Every tenth employee in Germany is a foreign citizen. In addition, more and more people have come to Germany in the context of flight migration in recent years as part of the wave of refugees and, in most cases, naturally also want to take a job here.

Situation Arrived / Refugees & Job Search

In June 2016, for example, 297,000 of the fugitives reported here (of whom 213,000 were recognised beneficiaries of protection, 78,000 asylum seekers and 6,000 tolerated foreigners) were registered as seeking work, 131,000 of whom were unemployed. The discrepancy is caused by the fact that refugees in language courses, training or similar programmes are not registered as unemployed but as seeking work.

Demographic data

The majority of job seekers are male – 76% – and under 30 years of age (47%). Just over a quarter have no lower secondary school leaving certificate and 74% of the refugees have no formal vocational training, whereas 26% have a high school diploma and nine percent have an academic education. Therefore, the majority of the fugitives (58%) are considered suitable for helper activities by the employment agencies of the Employment Agency, while only 15% can perform specialist and specialty activities and 4% expert activities.

Hint:

Now the question arises – what do refugees have to pay any attention to if they want to work here? Who can you contact if you have any questions? And what regulations are there regarding the increasingly popular mini-jobs?

When can refugees take jobs?

During the first three months of their stay in Germany and during the first six
months of their placement in an initial reception facility, refugees are subject to a total ban on employment. In some regions, a priority check ensures that nationals do not have to be given preference in the event of an employment offer. This test is not required after 15 months and is now unusual in most parts of Germany.

**More unstable countries of origin**

However, this rule only applies to fugitives from unsafe countries of origin. People of safe origin who have fled for economic reasons, for example, are not allowed to practise a profession throughout their recognition procedure. This ban came into force on 24 October 2015.

**During the asylum procedure, a distinction is made between three different types of fugitives:**

- On the one hand, asylum seekers, who can present an aenthaltsgestattung, but whose proceedings have not yet been completed.
- Tolerated refugees who cannot currently be deported for various reasons, such as illness or lack of documents, but whose application for asylum has already been rejected.
- And lastly, recognised refugees who are already in possession of a residence permit.

The first two groups are not allowed to work for the time being. If refugees enter into employment in this case, they face a fine of ,- EUR 500 for committing an administrative offence. However, this is much more expensive for the employer: He has to pay a fine of **up to 500,000 euros**.

**work permit**

However, if they have applied for a work permit from the Foreigners Authority and the latter, in cooperation with the Employment Agency, has granted them a work permit after a waiting period of three months, nothing more stands in the way of an employment relationship.

**Info:**
Refugees with a residence permit may generally enter into an employment relationship. This does not apply to work for temporary employment agencies. Refugees may only work for a temporary employment agency if no priority check is carried out. This is otherwise prohibited.

**Asylum seekers with vocational training who are in high demand**

Another special feature are asylum seekers who have learned a profession for which there is a shortage in Germany. At the moment, these are doctors, computer scientists or engineers, for example. Here it is possible to obtain an EU blue card, comparable to a green card in the USA. Refugees may work with these without restrictions.

**Hint:**
After a four-year stay in Germany, any desired employment can be pursued without approval.

**What about practicing mini-jobs?**

A mini-job is a job where the employer hires an employee for a small number of hours per month. The salary may not exceed 450,- EUR per month or 5400,- EUR per year.

For refugees, these professional conditions represent a good way into the German labour market and facilitate the first steps in it. In addition, working with colleagues and customers in the company helps to integrate into our culture and improve language skills. This is why jobs in this area are particularly suitable for those who have fled.

**Info:**
Otherwise, the same provisions apply to part-time employment as to full-time jobs: the fugitive needs a residence permit.

**Insurance & Benefits**

It should also be noted that part of the salary earned is credited to the social benefits received.
In addition, as a refugee, you should make sure that the employer reports the employee to the mini-job centre, otherwise the refugee is not insured.

**Hint:**

According to statistics from 2016, most foreign mini-jobbers come from Turkey (182,957), Italy (60,797) and Poland (58,337). However, the number of foreign workers from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria is continuously increasing.

