

The future working environment

REPORT ON FUTURE WORKING ENVIRONMENT 2010

– new priorities for the working environment



Danish Government, December 2005

INTRODUCTION

In its platform of February 2005, the Danish government stipulated that, in collaboration with the social partners, it would prepare a new list of priorities for working-environment work which would ensure that focus was on the most important working-environment problems. This was a follow-up to the agreement on working-environment reform of 2004.

Since 1996, the action programme entitled "Clean Working Environment 2005" has been the overall framework for working-environment efforts. On the basis of this action programme, in 2002 the social partners in the Working Environment Council prioritised four problems and at the same time set up goals for improvements to be realised. The action programme and associated priorities expired at the end of 2005.

Nationwide prioritisation has been successful. Setting priorities in this way has ensured that efforts are directed towards the most important working-environment problems for the benefit of all employees. This has also ensured that all the working-environment players work towards a common goal. Therefore, the government would like a new list of priorities for working-environment efforts for the period up to and including 2010.

The government considers it important that priorities in working-environment efforts are set on a solid technical foundation. The Working Environment Authority, the National Institute of Occupational Health, and the

National Board of Industrial Injuries have therefore prepared the report "Fremtidens Arbejdsmiljø", (The Working Environment of the Future) (annex 1), which was published in May 2005. The report is the technical foundation for decisions on which working-environment problems and issues should be in focus for efforts after 2005.

On the basis of this report, in May 2005 the government asked the Working Environment Council to recommend which working-environment problems should be afforded priority in overall working-environment efforts up to the end of 2010. The Working Environment Council was also asked to identify any special target groups, justify the priorities, and set target figures. The government received the recommendations from the Working Environment Council in October 2005 in the report "Oplæg til ny national handlingsplan og prioriteringer for den samlede arbejdsmiljøindsats i Danmark frem til udgangen af 2010" (Report on a new national action plan for prioritisation of overall working-environment efforts in Denmark up to the end of 2010) (annex 2).

Subsequently, the government has held a hearing at which a large number of working-environment professionals and stakeholders presented their opinions on efforts up to 2010.

With this basis, the government has set new priorities which will make up the framework for overall working-environment efforts up to the end of 2010. This report describes the foundation for the priorities, the government's new priorities, and implementation of these.

FOUNDATION FOR THE NEW PRIORITIES

The government's new priorities have emphasised an understanding of the working environment in a wide context, emphasising the significance of the working environment for both the individual and society. The government also considers it important that the priorities are secured against future changes by starting from an assessment of the significance of working-environment problems in the future.

The report "The Working Environment of the Future" therefore includes analyses of the significance of the working environment in a broader context. The report examines both the consequences for the individual in the form of occupational health problems and injuries, hospital admissions and absenteeism due to sickness as well as the consequences for society, including employment and health consequences.

In order to be able to assess the significance of the working-environment problems in the future, analyses have been completed of the following aspects of working-environment problems:

- development and trends,
- spread,
- severity.

Development and trends means whether a working-environment problem is expected to increase, decrease or remain the same over the next five years. This again relates to developments in the labour market, because changes here may lead to changes in working-environment problems. Spread means the number of employees affected by a working-environment problem today. Severity means the consequences of a working-environment problem for health, absenteeism, and loss of ability to work.

These three factors – development and trends, spread and severity, have been combined to obtain an overall picture of which working-environment problems could be included in priority setting on the basis of a technical per-

spective. In this way, the description sketches a picture of the working environment of the future, and within this framework the government has decided which working-environment problems should have priority.

The significance of the working environment in a broad context

A poor working environment can be expensive, for the individual, the enterprise and society.

Each year, a large number of industrial injuries are reported to the Working Environment Authority and the National Board of Industrial Injuries, respectively. The Working Environment Authority receives reports of more than 40,000 industrial accidents and about 12,500 work-related health problems annually. The National Board of Industrial Injuries recognises as work-related an annual 13-14,000 industrial accidents and 2-3,000 occupational diseases. At the same time, studies of hospital admissions show that 8-15 per cent of all somatic hospital admissions of males can be attributed to the working environment in a broad context. For females this figure is 7-11 per cent. It has also been estimated that the working environment in a broad context could explain up to one-third of total absenteeism due to sickness in Denmark.

