MY PATH TO A GERMAN PASSPORT

Key facts on naturalisation

Federal Government Commissioner
for Migration, Refugees and Integration
Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism

Preface



Dear Reader,

I am delighted that you are interested in becoming a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany. Applying for naturalisation is a big step and a very personal decision. It demonstrates a commitment to our country and its liberal democratic order. It also demonstrates a commitment to social cohesion and political participation for everyone in our country.

Germany is a country of immigration. Our diversity is our strength, and a valuable resource. Anyone who has lived in Germany for a long time, who works here, who speaks German and feels they belong, should be able to become a German – with all the corresponding rights and obligations – and should be able to vote and stand for election, and have their say in the future of our country.

This brochure provides you with information about the requirements you have to meet to become a German citizen, how the naturalisation process works, and what you have to take into consideration when applying. I wish you every success on your chosen path!

Yours,



Natalie Pawlik

Minister of State
Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration
Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism

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1.

Key information at a glance

In this chapter you will find answers to the following questions:

- → **What are the requirements before I can become naturalised?**
- → **Who submits the application for naturalisation?**
- → **Where can I submit the application?**
- → **How does the application process work?**
- → **Which documents do I need?**
- → **Do I have to give up my previous citizenship?**
- → **How much does naturalisation cost?**
- → **How long does the naturalisation procedure take?**
- → **Where can I get further information?**

What are the requirements before I can become naturalised?

Among the most important requirements are that you have sufficient income, that you speak German well enough, and that you are committed to the → **Basic Law.** If you meet these and some → **additional requirements** then you have a legal entitlement to German citizenship.

However, even without this legal entitlement, naturalisation may still be possible. → **For more information on this, see page 26.**

The website has complete information on naturalisation. There is also a Quick Check to see if you fulfil the most important requirements for German citizenship.

www.einbuergerung.de

Who submits the application for naturalisation?

If you are 16 years of age or older, you submit the application yourself. Children and young people under the age of 16 must have their legal representative apply for naturalisation on their behalf. This is usually their parents.

Where can I submit the application?

You submit the application to your local nationality authority *(Staatsangehörigkeitsbehörde)*. Not sure which authority to contact? Please enquire with your town/city or district administration *(Stadtverwaltung* or *Kreisverwaltung)*, borough office *(Bezirksamt)* or foreigners authority *(Ausländerbehörde)* or with a migration advice centre in your area, or call the official telephone number 115.

The online navigator provided by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) shows you migration advice centres, integration courses and foreigners authorities in your area.

www.bamf-navi.bamf.de

How does the application process work?

If you meet all of the requirements for naturalisation, you should first ask your nationality authority about the application forms.

You may also find these on the authority's website. Then fill out the forms and assemble the required documents. Finally, take the application and all of the documents to the nationality authority. Some authorities also allow you to apply online. It's a good idea to keep a copy of the application and the documents that you submit.

Which documents do I need?

Application forms are available from the relevant authorities in person or on their website.

If you fill out these forms before your appointment, the staff at the authority will have a clearer overview and will be able to process your application. You can obtain support from advice centres when completing the application. Some authorities also allow you to apply online. As a rule, you must submit these documents in addition to the application:

- → Proof of a permanent right of residence or a long-term residence permit (this is usually your currently valid residence permit or settlement permit) **→ For more information on this, see page 16.**
- → Documents about your current living situation (e.g. lease agreement)
- → Proof of your financial independence (e.g. employment contract, payslips, your last income tax assessment if you are self-employed)
- → Proof that you have passed either the naturalisation test **(→ more information on page 22) or** the Life

in Germany test, **or** have obtained a German school-leaving certificate (including from a German vocational school), **or** have successfully completed a course of study in Germany in the field of law, public administration, political science **or** the social sciences

→ Valid passport **or** ID card; for EU citizens, your ID card

→ Marriage or birth certificate, divorce decrees (if applicable), your children's birth certificates

