



# Report 2015:06 Eng

Women's Work Environment  
2011 – 2014



ARBETSMILJÖ  
VERKET

## **Women's Work Environment 2011-2014**

Final report on the government assignment to develop and carry out special efforts with the aim of preventing women from being knocked out of working life due to work environment related problems.

Government assignment for The Work Environment Authority according to decision 2011-05-12 Ministry of Employment ref. A2011/2209/ARM as well as additional assignment according to decision 2014-09-04 ref. A2014/3170/ARM

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## Summary

In spring 2011 the government tasked the Work Environment Authority with developing and carrying out special efforts with the aim of preventing women from being knocked out of working life due to work environment related problems. The focus should be on preventing wear injuries due to incorrect workloads. The effort would encompass knowledge acquisition, information, the education of inspectors and the carrying out of a national inspection activity.

During the time of the assignment 2011 – 2014, the Work Environment Authority has among other things

- published two knowledge compilations from researchers
- used follow-up researchers to continually evaluate the work
- created and published tools which will help inspectors as well as employers to better reveal and assess the risks of musculoskeletal disorders
- trained all inspectors in these new tools and all staff in gender questions
- inspected approximately 4 100 workplaces and in those made demands on measures, among others with the purpose of reducing the risk of musculoskeletal disorders
- developed a new method to be able to compare work environment and working conditions for female and male dominated activities and thereafter inspected 65 municipalities
- over the course of three years in connection with International Women's Day, dialogue was started with a total of 2 600 different employers about how they, with a gender perspective in systematic work environment management, can receive a more comprehensive picture of risks and shortcomings in the work environment of both women and men.
- carried out four well-attended conferences to disseminate our experiences.
- cooperated with the partners on the labour market and others in a reference group.

In Autumn 2014 the Work Environment Authority received an additional task. In connection with the handing over of the final report, it was also presented. The result, in the form of information material, consists of an animated film and three short lecture films that describe our experiences and the knowledge that was compiled during the time of the programme. The films can be found on our website. The aim is to spread our experiences and through that involve more employers.

In our overarching conclusions from among other things the inspection efforts and knowledge compilations, we state that the following factors are central to explaining why women to a greater extent are affected by work-related illnesses compared to men:

- The gender pattern prevailing in society today, that is to say that man is the norm, is found also in working life. That women's work is valued lower has the result that their work environment risks are not sufficiently revealed and therefore not fixed to a sufficiently high degree. A gender perspective is therefore necessary in the systematic work with the work environment.
- The gender-segregated labour market essentially contributes to women running a greater risk of being affected by musculoskeletal disorders.
  - Women and men in the same profession often work with different tasks and their physical loads are therefore different. Women work to a higher degree with monotonous and repetitive working tasks or with patient transfer.



- Women work to a higher degree with meetings and contacts with people, which often entails a psychosocial strain.
- When women and men work with the same things at the same workplace they are loaded differently anyway because tools, protective equipment and workstations are often not designed for women.
- Many employers and employees do not have sufficient knowledge to prevent musculoskeletal injuries in their activities.

Reports and information are translated to English on the authority's website:  
[www.av.se/inenglish/](http://www.av.se/inenglish/)

## Introduction

In autumn 2011, the government in the government decision A2011/2209/ARM tasked the Work Environment Authority with developing and carrying out special efforts with the aim of preventing women from being knocked out of working life due to work environment related problems. The focus should lie on preventing wear injuries due to incorrect physical workloads. This effort would cover knowledge acquisition, information, education of inspectors as well as the implementation of a national supervision activity. The assignment would be carried out during the period 2011 – 2014 and the final report would be ready by 1 March 2015 at the latest.

The government has given the Work Environment Authority 20.5 million SEK for the task. Over and above a presentation of how the funds are used, the Work Environment Authority must present completed activities with evaluation and description of how the results and experiences will be taken care of in the Authority's ordinary work, in a final report to be submitted at the latest 1st March 2015. The Work Environment Authority has on two previous occasions, the 13th March 2012 and the 14th January 2014, submitted situation reports to the commissioning body (our reference 2011/100748).

