

Work Experience in Germany – with PFIFF

Guide to a successful placement



On behalf of

Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

inWent

Capacity Building International
Germany





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Contents

I. General Programme Conditions

1.	Work experience in two worlds – or dumplings in the cafeteria	4
2.	Your work experience: Made in Germany	6
2.1	The work situation in Germany: Working in the land of ideas	7
2.2	You, the employee, and your new home	8
2.3	The German medium-sized businesses: Bigger isn't always better!	9
2.4	The purpose of practical experience – A win-win for you and your employer	10
2.4.1	Your expectations, from the company and the experience – Have you thought of everything?	12
2.4.2	What the company expects from you: New ideas welcome!	13
3.	Cross-cultural competency: Are you prepared to form new cultural contacts?	15
3.1	Not all Germans are poets and philosophers – Examples of German cultural standards	18
3.2	German private life – how to utilise your free time in your new host country: idleness is not a German concept	22
4.	Support from InWEnt – You're prepared You have the "ILT-factor" on your side	23
5.	Important to know: You are well prepared - so is your company	24

II. Before you Begin

1.	Your placement timetable	26
2.	Make it a success	27
3.	"SMART": Goals of the placement	28
4.	"Hello. You can stop looking because I am your man!" Tips for your interview	31
5.	Important to know: You are well prepared - so is your company	33

III. Your Placement

1.	Behaviour in the workplace	34
1.1	Setting the tone: Communication and language	37
1.2	German time management: time is a precious commodity	39
1.3	First impressions	40
1.4	Keeping work and private life separate Caution: Private - entry by invitation only	42
2.	What to do in case of ...?	43
3.	Rules, rights and obligations: The legal framework of the InWEnt-ILT placement	45
4.	Well done! – Certificate of completion for your placement	47
5.	Important to know: You are well prepared - so is your company	49

IV. Wrap-up

1.	The placement may be over, but the experience will stay with you	50
2.	Exclusive – your placement report	54
3.	Keep in contact! Networking after your experience	55

V. Appendix

1.	Profile of Germany	58
2.	Addresses	60
3.	Glossary	62
4.	Checklist for your placement report	63
5.	Agreements between InWEnt and your company	65
6.	Links, sources and picture credits	68



I. General Programme Conditions


1.

Work experience in two worlds – or dumplings in the cafeteria

Red cabbage and dumplings? The menu in the cafeteria of your new company will most likely present you with a great deal of unknowns during your stay in Germany. However, more than just a few new food dishes are awaiting you.

As a member in InWEnt's International Leadership Training Programme (ILT) you have the opportunity to gain deep insight into work as well as everyday life in Germany. Cultural characteristics of your German colleagues, new business structures, communicating in German rather than your native language, a new climate - all of these and more will be a part of your new German living environment.

We hope that these new challenges will have a positive influence on you and your time in Germany, both personally and professionally, as well as prove to be a valuable experience. For this reason InWEnt would like to assist you in your cross-cultural experiences. Previously in the introductory seminar, as well as the IMKs, you have been introduced to some of the issues that can arise in a cross-culture situation. This guide was created to help prepare you for your work experience as well as to recall a few important points.



It is put together in such a way as to be of assistance throughout the programme as well as before and after your work experience, not just during. The sections build on one another and attempt to answer any possible questions you might have during these phases of your stay. Included you will find tips for interviewing, behaviour in the workplace, information on professional and cultural life in Germany and information on networking so as to prepare you for after your programme participation. It may also prove to be helpful to your superiors within your work environment so as to allow for collaboration between you, the company, and other employees.

This guide will also serve as a reference on the terms and conditions of the ILT Programme, and how they apply to you as a member of the programme.

You will find hints, tips and recommendations as to the general components of your work experience: the ILT Programme, businesses and working conditions in Germany.

Differences and specifics, such as the thematic focus of your ILT Programme or special rules and regulations for your company can of course not be taken into account.

In this guide you find a navigator – describing a best-case scenario - as well as a helpful companion. It contains important contact information, such as who to get in touch with in case of an emergency. It also helps you to keep in mind what your personal expectations for your time in Germany are as well as your career goals.

**We wish you luck and a great start to your work experience,
Your PFIFF-Team!**

PFIFF – Praxisvermittlung für internationale Fach- und Führungskräfte®

PFIFF: The acronym “PFIFF“ has in German also the meaning of “having a special knack to something“. The adjective “pfiffig“ means “smart, sharp, cute“.

2.

Your work experience: Made in Germany

From the smallest precision equipment to the largest industrial plants - Germany as a whole exports more goods than any other country in the world, and enjoys an international reputation as the World Champion in Exports (“*Exportweltmeister*”).

However, quality is just as important as quantity. “Klasse statt Masse” (quality not quantity) is a popular German motto, which is also reflected in the pride shown for products bearing the label “Made in Germany”: because worldwide “Made in Germany” stands for innovation, quality and technical know-how.

For technical and scientific know-how, experience and expertise, “Made in Germany” is in its self an export. It not only benefits students and trainees in Germany, but their international colleagues as well.

The transfer of knowledge between Germany and its partner countries is continually promoted through government programmes and initiatives. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with its various affiliated agencies, coordinates multiple programs for developmental cooperation.

These include:

- Implementation of projects dealing with financial and technical cooperation
- Preparation and deployment of German experts and development workers
- Further training of professionals and specialists from partner countries

InWEnt Capacity Building International, Germany, takes special responsibility in staff development and further training.

As a scholarship recipient you find yourself in the heart of an InWEnt programme: a four-month work experience as part of International Leadership Training (ILT). In searching for a suitable placement for you, Praxisvermittlung für internationale Fach- und Führungskräfte or PFIFF has kept a close watch on the German job market.



Helpful Link

Facts about Germany

www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de
(site available in multiple languages)

2.1

The work situation in Germany: Working in the land of ideas

Your new host country scores some high marks when compared to others on an international scale: Germany is one of the most developed industrial nations in the world and has the third largest economy behind the USA and Japan. With its 82 million inhabitants it is the country within the European Union with the largest and most important market. Foreign investors view Germany as one of the most attractive investment locations worldwide.

The country excels especially in the sectors of research and development, starting with the qualifications of its workforce as well as in logistics. Among other things, it holds an attractive position in the centre of the EU from a geographical standpoint, has a solid infrastructure and a well-established stable legal system.

Effects of the economic crisis in the fall of 2008 can still be seen in the German job market. It has led to some companies using a short-time ➔ **Kurzarbeit** system with their employees, meaning weekly work hours have been temporarily reduced.

Another mark of the economic crisis can be seen in the increased unemployment rate.

Despite all of this the German Chambers of Commerce and the Bundesagentur für Arbeit have assessed the current economic situation as stable.



Helpful Links

[Current data on the development of the German job market](#)

Bundesagentur für Arbeit

www.pub.arbeitsagentur.de/hst/services/statistik/interim/index.shtml
(available only in German)

The German Chambers of Industry and Commerce

www.dihk.de/english/

Germany, Land of Ideas

www.land-of-ideas.org/

“To me, this stands for curiosity and experimentation. In all walks of life, it stands for courage, creativity and a desire for the new without doing away with the old“ said former German Federal President Horst Köhler, patron of the initiative “Land of Ideas“.

This is of course good news, because a stable German economy proves to be profitable for international partners as well as Germany itself. In a world of globalised markets, sustainable economic development and balanced business strategies are valuable in providing the tools needed to appropriately react to a crisis situation. Social commitment and visionary ideas are also highly valued. International

exchanges in education, science, research and development are an essential part of this.

You are very much in the right place at the right time:

Welcome to the land of ideas!

2.2

You, the employee, and your new home

There is a company prepared to take you on as an employee. Though you won't be living there in a conventional sense, the amount of time and dedication your new job will require and the relationships you will build with your colleagues will soon enough make it something of a new home. Keep in mind that InWEnt's International Leadership Training Programme is set up by the government to better national cooperation (see Chapter 2), however companies are under no obligation to employee trainees from a government programme. The companies decide freely and without government pressure whether or not to provide programme participants with a placement.

To secure a position in Germany usually requires that one sends about an average of twenty resumes to different companies in order to secure at least one offer. Often it takes even more.

PIFF has taken care of this part of the process for you and found a position that is tailored as closely as possible to your professional qualifications and needs. This will save you a great deal of time, not only in searching for suitable companies and available positions but also when it comes to preparing and sending resumes and attending interviews. One further advantage is that you are not being forced to compete with the others in

the job market that are also searching for a position.

Students at German Universities are required to have internship experience in the area of their studies in order to receive a degree. Graduates and students at practical application schools also improve their professional skills and round their resumes out by completing internships or getting work experience. Companies place a great deal of importance on any previous work experience prospective employees can bring with them, as well as good evaluations from former employers. This increases the amount of competition in the German job market enormously.

2.3

The German medium-sized businesses: Bigger isn't always better!

The larger and more well known a company is, the better quality experience they can provide? This tends to be the usual conclusion that people jump to. It is often assumed that more prestigious and well-known companies are the only ones that you can gain something from. However, the small and medium companies, the SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) - or in German → **KMU**, are absolutely vital to the German economy. They also play a vital role in the fields of education and advancement.