→ German language certificate at level B1 or higher, **or** a school-leaving certificate from a German school, **or** successful completion of a course of study in Germany that was taught in German

→ Documents about your pension insurance in Germany

→ For school pupils, apprentices/trainees and students: Proof of school registration *(Schulbescheinigung)* **or** proof of training/apprenticeship registration *(Ausbildungsbescheinigung)* **or** of university enrolment *(Immatrikulationsbescheinigung)* **or** training/apprenticeship contract, all school reports (including vocational schools)

At your initial interview at the nationality authority, you must as a rule present your supporting documents, in particular documents from your home country, in the original – together with a certified German translation if they are not already in German. Please make sure that all documents are complete so that your application can be processed. You may have to submit additional documents. Your nationality authority will let you know if this is the case.

You can find approved translators for certified translations here:

www.justiz-dolmetscher.de

Do I have to give up my previous citizenship?

You do not have to give up your previous citizenship(s) in order to become a German. According to German law you can hold multiple citizenships. However, the country or countries that you are already a citizen of may have other

regulations – so, for example, you might automatically lose your previous citizenship when you become naturalised in Germany. If you are unsure about this, you should contact the embassy or a consulate of the country or countries that you are already a citizen of.

You can find an overview of embassies and consulates here:

www.auswaertiges-amt.de

How much does naturalisation cost?

Naturalisation costs €255 per person. For underage children without their own income **who become naturalised together with their parents (→ page 29),** it costs €51. If you are unable to pay the costs, please ask the staff at the authority directly whether lower costs or payment in instalments are possible for you.

In addition to these costs, you may also have other costs, for example for the naturalisation test, proof of identity or a language certificate.

How long does the naturalisation procedure take?

Processing times vary in the different *Länder* (federal states) and depend on the individual case. Expect a processing time of 18 months or longer.

Where can I get further information?

You can find information about the process and requirements at → **www.einbuergerung.de,** by calling 115 (official nationwide number for any questions concerning the authorities) or at your local nationality authority. If you have any questions about your own application, please contact your nationality authority directly.

www.einbuergerung.de

2.

Naturalisation requirements and steps in the procedure

The requirements at a glance

There are various ways to obtain German citizenship. Generally speaking, you must meet all of the following requirements in order to be entitled to standard naturalisation (→ naturalisation by legal entitlement – *Anspruchseinbürgerung*):

1. You have been living habitually and legally in Germany for five years.
2. You can prove your identity and current citizenship, or your stateless status.
3. You have a permanent right of residence or a long-term residence permit.
4. You can financially support yourself and your dependent family members.
5. You have sufficient knowledge of German.
6. You have sufficient knowledge of the legal system, society and way of life in Germany.
7. You declare your commitment to the free and democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany.
8. You declare your commitment to Germany's special historical responsibility for the tyrannical National Socialist regime and its consequences, in particular for the protection of Jewish life, the peaceful coexistence of peoples and the prohibition on waging a war of aggression.
9. You have not been convicted of a criminal offence.
10. There are no other reasons that might make you ineligible for naturalisation.

The requirements in detail

1. You have been living habitually and legally in Germany for five years.

You must have been living in the Federal Republic of Germany as your main place of residence for at least five years. This means that you have been here for this period without interruption and still live here. Short absences such as holiday trips do not matter.

Documents that can prove your habitual residence in Germany are, for example:

- → Pension insurance records
- → Payslip / Confirmation of employment from your employer *(Arbeitgeberbescheinigung)*
- → Certificate of enrolment or deregistration *(Immatrikulation* or *Exmatrikulation)* from a university (including universities of applied sciences)
- → Confirmation that you are actively involved in a club/association or volunteer work
- → Certificates from training courses
- → School reports
- → Proof of school registration *(Schulbescheinigung)*
- → Bank statements (showing card payments in Germany)
- → Documentation of doctor's visits (confirmation from your health insurance provider)

Time in which you had a temporary suspension of deportation is not counted. The duration of an asylum procedure is only counted if you have been recognised as a person entitled to asylum within the meaning of Article 16a of the Basic Law, or as a refugee under the Geneva Refugee Convention, or as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection.



