

Visas for Setting up Business

Note to readers

GTAI's Investment Guide to Germany is intended to provide general information for foreign companies wishing to expand to Germany. GTAI is unfortunately not able to answer visa requirement queries from private individuals or support individual visa applications.

Further information can be found at the websites of the [German Federal Foreign Office](#) ▶ and [German Missions Abroad](#). ▶

Establishing a Business with the Schengen Visa

For non-EU nationals a Schengen visa is generally sufficient for most steps which are required to establish a business in Germany (usually called a business visa in this context).

A Schengen visa permits a 90-day stay in Germany (in any 180-day period), during which all of the key business formation steps can be carried out. These include:

- The conclusion and notarization of the articles of association
- Application for entry in the commercial register (*Handelsregister*) through a German notary
- Trade registration
- Other preparatory activities during the business establishment phase (such as opening a bank account or the conclusion of rental agreements)
- Negotiations and the conclusion of contracts with business partners

Citizens of certain countries may stay in Germany for up to 90 days (in any 180-day period) without a Schengen visa. Please refer to the following site for more information:

- [Schengen Visa and National Visa](#) ▶

What is needed when applying for a Schengen visa?

Schengen visa applicants (business visa applicants) will usually be asked to present certain documentation such as:

- a letter of invitation by the German business partner
- documentation of employment and salary certificate
- a letter from the applicant's employer confirming the business purpose of the trip
- proof of travel health insurance

Where the entrepreneur personally applies for a Schengen visa (or business visa), documents such as a copy of the foreign company's entry in the foreign commercial register, articles of association, and bank statements from the last three months may also be required.

For more information on how to apply for a visa, please refer to:

- [Visa Application Process](#) ▶

Other Visa Requirements

In some cases, authorities might require a national visa, namely a residence permit for the purpose of self-employment (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis für selbständige Tätigkeit*), during the last phases of setting up a company. A residence permit for the purpose of self-employment allows individuals to perform all of the steps necessary to establishing a business in Germany as well as running the business on-site.

If the establishment of the company and the stay in Germany exceed 90 days it is also necessary to apply for a residence permit in advance. For more information please also refer to the following site:

- [Residence Permit and Settlement Permit](#) ▶

Please note: Establishing a business in Germany with a Schengen visa (business visa) is no guarantee for the subsequent issuing of a residence permit. For this reason it is necessary - appropriate to the intended business activities in Germany - to apply for a residence permit for the purpose of self-employment or regular employee purposes in advance.



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