

*Government Resolution on Developing*  

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**Occupational Health Care**



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# Government Resolution on Developing Occupational Health Care

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Working life is changing rapidly, the demands of work are increasing, international competition is becoming more intense, and the economy is becoming more and more international and global. New IT, new materials, procedures and production processes are being introduced. Work organizations are changing and being reformed. Business structures are changing, and new business networks are emerging. Requirements for professional skills and learning are increasing and diversifying. At the same time, the average age of the working population is rising. It is anticipated that Finland will be facing a labour shortage in a few years.

Wellbeing at work and staying longer in work are a key objective from the point of view of national economy. In order to achieve this objective, work must be developed taking into account the capacities of employees. Reconciliation of work and family is also an essential element in developing working life. Occupational health and safety at work as well as supporting wellbeing at work are an important part of companies' social responsibility.

Occupational health care contributes to improving the quality of working life and increasing its attractiveness. The quality of working life and working conditions is a part of the overall quality of life. The most important strategic lines for developing occupational health care up to 2015 are improving the quality of working life, maintaining and promoting health and work ability, and securing comprehensive occupational health services of good quality.

These strategies support the overall wellbeing at work, coping and staying on at work, and promoting the attractiveness of working life by taking into account, at the same time, equality aspects.

The Government Resolution on developing occupational health care was prepared by the Government-appointed Advisory Board on Occupational Health Care, which represents agencies and institutions in the relevant administrative sectors, bodies whose contribution is significant in the implementation of occupational health care, and the most representative labour market organizations.

The Government Resolution supports the implementation of the Occupational Health Care Act. It indicates the measures and areas of responsibility of the various actors with a view to maintaining the employees' health and work ability.

# Development strategy for occupational health care

Developments in occupational health care will be pursued on the tripartite principle as part of Finland's social and health policy. The health and safety of work, the working environment and the workplace community will be developed to function better. Efforts will be made to maintain and promote the health and working capacity of employees. Top-level services that are comprehensive in terms of content and quality will be produced cost effectively for companies, employees, entrepreneurs and self-employed persons.

The implementation of the Occupational Health Care Act will be backed up by the 10 key lines of development listed below.

## Line 1

### Legislation

The revised legislation on occupational health care will be enforced. Two new acts will be drafted; one on the use of government subsidies needed to improve training for physicians specializing in occupational health care, and one amending the Health Insurance Act to improve compensation for the costs of occupational health care. Guides and instructions will be drawn up to help implement the legislation on occupational health care.

Occupational health care legislation will be developed to take account of the changes in working life and the labour force, and Finnish, EU and international legislation.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the preparation and development of legislation on occupational health care in collaboration with the labour market organizations and other partners important for occupational health care.*

## Occupational health care content

The content of occupational health care will be overhauled on the basis of the changing needs of working life, research data and new methods, using a multi-disciplinary approach.

The content, quality and operating modes of occupational health care will be developed to respond to new needs as a part of overall development in working life and as a part of primary health care and occupational health and safety.

Occupational health care will be implemented as a broad-based process covering the evaluation of occupational health care needs on the basis of risk assessment at the workplace, problem prevention, promotion of health and working capacity and developing the working environment and the workplace community.

Occupational health care will focus on the following areas: prevention of illnesses associated with work and industrial injuries, health monitoring and promotion at the workplace and early recognition of the threat of incapacity for work.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Institute of Occupational Health and the expert organizations in collaboration with the occupational health care units will develop the content of occupational health care and high-quality procedures to implement good occupational health care practice taking different types of employment relationship into account.*

*A good deal of emphasis in occupational health care will be placed on activities at the workplace and strengthening cooperation between occupational health care and the workplace.*

*Practical methods of occupational health care will be developed, evaluated and verified, and training will be provided to support their adoption.*

*Good evidence-based practices in occupational health care will be evaluated and developed.*

## **The occupational health service system**

The occupational health service system will be developed so that everyone in working life will have equal access to services. In the organization of services, special attention will be given to securing occupational health care services for employees in atypical employment relationships and in small workplaces, and for entrepreneurs and self-employed persons. In organizing occupational health care services, sufficient personnel resources and cooperation with other branches of health care will be ensured. In order to boost the sufficiency of occupational health care services, municipalities will increase mutual cooperation and different occupational health care service providers will collaborate to improve the availability of services.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the State Provincial Offices, the municipalities, the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates, the Institute of Occupational Health, occupational health care units and other branches of health care will collaborate to ensure that occupational health care services are comprehensive and easily accessible for employers, employees, entrepreneurs and self-employed persons.*


*Regional cooperation projects between municipalities and service providers will be launched within the occupational health service system.*

*When occupational diseases are suspected, access to examination will be guaranteed independent of industrial sector, trade or profession, or locality.*

*The support services needed to implement occupational health care services will be of high quality and produced throughout the country on a comprehensive regional basis using the network of the regional institutes of occupational health and other networks and partners that operate regionally.*

## A funding and compensation system for occupational health care

The application of the Occupational Health Care Act and the implementation of occupational health care will be supported by a funding and compensation system for occupational health care. The adoption of alternative compensation models will be studied when compensation cannot be efficiently handled within the framework of systems for employers and entrepreneurs. A funding and compensation system will be developed that not only takes into account different types of employment relationship, the potential special needs of certain sectors, but also emphasises preventive action in occupational health care. The funding system for entrepreneurs will be investigated.



