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 web magazine
www.dguv.de/kompakt

Page 2: Too much mental stress can make you ill. In this interview, Esin Taşkan (BG RCI) and Dr David Beck (BAuA) explain how companies can protect their employees.

There is still a lot of work to be done

It is not enough to just talk about disability sport when the Paralympics or the Special Olympic World Games are taking place. Journalists like Christof Dörr are also reporting on disability sport outside of these events, and in doing so, are helping to promote inclusion. Dörr won the 2023 German Paralympic Media Award with the film “Annika will Hockey spielen” (Annika wants to play hockey).

In the film, 13-year-old Annika begins telling her moving story with the words: “What makes me special is that I have three legs”. In an honest and matter-of-fact way, she speaks about the cancer diagnosis that drastically changed her life. In the film “Annika will Hockey spielen” (Annika wants to play hockey) by Christof Dörr, Annika talks about how she has dreamt of being a professional hockey player ever since the first time she played. But then she was diagnosed with bone cancer. A tumour in her knee. Her left leg had to be amputated below the knee. She received a prosthesis, her third leg, as she calls it, and learnt to walk again. Annika’s story is both touching and inspiring. Dörr received this year’s German Paralympic Media Award (GPMA) in the Film category for this piece. Hubertus Heil, the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, presented the award in the Photo category: “The GPMA is a matter that is very close to my heart. It is about good journalism that gives a voice to people who we do not hear from enough”.

Commitment to inclusion

One of the main tasks of the German social accident insurance is to help people participate



Image source: © DGUV/Jan Röhl

The award-winning film by Christof Dörr showcases an inspiring example of holding on to hope and never giving up after a life-threatening diagnosis.

in life as much as possible after an accident. Sport plays an important role in the rehabilitation process, as movement assists recovery after an accident. When people are able to be mobile more quickly, this has a positive effect on both their physical and mental health. “Role models play an important part in this, regardless of whether these are in competitive sport, rehabilitation sport or popular sport. Being able to achieve goals that seem impossible motivates and inspires people”, states Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV). The GPMA showcases these role models and joins a range of projects such as the Paralympics Zeitung (Paralympics Newspaper), the film “Gold – you can do more than you think” and the inclusive relay marathon R(h)ein Inklusiv. Currently, the campaign “Your Start. Our Goal.” is under way. It shows people like Britta Wend, who suffered a training accident while studying for a sports degree. After the accident, she discovered wheelchair tennis.

Equal opportunities

Annika speaks about her disability in a very matter-of-fact way. This is incredibly moving, because it is not always a matter of course that people with a disability have equal opportunities. They often need to fight for it. The GPMA puts a spotlight on the people and their sports stories, as well as the people who have written, filmed, photographed or recorded these stories. “We are still nowhere near where we want to be in terms of inclusion. That’s why it is so good that awards like the GPMA exist, because these awards showcase people with a disability and highlight their abilities”, says Jürgen Dusel, Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities, on the evening of the event.

All winning entries and nominees

→ www.dguv.de › Webcode: d1184287

LATEST NEWS: Position paper on hospital reform

The federal government is planning a comprehensive reform of hospital care in Germany. The German social accident insurance supports the reform, but appeals to the federal government and regional governments to consider the special requirements involved in the care of those who have been injured as a result of an occupational accident.

→ www.dguv.de › Webcode: d1184239 (German only)



Dear readers,

The European Representation of the German Social Insurance in Brussels is celebrating its 30th year in existence. The office in Brussels was founded to enable a farsighted approach. Ilka Wölfle, Director of the European Representation, summed it up nicely: You really do have to be able to “hear the grass grow” to be able to understand and contribute to a political discussion from an early stage. The umbrella associations of the German social insurance system, consisting of statutory health insurance, statutory pension insurance and statutory accident insurance – recognised this 30 years ago and came together to found the European Representation. Since then, we have kept a close eye on what is on the agenda in the European Union and continue to provide our expertise and advocate for our interests.

Occupational safety and health is European. Therefore, challenges can only be overcome by working together at a European level. From the handling of asbestos or chemicals to mental health, the health of employees, the use of artificial intelligence, climate change and digitalisation – the challenges faced in the field of occupational safety and health are varied and are certainly not getting any smaller. The highest priority for the German social accident insurance has been and continues to be making work healthy and safe. This was true almost 140 years ago when an insurance against occupational accidents was established, and it will continue to be true in the future. Social insurance has to move with the times, but the fundamental principles must stay the same. In order to achieve this, a strong voice of German social insurance in Brussels is needed.

Ihr
Dr Stefan Hussy
Director General of the German Social
Accident Insurance (DGUV)

An interview with Esin Taşkan and Dr David Beck

“In many companies, psychosocial risks are not discussed.”

