

# All Set

A Guide for Freelance Journalists  
Who are New in Germany

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Dear Colleagues,

Journalism is not just a job. For most of us, this profession is a passion. Many journalists are willing to take personal risks and use their work to make critical or suppressed voices heard or to expose things that the public doesn't know about but should.

There are many reasons why you are now in Germany. Some of you have been forced to leave your home country because you couldn't do your journalistic work safely there. Others have come to Germany for private reasons.

As varied as the reasons may be, you all have one thing in common: you are about to start a career in a foreign country – in many cases with little knowledge of the language and few contacts. You also share the desire to continue working as a journalist because you know about topics that should be covered and because your perspective would otherwise be missing.

That is why we have created this brochure for you. Germany's media industry urgently needs new, fresh voices. It needs the perspectives and experiences that people who were not born and raised in Germany can provide. Because you can offer valuable input and points of view which can only enhance journalism in this country.

One major aim of this publication is to convey an important message to all those who have the courage to restart their journalistic career in Germany: You are not alone. There are many fellow journalists who have started from scratch in the German media system after leaving their home country for various reasons. The stories of these journalists show that making a new start in Germany may not be easy, but it is possible – also because you can count on a large network of colleagues willing to support you.

This includes us, Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen (New German Media Makers), a network of journalists with and without an international background who campaign for diversity in the media. We have joined forces with n-ost, a transnational

network advocating new approaches in foreign journalism, and Freischreiber, a self-help network for freelance journalists. Together we have compiled this guide containing key information for (freelance) journalists, in particular those who are new to Germany. The brochure starts with an overview of the structure and working methods of German media, then moves on to practical tips for working with editorial departments and organising freelance work, and ends with advice for dealing with discrimination and threats.

We hope this brochure will answer your most pressing questions and help you to gain a foothold in the world of German journalism. Please note, however, that the information provided here is not legally binding. Particularly when it comes to questions about residency and labour law, each case should be considered on an individual basis. We obtained our information in these areas from the Handbook Germany information platform – another project of the Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen. Here you will find verified and regularly updated information on living and working in Germany in nine languages (Arabic, Dari/Farsi, German, English, French, Pashto, Russian, Turkish and Ukrainian). If in doubt, please check the Handbook or visit the affiliated community platform Together in Germany for further advice.

This brochure can only be a first step. We wish you every success on your path to a career in the German media industry. And if you would like to join our networks, you're more than welcome!

# Experienced Journalists Share Their Stories

**We asked journalists whose first language is not German: What are the challenges you face and have faced in the past in Germany, and what tips do you have for colleagues in a similar situation?**

„At the beginning of my journalistic career, the most difficult challenge for me was overcoming my inferiority complex because my German was not perfect. Later I realised that good journalism is not just about writing without errors. It's also about having the skills to do effective research, find interesting topics, make contacts and work well in a team – and many immigrant journalists already have these skills when they come here, as well as flexibility, new perspectives on many topics, knowledge of different languages and cultures, and access to other communities.“

**Ella Schindler** is an editor at the publishing company Nürnberger Presse and is responsible for its training schemes. She grew up in Ukraine and came to Germany with her family when she was 16.

„The biggest challenge for me was to start working in an editorial department and show that I am good at my job even though I'm a refugee. As soon as they hear that you come from Afghanistan or a country that is at war or poor, many people have this fixed idea in their heads. They think you can't work well. You have to work harder than others to be seen and taken seriously. Even if you're rejected again and again, you need to just start over and not let yourself be intimidated.

I did four different internships within six months at the beginning. One of them was at the Tagesschau, and that's how I ended up at WDR. That way I got to know really nice and helpful people. There are people like that everywhere. It pays off to start a conversation with these colleagues. Always seize this opportunity. And be aware of the value of your own experience and use your language skills.“



**Arezao Naiby** works as an editor and writer for WDRforyou, the ARD magazine Monitor and NOWU. She was born and raised in Kabul and worked as a journalist in Afghanistan during the war before fleeing to Germany.

**Vera Block** is a freelance journalist with a focus on radio broadcasts on topics related to diversity, equality and migration history, mainly in the areas of culture and social issues. She was born in Georgia.



„The main challenge was and still is proving to editors who don't know me yet that I'm a good journalist. Not only when it comes to acting as a translator and interpreter, eyewitness or fixer, but also in terms of journalistic expertise that goes beyond my background or language skills. One challenge specific to working in radio broadcasting is having to again and again answer the question of whether I talk on the radio because journalists with an accent are a rare species in the German media landscape.“

„You should definitely learn German first. If you can't express yourself properly, your topics won't sell well. You don't get the chance to show what kind of person you are. In addition, you should reflect on what you can contribute that comes from your own country, your own culture. How can you approach political issues in Germany from your own perspective journalistically? What bothers you about Germany? Topics that many Germans – by which I mean people who were born here – can't understand because they haven't had the experience of growing up in another country, with another culture, and then coming to Germany.

I myself simply kept fighting and asking people to give me a chance. I was promised a lot during my internship, but I said I didn't want promises, I wanted a contract. I got my opportunities, although my language skills were very poor back then. The editor-in-chief told me that I had this energy, this fire in me that he wanted to see. I want to encourage others to show how motivated they are too.“

**Sulaiman Tadmory** works on the STRG F and Panorama editorial teams at German public broadcaster NDR, where he does investigative research on a broad range of topics which are made into films. He was a journalist in Syria, where he made documentaries about the revolution and the war.

„For me, and on my path to working in German media, networking and contacts with other journalists and media organisations really were key. The value of journalistic workshops and events should not be underestimated. Then an appropriate traineeship also eased many of the difficulties I encountered along the way. And yes, I had to struggle with my ego over that. In my country I had worked at the leading dailies, yet here I was working as a trainee. But it was the right decision.

