



## Working safely in multicultural teams

The German labour market needs migration to address the shortage of skilled workers. Prevention concepts must increasingly take language barriers and cultural differences into account. A survey of labour inspectors confirms the urgency of communicating safety instructions in a new way.

In 2022, according to the Federal Statistical Office, 23.8 million people in Germany had a migration background. This is 28.7 percent of the population. The broad definition means this group is very heterogeneous and there is no one-size-fits-all response to the question of whether immigrants are at a greater risk of accidents at work. Many indications suggest that the level of education, language skills and learned safety behaviour have a key role to play.

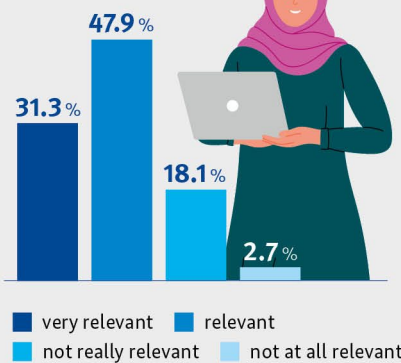
### Relevant factors are education, understanding of language and cultural influence

In order to establish the extent of the need for prevention in the context of migration, the Institute for Work and Health of

### Survey of labour inspectors:

n = 1313, survey period: 23.10. to 08.12.2023

#### How relevant is migration in terms of prevention?



#### What action do companies need to take? (TOP 5)



Source: IAG/Graphic: DGUV/Graphic elements: Shutterstock.com

the DGUV (IAG) conducted a survey among labour inspectors. Around 75 percent believe migration is an important issue in terms of prevention. They see the greatest challenges as being language barriers and a lack of qualifications.

“People with a migration background who have a low level of education, who cannot speak German well and who do not have a professional qualification appear to be at greater risk of having an accident at work,” says Dr. Stefan Hussy, Director General of the DGUV, adding: “The reason is that these individuals are often deployed in work locations or in sectors with specific hazards, such as the construction or metal industry.” Insufficient language skills may also be the cause of an accident if instructions or shouted warnings are not understood in time.

Cultural differences, however, also play a role. Experiences of health and safety in the country of origin, where protective equipment and devices are often outdated or non-existent, have been shown to have a strong influence on future working life. Religious traditions such as the commandment not to eat during the day in Ramadan can affect performance at work and place workers at risk.

### Companies need new training concepts

Around 82 percent of labour inspectors surveyed by the IAG take the view that companies need training concepts specifically for people with a migration background. Language teaching (76.6 percent) and specialist qualifications (63.3 percent) are also rated as important. Managers also need to be made aware of different cultures (57.4 percent) and less text-heavy prevention materials need to be developed. If there is a lack of language skills, then safety-relevant behaviour can be described via films, images and pictograms, even without words. “During instructions things should be demonstrated and procedures should be run through together. You should always check that everything has been understood,” explains Hussy. “In companies where there are several people from one country of origin, it may be useful to appoint one person from the group with good knowledge of German as a safety delegate. This way, the knowledge can also be passed on in the language of origin.”

### Training without words

The cartoon character “Napo” shows, without using any words, what’s important for ensuring safe and healthy working.

→ [www.tube.dguv.de](http://www.tube.dguv.de)  
→ [www.Napofilm.net/en](http://www.Napofilm.net/en)





## NO to cannabis at work and training

On February 23, the German Bundestag approved the legalisation of cannabis. The heated debate beforehand showed just how contentious this issue is. The law must still pass through the Bundesrat – so it remains to be seen when it will enter into force.

As the German Social Accident Insurance, we actively contributed to the debate with a position paper as in my view one aspect was not being sufficiently addressed: what effect will the legalisation of cannabis have on safe and healthy working? There is only one answer to this – cannabis and other drugs have no place in the workplace. Occupational health and safety is very clear in this respect: employees must not use intoxicants to put themselves or others at risk. Also, employers must not allow employees to work if they cannot perform their work safely. For this, employers require binding criteria to determine the influence of cannabis on occupational safety. This problem must be solved.

The fact that the planned law also includes measures to help prevent addiction and to protect children and young adults is to be welcomed. In terms of protecting children and young people, zero tolerance is right and important. Companies and educational institutions should provide information on addiction and drugs, should offer help, and should regulate what is and isn't permitted in company agreements. The German social accident insurance institutions provide advice on this.

