

Opportunity Card Germany

The newly introduced Opportunity Card (the so called German „Chancenkarte“), extends the previous German Skilled Labour Immigration Act to include a further residence permit for qualified non-EU citizens. While the Skilled Labour Immigration Act makes it easier for people to enter and stay in Germany, the Opportunity Card is explicitly intended to help people who do not yet have a permanent employment contract in Germany and would like to look for a job locally.

With the Opportunity Card, non-EU citizens can enter Germany and receive a one-year residence permit to look for a suitable job there. During this time, they can look for a suitable job or have their professional qualification recognised retrospectively (recognition partnership).

They do not have to have a permanent employment contract. The Opportunity Card is issued to anyone who is recognised as a skilled worker or who scores at least six points in the points system. In addition, you must be able to support yourself for the duration of your stay.

What does the Opportunity Card entitle to?

The Opportunity Card entitles to

1. a two-week trial period or
2. to take up secondary employment (up to 20 hours per week)

People with an Opportunity Card are allowed to stay in Germany for one year to look for a job.

Can the Opportunity Card be extended?

An extension of the Opportunity Card for up to a further two years is possible under strict conditions. You must apply for the extension at the local immigration office.

Basic requirements for the Opportunity Card:

- (At least) two years of vocational training or a university degree in the country of origin
- basic knowledge of German (A1) or English (B2).
- In addition, it must be proven that the person is financially secure, for example through a part-time job (up to 20 hours a week). This can be proven by means of an employment contract.

Issue of the Opportunity Card based on a simple points system

The simple points system can be used to compare the required selection criteria with the own requirements. A total of six points must be achieved in order to receive the Opportunity Card.

The other criteria for issuing the Opportunity Card are determined on the basis of the points allocation system. These include language skills, professional experience, age and "connection to Germany". The time of application is decisive for the age criteria.

Points system for issuing the Opportunity Card at a glance

- **4 points are awarded for** partial recognition of a foreign professional qualification or for authorisation to practise a regulated profession (e.g. educator, nurse or engineer).
- **3 points are awarded** for five years of professional experience (in the last seven years) in the profession you have learnt and two years of prior vocational training in accordance with the rules of your country of origin. Alternatively, you will receive 3 points for good German language skills at language level B2.

- **2 points are awarded** for two years of professional experience with prior vocational training (in the last five years). If you are less than 35 years old, you will also receive 2 points. In addition, sufficient knowledge of German at language level B1 is awarded two points.
- **1 point is awarded** to applicants who are not older than 40 years of age and for a previous stay in Germany (at least six months). You must provide proof of this based on documents. Previous tourist stays do not count.
- **1 point** is also awarded for very good knowledge of English (C1), sufficient knowledge of German (A2), training in a shortage occupation or if you apply for the Opportunity Card together with your spouse.

Where to apply for an Opportunity Card?

The responsible German missions abroad in the country of origin (for example at the German embassy or the German consulate) will issue the Opportunity Card. If you are already in Germany, the application can be submitted to the local immigration office.

Prospects: further changes - short-term employment with quotas

To cover temporary peaks in demand, a quota system for short-term employment has been created for the first time. This is a good opportunity for employers to recruit foreign skilled workers and employ them for up to eight months. The prerequisite for this is that the employer must be bound by a collective agreement. The employment is subject to social security contributions from the first day. The Federal Employment Agency has set a quota of 25,000 for this for 2024.

Until the quota is exhausted, people from a third country can enter Germany for a limited period of time and work here in a company that is bound by collective bargaining agreements – regardless of their professional qualifications. Third countries are all countries that do not belong to the European Union or the European Free Trade Association. With short-term, quota-based employment, your company can cope with short-term peaks in demand with additional staff. The peak in demand does not have to be seasonal.