As an editor and writer, I now contribute a new, different perspective which many German-speaking writers lack. I'm bilingual and I've had the experience of working in a country where freedom of the press is not a given. I see some things that my white colleagues here don't see. And every time I write about poverty, LGBTIQ\* people, religion, abortion or bodily integrity and sexual self-determination in Germany, I also have a different, deeper insight, because I know how these topics are treated in Iran. This is enriching for my work here in Germany.“

**Negin Behkam** is contributing editor at “nd Aktuell”. She also works as a freelance journalist for other German-language media as well as for Persian-language exile media.

„At first I was very afraid of making mistakes in German. I always checked my texts and emails over and over again before sending them. Now I've become a bit more relaxed because most of the time my mistakes hardly bother the editors. My German is already good, but I want to keep learning the language.

The second challenge is finding ways to make new contacts at the editorial departments I want to work with. Taking part in programmes and attending conferences for journalists in Germany helped. I was able to meet German journalists and other people who had just arrived in the country and, like me, were trying to get their foot in the door. I would recommend attending such events on a regular basis, expanding your network and trying out different options.“

**Irina Chevtayeva** is an editor with Deutsche Welle's Russian service. She also writes articles on Russia for German media such as Die Zeit and news agency epd. She previously worked as a correspondent for Radio Liberty and Novaya Gazeta and as a producer for German broadcaster ARD in Moscow.

„I think that here in Germany too much attention is paid to pronunciation, and this creates an artificial language space in the media that doesn't correspond to normal everyday life. Obviously, mistakes are not a good thing, but accents are part of any living language. In the UK and the US, they're already very common in the media.

As a person whose first language is not German, you need to be self-confident and have the courage to put forward your own ideas and topics. In particular since the Russian war in Ukraine started I've become more aware of how enriching different perspectives can often be for my German colleagues. It's also important to always emphasise and make use of your own language skills – most editing departments don't have multilingual editors, so anyone with additional language skills is an asset for them.“

**Danilo Bilek** is a freelancer and editor in Deutsche Welle's Ukrainian editorial team, where he works in various roles in the production of the online edition – from news editor to coordinator and quality manager. He also does freelance work for several German-language media including WDR and Deutschlandfunk in Cologne.

# The Media Landscape

# How is the German media market structured?

Compared to the media systems of other countries, the German media system is relatively decentralised. The state exerts little influence here. In the 2022 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index, Germany ranks 16th out of 180 countries. In recent years Germany has dropped several places in this ranking. This trend is due to an increase in attacks against journalists and a decline in press diversity driven by economic factors. The German media market can be broadly divided into three main segments: the press, broadcast media and the internet.

The press: In Germany, this segment is dominated by regional subscription newspapers. These papers generally have a common national and international news section ("Mantel-Teil") dealing with politics and economic affairs. This is followed by a section dedicated to local news from the area where the newspaper is distributed. Some examples of large publishing groups in Germany that own several regional newspapers are Südwestdeutsche Medien Holding GmbH, Funke Mediengruppe and the publishing group Ippen. Among their publications are the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, the Sächsische Zeitung and the Berliner Zeitung.

There are also a number of national newspapers and magazines which appear on a daily or weekly basis. These publications have a stronger political profile. Prominent examples include the taz, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,

the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Der Spiegel, Stern, Die Zeit, Die Welt, BILD.

**Broadcast media:** In Germany, the broadcasting segment (television and radio) is divided into public and private broadcasters. Public broadcasters are subject to a statutory public service mandate to provide the population with information, education, advice and entertainment, but they have a free hand when it comes to how they implement this mandate. The public broadcasters are financed by licence fees, which are paid by all households, companies, institutions and public welfare organisations in Germany. In this segment too, there are national and regional broadcasters. ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio are examples of national broadcasters. NDR, MDR, SWR, BR, HR are regional broadcasters.

Private broadcasters don't have a mandate to serve the public and don't receive any funding from the licence fees to finance themselves. There are free-to-air broadcasters that are financed by advertising revenues, including Sat.1, ProSieben and RTL, and there are pay-per-view channels such as Sky.

**The Internet:** The main journalistically relevant media on the Internet are the online platforms of the major press and broadcast media, for example, bild.de, spon.de, rtl.de.

## How editorial departments work and how to get your foot in the door

The editorial departments of media outlets are divided into different sections. Each section is dedicated to a specific subject area such as politics, business, sports or science. There are fixed procedures and structures within these sections. These procedures are strongly influenced by the publishing schedule. At daily newspapers there are morning conferences in which the news stories are discussed, then the texts are written and the newspaper is laid out. Everything has to be ready in time for the copy deadline. Weekly publications don't usually hold a daily conference. The stories are planned longer in advance and there is more time for research and writing. The editorial departments of online media hold regular conferences (usually daily), but there is no copy deadline. Texts often have to be finished „as quickly as possible“ and are published as soon as they are ready.

## THE MAIN POSITIONS IN AN EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT ARE:

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- **Editor-in-chief:** The editor-in-chief or chief editor is in charge of content and coordinates and develops an outlet's overall coverage and editorial output. They make decisions on fundamental matters such as budget, staff, layout and orientation. They are rarely involved in day-to-day operations.
- **Head of section:** They decide on the content that appears in the section they are in charge of, and coordinate the processes in that section.
- **Managing editor (CvD):** The managing editor manages the day-to-day editorial activities, leads conferences, keeps an eye on the submission of articles, plans the content and is the contact person for day-to-day operations.
- **Editors:** Editors research, write and edit texts. They usually have a special focus area in which they are particularly knowledgeable.
- **Assistants:** Assistants help with the various organisational tasks in the different sections. They answer minor enquiries and coordinate appointments and trips.
- **Accounts:** This department is responsible for finances. Its staff are responsible for paying the journalists' fees and salaries, for example.

# How to write a good article pitch

an article to a particular editor, you can write a few short sentences about yourself: your educational background and work experience, and which media you have already worked for. If you have a website or samples of your work, provide links to them.