A safe and healthy working environment is of great importance for the individual employee. But a safe and healthy working environment is also important for the enterprise and for society in general. For example, a good working environment can mean lower absenteeism due to sickness, and this in turn affects productivity. At society level, lower absenteeism due to sickness means large financial savings.

The working environment is therefore not only important for the individual employee. The working environment is also an important element in other social contexts.

The government finds it especially important that working-environment efforts are part of overall employment policy initiatives. A good working environment prevents absenteeism

due to sickness, loss of ability to work, termination of employment, and it helps retain older people in the labour market.

A good working environment can therefore be one of the elements which ensure an adequate workforce in future years.

A good working environment is also an important element in the government's health policy. Good opportunities for improving the health and safety of Danes lie in reducing work-related health problems and injuries. The working environment can in itself involve risks to health such as cardio-vascular diseases, stress, or neck and shoulder complaints. The working environment can also affect the ease or difficulty with which the individual chooses a healthy lifestyle, and therefore the workplace could also be an important forum for initiatives aiming at promoting a healthy lifestyle, not least through integrated efforts which combine the working environment and lifestyle.

Another example of the interplay with other areas is the interplay between the working environment and the environment, just as the working environment and family life can be interwoven.

Danish working-environment efforts should also be considered in the context of Danish international obligations and in particular in the context of working-environment initiatives agreed within the EU.

The government stresses that future working-environment efforts should be based on the working environment influencing and being influenced by society in general and other social priorities. Working-environment efforts should therefore not be considered in isolation, but on the contrary they should be regarded in the context of other national and international initiatives and policies. The government considers it especially important to regard working-environment efforts as part of the overall employment policy initiatives and it emphasises the cohesion with health policy and EU priorities.

Development trends in the labour market

The government considers it important that the new priorities for working-environment efforts are secured against future changes. Priorities should therefore take into account what the structure of business will look like in the next five years, the types of job expected in the Danish labour market, what technological change there will be, who will be part of the workforce etc. Therefore it is important to examine the likely trends in the labour market over the next five years.

From a perspective up to 2010, the labour market will, to a large extent, resemble the labour market we know today. Continuity is therefore an important key word in understanding the labour market of the future.

Although the future labour market will very much resemble the current labour market, some changes are expected to become significant over the next five to ten years. Some of the most important changes are:

Increased globalisation and competition

Globalisation is not a new trend, but it is expected to increase more rapidly in coming years. Globalisation leads to outsourcing, especially of industrial production and standardised office work, as well as migration, primarily of labour from Eastern Europe.

Greatest growth in the service sector

The only sector in Denmark with a significant proportionate growth in employment over the last ten years has been the service sector. This trend is expected to continue, and it is expected that the knowledge content in products and production processes of the future will grow.

Rapid technological development

Considerable technological development is expected, in particular in ICT, and in bio and nano technology. In particular, recent development trends in ICT are expected to impact life at work in the period up to 2010.

More elderly people

In the short term, the increasing proportion of elderly people in the population will mean that the elderly will make up an increasing percentage of the workforce. In the slightly longer term, i.e. after 2010, there will be a growing group of elderly people outside the workforce, who must be provided for by ever fewer young people. At the same time there will be a need to expand the nursing, care, and health sectors.

More Danes with a non-Danish ethnic background

Immigrants, refugees and their descendants will make up an increasing proportion of the workforce. The employment rate amongst these groups is very low, and it is well known that even today there are difficulties in integrating many groups with a non-Danish ethnic background.

Development trends in the working environment

The expected changes in the labour market are expected to impact a number of overall development trends within the working environment.

Continuation of known working-environment problems

One of the key development trends in the labour market is continuity. Changes are happening, but not so fast, and the labour market of the future, and thus the working environment of the future up to 2010, will therefore to a large degree resemble that we already know today.

Fewer jobs affected by traditional production-related working-environment problems

In the future, fewer jobs are expected to be affected by traditional production-related working-environment problems because industrial workplaces will be outsourced.

More jobs affected by sedentary work

The expected continuing drop in industrial production and the concurrent growth in knowledge and computer work will mean that

in future there will be more sedentary jobs. This will mean an increased risk of cardio-vascular diseases and similar.

More jobs affected by physical strain

Increased work intensity, a more blurred distinction between work and private life, and greater knowledge, social and emotional demands are all expected in the work of the future. Furthermore, less rigid terms of employment are expected as well as less rigid working hours, rapid change and new types of organisation and management with increasing social demands. These development trends are expected to be significant for the psychological impacts from work, and they can lead to stress etc.

