

1. The DGB Good Work Index is the human yardstick for work

Quality of work means quality of life, and working time is living time. Anyone who seeks a sustainable working society with a viable future must take serious account of what employees themselves want from the world of work, must be aware of how they rate working conditions and must take care of their interests. The Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) and its affiliates have therefore, as part of the Turnover Initiative, developed a way of measuring the quality of work on the basis of the employees' own judgements - the DGB Good Work Index (DGB Index Gute Arbeit). Since 2007, the employees' assessments of their work situations and their requirements concerning the design of their working conditions have been surveyed. For this purpose, the social polling firm Infratest Sozialforschung GmbH collects representative data from some 7,000 people annually. The DGB Good Work Index is also used for employee surveys within enterprises, as this instrument makes it possible to identify concrete starting points for improvements in the workplace.

1.2 The DGB Good Work Index highlights the employees' viewpoint

Workers, unlike shareholders, spend most of their active lives in the workplace. So they are also its most important investors in terms of knowledge and wealth creation. That is why the DGB Good Work Index focuses on their needs, knowledge and skills.

The DGB Good Work Index puts a figure on the quality of work from the employees' point of view. In all work dimensions for which the quality of work can be measured, employees assess their working situation differently. Employees themselves are asked for their views, and they regularly assess the quality of their work in 15 relevant dimensions (see below).

“Good Work“ is about identifying and promoting those development factors that make it possible for people to remain healthy and creative throughout their working lives. Not only does this make good sense for the national economy and business, it also reflects our basic conviction that being social means creating Good Work.

1.3 The DGB Good Work Index promotes Good Work competition

Through the DGB Good Work Index, the DGB and its affiliates are tackling some major issues: Where is the potential for improvements to be found? What development opportunities are available to the employees? How important do firms consider their employees to be? Which firms do better than others? What are the openings for action by works councils and staff committees, as well as by personnel departments?

The future of enterprises and the German economy lies in the creative potential that employees carry within them. Too much of that is lying fallow. Too many people are badly deployed and resigned to their fate. Their strengths are neither used nor developed. The purpose of an enterprise is to develop good products and services for its customers. That requires qualified, motivated employees. The DGB Good Work Index provides support to employees and enterprises in identifying development opportunities. After all, the quality of work and people's talents will determine whether Germany and Europe have growth potential. Last but not least, the looming shortage of skilled labour is turning Good Work into the central issue for the enterprises of the future. They will not be successful and develop unless Good Work has been achieved for the employees.

2 The methodology of the DGB Good Work Index

The DGB Index provides a differentiated analysis of the work situation as perceived by the employees in all the 15 dimensions that are significant for work quality design.

These are:

- Qualification/development opportunities
- Creativity
- Promotion opportunities
- Possibilities for influencing/shaping work
- Information flows
- Management quality
- Workplace culture
- Relations with colleagues/social climate
- Meaningful work
- Hours of work

- Work intensity
- Physical demands
- Emotional demands
- Income
- Career outlook/job security

Here, a set of 31 unchanging questions are used to construct the index. In this way, comparability within a firm or a sector, or with a general federal German trend, is guaranteed.

The index questions are broken down into three sections: resources, burdens and income/security. Index values are calculated from the responses, on the basis of tried and tested ergonomic findings.

2.1 Calculation of the DGB Good Work Index

Underlying the DGB Good Work Index is a requirements-and-burdens concept rooted in ergonomics. In other words, respondents are asked how often a requirement (e.g. working in noisy surroundings) occurs in the workplace (never, seldom, often, always) and the follow-up question is then whether and to what extent the requirement (e.g. working in noisy surroundings) is felt to be a burden by the person concerned. Similarly, in the case of what are known as work-related resources (e.g. influence over job design), the first question put is about their degree of availability (to a great extent, ..., not at all) and after that the interviewees are asked whether a lack of resources (e.g. little or no possibility for influence) is perceived as a burden.

In this way, for each of the 15 dimensions of the DGB Index, intermediate values are obtained which are assigned the following points (index values):

- 100 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are available to a very large extent and the person is not required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise).
- 83 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are available to a large extent and the person is seldom required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) and does not perceive this as a burden.

- 67 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are available to only a limited extent, but the person does not perceive this as a burden, and the person is often required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) but does not perceive this as a burden.
- 50 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are not available, but the person does not perceive this as a burden, and the person is often or always required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) but does not perceive this as a burden.
- 34 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are not available, or only to a limited extent, and the person perceives this as burdensome. And: the person is often or always required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) and perceives this as a burden.
- 16 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are not available, or only to a limited extent, and the person perceives this as a major burden. And: the person is often or always required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) and perceives this as a major burden.
- 0 points: Resources (e.g. influence) are not available, or only to a limited extent, and the person perceives this as extremely burdensome. And: The person is often or always required to work in potentially burdensome conditions (e.g. noise) and perceives this as extremely burdensome.

On the basis of this points system, the work is categorized as Good, Medium-Grade or Bad. In the 80-100 point range (“Good Work”) the respondents report that resources are available, to the relevant extent, and never or rarely cite burdensome factors. The Medium-Grade Work range (50-79 points) is characterized by the absence (or, at best, the limited availability) of resources and the presence of potentially burdensome requirements. Even if the employees do not, subjectively, perceive this as burdensome, such a categorization makes it clear that better design is needed. In the 0-49 range (“Bad Work”), no resources such as possibilities for influence, good management style, learning opportunities etc. are available. This can no longer be described as “Medium-Grade Work”, and should not be labelled as such. However, within the “Bad Work” category, further distinctions are made according to how burdensome the person feels the lack of resources and/or the presence of certain work requirements to be (noise,

heavy repetitive physical work etc.). The closer the score gets to 0, the stronger is the subjective burden imposed by the work requirements and/or the lack of resources.

