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No place for violence

Schools are intended to be locations for learning and knowledge, and where people come together. There's no place for violence here, or at least there shouldn't be. The reality however often looks very different. Conflict, aggression and marginalisation also find their way in through the school gates. Examining the situation and taking preventative action will help.

Violence in schools is a relevant issue and a strain on all those involved. According to German Social Accident Insurance statistics, a total of 53,725 school accidents occurred due to violence in schools in 2022. While there has been a downward trend for many years, the extent is still cause for concern as the statistics above only include accidents among pupils resulting in physical injury. "The scope of violence is, however, far more wide-ranging and starts long before the physical confrontation with insults, bullying, threats and harassment," explains Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of DGUV. "Whether it's in the classroom, on the school yard, on the way to school or in social media."



Violence in schools needs to be addressed. The German social accident insurance institutions for the public provide advice and information.

And it's not just the pupils who experience violence. School administrations in all types of school are reporting increasing violence against teachers. According to a study by the *Verband Bildung und Erziehung* (trade union for the educational sector), two thirds of school leadership teams questioned reported cases in the last five years of teachers being sworn at, threatened, insulted, bullied or harassed.

Examine – listen – take preventative action

To prevent violence, it's important to put in place preventative measures supporting a positive social climate. School leadership teams and educators should set boundaries at an early stage and not tolerate any violence. An anti-violence strategy should also be developed for the school and incorporated within the school programme. It is important to include all those involved in the school community and to provide them with the necessary basic knowledge. This will help them to watch out for signals and to try and talk to those concerned. A contingency plan also provides the security of knowing what to do in the event of an emergency. "A protection concept such as this cannot and does not have to be rushed," explains Hussy. "Small but continual steps towards a protection

concept will also help." Fixed lessons in the weekly schedule for discussing violence and potential solutions are also a sensible addition. This can be approached via children's rights, the specific meaning and implementation of which can be addressed in the class council or in the pupil parliament. Free external offers or socio-educational experts might also reduce the workload for teaching staff.

Advice from public-sector accident insurers

The public-sector accident insurers provide advice and information to school administrators and support them in establishing networks. They offer training covering strategies for dealing with violence and supporting a positive togetherness. At a national level, the MindMatters prevention programme has proved effective. It helps to foster the psychological health in the school, assists in establishing and maintaining a caring school culture and promotes a sense of belonging to the school as well as mutual respect and acceptance.



Read more: The MindMatters programme – an example of violence prevention in educational institutions
forum.dguv.de › Issue 3/23 (German only)



Sexualised violence
 Awareness of sexual harassment is growing.

➔ www.pluspunkt.dguv.de
 Focus 4/23 (German only)



In support of respect, tolerance and non-violence

All people have the right to work and to learn free from violence and harassment. Germany is committed to upholding this right. DGUV, the umbrella organisation of the German social accident insurance institutions is also committed to upholding this right. Violence – even verbal violence – must not be used as a means of engagement with others. Violence is a matter which concerns us all. With our #GewaltAngehen (#Fight-Violence) campaign, which tackled violence against emergency workers, we were able to spread this message effectively at the turn of the year. We want to use 2024 to demand non-violence for other sectors too – such as healthcare. After all, it is important that all people can work and learn together safely and in a healthy way without having to fear being attacked or discriminated against in a racist or sexist manner. Anyone who threatens others, harms society as a whole.

The harassment and discrimination of people based on their origin, religion or other characteristics is an attack on human dignity. Behaviour such as this has a negative impact on the integration of people from different cultures – people we need for our society and for our labour market. Marginalisation harms us all.

We want to promote diversity in Germany and support our members in establishing diversity, in harmony with safety and health, within their day-to-day working lives. This is why the DGUV signed the German Diversity Charter in 2021.

I hope you have a diverse 2024.

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

EU launches digitalisation of social security

The European Commission is seeking to digitalise the coordination of social security systems more quickly. At European level, the plan is to make access to 21 public administration processes entirely digital. The goal is to simplify the exchange of information between authorities in the different countries. From now on, electronic documents are to be made available to citizens in a type of digital wallet known as the European digital identity (EUID). The “Your Europe” website will serve as a single-entry point for data exchange.

