

DGUV Kompakt



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The new DGUV Yearbook presents interesting facts and figures from the broad range of activities carried out by the DGUV

TOP STORY

Strengthening social rights in Europe

A pillar of social rights in Europe – EU Commission presents first considerations for discussion



Photograph: Sergii Figurniy / Fotolia

“The EU should, at most, play a supporting role.”

Dr Joachim Breuer,
Director General of the DGUV

The aim of the European Pillar of Social Rights is to make a significant contribution to the protection of values and common social principles

The social dimension of the European Union (EU) is at the top of the political agenda of the EU Commission. The aim is to achieve a “Triple A” for social topics. According to the plans of the commission, this includes linking economic development and social progress. On 8 March 2016, a first draft was presented by EU Social Commissioner Thyssen. Interested parties can comment on the draft as part of a public consultation that runs until the end of 2016. The social pillar will initially apply only to the Economic and Monetary Union, however, the aim is to eventually extend it to all Member States of the EU.

The plans encompass a range of topics that are relevant for the German Social Accident Insurance. These include equal opportunities and labour market access, fair working conditions (including occupational safety and health), as well as proper, sustainable social protection including rights for people with disabilities. In addition, a key concern of the EU Commission is to determine how best to deal with future challenges associ-

ated with changes to forms of work. In the future, issues must be addressed regarding the social security of self-employed workers and clickworkers, new demands on OSH and demographic change.

However, the European Union has limited powers when it comes to social policy because the Member States are the ones primarily responsible for organising social security. “In the opinion of the DGUV,

this must continue to be the case even after the pillar is introduced. Otherwise, there is a danger that the Member States will lose control of this area and as a result, standards for OSH and quality assurance will possibly sink to a lower level. The EU should, at most, play a supporting role,” said Dr Joachim Breuer, Director General of the DGUV.

The DGUV will make comments as part of the EU Commission’s consultation and make reference to the limited competences of the EU in the area of social and health policy.



A social Europe

Dear reader,

Brexit has highlighted what was probably quite clear, namely that the European Union is in crisis. This is a disturbing situation that demands appropriate action to be taken. But which measures should be employed? In recent analyses, it has often been pointed out that EU citizens have the impression that their well-being and needs are increasingly being ignored, whereas economic interests are being given priority. Therefore, the EU Commission has decided to establish a new European Pillar of Social Rights. This is clearly the right way forward. Without a social dimension, acceptance of European integration will improve neither in the short term nor the long term. For too long now, social achievements have been considered as obstacles to competition and investment. However, numerous studies have shown that systems are only successful over the long term when they take into consideration the social security and protection of their citizens. Thus, the EU must continue on this path and make sure that neither countries nor citizens are left behind in the European process. In order to do this, the individual Member States must continue to be able to act and be allowed to make their own social-political decisions based on the principle of subsidiarity – corresponding to local circumstances. Perhaps then we will together succeed to generate enthusiasm for Europe once more.

Dr Joachim Breuer
Director General of the DGUV

“Sunscreen is Plan Z”

Talking with Dr Walter Eichendorf,
Deputy Director General of the DGUV

Anyone who works outdoors is exposed to more carcinogenic ultraviolet radiation than other workers. However, there has been a lack of information regarding which occupations are more affected by this. This knowledge gap has now been closed by a study conducted by the Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the DGUV (IFA) in Sankt Augustin. A total of 600 participants from various occupations have so far been fitted out with a newly developed measuring device which measures UV exposure directly on the person. Results from the study show that there is significant exposure to the various occupations working outdoors. DGUV Kompakt spoke with Dr Walter Eichendorf about the results and their importance for prevention.

Dr Eichendorf, it is well known that UV radiation can damage skin. Why has the German Social Accident Insurance carried out yet another research project?

This is a valid question. Most people know that UV radiation can cause cancer, but not enough people act accordingly. This not only applies to leisure activities but also to work. We're very concerned about this because we can see the consequences in our statistics. Basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma of the skin were added to the list of official occupational diseases in Germany last year. As a result, it has become one of the most common occupational diseases. More prevention is definitely needed. But if you take a look at all of the people who work outdoors, you quickly recognise that there are many different occupations and activities. We needed to have a better overview of how much exposure there is in each of the occupational groups so that we, as accident insurance provider, can provide customised services. That was the background behind the study.