Yours  
Dr Stefan Hussy  
Director General of the DGUV

## GVG publishes roadmap for the digital transformation of the welfare state

How can the digitalisation of social security be accelerated? The digitalisation forum of the German Association for Social Security Policy and Research (Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V., GVG) has examined this question closely and published a roadmap. “With the GVG roadmap, we are calling on policy-makers to put in place the necessary framework conditions for accelerating the digital transformation. The aim is to enable service-oriented digital solutions,” explains Dr. Edlyn Höller, Deputy Director General of the DGUV and member of the GVG board and executive committee.

According to GVG, this requires a cultural change and close cooperation between the various stakeholders. The focus should be on the needs of citizens. Barriers to dig-

italisation should be removed, digital services should be prioritized, and their public tendering procedures should be simplified. A further demand is the reform of social data protection, particularly regarding the use of artificial intelligence.

The GVG brings together a large part of the German social services and healthcare system, including social insurance institutions, social partners, service providers, private companies, associations, and chambers. The GVG digitalisation forum, which developed the roadmap, is led by Bertram Geck, IT systems house of the Federal Employment Agency, and Tobias Schmitz, Head of IT and Digitalisation at the DGUV.

➔ [www.gvg.org](http://www.gvg.org) > Newsroom > Aktuelles > Digitale Transformation des Sozialstaates beschleunigen (German only)

## Greater alertness – fewer commuting accidents

Distraction, overtiredness and the influence of alcohol, drugs and medication impact negatively on alertness in traffic and are often the cause of accidents. In 2022, there were 290,000 road traffic accidents resulting in personal injury and 170,000 reportable accidents on the commute to work. The direct cause of over 7,000 accidents involving personal injury was distraction – more than 100 people lost their lives as a result.

In order to highlight the effects of tiredness, distraction and drugs when driving, the German Road Safety Council (DVR) and the German social accident insurance institutions have launched a campaign. Films, seminar materials and presenta-



Being tired affects alertness while driving.

tions for informing employees are available to companies, local authorities, and public institutions.

➔ [www.schwerpunktaktion.de](http://www.schwerpunktaktion.de) (German only)

### Good to know.

A careless moment, a slippery patch – there are plenty of pitfalls on the way to work. So it's good that commuting accidents – i.e. accidents on the way directly to or from work, or an educational institution – are covered by insurance. The insurance cover begins when you leave the external door of the building you are living in and ends at the external door of your destination. It's not the shortest route, but the most easily accessible route which is relevant in terms of insurance. This also applies to car-sharing and journeys to childcare, even when working from home.



# Successful settling in – making integration work for international specialists



DGUV Kompakt spoke to **Stephan Köhler** about the challenges of intercultural cooperation, taking the care sector as an example. Stephan Köhler is an OSH expert at the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Health and Welfare Services (BGW).

## The German Economic Institute is forecasting a shortage of around 307,000 care workers by 2035. What is your view of the current situation?

The forecast illustrates a shortage in the care sector that must be taken seriously. We are seeing increasing demand for care workers coupled with a shortage of skilled labour. This requires innovative approaches to attract and integrate international skilled workers.

## In your view, what are the challenges posed by integration?

There are various challenges associated with intercultural working, particularly in the area of occupational safety and health. Let's assume there are professionals from different countries working in a care team. Due to cultural differences in risk perception, not all team members may have the same assessment of certain tasks and risks. This could result in misunderstandings and, in the worst case, in unsafe working practices. In addition, foreign skilled workers often encounter stressful working situations due to a lack of time. Familiarization is often neglected. At the same time, they are usually waiting for their recognition procedure to be finalised. In nursing, this means they are deployed as care assistants – in activities well below their level of qualifications. Over the long term, this can lead to dissatisfaction.

## How can companies and managers counteract this?

It is important to be aware of factors making integration more difficult. Companies must also create structures giving new team members, and in particular those coming from abroad, sufficient time for adaptation training. Companies should support employees with recognition procedures. It is also advisable to attend training which builds awareness of cultural differences in the work context.