Of relevance to social security are the pension claim procedure, pension rights information, the European Health Insurance Card and A1 process for proving payment of social security in the country of origin. The latter is the first project to be



The aim is for 80 per cent of EU citizens and companies to be able to provide proof of their identity online across the EU by 2030.

implemented digitally. The European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS), based on the EUID, will be introduced for social security documents.

➔ www.dsv-europa.de/en/news

Belgium seeks to strengthen Europe’s social dimension

Belgium took over presidency of the European Council on 1 January 2024. What are the country's social policy objectives for the next six months? Before the end of the current term of office of the EU Commission and before the European elections, Belgium wants to push ahead with a large number of legislative proposals in the social field. This includes, for example, a directive for improving working conditions for platform workers. The regulation on coordination of social security systems is also to be revised and its digitalisation accelerated. Other issues to be addressed are the European disability card, an improvement to the European quality framework for traineeships and a comprehensive approach to improving mental health. At the same time Belgium is also seeking to shape EU policy in the long-term and in March 2024 will submit recommendations for a social agenda. These are to be based on the European Pillar of Social Rights and serve as the basis for an interinstitutional Declaration to be adopted under the Belgian Council presidency at a high-level conference on the future of a social Europe.



Belgium is taking over presidency of the EU Council and is seeking to press ahead with a range of draft legislation in the social sphere.

Good to know!

Labour inspectors provide a link between German accident insurance institutions and companies. They advise and monitor organisations and educational institutions in order to prevent accidents at work, occupational diseases and work-related health hazards.

➔ www.dsv-europa.de/en/news



Monitoring and advice: site inspections are opportunities for effective prevention

DGUV Kompakt spoke to Dr Roland Portuné, DGUV Safety and Health Division, about the added value to be gained from monitoring and providing advice, and about the criteria by which organisations are selected.

Dr Portuné, why do the German social accident insurance institutions make site inspections?

The German social accident insurance has a statutory mandate to prevent accidents at work, occupational illnesses and work-related health hazards by all suitable means, and to provide effective first aid. Consultation and inspection are key elements in implementing this mandate. They are fundamental when it comes to prevention services and provide a “door-opener” to organisations.

“**We look very specifically at those organisations and educational establishments where there is an increased risk to safety and health.**”

Why is a “door-opener” needed?

The site inspections also reach organisations and institutions that do not actively request consultation on their own initiative. This means the accident insurance institutions show their presence precisely where the need for prevention is particularly high. The inspection is carried out with the aim of optimising safety and health and supporting organisations in the process. Consultation and inspection are therefore always closely linked. Also with other prevention services, such as training measures, which can then be offered to the companies.

In 2022, 204,566 companies were inspected by the German social accident insurance institutions. Approximately 3.2 million companies are registered with the accident insurance institutions. Are the site inspections sufficient?

It is important to properly understand these figures. The personnel resources of the accident insurance institutions are not equipped for across-the-board inspections, and they do not need to be. Depending on the branch of industry and company there are significant differences in terms of accident risks and health risks. The German social accident insurance Institutions therefore carry out spot-checks and look very specifically at those enterprises and educational establishments where there is an increased risk to safety and health.

Do the accident insurers arrive with or without prior notice?

They do both. A sensible combination of the two is most effective. In the case of announced site inspections it can be ensured that key contacts are on site to clarify how health and safety is organised and how working conditions are assessed. Many unannounced inspections result from data-based risk assessments of companies, branches of industry or specific workplaces. Others are for the purpose of investigating accidents at work or occupational illnesses or result from complaints.

What criteria do you use to select who you inspect?

The networking of different sectors means statistical data can be merged, for example on compensatory payments or on the occurrence of occupational accidents and occupational diseases. Inspections in areas with a particularly high risk to the insured person in the workplace and with a greater need for advice can be prioritised.

How is that implemented technically?