An article or story pitch is a short text introducing the topic and content of your proposed piece. It should give the reader a rough idea of what it's about and what the finished product might look like. The pitch itself is short. A few lines/sentences suffice – as a rule, it should be no more than two paragraphs long. The language should be simple. It's not always easy to identify the key content and present it in a few sentences, but the editors to whom you send your pitch will generally be pressed for time and receive dozens of pitches every day. Your pitch should give them a brief summary of the information they need to be able to quickly decide whether they want to commission your piece.

Describe your topic in one sentence then explain why you believe it is particularly relevant and important for society or the target audience of the media outlet/news section. Write one or two sentences about how you intend to present the topic (as a report, feature, interview, etc.). Furthermore, suggest how long you think the article should be (in characters or minutes). If you already know who the protagonists might be, you can add that as well.

If this is the first time you are pitching

# Organisational Matters

# What do you need to do to be allowed to work in Germany?

Germany, anyone can work as a journalist because „journalist“ is not a protected professional title in this country. Unlike doctors, pharmacists or lawyers, journalists don't need to have professional qualifications that are recognised by an official body. In accordance with Article 5 of the German constitution, freedom of the press also covers the right to work as a journalist.

Nevertheless, there are certain hurdles, of course. To be allowed to work as a freelance journalist, your residence permit must explicitly state that „gainful employment is permitted“ (Erwerbstätigkeit gestattet) or „self-employment is permitted“ (selbstständige Tätigkeit gestattet). If you have been granted the status of a person entitled to asylum, a refugee, or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, this information is usually written on a green supplementary sheet that you receive from the Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde) together with your residence permit. If your residence permit does not allow you to work as a self-employed person, under certain conditions you can apply to the Immigration Office for a resi-

dence permit allowing self-employment under Section 21 (6) of the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz).

This means that before you can get started there's a lot of paperwork to do. Depending on where you come from and how old you are, the requirements are simple, strict or very strict.

If you come from a country within the European Union, the European Economic Area or Switzerland, and register Germany as your main place of residence, you will receive a Tax Identification Number (Steueridentifikationsnummer) and can start working in accordance with the right of free movement. If you want to work as a freelancer and submit invoices, however, you'll also need a Tax Number (Steuernummer). You must apply for this at your local Tax Office (Finanzamt).

If you come from a country other than those mentioned above, you must apply for a work permit. In the case of migrants, the work permit is directly linked to the residence permit. There are many different types of residence permits (Blue Card, visa for seeking a job, visa for studying, etc.). These are explained in English on the [Handbook Germany](#) website.

If you want to work as a freelancer, a visa/residence permit for freelance work pursuant to Section 21 (5) of the [Residence Act](#) is the obvious choice. A residence permit may be granted for freelance work if this work can be

**TO OBTAIN THIS VISA/RESIDENCE PERMIT, YOU MUST MEET CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

- The financing of your business idea must be guaranteed.
- If you want to work on a fee basis, you'll need to show letters of intent for collaboration. In other words, at least two letters of intent from editors confirming that they want to work with you (including details of the type, scope and general description of the work). You are more likely to receive such a letter of intent if the editors already know you, so it is advisable to apply for this type of residence permit only once you have already had the opportunity to build up contacts with the respective editors through a different type of work permit, for instance through an internship or work shadowing.
- If you are older than 45, you must also prove that you have made adequate provisions for old age. Self-employed persons can do this by furnishing proof of ownership of assets in any form, pension entitlements acquired abroad and/or in Germany or business assets.
- For reference purposes, the procedural notes on the right of residence published by the Berlin Immigration Office (LEA) state that you must be able to prove that you will receive a monthly pension of at least 1340.47 euros, or own assets worth 195,104 euros or more, when you turn 67. Exemptions: citizens of Turkey and some other countries are exempt.

expected to produce economic or cultural benefits. This is what is known as a „discretionary“ provision, which means that the permit is granted at the discretion of the Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde) and does not establish a legal claim.

Several other documents must be submitted. These include a CV, a certificate or card confirming that you have health insurance, an earnings estimate, proof of rental costs and others.

You don't need to prove that you have specific training, as anyone can work as a journalist in Germany. The Immigration Office checks whether your information is plausible and realistic and whether you can live on your income. You can find more information about this [here](#) and [here](#).

If you are a refugee, everything depends on your current status. If you have received a Tolerated Stay Permit (Duldung) or your asylum procedure is still pending, you will not receive a self-employment permit. If your asylum application has been approved, i.e., you have been granted protected status as a person entitled to asylum, as a refugee or as a person entitled to subsidiary protection, you may work without restrictions as an employee or as a self-employed person. The same rules apply to you on the labour market as to German citizens.

A special status is currently granted to people who have received a resi-

dence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act. This status currently (as of July 2022) applies to people with Ukrainian citizenship, immediate family members and, under certain conditions, also to third-country nationals who have fled Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

People with this status can work as freelance journalists without restrictions. An official document proving your identity should suffice.

Experience shows that many decisions depend on the discretionary powers of the case workers at the Immigration Office. It is therefore difficult to offer advice here. But it pays to have a good network, and media organisations can often help, too. For further details, contact other organisations. Our multilingual colleagues at Handbook Germany and Together in Germany are a good starting point.

## Do you have to speak German to be able to work in Germany?

Journalism and the media industry are changing. Nowadays not all journalistic jobs require a perfect command of

German. In a data journalism team, if you can speak English and have a good command of programming languages you will be in high demand even if your German isn't perfect. Editorial departments that promote cross-border projects and work on international research projects are also open to multilingual colleagues. In general, the extent to which you are involved as an author or staff member depends largely on the individual editorial department and the people who work there. In recent years, media companies have become increasingly aware that more diversity is good for reporting. And things will no doubt develop more and more in this direction.

Nevertheless, anyone reporting on Germany and for a German-speaking target group would do well to perfect their German as much as possible, on the one hand to be less dependent on the translation of texts and exchanges with sources and interview partners, and on the other, to be able to communicate better with their colleagues in the editorial department. More information about learning German is available [here](#).

However, you can start working as a journalist even if your German is not very good yet. One possibility is to work with German-speaking co-authors. Another advantage of this collaborative work is that editors will be more open to giving you an assignment if they already know someone in your writing team.

