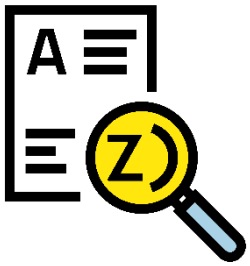
Facts and Questions: Job loss

Last updated: 09 | 2025

I am a skilled worker with a residence permit under § 18a or § 18b of the Residence Act (AufenthG) or in possession of an EU Blue Card and have lost my job. What can and must I do?



1. Do I have to inform the immigration office (Landesamt für Einwanderung - LEA)?

According to § 82 Paragraph 6 of the Residence Act you must inform the LEA within two weeks of your acknowledgement of the early termination of your employment via the contact form.

2. Will my residence permit remain valid?

Unless stated otherwise in your residence permit and your supplementary sheet (Zusatzblatt), your residence permit will remain valid even after you lose your job.

3. What happens next?

Usually the LEA will give you up to 12 months to find a new job. As the residence permit remains valid in most cases, the LEA will not take any action during this time. If you have not found a new job within this timeframe, and have not applied for a new residence permit, the LEA can shorten the validity of your residence permit. The LEA would first need to inform you of this with a hearing letter, which you can usually respond to within four weeks. Only then, would a decision be issued about a shortening of your residence permit. You can appeal against this, see question 12 below.

4. Can I start another job immediately or work as a freelancer while I am looking for a job?

As long as your residence permit is still valid, you may only be gainfully employed to the extent stated there or in the supplementary sheet. In many cases, this means that you may only work for your former employer. If this is the case, it may be advisable to apply for an Opportunity Card (Chancenkarte) as soon as possible so that you can at least work part-time to support yourself financially while looking for a job.

If your supplementary sheet states:

> „Nach 2-jähr. versicherungspfl. Beschäftig. ist Beschäftig. jeder Art erlaubt."
> ("After 2 years of employment subject to mandatory insurance contributions, employment of any kind is permitted.")

and you have already worked for two years subject to mandatory insurance contributions, you can take up any job without permission from the LEA. However, your residence permit can only be extended later, on the basis of skilled employment. If your supplementary sheet for the EU Blue Card states:

> „Beschäftigung und AG-Wechsel gemäß § 18g Abs. 1 S. 1 AufenthG erlaubt
> Nach 1-jähr. versicherungspfl. Beschäftig. ist Beschäftig. jeder Art erlaubt"
> ("Employment and change of employer permitted pursuant to Section 18g (1) sentence 1 Residence Act
> Employment of any kind is permitted after 1 year of employment subject to mandatory insurance contributions")

then you do not need permission from the LEA to change employers. If you change employers in the first year, you are obliged to inform the LEA. If your new employment does not meet the requirements for the EU Blue Card, the LEA will ask you to end your employment.

5. Can I apply for a residence permit to look for a job?

As a skilled worker, you can also apply for the so-called Opportunity Card (Chancenkarte) online at the following link: https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/354301/.

The prerequisite is that you are able to secure your livelihood. You can prove this with a bank balance or a concrete job offer (also unqualified). However, you may not work more than 20 hours a week with the Opportunity Card. As a single adult, you need a monthly net amount of 911 Euros plus rental costs, either as a bank balance or as a salary. Alternatively, you may use a Declaration of Commitment (Verpflichtungserklärung) or a notarized declaration from your parents. Furthermore, you need to have health insurance. You can only start your part-time job, after you have been issued an Opportunity Card. The Opportunity Card is issued for up to one year, starting from the date on which your employment contract was terminated.

6. How can I finance myself while I am looking for work? Can or may I receive benefits?

If you have worked for a certain period of time, you can apply for Unemployment Benefits I (Arbeitslosengeld I). This does not affect your residence status. You may not apply for Citizen's Benefits (Bürgergeld). This would lead either to a termination of your residence permit - depending on what is stated in the residence permit or in the supplementary sheet - or the LEA could shorten the validity of your residence permit. With an Opportunity Card, you can also do unskilled jobs part-time.

7. Do I have to find a job again in the profession I have learned?

In order to obtain a residence permit as a skilled worker again, you must find a job that requires an academic degree or vocational training. For the Blue Card, you must find a job in the field of your degree. Depending on what is stated in your supplementary sheet, you may also be allowed to work in another field in the meantime, see question 4 above.

8. How can I apply for a new residence permit with a new job offer?

You can apply online for the residence permit as a skilled worker:
www.service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/329328/

9. What happens if I do not find a new job while my residence permit is valid?

In the event that you are unable to apply for a residence permit for another purpose, you must leave the country after your residence permit expires. If you submit a new application before the residence permit expires, the so-called temporary effect (Fiktionswirkung) applies and the LEA must decide on your application. It must first grant you a hearing you in writing. As a rule, the LEA gives you four weeks to respond to the hearing letter. As long as your residence permit or Fictional Certificate (Fiktionsbescheinigung) is still valid, you can submit a new application.

Facts and Questions: Job loss

Last updated: 09 | 2025

10. What happens if the LEA rejects my application for a new residence permit?

The LEA must hear you in writing before rejecting your application. As a rule, the LEA gives you four weeks to respond to the hearing letter. As long as your residence permit or a provisional residence document is still valid, you can submit a new application. If your application for a residence permit is rejected, the immigration authority will ask you to leave the country within four weeks.

11. Can I appeal against the negative decision?

Yes, you can file an appeal (Klage) and you can file an urgent application (Eilantrag). You are only protected from deportation, until a decision has been made on the urgent application (usually within a few weeks). If the urgent application is rejected, you must leave the country, even if the court has not ruled yet on your appeal. If your urgent application is successful, then you are safe from deportation until the decision on the appeal is made. In the event that your appeal will be dismissed, you must also leave the country.

12. I have lost my job and my residence permit is about to expire. What can I do?

As a skilled worker, you can apply for an Opportunity Card in accordance with § 20a of the Residence Act. To do so, you must prove that you are able to secure your livelihood. You can do this by submitting a job offer (max. 20 hours per week).

13. Can I book an appointment at the LEA or go there without an appointment to apply for a new residence permit?

You can apply online for a residence permit as a skilled worker or for an EU Blue Card, see question 9. To apply for the Opportunity Card you must use the LEA contact form.

14. I have applied for a new residence permit and I would like to or need to start quickly a new job, but the LEA is not responding to me. What can I do?

You can request an emergency appointment with the LEA via the contact form, if you have a written confirmation from your employer that you are at risk of losing your employment without a valid document.

Facts and Questions: Job loss

Last updated: 09 | 2025

15. I do not receive unemployment benefits and I am not allowed to work. What can I do to finance myself?

You should apply for an Opportunity Card as soon as possible. This will allow you to work 20 hours per week.

Facts and Questions

The Welcome Center is the counseling center of the Berlin Senate Commissioner for Participation, Integration and Migration. We offer advice for immigrants and new arrivals, people without a German passport and people with a history of migration, as well as for their relatives.

Facts and Questions is a regular informative format of the Welcome Center. We are also happy to provide advice on site. More information about the Welcome Center at www.berlin.de/willkommenszentrum