

Living together in Germany

1. The Basic Law

Every nation has rules that everyone must abide by. The most important set of rules for Germany is the Basic Law. It is a collection of 146 articles. Each article stands for a law, a rule. These rules define how we live together in Germany. The basic rights protect the freedom of each individual. They are set out in Articles 1 to 19 of the Basic Law.

Here you can find the Basic Law in 11 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, German French, Italian, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Turkish.

How the German constitutional state works is clearly shown in this film shown in this film: [German](#), [Dari](#), [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Pashto](#), [Urdu](#).

According to the Basic Law, every person is a free and self-determined individual.

No differences may be made according to

- Gender
- Origin (ancestry, language, homeland)
- skin colour
- Religion, belief or ideology
- disability
- age or
- sexual orientation

Germany is a federal state consisting of 16 federal states.

Germany is a democratic state. This means that all state power comes from the people.

2 Rule of law

Germany is a democratic constitutional state. The Basic Law guarantees human dignity, freedom and justice. There are laws to ensure that human rights are respected.

Political decisions are made by representatives of the people. The representatives of the people are elected by the Germans in free elections.

The laws apply equally to all people in Germany. The state must abide by the laws. All people living in Germany must also abide by German laws.

This means, for example:

If people think that other people or the public administration are doing them wrong, they can appeal to a court. These courts are independent. This means that the government is not allowed to tell the courts how they should decide.

State courts decide whether someone should be punished. Punishments include fines, community service or imprisonment. There is no death penalty in Germany.

After serving their sentence, non-German nationals can lose their right to stay and be deported under certain circumstances.

3. personal freedom

All adults have the right to decide for themselves and their own lives. Whether man or woman, young or old, with or without a disability, regardless of skin colour or religious affiliation.

All people are allowed to do what they want as long as they abide by the law and do not restrict the freedom of others.

This means, for example:

- All people are allowed to decide what they want to wear. Women can decide whether they want to wear trousers, dresses, long or short skirts, tight or loose clothing or a headscarf. Men can decide whether they want to wear a suit and tie, a T-shirt and jeans, a turban, a hat or a beard.
- All people are allowed to eat what they want and what they like. The decision whether to eat meat (including pork or beef) is made by people alone. There are no general or religiously based dietary regulations from the state.
- The consumption of alcohol is permitted for adults. Children and young people are not allowed to consume alcohol.
- Every woman and every man may decide for themselves whether and whom they wish to marry.
- Every woman and every man may divorce.
- Unmarried couples are allowed to live together and have children.
- Members of different religions and faiths may marry and have children.
- Contraception is permitted for both sexes. A person's decision to use contraception must be respected.
- Same-sex partnerships are accepted. Same-sex couples can marry. The rights are the same as in a marriage between a man and a woman.
- Everyone decides for themselves how and where they want to live. This right may be restricted for persons in the asylum process until an asylum application is recognised.
- Sexual acts between adults may only take place with mutual consent. Any sexual activity with children is prohibited.
- Private property is permitted in Germany for every man and every woman. It is permitted to own a house or a plot of land. Many companies are privately owned.
- Women and men have equal rights when it comes to inheritance.

Important: One's own freedom ends where it infringes the freedom or human dignity of others or violates the law.

4. equal rights for men and women

Women and men have the same rights. This is reflected in the law and in everyday life.

This means, for example:

- Girls and boys go to school together and receive the same lessons. They take part in sports lessons together.
- Women are allowed to study or learn a trade. In principle, all professions are open to women.

- Women take on responsibility in society, for example as policewomen, doctors, teachers or in public offices and authorities. Their instructions must be followed.
- Women decide for themselves what work they want to do. They can dispose of the money they earn themselves.
- Women do not have to ask their husbands, parents or other family members for permission to work, open an account or conclude contracts.
- Women are allowed to dress as they wish.
- Women decide for themselves if, when and whom they want to marry.
- Mothers are particularly protected. They must and may not work for six weeks before and eight weeks after giving birth. They may not be dismissed because of their maternity.
- The tasks and roles in the family are not prescribed.
- Women take part in public life. They attend cultural, political or sporting events, restaurants and bars.
- Women can vote and be elected to political office.

This is not permitted in Germany, for example:

- Any form of violence against women, even in marriage.
- No one may be sexually harassed.
- Rape, even within marriage, is penalised.
- No one may be forced to marry. Coercion into marriage through violence or threats is punished.

5 LSBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, inter, queer)

Many different people live in Germany.