Algorithms take care of the merging and interpretation of data. This enables an estimate to be made, based on over 100 characteristics, of the probability of occupational accidents in organisations of a certain size. Historical patterns and correlations are searched for and identified in order to back up the predictions.

What can accident insurance institutions do if there is a need for change but this is not accepted?

If there are deficits, then it is down to individual motivation to remedy these. The aim is always to explain in a convincing manner why something needs to be changed. If in individual cases there is no acceptance of the necessary improvements to occupational safety and health, then labour inspectors have the option of enforcing measures or imposing sanctions – such as fines and penalties. However, the aim of holistic and sustainable inspection activity is always to further develop the corporate culture with respect to safety and health and thus to come closer to Vision Zero. This journey involves genuine participation by the company by means of acceptance from all involved.



Read more about the core activities of consultation and inspection of the social accident insurance institutions in DGUV Forum, issues 6/2023 and 9/2021.

forum.dguv.de

Which occupations in Germany are the most dangerous?

The record of occupational accidents from the German Social Accident Insurance can provide a statistical answer to this. The record compares reported occupational accidents with the number of employees and the average working hours of the occupational group. The highest risk of suffering an accident at work is therefore for employees in the building trade such as bricklay-

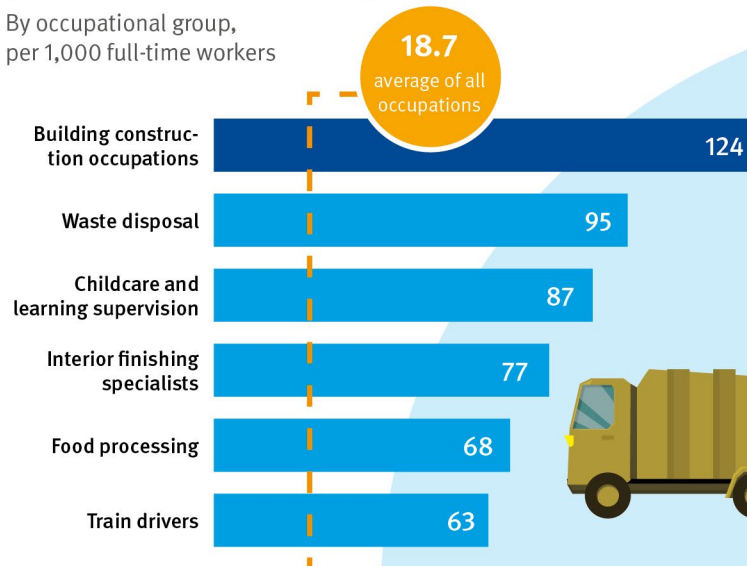
ers, carpenters and joiners. Also, employees in waste disposal and in childcare and learning supervision occupations are at an increased risk of accidents. The latter may come as a surprise, but in addition to accidents from tripping, slipping and falling, working with children often results in injuries on furniture and on sports and play equipment. The average accident rate was

18.7 accidents at work per 1,000 full-time workers. Office and secretarial staff have a low risk of accident with 1.8 accidents per 1,000 full-time workers.

→ www.dguv.de > Webcode: p022405 (German only)

ACCIDENTS AT WORK 2022

By occupational group, per 1,000 full-time workers



Graphic elements: shutterstock.com

Accidents resulting in an inability to work for at least four days are recorded. Office and secretarial staff have a low risk of accident with 1.8 accidents per 1000 full-time workers.



EU law on platform work on its way

In the European Union, approximately 28 million people work through platforms. It is estimated that more than 5 million of these people have so far been incorrectly classified as self-employed. The aim is now to improve their working conditions by correcting their employment status and in doing so affording them social protection. The intention is that the same employment and health protection rights should apply for them as for those employees not employed via digital work platforms. Once

the new rules are implemented, decisions impacting directly on platform employees – such as dismissals – must be made by people.

The EU Parliament and EU Council negotiators arrived at a provisional agreement on draft legislation on 13 December 2023. The Parliament and Council must now formally adopt the law.

→ www.dsv-europa.de/en/news



More than 5 million platform workers in the EU are to benefit from the new law.

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