## What role does language play in this process?

Communication is fundamental. Language barriers can become a real burden, both when dealing with patients and within the team. Offers which help to learn the language more quickly and clear guidelines for communication within the team are important measures to reduce the potential for conflict. It is also helpful for the people who train others endeavour to use simple language, repeat information, and ask whether everything has been understood.



**Communication is fundamental. Language barriers can become a real burden.**

## The BGW's "Intercultural team – care" training programme aims to promote culturally sensitive interaction. Who is the programme aimed at and what does it involve?

The training is aimed at facilities in residential nursing and geriatric care which are specifically seeking to recruit (care) professionals from abroad and to integrate them over the long term. It includes a briefing with the management team as well as optional support when transferring the training content – and, if requested, extends to a full integration concept. Over three modules, we make managers, new nurses and multipliers aware of what culturally sensitive working means – i.e. what impact cultural differences can have on work, and also specifically on occupational health and safety, and what structures and rules are conducive to good teamwork.

## What helps new employees:

- Language learning offers
- Structured induction
- Defined area of work
- Culturally sensitive managers
- Support offers for the recognition procedure
- Permanent contact person

## What measures are the participating companies implementing?

One example is a systematic induction concept, including mentoring, for which the necessary time and personnel resources are made available, or language courses that also teach medical terminology. Facilities demonstrating exceptional commitment can receive an award from the BGW for being an integration-friendly organisation as well as financial support.

→ [www.bgw-online.de/pflege-interkulturell](http://www.bgw-online.de/pflege-interkulturell) (German only)

## BGW-Podcast "Heartbeat" – episode 7 "Intercultural cooperation in nursing".

If you want to integrate foreign employees, you need to be well prepared and adopt a strategic approach. But how? This is the focus of episode 7: "Intercultural cooperation in nursing". (German only)



# Women at work – typical occupational diseases, common causes of accidents

Which occupational diseases affect women in particular and do they have just as many accidents as men? We take a look at DGUV statistics from a female perspective to mark International Women's Day.

**Violence in the workplace**  
For women, one in thirty accidents at work is linked to violence.  
(for men the figure is one in ninety.)

## OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

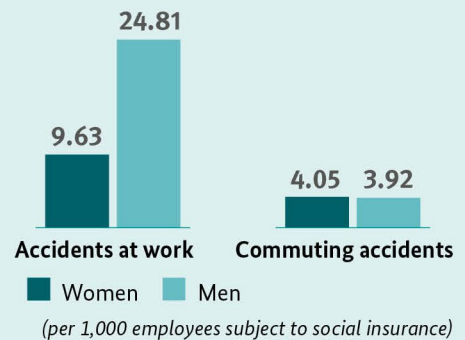


In 2022, **151,075** occupational diseases were officially diagnosed in women. These are primarily **infectious diseases and skin diseases**. For men, skin cancer, noise-induced hearing loss and asbestos-related diseases also have a role to play.



## ACCIDENTS AT WORK AND COMMUTING ACCIDENTS

**218,452** women had a reportable accident at work in 2022 – significantly fewer than men. Common causes were **tripping, falling, rolled ankles, slipping or losing control of a machine or an object**. 65 out of 423 fatal accidents at work concerned women. 85,222 women suffered accidents on the commute to and from work and injured themselves so severely that they were unable to work for 4 or more days – about the same number as men.



# Joint awarding of contract of social insurance providers

Cloud services providers are becoming ever more important for public authorities. Some digitalisation projects, such as networking or use of artificial intelligence, can hardly be achieved without cloud technology. The German Pension Insurance Association (DRV Bund), the Federal Employment Agency (BA) and the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) have now launched a joint tender for a multicloud provider.

The winner of the tender will act as a kind of intermediary. On the one hand, the winner will provide DRV, BA and DGUV each with a portal for at least five cloud service providers. On the other hand, it will set up an ordering and billing portal. The German social accident insurance institutions will also be involved in the tender via the DGUV portal.

The joint awarding of contracts by the three social insurers is new for the public

sector. Compared to previous, concurrent contract awarding processes, the current tender should offer many advantages. Those involved want to use this joint approach to reduce costs and to be in a stronger position for negotiating better conditions with bidders. Interfaces can also be created and, ideally, a common standard procedure can be developed for awarding contracts.

## Imprint

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