## Is it worth-while to do an internship or traineeship?

Starting from scratch in Germany when you already have several years of experience as a journalist or have worked in a position of responsibility is not an easy pill to swallow. Nevertheless, it pays to do an internship because this is a way to get to know an editorial department and its processes from the inside – and perhaps even more importantly, the editors can get to know you better. It makes sense to talk openly in advance and during the internship or job shadowing about what you expect from it.

In principle, you don't need formal training to work as a journalist in Germany. However, experience shows that completing a traineeship in a media organisation or attending a school of journalism brings many advantages. Even if technically you don't learn anything new, such training is worthwhile because it gives you the chance to build up a professional network, try things out and prove yourself.

One problem is that such training is often poorly paid, or in some cases not paid at all. There are however grants and scholarships that you can apply for. The selection procedures for traineeships are also sometimes not so easy.

We recommend getting in touch with former trainees and asking for tips on how to prepare and what can make a difference. Here, too, having a good network pays off.

## What fees are appropriate, and how to negotiate effectively

There is no minimum wage for journalists, and because freelance journalists are paid for each individual assignment they can hardly use the collective wage agreements of salaried journalists for guidance.

Freelance journalists often charge by the line or by the page. This means they receive a fixed sum per line or magazine page of their article. This is not always fair, since some articles require far more effort than others. To ensure fair pay it's therefore generally better when media companies pay daily or hourly rates, as this is the only way to ensure that the required working time is actually paid for.

It's difficult to say exactly how much you can charge for your work. According to the Freischreiber Fees Report, the gross income of a salaried journalist with average professional experience (between five and ten years) is 3538 euros per month.

To calculate an average daily rate, add 300 euros for operating expenses and then divide the sum between the number of working days of a freelance journalist. If you subtract holidays, weekends, public holidays and sick days, that leaves 214 working days per year. If you subtract another 20 percent because freelance journalists also have to do research on and propose topics, do the bookkeeping and correspond with clients, you still have 171.2 working days per year (or 14.27 working days per month), and the average daily rate would be 268.96 euros (33.62 euros per hour).

The fees actually paid in Germany vary greatly depending on the client, the type of publication, the publication's reach and the subject area: according to the Freischreiber Fees Tool, the average hourly rate at the taz newspaper is 14.63 euros, at the Tagesspiegel 15.18 euros, at Zeit Online 18.75 euros, at Spiegel Online 20.56 euros, at NDR 27.18 euros, at Deutsche Welle 28.13 euros, and at WDR 37.50 euros. If you want to get an idea of how much a particular client pays on average, you can look it up on the media organisation Freischreiber's fee calculating tool [www.wasjournalistenverdienen.de](http://www.wasjournalistenverdienen.de).

## What to look out for in contracts

If you are commissioned by a publisher to write an article, the publisher will

send you an author contract (Autorenvertrag) that regulates the terms of the collaboration. The interests of publishers and freelance authors diverge in many respects. Here is a list of points you should pay attention to in an author contract:

**Exclusive right of use:** If a work is to be subject to exploitation by multiple parties, the rights of use must be granted „non-exclusively“. The granting of an „exclusive“ right of use is only an option if secondary exploitation is out of the question. For magazine texts, „exclusive“ use for a period of one year is the rule.

**Transferability:** Many contracts now stipulate that the publisher may transfer the rights of use to third parties. This means that journalists compete with themselves and lose control over the journalistic use of their work. As a rule, such a clause should be accompanied by an increase in the fee commensurate with the additional possibility of use (if applicable, as a share in the proceeds in the case of an additional transfer), as well as an obligation on the part of the publisher to provide information regarding such proceeds. At the very least, the author should be asked.

**„Publisher’s clause“:** In the past, contracts usually stipulated that rights of use were granted to a single publishing entity. Nowadays, publishing groups often try to extend the rights of use to all entities within their organisation. This is usually disadvantageous for the author because

the fee is seldom adjusted to take account of the extended possibilities of use. Especially in the case of daily newspaper publishing groups which own several independent entities (e.g. Holtzbrinck), a clause limiting the rights of use to a single entity ensures that a multiple sales of the same text to two or three newspapers is no longer possible. den\*der Autor\*in in der Regel nachteilig, weil die Honorarhöhe selten an die erweiterte Nutzungsmöglichkeit angepasst wird. Gerade bei Tageszeitungsverlagen mit mehreren unabhängigen Objekten (z. B. Holtzbrinck) ist mit einer solchen Klausel ein Mehrfachverkauf desselben Textes an zwei oder drei Zeitungen nicht mehr möglich.

**Editing rights:** Articles are often developed in preliminary discussions with the editors (several rounds of editing, extended preliminary discussions) and revised in one or more rounds of editing after submission. As a rule, publishers grant themselves the right to edit commissioned texts. This is necessary and makes sense because minor adjustments are often required for layout and formatting purposes. However, the right to edit should always be limited to „meaningful“ edits; anything beyond this should only be done with the author’s prior consent.

**Subsidiary rights:** subsidiary rights are rights that are not required for the main purpose of the contract – translation rights, book rights, film rights, performance rights, etc. As a rule, the transfer of copyright includes the transfer of

**IN MANY CASES YOU CAN ALSO TRY TO NEGOTIATE A BETTER RATE. HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR NEGOTIATING:**

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- **Be well prepared.** If you know how much the editors normally pay, you'll have better chances.
- **Have three prices in mind.** Before you start negotiating set a target price, an asking price (this is higher, and you name it at the beginning, so that you end up with your target price) and a minimum price (anything below this you reject).
- **Get the timing right.** It's best to start negotiating when the editors have already accepted your pitch and want to give you the assignment.
- **Be the first to start talking.** It's better if you name a figure first (your asking price).
- **Take your minimum price seriously.** You've set your red line – now stick to it.
- **You're not working for fame.** The desire to make a name for yourself or cover an important issue are legitimate motivations for journalistic work but don't let that push you below your minimum fee.
- **Empathy and equality.** Negotiating is good but arguing is not. Negotiations can be a friendly process – they don't have to turn into a battle.

subsidiary rights. Special attention should be paid to this if there is the possibility that a text could be made into a book or film. If you have granted the exclusive right of use to the publisher, you may no longer be able to exploit the text in question for a film or book without the publisher's consent.