2. You can prove your identity and current citizenship.

You can generally prove your identity and current citizenship(s) by presenting a national passport or another official identity document with a photograph (e.g. an identity card). The national passport must be issued by the state of which you are a citizen. It must contain your photograph, your full name, and your date and place of birth. A valid identity card is sufficient for EU citizens.

If you do not have these documents, other evidence may also be suitable, for example a driving licence, a work ID card, a military ID card, or a document concerning your civil status that shows a passport photograph.

Are you unable to obtain any of these documents either? Then you could present other documents from your home country, for example a birth certificate, baptism certificate, marriage certificate or residence registration certificate, or school reports.

If you are stateless and do not yet have a travel document for stateless persons, you should apply for one in good time before your naturalisation. Submit this application to the foreigners authority that is responsible for you.

Do you have questions or problems related to establishing your identity, current citizenship or stateless status? Your nationality authority or an advice centre in your area can provide you with information and support.

3. You have a permanent right of residence or a long-term residence permit.

This is generally the case if you meet one of the following criteria:

→ You have a settlement permit or an EU long-term residence permit.

→ You are an EU citizen or a family member of an EU citizen and therefore have the right to free movement. You then do not need a residence title, only a valid ID card. As a family member, you need the residence card *(Aufenthaltskarte)* for family members of EU citizens. You obtain this from the foreigners authority after entering Germany.

→ You are a citizen of Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway. This gives you the same rights as an EU citizen.

→ You have a right of residence under the Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom, or the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU.

→ You are a Turkish worker, or a family member of a Turkish worker, and have a right of residence thanks to the Association Agreement between the European Union and Turkey.

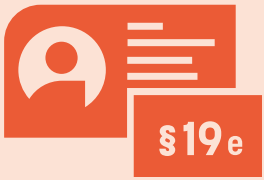
A **temporary residence permit** may also be sufficient for your naturalisation. This is generally the case if, for example, you are in Germany as a skilled worker or if the residence permit was issued for family reunification. A temporary residence permit is also sufficient for naturalisation if you are a person entitled to asylum or a beneficiary of international protection, as well as for certain other humanitarian reasons.

A temporary residence permit is not sufficient for naturalisation if you are in Germany to study, to train, or for certain types of stay granted for humanitarian reasons.

If you have a permission to remain or a temporary suspension of deportation, you are not entitled to naturalisation.

Check your residence permit. If it refers to one of the following sections (§§) of the Residence Act you are not yet eligible to become a German citizen:

Sections 16 a, 16 b, 16 d, 16 e, 16 f, 17, 18 f, 19, 19 b, 19 e, 20, 20 a, 22, 23 a, 24, 25 (3–5) or section 104 c.



4. You can financially support yourself and your close family members.

This means that you are generally able to pay for food, clothing and accommodation for yourself, your spouse and your children from your income. Income includes, for example, earnings from your job, your income as an entrepreneur, or the maintenance/alimony that your divorced partner has to pay. Generally speaking, you cannot be receiving any benefits from the job centre or the social welfare office, such as social assistance *(Sozialhilfe),* citizen's benefit *(Bürgergeld)* or social allowance *(Sozialgeld).*

As a rule, your entitlement to naturalisation is not affected if you receive one of the following benefits, for example: Training assistance *(Ausbildungsförderung),* housing benefit *(Wohngeld),* child benefit *(Kindergeld),* child supplement *(Kinderzuschlag),* unemployment benefit *(Arbeitslosengeld),* pensions based on social insurance contributions, payments under the Long-Term Care Insurance Act *(Pflegeversicherungsgesetz).*

The authority will check whether you will be able to financially support yourself and your dependent family members from your own income long-term. When assessing this, the authority will take your career prospects, employment history and current income situation into account. It may request proof of income, pension insurance records or (if you are self-employed) income tax assessments.



