**Victims' rights - by country**

Tyskland

You will be considered a **victim of crime** if you have suffered harm, for example you have been injured or your property has been damaged or stolen as a result of an incident which constitutes a crime under German law. As a victim of crime, the law grants you certain individual rights before, during and after court proceedings.

**Criminal proceedings in Germany** start with investigations that are conducted by the police and the public prosecutor's office; such investigations may also be initiated by a report from the injured party. If there is insufficient evidence against the suspect to press charges, the public prosecutor's office terminates the criminal investigation. If, on the other hand, sufficient evidence is available, the public prosecutor's office takes the suspect to court. It may, however, also terminate proceedings in certain circumstances, for example if the suspect has made reparation for material damage caused to you or has fulfilled certain conditions and instructions.

If the court opens the main proceedings following the indictment, it will examine the evidence against the accused at a hearing in court. If it finds the accused guilty, it will convict them and set a penalty. The court may, in appropriate and less serious cases against the accused, also terminate the proceedings, for example if the accused shows remorse and has participated in victim-offender mediation. If the evidence against the accused is insufficient, the court must acquit them. If a judgment is handed down, the criminal proceedings may be continued in a higher court following an appeal.

You as a victim can take part in criminal proceedings as a witness, or you can take on a more active role by formally becoming a private prosecutor (*Privatkläger*) or private accessory prosecutor (*Nebenkläger*) and thus benefit from a variety of rights available to you. As a private prosecutor you will take the place of the public prosecutor; as a private accessory prosecutor you will take part in the proceedings alongside the public prosecutor.

With just one click on the relevant link, you will reach the following **factsheets** which will take you through the different steps your case will go through, describing your rights as a victim of a crime when you report a crime, during the investigation of the crime, during the trial or after the trial at first instance. Also, you can read more about your entitlement to compensation, and the help and support you can get.

Of course these information sheets are only an introduction to the many, different rules. For example, you would need more specific information for proceedings where the accused is an adolescent or young adult, which are barely touched upon here.

**Click on the links below to find the information that you need**

1 - My rights as a victim of crime
2 - Reporting a crime and my rights during the investigation or trial
3 - My rights after trial
4 - Compensation
5 - My rights to support and assistance

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