In a new government decision in September 2014, the Work Environment Authority received an additional assignment. The assignment consisted of 'creating and making accessible tools for risk assessment with special focus on women's work environment'. For the task the Authority had at its disposal 240 000 SEK. The presentation of the assignment should occur in connection with the final report of the assignment of women's work environment.

The Work Environment Authority has, within the framework for the two assignments, carried out a number of activities of different kinds and scope. This report is a presentation of the completed assignments.

## Background

In the government decision in 2011 it was stated that women in total have a rate of ill health that is essentially higher than that of men. There are also more women than men who, for health reasons, are forced to end their working life early. This also entails a lower pension and an insecure old age as a result of a higher rate of illness and worse economic relationships. The government argued that this is problematic from a gender equality perspective and

therefore considered as urgent any efforts that could reduce women's absence from work due to illness.

The government stated further that wear injuries due to heavy work, repetitive working movements and straining working positions are responsible for a great deal of work related ill health and absence due to illness. Among both men and women, musculoskeletal disorders are dominant among work related illnesses.

The Work Environment Authority's assignment should lead to a general increase in knowledge about women's work environment and better methods to, in our supervision work highlight the risk of musculoskeletal disorders. This was expected to have positive effects for women's as well as men's work environment.

## Planning and implementation

We have carried out the assignment in programme form. To be able to work with musculoskeletal disorders more specifically as a general gender perspective on the work environment, the task was divided into two projects: 'Ergonomics in women's work environment' (EKA), and 'sustainable work environment with women in focus' (HAK). The activities have mainly been carried out by staff at the Work Environment Authority. The two knowledge compilations were carried out by researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and the Centre for Musculoskeletal Research, University of Gävle. Further, two researchers were contracted from the Department for Social Sciences, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, to carry out on-going evaluation of the programme.

## Presentation of activities as well as the evaluation of results – knowledge acquisition

### *Benchmark measurement of employer's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour*

We started the whole project in autumn 2011 with finding out how employers see men's and women's different working relationships and prerequisites in working life. The aim of the investigations was to obtain benchmark measurements for chosen target groups as a starting point for the work for change.

We carried out telephone interviews and focus groups with the employers within several different sectors. The questions were partly about how employers see women's and men's different working relationships and prerequisites in working life, and partly about the employer's view of musculoskeletal disorders in sectors where strain problems are common. The result showed that ignorance and traditions are the greatest challenge to change so that men and women have the same prerequisites in working life. The female-dominated sectors worked more consciously to get men into the activity than the other way round. There was a low proportion within all sectors that worked to give men and women equal prerequisites during the allocation of working tasks.

#### *Knowledge acquisition about ergonomics in women's work environment*

We carried out several seminars with our own variant of the breakthrough method, a method to drive development work at the workplace. The method has meant that we have been able to set clear goals and test change on a small scale, which meant that we have learned which changes lead to improvement. Through inviting researchers from different research disciplines we have collected knowledge that has been refined in seminar form. The participants were ergonomists, inspectors, communicators and researchers in different constellations.

There is a connection between ergonomics and quality, and the need of having an MTO perspective (man - technology - organisation) during workplace improvements has been seen. Ideas about men and women mean that work tasks and equipment are gender-based. Through working with values, norms and patterns during work with change in organisations where gender is given significance gives support to the long-term sustainability of change.

#### *Knowledge compilation – from a manual handling ergonomic perspective*

The knowledge compilation 'physical loads, gender and health' (Work Environment report 2013:9) takes up the question as to why women have more ill health related to physical loads than men. From the research, it is clear that men and women have different work tasks even if they work in the same profession. This is, in all likelihood, an essential explanation for inequality in work related health. That men and women have different loads when they carry out the same work tasks can also be a likely explanation. Men's and women's different physiological reactions to the same loads can on the other hand not to any significant extent explain the difference in physical load related ill health between women and men. To construct work tasks and equipment to suit both women and men should be obvious in an inclusive working life.

