



INTERVIEW

„Every light is biologically effective“

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TOP STORY

European Pillar of Social Rights

For a social dimension and true subsidiarity in Europe

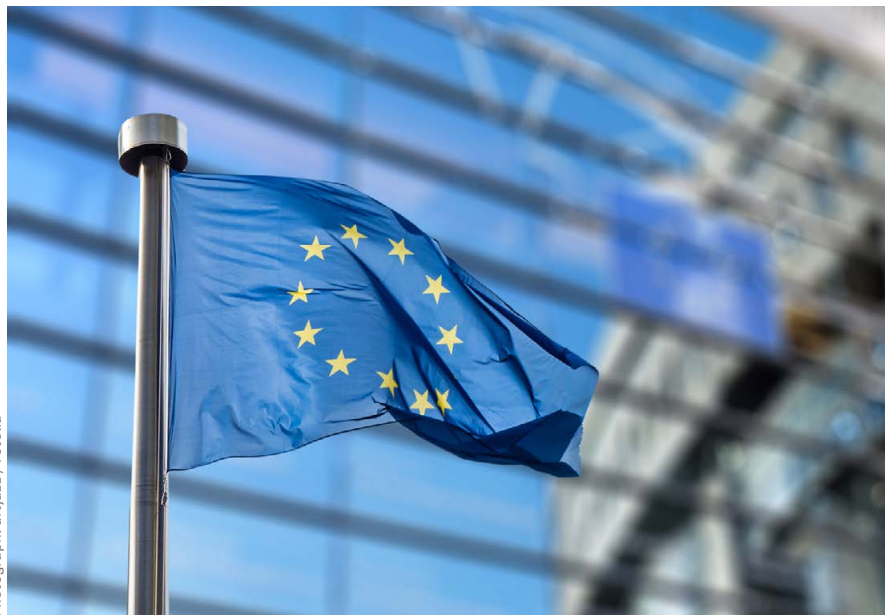
The European integration process is in crisis; acceptance of the European Union (EU) by its citizens is dwindling. Not least for this reason, the European Commission has announced its intention to strengthen the social dimension within Europe. In September 2015, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced an instrument for doing this – the European Pillar of Social Rights. As part of the public consultation launched in March 2016, the DGUV issued comments on the Pillar.

The EU Commission's aim for the Pillar of Social Rights is to fight poverty, social exclusion, inequality and high unemployment in the EU and "to update the social agenda and our social 'acquis' in the light of economic and social trends in the 21st century", as stated by Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, during the presentation of the first outline of the Pillar. The aim of the public consultation, which ran from March to December 2016, was to gather feedback and opinions from institutions and citizens regarding the Pillar. The DGUV contributed to the consultation by submitting and publishing a position paper on the Pillar.

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Valdis Dombrovskis, Commission Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue

In principle, the DGUV welcomes the EU Commission's initiative to strengthen the social dimension with the European Single Market because positive economic development goes hand in hand with good social security, but the Member States are



Photograph: artjazz / Fotolia

Economic growth and a high degree of social security in the EU Member States form the basis of long-term cohesion in the EU

particularly responsible for the latter. As such, a European Pillar of Social Rights can only provide general, non-binding principles or guidelines that serve as an impetus or provide assistance. "The design and organisation of social insurance must continue to clearly lie within the competences of the Member States. The EU should primarily have a supporting role", said Dr Joachim Breuer, Director General of the DGUV. "This ensures that the social partners in the Member States can continue to fulfil their responsibilities and it prevents a reduction in social standards." The DGUV is of the opinion that existing regulations such as the European Coordination of Social Security Systems should be further developed in order to strengthen social rights and should be supplemented by clear rules on occupational integration.

Web: www.dguv.de (Webcode d1067290)

IN BRIEF

European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights is part of the efforts being made by the European Commission to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union. Its principles do not replace existing rights but rather provide the opportunity to assess the performance of employment and social policies in the individual Member States.



A Social Pillar?

Dear Reader,

The EU Commission's plans for a European Pillar of Social Rights are moving forward. The public consultation, which the DGUV also participated in, has finished. A consolidated draft version of the Social Pillar is expected in spring 2017. Although it is always good to strengthen social policy, the concept of the Social Pillar also raises many questions: Does the Commission's proposal respect the principle of subsidiarity, that is, the competences of the Member States in the area of social policy? Or is the Pillar yet another step towards expanding the competences of the EU as has recently been seen in other areas of social policy? Is it really certain that when the Pillar is implemented that some will win without others losing? In fact, the Commission's proposal could also pose a risk to the social standards that have already been achieved in certain Member States. We have a social security system in Germany that is the envy of many parts of the world. It would be disastrous to downgrade these achievements. Furthermore, the circumstances in each of the Member States are so varied and specific that it is questionable whether a unified social model is actually the right method of choice.

