

THE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN OF GERMAN SOCIAL ACCIDENT INSURANCE (DGUV) — ‘THINK OF ME — YOUR BACK’ (*DENK AN MICH — DEIN RÜCKEN*) - GERMANY

Type of initiative: Work programme

Time frame: 2013-2018

1 Description of the initiative

1.1 Introduction

This campaign focused on physical loads in the workplace, specifically back load, and targeted schools and companies. It was introduced in January 2013 by the German Social Accident Insurance umbrella organisation (*Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung — DGUV*) and the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry, Landscaping and Miners (*Sozialversicherung für Landwirtschaft, Forsten und Gartenbau — SVLFG*) and it ran until 2015.

DGUV regularly conducts prevention campaigns (such as a campaign on skin diseases (1)) and these campaigns are run within the framework of DGUV's 2010 strategy paper entitled 'Common principles for prevention campaigns by the statutory accident insurance body' (*Gemeinsame Grundsätze für Präventionskampagnen der gesetzlichen Unfallversicherung*) (2). The principles were agreed at a strategy symposium on joint prevention campaigns of the statutory accident insurance. The participants of the symposium (around 120 participants) included members of management, chief executives, prevention supervisors and communications officers of the accident insurance funds and employers' liability insurance associations. The paper defines the strategic principles, and the principles of planning, structure and evaluation of the campaigns.

1.2 Aims of the initiative

The initiative focused on physical loads, aiming to reduce back load at work and in schools. It also targeted strain on the back from other sources, including a lack of exercise, as well as psychosocial risks. The campaign sought to raise awareness and create change in workplace practices and in the behaviour of individuals in companies and schools, thereby preventing work-related back injuries. The target group was insured persons (employees, pupils, students, volunteers, etc.), employers or occupational safety and health (OSH) managers, occupational physicians, technical OSH staff and trade union representatives.

The expected effects of the campaign were:

- a greater awareness among the target group of back-related risks at work and how to prevent back problems and injuries;
- concrete changes in enterprises and schools in terms of risk prevention, e.g. increasing the number of enterprises with ergonomically optimised workstations and an increased focus on risk factors for back pain in risk assessments;
- an increase in medical prevention assessments among businesses.

1.3 Organisations involved

The campaign was implemented by DGUV, which is the umbrella association of the accident insurance institutions for the industrial and public sectors (*Berufsgenossenschaften*) and the public sector accident insurers (*Unfallkassen*). Together, these organisations provide statutory accident insurance against accidents at work or that happen while commuting and occupational diseases. Other organisations involved included SVLFG and the *Knappschaft*, which is an association of statutory pension insurance, private pension insurance, and health and long-term care insurance providers.

1.4 What was done and how

The campaign consisted of a combination of awareness raising, training and information dissemination activities about MSDs and their prevention (e.g. the consequences of stress for the back and how to increase movement every day). It was implemented through various online communication channels, including the campaign's main website (www.deinruecken.de), which included a web page for enterprises, a simplified web page for persons with reading or learning difficulties and a web page for non-native German speakers. The campaign also developed a Digital Action Box, namely a compilation of tools for companies to use to carry out prevention workshops or promote prevention within their organisations.

Other outputs of the campaign included nine brochures for different target groups, 26 posters with slogans tailored to different target groups and event modules on the prevention of back strain that were intended to support the organisation of action and health days, which were available for borrowing. Target audiences included not only workplaces but also schools, which are a key risk area for the development of MSDs (e.g. heavy and awkward school bags and poorly designed and inadequate school furniture). The campaign was launched through the media, using a range of formats such as advertorials, radio PR and social media, including a Facebook campaign for a young target group and a Xing network for experts in the field of workplace prevention.

The main innovative element of the campaign was the outreach to a young target group through the use of a number of social media channels. In this way, the campaign addressed concerns about the early development of MSDs. It was also innovative in that it targeted both schools and enterprises within the same campaign. Other innovative elements included the wide variety of actions and communication channels used in the campaign, from on-site inspections to the Digital Action Box and Facebook, targeting young people.

1.5 What was achieved

After the campaign, a far-reaching evaluation was carried out to assess the impact of the measures. Among other aspects, the evaluation covered topics such as media presence, awareness, acceptance, changes induced in enterprises and behavioural changes in the target groups.

Surveys were carried out before and after the intervention. The pre-intervention survey was conducted with around 2,600 employees, 1,600 employers and 800 technical experts, covering back health generally as well as the situations in their companies. These first survey results served as a basis for developing the content of the campaign.

The post-intervention survey sought to evaluate the impact of the measures taken and to establish what behavioural changes (if any) could be seen in enterprises and organisations. Over 3,000 employers, managers and employees were interviewed or surveyed.

The following tables summarise the extent and reported impacts of the post-intervention survey. 'Number' indicates the number of actions of that type that were conducted and 'Outreach' indicates the estimated number of individuals being reached through this channel.