The knowledge compilation made a knowledge-related breakthrough. This showed the importance of changing attitude from that women's physiology gives limitations to that the limitation lies in the organisational prerequisites, how the work tasks are allocated or in the design of the equipment. The conclusion becomes therefore that it is important to, in the systematic work environment management, see that one does not miss certain work environment risks because one starts out from that all those in a profession do the same things. The effect of the report has been a better background for our inspectors in the discussions with employers about musculoskeletal disorders. The knowledge compilation has thus far been downloaded 278 times from our website.

#### *Knowledge compilation – from a work organisation perspective*

In the knowledge compilation 'under the magnifying glass – gender perspective on work environment and work environment organisation' (Work Environment Authority report 2013:1) gender research about work environment and work organisation is presented, with the main focus on work organisation research. The main conclusion is that to achieve continuous improvement and renewal in work environment management, it is a must that the workplace is not a seedbed for traditional values and patterns. It is, therefore, central to identify and work through the values and norms that prevail when it comes to ideas and expectations about how women and men should be.

In our inspection of female and male dominated municipal activities we acquired our own understanding for the main conclusion. With the aim of identifying and working through the values and norms that prevail when it comes to ideas and expectations of how women and

men should be, we used the comparison as a tool. Another effect of the knowledge compilation was the setup of the dialogue with employers around 8 March. See further points 8 – 10. Thus far, the knowledge compilation has been downloaded 416 times from our website.

## Follow up research of activities as well as evaluation of results – information and knowledge dissemination

*Knowledge dissemination about methods for the assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders*  
To reveal and assess risks for musculoskeletal disorders, we have identified the following methods: Key Indicator Method (KIM I, II and III), hand-arm risk assessment method (HARM), the Tilt Thermometer and Patient Transfer Assessment Instrument (PTAI). HARM, the Tilt Thermometer, PTAI and KIM III have been translated to Swedish within the framework of the project and all methods are on our website. To disseminate information about methods, we have arranged and taken part in training efforts for experienced ergonomists. During these education campaigns, the use of the methods was connected to the need of having an MTO perspective (man, technology and organisation) during workplace improvements. The methods are now used to an increasing extent by employers, ergonomists, and inspectors. During 2014 the checklists for the abovementioned methods, including the provisions about physical load ergonomics were downloaded 6 900 times from our website.

*The knowledge dissemination and national inspection efforts in connection with the international women's day 8 March – Sustainable work environment with women in focus (HAK) 2012*  
The first information activity within the part project HAK was both an inspection activity and the first in a row of three knowledge dissemination occasions in connection with the International Women's Day 8 March. The focus of the inspection was upon investigating if the employers had investigated and assessed which relationships in women's work tasks would comprise a risk of accidents and ill health. Just over 1300 inspections were carried out and 47 per cent of the workplaces had work environment shortcomings. Several shortcomings were about insufficient risk assessments. Most visits were made to retailers and health care and social care in special housing.

Some months later, 600 follow-up visits were made. We could then state that several employers had fixed the shortcomings we had spoken about or put in place measures in an action plan.

*Knowledge dissemination in connection with International Women's Day 8 March – sustainable work environment with women in focus (HAK) 2013*  
For 2013's 'March 8 activity' we changed the setup to a pure communication activity. Just over 600 dialogues were carried out with employers and safety representatives about a gender perspective, giving a more comprehensive picture of risks and shortcomings in the work environment for both women and men. The dialogues were carried out in connection with already planned regular inspections and follow-ups. The inspections occurred in principle in all areas of business.



