

Information sheet: Evaluation of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA)

Background

By anchoring the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA) in the Occupational Safety and Health Act and in the Seventh Book of the German Social Code (SGB VII), the German legislator obliged the GDA bodies, i.e. the federal government, federal states and public accident insurance institutions, to evaluate the attainment of the GDA objectives.

In addition to the evaluation of the targeted GDA work programmes across federal states and responsible institutions, the GDA is also to be evaluated in its entirety with regard to overriding effects on the occupational safety and health system and on safety and health at the workplace.

With the intention of evaluating the GDA, we are following the example of other EU member states which also evaluate their national occupational safety and health strategies.

Evaluation concept of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy

The evaluation of a multi-stakeholder and multi-action-level strategy such as the GDA is a major challenge.

The GDA is not a "project" or "scientific experiment" in which certain parameters can be stipulated so that the effects of the GDA can be measured under as controlled conditions as possible. The GDA is largely implemented in the companies by "administrative action" applying existing law.

The objectives and actions of the GDA are intended in socio-political terms and not derived from scientifically sound hypotheses on interconnections to be examined between measures ("interventions") and effects. However, a fundamental assumption of the GDA is that a harmonised supervisory activity based on practicable and transparent regulations increases the acceptance of occupational safety and health in the companies and therefore also indirectly improves the workers' safety and health.

As part of the evaluation, the success of the GDA is determined according to 5 different target levels:

1. Are the national occupational safety and health objectives reached?
2. Can the acceptance and effectiveness of the consultancy and monitoring of the supervisory services in the companies be increased with the GDA?
3. Do state occupational safety and health authorities and public accident insurance institutions work together appreciably better for the companies?
4. Can the cooperation with health insurance funds, pension insurance institutions, industry and networks be improved under the GDA?
5. How are company prevention and its effects on the workers' health as well as on the competitiveness of the companies developing?

Various methods and monitoring instruments, such as assessments of routine statistics, interviews with experts, representative surveys and regular central status reporting are used to evaluate the complex overall package of objectives and measures and their effect on the national occupational safety and health system as well as on safety and health at the workplace.

The evaluation is performed by an independent external institute. The General Office of the National Occupational Safety and Health Conference (NAK) at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) performs the monitoring. A scientific and socio-political Advisory Council with international members, which was set up in July 2010, takes care of the scientific quality assurance.

Results

The first cornerstone of the evaluation was laid in 2011 with a broad-based company and worker survey. From May to August, 6,500 businesses were questioned on the telephone by the social research institute, TNS Infratest, on basic tasks of company occupational safety and health, for example on the risk assessment but also on the information and training of employees in occupational safety and health and on other aspects of their occupational safety and health commitment as a whole. TNS asked some 5,500 workers the same or similar questions, including ones about the availability of occupational safety and health information, work stresses they experienced and about the prevention culture prevailing at the workplace and their personal health skills.

The researchers also wanted to know from companies how satisfied they were with the current regulations – and which regulations were most familiar to the management and the occupational safety and health professionals in the company.

The survey tools for these broad-based surveys, which represent a sort of reference line for the further actions of the strategy, were jointly agreed upon by the GDA-bodies and representatives of the social partners.

The results of the surveys will be processed in an interim report on the GDA evaluation. This report will probably be published in July/August 2012.

It is planned to conduct the survey again in each coming GDA period, i.e. the next time in the period 2013 – 2018 in order to permit comparisons over the course of time. For example, companies and workers can regularly express their opinions on the status of occupational safety and health in Germany. Not least of all, with the help of this barometer it will be possible in the long term to gain an idea of the successes of the GDA and, at the same time, obtain an indication from those surveyed where adjustments may have to be made.

The final report of the GDA evaluation is planned for 2013.