Exceptions apply for:

→ former guest or contract workers and their spouses who subsequently joined them in Germany, if they receive benefits from the job centre or social welfare office through no fault of their own,

→ foreign nationals who are in full-time employment and have been for at least 20 of the last 24 months,

→ spouses and registered civil partners who live in a family unit with an underage child and a person who works full-time.

There may be other cases in which you cannot support yourself independently, but naturalisation is still possible.

Examples:

→ You are a single parent and/or you are caring for small children at home who have special care needs, and because of this you cannot yet begin/return to work, or you can only work part-time.

→ You receive a low pension and are therefore reliant on supplementary benefits, even though you have a history of continuous gainful employment.

Exceptions may also apply to people with a disability or illness if they are unable to financially support themselves completely independently.

The relevant authority will examine your application and decide whether an exception or a case of hardship applies. Please ask your nationality authority for information about this.

5. You have sufficient knowledge of German.

If you are older than 16, you need at least general language skills at level B1 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR) on the German Test for Immigrants (DTZ). This means that you can communicate in German in everyday situations and speak about personal interests and topics that are familiar to you. If you have successfully completed an integration course, the authority can assume that you speak German well enough. The same applies if you have obtained a German school-leaving certificate or university degree in Germany.

The following documents can prove that you speak and understand German at level B1:

→ a certificate from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) confirming that you have successfully completed a language course,

→ a certificate from the German Test for Immigrants (DTZ) or an equivalent or higher language certificate,

- → proof that you successfully completed at least four years at a German-speaking school (years that you had to repeat do not count),
- → a lower secondary-school leaving certificate obtained in Germany *(Hauptschulabschluss),*
- → proof that you reached the tenth grade of a German-speaking secondary school, or
- → your degree certificate from a German-speaking university (including universities of applied sciences).

If the authority is convinced of your German language skills, it will sometimes not require any documents as proof. If doubts remain, you will have to take a language exam.

Children under 16 years of age do not have to take a language exam. The authority will simply check if the child's language skills are at the level expected for their age.



You can test how good your German language skills are here:

www.goethe.de

You can learn German for free with the following websites and apps:

- → **Deutsche Welle DW (www.learngerman.dw.com)**
- → **the vhs Learning Portal (www.vhs-lernportal.de)**
- → **the Ankommen app (www.ankommenapp.de)**

Exceptions for guest workers and contract workers

If you entered the Federal Republic of Germany on or before 30 June 1974 as a guest worker, or entered the German Democratic Republic on or before 13 June 1990 as a contract worker, it is sufficient if you can communicate verbally in German in everyday life and you prove this to the authorities. This exception also applies to your spouse if they subsequently joined you in Germany.

Exceptions due to disability, illness or old age

If you are unable to acquire German language skills at level B1, or have persistent difficulties in doing so, despite making a serious and sustained effort, the nationality authority can decide not to apply the language skills requirement. It will check whether your specific case meets the conditions for one of the following exceptions:

→ You are ill or have a disability and have been unable to reach level B1 for this reason. If this is the case, you will need a medical certificate confirming your illness or disability.

→ You find it very difficult to learn German due to your advanced age.

→ The nationality authority classifies your situation as a case of hardship. In this case, it is sufficient if you can communicate in German in everyday life. You must prove that you are unable to acquire sufficient German skills (at level B1), or have significant and persistent difficulties in doing so, due to your life circumstances – for instance because a relative requires permanent care.

In order to be legally entitled to naturalisation, even people who cannot read and write well must generally prove that they have sufficient language skills. **For learning German, there are also integration courses that include literacy training. You can find these on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF):**

www.bamf.de

6. You have sufficient knowledge of the legal system, society and way of life in Germany.

If you are 16 years of age or older, you must be able to answer questions about Germany's legal system, society, culture and history. These include questions about democratic values in Germany, the basics of the legal system, equal rights, tolerance, and freedom of religion. These questions will be asked in a naturalisation test that you must pass.