Chaos and stress at work, workplace bullying and harassment, skipping of breaks and excessive working hours – companies want and need to protect their employees from matters such as these. But how can psychosocial risks at work be systematically identified and which countermeasures are suitable? DGUV Kompakt spoke with Dr David Beck from the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) and Esin Taşkan from the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Raw Materials and Chemical Industry (BG RCI) about a fundamental approach for companies to comprehensively monitor and protect the health of their employees.

Ms Taşkan, Dr Beck, we are experiencing an increasing labour shortage in Germany. People are also expected to work longer. How can companies help their employees to reach retirement age in good health?

Taşkan: Companies are obligated to provide a safe and healthy work environment. Traditionally, this meant technical improvements, such as protective equipment on machines or ergonomic adjustments. In recent years, mental stress, for example due to an excessive workload, bullying or even harassment or violence at the workplace, has been included in this discussion to an increasing extent. This is important, because stress can make people sick and can lead to long periods of absence.

Facts & figures: Mental illnesses

One in seven adults has fulfilled the diagnostic criteria for depression at one time in their life. Within one year, that is 7.1% of the population. The number of new pensions owing to a reduction in earning capacity due to depression has increased significantly since the early 2000s.

Source: RKI

The German social accident insurance views the risk assessment process as the basis for identifying risks at the workplace. This includes mental stress. Is this instrument used in practice?

Beck: It is not used across the board, unfortunately. Often, in smaller companies, no risk assessment is carried out. And in many larger companies, psychosocial risks at work are often not considered as part of the risk assessment.

Why do you think this is?

Beck: On the one hand, mental stress is a relatively new topic for the technically minded field of occupational safety and health, and companies lack expertise and experience in this area. On the other hand, hazards, such as those relating to an excessive workload, excessive working hours or poor management practices, are also very difficult to assess. And this is a task that some companies shy away from.

Taşkan: We realise that establishing a process for identifying mental stress at work takes time. This is also the case for all other hazards. Understanding what exactly should be documented and what methods can be a hurdle for companies who are factoring mental stress into their risk assessment process for the first time. However, we often see that once a company has started, they consider the risks of mental stress in the long term.

What is the German social accident insurance doing to help companies?

Taşkan: The German social accident insurance institutions work together with regional occupational safety and health authorities to provide companies with advice and support. Often, companies can get the help they need by looking at the website of the relevant accident insurance institution, where they can find useful information as well as specific instructions for certain sectors or company sizes. All of this makes it easier for companies to carry out the risk assessment. The revision of the recommendations set out in the Joint German OSH Strategy (GDA) is also an important contribution. The fourth edition sets out how to apply the strategy more specifically and provides companies with more certainty in the actions they take.



The risk assessment provides the basis for identifying risks at the workplace. The figure shows how the process works over seven steps.

How should a risk assessment process be introduced?

Taşkan: A risk assessment must be carried out when a company has at least one employee. This is prescribed by law. The objective of this is to take preventative action so that accidents or excessive mental strain are avoided in the first place. As part of this process, the potential risks associated with every workplace, every piece of work equipment and every task are identified. This can be technical aspects, such as risks associated with operating machinery or poor ergonomics. However, psychological aspects must also be documented, such as when there is a risk of assaults. This can be done either through a survey, workshops or observation. If workers are involved in this process, hazards can be identified more precisely.

Beck: Once all of the risks have been identified, suitable protective measures are developed to protect against the risks identified. These must also be documented. This is a joint process involving the employer and the employees and it must be repeated regularly when circumstances change.

Are there any guidelines that guide companies through the process, especially with regard to mental health risks?

Taşkan: The recommendations set out in the Joint German OSH Strategy (GDA recommendations) provide specific guidance on which risks associated with mental stress should be assessed. These can be used as a means of orientation. Recommended procedures and methods that can be used to document the risks are also described.

Beck: In general, companies have a certain level of freedom in terms of how they carry out the risk assessment. They can

document the results in writing or using software. The scope of documentation also depends on the work processes.

What challenges will the coming years bring?

Beck: Maintaining an open dialogue with those working in the field is important for raising awareness of sound and practicable solutions, but also for improving our understanding of the problems companies experience in dealing with mental stress. Ultimately, safe and good working conditions are also an important factor in a company's ability to retain their staff. The risk assessment provides an opportunity to discuss relevant topics such as the organisation of work, the work environment, work tasks and the work climate within the team, and to structure these in a way that benefits everyone.

GDA Portal – Mental Stress

➔ www.gda-portal.de › Companies › Mental Stress



Esin Taşkan (left) heads up the prevention department Health – Medicine – Psychology of BG RCI and the DGUV subcommittee Psychology and Health in the Workplace.

Dr David Beck (right) heads up the “Mental Workload and Mental Health” unit at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA).

