Federal Ministry
of Labour and Social Affairs

Digitalisation Strategy: Public Employment and Social Protection Services

This publication was produced by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) in collaboration with the following agencies and authorities of the public sector employment and social protection services:

- German Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade (BG BAU)
- Federal Employment Agency (BA)
- Federal Office for Social Security (BAS)
- Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA)
- German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)
- German statutory pension insurance (DRV Bund)
- Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG)

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FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

As the public administration for employment and social protection services, the assistance and benefits we provide have been reliably supporting people all over Germany for decades. Particularly in times of change or crisis – such as after an accident at work, during a period of unemployment or leading up to retirement – people are able to rely on our welfare state. This is why we want to seize the opportunities that **digital transformation** brings and make access to both assistance and benefits as easy as possible.

We know that people's expectations regarding our services have changed over time. The world of work has developed at a rapid pace – sectors and regions are suffering from a lack of skilled workers, while personal and professional biographies are becoming ever more diverse. This calls for a public administration that works faster, with processes that are easy to access and easy to understand.

This is where the digital transformation comes in. It noticeably relieves workloads, enables a higher level of service and – over time – strengthens people's trust in the welfare state. It also makes us scrutinise our in-house structures and processes, then rethink and recreate them to make everything we do **digital by design** and inclusive. I want to emphasise here that innovative ambitious use of data goes hand in hand with ensuring data privacy and protection. This is why we need appropriate protection policies – both for the citizens we serve and for our employees.

Expectations are high. People will measure our future performance against the quality and speed of the digital services they already use on their smartphones every day. But we need to be realistic – while it is doubtful that we will ever make application processes as easy as shopping online, our medium-term goal must be to significantly reduce the effort involved in filling out and submitting the necessary forms. The only way to do that is by **consistently aligning our services to the needs of the people we serve.**

That we are able to "do digital" was put to the test and made highly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, we cannot rest on our laurels – we must continue to deliver as the digital transformation continues apace. **The time has come for us to develop our digital capabilities** even faster and in a far more determined way. But in rising to that challenge, the effort needed cannot be managed by a single agency or authority alone. This is why we have devised this Digitalisation Strategy in the form of a **joint interagency endeavour.** It sets out an **integrated approach** to digital transformation across all of our employment and social protection services between now and 2030.

My thanks go to all who participated in the intensive dialogue process that gave rise to this document and to the new integrated strategy it contains – one that builds on, connects and supplements the existing digitalisation strategies of the different agencies, authorities and providers involved.

Ultimately, the digital transformation can only really be achieved if we all pull together to chart a common course. **So, let us get to work!**

Hubertus Heil
Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs

At a glance

Most people in Germany have had dealings with an employment and social protection agency or authority at some point in their lives. So for us to be able to continue providing quality assistance and services well into the future, using digital technologies to align these to the needs of our users and reducing the effort involved in submitting and processing applications is of central importance. This is why we want to shape digitalisation in a way that enables us to assist both people and employers faster by taking a more targeted approach. And in doing so, we place great importance on ensuring that people have equal access to digital employment and social protection services regardless of their personal circumstances and experience with new technologies. In addition, direct contact with our agencies and authorities, along with personalised and accessible assistance and advice remain an integral part of the services we provide to ensure access and participation for all.

In designing cross-agency digitalisation, we – the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) together with seven public employment and social protection agencies and authorities – have developed this Digitalisation Strategy as part of a participative process. It sets out our **overarching vision** for the **services we will provide in 2030 and the approach we will take in doing so:**

> **OUR VISION FOR 2030:**
>
> **Ensuring decent work and social protection: the assistance and services provided by digital employment and social protection agencies and authorities are fast and easily accessible and simplify the everyday lives of people and employers.**

To enable this transformation, we want to scrutinise, rethink and improve the existing processes and structures in **three action areas:**

ACTION AREA 1
User-centric services, 100% digital processes:
We offer as many services as possible in a user-friendly easy-to-understand format online. This includes using an increased number of automated processes. In developing our services, we systematically involve users and ensure a seamless end-to-end administrative process.

ACTION AREA 2
Cross-level cross-agency collaboration:
We ensure legally sound, uniform standards for digital collaboration within our employment and social protection administration and in dialogue with others at EU level, the German

Länder (states) and local authorities. We improve our capabilities surrounding data exchange and data analysis to ensure we are able to make existing solutions and resources easier to access and use.

ACTION AREA 3
Digital-friendly transformation and innovation culture:
We take cultural change seriously, focusing on greater agility and flexibility, and increased capacity for innovation. We create modern structures and a work environment where we can develop new ideas through to implementation. We ensure that our employees have the knowledge and skills they need to seize the opportunities that digitalisation brings.

For these three action areas, we have set the following goals and objectives:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – DESIGN USER-CENTRIC SERVICES, 100% DIGITAL PROCESSES:

- Establish digital services.
- Optimise processes.
- Design easy-to-use digital access routes that are safe and secure.
- Involve users in a targeted way.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – CROSS-LEVEL CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION:

- Ensure international and interagency interoperability.
- Share data within employment and social protection agencies and authorities.
- Collaborate within employment and social protection agencies and authorities.
- Design the legal framework.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – DEVELOPING A DIGITAL-FRIENDLY TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION CULTURE:

- Further develop knowledge, abilities and skills.
- Ensure effective use of personnel.
- Establish modern structures and work processes.
- Create space and scope for innovation.
- Take responsibility for cultural transformation.

To achieve these goals and objectives, we define concrete measures which we implement without delay. We regularly monitor our implementation progress and especially the impact of the measures we introduce. And we enter into dialogue with other important partners when developing the Strategy further and making it future-proof. ●

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INTRODUCTION:

An integrated approach to employment and social protection services

Why?

Employment and social protection agencies and authorities stand for **decent work and social protection.** They play an important role in people's everyday lives. Day in, day out their staff work to make employment in Germany safe and healthy, and they ensure that benefits such as pensions and citizen's benefit (Bürgergeld) are paid out. In doing so, they meet the needs of vastly different groups of people across a wide range of circumstances and life situations. These include young people receiving education and training assistance, employees reliant on financial or medical support after an accident at work, and pensioners for whom the statutory old-age pension often forms the main component in securing their livelihood and covering everyday expenses.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES?

This is just a small selection of the services provided by public employment and social protection agencies and authorities. In 2022 they:
1. Paid pensions to more than 21 million people,
2. Processed some 1.8 million applications for rehabilitation assistance,
3. Supported almost 800,000 recipients of unemployment benefit.