Changed composition of the workforce

The expected changes in the composition of the workforce, with more elderly people and more people with a non-Danish ethnic background may be significant for how the working environment influences employees and for how prevention of working-environment problems can be implemented.

Possible new risk factors arising from technological development

Developments within ICT as well as bio and nano technology could lead to the elimination of some working-environment problems, but they could also give rise to new working-environment problems.

Over the next five years, the working environment will be affected by some new development trends, but there will also be a high degree of continuity. The government is therefore aware that in the period up to 2010 it will be important to take action against existing working-environment problems as well as against new working-environment challenges.

The most important working-environment problems

As described above, a number of development trends in the future working environment can be identified on the basis of labour market developments. By comparing these development trends with analyses of the current severe-

rity and spread of working-environment problems, an overall assessment can be made of the significance of working-environment problems for safety and health in the future. This has been done in the report "the Working Environment of the Future" (annex 1).

On this basis, the government considers that the overall picture of the future working environment up to and including 2010 indicates that the most important risk factors nationally will be psychosocial risk factors, physically inactive work, and industrial accidents.

Monotonous strain from computer work, impacts harmful to skin, noise harmful to hearing, personnel moves and impacts from the indoor climate will also be amongst the most important working-environment problems.

Instead of defining working-environment problems as risk factors, working-environment problems can also be defined as the health consequences caused by a poor working environment. The government considers that the most significant work-related consequences for health nationally will be cardio-vascular diseases, stress, industrial accidents, and musculo-skeletal disorders, while skin irritation, damage to hearing, and unspecific symptoms will also be amongst the most important working-environment problems.

Whether working-environment problems are defined on the basis of risk factors or on the basis of health consequences is a question of the approach chosen to describe the same reality.

The government considers the working-environment problems mentioned here as a series of well reasoned choices for the prioritisation of which working-environment problems should be in focus in future working-environment initiatives. The new priorities have been selected from these working-environment problems.

The government also considers that it is important not to forget that, in addition to the above working-environment problems, there will also be a number of other important working-environment problems in the next five years. Nationally, they will not be as crucial as the above working-environment problems, but they may well be very important within a specific sector or at a specific enterprise. For example, there are carcinogenic substances, passive smoking, vibrations and work-related asthma.

There is also a number of working-environment problems which require more knowledge in order to assess their significance for the working environment of the future. This applies to, for example work-related damage to the reproductive system or working environment impacts for asthma sufferers. Finally, it is not yet clear whether new technology such as nanotechnology poses new risks.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES 2010

It is clear from the previous section that a number of different working-environment problems can be identified in the future working environment. Each working-environment problem is one problem too many. Therefore, it is desirable to do something to reduce all of these working-environment problems.

However, it is not possible to do everything at once. The government therefore considers it vital that national working-environment efforts are prioritised so that resources are used on few, but important problems and so that working-environment efforts are efficient. It is also crucial that specific targets are set for what is to be achieved so that subsequent measurements can establish whether these targets have been met.

There are many players in the working-environment field. If prioritising working-environment efforts is to work optimally, it must have broad support in order to create common initiatives where all working-environment players are pulling in the same direction.

Proposed priorities from the Working Environment Council

In May 2005, the government asked the Working Environment Council to recommend which working-environment problems should take priority in the overall working-environment efforts up to the end of 2010, as well as any target groups, the reasons for the priorities and target figures.

Therefore, the Working Environment Council set up a committee to prepare these recommendations. On the basis of the work of the committee, in October 2005 the Working Environment Council decided on a discussion paper for a new national action plan and priorities for overall working-environment initiatives up to the end of 2010 (annex 2).

In the opinion of the Working Environment Council, the new priorities should be considered in the context of the strategies and tools which are to lead to results and improvements in the working environment. The Working Environment Council has recommended that the Minister for Employment develop a new national action plan which includes efforts from the social partners, authorities and sector research up to 2010. The recommendations from the Working Environment Council include what should be the main points in a new action plan.

The Working Environment Council's recommendations for the overall priorities for working-environment efforts are based on the analyses in the report "The Working Environment of the Future" of the severity of the problems, their scope and expected development.

