



## FAQ – Frequently asked questions by foreign physicians\*

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**1. Which organisation is competent for the recognition of foreign medical diplomas?**

All foreign physicians who want to work in Germany as physicians must contact the competent Federal State authority to have their medical diplomas (basic medical training) recognised. In some Federal States there is only one registration authority (Approbationsbehörde), whereas other Federal States have several registration authorities for different regions. Competent is the registration authority in which area the physician wants to work (see list: [Addresses of Registration Authorities](#)).

The State Chambers of Physicians (Landesärztekammern) are responsible for the recognition of specialist qualifications. The recognition of the specialist diploma is incumbent to the State Chamber of Physicians in which area the physician wants to work (see list: [State Chambers of Physicians](#)).

**2. Is it necessary to have a job offer as a physician or reside in Germany before an application for limited registration (Berufserlaubnis) or full registration (Approbation) can be submitted?**

You can apply for limited or full registration even though you have not found a position yet and you reside outside Germany. You should submit your application to the registration authority in which area you would like to work.

**3. Can I submit an application for full registration or limited registration to several registration authorities simultaneously?**

No! You must decide where you would like to work as a physician and submit then your application to the registration authority in which area you plan to take up a job.

**4. What are the documents to be submitted for the recognition?**

The competent registration authority (Approbationsbehörde) provides the information as to which documents must be submitted for the recognition of the medical diploma (see list: [Addresses of Registration Authorities](#)).

The competent State Chamber of Physicians provides the information as to which documents must be submitted for the recognition of the medical specialist diploma (see list: [State Chambers of Physicians](#)).

**5. What role does the citizenship play regarding the granting of full registration?**

Since the taking effect of the so-called recognition law (1 April 2012) the citizenship is irrelevant for getting full registration in Germany.

**6. I have successfully completed my basic medical training in a member state of the European Union (EU), in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland. Will my medical diploma be recognised?**

A basic medical training completed successfully in a member state of the European Union will, on request, be automatically recognised in Germany provided that the qualification is listed in the European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC, Annex V.1.1), that the minimum criteria of the directive are met and that the basic medical training had been started after the specified reference date.



As the EU has passed corresponding treaties with Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, similar rules apply for diplomas from these countries.

If all the other requirements are met (knowledge of the German language, health requirements, no criminal record, etc.), the applicant obtains full registration.

**7. I have started my basic medical training in an EU country before the specified reference date (before the EU-entry of the country). Will my medical diploma be recognised?**

Medical diplomas from EU countries certifying that the basic medical training was begun before the reference date will be recognised in Germany if the applicant submits in addition to his/her diploma a certificate of conformity. Herewith, the relevant authority of the home member state confirms that the basic medical training of the applicant corresponds to the minimum standards of the European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Alternatively the applicant can submit a certificate from the relevant authority of the home member state (or another EU member state) stating that he/she has been full-time, effectively and lawfully engaged in his profession for at least three consecutive years during the five years preceding the award of the certificate.

**8. I have started my basic medical training at a time when the territory of the current EU country (e.g. Lithuania) belonged to the territory of another state (e.g. the Soviet Union). Will my diploma be recognised?**

Such a diploma will only be recognised in Germany if the relevant authority of the home country confirms that the diploma has the same legal validity regarding the access to the profession and to its practice as the diplomas issued currently in the present member state. Additionally there must be an attestation presented that the applicant has been working during the past five years at least for three consecutive years full-time, effectively and lawfully as a physician in the territory of the present member state.

**9. Where do I find the European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications on the Internet?**

The European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC) can be downloaded under the following link:

[http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/qualifications/policy-developments/legislation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/qualifications/policy-developments/legislation/index_en.htm)

**10. I have successfully completed my basic medical training in a country outside of the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. Will my diploma be recognised?**

The competent registration authority (see list: [Addresses of Registration Authorities](#)) will assess the equivalence of medical diplomas obtained outside of the European Economic Area/Switzerland compared to medical diplomas from Germany. If the competent registration authority confirms the equivalence of the foreign diploma or concludes that potential differences in the basic medical training can be compensated by pertinent work experience and if all the other

requirements are met (knowledge of the German language, health requirements, no criminal record, etc.), the applicant is granted full registration.