2.2 Selected results from the first representative survey, 2008

First, a brief overview of the results from the 2008 DGB Good Work Index: 13 per cent of employees have Good Work, 55 per cent have Medium-Grade Work and 32 per cent have Bad Work. The average work quality attained an index value of 59 points, out of a possible 100. So as seen by wage and salary earners, the quality of work is still towards the lower end of the middle range. Overall, an improvement of one index point over 2007 may be noted, but this does not apply to all groups.

Another major finding is that the quality of work is higher in establishments where the workers are represented. Where the interests of the workforce are defended by employee representatives or a staff committee, 15 per cent of the workers have Good Work, 56 per cent have Medium-Grade Work, and 29 per cent have Bad Work. But when there are no worker representatives, things look rather different: 12 per cent Good Work, 53 per cent Medium-Grade Work and 35 per cent Bad Work. One circumstance which certainly plays a role here is that workplaces with employee representation have significantly fewer insecure employment relationships. The representative survey for the 2008 DGB Good Work Index produced the following results: The proportion of fixed contract or subcontracted workers with a monthly gross income of up to €2,000 is 12 per cent in larger enterprises with employee representation (200 employees or more) and 33 per cent in those without employee representation. There are also enormous differences among the smaller enterprises (less than 200 employees): 11 per cent fixed contract or subcontracted labour in enterprises with employee representation, but 24 per cent in those without such representation.

3. Utilization of the DGB Good Work Index in the workplace

Through its representative surveys, the DGB Good Work Index puts a figure on the quality of work regularly, once a year, right across Germany. But this instrument is also

ideally suited to measuring the quality of working conditions within smaller units. The questionnaire can easily be used as an employee survey in firms, administrations and organizations. Workplace-level applications provide enterprises and their staff with a finely graded measurement of their work quality, in comparison with other workplaces across Germany.

Employee surveys are an important part of modern organizational and personnel development processes. They serve as instruments of analysis and diagnosis, and they provide starting points for design measures. At the same time, an employee survey is an instrument for worker participation in processes of change and modernization.

This combination of an annual nationwide representative survey with the possibility of use at the workplace level is what makes the DGB Good Work Index so unique. Not only does it provide workplace-specific figures. It also enables national and/or sectoral comparisons. After repeated use, time-based statistical series can be built up, both within a workplace and at whatever comparative level is chosen.

4.1 Employee surveys

The standard questionnaire used to produce the DGB Good Work Index can also, where needed, be modified to take account of specific points of interest within an enterprise or an administration. This may concern partial aspects of the work, the work surroundings, work organization etc. For instance, workplace-level surveys drawing on the DGB Good Work Index can provide differentiated insights into:

- how workers perceive their current work situation
- what concrete expectations workers have of their work
- which aspects of the work are judged positively and which negatively
- what potential for improvement exists in individual fields of work or occupations.

The results can prompt measures to improve the quality of an enterprise's or an administration's jobs and output.

4.2 DGB-Index Gute Arbeit GmbH (DGB Good Work Index Ltd.)

The DGB and the unions IG BCE (mining, chemicals and energy union), IG Metall (metalworkers unions), NGG (food beverages and catering union) and ver.di (united services union) are partners in the limited company DGB-Index Gute Arbeit GmbH, which since the beginning of 2008 has been coordinating and conducting the representative survey, the workplace-level applications and the marketing of the DGB Good Work Index. Services provided by DGB-Index Gute Arbeit GmbH include expert advice, information and support for the conduct of employee surveys. This includes, for example:

- Preliminary meetings to pinpoint the aims of the survey
- Workshops to analyze suitable possibilities for application and implementation
- Workplace-specific adaptations of the questionnaire
- Organizational and technical support for the conduct of online surveys
- Organizational support for the conduct of surveys using a paper questionnaire
- Basic calculation of the data, as well as comprehensive reports of results and analyses
- Presentations (of the results)
- Support for communication about the project and the results
- Advice on targeted analysis and implementation of the results.

The costs are calculated in a transparent way. They depend on such parameters as the number of participants, the depth of analysis sought, the form of data collection (paper questionnaires and/or the online variant), and the outlay for adaptation. The crucial precondition for an employee survey is to gain the trust and acceptance of the workforce. Only then can a good reply rate and, therefore, valid results be achieved.

This entails a high level of information, strict respect for data protection, and the best possible technical safeguards. During the surveys (both online und offline), the respondents' anonymity is, of course, guaranteed at all times.

Contact:

DGB-Index Gute Arbeit GmbH

Dieter Scholz (Manager)

Keithstraße 1-3

10787 Berlin

Germany

Tel: +49 (30) 6956-2091

Fax: +49 (30) 6956-3393

E-Mail: info@dgb-index-gute-arbeit.de

URL: www.dgb-index-gute-arbeit.de

Dr. Frank Mussmann / Mußmann (scientific advisory council DGB-Index Gute Arbeit)

Cooperation Office Universities and Trade Unions

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

Humboldtallee 15, D-37073 Göttingen, Germany

Tel.: +49-551-39-7468

Fax: +49-551-39-14049

E-Mail: kooperationsstelle@uni-goettingen.de

URL: www.kooperationsstelle.uni-goettingen.de