What to expect on the naturalisation test

The naturalisation test consists of 33 questions. Thirty questions relate to Germany, while three will be about the Land (federal state) in which you live. Each question requires you to select the correct answer from four possible answers. You pass the test if you answer at least 17 questions correctly. You can take the test as many times as you like.



You can review test questions to prepare for the naturalisation test on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF):

www.bamf.de

Generally speaking, you do not have to pass a naturalisation test if you meet one of the following requirements:

- → You have successfully completed an integration course and passed the Life in Germany test. This demonstrates your civic knowledge.
- → You have a German school-leaving certificate.
- → You have a German university degree, even if you did not go to school here. In this case, please ask your nationality authority whether you have to take the naturalisation test.
- → You entered the country as a guest worker or contract worker. This also

applies to your spouse if they subsequently joined you in Germany.

→ A doctor certifies that you are unable to take a naturalisation test due to illness, disability or old age. This may have to be confirmed by a public medical officer.

Naturalisation test or Life in Germany test? The naturalisation test and the Life in Germany test (as part of an integration course) are organised on behalf of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The two tests are identical. They have the same questions and are structured in the same way.

Where can you register for the naturalisation test and how much does it cost?

The naturalisation test costs €25. Your nationality authority will tell you where you can find the nearest test centre.

You can also find a list of test centres in your Land (federal state) on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF):

www.bamf.de

7. You declare your commitment to the free and democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany.

If you are over 16 years old, naturalisation requires you to declare your commitment to the free and democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany. You must also declare that you do not pursue or support any endeavours that oppose the free and democratic basic order of the state, and have not done so in the past (known as the declaration of loyalty – *Loyalitätserklärung).*

During the naturalisation procedure, staff at the authority responsible for your application will talk to you about Germany's basic order and fundamental values. You will talk about:

- → Elections and principles of voting
- → Fundamental rights and human rights
- → Democracy and the system of government
- → State authority and the separation of powers
- → The government, government bodies, and parties

You must also confirm that you have not pursued or supported any anti-constitutional endeavours. If you have taken part in such activities, you generally cannot be naturalised.

Antisemitic or racist acts and other acts evidencing contempt for humanity are incompatible with the guarantee of human dignity contained in the Basic Law and violate the free and democratic basic order of the state. You cannot be naturalised if you commit such acts or hold anti-constitutional views. This also applies if you have committed such acts in the past and do not credibly distance yourself from them today.

8. You declare your commitment to Germany's special historical responsibility for the tyrannical National Socialist regime.

If you are older than 16, naturalisation requires you to declare your commitment to Germany's special historical responsibility for the tyrannical National Socialist regime and its consequences, in particular for the protection of Jewish life, the peaceful coexistence of peoples and the prohibition on waging a war of aggression. It is a fundamental principle upheld in the Federal Republic of Germany.

You can download the Basic Law in various languages from the website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb):

www.bpb.de

9. You have not been convicted of a criminal offence.

If you have been convicted of a criminal offence in Germany or abroad, naturalisation is generally not possible. If you have a criminal record or are currently the subject of criminal proceedings or an investigation, you must inform the nationality authority. It will then wait until the investigation has been completed or the court has made a decision.

However, naturalisation is generally possible if you have been convicted of nothing more serious than a minor offence. This includes convictions under the Youth Courts Act *(Jugendgerichtsgesetz)* and fines of up to 90 daily rates. It also includes suspended prison sentences of up to three months, if you successfully completed your suspended sentence order and, for example, received a remission *(Straferlass)* from a court.

This does not apply if it was ruled at the time of conviction that you committed your offence for racist or antisemitic reasons or other motives evidencing contempt for humanity. In this case, naturalisation is not possible. Convictions that are no longer listed in the Federal Central Criminal Register do not affect your entitlement to naturalisation.

