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Residence Permit — Aufenthaltstitel in Germany

Types of residence permits, how to extend them, and the path to permanent settlement.

Deutsche Begriffe: Aufenthaltstitel | Aufenthaltserlaubnis | Niederlassungserlaubnis | Ausländerbehörde | Visum | Aufenthaltsgesetz | Freizügigkeit | Blaue Karte EU | Einbürgerung | Einbürgerungstest | Fiktionsbescheinigung | Fortgeltungsfiktion | Meldebescheinigung | Krankenversicherung | Drittstaatsangehörige | Lebensunterhalt

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Aufenthaltstitel — residence permit in Germany

Aufenthaltstitel is an official residence permit required by foreigners from outside the EU to legally live in Germany. The rules are regulated by the residence law (**Aufenthaltsgesetz, AufenthG**), and it is issued by the **Ausländerbehörde** (foreign office).

Who needs Aufenthaltstitel?

• **EU/EEA citizens and Swiss citizens:** NO — they have freedom of movement (Freizügigkeit).

• **Citizens from outside the EU (Drittstaaten):** YES.

Types of permits

1. Visum (visa) — for entry. National visa (D) for long-term stay; usually exchanged for Aufenthaltserlaubnis upon arrival.

2. Aufenthaltserlaubnis (temporary permit) — issued for 1–3 years, **tied to the purpose** of stay (work, studies, family reunification, vocational training). Must be

renewed.

3. Blaue Karte EU (Blue Card) — for qualified specialists with higher education and appropriate salary; faster path to settlement.

4. Niederlassungserlaubnis (settlement) — **unlimited**. Usually after 5 years with Aufenthaltserlaubnis, upon meeting conditions (see below). For qualified workers and Blue Card holders — faster.

Path to Niederlassungserlaubnis

Usually requires in total:

• 5 years of residence with Aufenthaltserlaubnis (60 months of pension contributions),

• stable income and financial security,

• German language at **B1** level,

• suitable housing and insurance,

• no serious criminal record.

Einbürgerung — citizenship (2024 reform)

Since June 2024, new rules apply: citizenship is possible after **5 years** of residence (after 3 years with exceptional integration), and **dual citizenship is permitted**. Requires B1 level, passing a test (Einbürgerungstest), and financial security. Details: Einbürgerung.

How to renew Aufenthaltstitel

1. Submit your application **at least 8 weeks, preferably 2–3 months** before expiration.

2. Schedule an appointment at the Ausländerbehörde — in large cities, free slots are scarce, so submit your application on time (online or by mail), even if your appointment falls later.

3. Prepare documents: valid passport, biometric photo, Meldebescheinigung, proof of employment/income, health insurance.

4. Fee: usually around 100 €.

⚠ Most important: submit your application BEFORE expiration

If you submit your renewal application **before** your current permit expires, its legal effects continue (Fortgeltungsfiktion) and you will receive a **Fiktionsbescheinigung** — a document confirming that you are legally waiting for a decision. If you miss the deadline by even one day, you lose this protection and risk losing your right of residence.