To be able to fulfil this complex task efficiently and effectively, focusing on target groups in today's increasingly connected and digitalised world, we have developed a Digitalisation Strategy that takes a joint integrated approach. We see digitalisation as an opportunity to make **employment and social protection services future-ready and future-proof.** This is why we want to scrutinise our existing services and processes, systematically rethink them, optimise them in a targeted approach and integrate new technologies and requirements, knowledge and findings in the best possible way.

Who?

This Digitalisation Strategy is a **collective work.** It is the result of a collaborative effort between seven public sector employment and social protection agencies and authorities, and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). As members of a dedicated working group, a great number of specialists from the various institutions contributed their insights, visions and expertise in the Strategy's development and production.

WHO DEVISED THIS DIGITALISATION STRATEGY?

This Digitalisation Strategy is the result of an intensive working process involving the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and seven public sector employment and social protection agencies and authorities: the German Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade (BG BAU), the Federal Employment Agency (BA), the Federal Office for Social Security (BAS), the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), the German statutory pension insurance (DRV Bund) and the Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG).

We see digitalisation in public sector employment and social protection services as a joint task in which each institution plays its role. In this Strategy document, the term "we" refers to all of the organisations who participated in the strategy development process. Thus, in implementing the measures it contains, we use the term "we" although it may not necessarily be the case that all agencies and authorities are involved in implementing every measure at every stage.

What?

This Strategy document is structured as follows: first, we set out our joint vision for 2030 (see section 2). **Ensuring decent work and social protection: services provided by the digital employment and social protection agencies and authorities are fast and easily accessible and simplify the daily lives of people and employers.**

This Digitalisation Strategy focuses on three action areas, which we subsequently describe together with the goals, objectives and measures involved (see sections 3 to 5):

ACTION AREA 1
User-centric services, 100% digital processes

ACTION AREA 2
Cross-level cross-agency collaboration

ACTION AREA 3
Digital-friendly transformation and innovation culture

Finally, we set out our plans for the Strategy's implementation and ongoing development (see section 6): because time is of the essence, we have already started implementing certain **key measures** to ensure we meet our 2030 goals. ●

Our vision for 2030:

Ensuring decent work and social protection: services provided via the digital employment and social protection agencies and authorities are fast and easily accessible and simplify the daily lives of people and employers.

WORK. SOCIAL. DIGITAL.:

Digital employment and social protection services – our vision for 2030

The task of the public sector employment and social protection services is to ensure decent work and social protection. Our **vision** is thus to establish a digital administration that gives all people, employers and institutions (including civil society stakeholders, for example) an easy-to-understand, fast, simplified and accessible path to the benefits and forms of assistance they need.

Guided by this vision, we want to champion **innovation, cross-agency collaboration and user-centric services in the public sector.** This is how we plan to achieve the impact and effects we envision – helping to ensure decent work, social protection and social cohesion, thereby strengthening trust in the public sector among people, companies and institutions.

To help ensure social protection and decent work, the services that people, companies and institutions need must be available in a fast, accessible and simplified manner. What we then need are **efficient digital employment and social protection agencies, authorities and functions** that take a user-centric, cross-level and cross-agency approach, embrace the cultural change towards modern work organisation and consistently drive it forward.

This is where digitalisation comes in, enabling us to optimise existing administrative structures and processes by introducing automation in areas where it is possible and practical and makes sense. Through improved and continued secure use of data, we can provide **high-quality services more efficiently and faster.** Ambitious data use also calls for appropriate data protection, both for the people we serve and for our employees. One crucial factor in all of this is that we consistently apply our Once Only goal.

Digital transformation as an overarching topic in our agencies and administrations

The digital transformation in our employment and social protection services will be implemented and coordinated at various different levels. Our Digitalisation Strategy takes account of the wide range of activities involved.

National level
Digitalisation of public administration is clearly defined as a goal in the Federal Government's **Coalition Agreement.** Under the German Act to Improve Online Access to Administrative Services (Online Access Act, OZG), the Federal Government and the German Länder (states) are required to provide their administrative services online via web-based portals. To take the digital administration to the next quality level and provide administrative services to users without them repeatedly providing the same data and credentials, register modernisation is crucial. **Register modernisation** creates the conditions needed in implementing the Once Only principle in the provision of administrative services. In line with this principle, public sector agencies and authorities should – at a citizen's request – be able to exchange data and credentials already available to them simply and securely. As an overarching strategy, in August 2022 the Federal Government agreed a joint **Digitalisation Strategy,** setting out the comprehensive framework for digital public administration in Germany for the current electoral term. In conjunction with the newly formulated National Data Strategy 2023 and the National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence (AI Strategy), it provides vital guidance for public sector agencies and authorities belonging to the employment and social protection administration.

EU level

In its Digital Decade policy programme, the EU has set out clear targets and objectives for 2030. Designed to drive digital transformation in Europe, these have considerable impact on the activities of public employment and social protection administrations. In line with the EU's Single Digital Gateway Regulation (SDGR), member states must ensure that citizens and employers throughout the EU have digital access to 21 administrative procedures and that these can be processed from start to finish online. The Once Only Technical System (OOTS) aims to reuse information which is already available in electronic form at other administrations, thereby making things easier for citizens and companies within the EU. Via the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) system, social insurance funds throughout the EU have been able since 2019 to securely exchange data involving people who work in a different country within the EU. Regulation (EC) 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems in cross-border matters is being revised. The revision focuses on Portable Document A1 and unemployment insurance for cross-border workers. Work is also currently underway to revise the electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services (eIDAS) Regulation, which sets out binding EU-wide provisions concerning electronic identification and electronic trust service providers. In that revision, a key component will involve the European Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI Wallet) designed to enable citizens and businesses to prove their identity and store a wide range of documents online. Use of the wallet is already being designed and tested in several areas (including social protection) as part of the large-scale DC4EU pilot project, in which the German statutory pension insurance (DRV Bund) is a participant. Under the Interoperable Europe Act, seamless provision of public sector services in the EU is to be enabled between the member states. In line with the updated Industry Strategy 2020, the European Commission aims to break down labour law-related administrative barriers for the posting of workers – something it reaffirmed and elaborated on in its Work Programme 2024. The Commission will also continue its initiative to introduce an EU-wide standardised online posting notification system in conjunction with a voluntary multilingual portal for notification of postings (known as the eDeclaration). Right now, when sending employees to another EU country, employers must observe the prevailing notification provisions and systems in each of the 27 member states. Standardisation would thus significantly reduce the bureaucracy involved. We support the work of the European Commission and are actively involved.

