

Use of media in the communication of the German
social accident insurance

The social accident insurance institutions use a range of tools to achieve their goals and to fulfil various statutory information obligations. These include methods and tools of modern mass communication. This article is about these tools.



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As the German social accident insurance institutions, the Berufsgenossenschaften and Unfallkassen (as well as the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture) have two main tasks:

- They assume employers' liability under civil law for occupational accidents and diseases. In this role, they provide medical care to their insured after occupational accidents and diseases, ensure their professional and social participation and compensate those affected financially.
- They support companies and institutions in designing safe and healthy working conditions. In this role, they help to ensure that people's right to physical integrity at work is realised. In their prevention work, the accident insurance institutions pursue the goal of Vision Zero, a world without fatal or serious occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

## Target groups, content, and messages

**Employers:** In its communication with employers, the German social accident insurance continuously raises awareness of employers' responsibility for occupational safety and health. It also provides information about its prevention services, for example, information brochures or training measures. As one of the main benefits, the assumption of the employer's civil liability for occupational accidents and diseases is regularly addressed in the communication, for example, in connection with benefits for insured persons with an occupational disease or reports on the successful reintegration of employees after an occupational accident.

**Employees/workers:** In their communications with workers, the social accident insurance institutions provide information about their services and insurance cover. In addition, and depending upon the industry, media are produced that are tailored to the needs of the respective target group and that process and present OSH information in a way that is specific to the profession.

**Special professions:** The accident insurance institutions also address their communication to certain professional groups that play a special role in their tasks. In occupational safety and health, these are occupational safety specialists, safety officers and company doctors. In the healthcare sector, these are medical service providers such as hospitals and specialist doctors for trauma surgery (so-called Durchgangsarzte or D-Ärzte) who treat insured persons on behalf of the statutory accident insurance and provide rehabilitation services.

**Multipliers:** The social accident insurance informs multipliers in the political arena and the general public about current developments in occupational safety and health and about the role of the social accident insurance in the social security system. The German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) plays a major role in this context.

## Media communication tools

German social accident insurance institutions publish and use a variety of media to reach their target audiences. In order to present a concise overview of the media, it helps to divide these media into three categories: owned media, shared media and earned media. This classification is established in the communications industry, although the boundaries are not always clear. Overlaps in the sense of converged media should therefore be taken into account.

### Owned media

Owned media are channels that a company owns and controls itself. Examples include the company website, blogs, email newsletters, and social media profiles.

In recent decades, customer magazines for employers and insured persons have become increasingly important in communicating with these target groups. At the end of the 20th century, these were print products. Since the turn of the millennium, they have been increasingly digitised – a trend that has been accelerated by the pandemic and the increase in mobile work. In this context, many social accident insurance institutions are now adopting a 'digital first' or 'digital only' approach to communicating with their target groups. Examples include

the online magazine [Certo](#), published by the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Administrative Sector, and [Arbeit und Gesundheit](#), which is aimed at safety officers.

## Shared media

Many social accident insurance institutions also have profiles on social networks. These enable dialogue-based approaches to be implemented in communication. Social networks also make it possible to reach smaller target groups efficiently that would have been difficult or very costly to reach in the past.

Social media provides enormous reach and the opportunity to position yourself quickly and up-to-date. They make it possible to highlight the services of the social accident insurance institutions as and when the need arises. Of particular note is LinkedIn. The DGUV channel on this network, for example, currently has around 19,000 followers and usually achieves several thousand impressions per post and interaction rates of between 2 and 10 per cent. In terms of communicating with the insured, Facebook (38,000 followers) and Instagram (3,000 followers) continue to prove their worth. Compared to other marketing measures, these two channels in particular offer cost-effective advertising opportunities and can provide good support for individual communication measures.

## Earned media

Even though the gatekeeping function of the media has diminished in recent decades, reporting in newspapers, on the internet and on the radio still plays a very important role in mass communication. The German social accident insurance institutions therefore also address the editorial offices of mass and spe-

cialist media in their communication and are committed to placing their messages and topics in news coverage. They use traditional public relations methods such as press releases, press conferences, and direct contact with journalists. They also regularly evaluate reporting in the mass and trade media with a view to identifying new topics in occupational safety and health or the social discourse on social security.

## Campaigns

The German social accident insurance institutions run prevention campaigns to raise awareness of their prevention services among companies and insured individuals and to raise awareness of specific OSH topics.

One example of a cross-industry campaign on a specific topic is the current German social accident insurance campaign [#GewaltAngehen](#) ([#FightViolence](#)), which is aimed at tackling violence at work.

For workers in many trades and industries, violence is one of the risks they face in their day-to-day work and in their voluntary roles. Almost all sectors are affected – people in politics, retail, transport companies, job centres or care facilities, as well as emergency services and firefighters. For these groups of workers, violence is a stressful aspect of their work. At the end of 2023, the German social accident insurance therefore launched the [#GewaltAngehen](#) campaign, initially focusing on violence against emergency services personnel. Since its launch, the campaign has been continuously adding further sectors: healthcare, education, and public services. The aim of the campaign is to take a clear stand against all forms

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of violence, while also highlighting ways to prevent violence. It also provides information about the support offered by the social accident insurance for insured persons affected by violence.

This campaign ensures that the social accident insurance is constantly in the public eye by promoting it across a range of media, including press work, social media, surveys, trade fairs and collaborations. In particular, the presentation of a joint survey with the German Fire Services Association before New Year's Eve 2023 and the DGUV Barometer Bildungswelt (a survey focusing on the issue of violence among schoolchildren) in October

2024 enabled the campaign to generate visibility for the social accident insurance and the issue of violence prevention. As of today, both activities have resulted in the social accident insurance being mentioned in a total of 1,600 news reports. These had a potential reach of around 850 million readers. The campaign also generated good reach and interaction on social media. Overall, 5.7 million people were reached through social media last year, with interaction rates of five to eleven per cent, which are well above average.

#GewaltAngehen can be found on the internet at [www.gewalt-angehen.de](http://www.gewalt-angehen.de). ●

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