They differ, for example, in

- religion
- gender
- origin and
- political views.

They live together peacefully. They have the same rights.

This also applies to people with different sexual orientations. Or gender identity:

- Lesbians,
- gays,
- bisexuals and
- trans, intersex and queer people (LGBTIQ for short)

They have the same rights in Germany as other people.

In Germany, there is the gender entry "male" and "female". There is also "diverse". Anyone can have their entry and name changed.

Women can love and marry women.

Men are allowed to love and marry men.

This is permitted in Germany.

6 Children's rights

Children and young people have rights. These rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also applies in Germany to all children and young people under the age of 18. In addition, there are many laws in Germany that protect the life, health and rights of children in a special way. The protection of children is always the top priority.

This means, for example:

- All children have the same rights. No matter where they live, where they come from, what colour their skin is, what their parents do, what language they speak, what religion they are, whether they are boys or girls, what culture they live in, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. Children whose parents are not married have the same rights as children who live with married parents.
- Children have the right to a name, a birth certificate, a nationality and a family. The state generally helps if children lack any of these rights.
- Children should be able to live with their parents, unless this puts them in danger. Parents may and must care for their children, protect and promote their health and well-being.
- Children who have fled have the right to special protection and help.
- Children must and may go to school. School attendance is compulsory. Parents must support their children in attending school. School education is free in Germany.
- At the age of 14 at the latest, children can decide for themselves whether they want to belong to a religion and which one.

Children should be able to develop well. Parents are responsible for this. If they need support, the state must help and provide food, clothing and housing, for example.

This is not permitted in Germany, for example:

- Children must not be neglected or abused.
- Children may not be beaten or physically or mentally abused in any way.
- Children may not be used as labourers until they are 13 years old. When they are older, they are only allowed to work to a very limited extent. This must not impair their health and development.
- It is forbidden to perform sexual acts on children.

7 Freedom from violence/physical integrity

Everyone has the right to a life without violence. This means that all people have the right to life and physical integrity. This includes both the physical and mental health of a person.

This means, for example:

- Conflicts should be resolved without violence.
- Anyone who needs help in the event of danger or conflict can call the police.
- All police instructions must be followed.

- Vigilante justice is not permitted. If your rights have been violated, a state court will decide.
- The state must act non-violently. It may only use force in exceptional cases when all other means have been exhausted. There is no death penalty and no corporal punishment; torture is prohibited.

This is not permitted in Germany, for example:

- Physically injuring or killing another person.
- This also applies within the family, at school and on the street.
- Criminal offences in the so-called name of honour.
- Violence against women and children
- Human trafficking, slavery and forced prostitution.
- Sewing up, circumcision or mutilation of female genitalia.

8. freedom of religion

Religion and faith are private matters in Germany. The state does not dictate to anyone whether and in which God he or she should believe. State and religion are separate.

This means, for example:

- All people are free to practise and choose their religion and beliefs.
- All people have the freedom not to be religious and to say so. Anyone who does not believe in God is allowed to say so publicly.
- Members of different religions and faiths may marry each other.
- Marriages only count as legally valid marriages if they are concluded before the registry office. Marriages concluded exclusively within the framework of a religion are not legally binding in Germany.

This is not permitted in Germany, for example:

- To place religious rules or traditions above applicable laws, for example being married to several women at the same time or slaughtering an animal without special permission.
- Boys may only be circumcised if this does not jeopardise their welfare.

Many people in Germany today are committed to dialogue between religions. The aim is the peaceful coexistence of religious people, believers and people who do not belong to any religion. The state is committed to ideological neutrality. As long as the practice of a religion does not jeopardise democracy or the separation of state and religion, it is protected.

9 Freedom of opinion

All people may form their own opinions and express and disseminate them freely. People may also express these opinions publicly. All media are also free, all people can inform themselves there. Anyone who expresses their opinion freely must ensure that the personal honour or personal dignity of other people is protected.

That means, for example:

- The government may be criticised.

- Religion may be criticised.
- Artistic works may provoke. No one may dictate to writers, musicians or visual artists how they should work.
- The government and religions may also be the subject of satire and critical art.

Anyone who feels slandered, insulted, defamed or whose personal honour or dignity has been violated can turn to the police or a court.

This is not permitted in Germany, for example:

- The use of anti-constitutional symbols and calls to overthrow democracy.
- Insults and statements that demean other people.
- Defamation or slander against other people.
- Incitement to hatred and violence.