Country Guide (IAM)

Germany

This guide is compiled from the IAM Country Guide for reference only. Customs regulations change frequently; please consult your Seapoe relocation consultant for the latest requirements before shipping.

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Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

For Foreign Citizens

- Copy of passport
- Copy of visa
- Bill of lading (BL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Packing list in German or English
- Customs declaration / signed letter by owner of the goods (confirming no taxable high-value goods: firearms, alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, tea, coffee)
- Customs registration form 0350 (stating goods will not be sold for 12 months)
- Letter of employment stating the term of employment is a minimum of 12 months and that the owner lived abroad for at least 12 months (issued by employer)
- Anmeldebestaetigung (registration confirmation from the local German town hall, not older than 3 months)
- Wohngeberbescheinigung (landlord confirmation letter, required since November 1, 2015, confirming the owner will reside at the stated address; needed to obtain the Anmeldebestaetigung)

For Returning German Citizens

- All of the above, plus:
- Botschaftsbescheinigung (certificate from the German Embassy or Consulate at origin, confirming the period of time spent abroad)

For Diplomats

- Diplomatic entry form 0349
- Certificate from the diplomatic organization in Germany
- Duty-free entry is permitted only if a bilateral agreement exists with the origin country

Specific Information

EU customs union: Products imported into the European Customs Union are subject to duties only when and where they first enter the EU. If goods enter the EU through another member state (e.g., via Rotterdam or Antwerp), customs clearance may occur at that point of entry or be deferred to Germany under the transit procedure.

Customs processing: The customs declaration can only be processed once the goods are physically within the EU and have been presented at the customs office. The customs declaration form should be provided by the local agent in Germany.

12-month arrival deadline: The shipment must arrive in Germany within 12 months after the owner's registration in Germany.

12-month resale restriction: Goods imported duty-free (Form 0350) may not be sold for 12 months after import.

Registration chain: The Anmeldebestaetigung (town hall registration) requires first obtaining a Wohngeberbescheinigung (landlord confirmation). The owner needs a German address before registration. The Anmeldebestaetigung must not be older than 3 months at the time of customs clearance.

EORI number: An EORI (Economic Operators Registration and Identification) number may be required for customs clearance of commercial or larger shipments entering the EU.

ISPM 15: Wood packaging materials must comply with ISPM 15 standards.

Currency: Euro (EUR).

Duties & Taxes

Duty-free conditions: Household goods and personal effects may be imported duty-free provided the owner has lived abroad for at least 12 months, has employment in Germany for a minimum of 12 months, and all goods have been in the owner's possession for at least 6 months prior to shipment.

VAT: Germany's standard VAT rate is 19%. Goods qualifying for duty-free transfer of residence are exempt from VAT. Non-qualifying items are subject to 19% VAT plus applicable EU common customs tariff duties.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Drugs and narcotics
- Explosives
- Ammunition (without permit)
- Dried plants (phytosanitary restrictions)
- Pornographic materials involving minors
- Certain types of meat and animal products from non-EU countries (EU veterinary restrictions)
- Radioactive materials
- Protected animal products (ivory, snakeskin, leopard fur, etc.) (CITES)
- Items of historical significance without export authorization from origin country
- Counterfeit goods

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Alcohol: Does NOT qualify as household effects and is always subject to duties and taxes. The shipper must sign a customs declaration confirming the shipment does not contain alcoholic beverages. Customs clearance of alcohol is a separate process from the household goods clearance, is not included in standard destination rates, and is subject to EU customs tariff rates plus 19% VAT calculated on duties plus proportionate transport costs (door-to-door).

Tobacco and cigarettes: Subject to duties and taxes. Must not be included in household goods shipments.

Tea and coffee: Subject to duties if included in shipments.

Weapons: Applicable license is required.

Live plants: Special import license required.

Traveller allowances (for goods in personal luggage, not household shipments): Standard EU traveller allowances apply for arrivals from non-EU countries: 200 cigarettes or equivalent, 1 litre of spirits over 22% ABV or 2 litres under 22%, 4 litres of wine, 16 litres of beer, other goods up to EUR 430 (air/sea) or EUR 300 (land).

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air and sea shipments.

Owner should arrive before the shipment. The Anmeldebestaetigung (town hall registration) can only be obtained after the owner arrives and registers at their new address. This document is required for customs clearance. The owner should plan to arrive at least 1-2 weeks before the shipment to secure the Wohngeberbescheinigung from the landlord and then register at the town hall.

Inventory requirements: Packing list in German or English, detailed enough for customs inspection. A signed letter confirming the absence of taxable high-value goods (firearms, alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee) is required.

Ports of entry: Hamburg, Bremerhaven, and Rotterdam (Netherlands, with transit to Germany) are the primary sea freight ports. Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin airports handle air freight. Germany's extensive road and rail network also supports overland shipments from other EU countries.

EU intra-community moves: Household goods moving from one EU member state to Germany are not subject to customs clearance. No customs documentation is required for intra-EU moves; only standard moving documentation applies.

Special note on alcohol: If a client insists on including alcohol in their shipment, it must be declared separately and will require a separate customs clearance process with applicable duties and taxes. This should be quoted as an additional service.