Public sector employment and social protection activities to date:

- With this Digitalisation Strategy, we are consolidating our efforts and resources to jointly use and shape the digital transformation with people and employers in mind. But this is not where our digitalisation journey begins – much has already been achieved.
- As early as in 2018, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs established the **Policy Lab Digital, Work & Society,** an interdisciplinary agile organisational unit that merges the functions and working processes of a classic think tank with those of a modern future lab. The Policy Lab also includes other units, such as the **Observatory for Artificial Intelligence in Work and Society (AI Observatory).**
- The various agencies and authorities are also driving digitalisation at a rapid pace and with tremendous results. This is reflected in a range of in-house strategies and programmes within the different institutions which also form a framework for the joint Digitalisation Strategy: Public Sector Employment and Social Protection Services. For example, the **Federal Employment Agency (BA),** the **German statutory pension insurance (DRV Bund)** and the **German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) have developed their own digitalisation strategies, while the German Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade (BG BAU) and the Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) have laid out their own digital agendas.**

- The social insurance agencies involved in this Digitalisation Strategy fulfilled their obligations under the Online Access Act (Onlinezugangsgesetz, OZG) within the set deadlines. Citizens are already able to submit applications for benefits and assistance to the German statutory pension insurance Fund (DRV Bund), the Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forests and Horticulture (SVLFG), the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA) electronically. Data is now transferred electronically between employers and social insurance agencies for all related procedures concerning notifications, contributions and applications. Synchronisation capabilities and quality improvements are stipulated by law for such procedures over the next five years.

In the future, new benefits and services will be made digital by design. To further cement this notion, we accompany and support digital-friendly **cultural transformation at all levels** and in all areas of the public sector employment and social protection administration, strengthening digital skills and promoting collaborative learning. In doing so, we are guided by the principle of **consistent user-centricity** and the requirement for the **greatest possible transparency and credibility.**

We are also committed to closely interlinked and connected data infrastructure and data governance to ensure seamless data-sovereign exchange between administrations in line with EU and international standards. This is the essence of **our mission** – this is what drives us in further elaborating our vision for 2030:

> **OUR MISSION:**
>
> Providing user-centric, verifiable and accessible services, we accompany people in all phases of life, as well as companies and institutions. We therefore engage in cross-agency and cross-authority collaboration and we are well connected, working to improve and expand data exchange, joint data use and automation.
> In doing so, we play an active role in developing joint standards and joint processes to ensure sound and secure infrastructures, and work to enable connectivity between EU and international projects and standards.
> We think through our actions and impacts, both internal and external, in a digital context from the start. By adapting and aligning our structures and processes accordingly, we strengthen both our own digital skills and those of our users, and we learn from one another as we drive digital transformation and cultural change.
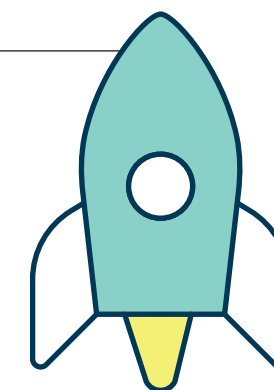
To implement our vision and mission, we focus on **three action areas:** by making a direct tangible contribution to ensuring our services are quickly and easily accessible, we aim to digitalise them as far and as comprehensibly as possible with the involvement of our users (action area 1). As many of the services provided by an authority call for collaboration between many different stakeholders behind the scenes, we want to strengthen and simplify cross-level cross-agency collaboration (action area 2). Digitalisation is about more than technology. Using new approaches and forms of cooperation must go hand in hand with an open adaptable work culture. We aim to promote a digital-friendly transformation and innovation culture in public employment and social protection services (action area 3).

In the next three sections, we describe these action areas in greater detail and outline the goals and objectives we want to achieve. ●
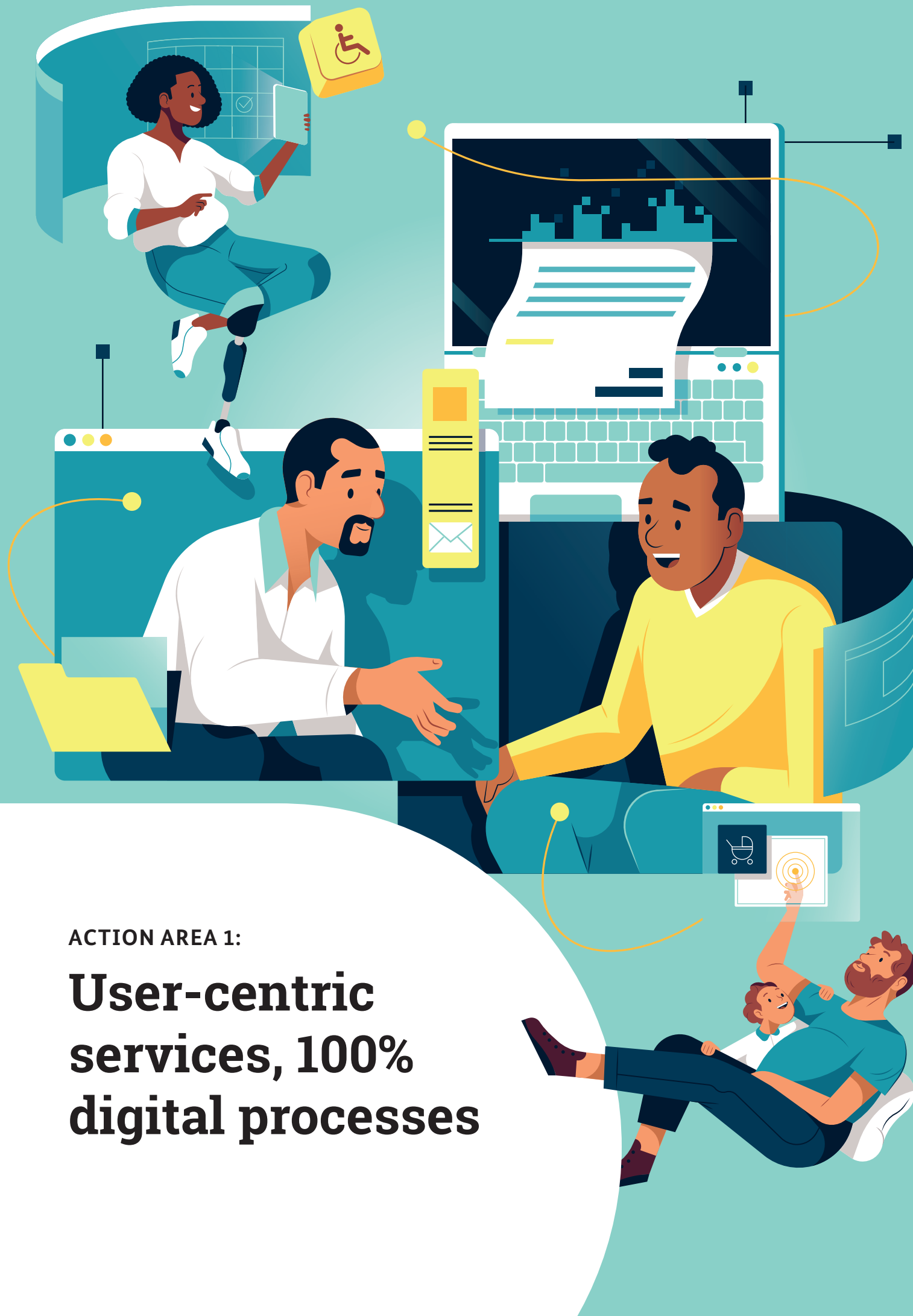
ACTION AREA 1:

User-centric services, 100% digital processes

We offer a vast range of assistance, benefits and services for diverse target groups. These include applications for citizen's benefit (Bürgergeld) and assistance for pensioners in transitioning to their next phase of life. For example, we processed some 1.7 million new pension applications in 2022 (source: Statistikportal der Rentenversicherung). As of the same year, more than 64 million people in more than 120 million social insurance relationships were insured with occupational accident insurance providers against accidents at work, on the way to and from work, in school and on the way to and from school, and against occupational illnesses (source: DGUV – insured persons in companies). We are there for people in difficult circumstances and phases of life, and in times of transition.

While we already make many of our services available online, it can still happen that users are required to repeatedly enter the same data when submitting different applications. If processes are not yet fully digitalised, it can lead to inefficiencies and discontinuities. We want to make sure our services and the associated processes are **digital by design,** and we want to optimise our administrative processes **end to end** – from a user submitting an application to us notifying them if it has been approved. Our users should be given **easy access** to our services, which – where possible and practical – we will also provide in **automated form or without the need for an application,** or as a proactive administrative service. If an applicant so wishes, data and credentials need only be provided once. We make online interaction with our users fully **accessible and verifiable.** Information is provided **proactively in plain language** that is easy to understand.

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – USER-CENTRIC SERVICES, 100% DIGITAL PROCESSES:

- **Establish digital services:** establish our online services as the main gateway to the employment and social protection administration. Where needed, users have access to suitable options for personal consultation and advice.
- **Optimise processes:** our processes are put to the test, systematically optimised and digitalised from end to end. We use the opportunities that digital technologies offer to make our administrative processes more efficient and effective.
- **Make digital access channels easy and secure:** when they want to use our services, it must be easy for users to register online and provide identification if needed.
- **Involve users in a targeted way:** our services and access to them and to the information we provide are designed from the user perspective and made available in a cross-agency accessible approach. We specifically involve users in service development, design and evaluation.

We are **further expanding our portfolio of online services** and are also digitalising services which have only been available in analogue form so far. To help users, we offer assistance and advice on submitting applications online. In future, online channels will thus become the primary gateway for access to our benefits and services. Analogue access routes will remain available to ensure the broadest possible paths to participation for users. And in all of this, we make sure that our services are **fully digitalised** from **end to end** – from a user submitting an application to us notifying them if it has been approved. We systematically scrutinise our processes for their Once Only potential, the aim being to eliminate barriers to digitalisation. In this way, and using new technologies, we continuously develop our processes with greater efficiency, transparency and effectiveness in mind. We make sure interaction between users and administrative employees involves a quality service which is accessible and free from media discontinuity and requires only minimum effort. In addition to the dedicated portals operated by the various agencies and authorities, the BundID register gives users a centralised government services user account which they can use to process all online requests and applications. Businesses and institutions can use the online ELSTER portal to create a business user account (called an "ELSTER-Unternehmenskonto"). Our online services are to be designed so they are intuitive and easy to use and understand. User-friendliness is best achieved by ensuring **users are involved** in the development, design and evaluation of our digital services at an early stage **as part of an ongoing targeted approach.** User-centricity is thus the key area of focus in optimising both our processes and the services we provide.

Measures and activities:

- We are setting up and continuously improving an **online video consultation service:** this creates the interface where in-person consultations and use of our online services meet. By offering online video consultations, we give users yet another simplified way to make use of the wide range of online services we provide.

- We are **piloting a primarily online application process for citizen's benefit (initial applications and renewals)** in selected job centres.

- The **digital pensions dashboard** enables citizens to easily obtain information by simply calling up an overview of their statutory pension, occupational pension and private pension entitlements online. We continually **evaluate** the service and then use the results to further improve and enhance it in a user-centric approach. The number of pension providers participating in the service is gradually increasing.

- In the form of the national "mein NOW" portal for professional training and development, we provide transparent access to an online gateway to funding opportunities, advisory services and continuing education and training.

- Through digitalisation of the **job-related German language (BerD)** programme, we provide language course providers with a dedicated online platform where they can upload and submit all procedural and invoicing-related data. We are completely digitalising what has so far largely been a paper-based communication process regarding language courses and billing.

- For workers, we are enabling **online applications for places in a language course** and for cost reimbursement via the Federal Portal national portal, and provision of the digital proof of authenticity of the certificates obtained for the job-related German test (DTB) by means of a QR code. Issuance of a fully digital DTB language certificate to course participants is also planned.

- With the **online permit for access to the German labour market (eAMZ),** we are digitalising and optimising processing both within the German public employment service and between the public employment service and foreigners authorities (*Ausländerbehörden*), embassies and consulates. We are also using automatically generated decision proposals to speed up processing of pre-approval requests for access to the German labour market.

- The **review process** for foreign occupational qualifications in connection with **various new visa categories** (the Opportunity Card, recognition partnerships and skilled labour visas) is to be 100% digitalised. The information is to be fed electronically into the approval process with a QR code to verify its authenticity. The development of the digital solution will be commissioned and monitored by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) and managed entirely using BMI Online Access Act funds.

