



Internationale Fachmesse für Rehabilitation und Pflege
International Trade Fair for Rehabilitation and Care

DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY
14-17 SEPTEMBER 2022

www.rehacare.de

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Press release - REHACARE specialist article No. 2

Disability and work: redesigning workplaces

The search for a suitable job is often associated with additional obstacles for people with disabilities. At REHACARE 2022, solutions and support options as well as ideas for redesigning the workplace will be discussed and presented in the theme park "People with Disabilities and Work" in Hall 6. New is the use of exoskeletons for lifting and carrying heavy objects.

People with a disability do not have an easy time finding the right job. According to current figures from Aktion Mensch and the Handelsblatt Research Institute (November 2021), the unemployment rate for severely disabled people in 2020 was 11.8 per cent - in comparison, 5.9 per cent of people without disabilities were unemployed. At REHACARE 2022, experts will address key questions to improve this situation: How can the workplace be set up so that, for example, a person with a visual impairment can perform their tasks well? What possibilities are there to support someone at work who is in a wheelchair? Is it possible to facilitate jobs in which heavy objects have to be carried - for example, through the technical assistance of robots or through an exoskeleton?

Exoskeletons in vocational rehabilitation

The theme park "People with Disabilities and Occupation", near the REHACARE meeting place in Hall 6, will be supplemented this year by an Exoskeleton Park. An exoskeleton is effectively a mechanical framework that is attached to the body to support it. "Exoskeletons are already being used in industry to prevent back problems. We are currently discussing whether and how they can be used in occupational rehabilitation - for people who are limited by an amputation or paraplegia



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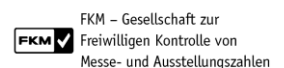
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after an accident, for example," says Dr Urs Schneider, head of the Human Technology Interaction department at the Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation (IPA) in Stuttgart. He is instrumental in organising the exoskeleton park and an accompanying programme with lectures and discussions. Partners are the Landschaftsverband Rheinland LVR, the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, the Wearable Robotics Association WEARRA and the German Foundation for Paraplegia (DSQ).

In the theme park, visitors can test whether and how exoskeletons provide relief for the back, hand or elbow. For this purpose, a workstation is set up where boxes with letters and parcels have to be lifted. At a second, wheelchair-accessible workstation, there are corresponding technical aids on display. "The goal is: rehabilitation before retirement. Experience shows that after an accident or injury, people mainly want to return to their jobs and not be retrained. An exoskeleton can make this possible," explains Dr Urs Schneider.



Inclusion offices inform about support

How technical aids can be used in practice is also an important topic of discussion at the joint stand of the Regional Associations of the Rhineland (LVR) and Westphalia-Lippe. Petra Wallmann from the Inclusion Office Work of the Regional Association of Westphalia-Lippe (LWL), (Hall 6, Stand D17): "However, the staff, as well as the integration specialist services and chamber advisors, will also provide further information - for example, on protection against dismissal, integration assistance or the transition from school to work and the general labour market."

Rehabilitation sport, aids and home care

At the joint stand of the accident insurance institutions under the umbrella of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) in Hall 6,



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Stand D23, Sports rehabilitation plays a major role. The specialists will answer questions such as "How do I get a prescription for sports rehabilitation? Where can I do sports rehabilitation?" and present examples of best practice. DGUV stand manager Karin Schwarz: "The professionals from the German Wheelchair Sports Association (DRS) will be demonstrating various sports such as table tennis, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair dancing, para-ice hockey or even Zumba and encourage people to join in." You can also try out the 60-square-metre, all-inclusive car racing track of the Berufsgenossenschaft für Gesundheitsdienst und Wohlfahrtspflege (BGW): if necessary, the cars can also be steered with the help of the eyes or feet.