If the competent registration authority finds that there are significant differences between the basic medical training of the applicant's home country and the basic medical training in Germany it may insist on the taking of an examination (knowledge test) provided that the differences in basic medical training cannot be compensated by pertinent professional experience. The professional experience may be obtained around the world.

The assessment of equivalence and the evaluation of professional experience is a case-by-case review conducted by the competent registration authority.

### **11. What is a knowledge test?**

The knowledge test refers to the substance of basic medical training in Germany. The foreign physician is to demonstrate that he has the knowledge equivalent to the one required by graduates of the medical universities in Germany. According to a regulation, which came into force on 1 January 2014, the emphasis of the knowledge test lays on internal medicine and surgery. In addition questions from the following fields have to be expected: accident & emergency medicine, clinical pharmacology/pharmacotherapy, diagnostic imaging, radiation protection, law on professional practice. Furthermore, the competent authority can inform the candidate in advance that another subject or cross-section will be part of the knowledge test if the authority is of the opinion that there is a major difference in the basic medical training in Germany and in the basic medical training which the examinee underwent.

The knowledge test is a clinical-practical test with patient presentation. It takes between 60 and 90 minutes and can be repeated two times at the most.

### **12. When do I have to take the knowledge test?**

The specific moment in time when the test can be taken varies between the different Federal States. Thus foreign physicians often obtain a limited registration in order to prepare for the knowledge test (maximum period of 2 years). The completion of this preparatory period is, however, not a guarantee for the successful completion of the knowledge test. Therefore, a thorough theoretical preparation of the test is highly recommended.

The completion of a preparatory period is not a prerequisite for the admission to the knowledge test.

### **13. How can I prepare for the knowledge test?**

Various institutes in Germany offer integration courses for foreign physicians and offer preparatory courses for the knowledge test. The following institutes are approved by the Federal Employment Agency: bfw Unternehmen für Bildung ([www.bfw.de](http://www.bfw.de)), Freiburg International Academy (<https://www.fia.academy>), Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft für berufsbildende Maßnahmen mbH Berlin ([www.gfbm.de](http://www.gfbm.de)), Interkulturelle Bildung Hamburg ([www.ibhev.de](http://www.ibhev.de)), Kulturakademie Dresden ([www.kulturakademie-dresden.de](http://www.kulturakademie-dresden.de)), mibeg-Institut Medizin ([www.mibeg.de](http://www.mibeg.de)), VIA-Institut Nürnberg ([www.via-institut.de](http://www.via-institut.de)).

For many years the Marburger Bund co-operates trustfully with the VIA-Institut in Nuremberg. Some time ago the Marburger Bund and the VIA-Institut have concluded a co-operation agreement.

Since 2014 the Marburg Bund also co-operates well with the mibeg-Institut Medizin in Cologne.

#### **14. How expensive is the knowledge test?**

The costs of the knowledge test vary between the German states. Currently you need to pay € 74.50 in Bavaria and € 1,100 in Hesse or Rhineland-Palatinate (see overview: [Cost of Knowledge Test](#)).

#### **15. How am I getting paid during the “preparatory period”?**

The Marburger Bund takes the view that the foreign physician is entitled to be remunerated according to our collective agreements as he is also medically active with a limited registration. De facto such remunerations are not always the case.

#### **16. What is the maximum period of time a limited registration can be granted for?**

Since 1 April 2012 a limited registration can only be granted for a maximum period of 2 years. The granting or extension over this period of time is possible only in individual cases or for reasons of medical care for the population. And it is only admissible for reasons of medical care if the equivalent level of knowledge has been established. In this case the limited registration will be restricted to the particular speciality.

#### **17. What language skills are required for full registration (Approbation)?**

One of the basic requirements which must be met by foreign physicians intending to work in Germany is the proof of adequate knowledge of the German language. The physician is to contact the registration authority responsible for the geographic area in which he wants to work (see list: [Addresses of Registration Authorities](#)). The competent authority decides which level is adequate and which certificates/attestations it recognises.

With the aim to establish a more coherent system the State Ministers of Health agreed on key points for the required German language skills in June 2014. Among other things they came to an understanding that foreign physicians should at least have completed level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in general German. Additionally, they should also pass a specific Medical German language test (Level C1 of CEFR).