Dr Joachim Breuer

Director General of the DGUV

“Every light is biologically effective”

Light plays an important role for vision and thus for the safety of employees. It also influences our well-being and our internal clock. Currently there are standardisation projects on biologically effective lighting that the Commission for Occupational Health and Safety and Standardisation (KAN) has been critical of. DGUV Kompakt spoke about this with Angela Janowitz, Deputy Director of the KAN Secretariat.

Ms Janowitz, what exactly is biologically effective light?

One thing is certain: every light is biologically effective. Light is extremely important for vision but also as a clock for our own unique circadian rhythm. Special cells in the eye process light and stimulate the production of hormones in the body. The hormone melatonin, for example, makes you tired and reduces your activeness. But light also influences your well-being. However, not all light is the same. Important factors for the effect of light include its spectral composition and the time of day when you are exposed to this light. Since time immemorial, the internal clock of human beings has adapted to daylight: in the middle of the day it is active and evenings it is more calming. In today's world of work, there isn't much natural daylight and standard artificial lighting in the workplace is not

„In today's world of work, there isn't much natural daylight and standard artificial lighting in the workplace is not ideal in terms of a biological effect. The wrong light at the wrong time can increase fatigue during the day or aggravate sleep disturbances at night, both of which increase the risk of an accident.“

Angela Janowitz

ideal in terms of a biological effect. The wrong light at the wrong time can increase fatigue during the day or aggravate sleep disturbances at night, both of which increase the risk of an accident.

New technologies promise to improve on this because they can be more targeted in how light is composed. But do we really know the risks of using the biological effect of light this way? Is the success of these new technologies closer to that of the washing machine or of asbestos? When the washing machine was invented, laundry women were worried about losing their jobs. But the opposite was true. In addition, they were exposed to less physical strain. Asbestos, on the other hand, was long seen as a “miracle fibre”. Its disastrous legacy is now known to us all.

Supporters argue that biologically effective light increases well-being and even helps prevent workplace accidents. What's your opinion on this?

Natural daylight is always the first choice. This is also stated in Technical Rule for Workplaces 3.4, “Lighting”. If this is not possible, or only to a limited extent, the targeted use of biologically effective lighting could benefit employees. When doing this, their safety and health must be given priority. During a night shift, for example, lighting must be avoided that temporarily improves performance and prevents fatigue, but which negatively impacts the circadian rhythm of the shift worker and is possibly harmful over the long term.

What current standardisation initiatives are there on this topic? Why has KAN spoken against standardisation in its recent position paper?

DIN SPEC 67600 “Biologically effective illumination – Design guidelines” provides recommendations for the targeted use of biologically effective lighting in



Photograph: vicu9 / Fotolia

Every light is biologically effective and influences our well-being: special cells in the eye process light and stimulate the production of hormones in the body

manufacturing, in offices, during breaks and in first-aid rooms. KAN has taken a position on this.

Firstly, these specific recommendations are premature because there are still too many pieces missing in the puzzle regarding the right light for the right time.

Secondly, it is primarily the responsibility of the government and the social accident insurance institutions to regulate the design of workplaces. Standardisation can only play a limited role here according to the "Policy Paper on the Role of Standardisation in Occupational Safety and Health". It's different for product requirements for lights, lamps and luminaires. These are well covered by standards that are directed at manufacturers.

How can KAN help more with this?

At the forefront for KAN is dialogue with all relevant parties and a sensible division of work. The kick-off was a KAN workshop at TRILUX, a leader in lighting technology, in September 2016. KAN's next step will be a literature review. Studies currently available on the effects of lighting are partly contradictory. Our research is intended to gather findings that are rele-

vant to occupational safety and health in order to answer two key questions:

Firstly: What do we already know? The answer will be passed on to employers, supervisory bodies and employees. The Committee for Workplaces (ASTA) and the DGUV Expert Group on Lighting are currently discussing whether, and how, they will provide information on the subject. It's time to take this step because companies are already using these new lighting technologies. And it is important to review whether standardisation should or could play a role and if so, what that role could be.

Secondly: Where do we still need to do research? The results can be incorporated in OSH research.

The goal for everyone involved must be the responsible, healthy use of new technologies so that we are as successful as we were with the invention of the washing machine.