*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Social Insurance Institution will collaborate with the labour market organizations to develop a funding and compensation system to promote the effectiveness of occupational health care in the workplace.*

*The compensation side will be developed so that it supports a flexible provision of services.*



## Human resources in occupational health care

The volume and quality of human resources in occupational health care will be ensured by scaling the number of those to be trained to correspond with the need and by overhauling the content of the training. In developing occupational health care training, attention will be paid to a multi-disciplinary approach and multi-skilling so that these will be adopted in the planning, implementation, development and monitoring of occupational health care.

*The extent of the range of services will be supported in collaboration with the Institute of Occupational Health, the universities and polytechnics and other partners.*

*Training programmes will be drawn up for all the experts required by the Occupational Health Care Act.*

*The quality of the training and the qualification of the persons trained will be ensured by overhauling the training programmes, and by examinations and certificates.*

*Training for instructors in the sector will be improved.*

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education in collaboration with other partners will take care that the human resources for occupational health care are sufficient and will also ensure that there is sufficient funding for occupational health care training so that occupational health care can be implemented according to good occupational health care practice.*

*The professional skill of occupational health care personnel will be supported according to Ministry of Social Affairs and Health instructions on further education.*

## Ethics of occupational health care

Following ethical principles in the implementation of good occupational health care practice will be supported and made more effective.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Institute of Occupational Health, the Finnish Association of Industrial Medicine, the Finnish Association of Occupational Health Nurses and expert organizations in the field of occupational health care will cooperate with the labour market organizations to increase the effectiveness of continuous education on ethical issues and dissemination of information.*

*Guidelines on professional ethics for occupational health care professionals and experts will be overhauled.*

*There are provisions on the use of information on the health of employees and passing it on to another party in legislation for which implementation instructions are now being drawn up. While information on the health of private individuals is being protected it will also be made available for use in occupational health care, if necessary.*

*The right of employers to obtain information and the responsibility to provide information on health and dangers to health in the workplace will be secured in such a way that the privacy of the individual is not endangered.*

*The right of the employee to be made aware of the risks associated with occupational health and safety and the right to information on his or her own health will be guaranteed.*

## Cooperation

Cooperation on occupational health care issues between the parties and with outside partners will be promoted by joint training organized for the various professional groups involved in occupational health care and the different parties at the workplace, using model procedures and partnership networks.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Institute of Occupational Health, the State Provincial Offices and the occupational safety and health authorities in collaboration with the health services will support cooperation as required by the Occupational Health Care Act.*

*Workplaces and occupational health care units will incorporate cooperation as a part of planning and it will be taken into account in the assessment of operations. Cooperation between occupational health care and other branches of health care, the labour administration, the education administration, the social insurance system, the social services and the occupational safety and health authorities will be made closer and more effective.*

*Cooperation models will be developed for joint occupational health care in workplaces.*

## Information management systems in occupational health care

Information management systems for occupational health care will continue to be developed and their introduction will be supported and encouraged.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will coordinate the development of information systems in collaboration with institutions in the sector. Information systems and tools to assist in planning, implementing and monitoring operations will be introduced in occupational health care.*

*Registration and the use of statistical material and databases in the sector will be promoted by increasing user friendliness and cooperation in maintaining registers.*

*Linking occupational health care with information technology and Internet projects in the social and health care sector will be supported.*

*External expert services and information services that support occupational health care will be further developed as Internet services to be used by experts and workplaces.*

## Research and development in occupational health care

Research and development work in occupational health care will be aimed particularly at the content of occupational health care, the functionality of the service system, development and quality of methods, economic impacts, and research on effectiveness and evaluation.

*The Institute of Occupational Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Social Insurance Institution in cooperation with the universities and other research institutes and key stakeholders will continue research and development work on occupational health care and agree on joint research programmes and cooperation with other programmes.*

*Research-supported experiments will be launched to develop occupational health care for special groups, small workplaces and self-employed persons.*

*The impact of occupational health care on well-being at work and remaining at work will be examined in an evaluation study.*

*The economic impact of occupational health care will be studied.*

*The service system will be developed with the aid of research interventions.*

## Monitoring and supervision

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the State Provincial Offices and the occupational health and safety authorities will monitor the implementation of occupational health care legislation. Partners will be committed to implementing the lines of development and reporting their activities to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

At specific intervals, the Advisory Board on Occupational Health Care will draw up a report on the adoption of occupational health care legislation, the implementation of lines of development and progress in equality. The board will make proposals for any necessary amendments in occupational health care legislation and the emphasis of occupational health care development.

*The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the development strategy in occupational health care.*

*The Institute of Occupational Health will produce information on more detailed monitoring of the Occupational Health Care Act and the development strategy using the 'Työ ja terveys Suomessa' (Work and health in Finland) and the 'Työterveys-huolto Suomessa' (Occupational health care in Finland) surveys, plus research and statistics on working life and working conditions. The Social Insurance Institution will produce information on the operation of occupational health care using data obtained through the compensation system.*

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