10. There are no other reasons that prevent you from being naturalised.

Naturalisation is not possible in the following cases:

- → You have pursued or supported endeavours directed against the free and democratic basic order of the state, or you have violated the constitution.
- → You have previously held anti-constitutional beliefs. In this case, you would have to present a credible case to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the nationality authority that you have distanced yourself from these beliefs.
- → You do not respect the equal rights of men and women as laid down in the Basic Law.
- → You are married to multiple people at the same time (known as polygamy).
- → You are married to a person who is married to multiple people at the same time. The nationality authority will check whether this means that you do not respect the equal rights of men and women as laid down in the Basic Law. If this proves to be the case, naturalisation will not be possible.

3.

Other ways to be naturalised

In this chapter you will find information about:

- → **Discretionary naturalisation**
- → **Naturalisation for spouses, civil partners and children**
- → **Naturalisation for partners of German citizens**
- → **German citizenship for children of foreign parents**
- → **Renaturalisation for former German citizens**
- → **Naturalisation through restitution**
- → **Acquisition of German citizenship by declaration**

Discretionary naturalisation

Are you unable to meet the requirements in Chapter 2, and you do not have a German partner **(→ page 30)?** Even then, there is still a possibility of obtaining German citizenship. The nationality authority has a certain amount of leeway, or discretion, in making its decision. This means that it can approve your naturalisation even if you do not yet meet all of the requirements and therefore do not yet have an entitlement to naturalisation.

However, the following requirements are generally mandatory:

- → You have been living legally and habitually in Germany for five years. Exceptions to this requirement apply, for example, when naturalisation will enable somebody to be recruited or retained for an activity that is in the German interest (in particular in the fields of academia, research, business, art, culture, media, sport or the public sector). Exceptions also apply to stateless persons.
- → You have a home or other accommodation.
- → You can financially support yourself and your dependent family members. This includes your spouse and, for example, your children whom you provide for.
- → You have sufficient German language skills, at least at level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
- → You are familiar with the legal system, society and way of life in Germany.
- → You declare your commitment to the free and democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- → You declare your commitment to Germany's special historical responsibility for the tyrannical National Socialist regime and its consequences, in particular for the protection of Jewish life, the peaceful coexistence of peoples and the prohibition on waging a war of aggression.
- → You have not been convicted of a criminal offence.

Make sure to ask your naturalisation authority early on whether so-called **→ discretionary naturalisation** is an option for you.

Naturalisation for spouses, civil partners and children

Your spouse or registered civil partner and your underage children can generally be naturalised together with you, provided they also meet the requirements in Chapter 2 (with the exception of the residence period).

Children under the age of 16 can generally be naturalised with their parents after three years of residence in Germany.

The parents must have custody of the children and live together with them in Germany.

If your child is not yet six years old at the time of naturalisation, it is sufficient if they have lived in Germany for half of their life before naturalisation. Your child must also speak and understand German at the level expected for their age. You can apply for the naturalisation of your family members when you submit your own application.

Naturalisation for partners of German citizens

Do you live in Germany but you don't yet meet the requirements for entitlement to naturalisation **(→ Chapter 2)?** But you are married to, or in a registered civil partnership with, a German citizen? You are then entitled to naturalisation. This generally also applies to your underage children.

Important: You must have been in this marriage or registered civil partnership for at least two years when you apply for naturalisation. Furthermore, you must have already been living legally and ordinarily in Germany for three years. Aside from that, the same requirements apply as to standard naturalisation **(→ Chapter 2).**



If you have already been in your marriage or civil partnership for three years, you can be naturalised for reasons of public interest even after less than three years of residence in Germany.

Spouses and life partners cannot be naturalised in the following circumstances, among others:

- → The marriage or civil partnership has already failed or ended at the time of naturalisation.
- → A divorce or separation is planned and the partners are living separately.

Your underage children can generally be naturalised with you if all of the following points apply:

- → The children are under the age of 16.
- → You (the naturalisation applicant) have custody of the children and live with them in Germany.
- → The children can communicate in German in everyday life.
- → Children up to the age of six have already been in Germany for half of their lives.

