example

- in Northern Germany: [dual-career-hamburg-und-norden.de/en.html](https://www.dual-career-hamburg-und-norden.de/en.html)
- in the Ruhr area: [rvr.ruhr/themen/bildung-wissenschaft/dcnruhr/](https://www.rvr.ruhr/themen/bildung-wissenschaft/dcnruhr/)  
(in German only)
- in Central Germany: [dcnm.de/en](https://www.dcnm.de/en)
- in the Rhine-Main region: [hgoethe-university-frankfurt.de/88957648/Dual\\_Career\\_Network\\_Rhein\\_Main\\_\\_DCN\\_RM?locale=en](https://www.hgoethe-university-frankfurt.de/88957648/Dual_Career_Network_Rhein_Main__DCN_RM?locale=en)
- in Stuttgart: [fachkraefte.region-stuttgart.de/gewinnen/was-wir-bieten-gewinnen/dual-career-center-region-stuttgart/](https://www.fachkraefte.region-stuttgart.de/gewinnen/was-wir-bieten-gewinnen/dual-career-center-region-stuttgart/)  
(in German only)
- in Munich: [idcn.info/our-locations/munich-germany/](https://www.idcn.info/our-locations/munich-germany/)
- at Lake Constance: [dual-career-am-see.de/](https://www.dual-career-am-see.de/) (in German only)  
and in many other regions.

---

At the supra-regional level, the MPG is a member of the above-mentioned Dual Career Network Germany. The network has compiled a range of information for dual-career couples, particularly those working in science and research:

📄 [dcnd.org/en/service](https://dcnd.org/en/service)

### 13.1 FURTHER USEFUL NETWORKS

In addition to the Dual Career Networks, there are many other groups, associations and networks you can join to exchange information with other internationals and help each other. Below you will find a small selection of mostly regionally organized networks (in German only):

Expat Network Germany:

📄 [internations.org/germany-expats/de](https://internations.org/germany-expats/de)

Newcomers Network Rhine-Main:

📄 [newcomers-network-frankfurt.de/](https://newcomers-network-frankfurt.de/)

Career Center for Internationals in Munich:

📄 [stadt.muenchen.de/infos/amiga.html](https://stadt.muenchen.de/infos/amiga.html)



There are also various local groups for expats and internationals on social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn, which are easy to get in touch with.

The International Offices of your partner's respective Institute usually have relevant information about regional networks.

# Enjoy planning your career!

We hope that this handbook will provide you with some useful information and that you will enjoy embarking on your future career planning.

We wish you every success and a good start at your new location!

Please also obtain information about corresponding dual career offers (Chapter 2) and job vacancies at the MPG ([↗mpg.de/jobboard](https://www.mpg.de/jobboard)).

Your Dual Career Team of the MPG

Picture credit: Alle photo collages by Designergold // Cover: AdobeStock / deagreez; p. 4: AdobeStock / photka, valiantsein; p. 6: AdobeStock / Janina\_PLD, piang; p. 8: AdobeStock / Joachim Wendler, devitaayu, Iryna; p. 10: AdobeStock / 1112000; p. 14: AdobeStock / aseenz imagine (Generated with AI); p. 16: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz BMWK; p. 18: AdobeStock / Looker\_Studio, Northern Owl, oleh11; p. 20: iStock / RgStudio, miodrag ignjatovic; p. 28, 33: AdobeStock / Trueffelpix, Anastasia, Senja; p. 37: AdobeStock / Jacob Lund; p. 41: AdobeStock / devitaayu; p. 42: AdobeStock / splitov27, deagreez; p. 44: AdobeStock / Zaleman; p. 46: AdobeStock / arfanah02; p. 48: iStock / momcilog, Ales-A; p. 50: AdobeStock / master1305; p. 52: AdobeStock / Krakenimages.com, iStock / FrankRamsrott; p. 57: iStock / Jayesh, AdobeStock / BillionsPhoto; p. 58: AdobeStock / Menara Grafis, deagreez; p. 60: iStock / rustemgurler; p. 62: AdobeStock / photka, Tupungato, p. 64: AdobeStock / christianchan.

## **PUBLISHER'S INFORMATION**

Publisher:

Max-Planck-Gesellschaft  
HR Development & Opportunities Department  
Hofgartenstr. 8  
D-80539 Munich, Germany  
Telephone: +49 (0)89 2108-1276  
Email: [presse@gv.mpg.de](mailto:presse@gv.mpg.de)  
Internet: [www.mpg.de](http://www.mpg.de)

Editor:

Beate Koch

Authors:

Sara Dirnagl  
Andrea Köster  
Lea Sophie Suhr  
Email: [dualcareer-welcome@gv.mpg.de](mailto:dualcareer-welcome@gv.mpg.de)

Specialist articles:

Diversity:  
Frauke Logermann  
Email: [frauke.logermann@gv.mpg.de](mailto:frauke.logermann@gv.mpg.de)

Family Office:

Susanna München-Rieger  
Sabine Neitzel  
Email: [family-office@gv.mpg.de](mailto:family-office@gv.mpg.de)

Health Management and Mental Health:

Anette Hausmann  
Rita Bago  
Email: [rita.bago@gv.mpg.de](mailto:rita.bago@gv.mpg.de)

International Offices:

Carolyn Fritzsche  
Dominique Henz  
Anke Schepers-Klingebiel  
Anita Tingberg  
Email: [Beirat\\_InternationalOffice@mpi-cbg.de](mailto:Beirat_InternationalOffice@mpi-cbg.de)

Layout:

Designergold – Sandra Koch, Julia Kessler

Dezember 2025

