



Being self-employed in a craft trade – information for refugees –

Being self-employed is a form of work. The self-employed are not employed by a company. The self-employed work for different customers and at their own risk. The self-employed do not have a boss. If you want to become self-employed, you can either start your own business from scratch or you can take over an existing business.

1. Registration with the local chamber of trade (Handwerkskammer)

Whoever wants to be self-employed as a tradesman or tradeswoman in Germany has to register with the local chamber of trade – i. e., with the chamber of trade at the place of work rather than at the place of residence. The chamber of trade represents the interests of the businesses of tradesmen and tradeswomen, of the qualified workers employed and of the trainees to bodies and institutions in politics and business.

Registering your business with the chamber of trade is required by law. By registering your business you become a member of the chamber of trade. You have to pay for this membership – how much, depends on several different factors.

There are many trade professions in Germany, such as joiner, bricklayer, roofer, dental technician, baker or building cleaner.

2. Requirements for self-employment in a craft trade

The individual trade professions can be divided in trades that require licensing and trades that do not require licensing.

2.1. The following trades require licensing. They may be practiced only if the corresponding requirements are met:

Trades that require qualification as a master tradesman or master tradeswoman (or an equivalent qualification):

1 Bricklayer and concrete worker	15 Coachbuilder and vehicle builder	28 Boat builder
2 Fitter of stoves and air heating	16 Precision machinist	29 Rope maker
3 Carpenter	17 Motorbike and bicycle mechanic	30 Baker
4 Roofer	18 Refrigeration technician	31 Confectioner
5 Roadbuilder	19 Information technician	32 Butcher
6 Thermal and noise insulation fitter	20 Motor vehicle technician	33 Optometrist
7 Well digger	21 Agricultural engineering technician	34 Hearing aid technician
8 Stonemason, stone sculptor	22 Gunsmith	35 Orthopaedic technician
9 Plasterer	23 Plumber	36 Orthopaedic shoemaker
10 Painter and varnisher	24 Pipe fitter, heating engineer	37 Dental technician
11 Scaffolder	25 Electrical engineer	38 Hairdresser
12 Chimney sweep	26 Electronics engineering technician	39 Glazier
13 Metalworker	27 Joiner	40 Glassblower, glassmaker
14 Surgical technician		41 Mechanic of tyre and vulcanisation technology

To be self-employed in these trades, you have to meet one of the following requirements:

- qualification as a master tradesman or master tradeswoman in the trade pursued or a related trade (in line with the German regulation on related trades) or
- qualification as a government-certified engineer or
- qualification as a certified engineer with a corresponding university degree or
- qualification as a foreman or
- graduate of a technical college or technical university provided that the major field of study corresponds to the trade pursued or
- obtaining a special licence by the chamber of trade or
- having your foreign professional qualification officially recognised in Germany – a procedure that establishes whether your qualification is equivalent to the German qualification of a master tradesman or master tradeswoman.



2.2 A licence is not required to register the following craft trades or craft-like trades:

Trades that do not require a licence (i. e., no qualification as a master tradesman or master tradeswoman):

- Tank and apparatus builder
- Concrete block and terrazzo manufacturer
- Bow maker
- Cooper
- Brewer and maltster
- Bookbinder
- Turner (ivory sculptor) and wooden-toy maker
- Printer
- Lapidary
- Screed layer
- Precision optics engineer
- Flexographic printer
- Tile, slab and mosaic layer
- Photographer
- Galvaniser
- Building cleaner
- Violin maker
- Glass and porcelain painter
- Glass finisher
- Goldsmith and silversmith
- Engraver
- Maker of reed-organ musical instruments
- Woodcarver
- Woodwind instrument maker
- Ceramist
- Piano and harpsichord maker
- Basket and wickerwork maker
- Furrier
- Bespoke tailor
- Metal and bell founder
- Ornamental metal worker
- Brass instrument maker
- Model maker
- Modiste
- Miller
- Organ and harmonium maker
- Parquet floor layer
- Interior decorator
- Roller shutter and sun shade technician
- Upholsterer and bag maker
- Sign and neon sign maker
- Cutting tool specialist
- Shoemaker
- Sail maker
- Screen printer
- Textile designer (embroiderer, weaver, bobbin lace maker, braid maker, knitter)
- Dry cleaner
- Clock and watch maker
- Gilder
- Chandler
- Wine cellar worker
- Maker of plucked string instruments

Craft-like trades (no qualification as a master tradesman or master tradeswoman required):

