



Export to Germany

Choosing your export market

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1. General information

After contracting by 1.1% in the second quarter of 2024, GDP grew by 0.4% in the third quarter, driven by both private and public consumption. The significant uncertainty surrounding the funding and design of measures to support the green transition is undermining investor and consumer confidence. In September 2024, industrial production was 4.6% lower than it had been a year earlier. Despite falling energy prices, energy-intensive industries produced 2% less in September compared to the same month the previous year, and the volatile automotive sector declined again after a sharp rise in August. However, in the manufacturing sector, new orders picked up strongly in September (+4.2%). Annual headline inflation rose from 1.8% in September to 2.4% in October, mainly due to higher prices for food and services. Core inflation also increased, from 3.0% in September to 3.3% in October, and remains persistent, largely driven by a 4.8% rise in service prices in October. In the third quarter of 2024, nominal wages per employee rose by 5.1% year-on-year, boosting real wages and supporting a rebound in retail sales volumes between July and September. Despite signs of easing, the labour market remains tight, as reflected in a stable unemployment rate and a still-high number of job vacancies compared to historical levels, pointing to continued significant labour shortages.



Strengths

- Strong industrial base (23% of GDP in 2022)
- Low structural unemployment; well-developed apprenticeship system
- Importance of family-owned exporting SMEs (Mittelstand)
- Consensus-orientated politics, institutional system promoting representativeness

Weaknesses

- Declining working population from 2020 onwards, despite immigration
- Strong dependence on international energy imports (share of net imports in domestic consumption was 64% in 2021)
- Economy's heavy dependence on foreign trade, which is mainly focused on single countries like China
- Prominence of the automotive and mechanical industries, particularly in exports (29% of total exports in 2022)
- Capacity constraints, insufficient investment (especially in internet accessibility) and venture capital limits productivity gains

Trade Exchanges

↑ **Export** of goods as a % of total

 United States of America	10%
 France	7%
 Netherlands	7%
 China	7%
 Poland	6%

↓ **Import** of goods as a % of total

 Netherlands	14%
 China	9%
 Belgium	6%
 Poland	6%
 Italy	5%

- After rising in July and August, exports fell by 1.7% in value in September.
- Exports to non-European Union (EU) countries declined further in October and remained 6.5% below their October 2023 level, mainly due to weak demand from China and the United States.
- Export orders, however, have bounced back in recent months following a broader recovery in global demand.
- Inflation rate expected to decrease further in 2024, stabilise around 3%
- Following the election of the new government and the shift in political leadership, new trends are expected to emerge, particularly in the areas of economy and energy.
- Current account surplus to recover due to improved terms of trade, increasing export volumes, and decreasing import volumes
- Structural deficit of trade in balance of services likely to widen as more Germans spend holidays abroad



2. Additional indicators

Economic indicators

Find the main socio-economic indicators for this country, as well as its trade with Brussels and Belgium, in the publication "[Brussels and the world – Country statistics](#)" on [analytics.brussels](#), [hub.brussels](#)' online data library.

The "[Brussels and the world - General statistics](#)" publication also provides data on trade between the Brussels-Capital Region and the rest of the world, by continent and by major world region. The same type of data is also available for the various regions of Belgium, as well as for Belgium as a whole.

Social and environmental indicators

If you'd like to know where your country stands in terms of social, environmental and economic issues, access a series of [composite indicators from the European Commission](#), structured according to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹ and the European Commission's 6 priority policy areas².

Free trade agreements

European agreements have a major impact on market accessibility and trade with certain countries. The links below, published by the European Commission, will provide you with all the information you need on free trade agreements and trade barriers. Existing agreements, those that have not yet been ratified and those that are expected to be ratified, can be consulted here:

- [Free trade agreements](#)
- [Trade barriers](#)

Additional information

The World Bank is an international organization that collects statistics on economic and social factors, institutions, and environmental issues in nearly all countries worldwide. These indicators, available from 1960 to the present, provide reliable information on population, development, and sustainability. (Not all data is available up to the most recent year for every country.) The database also allows countries to be compared.

