

# ***Fact-Finding seminar addressing psychosocial aspects and risks at work***

***23rd November 2020***

***Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy***

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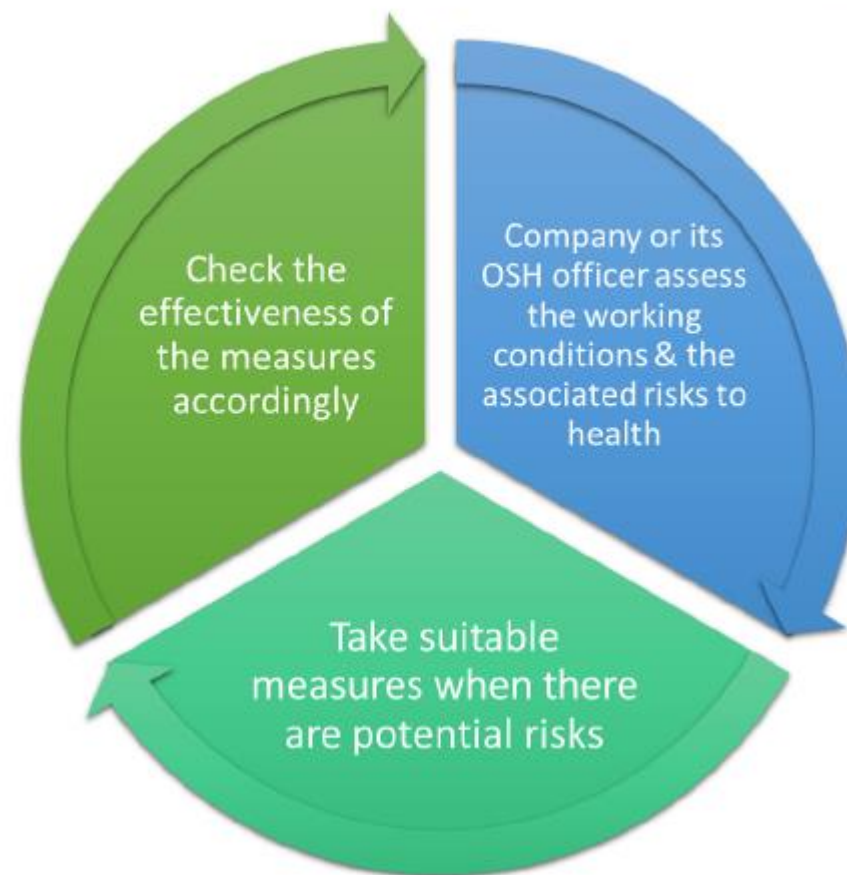
Confederation of German Employers' Associations

# Occupational safety & health in Germany

- Regulated by the German Occupational Safety & Health Act
  - The law is supplemented & specified by national regulations that are legally binding:
    - The Ordinance on Industrial Safety & Health
    - The Ordinance on Work Places
      - They describe precise measures for companies to ensure a safe & healthy working environment
      - As well as the correct handling of work equipment
- + regulation by the German Social Accident Insurance for accident prevention
- + national and international standards that apply

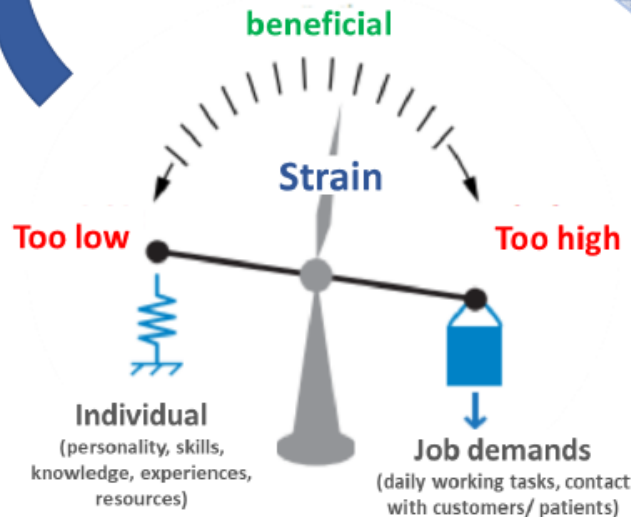
# Occupational safety & health in Germany

- Employers are liable to ensure safety & health of employees at work
- By conducting a risk assessment
- This includes psychological risks (job demands)



## Psychological health at work

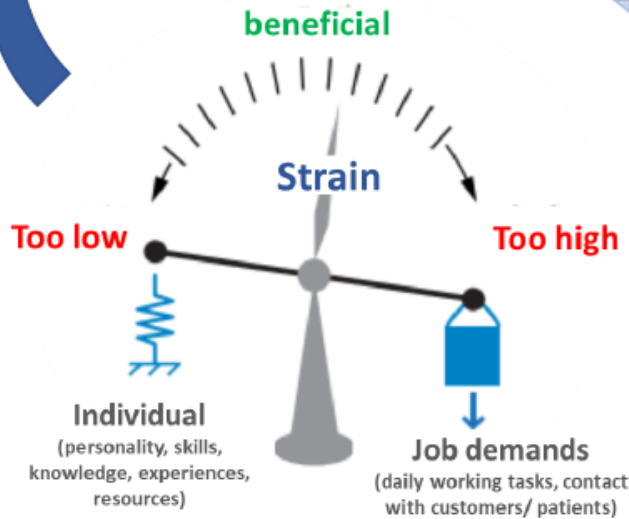
- OSH Act provides that psychological risks due to job demands must be assessed
- Theory: Job Demands – Strain Model
  - Job demands (value-free demands of our daily work)
  - Job strain (results from the individual experience of job demands)
- The experience & thus, the level of strain is highly individual
- Therefore, employers do not focus on the experience of strain, well-being & stress





## Psychological health at work

- Focus on job demands + a good job design
- Thus, employers regulate (i.e., optimise) the demands & ensure a „healthy design“ of:
  - work content / work tasks
  - Organisation of work
  - Social relationships
  - Work environment



# Joint German Occupational Health and Safety Strategy (GDA)



Source: Birte Cordes/GDA Psyche



Source: GDA Psyche



Source: GDA Psyche

# Joint German Occupational Health and Safety Strategy (GDA)



## What it is:

- Permanent and nationwide strategy for the strengthening of safety and health in workplaces
- Developed by the German central government, federal state governments, German social accident insurance institutions and social partners
- Basis for coordinated action to achieve jointly agreed occupational safety and health objectives
- Legal basis laid down in OSH Act since November 2008

## Joint German Occupational Health and Safety Strategy (GDA)

### Key elements:

- Development of joint OSH objectives,
- key areas for action, cornerstones for work programs, implementation according to uniform principles,
- Evaluation
- coordinated consulting and monitoring of companies
- understandable, clear and coordinated set of rules and regulations



# Joint German Occupational Health and Safety Strategy (GDA)

## Objectives:

- Improve prevention; create incentives for companies
- Increase safety and health awareness at all levels (i.e. employers & employees)
- Reduce number of accidents at work and work-related illnesses, thus reducing costs for companies and society
- OSH should support innovations

## Work programs of 3rd GDA period (2019-2023)

The current GDA work programs focus on

- **musculoskeletal strains**
- **safe handling of carcinogenic hazardous substances**
- **Mental Health**

# Work program „mental health“

## Objectives:

- systematic implementation of risk assessments
- optimization of psychological stressors in the workplace
  - identify stressors & take appropriate measures to address stressors
- inform & qualify all stakeholders (entrepreneurs, managers, employee representatives & those responsible for OSH at work)

# Work program „mental health“

## Overview:

- **Internet portal [gda-psyche.de](http://gda-psyche.de):** comprehensive information on psychological strains at work; e.g.: "**Work and Psyche from A to Z**", explains various factors affecting well-being of employees and what companies can change (e.g. working hours, sense of work etc.).
- **Recommendations for implementing psychosocial risk assessment:**
  - Since 2013, OSH Act explicitly requires the consideration of psychological stress in risk assessments
  - GDA published a detailed brochure defining parameters and providing methods and tools

# Work program „mental health“

## Overview:

- **Practical tools for the workplace:**
  - Collection of good practices; diffusion to public
  - Companies, workers and occupational safety and health experts receive practical support for the improvement of working conditions in everyday business.
  
- **Qualification of inspectors:** Inspectors from occupational health and safety authorities and accident insurance institutions are trained to identify mental stressors and to adequately advise companies.
  
- **Inspections and advice:** Since 2015, the inspection staff of OSH authorities and accident insurers **conduct coordinated inspections.**
  - consideration of psychological stress in the risk assessment
  - Consultation on working hours and on how to deal with traumatic events in the workplace.

# Occupational safety & health in Germany

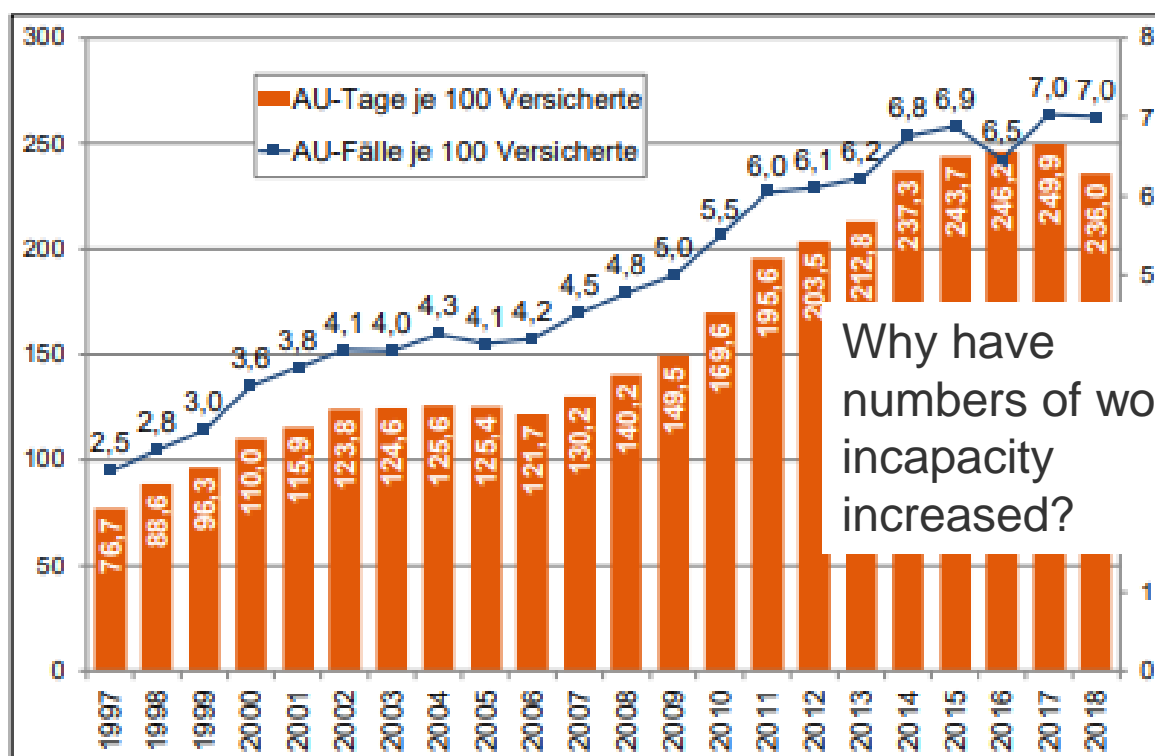
## Does it work?

**Red:** days of incapacity of work / 100 insured persons

**Blue:** cases / 100 insured persons

- Increased awareness
- Research: proportion of affected persons is stable

Abbildung 15: AU-Tage und AU-Fälle pro 100 Versichertenjahre aufgrund psychischer Erkrankungen



Why have numbers of work incapacity increased?

Quelle: AU-Daten der DAK-Gesundheit 1997–2018.



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