
Occupational Health and Safety in Non-Profit Initiatives – What You Should Know

Note: This information sheet does not claim to be complete or legally binding and does not replace individual legal advice.

Why this info sheet?

Even without permanent staff, you—as a non-profit organization, university group, or community initiative—are responsible for the safety and health of everyone working for you, regardless of whether they are volunteering, unpaid, or receiving an expense allowance.

Occupational safety obligations may apply even without a formal employment contract—specifically whenever people are working under instruction and integrated into your activities.

As soon as individuals contribute to your mission, university-related work, or events, the core obligations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (ArbSchG) apply—especially:

- **Organization of occupational health and safety (§ 3 ArbSchG)**
- **Risk assessment (§ 5 ArbSchG)**
- **Instruction (§ 12 ArbSchG)**

These obligations also apply in the context of events—including the requirements of occupational safety coordination.

Who is affected?

- Volunteer workers
- Unpaid helpers
- Students in university groups or student councils
- Individuals receiving an expense allowance
- Even unpaid helpers

What needs to be implemented?

1. Risk-Assessment

- What risks exist in setup, dismantling, and/or operation?
e.g. electricity, tripping hazards, tools, lifting loads, driving vehicles, etc.
- Is there a risk assessment or internal safety guideline?

2. Instruction of all helpers/volunteers

- Brief safety briefing before deployment
- Document the content and obtain signed confirmation of the briefing

Suggested contents (non-exhaustive list!):

- Emergency procedures
- Use of tools and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Contact person on site
- ...

3. **Provide personal protective equipment (PPE)** where required by the risk assessment or production guidelines
 - e.g. gloves, high-visibility vests, safety shoes, etc.
 - Consider protection during electrical work, setup, dismantling, or operation
4. **Define responsibilities**
 - Who is responsible on site for implementation and supervision?
 - Who instructs and supports the helpers?
5. **Insurance coverage and registration with a statutory accident insurance provider (UVT)**

For everyone working voluntarily or in an honorary role, check whether mandatory insurance coverage under Social Code VII applies or whether they can be voluntarily insured via a statutory accident insurance provider.

In most cases, this is the **VBG** (Verwaltungs-Berufsgenossenschaft) or the **Unfallkasse** of your federal state.

Check whether your organization is already a member or needs to register.

Also clarify whether your volunteers are automatically covered or if an additional registration is required. You can find more information, for example, via [this LINK](#) on the VBG website.

When in doubt: **Contact the VBG or your local accident insurance institution.**

Only if proper coverage exists, are accidents during assignments (including travel to and from the site) insured.

Checklist for Your Event Deployment

(This checklist is not exhaustive!)

- ☐ Responsible person for occupational safety designated
- ☐ Hazards for the assigned tasks assessed
- ☐ Helpers/volunteers briefed on safety and instruction documented
- ☐ PPE available (e.g. high-visibility vest, gloves for setup)
- ☐ Setup and dismantling safely organized
- ☐ First aid material available or accessible
- ☐ Emergency numbers and safety features (escape & rescue routes, fire extinguishers, etc.) known
- ☐ Insurance coverage verified and ensured (BG / Unfallkasse / University)

For questions, please contact your internal health and safety team or the local occupational safety coordinator.