- [World Bank indicators](#)

¹No poverty, Zero hunger, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Clean and affordable energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Sustainable consumption and production, Measures to combat climate change, Water life, Land life, Peace, justice and effective institutions, Partnerships to achieve the goals.

² A green pact for Europe, An economy serving people, A Europe fit for the digital age, A stronger Europe on the world stage, Promoting our European way of life, A new impetus for European democracy.



3. On-site: a step-by-step guide

Market access and first contacts

Prospecting

- 'Germans sell in English, but prefer to buy in German' – it is slowly changing but, in some sectors, German is still mandatory
- Germany is a very price-conscious market – check on your competitiveness in Europe's biggest market
- For all consumption goods, it is to consider the market size and check on the price, for which similar products already sold in Germany
- In some sectors, agents might be the appropriate partner – legally, they are very well protected in Germany.
- Germany is THE decentralized country, Berlin is the political, but not the economic capital of the country, economic power is spread all over the country.
- Germans want to know, whom they are dealing with – have a website (preferably in German, at least in English) to which you can refer – in Germany, an 'imprint' with the company details is mandatory
- If you want to reach out to a company you don't know, reach out to them by phone, even in English, a cold mail will be deleted unread. After the initial call, you can write an email referring to your call.



Exporting

company types

Below is the overview of the major business forms available in Germany. Please note that it is legally required for a business in Germany to identify their legal form as OHG, GmbH or AG.

- Sole Proprietorship (Einzelunternehmen): Mostly opted by people who are willing to start their business run by a sole trader
- Partnership (Personengesellschaft): When two or three people or companies as a sole proprietorship work together
 - Offene Handelsgesellschaft, **OHG**: also known as general partnership consists of two partners at least. There is no set limit on liability for each partner. OHG

can also include legal entities as members, in spite of them being established in the umbrella of German or foreign law.

- Civil Law Partnership (**GbR**): This type of company is defined as an association of business or individuals coming together to achieve a unified contractual purpose. This is purely suited for startups to launch their company or business in cooperation.
- Limited Partnership (**KG**): this type of business is related to an OHG. In this type, there is an option to limit the liability of some partners.
- Limited Partnership for Shares (**KGaA**): This is not a very common type of company. It is a combination of limited company (AG) and limited partnership company (KG).
- Corporation (Kapitalgesellschaft): the most favorite legal entity preferred by most start-ups and funded companies.
 - Private Company with Limited Liability (**GmbH**): This company type is most commonly used business form when starting a business in Germany.
 - Joint Stock Company (**AG**): An individual can establish this type of company with a capital of around 50,000 euros at minimum
- Non-profit Companies in Germany: Foreign residents and German citizens can also start a non-profit company (Gemeinnützige GmbH – **gGmbH**) when planning to start a business in Germany.

Registration of the new company

- Registration with the German commercial register (Handelsregister) via a German notary is mandatory. Since August 2022 it can be done online
- Once registered in the commercial register, the GmbH becomes a legal entity and the limited liability exists.
- Before business operations are started, the competent local trade office (Gewerbe-/Ordnungsamt) must be notified about the planned activity. A business license or permit is not necessary for registering the business in the majority of cases. In some sectors, a permit or authorization might be required.

Support and subsidies

Discover all subsidies for Brussels businesses on the Brussels Economy and Employment website.