- We are expanding our **multilingual service provision.**

- We are devising rules and regulations for piloting **online elections of works councils.**

- We are setting out regulations on the **online access rights of trade unions and employee representation** to workplace media channels. The statutory provisions are designed to make it easier for unions and employee representation to reach employees in the ever-changing world of work – to provide them with information, recruit new members and perform tasks and exercise powers under labour relations law.

- We support companies in a user-friendly digital way in the **implementation of risk assessments** with stakeholder involvement (occupational accident insurance providers and the German Länder) – with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as the coordinator and, where appropriate, as the lead public authority.

- We are continually improving the statutory pension insurance **(DRV) customer portal** in line with users' needs and will offer a range of new functions in future, including different language versions, a service for tracking basic pension insurance periods, and services for power of attorney holders and carers.

- The Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) is developing its **digital brand** further and is introducing **readily recognisable designs** which, through positive messaging and user experience, make it easier for users to access online services.

- By introducing a joint basic application, **we are simplifying access to rehabilitation and participation services for people with disabilities.** In a user-centric approach, we are developing a digital template to make the application process faster, unbureaucratic and accessible for all.

- The **"Teilhabeberatung" (participation) app** helps users in matters concerning rehabilitation and participation. They can use the app to find a Complementary Independent Participation Counselling Service (EUTB) in their area, request a counselling appointment (in person, by phone or video call), obtain information about the types of assistance available and give feedback on the counselling received from an EUTB service.

- The **Federal Centre of Expertise on Accessibility (Bundesfachstelle Barrierefreiheit)** works to promote accessibility in the digital world, providing new services and assistance.

- In an **AI Transparency Register,** we list AI applications used or that are planned for use in public administration, thereby fostering trust in and transparency on the topic, building on preliminary work by other public authorities.

- We provide a **generative AI tool** which our employees can use in creating and summarising texts.

- Complex notifications and official language can make communication with citizens difficult. We are thus developing an AI-based assistant that automatically recognises complicated wording in official communications, marks it up and generates plain language alternatives. In this way, we make administrative matters easier to understand and promote participation for all.

- We continue to actively promote **AI beacon projects:** at Germany's federal statutory pension insurance fund (DRV Bund), AI assists in conducting employer audits and suggests priority areas for audits. At the Federal Employment Agency, an AI application assists in job placement and career advice for skilled workers by comparing the skills requirements in job advertisements with the skills of job seekers.

- Currently, public authorities have a large amount of data that is available for processing cases but cannot be processed electronically. To reduce the processing effort required, we are working on the technical requirements needed to enable **automated data analysis** and are testing the suitability of new technologies as we go.

- In the **Working Group Digitalisation/Automation,** we are piloting a format for systematic efficient digitalisation of administrative processes. In a team comprising users and experts from the worlds of organisation, law and technology, processes are systematically rethought with digitalisation in mind.

- We are further expanding our **AI research activities** to explore the opportunities, potential, challenges and other aspects of AI regulation in the world of work. One aim is to establish a research priority at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) which will include looking at the underlying functional relationships and **consequences of using AI at work,** and at the safety-related and socio-technical issues involved.

- We are introducing **AI-supported processes** in the management of medical treatment and also in prevention work. One example is a German Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade (BG BAU) project, "AI-based support for targeted accident prevention", to ensure decent work for employees through efficient monitoring by occupational accident insurance providers.

- We are **optimising existing online reporting processes in social insurance** on the basis of process analyses and user surveys.

- **Led by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community,** we are establishing the **Central Register of Foreigners (AZR)** as a centralised platform to enable exchange of information relevant to international labour mobility and to speed up and simplify processes and procedures.

- We are creating administrative services that fit users' real-life situations. Applying user-centric methods, we are developing a citizen's benefit app which enables low-threshold submission of applications for administrative services.

- In the **further development of occupational safety and health,** we are introducing **participation-focused formats** and making them digital by design (e.g. for topics such as mobile working, mental health and climate change).

- For national and EU funding provided by employment and social protection services to companies, organisations and persons engaged in economic activities, we provide simple standardised channels of access and methods of processing.

ACTION AREA 2:

Cross-level cross-agency collaboration

To tailor our services as closely as possible to the needs of the people and companies we serve, **we engage in close collaboration across the organisations involved in employment and social protection administration, and cooperate with a wide range of other partners in the sector.** This occurs at national, EU and international level, covering areas such as:

- **Cooperation on specialist and methodological matters:** workers in all occupational fields are severely affected by the impact of digitalisation. The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which uses evidence-based findings to provide advice on issues surrounding health and safety at work, the Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) and the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) enter into dialogue both with one another and with experts from research and industry to assess how people can maintain and improve their health in the digital world of work.

- **Bilateral cooperation on social protection:** with increasing cross-border mobility, social protection issues do not stop at Germany's national borders. This is why the German statutory pension insurance (DRV) and the Polish Social Insurance Institution (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, ZUS) have long engaged in good and intensive cooperation in which they discuss the effects of digitalisation on the social protection systems and develop cross-border ideas and solutions for a social Europe.

- **Multilateral cooperation on international labour standards:** along with many other countries, we work to ensure that all people can work in decent conditions for decent pay and with decent working hours. At the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs thus actively participates in implementing the Decent Work Agenda and thereby also in ensuring that international labour standards are adapted and aligned to the digital world of work.

In the course of digitalisation, cross-level and cross-agency collaboration is not only becoming increasingly necessary, it also provides new opportunities to intensify and improve future collaboration by charting the right technological and organisational course. For example, we can create uniform standards for data exchange and continue to modernise our IT infrastructures as part of a joint approach – such as through greater use of cloud applications. By using available communication and collaboration tools for cross-agency exchange, we can work together to further expand our joint knowledge management methods.

Our aspiration is to enable **easy minimal-effort** exchange between our agencies, authorities and providers and other institutions in Germany and beyond. Our institutions should be able to **make their data available** for cooperation partners to use. They should have access to **state-of-the-art** collaboration tools and **interactive** formats for dialogue and exchange, allowing them to share their experiences and learn from tried and tested solutions. All interactions should enjoy a **high level of security,** while the necessary applications remain **easily accessible and intuitive in their use.**

> **OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – CROSS-LEVEL CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION:**
>
> - **Ensure international and cross-departmental interoperability:** interoperable standards and automation in cross-agency and cross-border employment and social protection processes ensure that the employment and social protection administration can connect to key data-holding bodies, other departments and partners in other member states.
> - **Data exchange within the employment and social protection administration:** through secure and automated data and information exchange via interfaces embedded in an agreed digital infrastructure, the employment and social protection administration is optimally connected both internally and externally, and has significantly reduced the administrative effort involved.
> - **Collaboration within the employment and social protection administration:** with cross-organisation processes, structures and formats for dialogue and exchange, we work better together, providing our services in a user-centric approach.
> - **Designing the legal framework:** joint design, implementation and evaluation of the legal provisions creates trust and legal security for the employment and social protection administration. A needs-based legal framework makes it easier to provide more efficient, user-centric services.