Children over the age of 16 can only be naturalised with you if they would also qualify for naturalisation independently.

German citizenship for children of foreign parents

The principle of place of birth

Children born in Germany to foreign parents on or after 1 January 2000 automatically receive German citizenship if the following requirements are met:

- → At least one parent has been living legally in Germany as their main place of residence for at least five years.
- → At least one parent has a permanent right of residence or a residence permit on the basis of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the European Union.

The registry office will check whether these conditions are met by the father or mother when you register the child's birth. If they are, no additional applications are necessary. The child automatically becomes a German at birth.

The principle of descent

If only the father is German and he is not married to the child's mother, the child only becomes a German citizen once paternity has been legally recognised or determined in accordance with German law. The child's parents must initiate this recognition or determination process by the child's 23rd birthday at the latest. In many cases, the child also receives the foreign citizenship of the other parent at birth. German law allows the child to permanently retain their other citizenship.



Renaturalisation for former German citizens

Former German citizens and their underage children can be renaturalised.

To do so, you must demonstrate that you meet the following requirements:

- → Good knowledge of German
- → Close ties to Germany
- → No criminal record
- → The ability to financially support yourself and your dependent family members without state assistance
- → A public interest in your renaturalisation

If you ordinarily live abroad, the Federal Office of Administration *(Bundesverwaltungsamt)* will check whether you are eligible for German citizenship.

Did you lose your German citizenship after 1 January 2000? Renaturalisation is possible if you still have close ties to Germany and it would have been possible at the time to issue you with permission to retain your citizenship.

Did you lose your German citizenship on or before 1 January 2000? Renaturalisation is only possible if there is a public interest in this. Your personal interest in naturalisation plays no role in the decision.



Naturalisation through restitution

Former German citizens can apply and be renaturalised if they lost or had to give up their citizenship as a result of National Socialist injustice.

If you were unable to acquire German citizenship in the first place due to persecution under National Socialism, you can apply for naturalisation.

This is known as naturalisation on grounds of restitution, and it is also open to your descendants.

Acquisition of German citizenship by declaration

Did you not become a German citizen at birth because you have a foreign father and your German mother could not pass on her German citizenship due to the law in force at the time? Until August 2031, you can acquire German citizenship by declaration. The requirement is that you were born after 23 May 1949. In this case, acquiring German citizenship is free of charge, and you will receive a certificate after the declaration.



Could one of the cases mentioned in this chapter apply to you and your naturalisation application? Then you should enquire directly with the nationality authority responsible for you, or, if you live abroad, with the Federal Office of Administration *(Bundesverwaltungsamt)*.

4.

The outcome of your naturalisation application

In this chapter you will find information about:

- → **A positive decision on your application**
- → **A negative decision on your application**
- → **Options for legal action against a negative decision**

Have you received the nationality authority's decision on your naturalisation application? There are usually two possible outcomes. If the decision is positive, you can become a German citizen. However, it may be the case that, after reviewing your application, the authority determines that you cannot obtain German citizenship.



Positive decision

If the nationality authority's decision on your application is positive, you will typically receive a letter or other notice informing you of this. You will also receive your naturalisation certificate, which officially gives you German citizenship. The next step would be to apply for a German passport or identity card from your residents registration office (*Einwohnermeldeamt).*



Negative decision

If your application for naturalisation is rejected, please check why this is. If you are unsure, you have the option of contacting the authorities and asking them to explain again why the application was rejected.

Depending on the circumstances, you can then resubmit the application. The information provided by the nationality authority does not help you and you have further questions? Contact options can be found at → **einbuergerung.de**



Options for legal action against a negative decision

Depending on the Land (federal state), you can also file an objection or directly file a lawsuit if your application is rejected. You have a general right to take legal action against an official decision. You would have to file a lawsuit with the administrative court *(Verwaltungsgericht)*.

