

Information for Au Pairs in Germany

The word “au pair” comes from French meaning reciprocity. An au pair is a kind of temporal family member whose stay as an au pair improves the education of a young person and develops their personality by intercultural social contacts. An au pair helps the host family to combine the family life with their professional interests. The most important reason for an au pair stay is to improve their knowledge of a foreign language. Au pairs are not domestic servants; they just live with a family and are involved in the family activities undertaking in childcare and light household work. In return they receive a monthly allowance, free room and board in the family and insurance, covering health, accidents and a third party insurance. The purpose of a stay as an au pair is to improve their German, and to learn about the culture, habits and traditions of the country.

Meaning of ‘Au Pair’

An au pair (age 18-26 years) stays in a host family in order to improve their knowledge of the language and the culture of the country. She/he has the status as a guest not as an employee. The accommodation is free. An au pair participates in the household activities and takes care of the children in the family. She/he receives spending money for the work done.

Duration of an Au Pair stay

An au pair is expected to stay in a family for 6 months minimum, maximum for 12 months. One year is a legal maximum limit for a residence permit as an au pair. Even in the case of not completing the 12 months with one family a renewal of the residence permit is not possible.

Au Pair Agreement

A contract is made between the au pair and the host family.

Requirements for an Au Pair

An au pair presents proof of practical experience in childcare. By applying for a visa to be considered as an au pair the applicant must be at least 18 years, but not more than 26 years old. The applicant provides a certificate of basic knowledge of German.

According to the European Reference Treaty a minimum of level A1 is required. The applicant supplies a medical certificate that confirms their physical and psychological wellbeing.

The legal base for Au Pair status

In the European Treaty of the 24th November 1969 the framed regulations over the living and working conditions for au pairs, the language courses, the social security and the rights and duties of the host family and the au pair are stated.

The duties of an Au Pair contain following activities:

Childcare

- preparing breakfast and basic meals
- looking after the children, i.e. supervising them, playing with them and escorting them to and back from nursery schools, and other schools, and activities in general; assisting them with their homework
- and babysitting in the evenings

Assistance in the household

- doing light household work means to help clean up at home and keep things tidy, i.e. washing, ironing, and laundry duty, and to do daily shopping
- looking after the household chores and if any, taking care of the pets;

Working hours

The household duties include babysitting extend for maximum 6 hours per day, maximum 30 hours per week. If occasionally a longer working time is necessary, the overtime has to be compensated with more free time. Each of 30 hour working period working time contains max. three times babysitting in the evening. The working times are arranged to accommodate the needs of the host family.

Free time

At least 1, 5 free days running per week, at least a free weekend in a month are guaranteed. In a week four free evenings must be guaranteed. An au pair has the freedom of religious practise.

Paid Vacation

Two days paid vacation per a month of stay are given. Sundays do not count as a vacation day.

Public Holidays

The public holidays of the host country are basically free or are compensated for with leisure time.

Allowances in case of illness

In case of illness, the allowances will be continued until the contract expires, up to a maximum of 6 weeks.

Language course

Au pairs are given the chance to participate in a German language course during their free time as well as to attend cultural or religious events. Their host families support them with an amount of € 50,00 for language courses per month.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses to and from language courses are to be paid by the host family.

Support for attendance of events

The host family supports the au pair in their cultural and social interests and provides the mobility needed.

Accommodation

Free accommodation is provided by the host family for their au pair. The au pair joins the common meals and is served with the same food as the family. Integration to the host family is to be offered. The lodging takes place in a separate, heated, sufficiently furnished room with lockable door, a window with daylight, and a minimum size 8 sq. meters in the house, the apartment or in other residence of the family. Washing facilities are provided.

Allowances and travel expenses

An au pair is not a servant/maid. Their study of the language and improvement of their general knowledge of the guest country is the main purpose of their function as an au pair. Therefore an au pair is not paid like an ordinary wage-earner, but receives allowances. As a rule, au pairs pay their way to and from Germany.

The monthly sum of money paid to an au pair since the 01.01. 2006 amounts to € 260,00. Shorter working hours requested by the host family do not justify cuts in their allowances. The au pair receive an additional amount of € 50,00 for language courses per month. The service of an au pair is without social security provisions. The allowances are usually paid at the end of each month.