Interesting markets for a first export

- **Digitalization of the medical sector**
 - The Covid Crisis has turned out to be an accelerator for Germany's digitalization in general. The medical sector is now more open to new solutions than never, being really in need for modernization
 - However, the medical sector in Germany is extremely regulated and solutions have to be tailor-made taking those regulations and the reimbursement policy of the healthcare system in consideration
- **Decarbonizing the German industry**
 - The German chemical industry as well as the German steel industry are leading industry sectors in Europe. Both industries are seeking decarbonization in order to reduce their carbon footprint - and will therefore be moving to hydrogen within the next few years. This decarbonization trend will create new investment opportunities along the entire value chain: for the production of decarbonized chemicals, for the production of green steel as well as for technology providers that enable this transition.
- **Start-up Location Germany**
 - There are more than 60,000 start-ups in highly specialized sectors across the country. As both Europe's biggest economy and largest market, Germany plays an important role within the European start-up scene. The country is highly competitive in comparison with other international start-up centers thanks to its unicorns (including Celonis, FlixBus and N26). In Berlin alone, you'll find more than 6,000 of them, across all sectors. International start-ups are being launched there and see the city-state as an ideal test market.
- **Sustainable construction**
 - Germany has to catch up in sustainable construction and is looking at Belgium for its positive reputation in this specific field. The whole country is in need of affordable housing which has to fulfill ambitious and climate-friendly regulations
- **Circular Economy**
 - The circular economy is expected to record annual growth of more than five percent - reaching market volume of EUR 32 billion by 2030.
 - Germany has long been a leader in the transition towards a circular economy. Progressive policies and initiatives promote resource efficiency and waste reduction. The sector has the potential to create new business opportunities, employment and environmental benefits as well as contributing to Germany's sustainable development goals.



Trade fairs

Germany is one of the traditional fair countries with 70 trade fair venues. Germany is home to four of the world's ten largest exhibition centres, and several organisers are among the world's top 10. 160 to 180 international and national trade fairs are held in Germany every year. These fairs attract more than 180,000 exhibitors and ten million visitors:

AUMA – Association of the German Trade Fair Industry - AUMA

AGRITECHNICA

The world's largest trade fair for agricultural machinery and equipment
09-15.11.2025 – Hannover
<https://www.agritechnica.com>

Anuga

The world's largest trade fair for food and beverages
04-08.10.2025 - Cologne
<https://www.anuga.de/>

Automechanika

International exhibition for the automotive service industry.
10-14.09.2024 - Frankfurt
<https://automechanika.messefrankfurt.com>

Bauma

The world's leading trade fair for construction machinery, building material machines, mining machines, construction vehicles and construction equipment.
7.- 13.04.2025 - Munich
<https://bauma.de>

BIOFACH + VIVANESS

World's leading trade fair for organic food/international trade fair for organic personal care
11.-14. 2.2025 - Nuremberg
<https://www.biofach.de>

DMEA

Europe's leading platform for digital healthcare
April 2025, TBD – Berlin
<https://www.dmea.de>

DMEXCO

The Meeting Place for Key Players in Digital Business, Marketing and Innovation
18.-19.9.2024, Cologne
www.dmexco.com

FRUIT LOGISTICA

International trade fair for fruit and vegetable marketing
5.-7.2.2025 – Berlin
<https://www.fruitlogistica.com/>

Gamescom

World's Leading Trade Fair for Computer and Video Games
21. - 25.8.2024 - Cologne
<https://glowstaff.de/en/gamescom-cologne-en/>

Hannover Messe

The world's leading trade fair for industrial transformation
31.3.-4.4.2025 - Hannover
<https://www.hannovermesse.de>

IFA

one of the world's leading trade shows for consumer electronics and home appliances.
6.-10.9.2024 - Berlin
<https://www.ifa-berlin.com/>

IFAT Munich

World's Leading Trade Fair for Water, Sewage, Waste and Raw Materials Management
13.-17.5.2024 – Munich
www.ifat.de

InnoTrans

The leading international trade fair for rail and transport technology
24.-27.9.2024 - Berlin
<https://www.innotrans.de>

Internorga

International trade fair for the hotel, gastronomy, and bakery industries
14.-18.3.2025 - Hamburg
<https://www.internorga.com/>