What is important after an accident at work, what aids and relief options are available, is the subject of information provided by experts from the BG Bau. The staff of the Accident Insurance Fund (UK) NRW will take a look at home care and their colleagues from the SVLFG (Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture) will demonstrate how the correct transfer from bed to wheelchair can work. "At the model of a rehabilitation house, visitors can find out from the Berufsgenossenschaft (BG) Holz und Metall how the living environment can be made barrier-free in the bathroom or with the help of a lift instead of stairs," announces Karin Schwarz from the DGUV.



**Representatives for the severely disabled:
Working against hurdles in the job for 102 years**



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An anniversary - postponed by the pandemic - will be celebrated at REHACARE 2022: for 102 years, representatives of severely disabled people have been ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account in companies.

"They can achieve so much for employees in companies - in prevention, so that serious impairments do not arise in the first place, as well as in supporting people with disabilities". This is how Christoph Beyer describes the role of representatives for severely disabled people in companies. As Chairman of the Federal Association of Integration Offices and Main Welfare Agencies (BIH), he is involved in the organisation of the anniversary "102 years of representatives for severely disabled people", which will be celebrated in the theme park "People with Disabilities and Work" in Hall 6 at REHACARE 2022 - postponed by the pandemic.



Employers are becoming increasingly involved

During the fair, a timeline will show important milestones in the history of representatives for severely disabled people, which include the continuous strengthening through social legislation (2001) and the Federal Participation Act (2016/2017). "Currently, we are seeing that as a result of the labour shortage, employers are increasingly looking not only to hire people with disabilities, but also to employ them for as long as possible," explains Christoph Beyer.

The Inclusion Offices help in different ways: on the one hand, they train the representatives of severely disabled people for their tasks, and on the other hand, they work directly with employers: "For example, we supported the employees with visual impairments of the Higher Finance Office in North Rhine-Westphalia to get further training in a new, barrier-free software," says expert Beyer. Overall, he says, it is about keeping up with technical and digital developments as much as possible and



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using the opportunities for inclusion in the workplace. "When hiring people with disabilities, money usually doesn't play a decisive role - employers want guidance and contact persons if questions arise." This could be a job coach, for example, who works together with the companies and the representatives of severely disabled people on behalf of the Inclusion Office. Since the beginning of 2022, there is also a new counselling service - the Single Points of Contact for employers, which were created through the Participation Strengthening Act.

Information on accessibility on the job

If a **barrier-free workplace** is set up, then building regulations and the workplace ordinance apply. The German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) provides information on this in its Barrier-free Work Design section: <https://www.dguv.de/barrierefrei>.



Information on the topic of accessibility can be found on the website of the **Bundesfachstelle Barrierefreiheit (Federal Agency for Accessibility)**: www.bundesfachstelle-barrierefreiheit.de.

There you will also find the latest information on the Barrier-Free Act (Barrierefreiheitsstärkungsgesetz). It states that certain products and services must be barrier-free from the end of June 2025. This applies, for example, to computers and smartphones, but also to telephone services and e-books.

The Federal Association of Integration Offices and Main Welfare Agencies (BIH) is committed to the **equal participation of people with disabilities in an inclusive labour market** - as well as to the support of people who have suffered a health impairment, for example due to an accident. More information, including on the Points of Single Contact for employers, is available at www.bih.de. The points of single contact are



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also presented in a podcast by "Aktion Mensch": <https://www.aktion-mensch.de/inklusion/arbeit/unterstuetzung-foerderung/podcast-beyer>

REHACARE Düsseldorf at a glance:

REHACARE is the world's leading trade fair for rehabilitation and care. Every autumn at the Düsseldorf exhibition centre, it offers a representative overview of aids and current knowledge for a self-determined life. The trade fair is open from Wednesday to Friday from 10:00 to 18:00, on Saturday from 10:00 to 17:00.

Exhibitors and products of REHACARE 2022 at:

https://www.rehacare.com/en/Companies_Products_2022/Exhibitor_product_search

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Bei Veröffentlichung freuen wir uns über ein Belegexemplar.

Düsseldorf, August 2022