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**Where can refugees get help and support?**

Advice can be found at the Employment Agency or the BIS (Career Information Centres). The „Hotline Working and Living in Germany“ can help with questions about foreign university degrees and their recognition or qualifications or similar.

Together with the Federal Employment Agency, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) operates this telephone contact point on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at +49 30 1815-1111.

**Where can refugees find jobs?**

In Germany, you have to look for a job yourself and apply to the employer of your choice. Available jobs registered with the Employment Agency can be found at „https://con.arbeitsagentur.de/prod/jobboerse/jobssuche-ui/“.

However, this is not the only way to get an employment relationship. It is also advisable to look out for corresponding advertisements in local and national newspapers such as the „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ or the „Zeit“ or on other websites such as „indeed.de“ or „stepstone.de“.

**Enquire directly from companies**

In most cases, companies also maintain pages on their Internet presence with the jobs to be filled. Of course you can also take the initiative and create your own job application on these websites. Here it is possible to focus on one’s own strengths and to give the future employer an individual picture of oneself.
Complete application documents

Applications can be submitted both in writing and electronically to the company concerned. Most companies indicate their preferences in their job advertisements. A complete application includes a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, certificates, work certificates and references. These documents must all be submitted in German.

Info:
Refugees can seek help from the employment agency in preparing an application and in translating and recognising their qualifications. This offers special application training.

The ESF-BAMF programme

If refugees are not able to find a suitable employment relationship, for example due to insufficient language skills, they can participate in the ESF-BAMF programme. This is a combination of German courses, professional training and job-related internships, which should increase the chance of a permanent position and entry into the job market.

Prerequisites for participation

In order to be able to participate in this programme, you must have a migrant background and too little knowledge of German to find a job, but at least language level A1 according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages.

In addition, one must either be registered as unemployed or unemployed, receive unemployment benefit or Hartz IV, participate in a qualification measure financed by the Employment Agency or be in vocational training. In addition, compulsory schooling must already have been completed.

Hint:
Then, however, nothing more stands in the way of participation in this measure. It lasts up to 730 lessons, so if you take the course full time, it will take about six months. There is also the option of taking
this course on a part-time basis, but then it is extended to twelve months.

Regulations regarding working hours and wages

The regulations of the Working Hours Act apply to fugitives as they do to domestic employees. The maximum working time allowed on average per week in Germany is limited to 48 hours. However, employers may also order a 60-hour week if they provide for a time compensation in the same year.

What about working hours?

The working week is normally limited to Monday to Friday, but Saturday and Sunday work is also common in the catering trade or food production. Working hours are usually recorded in an employment contract. It is often interesting to see which employees are paid bonuses for their willingness to work shifts, public holidays or weekends: Often the bonuses are up to 75% of the normal salary, which is added to the normal salary.

payment for labour

The salary is also specified in the employment contract. It is based on the one hand on the collective agreements customary in the industry, but on the other hand, of course, on the qualifications of the employee and the region in which the company is located. In Germany, for example, according to „gehaltsvergleich.com“, a baker earns an average of EUR 2,377 in the West and only around EUR 2,000 in the East. However, the statutory minimum wage always applies – except for orientation internships lasting up to three months, which are necessary for subsequent studies or training: since 1 January 2017 it has been 8.84 EUR per hour in Germany.

Info:

In addition to language and foreign culture, it is often a major problem for fugitives to have their qualifications recognised in Germany. For many jobs, however, a corresponding qualification is required. If you want to find out about translation and comparison
options for your documents directly at your place of residence, you can do this at the Migration Advice for Adult Immigrants, the Youth Migration Service or the Employment Agency.

Help from the Employment Agency

Finally, it can be said that the Federal Employment Agency and the Immigration Office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are often the appropriate contacts for problems regarding potential employment relationships. They are easiest to reach via their websites, which are also available in simple language: https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/privatpersonen and https://www.bamf.de/SiteGlobals/Functions/WebGIS/DE/WebGIS_Alaenderbeoerde.html.

Hint:
Here refugees can be helped competently and reliably in their search for employment, so that nothing stands in the way of a job – be it a full-time job or a mini-job.