

OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING IN STATE ADMINISTRATION

Disability pensions' large share of the state's pension expenses has been one of the reasons emphasizing the significance of occupational well-being. In 2004 the state's pension expenses including all types of pension totalled 1,288 million euros. Disability pension accounted for 6.4% of this or 82 million euros. Sick leave and job-related ill health increase pay costs.

The biggest reason for granting disability pension has been mental health problems. The second biggest reason has been musculoskeletal disorders.

As a result of changes in working life, developing well-being has become more challenging. Attention has rightly been focused on the work community and working conditions. In practice developing both of these promotes well-being. The ingredients of occupational well-being are included in training, development, expertise, management, rehabilitation, exercise and maintaining health. It is often a question of what viewpoint is selected.

The present audit evaluated whether occupational well-being activities are systematic and how they are monitored along with goals, implementation and financing at the agency level. The audit was cross-sectoral and concerned several agencies.

Audit methods included participating observation, an e-mail survey and interviews.

On the basis of the state budget and agencies responses it appears that occupational well-being activities have become more goal-oriented. Goals have been set by supervising ministries for their administrative sectors and by agencies for their own activities. A goal-oriented approach is visible in the preparation of occupational well-being plans, for example.

The audit also indicated that development discussions are a key means by which agencies obtain information concerning occupa-

tional health and well-being. Well-being indicators also provide this type of information. At the state administration level the matter has been monitored with the help of a summary of personnel accounts.

The State Audit Office urges agencies that do not yet have a development discussion culture or have not yet made systematic measurements to develop their skills in conducting development discussions and to conduct systematic measurements of occupational well-being.

The audit focuses attention on occupational rehabilitation and encourages agencies to help employees return to work after a long absence and if necessary to guide employees so that they can remain in the working world, for example through job trials, if their illness does not absolutely require retirement. Job trials and other occupational rehabilitation should be used more extensively. Information concerning this matter should also be improved.

Agencies should evaluate the age distribution of their personnel and anticipate where gaps in expertise may develop in future as a result of retirement and occupational mobility. Many agencies have already done this but there is still room for improvement. Adequate attention should be paid to passing on experience and to recruitment in the right direction and at the right time.

In planning and implementing occupational well-being activities and related training, organizational cooperation is important. It makes it possible for people to learn from one another and opens new perspectives. The cooperation networks established within the framework of the State Treasury's Kaiku programme are a good example of this. Planning and implementing an extensive occupational well-being project requires considerable personnel resources and commitment on the part of agencies, however. In some agencies this can be an impediment. The State Audit Office believes that smaller projects planned and financed by the State Treasury can also support occupational well-being activities in these agencies.