



## The national and WEA strategies for job stress prevention

### The national strategy

- In 2004 the Danish government launched a new working environment strategy for the period of 2005-2010. Psychosocial working environment is one of the strategy's 4 prioritised areas. The overall goal is a 10% reduction in sickness absence caused by problems in the psychosocial working environment. This goal is supported by the social partners and the WEA is an important contributor in its achievement.
- In 2006 there was extensive media focus on "stress victims" in Danish enterprises. This was followed by an increased political focus on problems with enterprises' stress prevention.
- In 2007 a vast majority of the political parties made a welfare agreement that in part consists of initiatives concerning psychosocial working environment:
  - The WEA is obligated to inspect the psychosocial working environment in all enterprises.
  - A fund was established to which enterprises can apply for funding of projects that aim to prevent unhealthy psychosocial working environment.
  - A consortium between the "National Research Centre for the Working Environment" and WEA was established. The purpose of the consortium is to develop and communicate methods for the use of enterprises when dealing with problems in the psychosocial working environment.
  - The WEA is obliged to assist enterprises making qualified action plans when receiving improvement notices concerning problems in the psychosocial working environment (process guidance)

### The WEA strategy

To meet these expectations and contribute to the overall goal of a 10% reduction in sickness absence caused by problems in the psychosocial working environment, the WEA launched a large scale strategy by April 1<sup>st</sup> 2007:

#### **New methods for identifying problems in PWE:**

- 24 sector- and job specific guidance tools have been developed and implemented.
- All inspectors have been trained in how to use the guidance tools and in how to assess and evaluate the health and safety risks on PWE.
- The job of inspecting PWE has been organized and made systematic through
  - Method descriptions and instructions for the inspectors.
  - Specific guidelines on methods to use when inspecting PWE.
  - Templates are continuously being developed and improved to assist inspectors in writing improvement notices.
  - Best practice examples of improvement notices are made available for all



inspectors on the WEA intranet.

**Task forces for psychosocial working environment has been established in each of the 4 regional inspection centres:**

- The task forces consist of 6-8 highly skilled inspectors within psychosocial working environment and are headed by inspection managers.
- The task forces' main tasks are:
  - assisting other inspectors in assessing problems in the psychosocial working environment and in writing improvement notices
  - inspecting complicated problems in the psychosocial working environment
  - giving process guidance to enterprises that have received improvement notices.

**Other activities:**

- Basic training in inspection of psychosocial working environment for all newly recruited inspectors
- Two annual PWE workshops for experienced inspectors.
- Annual internal audits of improvements notices regarding PWE. The purpose of the audit is to strengthen the quality of improvement notices by assessing and communicating general strengths and weaknesses.
- The WEA is taking part in the consortium with the “National Research Centre for the Working Environment”.