- Alteration tailor
- Cloth dresser, decatizer
- Asphalter (without roadbuilding)
- Doing simple shoe repairs
- Building drying specialist
- Undertaker
- Concrete driller and cutter
- Floor layer
- Ironing business for menswear
- Brush maker
- Stave maker
- Decoration sewing (without shop window decoration)
- Installation of prefabricated standard building components (e.g. windows, doors, frames, shelves)
- Steel fixer
- Vehicle recycling
- Manufacturer of carpets and rugs
- Meat cutter, deboner
- Grouter (in construction)
- Tanner
- Beverage conduit cleaner
- Glove maker
- Manufacture of custom-made wire racks for decorative purposes
- Wood and building preservation specialist (wall preservation, wood impregnation in buildings)
- Woodblock maker
- Maker of wooden ladders (custom-made)
- Maker of wooden hoops
- Maker of wooden shingles
- Clogger
- Offal butcher
- Installing electrical wiring in buildings (without doing electrical connections)
- Piano tuner
- Cosmetician
- Darner of high-quality textiles
- Manufacturer of lamp shades (custom-made)
- Make-up artist
- Hacksaw sharpener
- Metal grinder and metal polisher
- Trough maker
- Pleater
- Piler (ramming piles in water engineering)
- Prop master
- Pipe and drain cleaner
- Maker of umbrellas and parasols
- Maker of percussion instruments
- Express dry cleaner
- Ice-cream manufacturer (including sale of ice-cream with usual accessories)
- Lithographic printer
- Cloth painter
- Tank protection business (corrosion protection of oil tanks for firing plants without using chemical processes)
- Carpet cleaner
- Textile hand-printer
- Theatre and scenery painter
- Theatre costume seamster/seamstress
- Theatre sculptor



3. Registering your trade

To pursue a trade, you have to register with the chamber of trade and apply for a trade licence at the public order office or trade office in your current place of residence.

4. Residence title

A residence title is a permit that allows you to stay in Germany. Some residence titles give you the legal right to start your own business – others don't. If your residence title does not allow you to start your own business, you have to get the corresponding permission from the immigration authorities (Ausländerbehörde) prior to starting your own business. There are different types of residence title such as a visa, a residence permit, a settlement permit and so on. You can apply for a residence title with your local immigration authorities. If you are not in Germany, then you should apply to a German diplomatic mission, i. e., an embassy or a consulate. Unless you come from an EU member state, from the European Economic Area or from Switzerland, you need a special permit in line with the legal requirements relating to foreigners (Ausländerrecht) to be able to start your own business in Germany.

5. Obligation to pay taxes

The obligation to pay taxes means that you have to pay taxes to the state. Taxes are a certain percentage of money that has to be paid to the state.

6. Insurance

An insurance protects you against risks. In case of a loss or damage, it compensates you for that loss or damage. For example, you make monthly payments to a health insurance company. When you get ill and need to see the doctor, the doctor gets paid by the insurance company. As someone who is self-employed you have to see about your insurances yourself. Health insurance is compulsory: you have to take out health insurance. There are several other insurances that are necessary for people who are self-employed. What insurances are important in your case depends on your work and occupation.

7. Contact your local chamber of trade to get free advice

Here, you can find the contact details of the five chambers of trade in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region. Please, get in touch with the chamber of trade of the region in which you would like to start your business.



The numbers on the map indicate the different locations of the chambers of trade in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region.

- ① **[Handwerkskammer Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Stade](#)**
Friedenstraße 6, 21335 Lüneburg
phone: 04131/712-0
e-mail: info@hwk-bls.de
- ② **[Handwerkskammer Flensburg](#)**
Johanniskirchhof 1-7, 24937 Flensburg
phone: 0461/866-0
e-mail: info@hwk-flensburg.de
- ③ **[Handwerkskammer Lübeck](#)**
Breite Straße 10/12, 23552 Lübeck
phone: 0451/1506-0
e-mail: info@hwk-luebeck.de
- ④ **[Handwerkskammer Hamburg](#)**
Holstenwall 12, 20355 Hamburg
phone: 040/35 905-0
e-mail: info@hwk-hamburg.de
- ⑤ **[Handwerkskammer Schwerin](#)**
Friedensstraße 4a, 19053 Schwerin
phone: 0385/7417-0
e-mail: info@hwk-schwerin.de



8. Further information

For further information and contacts, please, go to the following pages on the Internet:

General:

- Brochures issued by the federal ministry of economic affairs and energy:
 - [GründerZeiten 10: Existenzgründungen durch Migrantinnen und Migranten](#) (written in German and Arabic)
 - [GründerZeiten 18: Existenzgründungen im Handwerk](#) (available in German)
 - [GründerZeiten 26: Erlaubnisse und Anmeldungen](#) (available in German)

Hamburg Metropolitan Region:

- Promotion of economic development of the districts in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region:
<http://metropolregion.hamburg.de/wirtschaftsfoerderung/>

Hamburg Metropolitan Region: City of Hamburg

- Association of self-employed migrants (ASM Arbeitsgemeinschaft selbstständiger Migranten e.V.):
<http://www.asm-hh.de/>
- Information for refugees about life in Hamburg, about education and work:
<http://www.we-inform.de/>
- Entrepreneurs without borders (Unternehmer ohne Grenzen e.V.):
<http://uog-ev.de/>
- W.I.R - work and integration for refugees:
<http://www.hamburg.de/wir/>

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This document is also available in German, Arabic, Farsi and Tigrinya. It can be downloaded from the website of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region (www.metropolregion.hamburg.de) and from the websites of the participating chambers of trade.

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