*Knowledge dissemination in connection with the International Women's Day 8 March – sustainable work environment with women in focus (HAK) 2014*

In 2014's '8 March activity' we followed the set up from the previous year. Approximately 750 dialogues were carried out. One new thing was the information brochure 'how can work environment be better for both women and men?' (ADI 685) which worked as a gateway in the dialogue with the employers. It contains facts about work environment for women and men and about thirty questions which employers can ask themselves to identify and assess risks and shortcomings in the work environment that deals with notions about gender.

When it comes to our three campaigns connected to the International Women's Day, we have generally seen a good reaction. The follow-up dialogues with the inspectors show that many employers appreciated the dialogue but also that some were surprised but positive to the Work Environment Authority taking up this type of question. There is a curiosity and an interest in discussing the questions. For several employers it was an eye-opener.

*Four external conferences autumn 2014*

During the last six months of the assignment, we carried out four dialogue conferences with the aim of sharing our experiences with others. Three full-day conferences were held in Umeå, Malmö and Stockholm, followed by a half-day conference in Göteborg. The target groups were elected representatives, managers, safety representatives as well as work environment and gender equality strategists, mainly in the country's municipalities. In total the three full-day conferences gathered together 255 participants. Of these, 6 per cent were political elected representatives in municipalities, 19 per cent managers, 22 per cent safety representatives and 40 per cent human resources specialists. The conference in Gothenburg gathered together 125 participants.

The conference programme included short presentations of our inspection efforts as well as information from related research. Participating at each conference were representatives from a municipality with an educational example.

In the evaluations that were done, most of the participants felt that the aim and content were in line with that we had stated. Many of the participants worked within the HIR area. It is thus natural to participate at this type of conference. At the same time it would have been desirable to have several participating political elected representatives from municipalities and higher managers because most of the necessary changes demand insights as well as decisions at these levels.

*Other dissemination of information and knowledge*

Our assessment is that the dissemination of information worked well during this assignment. The special pages on women's work environment on our website has had just over 5 000 visitors during the time of the programme, with most visitors the first year.

The breakthrough in the media for our different programme activities has been significance. The start of the programme as well as the result of the different supervision activities have been frequently reported on in the media. The press releases that were about our two national supervision activities about ergonomics and the comparison between municipal activities had the greatest breakthrough of all our press releases in 2014 (approximately 150 publications each). The news on the latter efforts was also current longer than normal and led to several newspapers doing their own coverage of the situation locally.



We have also participated in conferences, held different meetings and networked with the partners on the labour market and other important players.

#### *Additional assignment, autumn 2014*

In autumn 2014 we received an additional task. The task means that the knowledge we have built through supervision activities and knowledge compilations should be packaged so that it becomes easy for those affected to find knowledge and tools. Specially emphasised was the risk of musculoskeletal problems or illnesses with the cause being that social and organisational relationships should be highlighted. To fulfil the wishes in the government's additional assignment we created information material which aims at central target groups for the assignment. Information material consists of an animated film and three short lecture films which describe our results and the knowledge which was compiled during the programme time. The films are on our website. They are a good background for, among other things, 2015's 8th March activities.

## Presentation of activities and evaluation of the results – method and competence development

#### *Methods for assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders*

To develop physical load ergonomics in the systematic work environment management has been circled as an improvement area. To prevent musculoskeletal disorders, concrete methods which reveal situations which in the long term can cause overloading of muscles and joints are necessary. The selection of methods for assessing risks for musculoskeletal injuries was done with the starting point being that the methods should be easy to use for employers, inspectors and ergonomists within occupational health and safety services and that they should be evidence-based. The following methods were chosen: Key Indicator Method (KIM I, II and III), Hand-arm-risk assessment method (HARM), the Tilthermometer and Patient Transfer Assessment Instrument (PTAI). The brochure 'Lighten the load in patient transfers' was created as supervision background prior to inspections with the focus on patient transfer. In 2014, three central questions in the inspection were highlighted to bring in a gender perspective.

Our work has led to us now having useable methods for risk assessment for musculoskeletal injuries during manual handling of goods, manual work and work with patient transfers. A conclusion is that there is still a great need of developing methods which are easy to apply in order to assess risks during situations with patient transfers.

