COUNTRY GUIDE



EUROPE

Austria.

Section 95 of the Austrian Criminal Code punishes failing to give obviously necessary help in an accident or common danger, unless help cannot reasonably be expected. The Volunteering Act (Freiwilligengesetz) sets up federal frameworks such as a volunteer pass, a volunteer report, volunteer centers and a recognition fund, and the Income Tax Act allows deductions for donations to qualifying institutions. Accident insurance rules treat rescue activities like work accidents.

DUTY TO HELP A STRANGER

Yes

PROTECTION FOR HELPERS

Limited

GIVING AND SERVICE

4 programs and laws

Is there a legal duty to help a stranger?

YES

Under section 95 StGB, anyone who, in an accident or common danger, fails to give the help obviously necessary to rescue a person from the danger of death or considerable bodily injury or damage to health faces up to six months in prison or a fine of up to 360 daily rates (up to one year or 720 daily rates if the omission results in death), unless help cannot reasonably be expected. Subsection 2 says help is in particular not reasonable if it is only possible at risk to life or limb or by violating other significant interests.

Strafgesetzbuch (StGB), § 95 Unterlassung der Hilfeleistung (version in force from January 1, 2016), RIS open government data copy (Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (RIS), Bundeskanzleramt)

Are people who help protected?

LIMITED

No Austrian statute giving general immunity from civil liability to helpers was found. Section 176 para. 1 no. 2 of the General Social Insurance Act (ASVG) treats accidents during the rescue of a person from actual or presumed danger to life, and during help in other accidents or general danger or need, as equivalent to work accidents (statutory accident insurance), unless the helper intentionally caused the accident or another accident-insurance claim exists.

Allgemeines Sozialversicherungsgesetz (ASVG), § 176 Arbeitsunfällen gleichgestellte Unfälle, RIS open government data copy (Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (RIS), Bundeskanzleramt)

How the government promotes giving and service

Freiwilligengesetz (Volunteering Act), BGBl. I Nr. 17/2012

Section 1 states the Act regulates frameworks for formal volunteer activity in the public interest and lists funding for volunteer organizations, a volunteer pass, a volunteer report every five years, a service and competence center, volunteer centers, a state prize for volunteering, the Freiwilligenweb, volunteer years (social, environmental, memorial service, peace and social service abroad), a volunteer council, and a recognition fund.

RECHTSINFORMATIONSSYSTEM DES BUNDES (RIS), BUNDESKANZLERAMT

Freiwilligenweb and the register of volunteer organizations (FWO)

The federal ministry's Freiwilligenweb site describes a register of organizations recognized by the ministry, a digital volunteer pass and proof of volunteering, and information on the volunteer years at home and abroad.

BMASGPK, FREIWILLIGENWEB

Donation deduction for businesses (EStG 1988 section 4a)

Donations from business assets to institutions that qualify by official notice, for purposes such as charitable and benevolent aims under the Federal Fiscal Code (BAO), count as business expenses up to 10 percent of profit.

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Donation deduction for individuals (EStG 1988 section 18 para. 1 no. 7)

Voluntary money donations to donation-eligible institutions under section 4a are deductible as special expenses, together with any business donations, up to 10 percent of total income.

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Ways to give and volunteer

Austria has a widely used donation seal and a strong volunteer culture centered on emergency services such as the Red Cross. Many social services are also run by church-affiliated groups, which this list does not recommend.

Check a charity before you give

The Austrian donation quality seal, whose site lists the organizations that meet its standards on transparency and use of funds; a missing seal does not prove a group is bad, but it is a quick first check.

Österreichisches Spendengütesiegel (OSGS)

Give your time

Freiwilligenweb.at
The federal government's volunteer information site with a search for volunteer roles and guidance for volunteers.

Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz
The national Red Cross society, which relies heavily on volunteers for ambulance, rescue and social services.

Give money, blood or a donation

Rotes Kreuz Blutspende
The Red Cross blood donation service, with donor information and where to give.

Fundraising Verband Austria
The professional association of fundraisers, which publishes a code of conduct for member organizations.

In an emergency or a crisis

TelefonSeelsorge Österreich
A free, confidential helpline reached at 142 for people in crisis, open at all hours.

Before you act

- Street and door-to-door collectors and phone callers asking for donations should be asked for the organization's name, and you can check it for the donation seal before giving.
- Be wary of urgent requests to pay by gift card or to a private account, especially after a disaster.
- Citizens of non-EU countries need the right permit for any work, and unpaid regular work for an organization can count as work, so check with the host group first.

This list does not cover local clubs and parish groups, or the separate rules for tax-deductible donations. Checked 2026-10-28. Listing an organization is not an endorsement, and none of them has endorsed this site. Some official sites block automatic checks, so a link may need a second try.

One thing worth knowing

Austria's Volunteering Act gives formal volunteering a federal framework with named instruments (volunteer pass, recognition fund, state prize), and rescue help is covered by statutory accident insurance (ASVG section 176).

What this does not mean

Not legal advice. German-language texts were summarized by this guide and the RIS open-data copies were used because the main RIS site blocked automated retrieval; later amendments to section 4a and 18 EStG were not checked. The Act covers formal volunteering, not spontaneous help to strangers. This is a plain-language summary of public sources, not legal advice, and it does not rank countries. No government named here has endorsed this site. Not reviewed by a lawyer. Statutes were read in public sources and may have changed. Last checked October 26, 2026.

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