In Germany the „KMU – Kleine und Mittelständische Unternehmen“ comprise around

- 99.7% of all taxable firms, in which almost
- 65.8% of all salaried employees (payroll taxes) are working
- 37.5% of national revenue is being generated, and in which
- 83.1% of the job training positions are offered

This is of course an advantage to apprentices and trainees: KMU firms have a great deal of experience in taking on trainees and are able to provide you with a great deal of helpful services, such as providing you with a specific contact person to whom you can bring all of your work related questions. One goal of this experience is to help introduce you to the straightforward components of your work and form a familiarity with the vari-

ous departments. According to a survey conducted by the German Association of Small and Medium-sized Businesses (BVMW), 70% of small and middle-sized businesses employ one or more interns/trainees.

Helpful Links

The German Association of Small and Medium-sized Businesses (BVMW)
www.bvmw.de/bund/sprachen/englisch.html

Information about KMU from the Institut für Mittelstandsforschung (available only in German)
www.ifm-bonn.org/

Up to date numbers that are annually re-calculated and posted can be found under “**Schlüsselzahlen zum Mittelstand**” (Key Data about the medium-sized businesses)
www.ifm-bonn.org/index.php?id=99



Note

Are you working at a company that is part of the KMU (definition in glossary)? Put together a profile of your company: Number of employees, average salary etc.

2.4

The purpose of practical experience – A win-win for you and your employer

The interaction and collaboration with you, as an ILT Programme member, can be a very enriching experience for your new employer. Your boss is of course not the only one that will benefit from this exchange. You and your employer will most certainly gain new and varied impressions and much more, along with work experience over the course of your stay.

Your employer

- is introduced to future contacts
- receives a first-hand account about industry in partner countries, most specifically your home-country
- increases their networking options with foreign firms
- is made more aware of their personal work environment and how it may contrast to yours
- gains insight into international cooperation efforts
- has some fresh eyes and ears to contribute new ideas and suggestions to the company
- takes part in the training of specialists and executives
- is able to play a role in exchanging technical knowledge
- is provided with a temporary additional staff member

You as the employee

- gain a first-hand look at how a German company is run
- establish a sustainable link with the company as well as potential contacts
- build personal and professional networks
- use your expertise, as well as increase your knowledge and develop new insights
- expand on your catalogue of practical experiences
- add to your personal qualifications
- expand your personal horizons
- improve your German speaking abilities

2.4.1

Your expectations, from the company and the experience – have you thought of everything?

You have probably been asking yourself a lot of questions about what you want to get out of this experience and how it will all work out. The following is a checklist of sorts designed to help you get the most out of your time here. Compare it to some of the expectations you already have and feel free to modify it to fall in line with what best suits you.

Some expectations you should have:

- a comprehensive view of the company and how the various departments interact
- hands on experience
- understanding and cooperation between you and your colleagues
- a trusting relationship with your superiors and co-workers
- a contact person whom you can bring questions and concerns to
- support from those around you when in difficult situations, as well as throughout your entire experience
- a proper introduction to your duties
- to have all rules and regulations clearly defined and any available benefits as well
- rewarding interactions with your colleagues
- an understanding from your superiors as to any linguistic weaknesses or cultural peculiarities
- challenging and engaging tasks
- acceptance as a co-worker and an interest in your professional skills



Tip

Tailor your expectations of the company to fit with your personal mind and skill sets!

2.4.2

What the company expects from you: New ideas welcome!

You are new to the company and its pre-existing work routine. By explaining a little bit about work culture in your home country to your new colleagues you introduce them to new ideas as well as prospective business structures. It also helps them to understand where you are coming from. You have the benefit, and potential challenge, of being the one with the “outsider view”. Your role is that of a “breath of fresh air”. You are bringing all of your previous experience and a new perspective to the company through your ideas and suggestions. This is an incredibly valuable aspect for your employer.

Along with this, your new company looks for your cooperation and a willingness to collaborate with them.

Stay engaged!

Communicate with your superiors and those around you. Show that you have a genuine interest in learning about the company and its various departments. Your co-workers are just as curious to learn about you as you are to learn about them. It wouldn't hurt to suggest giving a small presentation about your company and professional background in your native land.

Some of the expectations your new company has from you:

The assistance you offer your co-workers

You will be involved in hands-on experience, receive your own responsibilities and help your co-workers in their tasks. Involvement in things such as research endeavours, preparing presentations and taking part in sub-tasks in projects are just a few examples of what your new company may have in store for you.

Your new company sees you as an investment and they expect it to pay off

The application process is a long and complicated one. An applicant is chosen with work protocol and management practices in view. With this in mind it is a good idea to do things as efficiently and productively as possible. It will show your willingness to take initiative and make the most of this opportunity.

Your job duties

The nature and extent of your involvement will be greatly influenced by your skills and willingness to be involved. You are still a newcomer however, and regardless of your qualifications your superiors and co-workers are waiting for you to prove yourself. Do not be surprised if at some point your tasks include something as simple as making photocopies of important documents in preparation for an upcoming meeting.

Acclimating yourself to your surroundings

Your new firm is most likely not accustomed to some of the normal office place practices found in other parts of the world, such as observing Muslim prayer times. If work regulations interfere with your personal needs or you foresee some difficulties, be sure to bring it up before you begin working so that a solu-

tion can be reached. PFIFF will of course be willing to assist you with getting in touch with the people you need to.

Arrive at work:

- with the ability and desire to work independently
- with the capacity to be a team-player
- in a helpful and cooperative mood
- with a willingness to learn new work strategies, be empathetic and able to find creative solutions to problems that may arise
- with a responsible attitude
- willing to accept criticism, and learn from it
- with the ability to work under pressure
- punctually
- friendly, trustworthy and reliable

Notes

What else do you expect from yourself during this internship? Take the time to refer back to this list throughout your experience.

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3.

Cross-cultural competency:

Are you prepared to form new cultural contacts?

Every culture has its own gestures and behaviours as well as meanings that its members associate with them. Even if you are familiar with some of the cultural norms of Germany through what you learned in intercultural training or because you have similar ones at home, cultural misunderstandings are not out of the questions. Some make us laugh, others are just made to feel us uncomfortable.

The ability to interact with other cultures in a way that both sides of the exchange feel comfortable and understand one another is called **Cross-cultural competency**.

There is no right or wrong in this situation. What is important is to keep an openness and understanding for the new culture you are interacting with. Show an interest and then even the strange will become new and interesting.

You have already had some time to learn the different positive and negative aspects associated with Germany. A comment such as “the Germans are strictly punctual and always shaking hands” is probably one you will agree with soon enough. Everyone has certain expectations when it comes to meeting people from a new culture. Such assump-

tions play an important role when it comes to how we perceive and react to the people around us. Remember that though some stereotypes are true, leave your mind open and form your own opinions rather than making generalisations.

The cultural differences of your country do not always apply to you just as all of differences of German culture do not apply to every German. Cross-cultural competency is also having the ability to adjust to different situations and people, or to put it simply: **be flexible!**

Requirements for cross-cultural competency

- Understanding of the culture, country, region and its people
- Sensitivity and self confidence
- The ability to communicate yourself and your meanings clearly
- Curiosity, openness and interest in other cultures, people and countries
- Empathy and intuition when dealing with others
- The ability to identify stereotypes and prejudices against other countries, people and cultures
- Awareness and understanding of your own culture
- The capability and willingness to change your attitude about things
- The ability to tolerate ambiguity (a very important leadership quality)
- The ability to integrate different perspectives into your actions

Cross-cultural competency is not just an objective knowledge but a skill set as well. It requires the emotional capacity to deal with the actions and behaviour of others. Attitudes and feelings are always subject to a variety of influences and cannot always be controlled consciously.

The ability to deal fully with cross-cultural situations is something that needs to be practiced through experience and is not a characteristic that you can expect to gain just from reading handbooks and the IMK materials.

In the same way this manual is only a guide. It is here to help and advise you in some of the situations you may find yourself in. However the best guide is personal experiences.

Helpful Links

[Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Thüringen](#)

[Homepage for Cross-Cultural Learning
www.ikkompetenz.thueringen.de](http://www.ikkompetenz.thueringen.de)
(Only available in German)

[Multiple examples of cultural misunderstandings](#)

Notes

What prejudices/stereotypes are you aware of about Germany and Germans?

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3.1

Not all Germans are poets and philosophers – Examples of German cultural standards

The time you spent at the Einreisezentrum after your arrival in Germany most likely introduced you to some German cultural aspects that will prove to be relevant during your stay.

No one can say what Germany has in store for you and what will be important for you to know. Will it be interesting or possibly annoying at times? This is because nothing can be predetermined from cultural background alone. Personalities of the people involved and context of the encounter of course play a very large role in every situation as well.

In any situation where you feel unsure or doubtful the best thing to do is not focus on only one of the three areas of influence (culture, personality, situation).

Knowledge of cultural standards is a good guide when it comes to understanding different cultural influences.

