

The German sick leave policy

Immigration and employment in Germany



Every country has a different policy regarding paid sick days. In Germany, employers are legally obliged to pay sick workers' full wages for up to six weeks. But, employees must have been employed for a period of four weeks prior to illness in order to be eligible to claim salary for the period of six weeks.

If the incapacity for work continues for more than 3 days, sick workers must submit a proof of incapacity for work with duration. After six weeks, the health-insurance fund pays sickness benefits (Krankengeld) of "70 percent of the normal salary but not exceeding 90 percent of the net salary" (EC, 2008).

The insured employee receives sickness benefits in case of incapacity for work for the same illness for the longest period of 78 weeks within 3 years each, starting from the first day of sickness.

Working parents are also entitled to receive sickness benefits in order to take care of a sick child under the age of 12. Employees may receive the benefits for 10 working days for each sick child up to a maximum of 25 days per year; single parents have 20 working days, up to a maximum of 50 days per year.

Germany's adoption of a modified Law on Family Care Time (Pflegezeitgesetz) is allowing employees to take up to ten days of unpaid leave to care for a close relative in urgent situations. The ten days can also be used to organize care for relatives.

In Companies that employ more than 15 employees an unpaid leave of up to six months is also available. A notice period of 10 working days has to be taken into consideration. In both cases, employees are guaranteed a return to their employment after the leave.

The labour relationship cannot be terminated from the notification till the termination of the short term prevention from work due to the care case. This new federal legislation perceived as an important step ahead in reconciling work and life balance in Germany.

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