## How to write an invoice

If freelance journalists in Germany want to receive their fees, they must write an invoice. Germany's Value Added Tax Act (Umsatzsteuergesetz) stipulates which information an invoice must contain in Section 14 – Issue of invoices. The following information must be included on an invoice:

1. Your name and address
2. Name and address of the client
3. Invoice date
4. Invoice number (consecutive, the same number must not be assigned twice)
5. Description of service (quantity, scope, type, number of hours or days worked if applicable)
6. Period of performance of service or date of delivery
7. Net invoice amount
8. Applicable VAT rate (usually 7 percent for journalists)

9. VAT amount
10. Gross invoice amount
11. Tax number

If you are officially resident in another country, you do not have to charge VAT on your invoice. In this case it must contain the following statement: „Steuerschuldnerschaft des Leistungsempfängers“ („Tax liability lies with the recipient of the service“). If you come from an EU country, your VAT Identification Number (Umsatzsteuer-Identifikationsnummer) and that of the client must be included on the invoice. If you are based in a third country, your tax number must also appear on the invoice.

In addition to this information it is advisable to include the following:

12. A brief cover note
13. A payment deadline
14. Your bank details.

If you are a small entrepreneur with a turnover of less than 22,000 euros in the previous year (Kleinunternehmer) and thus exempt from paying VAT, your invoice should not include this tax, but instead must contain the following statement: „Nicht umsatzsteuerpflichtig nach § 19 UStG“ („Not subject to VAT in accordance with Section 19 UStG“).

## Here is a sample of a journalist's invoice:

① Freya Schreiber  
Autorenallee 1  
79098 Freiburg

② Max Mustermann  
Zeitungsmagazin  
Musterweg 1  
12345 Musterstadt

Freiburg, 15.06.2020

③

④ Rechnung Nr. 2020-001

⑫ Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,  
für Ihren am 01.01.2020 durch Herrn Max Mustermann erteilten Auftrag für das  
Zeitungsmagazin berechne ich Ihnen folgende Kosten:

Beschreibung	Betrag
⑤ Redaktioneller Beitrag: Artikel zum Thema „BASICS – Rechnung schreiben: aber richtig“	
Vereinbarte Länge: ca. 5.000 Zeichen	500,00 €
⑥ Leistungszeitraum: Juni 2020	
Lieferdatum: 15.06.2020	
Zwischensumme Netto	500,00 €
⑧ Zuzüglich Umsatzsteuer 7%	35,00 €
<b>Gesamtbetrag</b>	<b>535,00 €</b>

⑦

⑨

⑩

⑬ Bitte bezahlen Sie die Rechnung binnen zwei Wochen an die unten genannte  
Bankverbindung.  
Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Freya Schreiber

Freya Schreiber  
Autorenallee 1  
79098 Freiburg  
Deutschland

⑪

Email: XXX  
Telefon: XXX  
St-Nr.: XXX

⑭

Bank: XXX  
IBAN: XXX  
BIC: XXX

# Key points in brief

**Deadlines:** Deadlines set by the authorities can seldom be extended without further ado. However, the stated period to respond doesn't begin on the date the authority writes the letter but on the date you receive the letter. If no exact date is given, „vier Wochen“ (four weeks) means 28 days; if the stated period is „ein Monat“ (one month), you have 30 days.

**Press card:** A press card is a proof that you work for the press. It is issued by various journalists' associations (BDZV, DJV, dju, MVFP, Freelens, VDS) according to uniformly applied rules. No exceptions may be made. To prove that you work as a journalist, you can submit, for example, published articles and invoices from recent months, together with proof that you are a member of the Künstlersozialkasse (see below). A press card will help you obtain accreditation for certain events but in many cases you may not need it – for instance if an editorial department confirms that it has commissioned you to write an article about the event in question. However, a press card can be useful if you suddenly need access to an area that has been closed off by the police in the case of an unforeseeable event.

## Social security / Künstlersozialkasse

**(KSK):** In Germany, health insurance is mandatory for everyone. The amount you pay in social security contributions depends on your income. The Künstlersozialkasse pays half of the contributions of freelance journalists living in Germany. A prerequisite for this is that you earn at least 3900 euros a year as a freelance journalist. There are exceptions to this rule when you are just starting out as a journalist here. In any case, you should try to get into the KSK. Letters of reference from journalist organisations can also be helpful here, and these organisations can also provide advice. The KSK admission process can take several months. However, if you are accepted as a member your membership will apply retroactively from the day you applied for admission. For more information, visit <https://www.kuenstlersozialkasse.de/>.

**Expenses:** If you have to travel somewhere for an assignment, ask your employer whether your expenses will be covered. Be aware, however, that you are not entitled to this. If they are not covered, you can deduct them from your tax return and pay less tax. You should keep all invoices and receipts in any case.

**Taxes:** If your turnover (not profit) is below 22,000 euros per year, you don't have to charge VAT (under the small business regulation or „Kleinunternehmerregelung“). If it exceeds this

amount, however, you may no longer apply the small business regulation in the following year. This rule is not advantageous: freelance journalists are allowed to charge 7 percent VAT (the reduced tax rate instead of the usual 19 percent) but are only obliged to pay 2.2 percent to the Tax Office. Please note: You must submit your tax return by 31 July of the following year. If you miss the deadline, you will be charged at least 25 euros per month. More information on the topic of tax returns is available [here](#) on the Handbook Germany website.

# Fairness

# What should you be vigilant about?

You love your job and are passionate about your topics. But you still have to make a decent living. That's why the first thing you should do is work out what you need to earn per day to be able to live comfortably.

