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INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION
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INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG FÜR SOZIALE SICHERHEIT

Good Practices in Social Security

Good practice in operation since: 2014

Social security agencies must respect human rights

A case of the German Social Accident Insurance

German Social Accident Insurance
Germany

Summary

In 2012 social security agencies in Germany decided to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a model in their own organization. Social security institutions were to be model employers. Anyone insuring the social risks of people must also take human rights into account. All those working in social security have to live up to these on a daily basis whether they work in prevention, rehabilitation or claims. When service providers become involved, whether doctors, clinics or supervisory staff in factories, then these persons must also respect human rights.

Such a strategy to change attitudes, structures and processes in an organization can only succeed through an action plan. Over the period 2012 - 2014 the German Statutory Accident Insurance Scheme (DGUV) carried out this plan as a project. Action plan 2.0 is currently under way (2015 - 2017) to secure the results of the project and ensure they are properly embedded in administrative routine. The good example can not only be transferred to other accident insurers but to all social security agencies worldwide. The evaluated criteria for success in drawing up an action plan to implement the UN CRPD can be brought together in an ISSA guideline and thus made available to all ISSA members.

CRITERIA 1

What was the issue/problem/challenge addressed by your good practice?

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. These human rights have to be implemented in the individual member States when they have ratified them. Some 160 countries have done this. Social security agencies worldwide have to respect these human rights, particularly Article 25 (Health), Article 26 (Rehabilitation) and Article 27 (Employment). Many have opted to be guided more or less by whether they are state, self-governing or for-profit institutions. DGUV, the umbrella organization for all statutory accident insurers in Germany, the insurers against occupational accidents and illnesses, is one of the few ISSA members hitherto that had decided on an action plan to implement the UN CRPD in the statutory accident insurance sector (2012 - 2014). What has emerged is a good practice that is transferable to other social security agencies in other countries, i.e. to insurance schemes covering the risks against illness, old age and unemployment.

CRITERIA 2

What were the main objectives and the expected outcomes?

One of the main aims was a change in attitude among staff and partners in the statutory accident insurance sector (approximately 20,000 persons). This also includes nine accident clinics.

What was involved essentially was a paradigm change moving from reaction to intervention, from care to self-determination and from direction to participation. Services involved when working with occupational accidents and illnesses must be geared to human rights and form a contribution to a society that is inclusive and accessible. All 3.3 million enterprises in Germany, i.e. the members and contributors of accident insurers, are advised by the statutory insurance scheme if they wish to introduce measures to implement the UN CRPD in their workplaces. One advantage of this approach is the close collaboration with the German government. In 2010 the government adopted a national action plan covering the next 10 years.

CRITERIA 3

What is the innovative approach/strategy followed to achieve the objectives?

The DGUV action plan encompassed 64 measures under 12 aims in five fields of activity. Working groups used these to develop communication principles for accessibility, which included Internet presentations and documentation in simple language. There was also a check list for staff for preparing and holding events on accessibility. A design was produced for accessible premises for the administrative offices of accident insurers, which included more than just ramps and lifts. This led to the development of a design for accessible doctors' practices and clinics, either for the DGUV's own clinics or for those accepted by the DGUV for the treatment of accident victims.

Many ideas on awareness raising were combined and put into practice. This gave rise to the film "Gold - Du kannst mehr als du denkst" (Gold - you can do more than you think), that ran as a documentary in German cinemas, had already been shown at the United Nations in New York and is available for use by ISSA Members. Many brochures were produced. The brochure "Good Examples" is designed to inspire people to do the same. It is freely available on the DGUV's web site. The action plan is also available in English.

The method to produce an action plan for a social insurance branch met with the success that was hoped for because this action plan was adopted and supported by the DGUV's Board, i.e. by the employers and employees who are responsible for and who deliver accident insurance in Germany. All boards of directors in the statutory accident insurance sector have bought in to the plan. This *top down* approach ensured that all staff knew that they had to change, that a person's own actions were examples for others, and that the involvement of experts in their own cause, i.e. people with disabilities as insured individuals, was a conscious decision.

Social security's profile has sharpened both internally and externally as a direct result of the aim and efforts of statutory accident insurers to make people with disabilities healthy and fit for work again and to integrate them directly in this process. This movement has given rise to pilot projects for *peer* counselling, where, for example, amputees help amputees. It has also given rise to inclusion projects involving people with and without disabilities in the workplace and in educational institutions such as kindergartens and schools. Because in Germany the statutory accident insurance scheme also provides accident protection for children and schoolchildren.

Special worlds such as special schools and sheltered workshops for the disabled should be avoided where possible.

CRITERIA 4

Have the resources and inputs been used in an optimal way to achieve the set objectives and the expected outcomes? Please specify what internal or external evaluations of the practice have taken place and what impact/results have been identified/achieved so far.

The achievement of the aims and the implementation of the UN CRPD action plan were evaluated. The evaluation results were published, both as a status report for the DGUV Board and through essays, some of which were published abroad, such as in Austria. In an event in 2014 the principle of focus groups was used to find out what had been achieved and how. These findings were fed into a follow-up plan, the action plan 2.0. This is to stabilize the achievements of the first action plan and secure it sustainably. Over the period the action plan is to run (2015 - 2017) each decision-making body in the statutory accident insurance scheme is to put the item "UN CRPD" on their agenda and all decision papers are to be examined beforehand particularly for their relevance to the UN CRPD, especially with regard to accessibility, inclusion and awareness raising. The DGUV received a certificate of recognition from the German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

CRITERIA 5

What lessons have been learned? To what extent would your good practice be appropriate for replication by other social security institutions?

Factors for success in drawing up and carrying out an action plan to implement the UN CRPD in the social security sector arose from the experience of the last four years. These factors for success, which have been published, are transferable to other social security branches, such as those dealing with unemployment, pension and health insurance; indeed, they apply worldwide since the UN CRPD lays down human rights and not just national law. These are central social themes, which social security agencies can use if they wish to be seen as enabling and modern, regardless of whether they are organized as part of the machinery of state, social partners or private institutions, i.e. non-profit or for-profit. Because social security looks after the needs of people in all countries. Thus, social security agencies, with their staff, must respect and implement human rights on a daily basis regardless of whether they handle prevention, rehabilitation or claims.

Every social security agency can use the success criteria published by the DGUV for the drawing-up, carrying-out and evaluation of an action plan to implement the UN CRPD. These are, among other things; begin by taking stock, set up a project, ensure there is top-

down support, include ideas (bottom-up) and prioritize measures. Such cornerstones offer the opportunity to use good practice as an interdisciplinary topic for an organization, to promote a common attitude internally and externally; for good administrative management, for communication, for restoring employability and health, including at the workplace, and for providing social security cover for all population groups. Through the additional opportunity to advise enterprises in drawing up their own action plans and to promote free access to workplaces and health institutions social security agencies secure for themselves high social status. This acceptance is gained particularly through involving interest groups of people with disabilities, which includes employees with disabilities, and co-operation with respective governments looking for partners in implementing the UN CRPD in civil society.

The ISSA could play a co-ordinating role by adopting the subject of the UN CRPD in a guideline similar to those on Return to Work or Prevention. Then the DGUV's experience and achievements would benefit all ISSA members as part of the ISSA's efforts to bring together subjects across individual Technical Committees.