The basis for good cross-level cross-agency collaboration lies is ensuring **IT system interoperability** across as many agencies, authorities and partners as possible. This means making our IT systems more efficient and ensuring connectivity at the interfaces where they meet. We can then **significantly simplify data exchange.** And we can further improve it by designing our interagency work processes to make them seamless end to end, consistently modernising registry systems as we go. **We will also intensify direct collaboration:** we will share our collective experience, continuously improving the way we work. We will jointly shape and evaluate the legal framework, thereby creating legal certainty and fostering trust. Where necessary, we will **adapt the legal framework** to make sure that simplified and secure collaboration go hand in hand.

> **CROSS-BORDER INTEROPERABILITY:**
>
> In the public sector, cross-border interoperability means the ability of public administrations to function beyond national borders, exchange information and enable citizens seamless mobility and/or freedom of movement within Europe. Digitalisation can thus serve as a key instrument to:
> - Fulfil our responsibility to better enforce the rights of mobile workers by taking a more targeted approach
> - Improve cross-border collaboration in combating fraud and system abuse
> - Contribute to fair competition in Europe
>
> Through digitalisation, Germany wants to play an innovation-focused pioneering role on the path to ensuring interoperability between Europe's social insurance systems.

Measures and activities:

- We are testing the online retrieval and provision of digital credentials that can be checked throughout the EU, with **Portable Document A1** as the use case. In the large-scale DC4EU pilot project, we are working with other institutions in Germany and across Europe to develop concrete applications in the area of social insurance.

- We will use the (planned) European Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI Wallet) in accordance with eIDAS 2.0. requirements for **digital verification, authentication, storage and provision of digital credentials in all branches of social insurance.**

- We are launching a feasibility study on the introduction of a **digital European Social Security and Labour Pass with a legal requirement to carry and present it in risk sectors such as construction.** We will ensure connectivity to existing national notification processes (employer notifications in accordance with the German Data Collection and Transmission Ordinance (DEÜV)), with minimum migration effort for providers and public authorities. The pass (like other identification documents, driving licences, etc.) should be able to be kept and carried in the EUDI Wallet.

- We are advocating – as an initial step – the voluntary introduction of a **common European format for labour law-related posting notifications** which can be submitted via a central European multilingual notification portal: the current Internal Market Information System (IMI). And in a second step, we will work towards digitally combining the processes and procedures involved in posting notifications under both labour law and social insurance law.

- We are intensifying digital collaboration at EU level between public authorities and social insurance providers in **combating undeclared work and social dumping, and to prevent fraud and error,** i.e. behaviour that is either unknowingly or knowingly unlawful in matters concerning the law on the posting of workers and social security coordination. We are also working to achieve the necessary alignments in EU secondary legislation. These activities also make it necessary for both the coordination of and provision of support on the part of the European Labour Authority in conducting inspections at EU level.

- On the basis of the relevant new provisions contained in the German Act to Accelerate the Digitalisation of the Healthcare System (DigitalGesetz, DigiG), occupational accident insurance providers will be closely integrated into the **telematics infrastructure.**

- We will strengthen cross-agency dialogue and exchange by establishing and maintaining **close links with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community** and by contributing the perspective of the employment and social protection administration to the Federal Government's digitalisation committees.

- We are supporting efforts in **register modernisation** and implement the Once Only principle – as a pilot authority in this project, the Federal Employment Agency is leading the way.

- We are establishing a **database for joint use** by the German Länder, the accident insurance funds and the Federal Government. This calls for both clarification of the content covered by our **data collaboration** and legally compliant involvement of all providers.

- We are developing a model and a **prototype for a data exchange platform** for employment and social protection services. The platform will be based on Estonia's X-Road data exchange system.

- With a joint call for tenders, we are creating a public cloud environment tailored to the specific needs of employment and social protection administration so that we can continue to provide customised services that meet users' needs and expectations as regards public employment and social protection services.

- We are providing access to a collaborative whiteboard for use in cross-agency projects.

- We are **coordinating cross-agency networking** on the topics of the Online Access Act (OZG), register modernisation, the EU Single Digital Gateway Regulation and cloud technology.

- We are using the findings from beacon projects involving AI conducted together with other agencies and authorities, and reworking our AI guidelines to provide workbooks for use in practice (including with videos and handouts). We are also updating those guidelines in line with new technological and regulatory provisions, particularly in line with the EU AI Act.

- We are assessing where we can waive handwritten signatures to ensure that, in the future, legal transactions are no longer conducted solely on paper but also in electronic form.

- We want to enable our users to provide data and documentation quickly and easily when submitting an application online and are thus **enshrining the Once Only principle into social protection law.**

- In our plans for legislation introducing mandatory pension insurance for the self-employed, we consistently assess the legislative proposals to ensure their digital compatibility.

- When assessing legislative proposals for digital compatibility, we consistently apply the **end-to-end perspective** with the aim of digitalising our administrative processes and procedures to the greatest possible extent.

- With the **Act Amending the Third Book of the Social Code,** we are driving digitalisation in the employment and social protection administration, reducing bureaucracy in regulation, and improving collaboration with our users.

- We are enabling job centres to retrieve **electronic sick notes** online.

- Rapid piloting of new technologies poses something of a challenge. We are thus assessing the introduction of an experimental clause to enable fast testing of new technological solutions. In doing so, we also look at how suitable technical environments can be created to enable rapid testing of new technologies.

- We are **identifying legal hurdles in AI use cases at national level,** looking at opportunities to overcome and eliminate them, and then introducing the changes needed.

- We are reviewing the legal framework with the aim of exploring additional opportunities and identifying **further scope for automation.**

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES: GERMANY A PIONEER IN RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI IN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROVISION

Given the rapid pace of development in artificial intelligence (AI), the employment and social protection administration has set itself the goal of further expanding its **pioneering role in human-centred design of AI solutions.** This involves a total of four key steps, based on which we are building an ecosystem for the use of AI in employment and social protection administration.

