




TOGETHER FOR A STRONG, DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIAL EUROPE

The European Representation of the German Social Insurance has been involved in the joint shaping of Europe's social dimension for over 30 years now. Important steps are being taken at European level, for example in the areas of occupational health and safety, ensuring a high-quality and affordable supply of medicinal products and combating cross-border health threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The German social insurance system is a cornerstone of the welfare state and the democratic constitutional order. It represents the interests of 74 million insured persons in health and long-term care insurance, 57 million insured persons in pension insurance and more than 70 million insured persons in 5.2 million member companies in accident insurance – regardless of origin, religion or gender. Our basic principles are solidarity, codetermination and openness to the world.

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Ensuring freedom of movement through social security coordination

All EU citizens have the right to move freely within the European Union (EU). Whether studying, working or in old age – living abroad in the EU is part of today's normality. The coordination of social security systems under European law ensures that cross-border mobility does not lead to disadvantages in terms of social security. Social security coordination is not static, it must be regularly adapted to social and societal developments. For example, teleworking, mobile working and the so-called home office are now a natural part of the working culture in many areas. As this also applies to cross-border work, a multilateral framework agreement on teleworking was concluded in 2023.

The current efforts to reform the legislation on social security coordination contain important regulatory changes, for example in dealing with cross-border benefits when long-term care is required. In view of the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain the necessary skilled labour in Europe's ageing societies, a modern social security coordination is needed more than ever. It must be adapted to the challenges associated with the new flexibility in working life, improve the coordination of social security systems and be able to be implemented smoothly in practice. For this reason, the reform of social security coordination must be finalised as a high priority in the new legislative period.

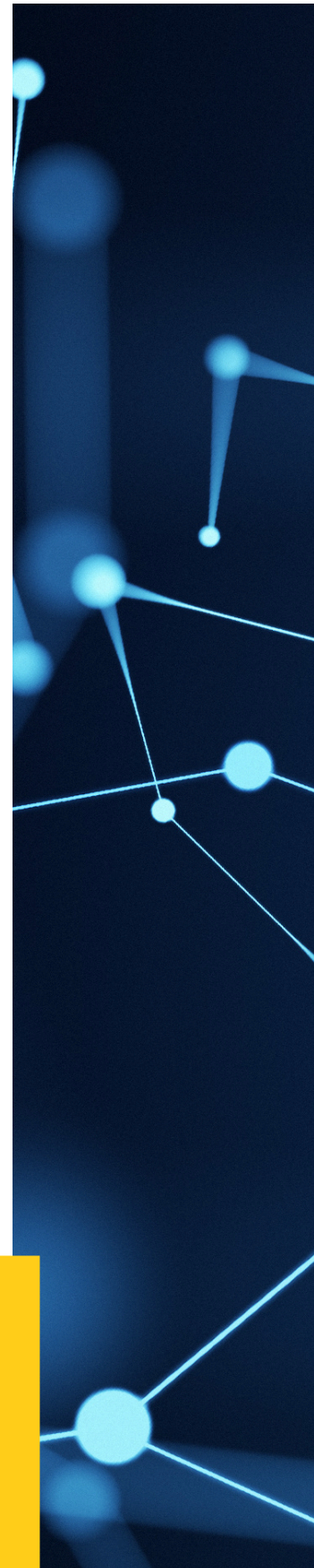


Advancing the digitalisation of social security systems

As part of the policy programme for the Digital Decade, the goal was set to make all administrative services available online by 2030. However, digitalisation is not an end in itself. Its full innovation potential will only be realised if the bureaucratic burden on insured persons and employers is significantly reduced.

The challenges and opportunities of digitalisation are demonstrated by the successful implementation of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information system (EESSI), which involves several thousand social insurance institutions in 32 countries. EESSI proves that large-scale, ambitious long-term projects are feasible and worthwhile for both insured persons and social insurance institutions. However, the introduction of EESSI has also made it clear that digitalisation involves complex issues that require the early and comprehensive involvement of the social insurance institutions.

This also applies to the European initiative introducing an EU Digital Identity Wallet, which should enable citizens to prove their identity throughout the EU for the use of online services as well as for the cross-border verification of digital documents. This means that mobile people can also provide evidence relevant to social insurance digitally. Consistent implementation is important in order to achieve further progress in the coordination of social security as a whole.



Shaping the green transition in a socially acceptable manner

The fight against the climate crisis and the transition to a resource-efficient European economy will characterise and accompany the coming legislative period. Climate change is already having an impact on various areas of life, including the world of work. People are exposed to more UV radiation, heat stress and increasing exposure to dust, pollen and tropical insects. This presents the social insurance with new challenges in terms of prevention, medical treatment, rehabilitation and care measures, as well as occupational health and safety.

In addition, fields of work that are evolving in the context of the energy transition and an emerging circular economy pose challenges. New "green jobs" will be created. Sectors such as repair, dismantling and recycling will gain in importance, but will also open up new sources of danger, for example in the handling of hazardous substances. A transfer of knowledge on safe working practices and personal protective equipment, as well as greater sensitisation of employers and employees are therefore essential for effective prevention.

In addition to effective social protection systems, joint European strategies are needed to successfully accompany the green transition. In this sense, the European Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights must be further developed.



Creating resilient healthcare systems



In order to make the healthcare systems in Europe crisis and future-proof, the forces at European level must be pooled sensibly and joint potential utilised without ignoring the special features of the national systems. This applies, for example, to common standards and benefit assessments of medicinal products and medical devices. It makes sense for the EU to establish standardised requirements for both the quality and safety of new medicinal products and medical devices.

Furthermore, challenges such as dealing with new technologies or supply bottlenecks for pharmaceuticals and medical products can best be overcome together. As a first step, this requires transparency and joint strategies to safeguard research, development and regulation of crisis-relevant products.

The EU is also playing an increasingly important role in the digitalisation of the healthcare system. The establishment of a European Health Data Space is intended not only to improve cross-border healthcare, but also to enable the use of health data for research and to promote the further development of healthcare in all areas – from prevention to acute treatment and rehabilitation. The focus must always be on added value for the insured person, their needs-based and quality-assured care and the sustainable financing of national healthcare systems.