During its work, the Working Environment Council has also stressed that the working environment plays an important role in general employment policy. The Council points out that the working environment affects absenteeism due to sickness, loss of ability to work, termination of work, and retention. The Working Environment Council places special importance on considering working-environment efforts in the context of increasing employment and minimising absenteeism due to sickness.

The Working Environment Council has also pointed out that working-environment efforts contribute to general health policy. Their prioritisation also emphasises that Denmark takes part in the EU cooperation.

The Council also points to education policy as an area of special interest in that a good safety culture can be founded in the education system.

The Working Environment Council has agreed on recommending new priority for four working-environment problems with proposals for reduction targets. The recommendations are reproduced in the box below.

1. Recommendations from the Working Environment Council for priority working-environment problems

Working-environment problem	Reduction target	Measured by
Industrial accidents	20 per cent	Injury, loss of ability to work, absenteeism due to sickness
Psychological working environment	10 per cent	Absenteeism due to sickness
Noise	Noise causing hearing damage: 15 per cent Nuisance noise: 10 per cent.	Noise causing hearing damage in affected sectors, self-reported noise
Musculo-skeletal disorders	Reduction target not yet set	Absenteeism due to sickness

A number of reduction targets relate to drops in absenteeism due to sickness.

A summary of the Working Environment Council's justification for its proposals is in box 2. The recommendations from the Working Environment Council contain a more detailed description of the four areas, an assessment of the tools, as well as targets and measurement methods. Furthermore, the Council has set a number of targets for working-environment work by enterprises (annex 2).

2. Summary justification by the Working Environment Council for the four working-environment problems

Industrial accidents

Industrial accidents can have serious consequences for employees, the enterprise and society. These may include death, loss of ability to work, permanent injury, long-term absenteeism due to sickness, as well as risk of exclusion from the labour market. Industrial accidents have also been rendered priority in the EU.

Psychological working environment

The Working Environment Council would like to place priority on the psychological working environment because of the health consequences of the area and its consequences for employment policy in the form of absenteeism due to sickness as well as because the area is widespread and development trends are rising. The area has also been rendered priority in the EU.

Noise

The Working Environment Council would like to place priority on noise in a wide context. This priority focuses not only on the well documented working-environment problem of noise causing hearing damage, which can lead to serious consequences for the health of the individual, quality of life and

ability to work; by including nuisance noise, focus is also on impacts, the consequences of which have not yet been fully identified, but which could lead to great nuisance. Many employees are exposed to nuisance noise and the problem is increasing.

Musculo-skeletal disorders

The Working Environment Council would like to place priority on musculo-skeletal disorders. Musculo-skeletal disorders are especially significant for absenteeism due to sickness and health-related early retirement. They are therefore a serious and widespread problem. There are many risk factors in work which could lead to musculo-skeletal disorders. Developments are also influenced by factors outside work. There is a need for general preventive measures. There have been great efforts over many years, e.g. aiming at MRW and heavy lifting. The importance of musculo-skeletal disorders is expected to continue in the future. The Working Environment Council therefore finds that, within the framework of a new national action plan, a prevention strategy should be set up aiming at musculo-skeletal disorders.

Government priorities

The working environment is not only important for the individual employee and the individual enterprise. A good working environment is necessary for an effective labour market. Therefore, the government considers it important to prioritise working-environment problems which are important from an employment policy perspective and which contribute to the government's overall goal of "More People in Employment". A good working environment is important to prevent industrial injuries, absenteeism due to sickness, loss of ability to work and termination of employment and to retain the elderly in the labour market. At the same time, the working environment policy priorities should support the government's health policy and accord with priorities at EU level.

The government also stresses that the prioritised working-environment problems are based on a solid technical foundation and that together they cover a broad spectrum of jobs and sectors and that they are relevant for the working environment of both men and women.

The government is very pleased that the social partners have agreed to recommend a new national list of priorities with proposals for reduction targets and the government notes that objectives have also been set regarding working-environment work.

The government considers that the Working Environment Council has indicated four central working-environment problems where each problem has a solid technical justification for its priority. At the same time, they support the employment-policy, health-policy, and international targets and secure job, sector and gender coverage. Therefore the government agrees with the Council's recommendations for the working-environment problems to have priority up to 2010.

The government's prioritised working-environment problems up to and including 2010 are:

Industrial accidents	– 20 per cent reduction
Psychological working environment	–10 per cent reduction
Noise	– 15 per cent reduction in hearing damage, 10 per cent reduction in nuisance noise
Musculo-skeletal disorders	– reduction target to be set no later than 1. April 2007

Industrial accidents remain a very important area for the government. There are still far too many industrial accidents, but fortunately overall the number of industrial accidents being reported has fallen through the 1990s. The government considers it important to ensure this trend continues.