Output/outcome	Number	Outreach
Consulting/on-site inspections	174,817	464,268
Health and action days/events in the enterprise	3,790	635,809
Self-organised events outside the enterprise	834	73,548
Presentation/conference participation	1,583	72,534
Participation at a fair/fair booth	541	19,423,471
Public events	41	1,073,963
Seminars/seminar modules	12,221	252,569
Media	Circulation	Outreach
Daily newspaper	55 million	134.6 million
Advertising paper	75.5 million	58.5 million
Specialist medium	2.5 million	5.4 million
Weekly/weekend newspaper or magazine	1.6 million	1.7 million
Online		20.7 million

The table below summarises the responses in an employer/employee survey to the question 'Has the campaign incited you to ...' (the sample size varied between 628 and 634 persons)

	Very often and often	Sometimes	Rarely and almost never
▪ Develop measures for the prevention of back strain at work?	40 %	39 %	22 %
▪ consciously avoid back strain at work?	45 %	40 %	16 %
▪ discuss the topic with managers and colleagues?	35 %	42 %	23 %
▪ think about the topic 'back strain at work'?	45 %	42 %	13 %

Regular conduct of risk assessments was promoted as part of the campaign 'Think of me — Your back'. It was emphasised that, in addition to physical strain on the back, psychosocial risk factors, stress and age-appropriate work also needed to be considered in risk assessments. The survey with management revealed that, before the campaign, risk assessments most frequently focused on physical strain, while mental stress and age-appropriate workplace design were less often considered as part of risk assessments. After the campaign, there was significantly more consideration given to all three aspects in risk assessments.

1.6 Success factors and challenges

The success factors of the campaign were the variety and versatility of the actions offered and the communication channels used. The actions focused on simple messages and easy-to-implement prevention measures to increase acceptance among enterprises and institutions. This allowed companies to focus on those elements most relevant to their business, optimising the likelihood of success. The campaign is viewed as the most successful ever run by DGUV.

1.7 Transferability

The concept of reaching a broad audience through a variety of channels is widely transferable, although it clearly relies heavily on cooperation and coordination between different sectors of society (including industry, schools and the OSH community). Dedicating the level of resources needed to facilitate a campaign like this requires a considerable degree of commitment, which may be justified given the social and health costs of MSDs. Provided there is commitment from the various stakeholders and effective communication channels between those stakeholders, there are few barriers to the successful transfer of this intervention.

2 National background

Eurostat data from Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules show that, in the 5 years from 2007 to 2013, the percentage of workers in Germany reporting some form of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) decreased markedly, falling from 74.9 % to 64.5 %. By contrast, in the EU overall, there was an increase from 54.2 % to 60.1 % in the same time period.

National legislation implementing the provisions of the Manual Handling Directive includes specific details on the nature of the information and training to be provided to comply with the legislation. There are no substantial additional requirements under German law in respect of either the Manual Handling Directive or the Display Screen Equipment Directive. However, in 1991, the Occupational Health Surveillance Ordinance (*Verordnung zur arbeitsmedizinischen Vorsorge*) was introduced, entitling employees to specific medical advice and assessments to prevent work-related MSDs. It also requires that preventive medical care be offered for activities with increased physical workload (this requirement is also specified in German Occupational Medical Rule 13.1 (*Arbeitsmedizinische Regel*). In 2010, new MSD-related occupational diseases were added to the German List of Occupation Diseases.

Psychosocial risks are increasingly recognised as a causal or contributing factor in workplace MSDs. Following intense political discourse, the Occupational Safety and Health Act was amended in 2013. It now explicitly states that employers have to conduct risk assessments that include psychosocial risks (§5) and that the measures implemented, based on those risk assessments, have to consider both physical and mental health (§4).

The initiative summarised here represents one element of Germany's ongoing action to address the problem of MSDs.

References and resources

- (1) DGUV web page on prevention campaigns (*Präventionskampagnen*). Available in German at: https://dguv.de/de/praevention/kampagnen/praev_kampagnen/index.jsp
- (2) DGUV web page on the strategy of common prevention campaigns (*Strategie gemeinsamer Präventionskampagnen*). Available in German at: https://dguv.de/de/praevention/kampagnen/praev_kampagnen/strategie_kampagne/index.jsp
- (3) UKBG, SVLFG and *Knappschaft*. Prevention campaign: Think of me — Your back, Accompanying brochure for the final documentation (*Präventionskampagne: Denk an mich — Dein Rücken, Begleitheft zur Abschlussdokumentation*). Available in German at: https://dguv.de/medien/inhalt/praevention/kampagnen/praev_kampagnen/dein_ruecken/abschlussbericht.pdf
- (4) UKBG, SVLFG and *Knappschaft*. Prevention campaign: Think of me — Your back. Numbers, data, facts (*Präventionskampagne: Denk an mich — Dein Rücken. Zahlen, Daten, Fakten*). Available in German at: <https://www.bghw.de/arbeitschuertzer/praeventionspreis> and https://www.dguv.de/medien/inhalt/mediencenter/pm/pressearchiv/2013/q1/deinruecken_start/factsheet.pdf
- (5) DGUV, 2017. IAG Report 5/2017 — *Die Evaluation der Präventionskampagne 'Denk an mich. Dein Rücken'*. Available in German at: <https://publikationen.dguv.de/dguv/pdf/10002/12662-iag-report-5-2017.pdf>

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