Consider these cultural goals as an orientation point for people when trying to explain

their motivation for doing things. Within a culture there are many rules and ways of thinking that are shared by its members. Cultural standards are categories of values, rules and ways of thinking shared within a culture and are identifiable as being a part of that culture by others.

The following [seven German cultural standards](#) will hopefully shed some light on and give a foundation for some of the thoughts and actions of the Germans that you will encounter.

Be careful though! Cultural standards are to be used as a reference point to help you understand people better. They are not meant to lump all people from one culture into a large comprehensive group.

1. Task-oriented

- The focus is on the task at hand

⇒ Tip:

Expect to experience the task-oriented focus at least some of the time! However don't assume that everyone is as such. When presenting something to a German colleague make sure to make it fact oriented and to the point rather than subjective. This also tends to be how Germans go about making new acquaintances. "Come by tomorrow and I can show you around the factory." Comments such as that are often used as a pretext for getting a chance to get to know a colleague a little better.

2. The high value of structure and rules

- In Germany implementing and following rules is incredibly important
- All rules are upheld firmly
- Improvisation is viewed as poor planning
- The written takes priority, often times it needs to be in “black and white”

⇒ Tips:

The rules are not in place to be patronising. The regulations and supervision are not set up to be against you.

Also be aware of the social aspects that come along with all this structure and regulation.

3. Internalised control

- There are rules for pretty much everything in Germany and they apply to everyone: right and wrong are usually clearly defined
- “What would happen if everyone did it that way...” is often used as the argument in favour of rules so as to keep disorder at bay

⇒ Tips:

Take the rules seriously!

If you are not sure about something, ask!

Go to your boss or supervisor with any problems you may have!

Germans like it when you take initiative and communicate with them!

Do not agree to anything you are unable to follow through on!

Let someone know if things are not going as planned!

4. Time management

- Time is a precious commodity in Germany
- Time management is a good idea in your professional as well as private life
- Time management is very highly valued by your superiors and colleagues

⇒ Tips:

Keep all appointments and make people aware in the case of a delay!

Make arrangements to discuss things with colleagues versus spontaneously visiting them!

Make appointments even in your free time!

Don't expect a great deal of flexibility on the subject of time and punctuality from the Germans.



5. Portray yourself clearly

- clear and precise communication is key
- “no” means “no”
- “yes” means “yes”
- honesty rather than vagueness
- “Don’t beat around the bush!”
Be direct!
- in conflicts or confrontations be self assertive but also have the ability to accept criticism

⇒ Tips:

Any social coldness felt should not be taken as a personal attack against you!

Be aware that developing relationships with Germans takes time!

Take the initiative to get in touch with others (for coffee, dinner, etc.)!

If you make plans outside of work be sure to invite a co-worker or two along!

Share what you hope to gain from this experience and the important points of your work, but always in an appropriate and professional setting.

6. Separation of your public and private life

- Keep work and personal life separate
- Separate rational and emotional (rational at work, emotional at home)
- Know the difference between the person and their position (at work a task should take priority, so conflicts can be resolved effectively)
- Separate formal and informal

⇒ Tips:

Do not be afraid to voice your needs, concerns, thoughts and opinions!

When you do not want to take something on, just say no!

Explain clearly what you do not want to do and why!

7. Individualism

Emphasis on the individual

- Self-responsibility, independence and personal opinions are all considered important principles
- A balanced relationship is important for any partnership

➔ Tips:

Identify your skills and interests and use them to your advantage!

Do not expect someone to hold your hand the whole time, but if you need help, ask!

Take initiative!

Notes

Cultural standards in my home country vs. Germany – Compare!

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3.2

German private life – how to utilise your free time in your new host country: idleness is not a German concept

Even after hours the Germans find it hard to “switch off” and are seldom with nothing to do. When the weather is good there are lots of “typical” German outdoor activities planned such as hiking or walks in the park. In bigger cities some families have allotments where they grow vegetables and flowers, and often times meet for barbeques. Germans also go on weekend trips with family and friends to visit new cities or to take part in sporting events

Sports are one of the most popular leisure activities in Germany: running, Nordic Walking, rollerblading or biking are just as loved as club sports, which include football, karate and bowling, essentially anything that is fun to do!

Every third German volunteers somewhere, most of them in different clubs and groups such as an animal shelter or other social activities. Involvement in a club continues to be a favourite pastime of many Germans.



Tip

Take advantage of the multiple opportunities you have to take part in different recreational activities while in Germany.

Ask in your area about clubs, sports and recreational facilities as well as volunteer possibilities.

By participating you will be able to form and maintain new personal contacts.

4.

Support from InWEnt – You're prepared: You have the "ILT-factor" on your side

Here we go! We have a list of all of the things that have been taken care of for you and that you can cross off your checklist:

- The PFIFF team has found you somewhere to work
- Your stay in Germany is being financially backed by your scholarship from the German government
- Accommodations have been arranged
- Residency issues have been cleared up and you have a permit to take part in training in a German company for a limited period of time
- Experienced InWEnt staff members are ready to answer any questions you may have and help with any problems that may arise throughout your time in Germany

With the "ILT-factor" behind you, you can focus your attention on your work experience. Have we left something out that you would like to discuss or have clarified?

Notes

Write down your InWEnt contact and any others that might be important!

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5.

Important to know:

You are well prepared – so is your company

Both you and your new employer are meant to profit from this experience. With this in mind you will find a few tips at the end of every chapter meant to help you and your boss.

For your new employer it is important not only to know about your professional background, which they learned from your CV, but something about your daily life in your homeland and Germany as well.

Your employer already knows, for example:

- That all of the participants are all highly qualified specialists and executives in their home countries.
- Particulars about your homeland and the conditions in developing and emerging nations.
- What position you held at home, what you expect to gain from this internship and what role it may play in your future career.
- That you are working on a transfer project for ILT that you can possibly present to the company.
- German is a foreign language to you and that you have not been speaking it for a very long time. Your boss and co-workers can only be aware of your weaknesses if you inform them of your current learning level.
- You would like to improve your German. Keep in mind that the Germans also like to better their language skills and may want to speak with you in your native language, this is a very common occurrence with native English speakers. If you prefer to communicate in German simply explain that to them.





II. Before You Begin

1.

Your placement timetable

PIFF undertook the task of finding you a work position. The following criteria were used in that search:

- Were there positions offered by companies and institutions that are prepared to take someone on?
- Are you capable of fulfilling the objectives of this position and does it meet your goals?
- Does your new employer agree with the criteria of the programme?
- Is it certain that your training and education will be guaranteed?

More specifics about your placement, such as the length, are determined by your specific ILT Programme.

Duration of the placement varies but the optimal length is between three and six months. This allows enough time for you to be truly incorporated into the firm but short enough to keep you from losing interest.

Your new employer decides your weekly work hours in line with legal requirements (the requirements InWent asks of the employers can be found in the appendix- Block V)

2.

Make it a success

The success of your placement will be determined by a lot of different factors. Things such as your professional and personal goals, willingness to get involved, take initiative and be creative within your new company, have already been discussed. There are also the conditions at the workplace itself to keep in mind.

Pay attention to quality criteria!

These include:

Complex tasks

Performing simple and menial tasks you have no real chance to prove what you are capable of, and what do you really learn? At a quality internship the acquisition of complex skills is most important; what is optimal is being able to take over, coordinate and carry out a project alone.

Independence:

You should be capable of working independently of administration. Occasional assistance is of course a must, but being able to show that you are prepared to work responsibly and independently, even as early as your interview, is essential.

Place of employment

Does your new job present you with an adequate work environment in which you can make the most of your placement? Do you have enough room to complete all of your tasks, so that you feel as if you have found “your place” in your new company?

Support

Do you have a contact at the company that you can talk to about any problems, issues or questions that you might have, or that can alert you to things you aren't aware of?

3.

„SMART“: Goals of the placement

You are the captain of the ship throughout the International Leadership Training Programme. You know what you want from the trip.

The success of your placement and time in Germany can be measured by the goals you have set for your stay and whether they are truly achievable. With a clear view of your goals, expectations and wishes you can use your skills to maximise your experience.

Your goals within ILT fall in line with the goals of the ILT Programme itself as well as your personal and professional ones. During the interview workshop or at the very latest during the programme conference in Saarbrücken these goals have been brought into line with those of InWEnt.

When it comes to the target agreement in terms of your placement, your thoughts and interests in respect to specialist theory, the placement and the transfer project were kept in mind. They were connected to the content of the ILT course and to other opportunities to realise your goals in Germany. It is the practical phase of your stay in Germany that you have the most influence on. For this reason be sure to take your time and really think about your goals for the placement once again. Now you can elaborate on these goals and break them down into different objectives. During the IMK-Module (Internationale Management Kompetenzen) you learned about the [➔ SMART-criteria](#). Now you will be able to use them.

The International Leadership Training Programme is giving you the chance to spend a year improving your professional know-how, management skills and capacity to change. These general goals apply to you as well as your ILT colleagues. You will have to formulate and narrow down your specific goals to get the most out of the experience.

