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Labor Law — Working Hours, Vacation, Illness & Dismissal Protection

Key employee rights in Germany: max. 8 hours/day, 24 vacation days, 6 weeks paid sick leave, dismissal protection after 6 months.

Deutsche Begriffe: Arbeitsrecht | Arbeitsvertrag | Arbeitszeit | Urlaub | Entgeltfortzahlung | Kündigungsschutz | Probezeit

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Your Rights as an Employee in Germany

German labor law protects employees comprehensively. These rights apply to **all employees** — regardless of nationality or residence status. Part-time workers and minijob employees also have these rights.

Arbeitszeit — Maximum 8 Hours Per Day

The **Arbeitszeit Act (ArbZG)** regulates:

• **Maximum 8 hours per working day** (Mon–Sat), i.e., max. 48 hours/week

• Extension to **10 hours** is possible if the average does not exceed 8 hours over 6 months

• At least **11 hours rest period** between two working days

• After 6 hours: **30-minute break** (after 9 hours: 45 minutes)

• **Night and shift work** are subject to special protection rules

Urlaub — Minimum 24 Working Days

• **Statutory minimum vacation**: 24 working days (for a 6-day week) or 20 working days (for a 5-day week)

• Many collective agreements grant **25–30 days**

• Full vacation entitlement accrues after **6 months** of employment

• Vacation cannot be **paid out** (exception: upon termination)

• **Public holidays** are additional (9–13 depending on the state)

Illness — Entgeltfortzahlung for 6 Weeks

When you become ill:

1. Inform your employer immediately (in the morning on the first day of illness)

2. From the 4th day of illness (often from day 1 — check your employment contract!) a **medical certificate of incapacity for work (AU)** from your doctor

3. Since 2023: The AU is transmitted **electronically** directly to the health insurance fund (eAU)

Your employer continues to pay your salary **for 6 weeks** (**Entgeltfortzahlung**). After that, the health insurance fund pays **sick pay** (approx. 70% of gross wages, max. 78 weeks).

Kündigungsschutz — After 6 Months and 10 Employees

The **Kündigungsschutz Act (KSchG)** applies to companies with **more than 10 employees** and after **6 months of employment**:

• Termination only for **personal, behavioral, or operational reasons**

• **Social selection** in case of operational termination (age, length of service, dependents, disability)

• **Notice period**: minimum 4 weeks to the 15th or end of a calendar month, longer depending on length of service

During the Probezeit (maximum 6 months): notice period only **2 weeks**, without stating reasons.

Minimum Wage 2026

The statutory minimum wage is **€13.90 gross per hour**. It applies to nearly all employees, including minijob workers. Exceptions: apprentices, mandatory interns, long-term unemployed (first 6 months).

If You Have Problems: Your Points of Contact

• **Works council** — your representative in the company

• **Trade union** — legal protection and advice (ver.di, IG Metall, etc.)

- **Labor court** — file a dismissal protection lawsuit within **3 weeks** after termination!
- **Faire Integration** (faire-integration.de) — free labor law advice for migrants

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