A strong alliance for #mehrAchtung (#MoreAttentiveness) on the road

The #mehrAchtung road safety initiative launched by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV) and the German Road Safety Council (DVR) aims to provide safer conditions on the road for 70 million people. DGUV and the social accident insurance institutions are supporting the initiative.

Whether travelling in the car, on foot, on an electric scooter, a motorcycle or a pedelec, the many people using our roads have to share a small space. This can often lead to stress, frustration and aggression. However, these emotions put the safety of road users at risk. They take road users' attention away from the road and increase the risk of an accident. In 2022 alone, there were 2,403,366 road traffic accidents. 358,665 people were injured and 2,776 died.

The #mehrAchtung initiative aims to promote better coexistence in road traffic. The initiative uses eye-catching messages on digital displays all over the country, in print media and on social media to promote more respect and attentiveness. It represents an important contribution to the federal government's road safety programme for the period from 2021 to 2030 and the implementation of the “Road Safety Pact”. The German social accident insurance has also joined up with this initiative.

“Preventing accidents on the road is of the utmost importance to us, as road traffic accidents often have severe consequences and lead to far too much human suffering. That is why the #mehrAchtung partner initiative is both appropriate and important!”, emphasises Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of DGUV. For many years, DGUV has been advocating for Vision Zero – both in the world of work and on our roads.

➔ www.mehrachtung.de (German only)



Image source: © Rünter vom Gas

The #mehrAchtung initiative promotes caution and attentiveness in hazardous situations as well as respect and appreciation for other road users.

Violence at the workplace – which sectors are at risk?

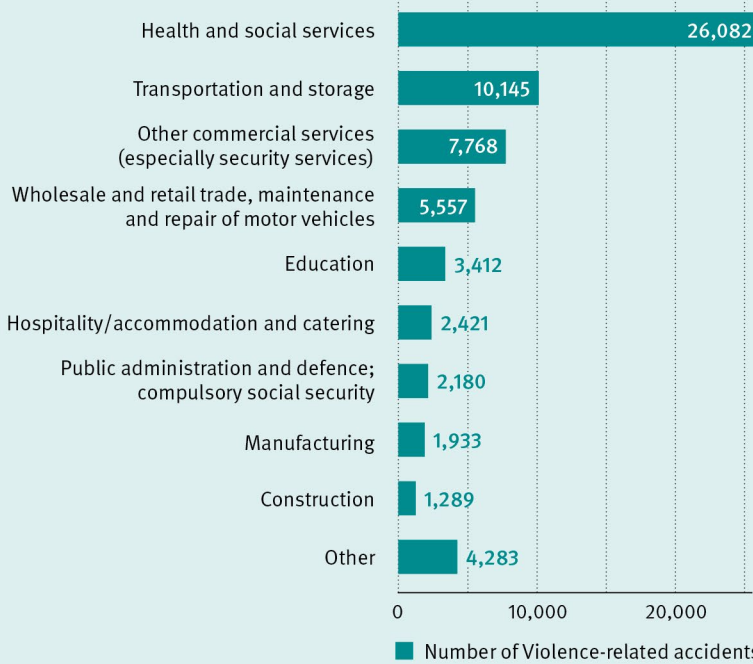
Violence at the workplace is a widespread problem. Women are affected more often than men and certain sectors are also affected to a greater extent. For example, forty percent of violence-related accidents at the

workplace reported over the last five years were attributed to the health and social care sector. However, individuals working in public transport, security services, retail and education also experience violence.

The 3/2023 issue of DGUV forum tackles the issue of violence at the workplace. It contains detailed statistics on this matter.
www.forum.dguv.de > Ausgabe 3/2023 (German only)

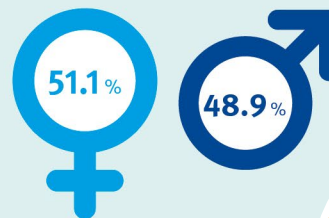
VIOLENCE-RELATED ACCIDENTS SORTED BY SECTOR

(2017–2021)



VIOLENCE-RELATED ACCIDENTS SORTED BY GENDER

(2017–2021)



In 2021, almost 12,000 violence-related occupational accidents were reported.



A world of work without violence and harassment

Threats, insults, harassment and sometimes even physical assault – violence at the workplace is by no means rare. Especially workers in health and social services, but also in retail, public authorities, public transport and education are increasingly confronted with aggression (see graphic).

Nobody should experience violence while doing their job. That is why the German social accident insurance welcomes the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work by the German

Federal Government. The German social accident insurance supports the aims of the convention.

German social accident insurance institutions advise companies on how to carry out the risk assessment (see interview on p. 2) and provide sector-specific guidance on how to prevent violence. Employees who have experienced violence receive support in the form of medical treatment, rehabilitation or psychotherapy.

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40 percent of reported violence-related accidents at the workplace come from the health and social services sector.

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