You should keep this in mind not only for yourself, but also for your working environment in your new company. It is also very important that you express your goals and expectations to those around you. Your partner - your new employers, colleagues and company as well as the InWEnt and PFIFF teams - are of course there to help you achieve your goals. That will require you to be aware of your goals and how others can assist you with them.

Key questions about your goals:

The overall goal of your placement is to establish a close link between your professional qualifications and work experience in a German company.

What connections are there already and which ones can be developed further?

- ➔ The placement is intended to increase your skill set, so that you can implement successful technical and academic information and methods into practice. **What am I capable of? What are my strengths and weaknesses? What do I bring to the company? What skills do I want to develop or improve?**

- ➔ The placement should introduce you to the application oriented skills and qualifications that are needed in a German company. You are given the opportunity to practice your skills and previously acquired knowledge in a new context. It's important that you learn the various aspects of the decision-making processes in business and how they interact, as well as gain insight into the economic, political, personal and social structure involved in the work process. **Can I compare the work process at my company in my home country to that of my company here in Germany? What are some differences? Do I comprehend the work methods I have observed? Can I empathise with the infrastructure of the company?**

Remember: During your placement you should of course continue creating goals and objectives for your professional life. You may not be able to fully achieve a goal but you will still gain insight.

How do you know if your objectives have been reached?

You have to decide for yourself if you have reached your goal. Be sure to keep things in perspective.

Can you use what you have experienced, learned and seen once you return to your own country? What would you need to change so that you can use it?

- Technical benefits
- Systematic gains
- Reflection of your work situation at home
- Acquisition of intercultural competence
- Improvement of your German language skills
- Contacts
- Industry specific information

Notes

What are the goals you want to accomplish? It is a good idea to separate your goals into professional and technical objectives on one hand and personal on the other. Make a “hit list” with your professional/technical and personal goals. What is first on the list? Second? Third?

Here is a place where you can record, amend and annotate your goals, not just now but throughout the programme.



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4.

"Hello. You can stop looking because I am your man!" Tips for your interview

Self-confidence is incredibly important in an interview. However overdoing it, like in the title, does not make the best impression. Usually an interview is the last hurdle in getting a placement. The company has a good feeling about you or they wouldn't have invited you to an interview.

An interview is a chance for your potential employers to get a real impression about you and is a vital step in finding a placement. It is an opportunity to see if you fit well with the company. It will also give you a chance to meet your prospective supervisor or manager.

They would like to know:

- Who you are (**personality**)
- Why you are there (**motivation**)
- What your professional background is (**capabilities**)

Introductions

It goes without saying that you should show up to the interview on time. Be sure to plan enough time for travel.

It is normal to be a little nervous before an interview. In this case you should do a practice interview with another ILT Programme member or friend. It will help you prepare to answer questions as well as calm the nerves. In an interview every question, and therefore answer, counts. Often they will open with "Did you find your way to us?" in order to break the tension and take some of the pressure off from you. Even this is important. With your answer you show that you came prepared. "I used the internet to find the location" is a positive answer showing that you planned and prepared for the interview.

From this one question your prospective employer has a picture of you: how you act, are you dressed appropriately, speaking clearly and fluently, using eye contact, etc.?

Even in the interview you can show that you take initiative. Ask valid questions and make them aware of your strengths. For example: "How will your company's project work in field XY?" "I am interested in the conceptual background of project xyz."

Questions about your personality

"We have gone over your resume but would you please just give us a quick summary?" This is a popular conversation opener to get a little more information about you first hand. For example: "On your resume it says that you have siblings." You can go on to say that you

have an older brother that you have always admired and looked up to while he is a very talented football player. If you follow this up with commenting that he inspired you to start playing volleyball at the local sports club, it shows that an outside influence motivated you to discover and follow your own paths.

It is normal to be asked about your hobbies and leisure activities. Talking about a group sport that you took part in while in your home country indicates an ability to be a team player and a desire to interact with others.

Specific personal questions as to religion, sexual preference, personal health, or asking a female candidate if they are pregnant are unacceptable and not allowed. If a question along these lines is asked remember to stay composed. Avoid answering if possible but give them some form of an answer. Example: "You are certainly trying to test my capability to handle stress."

Completely acceptable, and to be expected, are questions about your personal strengths and weaknesses. It is good to be prepared to paint a picture of yourself, for example "I am very organised but occasionally can be impatient." In an interview it is normal to list three weaknesses and three strengths. It is important to paint a confident picture of yourself; you are not forced to make it a negative one though.

Questions about your motivation

"Why do you want to work here?" is of course the standard question. Answering that PFIFF found you a position there is not the right thing to say, it will put the interviewer in a bad

light. Instead you should say something along lines of: your research revealed that the company profile, product range or the company's position in the market are right for you and that you are sure you will learn something here. Also that you know you will be able to bring something important to the company, such as a strong market knowledge of your home country.

You will surely be asked in the course of the interview what your role in your home company was. This is a topic you will need to be prepared to address fully. Following that your interviewer will most likely ask what your expectations for your new co-workers are.

A clear set of goals and objectives as well as industry knowledge and a basic understanding of your new German company, even if it is just from a basic internet search, will make you much more interesting to the interviewer and company.

Questions as to your capabilities

"Your bachelor's work was focused on wind energy. Can you give us a brief overview of your scientific findings?" This question you will gladly answer, first with "I would be happy to", because it will give you a chance to show off what you know. Be sure to tie your interests into this new position you are presented with, it is also a way of connecting the past and present.

After an interview there comes a point when the interviewer will present the company a little better and address organisational issues. This will be followed by a chance for you to

ask questions. It is a really good idea to come to the interview with some questions already prepared about things such as working hours, how the cafeteria works, names of supervisors/superiors, etc. If they manage to answer all of your prepared questions during the interview be sure to let them know that. "You have already addressed all of my questions."

At the end of the interview they will make a proposal as to how to proceed, such as: "We will get in touch with you over the next week by phone or via mail." Be sure to ask them to get in touch with the organisation that set up the interview, InWEnt or PFIFF, so as to inform them of how things turned out.

Don't forget to thank the interviewer at the end of the interview for their time and the opportunity.

5.

Important to know: You are well prepared – so is your company

You have now been introduced to your new employer here in Germany and got an impression of the company for which you will be working. Here are a few more tips to help you have a good introduction:

Tips for the employer

- appoint a contact person
- make an appointment to meet with project leaders from InWEnt and PFIFF to smooth any wrinkles that may still stand
- inform the current employees about the new trainee
- prepare appropriate tasks for the new trainee to take on

Tips for the trainee

- ask your contact person at InWEnt and PFIFF when the best time for meetings or getting in touch would be
- also inform them as to any special skills or knowledge



III. Your Placement

1.

Behaviour in the workplace

Work at work and play at home is how the German motto goes, and non-Germans can believe it before even spending an evening outside of work with their colleagues. The German cultural norm of separating personal and professional life you have already been made aware of (section 6, chapter 3.1). The following tips are to help make it easier for you to interact in the workplace and avoid any mistakes or potentially embarrassing situations.

This section can be applied to your professional and private life uniformly, so that friendly conversation and relationships can be maintained. It should go without saying that insults and abusive behaviour are taboo. Inappropriate language and unfriendly comments will make you unpopular and ensure that you will not be taken seriously.

It is also true however that even in the most genuine attempt to be friendly others may find your questions or comments inappropriate:

“How much do you earn?” Even if you are incredibly interested to know you should in no case ask! That is one of the most important things to remember at work. Only if you are very familiar with your colleague, is asking questions about personal and private matters socially acceptable.

Questions about age or marital status fall into the same lines as the questions above, in particular those addressed to women. Though in some countries to say that a colleague is “really truly fat” may be a compliment, in Germany that is putting your foot in it. If you manage to “put your foot in it”(in einen Fettnapf treten), you have gotten too near a co-worker with a question or comment.

As a rule of thumb, people generally keep things formal in the work environment as long as they feel like an outsider.

Supervisors/colleagues

In some ways dealing with supervisors and colleagues is very similar to dealing with friends and acquaintances. Seniority does of course play a role in how you regard people; you would treat the company's CEO more formally than you would treat the mailman. In some companies they have the concept of "flat hierarchy" in which you treat every member of the company equally, regardless of rank.

Do not let the casual tone fool you though; there are always invisible lines still present that can be very culturally specific and difficult for you, as a newcomer, to recognise. This is why it is always better to take a more formal approach when you first start than the people that have worked there for a few years.

For example there are some companies where colleagues and senior personnel address one another with the German informal version of "you" (du) versus the formal version (Sie). However there are certain informal phrases that, even in an informal setting, should not be used when speaking with your supervisors. An example would be a harsh opposition such as "That is completely wrong!" If you do not agree with a supervisor, express your claim with a comment such as "Couldn't we interpret the data as..."

You made a mistake? Try not to cover it up but take notice of it so as to avoid it in the future and apologise appropriately. "To err is human."

➔ Tips:

Observe your colleagues, how do they interact with one another? Are they friendly, familiar, polite, distant? Are private appointments usual? Do colleagues meet with one another outside of the work place?

