



Illegal Filesharing in Germany



Please note that this Information Paper only provides basic information and is not intended to serve as a substitute for personal consultations with a Legal Assistance Attorney.

BLUF: Downloading may be illegal and could result in legal action against you!

Which downloading activities are illegal?

- Downloading and/or uploading copyright protected material (e.g. movies or music) may be illegal.
- Important: you may also be responsible for the actions of others (children, neighbors, etc.).

How are illegal downloading activities identified?

- Copyright holders (e.g. BMG, Sony Music, Warner Bros.) hire companies to scan file sharing software for illegal uploading and/or downloading activities. The IP address is recorded, and the violation is reported to the copyright holder.
- Important: Peer-to-Peer file sharing software (e.g. BitTorrent, Vuze) automatically and simultaneously uploads the file while you download. Thus, the company can view the file you upload, and identify your IP address.

What are the consequences?

- The copyright holder notifies the District Attorney, an investigation is initiated, and the account owner is identified by the IP address.
- In many cases, a law firm is hired to represent the copyright holder. A letter requesting compensation and payment of attorney fees is sent to the account owner. Additionally, the account owner is notified to cease all uploading activities.

What should you do?

- Protect your account: restrict its use, create a unique password for your Wi-Fi, and do not use the default password.
- Contact the Legal Assistance Office at the Stuttgart Law Center immediately (DSN 421-4152, CIV 0711-729-4152) if you receive a letter from a law firm.
- Do not communicate with the law firm. Do not sign any documents or make payments without prior consultation with an attorney.