



Opportunity card (Section 20a + 20b Residence Act [AufenthG])

1. General Information

The opportunity card (available from 1 June 2024) is a new feature in the German Residence Act allowing eligible people to come to Germany to look for a job. As well as looking for a job, successful applicants can also take part in additional training for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in Germany.

The opportunity card is issued for a maximum of one year provided you can support yourself for this period. During your time looking for a job in Germany, you can complete work trials or engage in secondary employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week. You can find out more about the opportunity card (including a self-check) as well as general information on living and working in Germany here: „[Make it in Germany](#)“.

Please always take into account when submitting your application:

- Documents not in the German or English language must be submitted with a certified German translation.
- The standard processing time is approximately four to six weeks, in individual cases even longer.
- Flight reservations are not required to apply for a visa; please do not book your journey until you have received your visa.
- The Visa Service holds the right to request additional documents.
- Incomplete applications delay the process and can result in your application being rejected. So please try to submit your application in full, that is, with all required documents. If you have questions as you complete your application, we are happy to help.

2. Options for obtaining the opportunity card

Are you from a country outside the EU/EEA or Switzerland and would like to apply for an opportunity card under Section 20a of the Residence Act [AufenthG]? The following options are open to you:

Option 1: Do you have a German professional qualification or a German university degree? Or a foreign professional qualification or a foreign university degree, both of which are recognized in Germany? Then you are a 'skilled worker' within the meaning of Section 18 III of the Residence Act [AufenthG] and do not need to collect points to obtain the opportunity card.

Note:

If you obtained your university degree or professional qualification in Germany, you can immediately apply for a residence permit for jobseekers under Section 20 of the Residence Act [AufenthG]. This gives you more time to look for a job (18 months instead of one year) and you can work part-time without restrictions during this time.

Option 2: You score a minimum of six points in the points system in addition to meeting the following requirements:

- You have successfully completed vocational or academic training. It is important that the qualification is recognized by the country in which you obtained it. In addition, your vocational qualification must have required at least two years of vocational training. To support your visa application, you will need a positive result for this qualification, which you can apply for online at the [Central Office for Foreign Education \(ZAB\)](#).
- Proof of language proficiency: You either have German language skills of at least level A1 as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or English language skills of at least level B2 (CEFR).

If these requirements are met, you can collect different numbers of points for criteria such as recognition of qualifications in Germany, language skills, professional experience, age and ties to Germany as well as the potential of the accompanying partner or spouse. At least 6 points must be achieved in order to receive the opportunity card.

2.1 Requirements - skilled worker within the meaning of Section 18 III of the Residence Act [AufenthG] (Option 1)

If you are a skilled worker within the meaning of Section 18 III of the Residence Act [AufenthG], you **must fulfil and prove the following requirements:**

• Certificate of vocational training in Germany (original document + copy)

OR

• Certificate of degree from a university in Germany (original document + copy)

OR

• Recognition of the equivalence of the foreign vocational qualification from the respective agency responsible for recognition (original document + copy)

OR

• Recognition of the equivalence of the foreign university degree (printout from the anabin database for your university degree)

OR (if the degree is not rated 'entspricht' or 'gleichwertig' in the anabin database and/or the university is not rated 'H+')

• Statement of comparability by the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) (original document + copy)

OR (in the case of regulated professions in which permission is required to exercise the profession, for example, doctors, engineers; complete list is available from the Federal Employment Agency or the European Commission)

• Permission to exercise a profession issued by the authority responsible for recognising qualifications, or assurance of permission to exercise a profession (for example, for medical professions: decision of the licensing authority in the federal territory, i.e. assurance of permission to exercise a profession or issuing of medical licence (original document + copy)

You can find out more about recognition here www.erkennung-in-deutschland.de

2.2 Requirements - not a skilled worker within the meaning of Section 18 III of the Residence Act [AufenthG] (Option 2)

If you are not a skilled worker within the meaning of Section 18 III III of the Residence Act [AufenthG], you must fulfil and prove the following requirements:

- Foreign vocational training qualification (original document + copy) (original + copy) AS WELL AS
- Certificate (original document + copy) issued by the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) regarding your foreign vocational training qualification (state-recognised qualification, duration at least two years)

OR

- Notice of partial recognition / Deficit notice for your vocational qualification (original document + copy)

OR

- foreign university degree certificate (original document + copy) AS WELL AS Proof of state recognition of the university qualification – either in form of

- Recognition of (conditional) comparability of the foreign university degree (printout from the anabin database for your university degree and your university)

OR (if the degree is not rated 'entspricht' or 'gleichwertig' in the anabin database and/or the university is not rated 'H+')

- Statement of comparability by the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) (original document + copy)

OR

- Vocational qualification issued by one of the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad with the relevant confirmation from the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (original document + copy)

Language skills:

- Certificate (original document + copy) of your knowledge of the German language - at least A1!

AND/OR

- Certificate (original document + copy) of your knowledge of the English language – at least B2! The issuer of the certificate must be certified by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE); alternatively, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is also accepted.

Note: The documents listed above are also relevant for calculating your points for the opportunity card! You can be awarded points for knowledge of German and English at certain levels, as well as for partial recognition of your foreign vocational qualification.