#### *Development of methods for supervision of workload from an organisational perspective*

When we received the government assignment, the question was how we should reveal women's and men's work environment relationships and which basic prerequisites are given for work environment in an activity on the basis of organisation, management and resource allocation. We decided to use comparison as a tool. That comparison is an effective way to reveal differences has support in the research of Annika Härenstam (Göteborg University) and Tina Forsberg-Kankkunen (Stockholm University) where the watchwords are to reveal, compare and reflect. The methods for the supervision were developed in cooperation with these researchers. See further point 20 and 22.

Through comparing work environment relationships in a female-dominated organisation with relationships in a male-dominated organisation, it should be possible to reveal

prerequisites and differences that clearly influence the work environment. Usually the organisations are inspected one by one, but then we follow the pattern in the gender-segregated division of the labour market. Now we wished to do something different and add a gender perspective through comparison. To be able to make a relevant comparison, it was important that the same employer had the utmost responsibility for the work environment in both organisations. We chose to compare the female-dominated municipal home care services with the male-dominated municipal technical administration (for example roads and parks, property services, water and sanitation). Occupational injury statistics showed that the relative risk of being affected by an occupational injury in these activities were almost as great, but the causes of the work-related injuries differed as a result of the character of the operations.

Our hypothesis was that there would be differences and that the work environment and prerequisites for this would be worse in the female-dominated activities. This is what research has shown. The inspections confirmed our hypothesis and our results agreed with what research has shown.

#### *Education of inspectors etc.*

In spring 2012 we arranged a course in methods for the assessment of musculoskeletal ergonomic risks together with the Centre for Musculoskeletal Research (CBF) at the University of Gävle. The participants were expert inspectors in musculoskeletal ergonomics as well as officials from our regulation department. The aim was that the inspectors would know of the assessment tools that exist and be able to use them. Current inspectors have therefore not only conveyed their newfound knowledge to their colleagues but also begun to carry out dialogues with employers about the different tools.

The inspection activity within EKA 2013 (see point 19) had the focus on the assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders during patient transfer. As a starting point for the supervision, we arranged competence development about patient transfer in collaboration with the Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology in Gothenburg. The theme was important factors for good patient transfer. The participants learned about good technical aids and principles for patient transfer of overweight users. The inspection efforts and the assessment tools The Tilt Thermometer and PTAI were presented, as well as the new brochure 'Lighten the Load in Patient Transfer'. The competence development meant that the inspectors who participated could hold local education in the district afterwards and then later carry out the inspections. A large number of inspectors could, in this way, build on their competence, which they could later use in our inspection efforts. Our follow-up shows that the inspectors have felt welcome and were experienced to be credible by the employers and employees. The picture was reinforced by the inspectors stating that the employers have worked very well and with great commitment starting from the shortcomings that were described in the inspection activity.

#### *Gender education for all staff at the Work Environment Authority*

Early on in the work with women's work environment we saw the need for an internal gender education. Not least the inspectors (who were out doing the first inspections within the framework of the assignment during March 2012) wished for more and more firmly established knowledge in the continued work with finding a good way to inspect with a gender perspective. All staff at the work environment Authority were therefore offered a one-day education to increase their knowledge about gender and what it means to work from a gender perspective.

## Presentation of activities and the evaluation of the result - inspection

### *National inspection activity – ergonomics in women’s work environment (EKA) 2012*

The first inspection activity within the part project EKA was carried out in about 700 workplaces where manual handling or repetitive work occurred, mainly within the food industry, manufacturing industry, vehicle industry, laundries, wholesale trade, hotel cleaning and the care of green spaces. With this supervision we wished to contribute to reducing musculoskeletal disorders in the long-term by revealing the risks today – before the injuries occur. During the inspections we used three methods – HARM, KIM I and KIM II – for the assessment of the risk for musculoskeletal disorders with repetitive work and heavy lifting. The need for measures was great - approximately 70 per cent of the companies received demands.