If your lawsuit is well-founded and the authority has made a mistake, then it will be obliged to review your application again and make a new decision. If the lawsuit is inadmissible or is not well-founded, then you will not be entitled to naturalisation, at least at this point in time. You should read the court's reasoning *(Begründung)* for further information.

5.

Loss of German citizenship

In this chapter you will find answers to the following questions:

→ **How might I lose my German citizenship?**

→ **What happens if I lose my German citizenship?**

How might I lose my German citizenship?

In principle, your German citizenship cannot be taken away. Germany's Basic Law prevents this. Only in exceptional cases, and on the basis of a law, is it possible to lose citizenship. And this generally only happens if you will not become stateless as a result.

You can lose German citizenship in the following cases, provided this does not leave you stateless:

- → You renounce your German citizenship.
- → You voluntarily enter military service in a foreign state of which you are also a citizen, without the consent of the relevant authority.
- → You have a foreign citizenship in addition to German citizenship and actively participate in fighting by a terrorist organisation abroad.

You can lose German citizenship in the following cases, even if this leaves you stateless:

- → You have acquired citizenship through fraudulent misrepresentation, threats or bribery.
- → You have acquired citizenship by intentionally providing incorrect or incomplete information.

In such cases, the nationality authority will decide whether to revoke your naturalisation with retroactive effect.



What happens if I lose my German citizenship?

Then you will legally become a foreigner again. You must report the loss of your German citizenship to the passport authority.

If you have lost your German citizenship, you will once again need a residence title in order to stay in Germany. This is only not necessary for citizens of an EU member state, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway.

You must apply for the residence title no later than six months after you learn that you have lost your German citizenship.

Glossary

Association Agreement between the European Union and Turkey
An international treaty containing special regulations for Turkish citizens regarding access to the labour market and the right of residence. Turkish citizens who are "entitled to association" are Turkish workers and their close family members. Please note: This does not apply to all Turkish citizens!

Basic Law
The constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Beneficiaries of international protection
Persons granted refugee protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention, or subsidiary protection, following the conclusion of an asylum procedure in accordance with Directive 2011/95/EU (the Qualification Directive).

Case of hardship *(Härtefall)*
A particularly exceptional case that justifies an exception to the usual rules.

Discretionary naturalisation *(Ermessenseinbürgerung)*
An option for people who do not meet individual requirements for **→ naturalisation by legal entitlement** (usually the required duration of residence or the permanent right of residence) – the decision on their naturalisation application is at the discretion of the nationality authority.

Free movement
The right to freely decide where you live or temporarily stay, and to change this at any time. For EU citizens, this also includes the right to work, study or live in a different member state.

Geneva Refugee Convention
The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines who is a refugee and what legal protection, assistance and social rights they receive from the states that have signed the Convention.

Integration course
Lessons on the language, culture, history and legal system of Germany.

Naturalisation by legal entitlement *(Anspruchseinbürgerung)*
Standard naturalisation for persons who fulfil the requirements of section 10 of the Nationality Act (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz) – they must be naturalised by the nationality authority upon application. This means that the authority is not permitted to reject their application.

Permission to remain *(Aufenthaltsgestattung)*
Permission to reside in Germany for the duration of your asylum procedure.

Recognised refugees
Persons who are granted refugee protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention following the conclusion of an asylum procedure, as well as persons entitled to asylum in accordance with Article 16a of the Basic Law.

Residence permit / Residence title / Right of residence *(Aufenthaltserlaubnis / Aufenthaltstitel / Aufenthaltsrecht)*
Right of residence means the right to reside in Germany. The right of residence is generally documented with a "title" (for example a residence permit, a settlement permit or an EU Blue Card).

Settlement permit *(Niederlassungserlaubnis)*
A type of residence title that (unlike a residence permit) gives you a permanent right of residence.

Temporary suspension of deportation *(Duldung)*
An official order that temporarily prevents the deportation of somebody who is obliged to leave the country.

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Find further information and a naturalisation Quick Check at **einbuergerung.de**