Inspections in the area of Psychosocial Working Environment in Denmark
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The Danish Working Environment Authority - WEA
www.at.dk

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Psychosocial Working Environment (PWE): Legal background

- WEA is a government agency under the Minister for Employment

- The Working Environment Act:
  - "The work shall be planned, organised and performed in such a way as to ensure safety and health"
Strategy for improved Work Environment – “the 2020 strategy”

Objectives of Strategy:
- 25 pct. reduction of serious work related accidents
- 20 pct. reduction of work related muscular and skeletal wearing down
- 20 pct. reduction of Psychosocially conditioned overload

Strategy involves 19 initiatives
Influences on how inspection is conducted

• Political
  • Government - policy making, agreements, Ministerial foci etc.

• Employer’s organisations and Labour Unions
  • Agreements on boundaries for practice
  • What the WEA have and do not have official opinions about (the right the manage, wages, schedules of work etc.)

• Research — knowledge on health and safety in relation to PWE. Legitimizing our notices.
PWE: Increased political focus

• An area of regulation since 1974

• Since 2005: PWE is a targeted area in the working environment prioritisation by the Danish government

• WEA inspects PWE in all public and private enterprises in Denmark

• 2007: Welfare agreement
  – Extra appropriation
  – New tools on PWE
  – Increased inspections on PWE in "high risk" sectors

• 2013: PWE is co-ordinated with other work environment problems in terms of improvement notices
Inspection types

• Risk Based Inspections (and Expanded Risk Based Inspections)

• Inspections due to complaints (from employees, labour unions, managers, occupational health clinics etc.)

• Inspections of accidents – either through IT reporting (EASY), in urgent cases through the Police, companies or the media

• Inspections due to incidents and approaches from occupational health clinics
Expanded Risk Based Approach

2015: Political decision ending special actions on PWE.

2016: Expansion of the regular Risk Based Inspections (focusing on PWE)

Certain sectors have an increased risk of employees becoming psychologically strained are selected (Education, Hospitals, transportation of passengers, etc.)

These are subjected to more thorough inspections, meaning that focus group interviews are almost always conducted in these sectors.
The Danish Work Environment Authority’s approach to PWE

- Health and safety risks directly related to the tasks of employees?

Irritating?  Unsatisfying?  Frustrating?  Health and/or safety risk?
## Inspection practices when working with PWE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
<td>• Meeting with representatives of Working Environment Organization (WEO)</td>
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<td>• <strong>Written materials</strong> (company's work place assessment, statistics of employees absence due to illness, register of episodes with violence, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Observations of work processes</td>
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<td>• Dialogue with employees supported by guidance tool (individual or focus group interviews 6-8 persons)</td>
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<td>• Hearing of Management</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>• On site or back at the Office</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>• Conclusion of inspection – meeting with WEO and Management at the end of inspection</td>
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<td>• Or concluding remarks via Phone</td>
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Possible reactions in the area of Psychosocial Working Environment

(Guidance verbal)

1. **Guidance in writing**
2. **Improvement notice** effective immediately or with a deadline of 3 – 6 months
3. **Notice to examine** PWE (by use of authorized Working Environment Advisor)
4. **Notice to employ Working Environment Advisor** to address Bullying and/or Sexual Harassment
The method on PWE: Risk factor approach

- **Risk factors:**
  - Workload/pace of work
  - Emotional demands
  - Bullying/sexual harassment
  - Violence and traumatic experiences
  - Psychic first aid

- **Prevention factors:**
  - Help and support
  - Influence on planning and prioritization
  - Education and instructions
  - Technical solutions etc.

- **Consequences:**
  - Turn over rates
  - Absenteeism due to sickness
  - Errors, mistakes and complaints.

**Weighing out the proportions**
Prevalence of risk factor proportional to the enterprise's level of prevention.
The original guidance tool

- Implemented April 1. 2007 24 sector- or job specific guidance tools
  - Each guidance tool includes
    - The 3 to 5 most important risk factors in that sector
    - The most important preventive factors for the sector
    - Questions regarding the most relevant consequences
    - Still in use; although we are in a transition towards using version 2.0 entirely.
Amended Guidance tools (2015)

• Not sector/job specific any more.
• Arranged in order to identify problems related to the specific risk factors.
• Supports the writing of improvement notices as the guidance tools correspond with IT templates.
Authority’s strategy to support the inspection on psychosocial factors

• Training of all inspectors – introduction course to PWE and continuous training (case work etc.)

• Inspection of PWE has been made more systematic:
  – Method descriptions and instructions for the inspectors
  – Templates
  – Best practice examples
  – Call in - on complex psychosocial work environment issues

• Special PWE Competence Forum:
  – Support inspectors in assessing possible improvement notices, writing the and assessing the hearing and
  – Inspect the more complicated PWE-problems
**PWE inspection flow**

- **WEA inspection at the enterprise:**
  Detect health and safety risk on PWE

- **WEA issues an improvement notice on PWE**

- **Enterprise improves conditions to solve the PWE-problem**

- **WEA account of solution (including description of effects)**

**Acceptance:**
Enterprise is re-inspected by WEA within 12-18 months

**Rejection:**
Enterprise is re-visited to establish if implementation is in fact sufficient, partly solved or in actually unacceptable
Status

• Overall reduced time consumption per enterprise

• The improvement notices more targeted and qualitatively better due to:
  • Better qualified inspectors
  • Call in function supporting in making assessments and to the point notices
  • Templates, guidance tools and continuous case training

• Easier to follow up on targeted improvement notices
Inspectors’ experiences with PWE inspection

• Tools and training has made it easier to structure PWE inspections

• The guidance tool is used for
  – Preparing inspections
  – During interviews
  – To guide the writing of improvement notices etc.

• More inspectors assess PWE-problems and write improvement notices or screen and deliver inspections on to inspectors with more PWE competences

• Also more inspectors with special competences in PWE have been recruited (especially in 2012-2014)
## Feedback on the risk factor based guidance tool

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>New approach</th>
<th>Old approach</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strength</strong></td>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>More comprehensive</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weakness</strong></td>
<td>Simplistic and more general</td>
<td>harder to operationalize</td>
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SME’s and Psychosocial Working Environment

- Workload/Pace of work
- Organizational change
- Communication issues

- Inclusion in the educational sector
- Strain related to cocktail effect of emotional demands and temporal condition.
Perspectives and Future challenges…

• Reaching goals for 2020 – a reduction of 20 % of PWE related overload

• Serious Work Environment problems that relate to political reforms or other societal premises, that the WEA is demanded to stay clear of.

• Private sector enterprises – employees tend to be more discrete and unwilling to address problems with the WEA