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Tax Advisor (Steuerberater) — Costs, Benefits and Alternatives

When a tax advisor pays off, fees under StBVV, tax assistance association as budget option (€150–400/year).

Deutsche Begriffe: Steuerberater | StBVV | Lohnsteuerhilfeverein | Steuererklärung | Steuerklasse | Einkommensteuererklärung

Do I need a tax advisor?

German tax returns are complex — over **25 million Germans** file one annually. For foreigners, additional topics often arise: tax class selection, family benefits, foreign income. A **Steuerberater** (tax advisor) can quickly pay for itself.

When is a tax advisor particularly worthwhile?

- **Tax classes 3/5 or 4/4 with factor** — married couples' combination
- **Self-employed and freelancers** — revenue surplus calculation, VAT
- **Foreign income** — double taxation agreements, credit method
- **Rental income** — depreciation, business expenses
- **First tax return** in Germany — understand the basics
- **High business expenses** — commuting allowance, home office, training, relocation

Costs under StBVV

Fees are determined by the **Tax Advisor Remuneration Regulation (StBVV)** and depend on your income level.

Estimated costs for employees

Annual gross salary	Tax return costs (approx.)
€30,000	€400–700
€50,000	€600–1,100
€80,000	€900–1,600
€100,000	€1,100–2,000

Note: The tax advisor can charge within a range (tenth-rates). Costs are partly tax-deductible as **special expenses** or **business expenses**.

What's included in the costs?

- Preparation of income tax return (main form + attachments)
- Review of tax assessment
- Objection against incorrect assessment (charged separately)
- Consultation meetings (often included in the price)

Lohnsteuerhilfeverein — The budget alternative

A **tax assistance association** offers tax advice for employees, retirees and trainees — at significantly lower costs.

Advantages

- **Cost:** approx. **€150–400 per year** (income-dependent)
- **Membership fee** covers everything: return preparation, assessment review, objection
- **Personal advice** on-site or digital
- **No hidden fees**

Limitations

- **Only for employees, retirees, students** — not for self-employed
- **No advice on:** business income, VAT, rental income over €18,000/year
- **Waiting times:** Popular associations have long waiting lists

Major associations in Germany

• **Vereinigte Lohnsteuerhilfe (VLH)** — largest association, over 1 million members

• **Lohnsteuerhilfe Bayern** — strong in southern Germany

• **Aktuell Lohnsteuerhilfeverein** — nationwide

Finding a tax advisor

• **Tax Advisor Chamber:** steuerberaterkammer.de — official search

• **Google reviews** and **recommendations** from acquaintances

• **Tip for foreigners:** Look for tax advisors experienced in "international tax law" or "expat tax advice"

Prepare your tax return yourself?

For simple cases (one employer, no additional income), you can prepare the return yourself:

• **ELSTER** (elster.de) — free, official tax office portal

• **Wiso Steuer** — from approx. €30/year, user-friendly

• **Taxfix** — app, approx. €40, especially simple for beginners

Average refund 2025: approx. **€1,063** — filing a tax return almost always pays off!
