

DGUV Kompakt

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Dr Walter Eichendorf
on the impact of the
Prevention Act



TOP STORY

Safe and healthy workplaces boost Europe's competitiveness

Various stakeholders present their position in Brussels



The future of work in Europe: the creation of a common prevention culture

Safe and healthy workplaces not only benefit individual employees but also the performance of the economy and companies. The fact that investing in prevention pays off for a company from a microeconomic perspective has already been impressively proven by the DGUV's research project on calculating the international "Return on Prevention".

On 12 January in Brussels, stakeholders discussed developments at the European level as well as future demands on science and politics.

The event was hosted by Members of the European Parliament, the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP), the European safety partnership PEROSH, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA) and the European Forum of the insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases. Studies have shown that companies with high standards in safe-

ty and health are more successful and competitive. Furthermore, their employees have lower absenteeism and are more satisfied with their job. Prevention measures also contribute to the sustainability of social security systems because reducing the number of workplace accidents and occupational diseases also reduces expenditure on medical treatment and rehabilitation.

"Investing in OSH results in a win-win situation."

Zinta Podniece, EU Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

There was unanimous agreement regarding this by the representatives present from the various European institutions and organisations. Zinta Podniece from the EU Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion reiterated: "Investing in OSH results in a win-win situation for companies and society as a whole. It is vital that all stakeholders are involved." She announced that the Commission will be reviewing the current strategic framework for safety and health at work while also taking into account the positions taken by the social insurance institutions in Europe. Matthijs Groeneveld, Representative of the Dutch Council Presidency, stated that decent work is one of the priorities of the presidency and, in particular, revising the Directive on the Protection of Workers from the Risks related to Carcinogens or Mutagens at Work. Those present were also in agreement that it is necessary to create a holistic prevention culture in companies. This is already one of the goals of the social accident insurance in Germany. They have dedicated their upcoming prevention campaign to creating a "culture of prevention" in the economy and society.

Web: www.dguv.de (Webcode d33167) (German only)

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New position paper:
prevention of the future

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Newly merged Social Accident
Insurance Institution



In focus

Dear reader,

The German social accident insurance views occupational diseases as one of our most important areas of responsibility, occasionally even one of our most difficult areas. The issue of occupational disease is sometimes controversially discussed, developments are difficult to predict and they are strongly influenced by external circumstances. Recently, the DGUV committees responsible for occupational diseases have been increasingly occupied with the question of whether action is needed in laws related to occupational diseases and if yes, in what form. The catalyst for this has been working papers and position papers from the social partners as well as input from case law, jurisprudence and experiences from administrative practice. A special working group has been reviewing the possible need for adjustments in a number of areas of action. A special event was held in January at the DGUV which provided the debate with further impetus. Various guest speakers highlighted areas where action is required from different perspectives including jurisprudence, case law and the internal European context. Overall, we are confident that together we can find proposals for solving issues which our self-government committee can then recommend to policy makers. In the past, we have adapted and developed many things ourselves such as quality assurance. For approaches that go beyond this, law makers will have to play an active role; we will contribute constructive proposals. However, there is one point where everyone is agreed: the principles behind occupational disease legislation are correct and do not need to be adjusted!

Dr Joachim Breuer
Director General of the DGUV

“The decision to strengthen prevention is to be welcomed”

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

On 25 July 2015, new legislation to strengthen health promotion and prevention (The Prevention Act) came into effect. The aim of the Act is also to improve cooperation between the social insurance institutions, federal states and municipalities in the areas of prevention and health promotion. The statutory health insurance funds together with the statutory pension insurance, social accident insurance, statutory long-term care insurance and private health-care providers will be involved in a national prevention strategy. DGUV Kompakt spoke with Dr Walter Eichendorf about the impact of the new Prevention Act.

Dr Eichendorf, the Prevention Act came into effect last year – what has that meant for the German social accident insurance?

First of all, it should be noted that the German social accident insurance has been far less affected by the Act than say the statutory health insurance funds whose mandate for prevention and health promotion has been adjusted in Book V of the German Social Code as a result of the Act. In terms of the comprehensive statutory prevention mandate that we have always had, everything remains as it was because we have always been very active and competent in prevention work. The Prevention Act will have a bearing on us in terms of voting and agreements, cooperation and the goal of an overarching strategic approach.

The Act stipulates that stakeholders involved in the areas of prevention and health promotion are to work closely together at all levels. As such, the National Prevention Conference has been established and the first national framework agreements have been concluded. How do you rate these initial measures?

At the moment, there isn't much that can be said about the precise arrangement. Of course, we welcome a concerted, coordinated approach to improving prevention in Germany. But even here we're not really starting from scratch. For years, there has been particularly good cooperation with the statutory health insurance providers in terms of workplace prevention. However, there is still quite a bit to be done with in-

volving the other branches of the German social insurance system; there is still uncertainty concerning the implementation of the prevention strategy and other specific prevention goals. As part of the Prevention Act, we will be more involved in the worlds of learning and work; we are a voting member of the National Prevention Conference and we were involved in drafting recommendations for the federal framework. We have worked closely with other stakeholders in the past including the federal and state governments as part of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA) as well as the statutory health insurance providers as part of the Initiative for Health and Work (iga). As such, we can contribute a great deal from our experiences. Nevertheless, there are still a lot of open issues, not the least of which is how to implement the Act and understanding what its goals are.

What does the initiative mean in relation to the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy whose instruments have more or less all been emulated?