Photograph: Robert Bernhardt



Angela Janowitz
Deputy Director of the
KAN Secretariat

TOPIC

KAN – OSH in standardisation

The Commission for Occupational Health and Safety and Standardisation (KAN) was established in 1994 and is tasked with monitoring standardisation processes and attending to the interests of OSH. KAN is composed of representatives from the social partners, the government, the German Social Accident Insurance and the German Institute for Standardisation (DIN). KAN bundles the positions taken by various OSH groups, based on general consensus of all involved, and incorporates these via the DIN into standardisation projects, or existing standards, in the form of comments or recommendations.

Technical standards stipulate safety requirements in many areas such as work equipment or methods for testing and measuring. Thus, standards make an important contribution to the prevention of accidents and diseases. However, standardisation is not restricted to just the technical area, it is also increasingly being used for non-technical areas such as services and training. KAN assesses the contents of these standards in terms of whether they comply with OSH requirements from a German perspective and with the protection targets stipulated in European directives. KAN also examines whether there is a need for standardisation from an OSH point of view and, if necessary, proposes a new standard.

However, KAN itself is not a standardisation body. Its decisions in the field of OSH and standardisation take the form of recommendations which are based on the widest possible consensus among all stakeholders in OSH. The recommendations are addressed directly to the DIN and its standards committees.

KAN is a project of the Association for the Promotion of Occupational Safety in Europe (VFA) and is co-funded by the Federal Ministry for Work and Social Affairs (BMAS). The members of the VFA are the German social accident insurance institutions for the public and private sectors.

Web: www.kan.de/en

RECOMMENDED

Relaunch of “arbeit & gesundheit” magazine



“arbeit & gesundheit” can be viewed online:
Web: www.dguv-aug.de (German only)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Employee health and safety

On 10 January, the European Commission launched a new initiative to improve the health and safety of workers. The initiative builds on current OSH regulations in the EU. The main focus is on three key objectives: first, help companies, particularly small and micro enterprises, to comply with OSH rules; second, modernise rules so they are easier to put into practice; and third, better protect workers against work-related cancers. To achieve the latter, the Commission intends to set exposure limits or other measures for an additional seven cancer-causing chemicals. To assist small and micro enterprises, a guide with practical tips for conducting a risk assessment has already been published.

In 2017, the German social accident insurance institutions are relaunching their prevention magazine “arbeit & gesundheit” (English: “work & health”) with a brand-new look. There will be a redesign of the layout and new features, for example, topics chosen and discussed in the future will be geared even more strongly to safety delegates. The magazine is published by the German social accident insurance institutions as a service for their member companies. It provides practical tips and OHS-relevant news, as well as keeping readers up to date with rules and regulations. It is published six times a year and is provided free of charge to member companies. The first edition of “arbeit & gesundheit” for 2017 will be published at the end of February. In the future, articles can also be read online and downloaded for free. The magazine will also be available in ePaper format.



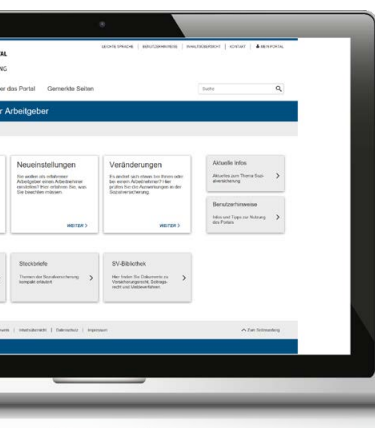
Photograph: santypan / Fotolia

The focus is on small and micro enterprises

In addition, there are free online tools aimed at facilitating risk assessments. Outdated rules will be removed or updated within the next two years. In the initiative, the EU Commission refers to the REFIT programme and the current process of establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights.

Employer portal for social insurance

The portal provides information about health insurance funds, pension funds and accident insurance institutions, together with information from the Federal Agency for Employment. The emphasis is on answering questions about social insurance for small and medium enterprises.
Web: www.informationsportal.de (German only)



IMPORTANT DATES

14 – 18 February 2017
didacta – the Education Fair
STUTT GART
www.didacta.de

20 – 24 February 2017
Meeting of Experts to adopt Guidelines on Decent Work and Socially Responsible Tourism
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
www.ilo.org > Meetings and events

22 February 2017
Psychological stress and burnout
MAINZ
www.arbeitsfaehig.com > Seminare

7 – 10 March 2017
WAI Network Annual Conference
BERLIN
www.arbeitsfaehig.com > Seminare

NUMBER OF THE MONTH

557,396

patients ...

... received medical treatment in the BG Hospitals in 2015. 134,501 of these were inpatients.

LEGAL INFORMATION

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