Invite your colleagues to take place in activities outside of work. Accept their invitations, whether they are to participate in an outing or just a conversation. Be careful with private chats and asking personal questions though.

Women/men

When unsure of the differences in how to treat men and women in the workplace the rule is usually: When in doubt be a little more formal than if it were just a social encounter. It goes without saying that sexual innuendo is unacceptable and there is a zero tolerance policy when it comes to sexual harassment or assault. These standards apply to both men and women. Courtesy and friendliness set the tone in the workplace. When you follow through with things, when you are reliable and use respectful etiquette with your colleagues, things will run smoothly and you will be a valued guest and employee.

Business partners

Conforming to the culture standard of being task oriented (section 1, chapter 3.1.), both parties focus on the reason for your business. It may involve product purchase or cooperation within a trade partnership. Marital status and your last vacation do not play a role; small talk and personal introduction have little to no importance. As with anyone you should be polite and friendly, and somewhat more formal than with normal colleagues. For first impressions it is important to have a friendly smile, eye contact, and a firm – non crushing - handshake. In fact the Germans do this all the time: business partners, acquaintances, colleagues, even friends and family members, in almost every situation Germans shake hands. It is also a normal practice between men and women. Caution: Offer your hand to both men and women alike even if in your culture that is not normal.



⇒ Tips:

Tips for how to conduct meetings in a formal setting:

- Interact professionally: be brief! When there is something you want to comment on concentrate on the essentials. Ask significant questions that show you have some previous knowledge on the subject.
- Don't interrupt: let your companion finish their thought first.
- Don't multitask: focus on the task at hand, whether that means the conversation with a colleague or working on a project. No text messaging or working on your laptop, it will be taken as a lack of interest and respect. It is probably best to turn your mobile off.
- Make eye contact with your interviewer or presenter.
- Take notes during a presentation.

1.1

Setting the tone: Communication and language

Your work experience is going to be in German - and German is a challenging language. Even though you are not fluent yet, you are now working in a German company and need to act responsibly and communicate to the best of your ability. It is not always easy but it is possible. Previous participants in the ILT Programme have all overcome this challenge.

Technical lingo

A particular challenge is the technical language involved with working in an industry specific field. You aren't just expected to hold conversations with your colleagues but also exchange knowledge with specialists. Complicated foreign words, technical terms and special technical phrases are generally more difficult to learn than general idioms.

Keep a special notebook where you can write down new words to look up later. If you hear a word or phrase that you do not understand or know what it means, be sure to ask! Your colleagues would be happy to answer the question "What do you mean by XYZ?"

When it comes to communication and language, keep the characteristics of verbal and nonverbal communication, and a few simple rules in mind:

Verbal communication

☞ Titles

In the work environment you will most likely be addressed as "Sie", meaning that generally the more formal and polite version of you (second person singular/formal) is used. When talking to someone you are very familiar with or if it is an informal situation the informal you, "du" (second person singular/informal), can be used as long as your colleague has told you it is okay. Some of the older colleagues, or ones that have been with the company a while, may give you the offer to use "du" when talking to you. For example: "We can use the informal you with one another." („Wir können auch gerne Du zueinander sagen.“) "By the way, I am Peter!" You could respond with: "Gladly. I am Gloria."

☞ Indirect requests

Indirect requests are often difficult to understand as far as language goes. For example: A group of your colleagues are sitting in the conference room waiting for a meeting to start. Finally your boss comes in, sits down and says "Wow it is warm in here." This observation is

an indirect request to open the window and let in some fresh air. Another phrase in the form of a question but meaning the same thing: “Does that window open?” This is not a technical question about the functionality of the window but an invitation to open it.

You should not answer this with a yes or a no and just stay in your seat. In short: keep your eyes and ears open for such hidden requests.

☞ Irony

“What beautiful weather we have today!” says your colleague as they look out the window at the sheets of rain coming down. It is a bit hard in this example to understand that by this comment he really means the opposite of what he is saying. Often times, especially in a cross-cultural situation, it is hard to hear the ironic undertones of comments. Train your ears to hear the tone, and be willing to laugh with your colleagues at subtle ironic jokes.

Nonverbal communication

☞ Body language and facial expressions

Anyone working in a foreign (corporate) culture needs to be aware of body language and facial expressions and how they can communicate feelings and ideas to others. Many of these signals are culturally specific and can be misunderstood on an intercultural communication level. For example: In Spain, Portugal, South Italy, Latin America, North Africa, the Middle East and the Southern Balkans people signal to a friend to come over by waving with their palms down. In Germany it is opposite.

☞ Distance

It is not common in Germany to touch the other person during a discussion. The opposite is true in fact and a certain professional distance is maintained. When it comes to keeping your distance there is a simple rule to remember: stay about an arms length away and do not step into the personal space of your companion.

1.2

German time management: time is a precious commodity

Maybe you have already noticed: the bus leaves only a few minutes after its listed departure time on the timetable at the bus stop. At the very least someone will announce any kind of delay. **Punctuality** is very important in Germany and strong emphasis is placed on both parties meeting deadlines and arriving at appointments on time.

➤ Appointments and punctuality

If your boss gives you the option: “We can meet in my office before or after lunch.” You should answer him with a concrete suggestion such as “Does tomorrow at 10 am work for you?” Do not show up spontaneously and expect him or her to make time for you.

Arrive at meetings on time. If you somehow happen to show up late excuse yourself for making them wait. Do not make up long-winded excuses because they will be able to tell that you are not being honest.

➤ Work hour regulations

The weekly and monthly working time is usually regulated by an agreement negotiated by the business sector and the labour unions.

The normal workweek varies from industry to industry and is usually between 38.5 and 42 hours. The daily work hours are decided by a labour management contract (unternehmensinterne Betriebsvereinbarungen “BV Arbeitszeit”).

➤ Core time and flexible work hours

Typically a model is chosen for office workers

that provides flexible work hours. In the core time all employees are expected to be present. Core hours can differ between full and part time employees. These hours could be from 9:30 to noon in the morning and from 2 to 3:30 in the afternoon.

The flexible hours are a time window in which employees can decide when they want to fulfil their required weekly work hours. These hours may extend from 7 am to 7 pm. Limits to this agreement may be enforced when you have required projects or duties to complete.

➤ Breaks

Flexible work hours mean that you are allowed to decide when you start and finish work as well as your break times. A control is already in place that says legally after no more than five hours of work you are required to have a 30-minute break. Compared to other countries German companies have a relatively short lunch break time, half an hour to an hour. In some companies there is also a short breakfast break of around 15 minutes at about 10 provided every morning. Many employees will instead use this 15 minutes with their lunch break to make it longer.

➤ Time cards

The weekly hours are usually documented with a time recording system. Many companies have a time clock located near the entrance or in close proximity to the offices.

Each employee has a personal time card that they stamp before and after work. It can also be monitored through a computer programme requiring you to sign in upon arrival and out upon departure.

➤ Sick leave

If there is a day when you are sick or feel unable to work it is very important that you get in touch with your supervisor or contact person that same day. Get a hold of them by phone to let them know you will not be coming in.

If you end up being sick for a prolonged period of time you are obligated to inform your employer and provide a note from your doctor by the third day of absence.

Violation of this rule is a serious problem and can result in the loss of your job. This is something that you have already learned from InWEnt.

➤ Vacation

Vacation time for employees depends on what business sector you are working in. For ILT participants – following the programme guidelines – there is no vacation time.

1.3

First impressions

They are new, freshly pressed and from an upscale fashion store in your hometown: flowered shorts. Why this is not something you should wear the first day on the job you will quickly learn when comparing it to what your colleagues are wearing.

Dress for success:

What to wear the first day

While different companies have different dress codes, companies that serve the public or have consistent visits from customers tend to have stricter dress codes than ones that do not. If you are going to be working with customers it can be expected that you must dress formally. You will learn the dress code quickly through simple observation.

A typical formal dress code for men would include: dress shirt, tie and sports jacket; for

women: suit with long pants or a skirt of appropriate length and blouse. Bright colours, low cut tops and excessive jewellery or make-up should be avoided. Rule of thumb for the first day: appear more formally than casually dressed.

Presenting yourself: Introductions on the first day

Being friendly and confident and taking the initiative to introduce yourself makes a good impression on your new colleagues when you arrive on the first day. You can do this by presenting yourself with your first and last name, a casual smile and a strong handshake. Your name may be new to German ears so speak clearly and do not be surprised if your colleagues ask you to repeat it once or twice.

Your contact person at the company or your supervisor will most likely give you a tour and introduce you to many of your new co-workers. Naturally you will not be able to remember all of their names and positions immediately. In later encounters you will be able to ask for their names again with full understanding on their part.

Your tour will also provide a chance for you to ask questions and make comments about

things that you observe within the company. For example: “The staff cafeteria is very modern” or “the offices are spacious”- and of course “I am excited to start working with all of you.”

Be observant: A successful start in your placement

It is certainly natural to be nervous on the first day and to have the desire to leave behind a positive impression on your new colleagues.

