

Form: Gewerbe-Anmeldung (GewA 1) (Registration of a business in Germany)

The following step-by-step guide was based on the August 2011 version of the official “Gewerbe-Anmeldung (GewA 1)” form used by the district of Neuenhagen bei Berlin. Although the form should be identical across regions in Germany, a quick double check won’t hurt.

Once filled out, this form needs to be submitted to the Gewerbeamt (trade licensing office) of whichever jurisdiction you wish to register your business in – as a start-up entrepreneur it will most likely be the Gewerbeamt of the city you are registered in. Many jurisdictions require that you show up in person. When you do, please bring this form, your passport, and your Meldebescheinigung (proof of registration in Germany), as well as other supporting documentation.

How to read this guide:

- Obtain the “Gewerbe-Anmeldung (GewA 1)” form, for instance by googling ” Gewerbe-Anmeldung” and the name of the city/jurisdiction you wish to register your business in
- Be sure to check whether you have obtained the GewA1 form as there are different forms for registering different types of businesses
- Print both the form and this guide and put both print-outs next to each other
- Be prepared to use Google and Google Translate for additional research and interpretation work
- Just like the actual form, this guide works with boxes, i.e. box 9 in this guide will correspond to box 9 on the actual form. Naturally, double-checking can’t hurt
- The guide was written with a non-EU start-up entrepreneur with no German language skills in mind, in other words, a person who is new to Germany and wants to start a small business on his/her own. Hence, **whenever feasible, fast track advice is provided in bold and blue colored writing (i.e. check this, skip that)**. If a question does not apply to you, leave it blank
- If you are unsure about what box to check, be sure to check with somebody who is fluent in German. If you are still unsure, consider contacting the local chamber of commerce (Industrie- und Handelskammer, IHK) or international organizations based in Germany such as the German-American Chamber of Commerce for assistance

Getting Started

Box 1: Please enter the name of your company. Heads up: If you are registering a business partnership (e.g. a two man-show like a GbR) the name of the business needs to include the names of all partners (e.g. John & Jerry Smith GbR). **If you are operating on your own, just put in your name.**

- *Company???* But I just want to do freelance/contractor work in Germany!
- *No worries. You are looking at the right guide. In Germany, being self-employed is more or less the same as being an entrepreneur who runs his/her own business. Therefore, this guide applies to freelancers/contractors and company founders alike. Before you start filling out the form, please make sure whether you are actually required to register a Gewerbe. You can do so by reading our other English language guide for the German tax authority’s Fragebogen zur steuerlichen Erfassung form.*

Box 2: Location and registration number of entry in German Trade Register. If you did not register, please skip

1.1 Information about you

Box 3: **Last name**

Box 4: **First name**

Box 4a: **Gender** (männl. = male / weibl.= female)

Box 5: Maiden name/ name at birth (only if different from current name)

Box 6: **Date of birth** (DD.MM.YYYY)

Box 7: **Place and country of birth**

Box 8: **Nationality** (either tick German, or enter your nationality behind “andere.”)

Box 9: **Your address**: street, house number, additional address information (e.g. apartment number), zip code, city, or if you have a P.O. box, Zip Code (of P.O. box), city and number of P.O. box. Also enter your telephone number, your fax number and your e-mail address (optional)

Information About Your Business

Box 10: **Enter the number of managing partners** (only for a non-incorporated firm or business partnerships) or the number of legal agents (only for corporate bodies). **Most likely, you will be the only managing partner, so you enter “1”**. If you founded a GmbH (limited liability company) you have to enter the number of all managing partners here.

Box 11: Name of the authorized representatives of your company (ONLY fill in if you want to register a stock-listed corporation or subsidiary branch of your company. If neither one applies, leave blank).

Box 12: **Enter the address (street, house number, zip code and city, telephone number, fax number, e-mail) of your workplace. This is either the address of your office or, if you are working from home, your private address.** If you are operating your business from the premises of another company, enter the address of the company.

Box 13: If the address provided in Box 12 is only a subsidiary of the actual headquarters of the company you would like to register, enter the address of the headquarters here. If there is only one branch, move on.

Box 14: Enter your previous office/subsidiary address if you registered a different address in the past (only applicable in case you do not use this form to register for the first time but to register a new subsidiary or to re-open an old business. **If you register for the first time, or if your company never operated from a different address, leave this box blank**).

Box 15: Here you enter a **clear and specific description of your business activities**. Keep it short and to the point. **Write in German and refrain from using English loan words commonly used in Germany, e.g. “Promotion”**. **Underline the most important activities, in case you engage in several ones**.