Especially if you come from a country that is often in the news, you may be asked for interviews by the media. Be sure to say that you would like to be paid for this. You can ask for a research fee, for example. Don't give away your expertise for nothing!

If you are given an assignment, have the main terms of the agreement such as fees, expenses, length and deadline confirmed by email. In the event of a disagreement you must be able to prove what terms you agreed to. You can send your invoice as soon as you have delivered your article. It's important to set a deadline for payment. How long is up to you. Normally it's one or two weeks, or sometimes 30 days.

If you are dealing with the authorities, always check the letters they send you because they can make mistakes too. Never rely on oral statements; always insist on getting something in writing. If you disagree with a decision, you can appeal it in writing. There are no rules for this; a simple letter of a few sen-

tences should suffice. But note that not all authorities accept applications or appeals by email.

## How to deal with discrimination in editorial departments

Many journalists with immigrant background experience discrimination in the workplace. They are seen as lacking the necessary journalistic objectivity because of their actual or ascribed background. They are told that they only got their job because of a purported „migrant quota“. Or they become the target of stupid remarks and jokes because of their skin colour, name or accent – and none of their colleagues intervene on their behalf.

Many editorial departments fail to recognise that there is a problem: „Discrimination? Not here.“ However, publishing companies and broadcasters are not discrimination-free spaces. It is therefore important that those affected know their rights. And employers need to know what their duties are. Only then can the protection against discrimination be effective.

There is no universal strategy for dealing with discrimination and no silver bullet for defending oneself against it – which is why this is a problem that

needs to be brought up again and again. For many of those affected, experiences of discrimination are associated with shame and feelings of guilt which ultimately silence them. Others are afraid they won't get any more jobs if they fight back – a fear which is quite justified. Therefore, none of the steps listed below are obligatory. But those who experience discrimination should know what possibilities there are for dealing with it.

## 1. Am I being discriminated against?

At first glance, this may seem like a simple question. The Anti-Discrimination Association of Germany (Antidiskriminierungsverband Deutschland, ADVD) provides a clear answer.

### Discrimination refers to situations when

- a person is directly or indirectly
- on the grounds of a certain characteristic (race or ethnic origin, gender, religion, age, sexual identity, disability)
- treated unjustly without any objective reason

It makes no difference whether the characteristic in question actually exists or is merely ascribed to a person.

As an example, if you are not allowed to talk on the radio because of your Russian accent while your colleagues with English or French accents are allowed

to talk, you are being discriminated against. A Black TV reporter who has to buy their own make-up while their white colleagues are provided with it by the broadcaster is being discriminated against. If you are told that you can't report objectively on migrant issues because your migrant background means that you yourself are affected, this is discrimination.

### Recognising discrimination

It's not so easy to recognise discrimination and label it as such in our everyday work life: perhaps because you're not sure whether something is within certain permissible boundaries or whether a line has been crossed. Or because colleagues vehemently deny that it's discrimination. Or because you consciously or unconsciously don't want to see yourself in the role of a victim of discrimination. Nevertheless, anyone who is treated less well than their colleagues without any objective reason, anyone who in such situations is judged directly or indirectly solely on the basis of their real or ascribed immigration background is probably being discriminated against – and should take action.

## 2. What can you do if you experience discrimination?

The Anti-Discrimination Association of Germany recommends the following steps:

## In the situation

**Focus on your own feelings:** Discrimination is hurtful and can feel humiliating. You don't have to prove anything to anyone in this situation. You don't have to respond with a witty comeback or immediately react in the „right“ way. But you don't have to simply accept discrimination either. It's important to ask yourself what you think would help you in this situation – and then follow your intuition. Withdrawing from the situation is just as viable a response as engaging in an objective discussion or voicing a clear „Stop!“ You can already consider it an achievement that you've been able to label a discriminatory experience as such.

**Stay calm:** Take a deep breath and don't let the situation upset you. Try to stay calm and make your position clear. You should also ask for the reasons behind a certain behaviour or decision and state as clearly as possible that you disagree with it, also explaining why (if possible).

**Seek support:** This can come from colleagues whom you can talk to and involve in the situation – be it for emotional support or as witnesses later on.

**Gather evidence:** Try to get the explanation for a decision or action in writing so you have proof. Also write down the names of anyone else involved or anyone who witnessed the situation. For instance, if, as a journalist of colour, you are the only trainee who is not

taken on after a training programme is completed even though all the feedback interviews were positive and all the articles you produced were broadcast, you should document this in writing.

## Once the situation is over

**Document the discrimination:** It's important to document the discriminatory situation as quickly as possible.

### **Seek support from friends and family:**

It can also be helpful to talk to people you know who have a special understanding of experiences of discrimination. This could be a friend, a close confidante, a colleague, or someone in a network such as Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen.

**Seek professional support:** Large media companies have their own equal opportunities officers. A visit to an anti-discrimination counselling centre can also be very helpful. There are counsellors there who can help you to process what you have experienced and can also help you decide what steps to take. If you want to take legal action, you should seek professional counselling as quickly as possible, because such claims can become statute-barred two months after you become aware of the discrimination. You can look up contact addresses at <https://bit.ly/3kcdtTP>

More information (in German) can be found at <https://neuemedienmacher.de/diskriminierung/>

# How to deal with threats and hate

In Germany too, journalists can become victims of physical or psychological violence in the course of their work. This may be because of the topics they cover or simply because of their appearance or their name.

If you cover sensitive topics as a freelance journalist, or if you suspect there could be violent reactions to your reporting, it makes sense to clarify in advance in a conversation with the editorial department what steps can be taken and who is responsible should a threatening situation arise:

- Who can you contact in the editorial department if you receive hate messages via email or social media?
- Who handles community management and the social media channels for your publication?
- Does the editorial department provide legal assistance in the event of threats?
- Is psychological counselling available?
- Who bears the costs if support measures for affected journalists become necessary after threats and attacks?

## Code for the Protection of Journalists

Together with other cooperation partners, Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen has developed a code for the protection of journalists: <https://schutz-kodex.de> (in German).

