By PwC Deutschland | 31 July 2025

Major digital search for tax-evading influencers

It started as a regional "task force" and now has developed into a nationwide search for influencers suspected of tax evasion. Special units of the tax authorities are now using state-of-the-art analysis tools throughout Germany combining artificial intelligence with traditional covert investigation methods and focusing specifically on social media income.

The seemingly boundless virtual world is thus overtaken by very real criminal law risks. Anyone who generates income from cooperations, advertising posts, affiliate links, or product placements should immediately check whether all payments, benefits in kind, or other advantages have been properly declared in Germany. Even minor discrepancies can trigger criminal tax proceedings and result in severe fines or even imprisonment.

It is not only the creator's scene that is under pressure. Companies that hire influencers are also finding themselves suddenly confronted with complex tax pitfalls. Questions of withholding tax, flat-rate tax, or payroll tax can become a bureaucratic minefield if contracts, payment flows, and benefits in kind are not precisely documented and reported. Even benefits granted with good intent such as free hotel stays, flights, or high-end gadgets represent potential sources of tax revenue that the tax authorities have had on their watch list for some time.

The good news, though, is that those who act sensibly now and seek professional support can avoid the worst by means of comprehensive inventory, clear documentation, and—if necessary—a legally compliant voluntary disclosure. Our efficient multi-disciplinary team of experts is available at short notice to clarify any tax and criminal law issues relating to your social media activities in a discreet and resource-efficient manner.

Note: This is a free translation (condensed version) of an article published on 30 July 2025 in our **German Blog** (by the authors Dr. Thorsten Zumwinkel and Sebastian Lattmann which are also the persons of contact).

Keywords

Tax evasion, influencer, tax audit

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Article No.: 250149