ISM Süßwarenmesse

World's Leading Trade Fair for
Confectionery and Snacks
2.-5.2.2025 - Cologne
<https://www.ism-cologne.de/>

ITB

The world's largest tourism trade fair
4.-6.3.2025 - Berlin
<https://www.itb.com>

IT-TRANS

International conference and exhibition on
the intelligent urban transport systems
14.-16.5.2024 - Karlsruhe
<https://www.it-trans.org>

Medica/Compamed

The world's largest trade fair for the
medical industry, including medical
technology, electromedical equipment,
laboratory equipment, diagnostics, and
pharmaceuticals

11.-14.11.2024 - Düsseldorf
<https://www.medica.de/>

parts2clean

Leading international trade fair for
industrial parts and surface cleaning
7.-9.10.2025 - Stuttgart
<https://www.parts2clean.de>

ProWein

International Trade Fair for Wine and
Spirits
16.-18.3.2025 – Düsseldorf
www.prowein.de

WindEnergy

WindEnergy Hamburg is one of the world's
biggest and most important wind business
platforms for exchanging news and views,
building networks and closing major deals.
24. - 27.9.2024 - Hamburg
<https://www.windenergyhamburg.com>



4. Business culture

- **Hierarchy and Structure:**
 - Well-defined hierarchical structures with clear lines of authority.
 - Top-down decision-making with senior management delegating tasks.
- **Efficiency and Precision:**
 - Valued qualities include efficiency, precision, and thoroughness.
 - Punctuality and meeting deadlines are essential.
- **Professionalism:**
 - Conducting oneself professionally and adhering to company policies is crucial.
 - Maintaining a high standard of performance is expected.
- **Work-Life Balance:**
 - Strong work ethic balanced with valuing personal time.
 - Flexible working hours, part-time options, and generous vacation time are common.
 - Observance of public holidays and regional variations.
 - Consideration of holidays when scheduling business activities.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:**
 - Emphasis on teamwork over individual achievement.
 - Encouragement of collaborative efforts to achieve common goals.
- **Direct Communication:**
 - Direct communication style with emphasis on honesty and clarity.
 - Respectful address using titles and last names initially – in German, you usually stick to Mr./Mrs./Dr. etc. and you are no on first name terms very quickly.
- **Attire and Clothes:**
 - Conservative and formal business attire (depending on the sector and the region).
 - Neat and professional appearance is important.
- **Language:**
 - Proficiency in English common but basic German phrases appreciated.
 - Effort to communicate in German can build rapport.



With Gen Z entering the workforce and the post-Covid era reshaping norms, many of these customs are starting to fade. Remote work is now commonly offered by default in job postings, and even four-day workweeks are sometimes considered and desired—highlighting the growing importance of work-life balance.

In the startup world, English is the everyday language, suits are rarely seen, and sneakers and more casual clothing are the norm. Overall, ties are gradually disappearing, though this still depends on the sector and region.



5. What can we do for you?

Local contact points

The General Delegates and Local Representatives of the Region employed by hub.brussels are official representatives of the Brussels Government abroad, they support Brussels companies that want to export, and search and prospect for new investors.

They have the information, expertise and in-depth knowledge about the specifics of different foreign markets. Based on that knowledge, they help to refine and fine-tune your export plans, with advice on regulations, competition, market entry conditions, permits, etc. Furthermore, they can support you with your questions regarding exports, certain sectors within the jurisdiction, contacts with intermediaries, business culture, and much more.



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Useful websites to delve into

www.gtai.de – Germany Trade & Invest, offers very interesting articles about the German Economy in different sectors

www.debelux.org – German-Belgian-Luxemburg Chamber of Commerce

www.destatis.de – German Federal Statistics Office

www.handelsregister.de – German commercial register

Mapping of German Clusters: [Clusterplattform Deutschland - Startseite](#)

Halle Institute for Economic Research - [IWH - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Halle \(iwh-halle.de\)](#)