And what kind of radiation doses are we talking about specifically?

This varies depending on the profession. People working in quarries or doing trench and canal work have three times the exposure of people working in agriculture or delivering the post on foot. Some things quite surprised us; for example, we'd expected that exposure would be similar for all horticultural professions. However, it in fact makes a differ-

ence whether you work in a nursery or you work with ornamental plants.

This means that for some professions, you might not need to do anything?

Actually, no. Although workers in day-care centres with a standard erythema dose (SED) of 96 units are significantly less exposed than say a worker who lays train tracks with more than 600 units, when you consider that just one SED is enough to cause sunburn in people with Type I skin ...

... fair skin, fair hair, blue eyes ...

... then it quickly becomes clear: an SED of 96 is enough to get sunburned every single day for three months. It would be very wrong to conclude that “comparatively low exposure means no prevention”.

Have policy demands also been drawn up from the results? For example, obligatory measures for prevention?

We will have to look into this. In any case, we now have valid data on which we can base further steps such as an accurate risk assessment. Similar to other physical stressors in the workplace, for example, noise or radiation, employers must take appropriate preventive measures. However, it is difficult to prescribe specific measures to employers. As already mentioned, the activities of employees who work outdoors vary greatly. There isn't a “one size fits all” solution. Therefore, the basis for prevention in every company has to be an individual risk assessment. First, you have to



TOPIC

Occupational disease legislation

Legislation concerning occupational diseases needs to be further developed. A corresponding resolution was passed by the Members' Meeting of the DGUV in June 2016. In the resolution, representatives from employers and employees committed themselves to adopt a tangible concept at the DGUV Members' Meeting at the end of November. This concept will be proposed to the legislature for implementation.

The background for this is the debate that has been running for some time now on the potential need to adjust occupational disease legislation. This guarantees that insured persons are protected if they are affected by a work-related disease which is listed in the German Occupational Diseases Act. The Act is adopted by the Federal Government with the consent of the Bundesrat. If an occupational disease is identified, the relevant accident insurance institution is responsible for the costs and management of treatment and rehabilitation. In the event that there is permanent damage to a person's health, the institutions then pay a pension. In return for these services, the insured person relinquishes their right to civil action against their employer.

"In principle, the existing legislation has proven successful", said Manfred Wirsch, incumbent DGUV Chairman of the Governing Committee. Nevertheless, there is room to modernise it. "Our goal is to further develop the existing system", said alternating DGUV Chairman of the Governing Committee, Dr Rainhardt von Leoprechting. Areas for improvement include better possibilities to determine harmful influences, particularly if the work was done decades ago, as well as measures to increase the transparency of legislation and administrative procedures. "It has always been the right and the responsibility of the self-government to find solutions for those affected by those affected", said Wirsch. "This is particularly true for occupational disease legislation because unilateral or improper decisions can lead to social, financial or administrative problems", added von Leoprechting.

The prevention of UV-related skin diseases is an important part of the prevention work done by the German Social Accident Insurance

look at the situations in which employees are exposed to solar radiation. Then based on this, specific preventive measures can be determined. These can be technical or organisational measures, for example, setting up a sun shade sail or moving work shifts to early morning or late afternoon. The next level is UV-protective clothing and a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face. We rarely recommend sunscreen lotions. These should only be considered if there really is no other protective option. Even then, having to constantly apply sunscreen when you're doing sweaty work in dust or dirt is really not enjoyable.

Do employers have to pay for sunscreen?

In those rare cases where a risk assessment has determined that UV protection is not possible any other way, then yes. But as I already said, sunscreen is not Plan A or Plan B but rather Plan Z. First come technical and organisational measures, then protective clothing and head gear, for example, a wide-brimmed hat.

This will require some work to convince employees. Not everyone likes to work in sweaty clothing.

That doesn't have to be the case. There is now a lot of clothing which doesn't absorb sweat and at the same time protects against UV radiation. The social accident insurance institutions are more than happy to advise people about this.



