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Dr. Joachim Breuer, Board Member, PCU-WHS Elected President of ISSA



The Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS) is pleased to announce that Board of Governors Member Dr. Joachim Breuer was elected President of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) at its meeting in Panama on November 18, 2016. Dr. Breuer becomes the 16th President in ISSA's 89-year history.

ISSA, a United Nations institution founded under the auspices of the International Labour Organization, focuses on fostering cooperation of social security institutions and assisting its global membership with technical and administrative improvements thus strengthening the role of social security outcomes on the basis of social justice throughout the world.

Dr. Breuer spoke with the University recently on how he hopes to leverage his knowledge and commitment to social security to advance both the goals of ISSA, as well as the University.

International travel has always been a big part of Dr. Breuer's professional life. As the newly-elected President of ISSA, Dr. Breuer says he knows his new role will require even more globe-trotting and responsibilities, but in an area of work he is truly passionate about.

"What it means to me personally is that I feel there are still so many big challenges ahead in the world of social security because in the next five to six years we are facing so many changes in the world, and I'm really happy that I have an opportunity to influence that."

"There are some key areas that I want to focus on as President. ISSA is an international institution that has more than 330 members in 158 countries so it is really the world's leading organization in the area of interaction and exchange about good government. What I would like to focus on is expanding ISSA into a truly global organization because I believe 158 countries as members is not enough. There are 190 countries in the world so why not get all countries to be members. As well, I want to do much more what I call work on the ground, meaning if a member needs some consultancy for reform or political discussion, then ISSA should offer that. ISSA could also provide experts to establish new areas of social security via its members.

Dr. Breuer also wants to raise the profile of ISSA through increased participation in world meetings. "ISSA is a world organization for social security but at the moment is not present at world meetings such as the G20 and other international forums, and I believe we have to bring ourselves to that high international level and be present there. Let's talk about the importance of social security and get results."

His professional accomplishments make him an ideal leader for this critical new position. "I feel I am very well prepared for the role. The organization that I'm running at the moment, the DGUV, deals with all areas of social security, including pensions,



healthcare, daycare and so on. I understand the challenges and the need for change that is happening in the world. I really want to be able to tell people that the problems are in detail different but in the key factors, they are always the same around the world.”

Dr. Breuer is a tireless advocate of the professional and program standards developed by the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) which are included in the best practice guidelines on return to work, and has spoken publicly about the benefits of the implementation of the NIDMAR standards in German workplaces.

“When I took on the position of President of ISSA, I didn’t intend to stop working for and promoting the idea of return to work. In fact I will be working even harder to use the experience and the wonderful work that NIDMAR has created to put that on a global level. The standards that have been developed between ISSA and NIDMAR, and internationally adopted three years ago, are for me only the first step. The next step is to convince all governments at all levels that haven’t realized that helping employees return to work is much better than compensating them or paying them benefits. I think my experience with NIDMAR will have a positive effect on me taking over the role as President of ISSA because together we can achieve a lot in the world of return to work.”

The transformative power of education is important to advancing those goals, says Dr. Breuer. “I want to let people outside of Canada know about the University, and how it is a unique and wonderful opportunity for people to be trained in the special world of disability management and return to work.”

ISSA has released a paper focusing on the 10 biggest challenges in the world of social security, but there are three in particular Dr. Breuer plans to make his personal focus: the ageing workforce and the challenges they face, the labour market and the digital economy, and the protection of migrant workers.

“What we need to do is to convince everyone that social security is not a question of administration. Social security affects every human being in the world. Without social security, there is no freedom, no peace in any society in the world. And that is why it’s so wonderful to work in this area, but on the flip side, that is why it’s so important to tell people that social security is not for specialists, it is something that’s important for the entire world.”

Dr. Breuer is Director General of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) and has, since 2002, served as a member of the ISSA Bureau, and as Chairperson of the ISSA Technical Commission on Insurance against Employment Accidents and Occupational Diseases. He has also been on the Board of Governors of PCU-WHS since its inception as well as being a board member for the NIDMAR since 2008.

Dr. Breuer provided invaluable guidance during the development of global best practice guidelines on occupational health and safety, health promotion and return to work, an initiative undertaken by ISSA.

The professional and program standards in disability management and return to work developed by NIDMAR and administered under the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), comprised of 28 countries to date that have undertaken implementation of these standards, formed the basis for the ISSA guidelines on return to work which were formally adopted by ISSA in 2013. For further details regarding the professional and program standards, please visit the NIDMAR website at:

www.nidmar.ca