To drive responsible AI use, in 2021, the Policy Lab Digital, Work & Society at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched the **Network Artificial Intelligence in Employment and Social Protection Services (Network AI).** The main aim is to take account of the fact that the employment and social protection services must apply high standards of responsibility when using AI because they process people's sensitive personal data. Within the Network, the participating agencies and authorities share best-practice examples, discuss the challenges they face and work together to find solutions.

In a next step, the Network drew up a set of **Guidelines for the Use of AI in the Administrative Work of Employment and Social Protection Services.** These guidelines contain concrete recommendations for action, setting out how the introduction of AI can be designed so its benefits to people are always the primary focus. To this end, it is especially important to create participatory opportunities for future users and data subjects at an early stage, including for citizens, employees, data protection officers and employee representatives.

On this basis, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is already funding **AI-based modernisation projects** in a targeted way with the aim of making the experience gained available to agencies and authorities across the entire employment and social protection administration. In a beacon project, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is, for example, funding the development of an AI application at the Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade (BG BAU) which is designed to help prevent workplace accidents and make administrative processes more efficient. This can prevent significant human suffering while also lessening the administrative burden on BG BAU employees.

In a next step, we envisage the creation of joint methodological and technical standards for use in rapid upscaling and further development of AI solutions that work. Our aim is thus to establish an **AI platform that provides efficient tools, services and data interfaces** to enable all organisations in the AI Network to implement their own use cases quickly and securely. The platform will be created in such a way that it enables targeted collaborations with our European partners – for example for AI-driven provision of training and cross-border efforts to address the shortage of skilled labour.

Rather than being a purely technical topic, digitalisation actually begins with people. And to be successful, it requires a fundamental change of mindset in working and learning. This applies not just to private enterprises, but naturally also to us as the public employment and social protection administration. This is why in our Digitalisation Strategy, we specifically focus inwards to develop a modern working and learning culture across our entire employment and social protection services. Newly emerging technological developments and the constantly changing needs of our users call for an ever-increasing willingness and flexibility to embrace change among employees working in the employment and social protection services – at all levels and in all fields of activity. To ensure the ability of our public administration to change, develop and adapt, we are not only promoting user-centric benefits and services, 100% digital processes and cross-level and cross-agency collaboration – we are carefully scrutinising our values, standards and structures as well.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – PROMOTING A DIGITAL-FRIENDLY TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION CULTURE:

- **Develop capacities and skills:** we continuously develop the digital skills of our employees. We are connected and learn with and from each other.
- **Efficient and effective use of personnel resources:** we discuss planning and recruiting of the staff needed in achieving digital transformation, and enable interagency deployment of experts to use available skills and expertise.
- **Establish modern structures and work methods:** teams work together on an interdisciplinary and cross-hierarchy basis as required. We also involve affected users. The structures and processes needed are already in place.
- **Create space and scope for innovation:** we create space and scope for innovation and testing of new technologies and digital solutions. Potential for digital transformation in society and the world of work is recognised at an early stage and translated into concrete policy options.
- **Assume responsibility for cultural change:** we take responsibility for digital transformation and live out a modern learning-oriented work and error culture – across the different levels, our managers act as role models. They support their teams in adopting a self-determined and self-efficacious attitude to work.

Our **aspiration** is to place the **needs of our users** at the **centre of our daily work.** In doing so, we create a **digital-friendly pro-innovation culture** shaped by an **iterative way of working,** a **learning attitude** and an **ongoing willingness to embrace transition and change.** To this end, we establish the necessary **structures and processes** and enable our staff to acquire the required **skills** and to engage in **continuous professional development.** We want to **collect available knowledge in a targeted and systematic way** and share it with one another **readily and openly.**

ACTION AREA 3:

Digital-friendly transformation and innovation culture

A modern work culture lives from the incumbent employees. We already have experts working on the digital transformation in various areas of the employment and social protection administration. We want to boost these activities by promoting the development of the **digital-friendly structures and formats** needed so we can learn from each other and introduce tried and tested solutions in a timely way. In all of this, dialogue and exchange between senior staff is just as important as between other employees and across hierarchies. We will also intensify our efforts to recruit the specialists we need for the digital transformation.

To ensure our digital capabilities, we are changing our work environments and methods, and our forms of collaboration. To support new agile ways of working, we offer methodological support for projects and plans. Over time, we will achieve this by making our decision-making structures and **collaboration forms more flexible, and by adopting an interdisciplinary, cross-hierarchy and project-oriented approach.** In this way, we create the conditions needed for digitalisation. Within these working structures, we want to create space and scope to venture away from well-trodden paths and develop new ideas for continuous transformation. We will also introduce an **Innovation Fund** to provide targeted start-up funding for select overarching digitalisation projects within the employment and social protection administration, thereby assisting the transformation.

To further promote innovative spirit in the public employment and social protection administration, we are **creating space and scope for innovation and for testing new technological solutions.** In this way, we want to identify potential for digital transformation in society and the world of work at an early stage, and integrate it into our everyday work. For example, we promote the development of innovative data-driven projects in labour and social policy through the Data Lab at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – using things like data visualisation in the form of dashboards and machine learning for improved data quality. To embed these innovations in our organisations, we are creating an active cross-agency network to foster dialogue and exchange on successful digitalisation projects, best practices and barriers to digitalisation.

The basis for our ability to change lies in a **new work culture** which we aim to foster in a targeted way – employees feel responsible for change and can play an active role in its introduction. We actively drive the digital transformation and practice a learning-oriented positive error culture. Our senior staff leads by example and supports its teams in adopting a self-determined and self-efficacious attitude to work. This self-commitment will be embedded in our leadership training programmes and throughout the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in a **digital mission statement** which we will develop as part of a participative user-centric process.

To achieve our goals and objectives for a digital-friendly transformation and innovation culture, we have developed a range of ideas and approaches which agencies and authorities can implement in their own organisations, but which are not set out in this strategy document. **These include promoting a digital-friendly leadership culture and expanding continuing education and training with a view to digital skills.**

We also aim to engage in close collaboration on this particular topic, participating in intensive dialogue and exchange – both via the existing project groups and also in **newly established expert communities.** ●

Implementation and further development

We will use the **target-oriented, agile and cross-agency process** used in developing this Strategy in both its implementation and its further development and enhancement. We will also establish formats for regular dialogue and exchange to assess progress in the Strategy's implementation, impact and effect. Another prerequisite for implementation is binding but low-burden **monitoring** of the measures introduced.