As the government has stated many times before, the psychological working environment is also an area to be taken seriously and which must have high priority in working-environment efforts. There can be no doubt that this is one of the most important working-environment challenges, and developments in the labour market do not seem to be alleviating this challenge. Therefore, through the Danish Health and Safety Research Fund, a number of research projects have been initiated in this area.

Noise is also a problem high on the government's working environment policy agenda. It is also a problem in focus at EU level and the government is currently implementing the new Noise Directive. The recent European Week for Safety and Health at Work on noise shows the issue has high priority. The Working Environment Council has recommended that the priority should not only apply to noise harmful to hearing, but also nuisance noise and the government agrees, as this type of noise is a problem for many employees.

With regard to musculo-skeletal disorders, the government notes that the recommendations from the Working Environment Council mean that the current initiatives for heavy lifting and MRW must be maintained up to and including 2007, or until the final results of this extensive work have been determined. According to the Council's recommendations, once these results are available, and no later than early 2007, a new national prioritisation of risk factors which can lead to musculo-skeletal disorders should be carried out and specific reduction targets should be established.

The government considers that prevention of work-related musculo-skeletal disorders is vital for future working-environment efforts. It is an extremely widespread problem which can have extensive consequences both for the individual (as pain, absenteeism due to sickness, loss of ability to work), and from an employment-policy perspective because musculo-skeletal disorders cause a lot of absenteeism due to sickness and early exit from the labour market.

Therefore, the government has a clear expectation that, no later than 1 April 2007, the Working Environment Council will present new recommendations for priorities of risk factors which can lead to musculo-skeletal disorders and reduction targets. The government will also ensure that the data basis for the results of the current efforts is available by October 2006.

The established reduction targets send a clear signal that considerable results are expected from the overall efforts. A new element is the use of the goal reduction in absenteeism due to sickness, and by doing this the government wants to underline the importance it places on the relationship between the working environment and employment policy.

With these priorities the government wants to focus on a few, but important working-environment problems and in this way achieve considerable and visible results. The government is aware that the analyses of the working environment of the future have also indicated

other working-environment problems which will be significant in the future. These include physically inactive work, skin irritation and indoor climate impacts. Physically inactive work is a widespread working-environment problem which can lead to cardio-vascular diseases. It is also a growing problem and a problem the government finds it necessary to be aware of in the coming years and which could form the basis of collaboration with other authorities. Skin irritant impacts are a serious problem in specific sectors and therefore the government expects that these sectors will continue the extensive efforts in this area which have already commenced in many cases. Finally, although indoor climate impacts do not actually involve actual disease and illness, they cause nuisance and symptoms which the relevant sectors are expected to work on.

Special target groups

As mentioned, working-environment efforts should not be seen in isolation, but they should be regarded with overall national and international initiatives and policies. In an employment-policy context it is vital that a good working environment has an influence in preventing absenteeism due to sickness, loss of ability to work, termination of employment and in retaining the elderly in the labour market.

The new priorities contain specific targets linked to both absenteeism due to sickness and loss of ability to work. In this way the new priorities are directly linked to important employment-policy objectives.

Furthermore, the government believes that there is also a need to set working-environment efforts in the context of the great social challenge involved in the demographic changes in the workforce. In future years there is a need for special efforts to ensure that elderly employees remain in the labour market. The working environment has a part to play in this connection by retaining people and attracting older employees.

Therefore the government is of the opinion that there is a need for elderly employees to make up a special target group for working-environment efforts in the next five years.

Another of the great challenges for the coming years is to ensure that more people with a non-Danish ethnic background have permanent attachment to the labour market. The government believes that there should be studies to determine how the working environment can play a role in this connection.

Moreover, as special groups, the Working Environment Council has recommended small enterprises, contractors, advisers and planners. The government agrees that these are crucial target groups to involve in the strategic considerations of the individual players.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW UP

Working-environment initiatives taken by enterprises are the determining factor when it comes to significant improvements of the working environment. This is why one of the pillars of the Working Environment Act is that enterprises themselves deal with health and safety issues under guidance by labour market organisations and guidance and control by the Danish Working Environment Authority.