You can also collect points for the opportunity card with the following certificates:

- Proof of your professional experience in the last 5 or 7 years insofar as this is connected to your vocational qualification: Curriculum vitae in tabular form indicating professional experience to date + employment references, confirmation of employment from your employer, etc. (original documents + copy)
- If you have been legally resident in Germany for an uninterrupted period of at least 6 months in the last 5 years (short stays under the Schengen Agreement do not count!), please prove this by providing suitable documents, for example,
 - valid rental contracts

- terms of employment, service contracts, etc.
- passports with visas and entry stamps
- Does your spouse/registered partner also want to apply for an opportunity card – or have they already done so – to then enter Germany together with you? If yes, one of you can collect 1 additional point for the opportunity card. Please enclose proof of the opportunity card application submitted by your spouse/partner.

3. Visa application checklist

The following documents must be submitted completely for each application. Please submit the documents listed here in the requested form and order.

- Completed and signed application form including declarations pursuant to Section 54 Residence Act
- Declaration of availability and authorization, if applicable, completed in full and signed
- Recent biometric passport photo (see specimen photos)
- Valid and personally signed passport with at least two completely empty pages
- Copy of the data page of your passport

Covering your costs: You can cover your living costs in Germany through your own means or a formal declaration of commitment. In addition, if you have concrete plans, income from secondary employment that is permitted with an opportunity card can be taken into account. Please provide the following proof depending on your individual case:

- Private resources in a bank account:** To stay in Germany, each individual applicant must have at their disposal at least 1027 euro per month, which for the standard 12-month stay with an opportunity card totals 12,324 euro. You can prove you have sufficient resources by presenting bank statements or a so-called blocked account.
- Blocked account:** Please open the blocked account in good time before you apply for a visa. When applying for a visa, only the official confirmation of the opening of the account issued by the bank, including information on the amount paid in and the amount available per month, will be accepted. Confirmation which does not cite these amounts is not sufficient, nor is proof of lodgement or transfer of funds without confirmation from the bank.
- Secondary employment:** If you already have a specific part-time job in Germany in prospect, you can provide evidence of this in the form of an employment contract or a binding job offer stating the weekly working hours and monthly earnings.
- Declaration of commitment:** Proof by means of a formal declaration of commitment in accordance with Sections 66, 68 of the Residence Act [AufenthG], in which a person undertakes in writing to the German immigration authority to bear the costs (original + copy)
- Private **health insurance** (usually called 'Incoming-Versicherung') valid throughout the Schengen area, minimum cover of €30,000, valid for the entire period of validity of the visa (proof must be provided at the latest when you pick up your visa!)

4. Points system

The points system is only relevant for you in option 2. This means if you cannot provide proof of a German educational qualification or full recognition of your foreign qualification. For your application for a Opportunity Card visa, you must also present a formal qualification and the required language skills. You can collect points for the following criteria:

Equivalence of the qualification:	If you have already applied for the procedure to recognize your foreign qualification and partial equivalence has been established as a result, you will receive four points for this. These four points are also awarded if, in the case of a regulated profession, compensatory measures are still required for the authorization to practice the profession.
Qualification in a shortage occupation ('Mangelberufe'):	If your formal qualification belongs to a shortage occupation, you will receive one point. You can find out which occupations are considered shortage occupations in the list of shortage occupations.
Professional experience:	You will also receive points for your previous professional experience in connection with your formal qualification that you have gained since graduating. If you can prove that you have at least two years of professional experience in the last five years, you will receive two points. If you have at least five years of professional experience in the last seven years, you will even receive three points.
Language skills:	If you have German language skills above level A1 (GER), you can receive points for this. German language skills at level A2 are awarded one point, at level B1 two points, and at language level B2 or better you even receive three points. An additional point is also awarded for English language skills of at least level C1 or if you are a native speaker.
Age:	You also receive points if you are of a certain age. People who are not older than 35 receive two points, exactly until the day of their 35th birthday. All those between the ages of 35 and 40 receive one point.
Previous stay in Germany:	Have you already lived in Germany? If you can prove that you have lived legally and continuously in Germany for at least six months in the last five years, you will receive one point. This includes, for example, periods spent studying, attending a language course or working. Stays purely for tourism or visits are excluded. As proof, you can submit copies of old passports and the visas and entry stamps they contain.
Potential of the spouse/life partner as a skilled worker:	Are you married or in a civil partnership and would like to immigrate to Germany together with your partner using the opportunity card? If your partner already fulfils the requirements for the opportunity card, you will receive one point in the points system. He or she can also complete the self-check for the opportunity card.

Please note that all information you provide in the above-mentioned categories must be supported by corresponding proof or certificates for the visa application.

5. Fees

A fee of EUR 75.00 or approx. SEK 880 (depending on the exchange rate) is charged for the application and processing. The fees are payable in cash (in Swedish kronor) or by MasterCard/VISA (in euros) at the time of the personal interview at the embassy. Unfortunately, bank transfers and payment by other bank cards are not possible. Please note that the amount will be debited by the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin and that the credit card must therefore be authorized for foreign payments and online payments. A receipt must be signed for the payment. The credit card can therefore only be accepted if the credit card holder can sign at the counter.

Please do not send cash with the application documents!

Exclusion of liability:

The information contained in this leaflet is based on the knowledge and experience of the Embassy at the time of publication. However, no guarantee can be given for the completeness and accuracy of the content.