Believe it: People will be considerate and at first very curious about you as a new fellow staff member. Keep your eyes and ears open. Observe your co-workers around you, how they interact with one another, what they are wearing, and how they talk to each other. You will get a close-up look at the tone and relationship between employees and the habits and practices of your new job.

Be positive about your new work environment and in no time at all you will feel right at home.

1.4

Keeping work and private life separate

Caution: Private – entry by invitation only

Take another look at point 6 from the German culture standards (Chapter 1, Section 3.1) and consider if you have ever been surprised by how a colleague acts. Germans behave differently depending on the context of the situation and the relationship they have with the people they are interacting with.

Conduct used in the work place is usually more formal than that used in private life; it also reflects the hierarchy and role distribution of your colleagues. Some bosses worry that they may lose some of their authority if they have too friendly of a relationship with their employees.

Your colleagues do not perceive you as a potential friend. People typically know very little about their co-workers on a personal level and private life is seldom a topic of conversation.

Most friendships will be created during free time activities. This helps ensure that at the office things get accomplished, and that in your free time you are able to relax and pursue personal hobbies and interests.

Common opinion is “you are being paid to

work, relax on your own time.” This may come off as a cold and dejected attitude to outsiders.

Do not look at this the wrong way, as if it is being directed at you personally or even xenophobic. Foreign employees are evaluated on their productivity just as the Germans are, and passports, skin colour or personal preferences do not factor in.

It should be all the more flattering if a colleague or supervisor shows a degree of openness and invites you to a private event with them. An invitation to dinner at a colleague’s home should not be taken for granted and if you receive one you should see it as a compliment and an expression of acceptance and friendliness.

2.

What to do in case of ...?

...illness

You wake up in the morning feeling a bit under the weather. You are unsure if it is the start of something serious or just a stomach bug. In any case it is very important that you get in touch with your contact person at the company to let them know you are sick (see 1.2). If you are seriously ill consult a doctor. If you are unsure about visiting a general practitioner for the first time or what kind of doctor you should visit, talk to your placement supervisor. You do not have to give out any information about your symptoms but you can get advice as to how to conduct your first doctor visit. The fact that you, for example, broke your arm is not something you must share with your employer, even if they ask you.

Have you found a doctor that you trust? Be sure to take your medical insurance card with you to any appointments or visits. You may also want to bring some cash in the case that you need to pick up a prescription. Even if you have medical insurance, in Germany it is necessary to pay at least a fraction of the cost of medications.



...conflicts or dispute

It is possible to find yourself in a conflict with one of your colleagues or supervisors. Try to conduct any disputes objectively. If you find that a remark or some form of conduct on your part has caused the conflict, reconsider what you have done and apologise to the person with which the conflict arose.

If you are convinced that one of your colleagues is not prepared to end a conflict despite having directly addressed the issue with them, then speak with your supervisor. They will venture to find a solution to the conflict.

In the event of a dispute with one of your neighbours or with another ILT Programme member: talk to them directly before speaking with your InWEnt contact person and bringing them into the situation.

...downtime

If you are at work and find yourself with nothing to do, use that free time wisely: take procedural notes, read any provided materials that you have not yet had time for, inquire about more information, develop questions and suggestions you can present to your colleagues and supervisors, as well as formulate your ideas. In short: Take initiative!

Though you will not have any vacation days during your work experience, take advantage of official government holidays, which are a perfect time to get things done. Have you considered when you are going to develop your Transfer Project?

Even if your workload is not all that interesting, make the most of it so that you can truly benefit from it. Utilise your free time by taking care of personal commitments and by making necessary enquiries.

...when you are feeling just a little bit off

You are in good health, your co-workers are friendly, the sun is shining - in spite of all of this you just do not feel right. It can happen to anyone at anytime, especially when in a new living environment like the one you find yourself in here in Germany. If this happens, talk to other programme members about their experiences. Maybe they are encountering some of the same issues?

If you are unhappy in your placement or living situation, identify the reasons for this and speak with people whom you can rely on and that can help you.

Feeling disoriented or lonely are serious obstacles that you should not just accept. The sooner you can identify what is causing you to feel so unpleasant, the sooner you can talk to a supervisor or contact person and remedy the problems.

3.

Rules, rights and obligations:

The legal framework of the InWEnt-ILT placement

Though the time frame is limited and you are not being paid for your services, your placement in a German company creates an employee-employer relationship. From this working relationship rights and obligations must be established for both parties, you as the employee and your boss as the employer. These rights can be found in the Works Council Constitution Act (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz, BetrVG). Among other things, this act establishes what rights special interest groups – works council – can advocate for you.

Specific labour-management agreements are concerned with the work processes that you take part in everyday. Some examples of these regulations are listed here. When in doubt discuss with your contact person in your company your rights and obligations.

Privacy/confidentiality of company information

Most companies and institutions have clauses in their labour-management contracts that deal with privacy and confidentiality when it comes to company information. These agreements require employees and trainees to keep not only company information confidential but customer information as well.

You will most likely be asked to sign such an agreement. By signing this you will be legally bound to comply with what the document says. This responsibility to uphold confidentiality will not end with your work experience in Germany.

This confidentiality agreement goes both ways and your company is not allowed to give out your personal information. Releasing this information would be an illegal act.

Electronic communication

Use of the telephone, e-mail and internet is also regulated by the labour-management contract. If the user regulations are not presented to you, be sure to ask.

If there is no operating agreement, then apply these general legal rules:

Telephone/fax

You wish to use your company phone or fax for a private purpose? Before doing this find out how this is regulated in your company. It is common for example, that employees must use a special dial out code for personal calls. This may be regulated in your contract, as to how much you will need to pay for these calls. Often it is presented in bill form at the end of the month.

Generally personal calls in the work place are kept to a minimum in duration and frequency.

If there are no specifications within your contract about private phone calls it is absolutely necessary to ask permission before making any private calls. International calls that would be charged to the company are not allowed.

Internet

Though it may not be specified in your contract or the company rules, accessing information that violates personal rights (privacy), is copyrighted material, or illegal (German Civil Code book) is not allowed.

This also applies to the downloading of offensive, slanderous, unconstitutional, racist, sexist, violent or pornographic materials.

Employers reserve the right to maintain and view usage logs of the electronic communication systems.

E-mail

The same rules that apply to internet usage within the company also apply to usage of e-mail accounts.

If you are using a private e-mail account or the company network to send personal e-mails this too should be cleared with your company.

Copier

Often times trainees complain that they are just given busy work, such as spending a few hours making copies. This complaint is fully justified if you find yourself spending the majority of the day making copies, and very little else.

However, if the copies being made are to be used in a project that you are taking part in, there is really no reason to complain. Despite your high qualification you are a trainee and a “newcomer”, therefore on the lower level of the company hierarchy. (See Chapter 2.4.2)

Important: Making copies for personal use is prohibited. This means that at any time when asked by another employee you must be able to explain what you are making copies of and for whom.

4.

Well done!

Certificate of completion for your placement

You have finished your work experience and said your goodbyes. Wait a second! Did you forget something? Right! Your certificate of completion. You need your certificate of completion to confirm your work performance and commitment to the company. The evaluation from your experience is not only important for young professionals, but also to document qualifications in an advanced professional career.

Trainees have a legal right to a certificate - similar to the review they would receive at the end of any other job - that is as graciously formulated as possible. It is a document intended to put you in a good light. There is a simple or a professional certificate of work experience:

A simple certificate of work experience should contain the following:

- Name and location of the company
- Name, date of birth and place of residence
- Duration of the placement
- Department in which you worked
- Nature of duties

A professional certificate of work experience also includes what your responsibilities at the company were and how you fulfilled these. An assessment of individual performance and skills may also be included, particularly if they were marked as a strong point. A closing of “We wish Mrs./Mr. XYZ a great deal of success with the rest of the ILT Programme” would be desirable.

If you spent longer than three months with the company you should receive a professional certificate, while in this time your boss got to know you and your work habits rather adequately:

Specifics that can be included in the certificate:

- Willingness to learn and work (e.g.: “was very motivated”)
- Learning and work ability (e.g.: “showed an excellent grasp of concepts”)
- Expertise (e.g.: “has brought extensive skills and knowledge”)
- Learning style and methods of operation (e.g.: “conducted tasks with strong self-sufficiency”)
- Outstanding achievements (e.g.: “excelled in the area of xyz”)

A professional certificate of completion is a bit like a job reference, but the company has no legal obligation to present you with one.

The certificate should be formed similar to a professional job reference and with the official company letterhead. It should be headed “Praktikumsbescheinigung” (certificate of work experience) or “Zeugnis” (testimonial). Make sure that it is signed and dated.

Like a job reference, your certificate will not include negative statements or assessments. Managers have developed a “secret language” of sorts in which they make even somewhat negative assessments sound as positive as possible.

Be sure to talk with your contact person and supervisor at the company about getting your certificate completed.

5.

Important to know:

You are well prepared – so is your company

Tips for your employer:

- Guide your new trainee through the company: dress code, work times and customs can be difficult for a newcomer to judge.
- Designate duties and responsibilities for your new trainee.
- Be sure to convey the importance of time management.
- Notify the PFIFF-team and InWEnt Regional Centre once the work experience has begun.
- The language that the placement should be conducted in is German.
- Keep in mind that the trainee can understand more German than they can speak.