More information about this agreement (in German) can be found on the following websites:  
[https://www.gmkonline.de/documents/TOP73BerichtP\\_Oeffentl\\_Bereich.pdf](https://www.gmkonline.de/documents/TOP73BerichtP_Oeffentl_Bereich.pdf)

It is worth noting that the key points are legally not binding for the states and that not all states have yet adjusted their rules. An overview of the requirements in the different states can be found [here](#). Please note that the requirements can change anytime. Therefore, the competent registration authority should be contacted before any decision is taken.



## 18. What language skills are required for limited registration (Berufserlaubnis)?

In most German states the language skills must be the same irrespective if you apply for full or limited registration (see question 14). Only four states allow lower skills if a physician applies for limited registration. Physicians who apply for limited registration in Brandenburg, Bremen or Hamburg do not need to pass the Medical German language test (Level C1) of the competent State Chamber of Physicians. Also in Hesse the exam B2 (CEFR) from telc or Goethe-Institute suffices for limited registration ([see German requirements for limited registration](#)).

Please note that the requirements can change anytime. Therefore, the competent registration authority should be contacted before any decision is taken.

## 19. How expensive is the Medical German language exam C1?

The costs of the Medical German language exam vary between the different providers. Currently you need to pay between € 150 for telc-Zertifikat Deutsch B2-C1 Medizin and € 450 for the exam offered by the State Chamber of Physicians Hamburg (see overview: [Costs of Medical German Language Exams](#)).

As the costs may change anytime, please contact the relevant provider before you make a decision. Please be reminded that you cannot simply choose a provider but that you have to fulfill the language requirements of the competent registration authority (see question 14).

## 20. Which organisation is responsible for postgraduate medical training?

For all matters regarding postgraduate medical training in view of obtaining the status of a specialist physician the [State Chambers of Physicians](#) as public bodies are responsible. For each physician only the regulations for postgraduate medical training issued by the State Chamber of Physicians where he is a member are legally binding.

## 21. Do I have to register with a State Chamber of Physicians?

Definitely! All physicians working in Germany must be a member of the relevant State Chamber of Physicians. This applies to physicians during postgraduate medical training as well as to specialists.

## 22. What are the income opportunities for physicians and for specialists?

Marburger Bund as the only trade union for physicians in Germany has concluded specific collective agreements with the different hospital operators. Wages and other working conditions (e.g. working hours) slightly vary according to each collective agreement. In communal hospitals physicians currently earn a monthly gross salary between 4,111.58 € (first year of professional experience) and 5,285.15 € (sixth year of professional experience). Monthly gross salaries for specialists are from 5,426.62 € (first year) to 6,969.17 € (from 13th year onwards). These salaries are for a weekly working time of 40 hours. Additional on-call services and overtime are paid extra.

The "[Career Entry Brochure](#)" by Marburger Bund offers a thorough overview of the physician working conditions at the different hospital operators.

The Marburger Bund has not yet concluded a collective agreement with practice based physicians (niedergelassene Ärzte) or Healthcare Centres (Medizinische Versorgungszentren). However, our collective agreements that apply in hospitals should serve as a basis while negotiating wages and other working conditions. The Marburger Bund can provide members with a model employment contract.

### **23. What does the job market look like and where do I look for vacancies?**

Whereas hospitals in big cities usually have no problems to fill their positions, there is a lack of physicians particularly in the countryside and in small towns. Employment ads may be found e.g. in the following media:

- Marburger Bund: <http://www.marburger-bund.de/mbz/stellenmarkt>
- Deutsches Ärzteblatt: [www.aerzteblatt.de](http://www.aerzteblatt.de)
- Websites of hospitals

### **24. Which organisation can advise me in matters pertaining to labour law?**

The Marburger Bund offers to all members an examination of their working contract free of charge and provides free counsel in all matters pertaining to labour law. However, the range of services of the Marburger Bund reaches far beyond this offer. You'll find more details on the advantages of a membership in the Marburger Bund under:

<http://www.marburger-bund.de/mitgliederservice#rechtsberatung>

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*\*This catalogue of questions and answers is only a recommendation and legally not binding. It is not meant to replace counselling by the relevant regional association of the Marburger Bund or the Federal Association which will gladly support you in any specific case.*

For further information please contact:

**Ms. Ruth Wichmann**

Telephone: +49 30 746846-30

email: [ausland@marburger-bund.de](mailto:ausland@marburger-bund.de)