The code includes standards for editorial departments and concrete protective measures to support journalists. A number of German media companies have already committed to following it. If the editorial department you work with is not one of them, please forward them the link so they can read about it.

## Handbook for Journalists in Threatening Situations

In the digital era, writing a threat and posting it can be done in a matter of seconds. Online hate is a major problem and can quickly develop into a serious situation for journalists and commentators who are in the public eye, so it's important to be able to distinguish between serious and empty threats. Which messages should be taken seriously and which can be safely ignored?

### 1. Clarify the situation and understand the threat

#### How to tell what is a real threat and what is an empty one?

There are no hard and fast rules for this – but there are some clear indicators. Does a tweet come from an account that openly sends threats to various users? Was the threat sent by a bot (i.e. automated)? Was the threat specifically

addressed to you, or even sent by letter post? Or did it go to several random recipients? Does the threat say that the sender will „pay you a visit“? Does the threat contain personal data that is not publicly available? Does it mention the address of the person who is being threatened? Does it contain sensitive data, such as your relationship status or the names of your children? Does the perpetrator seem to have information on who is where at what times, for example?

When in doubt, a threat should be taken seriously. Simply having a bad feeling about it can be reason enough to take a closer look at the language used, references to a specific article or report, or the use of private data that is not publicly available. Talking to someone close whom you trust can help to clarify the situation. To gain a better understanding of the threat, you can analyse together what exactly it refers to. If possible, any potential political motivation should be identified. Is it motivated by right-wing extremism? Religious extremism? Could it have been sent by people working for an autocratic regime? Is stalking an issue? Does the threat use far-right or racist language? Does it refer to a specific article? All these aspects and observations can help with investigations later on. Family members living in the same household and flatmates should also (if possible) be informed about the situation. Anyone who lives in the same home as the threatened person is automatically also under threat.

## 2. Communication and Publicity

### Should a threat be made public?

No, it's better not to. If an email containing a concrete threat lands in someone's inbox, the following often happens: a screenshot of the threatened person is quickly taken and uploaded to their social media profiles. Friends and other users post likes and comments, and other users share the information. In the case of well-known persons, journalists sometimes call wanting to report on the situation. In many cases this kind of publicity only gives the perpetrator the validation they crave, and may encourage others to use the same tactics. In the past, making threats public has inspired copycats to send further threats. This in turn complicates investigations into the original threat.

Another aspect that should be considered before turning to your „wider“ community is that by making a threatening letter or threatening situation public you clearly reveal your vulnerability and show that the situation is affecting you. Consequently, it is not advisable to immediately make a threat public. A wiser course of action is to seek advice from employers, trade unions or organisations that support journalists and media workers. Talking to friends, family and colleagues whom you trust can also help without creating diffuse publicity that gives the perpetrator validation. Discussing the situation with a small circle of people you trust can help you to gain a better understanding and, if necessary, assess the options for

implementing further safety measures.

**The bottom line:** publicity is the last resort which should only be used if all other measures have failed.

More information is available (in German) on the website [Notfallkit für Journalist\\*innen in Bedrohungslagen](#) (Handbook for Journalists in Threatening Situations)

## Helpdesk Against Hate

[Helpdesk Against Hate](#) (in German) offers tips and tools to help individuals and editorial departments deal with online hate – from preventive measures against hate speech to emergency assistance and follow-up measures.

## Group meetings for affected journalists

Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen organise regular meetings for affected journalists who want to discuss attacks and hate speech in a protected space and offer each other support. If you're interested in attending one of the regular meetings, please contact [info@no-hate-speech.de](mailto:info@no-hate-speech.de).

## Psychological support for journalists

[Selbstlaut Kollektiv](#), [Netzwerk Recherche](#) and [Dart Centre Europe](#) have compiled a list of organisations and resources offering psychological support: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14qxHZOCSrnQQ2OEBx7w-pydyKVxRSIt4PgvgvTKvB3Vg/edit> (in German and English)

# Link Tips – Where to Find What You're Looking For

## Trade unions and associations

### **Deutscher Journalistenverband (DJV):**

The German Federation of Journalists.

Website: [www.djv.de](http://www.djv.de)

**Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju):** The Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union is the journalists' organisation within the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

It is a professional association within the media section of the United Services Trade Union (ver.di).

Website: [www.dju.verdi.de](http://www.dju.verdi.de)

### **Deutscher Fachjournalisten-Verband e.V.:**

Website: [www.dfv.de](http://www.dfv.de)

**Freischreiber e.V.:** Professional association for freelance journalists. Website: [www.freischreiber.de](http://www.freischreiber.de)

## Other media organisations

**Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma** is a project of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (US), with departments and networks across the globe, including in Germany. Its mission is to advocate ethical and thorough media coverage of trauma, conflict and tragedy. Website: [www.dartcenter.org/europe](http://www.dartcenter.org/europe)

### **European Center for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF):**

A non-governmental organisation that organises counselling and professional training for journalists in exile who have had to leave their country because of oppression or persecution.

Website: [www.ecpmf.eu/support/journalists-in-residence](http://www.ecpmf.eu/support/journalists-in-residence)

### **Netzwerk Recherche e.V.:**

A journalists' association that represents the interests of investigative journalists, especially those who are attacked for their critical work or whose research activities are blocked. Website: [www.netzwerk-recherche.de](http://www.netzwerk-recherche.de)

### **Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen**

**(NdM):** New German Media Makers is an association that campaigns for more diversity in journalism. We see ourselves as a nationwide network representing the interests of journalists of colour and media professionals with an immigrant background. Any journalist who shares our goals can join NdM – whether or not they have an immigrant background. Website: [www.neuemedienmacher.de](http://www.neuemedienmacher.de)

**Handbook Germany** is a project of Neue deutsche Medienmacher\*innen. The multilingual editorial team of journalists, most of whom also come from an immigrant or refugee background, offers information and advice to third-country nationals and citizens of other EU countries in nine languages (Arabic, English, German, Farsi, French, Pashto, Russian, Turkish and Ukrainian).

