



EU Mental Health Initiative

Feedback from German Social Insurance dated 14 February 2023

The German Federal Pension Insurance (DRV Bund), the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Funds (GKV-Spitzenverband), the national associations for statutory health and longterm care insurance funds at the federal level and the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) have joined forces to form the "German Social Insurance - Working Group Europe" (Deutsche Sozialversicherung Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europa e. V.) with a view to their common European policy interests.

The association represents the interests of its members vis-à-vis the bodies of the European Union (EU) as well as other European institutions and advises the relevant stakeholders in the context of current legislative projects and initiatives.

As part of the statutory insurance system in Germany, health and longterm care insurance, pension insurance and accident insurance offer effective protection against the consequences of major risks to life.

I. Preliminary remark

The German Social Insurance European Representation (DSV) welcomes the mental health initiative. Mental health problems are a major cause of occupational disability and early retirement in many countries, challenging health and social systems.¹ In Germany, the number of days of absence due to mental illness increased by 41 per cent between 2011 and 2021 and reached a new high. Almost 40 per cent of reduced earning capacity pensions due to psychological reasons are now approved in Germany.

¹ https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/280604/WHO-Europe-Mental-Health-Acion-Plan-2013-2020.pdf



II. Feedback

A comprehensive approach to promotion of mental health must be holistic and encompass prevention, treatment and follow-up of mental illness.

Prevention

Prevention of mental illness must start in kindergarten and school, must be targeted at the workplace and must not end in old age.

The psychological resources of children and youth must be strengthened, especially as a result of the pandemic and against the background of the dangers posed by the Internet and social media.²

Preventing and combating psychosocial risks at the workplace has a special role to play. Psychological stress can result from working conditions, such as the intensity of work, social support at the workplace or the duration and distribution of working hours.³

The DSV especially requests:

- information and counselling services as well as programmes to destigmatise mental illness and an open approach in all areas of life.
- Preventive measures for children and youth: measures against violence and bullying; establishment of preventive measures in kindergartens and schools.
- Further development and promotion of measures against mental stress at the workplace with the priority of relationship prevention over behavioural prevention measures.
- The introduction of risk assessments that take into account mental stress in the workplace and facilitate systematic derivation of suitable measures.
- The targeted support of mental health through programmes, e.g. for stress prevention and health-oriented personnel management within the framework of workplace health promotion.

² It is estimated that almost one in five children and youth are bullied on the internet or social media.

³ [Consideration of mental stress in risk assessment \(gda-psyche.de\)](https://www.gda-psyche.de)



Rehabilitation

Mental illnesses lead to long periods of absence and treatment. The chronification of mental illness leads to a lower quality of life for those affected and also results in economic losses for companies and society as a whole.

The DSV requests:

- promotion of medical rehabilitation;
- ensuring timely psychotherapeutic care after traumatic events to prevent trauma sequelae;
- promotion of individual prevention after accidents at the workplace and
- expansion of occupational integration management.

Treatment and care

Patients must have equal access to psychotherapeutic and psychiatric treatment and care services. In the treatment of mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety disorders, digital health applications can help to bridge waiting times and act a supplement to outpatient psychotherapy.

The DSV requests:

- The evidence-based improvement of access to psychotherapeutic and psychiatric care.
- The optimisation of the supporting role of digital health applications in the treatment of mental illness.
- The development of specific support services for mentally ill in need of care and caregivers.