The way of working, to introduce new methods, was new and the inspectors were often surprised at the positive reception. Our follow-ups have shown that the methods offer space to companies to actively work with the correct measures. The employers and the safety representatives have really been thankful for us teaching new methods, which facilitates the assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders. Among the measures taken were work rotation, ergonomics rounds, better cooperation with the safety representatives as well as increased use of company occupational health services.

### *National supervisory activity – ergonomics in women’s work environment (EKA) 2013*

In the other national inspection effort within the part project EKA, we inspected workplaces within health care and social care with the focus on the assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders during patient transfer. The aim was to contribute to reducing musculoskeletal disorders through giving employers tools to reveal today’s risks in order to avoid tomorrow’s injuries. Of the just under 700 employers we visited, over 75 per cent received demands to fix shortcomings in their work environment.

The most common demands were about procedures for the mapping of risks for the assessment of musculoskeletal injuries during patient transfer. The assessment of risks during individual patient transfer situations had seldom been done. Another common shortcoming was non-functioning procedures for the reporting of injuries in connection with patient transfer. Our follow-ups showed that the employers had gained understanding of the importance of having musculoskeletal ergonomics in their systematic work environment management. We found many examples of well-prepared checklists having been created. Discussions were carried out about how managers could follow up whether the employees had sufficient patient transfer knowledge to be able to work safely.

A national guideline would give increased clarity. The question formulation has therefore been raised to the partners on the labour market.

*National inspection activity – sustainable work environment with women in focus (HAK 2013)*

In this drive, we inspected the work environment and revealed and compared work relationships in general in 59 municipalities' home care services and technical administrations. All municipalities received demands for measures to fix work environment shortcomings. There were municipalities where demands were only made on the one activity. We made significantly more demands in the home care services; both regarding staff and the managers work environment relationships.

Our efforts showed that there are systematic differences in prerequisites for creating a good work environment between the activities. For example, home care service managers generally had significantly more staff per manager. Further, home help services had fewer resources in the form of equipment and vehicles. At the same time, managers as well as staff within home care services experienced greater stress. A further contributing factor is that the Social Services Act in practice tends to be given precedence in relation to the Work Environment Act in the care of patients.

One aim of the campaign was to give political elected representatives and higher managers a picture of the differences in the prerequisites for a good work environment between female and male dominated activities. We reached the aim and received many reactions of the type 'We have not seen this before', 'How can it have become like this' but also of the type 'It is not possible to compare these two activities.'

In our follow-ups we have seen that in a number of municipalities there is an ambition to make changes in the basic prerequisites for the work environment as well as in the organisation, management and resource allocation in the activities.

In order to deepen the understanding of which effects our efforts had, reflection dialogues were carried out with 11 external individuals who took part in the inspection activities. Of the results of the evaluation it emerged that several municipalities have gone further and are carrying out organisational improvements and are using the inspection results as support. The Work Environment Authority's supervision efforts have, in several cases, contributed to gender equality work being taken from being a symbolic question to being a practical one. The authority has, in these cases, exercised its supervisory role in such a way that it has indirectly contributed to evaluating how well the municipalities have succeeded in operationalizing their gender equality policy goals. That the result has been reported higher up in the organisation has been a supporting factor for the degree in which managers have been able to make use of the inspection results to start organisational improvement work.

Many municipalities have carried out, or are carrying out, gender equality integration projects; these projects are often comprehensive and run on solid methodological foundations. The focus of the efforts is the perspective of the citizen. We see that there are good prerequisites to continue work with gender equality integration, even from an organisational, staff and employer perspective.

*National supervision efforts – ergonomics in women's work environment (EKA) 2014*

The supervisory activities aimed, as earlier, at increasing the employers' knowledge about the risks of musculoskeletal disorders in their activities and also increase knowledge about how these can be prevented. A broad spectrum of sectors was covered by the supervision. We carried out inspections with the focus on the assessment of risks of musculoskeletal disorders during patient transfer at workplaces within health care and social care, and to a small part within mobility services. At the same time the food products and manufacturing industry,

building and installation work, wholesale trade, retail trade, preschools as well as laundries were inspected with the focus on revealing risks for musculoskeletal disorders.