To uphold **dialogue and exchange** between the various stakeholders, we will maintain the cross-agency project groups in the form of committees and will also establish a number of expert communities to cover key aspects of digitalisation and define potential additional measures for use in Strategy implementation. The many specialists and experts from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and from the public agencies and authorities involved in the Digitalisation Strategy will also contribute important insights and ideas on how to shape digitalisation in the employment and social protection administration.

Finally, in the further development of our Digitalisation Strategy, we will also work to maintain **ongoing dialogue with the general public and other key partners.** We want to provide regular transparent information on the progress made in its implementation and create opportunities that enable us to consider new technological advancements and suggestions for improvement. The aim is to make the Strategy a living document which we continue to develop and enhance.

As the public employment and social protection administration, we will use these measures to ensure that we **implement the Digitalisation Strategy quickly in a closely coordinated approach** while also ensuring that we remain **flexible and forward-looking** in our response to technological advancement and ever-changing conditions. Working together in this way, we will strengthen our own **structures and capabilities, further improve digital collaboration** and give citizens, employers and institutions fast and easy access to modern online employment and social protection services. ●

Annex

Glossary

To ensure a common understanding of our Digitalisation Strategy, we use the following definitions:

Accessible: the design of people's surroundings, such as modes of transportation, technical devices, information processing systems and acoustic and visual information sources to ensure they can be found, accessed and used by people with disabilities in their intended way without any great difficulty or need for assistance.

Agile formats: methods designed to make collaboration in teams with complex project environments more effective (e.g. kanban boards).

AI Observatory: the Observatory for Artificial Intelligence in Work and Society – a Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) initiative which looks at the effects of AI on the world of work.

Artificial intelligence: the ability of a machine to imitate human abilities such as logical thinking, learning, planning and creativity.

Authentication: the process in which a person provides proof that they are who they claim to be. In everyday life, this is done by presenting an identity card (ID). Online, a password is often used in combination with a username.

BundID: a government services user account which users can use to access a wide range of administrative services online.

Cloud: a model which enables easy access anytime, anywhere via a network to a shared pool of configurable online resources (e.g. networks, servers, storage systems, applications and services) which can be made available quickly and with minimum management effort or interaction from the service provider.

DC4EU: project on the use of the electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services (eIDAS) and trust framework of the European Union in the fields of education and social security.

Digital by design: the development of new services in digital formats.

Digital Decade policy programme 2030: a political agenda designed to drive digital transformation in line with concrete digital targets and objectives in the areas of digital skills, digital infrastructure and digitalisation of businesses and public services.

ELSTER-Unternehmenskonto: digital credentials for companies in Germany, used for identification, authentication and communication when using online administrative services.

Employees: people working in the public employment and social protection administration.

Employment and social protection administration: the agencies and authorities in the area of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

End-to-end digitalisation: 100% digitalisation of administrative services from submitting an application to notification of whether it has been approved.

European Commission Industrial Strategy 2020: a policy package to support the twin transition to a green and digital economy, which was updated in 2021 to take account of circumstances following the COVID-19 pandemic.

European Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI Wallet): a personal digital wallet which citizens and organisations can use to prove their identity online and also store and manage their proof of identity along with other official documents.

Interoperability: the ability of different systems to communicate as seamlessly as possible with one another.

Interoperable European Act: legislation containing measures designed to ensure a high degree of interoperability between the public sectors in the EU.

Network AI: the Network Artificial Intelligence in Employment and Social Protection Services – a Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) initiative to discuss how high quality standards can best be ensured in AI systems in the employment and social protection administration.

Once Only principle: the principle by which, at a user's request, public administration services can share available proof of identity and documentation easily and securely.

Register modernisation: a three-phase work programme to connect public administration databases (registers) with the aim of, among other things, making administrative processes more efficient, improving the quality of the data stored in the registers and ensuring the Once Only principle is observed for improved data minimisation.

Telematic infrastructure: a platform ensuring connectivity between all stakeholders in the German healthcare system, such as doctors, dentists, psychotherapists, hospitals, pharmacies and health insurance funds.

Tool: an IT software programme used in performing specific tasks.

Users: people using the services of the employment and social protection administration.

User-centric: the guiding principle of an organisation or one of its departments or units, to place the needs and interests of users at the forefront in the development and alignment of the services it provides.

Verification: verification of proof of identity (ID).

X-Road: an encrypted data network via which all e-government services are provided in Estonia.

List of abbreviations

AG	Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Working Group)
AI	Artificial intelligence
AZR	Ausländerzentralregister (Central Register of Foreigners)
BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Agency)
BAS	Bundesamt für Soziale Sicherung (Federal Office for Social Security)
BAuA	Bundesamt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)
BerD	Berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung (free DeuFöV language courses to promote labour integration)
BG BAU	Berufsgenossenschaft der Bauwirtschaft (German Occupational Accident Insurance Fund for the Building Trade)
BMAS	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community)
DGUV	Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung e.V. (German Social Accident Insurance)
DEÜV	Datenerfassungs- und übermittlungsverordnung (German Data Collection and Transmission Ordinance)
DigiG	Gesetz zur Beschleunigung der Digitalisierung des Gesundheitswesens (Digital-Gesetz) (German Act to Accelerate the Digitalisation of the Healthcare System)
DRV Bund	Deutsche Rentenversicherung Bund (German statutory pension insurance)
DTB	Deutsch-Test für den Beruf (German language test to assess employment prospects)
eAMZ	elektronische Arbeitsmarktzulassung (Online Permit for Access to the German Labour Market)
EESSI	Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information
eIDAS	electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services
EU	European Union
EUDI Wallet	European Digital Identity Wallet
EUTB	Ergänzende unabhängige Teilhabeberatung (Complementary independent participation counselling service)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMI	Internal Market Information System
IT	Information technology
NOW	Nationales Onlineportal für berufliche Weiterbildung (National Online Portal for Professional Training and Development)
OOTS	Once Only Technical System
OZG	Onlinezugangsgesetz (Act to Improve Online Access to Administrative Services, Online Access Act)
SDG-VO	Single Digital Gateway Ordinance
SVLFG	Sozialversicherung für Landwirtschaft, Forsten und Gartenbau (Social Insurance Fund for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture)
UVT	Unfallversicherungsträger (accident insurance providers)
ZUS	Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych (Polish Social Insurance Institution)

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