COUNTRY GUIDE



EUROPE

Netherlands.

The Dutch Criminal Code contains a narrow provision, Article 450, on failing to help a person in immediate danger of death. The central government publishes information on volunteering and sets out what counts as volunteer work, and the tax authority allows deductions for gifts to approved charities. The state also awards royal honors, including one for rescues.

DUTY TO HELP A STRANGER
Limited

PROTECTION FOR HELPERS
Limited

GIVING AND SERVICE
4 programs and laws

Is there a legal duty to help a stranger?

LIMITED

Article 450 of the Wetboek van Strafrecht punishes a person who, as a witness to another's immediate danger to life, fails to give or obtain the help they could reasonably give or obtain 'without danger to themselves or others', but only 'if the death of the person in need of help follows'. The penalty is detention of up to three months or a fine of the second category. It is classed among the 'overtredingen' (minor offenses).

Wetboek van Strafrecht (Artikel 450) (Wettenbank, Dutch government (overheid.nl))

Are people who help protected?

LIMITED

No Dutch statute that gives helpers a specific immunity. Under Book 6 of the Burgerlijk Wetboek, 'zaakwaarneming' (Articles 198 to 200) is the general rule on voluntarily handling another's affairs; Article 200 says the person whose interest was properly looked after must compensate the damage the helper suffered as a result.

Burgerlijk Wetboek Boek 6 (Artikelen 198 to 200, zaakwaarneming) (Wettenbank, Dutch government (overheid.nl))

How the government promotes giving and service

Tax deduction for gifts to charities

The Belastingdienst states that one-off gifts above a threshold of 1 percent of threshold income (minimum 60 euros) are deductible up to 10 percent of threshold income, and it distinguishes these from periodic gifts, which have their own rules. The deduction applies to gifts to qualifying organizations; see the page for the conditions.

BELASTINGDIENST (DUTCH TAX ADMINISTRATION)

ANBI status for charities

The Belastingdienst's ANBI Loket states that ANBI status (a public benefit organization designation) gives donors access to the gift deduction and describes tax advantages for organizations, donors and volunteers.

BELASTINGDIENST (DUTCH TAX ADMINISTRATION)

Government volunteering information and the International Year of the Volunteer

Rijksoverheid.nl defines volunteer work as unpaid, voluntary work for others or society and publishes the rules for volunteers. In January 2026 the government announced that Queen Máxima would open the International Year of the Volunteer on February 12, an event organized by Vereniging VrijwilligerswerkNL.

RIJKSOVERHEID (DUTCH GOVERNMENT)

Royal honors, including a hero's award
The Kanselarij der Nederlandse Orden's site describes the royal decoration system and features a 'heldenonderscheiding' awarded for a rescue from a burning house.
KANSELARIJ DER NEDERLANDSE ORDEN

Ways to give and volunteer

Dutch giving is well organized, with a national volunteering platform and a strong system of recognized public benefit institutions. Many local services also run through churches and other faith groups, which are not listed here.

Check a charity before you give

The tax authority explains which charities have ANBI status, which means they must publish their finances and goals; the CBF (cbf.nl) also lists recognized charities.

Belastingdienst, ANBI (public benefit institution) status

Give your time

Het Nederlandse Rode Kruis
The national Red Cross society, with volunteer roles in first aid and emergency help.

NLdoet
The yearly national volunteer day, run by the Oranje Fonds, with one-day tasks at local organizations.

Give money, blood or a donation

Sanquin

The national blood supply organization, which explains how to become a blood donor.

Donorregister
The national register where adults record their choice about organ and tissue donation.

Voedselbanken Nederland
The national food bank network, which takes food, money and volunteers.

CBF
An independent body that reviews and recognizes Dutch fundraising charities, with a searchable list.

Goede Doelen Nederland
The sector association of Dutch fundraising charities, with a code of conduct for members.

In an emergency or a crisis

113 Zelfmoordpreventie: 113
Free, anonymous call or chat for anyone thinking about suicide or worried about someone.

Before you act

- Watch for street and door-to-door collectors who cannot show ID, and for emails or calls asking for payment to an unfamiliar account. Check that a charity is recognized by the CBF or has ANBI status and publishes annual accounts. Visitors from outside the EU may need a permit for unpaid work, so ask the host group first.

This list does not cover individual local clubs, neighborhood initiatives or faith-based charities. 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

The Dutch rule is unusually narrow: Article 450 applies only to immediate danger to life and is punishable only if the person in need of help dies.

What this does not mean

This is a plain-language summary, not legal advice. My English renderings of the Dutch texts are not official translations. Rijksoverheid.nl notes that volunteers are not automatically insured and that some municipalities arrange insurance, so protection varies locally. The Wettenbank text of the Wetboek van Strafrecht shows a future amendment scheduled for January 1, 2027, so the current wording should be checked. 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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