That's correct and we see this as clear acknowledgement of our joint efforts in effectively establishing the GDA. In my opinion, we've done a great job with this despite some difficulties and we've produced many excellent results. Naturally, we need to see how the GDA will evolve in the future regarding the initiatives of the prevention strategy. The goals of the GDA and its respective programmes have already iden-



TOPIC

New culture of prevention

In the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, the EU Commission has identified three future challenges: better implementation of OSH legislation in SMEs; improved prevention of work-related diseases; and dealing with the consequences of demographic change (see DGUV Kompakt October 2015). As part of their proposals, the Commission carried out a public consultation which the DGUV participated in. The DGUV published a position paper for the consultation called "Prevention of the Future".

The German Social Accident Insurance is of the opinion that the working environment and educational institutions should be structured in such a way that all possible means have been used to prevent severe and fatal work, school and commuting accidents as well as to prevent occupational diseases and work-related health hazards. This "Vision Zero" is the benchmark for successful prevention work. One of the most important tasks in order to achieve this is the successful transfer of prevention. In practical terms, it has been proven worthwhile to provide companies, particularly SMEs, and educational institutions with practical, easy-to-understand tools and advice based on applicable OSH legislation. Therefore, it is the view of the social accident insurance that the EU Commission's proposed streamlining of OSH legislation for SMEs is counterproductive and would be contrary to the principle of equal treatment. In order to achieve a long-term healthy working world, we need a new culture of prevention which covers all stages of life – starting with day-care, going through education and continuing through the working life. This holistic approach goes far beyond the EU's strategic framework. "Safety and health should be established as universal values and as the benchmark of all action," stated Dr Walter Eichendorf. Only then can we deal with the challenges identified by the EU Commission.

Prevention and health promotion should happen where people live, learn and work: the new Prevention Act aims to improve prevention and health promotion – for all age groups and in many fields of life

tified important prevention topics in the working world which come under the prevention strategy. By the way, our own prevention campaign aiming to create a comprehensive "culture of prevention" fits in seamlessly with a prevention strategy focusing on life stages and fields of action. This is because the approach of doing prevention work starting from childhood is in line with the approach of the new Act.

Dr Eichendorf, one final question: what's your opinion of the Prevention Act regarding workplace prevention as a whole?

As is normally the case, there are opportunities and risks. I already mentioned, the basic overall approach for strengthening prevention is very welcomed. However, at the same time, the Act will result in new structures being created and more and more players being invited to the table. We'll have to wait and see how it will work with agreeance. We really hope that it doesn't mean that workplace prevention will become more difficult or complicated. Rather we hope that the goal of closer integration of OSH and workplace health promotion will be achieved. This is also very

important for companies. Practical relevance has been a great strength so far and this should remain that way. Many stakeholders inevitably bring their own ideas and expectations – these need to be brought into accord. Then there are the different constructs within the social insurance system – for example, competition within the statutory health insurance system. It is going to be a long discovery process. We really hope that this will be as successful as the GDA. We're going to do our part to make this happen.



Dr Walter Eichendorf
Deputy Director General,
DGUV

Web: www.dguv.de (Webcode: d1130613)
(German only)

RECOMMENDED

Designing work in a new way

The development and spread of information and communication technologies, intensive use of mobile devices, structural changes and a variety of other factors have triggered constant changes to the world of work. The consequences of this are: changes in work processes, particularly in terms of flexibility and networking; new company structures; and new forms of work and organisation. This requires companies and employees to design and structure work in a new way. A recently published collection of practical examples shows different approaches to designing work using flexible models and shows what good solutions can look like. Companies are already taking advantage of the different possibilities offered by a work environment which is flexible in terms of time, space and location: home office, mobile office, open-plan offices, "e-place", desk-sharing and work-time apps. However, sight should not be lost of the risks involved because technology can also encourage permanent accessibility and work intensification which both put a strain on good health. Therefore, good solutions can only be found by working in dialogue with employees.



Photograph: BMAS

"Good Practice Examples of Flexible Work Design in Companies"
German: Gute Praxis „Zeit- und ortsflexibles Arbeiten in Betrieben“
www.bmas.de > Service
> Medien > Publikationen
(Artikelnummer A874)
(German only)

NEWS IN BRIEF

New Social Accident Insurance Institution

On 1 January 2016, the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for Transport and Traffic and the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for Deutsche Post and Deutsche Telekom merged to become the new German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the transport industry, postal logistics and telecommunications (German: BG Verkehr). The new institution now has around 200,000 member companies and insures approximately 1.8 million people. The BG Verkehr is responsible for the transport sector, for waste disposal, for air transport, domestic transport, sea transport, fisheries, financial services and telecommunication. "It was very important for us that



Photograph: BG Verkehr

The newly elected board of the future BG Verkehr

the merger bring postal, courier, express and parcel services under the one roof of the BG Verkehr. This will definitely benefit the prevention work that we do together," said Employee Representative Wolfgang Steinberg on 11 January following the inaugural board meeting at which he and Employer Representative Klaus Peter Röskes were selected as alternating chairman of the board.



4th International Strategy Conference

► What does successful prevention look like in the future? At the 4th International Strategy Conference on Safety and Health at Work between 21-24 March, German and international experts will discuss current key topics in occupational safety and health.

Web: www.dguv.de/isc

IMPORTANT DATES

1-2 March 2016
Working Life 2025 –
Fit for Work in the Future
BERLIN
www.arbeitsfaehig.com

9-11 March 2016
Annual meeting of DGAUM 2016
MUNICH
www.dgaum.de/dgaum-jahrestagung

14-15 March 2016
Dresden Dialogue Health and Work
DRESDEN
www.dguv.de (Webcode: d1083873)

NUMBER OF THE MONTH

4,003,444

Companies and institutions ...

... were insured by members of the DGUV in 2014. Of these, 3.3 million were covered by the private sector Social Accident Insurance Institutions and 680,000 by the public sector Social Accident Insurance Institutions.

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