

### Occupational Safety and Health Objective “Protecting and strengthening health in cases of work-related emotional strain”

The influence of psychosocial factors on an employee's health is increasingly coming under the scrutiny of occupational safety and health experts and health insurers. In particular, the strong increase in the number of incapacity to work cases and early retirements which can be attributed to emotional strain is alarming and is prompting a need for action.

Mental health problems can be prevented by ensuring a humane working environment and the strengthening of personnel resources. As part of the GDA, tools are being developed which will make it easier for employers and employees to recognise the early signs of mental health risks. In addition, the GDA stakeholders are planning preventative measures in the areas of workplace organisation as well as health and skills promotion in order to minimise work-related emotional strain and to raise both senior staff and workers' awareness of the issue.

A central concern of the GDA is to actively engage with companies, social partners and additional stakeholders such as health insurers, professional associations of occupational physicians as well as occupational safety and health specialists.

General Office of the National Occupational Safety and Health Conference  
 c/o Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health  
 Nöldnerstraße 40-42  
 10317 Berlin  
 Germany  
 Phone +49 (0)30 515 48 0  
 Fax +49 (0)30 515 48 4135  
 E-Mail [nak-geschaeftsstelle@buaa.bund.de](mailto:nak-geschaeftsstelle@buaa.bund.de)  
 Internet [www.gda-portal.de](http://www.gda-portal.de)

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

### Joint Safety and Health Objectives 2013 - 2018





### Safety and Health Objectives for the GDA period 2013 -2018 – Choosing the objectives

With the involvement of the Federal Government, federal states and accident insurers, the Joint Safety and Health Objectives are the basis for coordinated action and shared preventative measures in the critical area of safety and health in the workplace.

For the period 2013 - 2018 three central GDA objectives were identified. In doing so, there was a particular focus on the following selection criteria:

- Continuing and sustaining the Occupational Safety and Health Objectives for 2008 - 2012
- Topical relevance for society as a whole
- Relevance for employees
- Feasibility
- Opportunities for cooperation

In order to achieve as broad a consensus as possible for the GDA objectives, social partners and stakeholders were closely involved in the decision-making process. Following a lengthy series of votes and deliberations, the number of choices was narrowed down. For this process, approximately 130 relevant organisations (health insurers, pension funds, chambers of crafts/trades and commerce, professional associations, etc) were surveyed and requested to rate the suitability of these choices as goals for the new GDA period.

The results of this process were presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Forum in 2011.

### Occupational Safety and Health Objective “Improving the organisation of company occupational safety and health”

Healthy and safe workplaces are the main objective of the GDA. In order to guarantee these, a well-functioning occupational safety and health policy in the establishment is required. The better integrated occupational safety and health is into a firm’s everyday processes and decisions, the more effective it will be. Examples such as those from among the winners of the German Occupational Safety and Health Prize where occupational safety **and** strong business results are defined equally as a company objective, demonstrate the impact of such a strategy.

For this reason, GDA activities from 2013 onwards will seek in a targeted way to integrate health and safety into existing internal company structures.

For this purpose, the online tool GDA-ORGcheck ([www.gda-orgcheck.de](http://www.gda-orgcheck.de)) will inform and motivate companies. At the same time, the tool will also serve as the basis for the consultation and control activities of the supervisory authorities of the federal states and the accident insurers. In addition, the ORGcheck allows companies to benefit from self-evaluation and benchmarking within their sector.

### Occupational Safety and Health Objective “Reducing work-related health hazards and musculoskeletal disorders”

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) have for many years headed the statistics for causes of incapacity to work and are an enormous cost factor for both companies and health insurers. These disorders, which for those affected can often lead to chronic stress, occur in activities that are physically demanding as well those requiring little physical effort or movement, activities involving forced postures and vibrations as well as psychosocial factors.

GDA activities to avoid MSDs support companies by correctly determining potential risks in the workplace and reduce these by using a targeted approach. Through an ergonomic and age-appropriate design of workplaces and the promotion of preventive behaviour, MSDs can be effectively prevented.

A further important target group are schools and their students. Here, awareness of the topic of MSDs should be raised as early as possible.

The planned measures build on the experiences of the first GDA strategy period in which the reduction of MSDs was already a Joint Occupational Safety and Health Objective.