During the course of the project it has become clear that systematic work environment management needs a gender perspective. This because men and women often have different work tasks even if they work at the same workplace. During inspections, three important questions were posed to generate a dialogue about gender in work environment management. 80 per cent of the inspectors participated in the supervisory activity and just under 1 400 inspections were carried out. 75 per cent of the inspections resulted in demands.

During our follow-ups we have been able to state that several employers have worked with the assessment of risks for musculoskeletal disorders in a committed way. The new methods have been put into practice and used to a great extent at the workplaces. Examples of methods to be mentioned can be the automatisisation of repetitive work.

*National inspection activity – sustainable ergonomic work environment with women in focus (HEKA)*

This activity was a continuation of the HAK-supervision that was done in 2013 with the addition that there was a clearer focus on the risk of musculoskeletal disorders. The methods of risk assessment that were created earlier for the EKA supervision were used. We inspected six municipalities. All municipalities received demands for measures. The result did not significantly differ from 2013's inspection activity.

Improvement work is on going.

## Internal learning

The programme has, in both projects, worked with knowledge acquisition, knowledge dissemination, method and competence development as well as inspection. Parts have during the course of the whole programme, been integrated and in this way reinforced each other. Many inspectors have appreciated being able to work for three years with a theme. It has been an educational journey. *'We are a product of our time; we believe that we can do and know a lot but there is a lot we do not see. Here in depth knowledge is needed. A one-day seminar in gender knowledge is not sufficient. We need to be a learning organisation'*

A measurement done before and after the internal gender seminars showed increased knowledge and attitude changes and that more inspectors now take up these questions with the employer.

In the assignment it was stated that we should do a national inspection activity. We carried out six in total. In several of these, between 70 and 80 per cent of employers received written demands. These facts clearly show the need for these efforts. Most employers have perceived our inspections in a positive way, not least because they have increased their knowledge but also because they have received new tools to assess risks and reveal the differences between women and men. Most employers have also taken steps so that we, after the follow up, could close the cases. It was seldom that we needed to use injunctions or bans.

After the inspection efforts within EKA and HAK, we carried out reflection dialogues with the inspectors, In the dialogues emerged, among other things, experiences from the inspection for example about different views about knowledge in different sectors: *clearing saws, scaffolding*



*and forklift trucks may be used only when employees have received permission from their employer and they receive this when they have been on a course. This is not how it looks within health care and social care. Patient transfer is carried out before one has been on training. Both areas bring with them many occupational injuries.*

Another experience that we have had is about which success factors there are for workplaces within health care and social care where we have not made demand on measures. These include among other things good procedures for systematic work with revealing risks before work begins at a new user; functioning procedures for training and follow-up of patient transfer knowledge as well as good access to technical aids. Characteristic for these workplaces was also low absence due to illness, a feeling of participation, knowledgeable managers and a good atmosphere.

## Description of how experiences will be dealt with in the Work Environment Authority's regular activities

During 2014, the Work Environment Authority began work with gender mainstreaming the activity. Priority was given to our overarching planning and follow-up process as well as our regulatory process. The experiences from women's work environment have been used in this work and have been of decisive significance for their implementation. The work with gender mainstreaming our processes is continuing during 2015.

As a part of the work with gender mainstreaming and women's work environment, we have also highlighted the importance of a gender equal communication in all our channels. We have, through seminars, increased knowledge about how we can depict both women's and men's work environment and avoid reproducing gender stereotypes in word and image.