Medical insurances

For their arrival into the Federal Republic of Germany a short term travel and accident insurance is highly recommended. The costs for any medical bills; health-, accident and third party insurance are covered by the host family. The registration the au pair's insurance will be taken care of by the host family. Where this is neglected, all the health care costs must be covered by the host family. The insurance takes effect from the first day of the entry in Germany.

The termination of an Au Pair contract and the period of notice

The stay of an au pair is a temporal arrangement. It ends according to the signed agreement, latest after 12 months. A two-week-period of notice is mandatory. Termination of the contract must be given in writing. The period of notice starts with the handing over of the document to the host family or the au pair. It is necessary that both parties inform the au pair-agency about the notice. In certain specific cases of serious disagreement an immediate notice of dismissal is permissible. The agency must be informed. Where there are problems between the family and an au pair, the agency should be contacted. In most instances the host family and the au pair can agree that the au pair stays in the family until the agency can provide a replacement.

Acceptance of a medical examination

If the authorities demand a medical examination of an au pair, or a family prefers it, it is obligatory that the host family covers the costs.

Common language

The language of the host family is most probably German.

Communication link to the agency

A host family cannot restrict their au pair to contact the agency at any time. The agency Maria Theresia has office hours from Monday till Friday between 9am – 4pm. Outside of the office hours there is an answerphone available. For urgent cases there is a Germany wide free emergency number available: the number is 0800-110-287247 AUPAIR.

Application and visa conditions

Applicants need good basic knowledge of German. The applicant's knowledge of German is tested by the German consulate. The Council of Europe – level A1 containing 100-300 intensive lessons of 45 minutes each is required.

A complete application contains following documents:

1. CV
2. several photos, possibly with children, in a photocollage with explanations
3. personally written letter to the family
4. a copy of applicant's passport
5. a copy of applicant's driver's license
6. a proof of knowledge of German
7. an au pair-agreement
8. a completed questionnaire of the agency
9. a medical certificate issued by a doctor
10. one or two references of childcare

Regulations of the entry and residence

Au pairs from countries outside the European Union resp. the European Economic Area need a residence permit for the Federal Republic of Germany. At the point of applying for a visa the applicant must be under 27 years old. The passport must be valid for the entire duration of their stay. The au pair visa must be personally applied for by the person with a valid passport and three photos, in some cases a birth certificate (in official German translation), is required. The agency provides other necessary documents for the visa application (an invitation by the family and an au pair agreement). The visa is processed within 4 to 8 weeks. The residence permit is issued by the German consulate. If applicants fail the test in German, they will be immediately informed. An agreement with the local police in the area of residency of the host family is required for the au pair visa. German embassy resp. consulate informs the applicants by letter over the visa decision. The applicant receives the visa personally at the German embassy or consulate. The costs for the visa are covered by the applicant.

After the entry in Germany, immediate registration (Polizeiliche Anmeldung) at a local police station (Einwohnermeldeamt) is required. The working permit (Arbeitserlaubnis) for the au pair will be applied for during the first week after arriving in Germany.

Guidance of the Au Pairs during their stay in Germany

The au pair agency is responsible for contacting, mostly by phone, the au pairs during the first weeks after their entry to Germany. The agency is principally the constant partner in all occasions dealing with the au pair stay. The agent is available for both, the au pair and the host family during the whole stay of an au pair, and in case of problems, replacement of an au pair in a new host family is possible once. An au pair receives information about au pair meetings and trips, addresses of other au pairs under consideration of data protection. After the presentation of an au pair visa, an au pair receives a free au pair card. The card provides several privileges, for example for language courses and cultural events. In a letter of welcome the agency Maria Theresia sends the au pair a questionnaire to fill out. The form should be filled out and returned within one month upon arrival to the host family. On the 11th month of their stay au pairs are asked to fill out and return a second questionnaire for the purpose of feedback. During their stay au pairs might be contacted by a neutral auditor controlling the agency. The arrangement to become an au pair in Germany is free of cost.