Dr. Walter Eichendorf
Deputy Director General
of the German Social
Accident Insurance

Photograph: yuttana590623 / Fotolia

RECOMMENDED

“Without Borders and Barriers”

Bangladesh, wheelchair dancing, virtual reality – what do these three topics have to do with the German Social Accident Insurance? A great deal, because they are all examples of the focus areas of the current DGUV Yearbook: “Good, Safe Work in Germany, Europe and Worldwide”, “Rehabilitation and Participation” and “The Future of Work”. Under the title of “Without Borders and Barriers”, interesting facts and figures from the diverse range of activities carried out by the DGUV are presented with the help of analyses, interviews and photo spreads. The work done by the DGUV is illustrated with current examples from research and science, prevention, rehabilitation, policy and many other areas of work. These show how much the DGUV is actively involved in current political discourse such as the dialogue process for Work 4.0 and that the DGUV is committed, both nationally and internationally, to good, safe work and an inclusive society – crossing all borders and barriers.



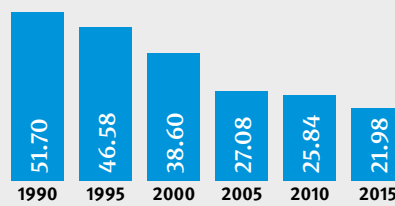
You can download the Yearbook at: www.dguv.de/publikationen (Order Number 12454)

NEWS IN BRIEF

More working hours and fewer accidents

Despite a greater number of working hours in Germany, there were fewer workplace accidents in 2015. This is shown by the business and accounting results of the German social accident insurance institutions which the DGUV has now made available. There was an increase of 1.5 per cent in working hours compared to 2014 but the number of reportable workplace accidents fell by 3,761 to 866,056. “Twenty years ago, there was double the number of accidents per working hour as there are today. This constant decline is remarkable”, said Dr Joachim Breuer, Director General of the DGUV. 470 people died as a result of a workplace accident in 2015, 13 fewer than in the previous year. In contrast, the number of reportable commut-

Reportable workplace accidents per 1000 full-time workers



Infographic: christophschmid.com

ing accidents increased by 2.84 per cent to 179,181 of which 348 were fatal. This is 26 more than in 2014.

Overall, employers in the private sector paid insurance contributions of around 10.8 billion euros to the German social accident insurance institutions, the public sector paid around 1.5 billion. At the same time, the average contribution rate to the social accident insurance institutions for the private sector fell two per cent to 1.19 per cent. The reason for this is sustained high employment and the continued decline in accident numbers.

Paralympics Zeitung

► The Paralympics Zeitung (Paralympic Post) published by the DGUV and the Berlin newspaper Tagesspiegel will also be reporting from this year's Paralympic Games in Rio. The Social Media Newsroom is already online and getting into the spirit of the Paralympics. **Web:** www.dguv.de/pz

TAGESSPIEGEL

Paralympic Post

IN COOPERATION WITH
DGUV

IMPORTANT DATES

7 – 9 September 2016

First VISION ZERO
Europe Conference
BOCHUM

www.vize-europe-conference.de

28 September 2016

OSH Management –
securing success with a system
COLOGNE

www.dguv.de > Veranstaltungen

11/12 October 2016

The Future of Work:
Safety and Health in
the 4.0 Era – Work,
Transport, Education
DRESDEN

www.dguv.de > Veranstaltungen

NUMBER OF THE MONTH

866,056

Workplace accidents in 2015

Positive Trend: in 2015 there were around 3,800 fewer reportable workplace accidents than in 2014.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Published by: Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung (DGUV), Dr Joachim Breuer (Director General); The DGUV is the umbrella association of the German Social Accident Insurance Institutions for the public sector and for trade and industry
Publishing committee: Dr Renate Colella (Chair), Udo Diel, Beate Eggert, Professor Dr med Axel Ekkernkamp, Dr Udo Schöpf, Karl-Sebastian Schulte, Dr Franz Terwey
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Layout: Christoph Schmid, www.christophschmid.com

Publishers: Helios Media GmbH, Friedrichstraße 209, 10969 Berlin, www.helios-media.de

Printed by: DCM Druckcenter Meckenheim

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