Tips for you as the trainee:

During your placement be sure to draw attention to your abilities. Ask your colleagues about different aspects of the business and offer to take over small tasks whenever you are able. By dealing with a specific aspect of a project you are able to draw your own conclusions rather than just hear other people's opinions. Direct suggestions to your co-workers and talk to them about your thoughts on the tasks you are undertaking, for example: "I would like to extend the search to include xyz." / "I have experience in the field of xyz and would be happy to help in any way that I can."

A few more tips:

- Show willingness to take responsibility
- Take initiative and show an interest!
- Make a weekly agenda with your contact person
- Ask questions if you do not understand something
- Stay in contact with PFIFF or with the head of your InWEnt Programme



IV. Wrap-up

1.

The placement may be over, but the experience will stay with you

The chapter that was your work experience is over. In spite of this all of the expertise and knowledge you have gained will stay with you. You will also have gained contacts during your stay as well as developed friendships and relationships that you can maintain even upon your return home.

Instead of just closing this chapter of your life and never looking back, use it as a stepping-stone to new things. You will have a chance to call on your new experiences and knowledge during the transfer phase. They will also be of assistance well into your future career.

Before you started your work in this new company we asked you to consider your goals and expectations. Hopefully during your placement you also added new ones and revised the original list. Now take the time to compare your expectations to your actual experiences.

Reflect about your experience through multiple channels!

when it comes to working with any international employees in the future. It may have been a new experience for them to have a highly skilled visitor in the company. Even your colleagues may have only been concerned with the training of people just entering the work force up until now. The ILT Programme is designed to benefit all parties involved, not only the programme members, in developing on factual, functional and personal levels during and even after the placement.

The exchange of positive learning effects of the experience is just as important as the mutual feedback from your co-workers about any negative experiences.

Share your experiences with other ILT Programme members

To truly take stock of your experience take advantage of the opportunity to talk about comparable experiences with other ILT members.

What kind of experiences did some of the other members have? What expectations and goals have they fulfilled? How did they accomplish these? What ideas and skills did they pull from their experience that they can use in the transfer phase and/or later on in their professional life?

Keep in contact: with your PFIFF supervisor and InWEnt project manager

You have certainly stayed in touch with your supervisor from PFIFF or with your InWEnt regional centre.

Take some time to sum up your experience together at the end of your placement. Your project manager at InWEnt and your PFIFF supervisor have known you from before your work experience started until now and are able to give you feedback in respect to the ending phase of the programme as well. Their experience with previous programme members helps them to judge your achievements, such as the positive effects your involvement in the programme has had.

Your experience in the ILT Programme is incredibly valuable to InWEnt, the PFIFF team and subsequent participants as well:

Your experiences were gained first hand and offer a profound look into the life and work environments that future programme members will encounter.

There are things to be learned from your experience. Do not hesitate to share any suggestions or recommendations that you think will improve the placement experience. What did you enjoy? What could be handled better?

After your placement is over you will be given the option to write a final report. This is an incredibly important way for you to reflect on your time and to document it for others.

For this reason there is a chapter dedicated to how to go about writing this report.

2.

Exclusive – your placement report

This report is a valuable documentation of your experiences during your placement, not only for you personally but also for the future readers that will gain information from it. Your PFIFF-team and future ILT Programme participants can gain suggestions, tips and recommendations from it.

The following rubric will give you some ideas when it comes to writing a report about your placement. You should take time to compare the working conditions in your German company and the experiences you had against the professional background you came into the programme with. What were similarities or differences between the two? Even if it was different was it a good fit for you? Include any aspects that you feel are missing in the provided outline and that were important in your experiences.

Aside from that your report should contain the following:

Cover page

With general information about yourself as well as the location and duration of your placement

Table of contents

List in chronological order the chapter names

- Description of the company
- Application process and objectives of the placement
- Description of your department within the company
- Tasks and goals of the placement
- Conclusion and review of the experience
- Appendix

In this manual's appendix you will find a checklist for the final report



Tips

In addition to your report, sharing this information with other ILT Programme members, friends and acquaintances is a great way to reflect on the experience, hear new opinions and gain new ideas for future career planning.

3.

Keep in contact!

Networking after your experience

During a department meeting you were introduced to one of your employer's business partners. While talking to him you learn that he runs a company very similar to that of the one you were employed at in your home country. This international contact is valuable for both sides and offers the opportunity to share important industry information and to cooperate with one another, perhaps with an international project.

Your new acquaintance gives you his business card, and you? Are you prepared with one to give him in return?

It would be a good idea to have business cards during your placement that have your German contact information on them. Having business cards made is inexpensive and can be done at almost any copy shop.

Have you also brought a sufficient number of business cards containing information for your company in your home country?

Outside of your professional skills, the contacts that you have with other companies and potential partners are crucial to success in your professional life. Forming contacts, developing and maintaining them, helps you further your network.

Here are a few tips for successful networking:

- When you receive a business card be sure to take note of the date and the topic of the meeting.
- If you have distributed a great deal of business cards it is by no means guaranteed that the recipients will get in touch with you. Take the initiative to get in contact with them. You have a specific question that you would like to ask the head of the marketing department? You would like to greet your former personnel director once you are back in your home country? Do it!
- An important requirement for a strong network is endurance. This means that you should not just attempt to make a bunch of contacts really quickly but rather select them carefully with tact and consideration.



Try to keep a positive impression in your new contacts memory, without being intrusive. It is often a good idea to send some of your contacts a personal e-mail versus sending multiple bulk e-mails in a month. A postcard from your home country is also good.

- You are not the only one that will profit from this new contact, your contact will as well.

They therefore need to know what you can offer them. If you have some industry specific information that they find interesting, share it with them. In this way they will remember you in similar situations and turn to you for assistance or input.

- This contact maintenance also goes for friends and acquaintances that you met during the ILT Programme. Be sure to exchange e-mail and addresses. Social networks and career portals such as Facebook or Xing are easy to use, available internationally and are a popular means of staying in touch. The exchange of photos or reports once you return home can be done with very little effort.
- The workspaces and forums that can be found on internet portal Global Campus 21 are designed to help you explore professional interests that are relevant and specially tailored to your needs. As a previous programme participant you have access to these workspaces any time and any place.
- As a previous participant of an InWent programme you are able to take advantage of all Alumni-offers that InWent puts forward, such as the InWent Alumni Portal or the AlumniPortal Deutschland APD.

Stay in touch!





V. Appendix

1.

Profile of Germany

Germany is a federal country in mid-Europe consisting of 16 states. Based on its constitution the Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic and social constitutional country. The country's capital is Berlin.

Germany is a founding member of the European Union and with close to 82 million inhabitants is the most densely populated member. Germany is a member of the United Nations, the OECD, NATO, OSZE and the Group of Eight (G8). On a GDP (gross domestic product) scale Germany has the fourth largest economy in the world after the United States, Japan and the People's Republic of China.

Profile of Germany: Facts and figures

Official language:	German
Capital:	Berlin
Government:	Federal Parliamentary Republic
Area	357,111.91 km ²
Population	81,882,342 (March 31, 2009)
Population density	229 people per km ²
GDP	
*Total (nominal)	3,667 billion US\$
*Total (PPP)	2,910 billion US\$
*GDP per capita (nominal)	44,660 US\$
*GDP per capita (PPP)	35,442 US\$
HDI	0.947
Currency	Euro (1Euro= 100 ct)
Formation	Holy Roman Empire, 2 February 962 Unification, 18 January 1871 Federal Republic, 23 May 1941 Reunification, 3 October 1990
National anthem	Deutschlandlied (third verse)
National holiday Unity)	October 3rd (Reunification Day/ Day of German Unity)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
-summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+ 2) (March – October)
Licence tag	D
Internet- TLD	.de
Calling code	+49

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany>

2. Addresses

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Fon +30 25482-0
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Fon +49 421 16297-40
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Poststraße 51
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Regionales Zentrum Hessen / Rheinland-Pfalz

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65185 Wiesbaden
Fon +49 611 99941-0
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19053 Schwerin
Fon +49 385 55743-93
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30159 Hannover
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Fax +49 511 30480-99

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3.

Glossary

⇒ Kurzarbeit

What does “Kurzarbeit” (short-time work system) mean?

With the short-time work system weekly work hours have been temporarily reduced. The reduced staff costs are aimed to support the business during challenging economic times. The employees receive short-time compensation, which does not replace the full time income, but the position and certain basic benefits are left in place. Unlike with layoffs the company is not forced let go of skilled and qualified workers.

⇒ KMU

What exactly is the “KMU”?

The German KMU (Kleine und Mittelständige Unternehmen) is comparable to the English SME (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises), however there is no official or common definition. Since these two are used interchangeably when talked about in regards to the economic and financial world, it is best to know the basic outline. The European Commission has recommended some guidelines in terms of the SME (KMU). It is comprised of the micro, small and medium sized companies that:
employ less than 250 people and have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million

Euro or an annual balance sheet total of no more than 43 million Euro.

