Welcome

You have found your home country and are now working in Germany

We – colleagues from the trade unions organized within Member States of the German federation of trade unions – welcome you. We want to inform you about your rights in the German labour market. This flyer tells you what you need to know about the national minimum wage.

The national minimum wage in Germany was set at Euro 8.50 per hour for all employed persons aged 18 and above. Exceptions include young people employed during the first six months after their return to employment, persons engaged in the agricultural sector such as the meat industry and the agricultural sector – trade unions and employers have agreed on minimum wages of less than Euro 8.50 for a transition period lasting until 31 December 2017. Yet minimum wages in most sectors are higher than Euro 8.50. The standard gross wage for unskilled construction workers, for example, is Euro 11.15 per hour in the western German states¹ and Euro 11.25 per hour in the eastern German states² (2016: Euro 8.00 in the west and Euro 7.90 in the east). The national minimum wage in the agricultural sector will remain below Euro 8.50 throughout 2016. Euro 8.50 in the west and Euro 7.90 in the east (from 2017: Euro 8.60 in the west and the east).

The national minimum wage also applies to unskilled construction workers. Yes. You are entitled to the national minimum wage if you are employed as a seasonal worker in the hotel and restaurant trade, for example. The national minimum wage does not apply to agricultural workers, however. National minimum wages in the agricultural sector will remain below Euro 8.50 throughout 2016 and the years thereafter.

Does the national minimum wage apply to season work? Yes. If you are 18 years old or above and have found seasonal work as a housekeeper or as a baby-sitter, etc., you are entitled to the minimum wage of Euro 8.50.

Does the national minimum wage apply to work in a private household? No. Your pay is determined on the basis of the applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Does the national minimum wage apply to work as a trainee or intern? Yes. If you have also added money, you can earn a maximum of Euro 450 per month. The national minimum wage applies here as well. This means that your employer must not allow you to work for more than 52 hours each month.

Can supplemental benefits such as bonuses for night-shift work or other additional allowances be deducted from the national minimum wage? No. Most benefits and allowances must be paid in addition to the national minimum wage. This also applies as a rule to special benefits and specifically to vacation pay.

Can tips be credited against the national minimum wage? No. Tips received from customers are not regarded as wages but are added “on top”. You must receive at least Euro 8.50 from your employer for every hour you work.

Who checks to ensure that employers pay the national minimum wage? The Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) – wish to find out more about your rights in Germany? You need to know about the national minimum wage.

Does the national minimum wage apply to mini-jobs? Yes! If you have also added money, you can earn a maximum of Euro 450 per month. The national minimum wage applies here as well. This means that your employer must not allow you to work for more than 52 hours each month.

Can the value of vouchers or coupons (e.g. meal vouchers, free cinema tickets, etc.) be deducted from the national minimum wage? No. The minimum wage must be paid in full and in money.

Can you demand the national minimum wage as a trainee or intern? Yes. If you have also added money, you can earn a maximum of Euro 450 per month. The national minimum wage applies here as well. This means that your employer must not allow you to work for more than 52 hours each month.

You have the right to file a complaint to the local “Hauptzollamt” (Central Customs Office). If you think that an employer has failed to pay – from the client for whom your employer performs contract services. You can demand payment of your wages from your employer, but also – in the event that the employer fails to pay the minimum wage, the employer may be subject to a fine of up to Euro 500,000. Anyone can report violations to the local “Hauptzollamt” (Central Customs Office).

How can trade unions help? Trade unions are committed to defending the rights of workers. Each individual person is entitled to fair working conditions, fair working hours and social justice. They can organize efforts and negotiate collective bargaining agreements with employers. Without the efforts of unions, the minimum wage of Euro 8.50 per hour would not exist. Union members who are involved in politics are committed to a political future that is labour-law friendly and can win people over to the social-democratic movement.

The information provided in this flyer was compiled with great care and attention. No claim of completeness is made, however. Specific provisions may change over the course of time.

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¹ The western German states are: Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Hamburg, Hessen, Lower Saxony, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein. The eastern German states are: Brandenburg, Berlin, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia.

² From 2016, the national minimum wage is Euro 7.90 per hour in the west and Euro 8.00 in the east. From 2017: Euro 8.50 per hour.

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National minimum wage in Germany — Do you know your rights? National minimum wage in Germany — Do you know your rights?