

Information Sheet 3: Money & Banking in Germany

In general, opening a bank account in Germany is a convenient option for MBS participants who intend to stay long-term in Germany. Many regular living expenses such as paying rent, internet and telephone bills, or the radio license fee require a giro account.

For some visa applications, a special bank account – called ‘Sperrkonto’ (blocked account) – must be opened to prove that adequate funds will be available for the whole intended stay in Germany. Information is available in Chapter 2.

1 Money

The official currency in Germany is Euro (€), which is available in bank notes and coins. The majority of daily life transactions in Germany are made in cash. This is particularly true for places like bars/pubs, and cafés, as well as when purchasing a ticket on the bus or ticket machines. Hence, carrying some notes and coins at all times is highly advisable.

Money in foreign currencies could be exchanged at many banks and post offices as well as in foreign-exchange offices. Some recommendations are the Reisebank offices, whose branch is located close to the Mannheim main train station), American Express and Thomas Cook/Travelex offices. Banks only exchange foreign money in the form of paper/notes, and not coins.

ATMs (Automatic Teller Machines)

ATMs are ubiquitous and usually the easiest and quickest way to obtain cash from a home country/residence or German bank account. Most ATMs are linked to international networks such as Cirrus, Plus, Star and Maestro. It is also possible to withdraw cash using a credit card. However, this is normally expensive due to service and interest charges. It is advisable to always carry the bank’s telephone number in order to report fraud or theft.

2 Opening a Blocked Account (“Sperrkonto”) & German visa application

A “Sperrkonto” is the best way to prove that adequate funds are available for the whole stay in Germany. With this account, a defined amount of money can be withdrawn on a monthly basis. It also allows a set-up of transfer orders (e.g. for your monthly rent or insurance payments) within monthly defined budget.

It normally takes three to five days to open an account. However, during the peak season in July and August, it may take one to four weeks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to start the process of opening a Sperrkonto account early. The account could be opened a year in advance, and funds could also be remitted within the one year.

MBS is currently in cooperation with Deutsche Bank in Hamburg in regards to opening a Sperrkonto. Information is available through:

- https://www.deutsche-bank.de/pfb/content/privatkunden/konto_international-students-en.html#myaccordion_10766
- Email: db.student@db.com
- Postal address:
Deutsche Bank
Privat- und Geschäftskunden AG
Servicecenter Hamburg
Spezialservice Ausländische Studierende
Alter Wall 53, 20457 Hamburg

As an acceptable financial proof for the German visa application, a duly completed set of documents for a Sperrkonto must be printed out and signed in person exclusively at a German Embassy, so that a confirmed account opening document could be issued. In this case, two appointments at the German embassy may need to be arranged: the first appointment is for the Sperrkonto application, and the second one for the visa application. Please check the current procedure with the German Embassy/consulate where the visa application will be submitted.

3 Opening a German bank account

There are two ways to open a German bank account. The most popular way is to arrange an appointment and to go to the bank in person. This way, one could enquire about necessary information and clarifications, such as account charges, limitations, etc. Online applications are becoming more popular; however one needs a certain level of German language knowledge in order to understand the information on the official bank website and fill out the application.

Documents required for opening a bank account are:

- Valid passport for non-EU nationals, identity card for EU citizens
- Stamped registration form from the Mannheim Registration office (or any other city you live and are registered in)
- Confirmation of enrollment by MBS (in German)

An account can be used for banking transactions directly after being activated. While waiting for the ATM card and its PIN to be delivered via mail in separate envelopes within one week, banking transactions can be made via internet banking or over the bank counter.

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