In more than 100 articles and videos, as well as daily Facebook posts, this handbook provides an A to Z of life in Germany covering a wide range of topics, from asylum and education to work, daycare, housing and visas.

Website: [www.handbookgermany.de](http://www.handbookgermany.de)

**n-ost:** As a European journalist network, n-ost forges new paths in foreign journalism. As a media NGO, we strengthen foreign journalism by facilitating transnational research, training journalists and engaging media workers with many different perspectives in a dialogue about themselves and the world.

Website: [www.n-ost.org](http://www.n-ost.org)

**Reporters Without Borders (RSF):** This international NGO campaigns for freedom of the press. Journalists who need protection and support can contact the RSF Germany's Assistance Desk: [www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/hilfe](http://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/hilfe). Click the following link to go to the RSF Helpdesk: [www.helpdesk.rsf.org](http://www.helpdesk.rsf.org)

## Where to get funding?

**JX Fund:** European Fund for Journalism in Exile: The JX Fund helps media workers to continue their work quickly and flexibly after they have fled war and crisis zones. <https://www.jx-fund.org/>

**Reporters Without Borders scholarships** (available as of 2023)

**RSF Reporting Fellowships, Rest & Refugee Fellowships, Berliner Scholarship Programme:** Scholarships | Reporter ohne Grenzen für Informationsfreiheit ([reporter-ohne-grenzen.de](http://reporter-ohne-grenzen.de))

**Other RSF cooperation partners for scholarships:** Villa Aurora: Feuchtwanger Fellowship, Hamburger Stiftung für politisch Verfolgte, Zufluchtsstadt Weimar  
**The European Centre for Press and Media**

**Freedom's Journalists in Residence Programme:** <https://www.ecpmf.eu/support/journalists-in-residence/>

**PEN Deutschland: Writers in Exile Programme (for authors):** <https://www.pen-deutschland.de/en/writers-in-exile/>

**taz Panter Stiftung: Refugium – Auszeit-Stipendium** <https://taz.de/Projekte/!160239/>

## Schools of journalism

**Independent of publishers:**

**Deutsche Journalistenschule (DJS), Munich:** [www.djs-online.de](http://www.djs-online.de)

**Freie Journalistenschule (fjs), online:** [www.freie-journalistenschule.de](http://www.freie-journalistenschule.de)

**Hamburg Media School, Hamburg:** [www.hamburgmediaschool.com](http://www.hamburgmediaschool.com)

**ifp – Die katholische Journalistenschule: Munich:** [www.journalistenschule-ifp.de](http://www.journalistenschule-ifp.de)

**Kölner Journalistenschule für Politik und Wirtschaft, Cologne:** [www.koelnerjournalistenschule.de](http://www.koelnerjournalistenschule.de)

**Zeitenpiegel-Reportageschule, Reutlingen:** [www.reportageschule.de](http://www.reportageschule.de)

**Publisher-affiliated:**

**Bauer Media Academy, Hamburg:** <https://job-karriere.bauermedia.com/journalistenschule.html>

**Burda-Journalistenschule, Offenburg:**  
[www.burda-journalistenschule.de](http://www.burda-journalistenschule.de)

**electronic media school (ems),  
Potsdam-Babelsberg:**  
[www.ems-babelsberg.de](http://www.ems-babelsberg.de)

**Free Tech – Axel Springer Academy of  
Journalism and Technology, Berlin:**  
[www.freetech.academy](http://www.freetech.academy)

**Georg von Holtzbrinck-Schule für  
Wirtschaftsjournalisten, Düsseldorf:**  
[www.holtzbrinck-schule.de](http://www.holtzbrinck-schule.de)

**Henri-Nannen-Schule, Hamburg:**  
[www.henri-nannen-schule.de](http://www.henri-nannen-schule.de)

**RTL Journalistenschule, Cologne:**  
[www.rtl-journalistenschule.de](http://www.rtl-journalistenschule.de)

All public broadcasters also offer training.

## Training Programmes

**Akademie für Publizistik Hamburg,  
Hamburg:**  
[www.akademie-fuer-publizistik.de](http://www.akademie-fuer-publizistik.de)

**ARD.ZDF medienakademie,  
Nürnberg / Hannover:**  
[www.ard-zdf-medienakademie.de](http://www.ard-zdf-medienakademie.de)

**Reporter-Akademie Berlin, Berlin:**  
[www.reporter-akademie-berlin.de](http://www.reporter-akademie-berlin.de)  
**ProContent, Essen:** [www.procontent.de](http://www.procontent.de)

**Akademie der bayerischen Presse,  
Munich:** [www.abp.de](http://www.abp.de)

**Akademie der bayerischen Presse,  
Munich:** [www.abp.de](http://www.abp.de)

**Evangelische Medienakademie, Hamburg:**  
[www.evangelische-medienakademie.de](http://www.evangelische-medienakademie.de)

**Deutsche Journalistenakademie, online:**  
[www.deutschejournalistenakademie.de](http://www.deutschejournalistenakademie.de)

**Reporterfabrik, online:**  
[www.reporterfabrik.org](http://www.reporterfabrik.org)

**datajournalism.com, online:**  
[www.datajournalism.com](http://www.datajournalism.com)

**BBC Academy, online:**  
[www.bbc.co.uk/academy](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy)

# Legal Notice / Imprint

## **Publisher:**

Neue deutsche  
Medienmacher\*innen e.V.  
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## **We would like to express our sincere thanks to:**

Yara Almunaizel, Mahdis Amiri, Tanja  
Friesen, Ellen Rothfuß, Yuliya Spillane,  
Ksenia Telepova

## **Gestaltung:** renk.studio

## **Editing and proofreading:** Renate Hensel, Negin Behkam

## **Translation:** Alison Waldie

This brochure was produced as part  
of the project „Vielfalt stärken. Di-  
versity-Kompetenz im Journalismus  
schaffen und sichtbar machen“ („Pro-  
moting diversity. Creating diversity  
competence in journalism and making  
it visible“).

We would like to thank our partners:





