Fact-Finding seminar addressing psychosocial aspects and risks at work
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Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy

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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

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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**: 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

Why have numbers of work incapacity increased?

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