In addition, a large degree of independence is required on the part of the company: companies that belong to business groups do not count as SMEs. According to the commission's guidelines, independence means that no other companies can own more than 25% of the company concerned.

⇒ S.M.A.R.T.-Criteria

S=Specific: What exactly and how much will be achieved? The “S” is often viewed as a synonym for “fixed and specified in writing”.

M=Measurable: What are the criteria, to which objectives and achievements should be measured and controlled?

A=Attainable: Is the goal ambitious and challenging? Often times “A” can also be taken to mean “acceptable” or “actively influential”. That means that the jointly set goals must be actively attainable and influenced by the person for whom they are set, through means that are available to him/her.

R=Realistic: is your set goal achievable under current circumstances and with your given resources?

T=Time Bound: Is there a set time limit in which this goal needs to be achieved? Set intermediate goals and deadlines.
[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_\(Projektmanagement\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_(Projektmanagement))

4.

Checklist for your placement report

A) Description of the company

The history and background information of the company

- When was the company founded?
- Who founded it?
- On what idea was the concept for this company formed?
- How is the company culture structured?

The company's business model

- What products or services does the company offer?
- How many people does the company employ?
- Who are the company's customers?
- What sales has the company attained lately?
- In what business sector does the company operate?

B) Application process and objectives of the placement

Application process in general

- To what extent have my professional skills contributed to the company?
- How did I prepare myself for the interview?
- What form did the interview take?
- What experience/s can I take with me from the interview?

Objectives for your placement in the company

- What were the goals and expectations that I linked to this experience?
- What goals did I accomplish during the placement?
- What were the expectations of my employer?
- What guidelines did I have to follow from my supervising organisation, InWEnt?

C) Description of the department(s) that the placement occurred in

Working in your department

- How was the department structured?
- Which were some of my tasks?
- Who was the contact person/supervisor during my time at the company?
- What was my work schedule?
- Did I gain an insight into all of the different departments of the company?
- How were the working conditions in the department?
- How were tasks delegated?
- What skills, such as previous education or experience, did I bring with me?
- Was I involved in the daily operations of the company or did I have the opportunity to work on independent projects?

D) Conclusions and review of the experience

Assessment of the placement

- What was my overall opinion of the experience?
- Did I have a chance to exercise my strengths?
- Did I bring in my personal potentials?
- What was the situation in my department like?
- Was there a good balance between theory and practice during the placement?
- Which are the skills and experiences I can profit from?
- Can I recommend my position to other programme participants?
- Was I content with the evaluation that I received?

E) Appendix of documents

- Copy of your certificate of participation
- Confirmation of participation in the placement with the signature of your supervisor

5.

Agreements between InWEnt and your company

Agreements between InWEnt and your company when training professionals and specialists from Germany's partner countries

A) Legal framework

The Federal Republic of Germany promotes training programmes in the realm of personal and technical cooperation with developing countries. Foreign experts and managers (all government scholarship recipients in this case) are given the opportunity to expand their professional skills and deepen the cooperation through work with enterprises and institutions.

Health condition

Government scholarship recipients are usually reviewed not long after arrival in Germany by the medical service from the Federal Work Ministry. General health and fitness as well as suitability for the required tasks are tested. Afterwards the participant receives a certificate presenting their medical results.

Permit for residency and training

Recipients of government scholarships receive a permit for completing vocational training in accordance with the InWEnt gGmbH employment regulations (Beschäftigungsverordnung § 2 Nr. 4). They are required to give notice of departure in the event that they move and must register in the new city or with any change of address.

Lodging

InWEnt is responsible for the participant's accommodations throughout the duration of the traineeship.

Language training

Before the beginning of the practical phase participants are given the opportunity to take part in a multiple month preparation and language course.

Training

The training period requires active involvement on the part of the participants. They should be aware of the work hours and procedure of their new placement, especially in regard to punctuality and participation. The company is asked to produce a training plan and schedule for the trainee based on the profile, which has been provided by PFIFF. For any questions regarding the internship PFIFF offers advice and assistance.

Scholarship

During the training period the trainee receives a scholarship in accordance with the guidelines of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

PIFFF must be informed immediately in case the trainee

- is absent from work due to sickness more than three days
- must be taken to the hospital
- has repeated unexcused absence or
- in some other way jeopardise his/her position.

Travel costs

It may be necessary for scholarship recipients to attend business trips (e.g. information and trade fairs) and if they wish to maintain their current living situation they should notify InWEnt as early as possible (if possible three weeks beforehand) in writing. There is a specific form to be filled out for this.

The needed train tickets (DB, 2nd class) will be provided by InWEnt and travel costs for public transportation will be reimbursed. For business trips the scholarship recipient will receive a specific daily allowance.

The monetary amount varies with location and is stringently regulated. For business trips no travel costs, according to the Travel Cost Rules (Bundesreisekostengesetz, BRKG), are paid, i.e. no per diem or lodging costs.

Insurance coverage for InWEnt-trainees during the experience

Scholarship recipients are covered throughout Europe with health, accident and liability insurance during their stay in Germany. In the case that something occurs, this accident and liability insurance will be secondary insurance to that of the company's insurance policy.

Liability insurance

Liability for damages, caused during the train-

ing or in exercising professional duties, will be covered by InWEnt's insurance only if there is not already coverage from other insurance contracts (business liability insurance, etc.). If business liability coverage is provided, then it will cover any damages incurred during completion of training or professional duties.

The insurance provided through the company where the participant is employed is the primary insurance and that provided by InWEnt's insurance is secondary.

Accident insurance

This accident insurance deals with accidental death and disability compensation. All accidents that do not lead to disability should be covered by the normal health insurance that all government scholarship recipients are insured with

The companies/institutions are asked to acknowledge these insurance specifics in the context of the placement of our trainees, because they are obligatory.


Social insurance

According to the social security code (§ 27 Abs. 3 Nr. 3 a, SGB III) professionals and executives from developing countries doing further training in Germany are in principle not required to pay into the Federal Work Agency.

As to whether this is the case in every situation is subject to and reviewed by the social security agency.

Business relations

Commercial agreements and arrangements can be freely decided between the scholarship recipients and their company/institution, for



example: exchanging experiences, transfer of licenses, purchase of a product, or a later placement in foreign corporate offices, etc.. This is only the case if the training is not already connected to a project and the programme in respect to length, goal or focus of the placement is not interfered with.

B) Agreement

The signing company/institution and InWEnt have agreed upon the objective, to make the experience as beneficial as possible for the trainee.

6. Links, sources and picture credits

Alexander Thomas, Kulturstandards

<http://lehrerfortbildung-bw.de/bs/bsa/bgym/lehrgang/erklaerung/stand/>

Arbeitszeugnis.de

<http://www.arbeitszeugnis.de/>

Auswärtiges Amt

Leben und Arbeiten in Deutschland

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Infoservice/FAQ/ArbeitLebenDeutschland/Uebersicht.html>

Bergische Universität Wuppertal

<http://www.zsb.uni-wuppertal.de/html/f,75,Praktikumsleitfaden,000.htm>

Berufspraktika erfolgreich gestalten - Praktikumsleitfaden für Geisteswissenschaftler

Herausgeber: Handelskammer Hamburg

www.hk24.de

in Zusammenarbeit mit Arbeitsstelle Studium und Beruf, Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften, Universität Hamburg

www.uni-hamburg.de/astub

Bundesagentur für Arbeit

<http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/>

Bundesverband mittelständische Wirtschaft (BVMW)

www.bvmwonline.de

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst


<http://www.daad.de/de/index.html>

Deutsche Industrie und Handelskammer

<http://www.dihk.de/>

Deutsche Welle

<http://www.deutsche-welle.de/dw/o,,266,00.html>



EU Bildungsprogramm für lebenslanges Lernen, Leonardo Da Vinci Projekt
http://www.lebenslanges-lernen.eu/leonardo_da_vinci_4.html

Innenministerium des Landes NRW
<http://www.im.nrw.de/vm/39.htm>

Institut für Mittelstandsforschung Bonn
www.ifm-bonn.org/
www.ifm-bonn.org/index.php?id=99

Landeszentrale für politische Bildung
<http://www.ikkompetenz.thueringen.de/>

Land der Ideen
<http://www.land-der-ideen.de/>

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<http://www.praktikumsbericht.com/>

Dr. Stefan Schmid, Interkulturelle Kommunikation
<http://www.stefanschmid-consult.de/>

Tatsachen über Deutschland
www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de

Universität Göttingen
<http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/suche.html?query=praktikum&refid=55782>

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster
www.uni-muenster.de/CareerService/Praktika

World Experts, Interkulturelles Wissen
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InWEnt – Qualified to Shape the Future

InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany, is a non-profit organisation with worldwide operations dedicated to human resource development, advanced training, and dialogue. Our capacity building programmes are directed at experts and executives from politics, administration, the business community, and civil society. We are commissioned by the German federal government to assist with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. In addition, we provide the German business sector with support for public private partnership projects. Through exchange programmes, InWEnt also offers young people from Germany the opportunity to gain professional experience abroad.

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