By giving this area priority, the government is actively tackling a number of serious working-environment problems in the Danish labour market. By giving priority to a number of specific working-environment areas, the government aims at achieving clear results with regard to those working-environment problems that seriously affect the working environment of today and of the future.

This is a national priority, and all working-environment players are expected to participate in carrying out this task, both together and individually.

The areas given priority should be given special attention to ensure significant and visible progress in these areas. In order to achieve the goals set, the Danish Working Environment Authority, the National Institute of Occupational Health, the National Board of Industrial Injuries, the Sector Working Environment Councils, the Working Environment Information Centre and trade unions must include these priorities in their work when this seems relevant.

However, the working-environment problems that have been given priority are not the only important working-environment problems in the labour market. Several other important working-environment problems also affect health and safety. The government believes that each enterprise should continue to address any significant working-environment problems it might have, regardless of whether these problems are included on the national list of priorities. The requirements of the Working Environment Act should always be

the focus of attention, no matter what the priorities are.

The government also expects that the individual sector working environment councils take an active role in the implementation of the new priorities. Some working-environment problems that are not very common at national level can however be very common in specific sectors. Sectors should of course continue to work with these problems even though they are no longer included on the national list of priorities.

Measures

Identifying which working-environment problems to give priority to is an important step towards upholding efficient efforts for a safe and healthy working environment.

The working environment reform of 2004 introduced a number of measures that focus attention on the working environment at enterprise level. This is a good starting point for future working-environment initiatives. Each player contributes to the implementation of the priorities based on their experience using different measures.

In its recommendation, the Working Environment Council identifies a number of measures that the council finds relevant. The government considers that it is positive that the social partners have initiated such important discussions. Several of the many proposals only concern efforts by the social partners; the government is very positive towards these initiatives. Other proposals concern the working environment reform and efforts by the Working Environment Authority in general. To secure a holistic approach, the government will assess the proposals by the Working Environment Council when reviewing the working environment reform in 2006.

Implementation in the Ministry of Employment

With regard to the Danish Working Environment Authority, this means that development work, inspections, regulation, com-

petence development as well as guidelines and information material should be based on the working-environment problems that have been given priority. When carrying out inspections, the most important problems at the enterprise in question should be central, and not just the priority problem areas. Furthermore, the list of priorities should not prevent initiatives in other areas.

The list of priorities is also indicative for the National Institute of Occupational Health's development and research activities. At the same time, a broad approach to the working environment must be secured enabling research and development activities within the working environment priority areas that have already been identified as being important. Also the working-environment problems that we do not know enough about to be able to assess how they will affect health and safety in the future should be included. How nanotechnology will affect the working environment in the future for example.

The report "The Working Environment of the Future" has identified a number of research areas that the Government believe should be taken into account. The government has noted that the research fund wishes to discuss whether additional areas should be included in the strategy for the Danish Working Environment Research Fund because of the new working-environment priorities. At the same time, basic research and research carried out under the auspices of e.g. the Danish Council for Strategic Research and the new Danish National Advanced Technology Foundation should be relevant for the working-environment areas on the priority list.

With regard to the National Board of Industrial Injuries, the list of priorities entails that special attention is given to the priority areas in connection with statistics and analyses of the occupational injuries area. This information will serve as background knowledge for the Working Environment Authority in its pre-emptive initiatives and for the social partners in their information and training activities.

Implementation of the new list of priorities should also take into account that the working environment is part of a larger context. This means that the working environment can also be included in plans and activities initiated in other ministries that focus on other problem areas in society. Therefore the government also emphasises the importance of coordinating cooperation across ministries, where this is relevant.

Several central government authorities are responsible for the working environment depending on whether it is in the air, at sea or on land. There is a special obligation for coordination of cooperation in this area.

Follow up

Based on the Ministry of Employment's monitoring of the working environment, developments within the four priority working-environment problem areas will be followed, and when the period expires, achievements will be balanced against the targets set.

It is important the list of priorities does not become too static. The priorities are based on existing knowledge, however new knowledge may require new initiatives on working-environment problems that were not initially included in the set of priorities. The government therefore places great importance on constant follow up of trends in the labour market as well as the development of new technologies, and that the consequences of these for the working environment are assessed. If it should be necessary, the government may decide to adjust the list of priorities. Therefore the list should be seen as a dynamic list of priorities that can be adapted to a changing reality.