The experiences will be used in coming provision projects, they have already been used in on-going work with a new provision for organisational and social work environment. The knowledge about how decisive the organisational prerequisites are for work environment relationships as well as physical, psychological as well as social, strengthens the perspective we have in the proposal. When we later roll out and apply the provisions and guidance, we need to have with us knowledge of women's work environment, about women and men often being given different organisational prerequisites, and that this affects the work environment relationships. There are systematic and structural differences and different norms and cultures. There are different expectations and notions about what women and men should do, what suits them, what they are good and less good at.

When it applies to inspection activities, experiences from women's work environment have been dealt with in different ways. During the time of the programme, all inspectors have been trained. These experiences have now been taken care of in the on-going inspections. The selection process of which supervision shall be prioritised as well as which workplaces will be visited is being further developed. There the programme's experiences will also be taken into consideration.

During the coming years it will be especially important to, in addition to continuing to have a gender perspective in our inspections, also integrate these into our decisions. Continued competence development within the area is going to be necessary.

Information campaigns in connection with regular inspections around the 8th March will continue even in 2015 with the same layout as during the work with women's work environment.

## Presentation of the use of the funds

The government has, for these two assignments, given at the most 20,74 million SEK. An allocation for the three years was made where the government contributed 4 million SEK to the agency for 2011, 5 million SEK for the year 2012, 7,5 million SEK for the year 2013 and 4 million SEK for the year 2014. For the additional assignment in 2014 the government contributed 240 000 SEK. The Work Environment Authority has, for the assignment, used just under 20 million SEK.

Table 1. Cost overview for the assignment to develop and carry out special efforts with the aim of preventing women from being knocked out of working life due to work environment related problems including the additional assignment.

Allocation of costs including OH	
Staff costs	9 886 683 SEK
Premises and running costs	6 342 842 SEK
Other costs	3 419 317 SEK
The sum of costs 2011-2014	19 648 842 SEK
Unused allocated funds 2011	1 091 158 SEK
<b>Allocated funds 2011-2014</b>	<b>20 740 000 SEK</b>

The large cost item is staff costs. The assignment has involved a number of staff at the Work Environment Authority, not least inspectors in connection with the national inspection activities. The other larger cost items have been the task of following up researchers (1.15 million SEK), the assignments that have been allocated to two research institutes with the aim of creating knowledge compilations (approx. 1 million SEK) but also the external conferences during autumn 2014 (just over 600 thousand SEK).

## Closing comments

We are, just like all others, a part of the structures that reproduce ideas about gender, that is to say what is considered to be typically female and typically male. This assignment has contributed to knowledge positions being moved forwards, both internally and externally. It is, however, not the same thing as that the new knowledge and methods are present in the structures, either with us or with those who have taken part of our efforts and results. Traditional gender patterns characterise society as well as working life. This has consequences for which way in which we, but also other players, meet women's and men's work environment. Research has shown that a gender-neutral approach to the work environment as a rule reveals the average male staff member and that it does not show the working situation for the women and men who fall outside the norm. In this we have important work ahead of





us. We must continue to reveal how gender is given significance in our work processes. For this there is now both competence and commitment in the organisation.

The result of our task shows that fundamentally how the work is organised is of decisive significance for the possibility of preventing musculoskeletal disorders and related ill health. To achieve sustainable work environments the prevailing gender pattern in working life needs to be broken. Experiences show that changing attitudes, values and cultures is a long-term task. Continued efforts are demanded both from the authorities and from the partners on the labour market and individual employers.

The ill health figure for women continues to rise. The Work Environment Authority therefore views positively the fact that we have been given further funding to continue the work with the focus on the work environment in female-dominated activities in 2015.

## List of English publications from the assignment "Women's work environment"

Report 2013:7E – Ergonomics in women's work environment 2012

Report 2013:09E - Physical work, gender and health in working life

Report 2014:03E - Inspections of female and male dominated municipal activities, home care services and technical administration

Brochure ADI 690: "How can the work environment be better for both women and men"?

All publications are available on [www.av.se/inenglish/](http://www.av.se/inenglish/)



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Our vision: *Everyone wants, and everyone is able, to create a good work environment*