COUNTRY GUIDE



EUROPE

Germany.

Section 323c of the Strafgesetzbuch punishes failing to render assistance in an accident, common danger or emergency when help is necessary and reasonable to expect. Statutory accident insurance covers people who help in such situations, and federal law sets up a national volunteer service and tax rules for donations and volunteer payments.

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

Section 323c(1) StGB punishes anyone who does not render assistance in an accident, common danger or emergency although it is necessary and can reasonably be expected under the circumstances, in particular if possible without substantial danger to that person and without breaching other important duties. The penalty is imprisonment of up to one year or a fine. Section 323c(2) punishes obstructing a person who is helping or wants to help.

German Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch - StGB), English translation (Section 323c) (Federal Ministry of Justice via Gesetze im Internet (translation by Prof. Michael Bohlander, informational only)) § 323c StGB - Unterlassene Hilfeleistung; Behinderung von hilfeleistenden Personen (Federal Ministry of Justice via Gesetze im Internet)

Are people who help protected?

LIMITED

Section 2(1) no. 13 a) of Book VII of the Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB VII) makes people who render assistance in accidents, common danger or emergencies, or rescue another from significant present danger to health, insured by law under statutory accident insurance. In the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, Section 680 limits the liability of a person acting to avert an urgent danger to the other party to intent and gross negligence, and Section 683 lets such a helper claim reimbursement of expenses under the stated conditions. This guide did not review how courts apply these provisions.

§ 2 SGB VII - Versicherung kraft Gesetzes (Federal Ministry of Justice via Gesetze im Internet) § 680 BGB - Geschäftsführung zur Gefahrenabwehr (Federal Ministry of Justice via Gesetze im Internet) § 683 BGB - Ersatz von Aufwendungen (Federal Ministry of Justice via Gesetze im Internet)

How the government promotes giving and service

Tax deduction for donations

Section 10b of the Einkommensteuergesetz allows donations and membership fees for tax-privileged purposes to be deducted as special expenses, up to 20 percent of total income (or a turnover-based alternative), subject to the conditions in the section.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE VIA GESETZE IM INTERNET

Tax exemption for part-time volunteer income

Section 3 no. 26a of the Einkommensteuergesetz exempts income from certain part-time activities that serve charitable, benevolent and church purposes, up to a stated annual amount (960 euros in the version consulted).

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE VIA GESETZE IM INTERNET

Bundesfreiwilligendienst (Federal Volunteer Service)

The Bundesfreiwilligendienstgesetz establishes a federal volunteer service in which people engage for the common good, in particular in the social, ecological and cultural fields and in sports, integration and civil and disaster protection (Section 1).

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE VIA GESETZE IM INTERNET

Orders and honors

The Federal President's office publishes information on the federal orders and on other decorations he awards, which include, for example, decorations for mine rescue work and for long-standing choirs, orchestras and clubs.

OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT

Ways to give and volunteer

Germany has a dense network of registered associations (Vereine), and large charities are run by welfare federations, some of them church-based. Look for a recognized seal before giving to a large appeal.

Check a charity before you give

The German Central Institute for Social Issues, which awards a donation seal and reviews charities.

DZI Spenden-Siegel

Give your time

Bundesfreiwilligendienst

The federal voluntary service, offering full-time service placements in social and environmental work.

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK)

The German Red Cross, with volunteer roles in rescue, first aid and community help.

Tafel Deutschland
The national network of local food banks (Tafeln), most of which need volunteers.

Give money, blood or a donation

Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft
A voluntary pledge listing organizations that publish basic facts about their money, goals and leaders.

Blutspende (DRK)
Find a blood donation appointment through the Red Cross blood services.

Organspende-Info
The federal health education site on organ donation and the donor card.

Tafel Deutschland
Donate food or money to local food banks.

In an emergency or a crisis

TelefonSeelsorge: 0800 111 0 111 or 0800 111 0 222 (also 116 123)
Free, anonymous support by phone, open day and night; chat, email and in-person counseling also offered.

TelefonSeelsorge
A free, anonymous crisis line and chat that runs around the clock.

Before you act

- Be wary of street and doorstep collectors without ID and of emails asking for quick transfers, and ask a charity to send its details by mail first. A DZI seal or Transparente Zivilgesellschaft listing is a helpful sign, though many good small groups have neither.
- TelefonSeelsorge is run with church support, but it serves everyone.

This list covers a few national starting points, not every local group, and sites can change. 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

Section 323c(2) also makes it a crime to obstruct someone who is helping or wants to help, and statutory accident insurance explicitly names helpers in emergencies as insured persons.

What this does not mean

This is a plain-language summary, not legal advice. The English StGB text is a courtesy translation by Prof. Bohlander published for information only; the German text is the authoritative one, and this guide's renderings of the other German statutes are this guide's own. Tax figures change over time and This guide did not verify how the provisions work in practice. 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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