Box 16: **Please indicate here whether you will work part-time** (tick “Ja”) **or full-time** (tick “Nein”).

Box 17: **Insert the start date of your business activity**. Heads up: Do NOT date back. Running a business without a proper license is an offence in Germany. You might be fined.

Box 18: **Select your business' general industry branch.** Tick either industrial labor (Industrie), artisan work/handcrafts (Handwerk) , trade (Handel) or other (Sonstiges).

Box 19: **Enter the number of workers in your company who do NOT hold stakes in your company** (so, do not count yourself and your partners!). Enter the number of full time workers (“Vollzeit”) and part time workers (“Teilzeit”). If there are none, tick “Keine”.

Box 20: Select which part of your business you wish to register. **Tick headquarters** (“Hauptniederlassung”) **if you wish to register your main office.** Alternatively, tick subsidiary (“Zweigniederlassung”) if you wish to register an independent branch of your main business, or dependent subsidiary (“unselbstständige Zweigstelle”) if you wish to register a dependent subsidiary of your main business.

Box 21: Tick this box, if you run a vending machine business (Automatenaufstellungsgewerbe) (No kidding). If this does not apply to you (...) just leave it blank.

Box 22: Tick this box, if you wish to register a business in the travel industry. Not the case? Please move on.

Boxes 23-24: Here, you have to provide specific details as to the formation of your business. Please, select one of the following:

- **If you want to register a new business, tick “Neugründung”**
- If you are still running the same business but have moved to a different city or jurisdiction within Germany, tick “Wiedereröffnung nach Verlegung aus einem anderen Meldebezirk” (reopening a business after moving from a different district)
- If you changed your company form, say from a sole proprietorship to a limited, select “Wechsel der Rechtsform” (change of company form)
- If the nature of your business has changed after merging with another company or after separation from another business tick “Gründungs nach Umwandlungsgesetz (z.B. Verschmelzung, Spaltung)” (formation of a new business after mergers or separation)).
- If you are still running the same business but with a new partner, tick “Gesellschaftereintritt” (entry of a corporate partner)
- If you inherited a company or you chose to buy or lease an existing one/ select “Erbfolge/Kauf/Pacht” (inheritance/acquisition/tenancy)

Box 25: N/A

Box 26: If you did not start an entirely new business, but acquired an existing one in any other way mentioned in Boxes 23-24, provide either the former name of the company or the name of the previously registered business owner.

Box 27: N/A

Box 28: If you need a permit to run your business (i.e. not a visa but rather a permit in case you are dealing with dangerous good, etc.), please fill out this box. If you have a permit select yes (“Ja”), if not tick no (“Nein”). If you have one, also add the date of issue and the issuing authority. If you do not need a permit, please leave blank.

***Head up:** If you are a non-EU citizen and want to set up a business in Germany, you will need a residence permit (e.g. a temporary visa for self-employed entrepreneurs) from the immigration agency (Ausländerbehörde). See Boxes 30 and 31 for details.*

Box 29: Only relevant if you wish to register an artisan/handcraft business. In this case, you are in need of a special permit, the Handwerkskarte. If you have one, tick yes (“Ja”). If you don’t have one yet, tick no (“Nein”). If you have one, also add the date of issue and the issuing authority.

Box 30: Do you have a residence permit (e.g. a temporary visa for self-employed entrepreneurs)? Select either yes (“Ja”) or no (“Nein”). If you have one, also add the date of issue and the issuing authority. Before filing this Gewerbe application you will need to obtain a visa from the Ausländerbehörde. While there are many different ways to do this, the temporary visa for self-employed entrepreneurs (Selbständige Erwerbstätigkeit) is arguably the most common avenue for recently arrived start-up entrepreneurs in Germany. There is much to say about how to obtain such a visa. Please check back for another guide on work visa in Germany.

Box 31: Does your residence permit state any restrictions? For example, you may be authorized to work as a self-employed entrepreneur in the field of software development, but not advertising. You might not be allowed to register a company at all, if such restrictions are mentioned, so please check carefully. If any restrictions are stated, select yes (“Ja”) otherwise, tick no (“Nein”). If there are, add the details of the restriction.

Heads up: Filing this form does not entitle you to start your business right away. If any data or permit is missing, you will have to provide it and wait until you obtain the official confirmation that you may start your business.

Box 32: Enter the date.

Box 33: Sign the form.

Sources:

http://essen.de/de/Rathaus/Aemter/Ordner_22/GewerbeAnUmmeldung.html#auslaender