

SOCIAL PARTNER CONSULTANCY FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS: STRENGTHENING COOPERATION IN INDUSTRY

1 Overview

Country: Denmark

Name of the programme: TEKSAM - The Consultancy Service (*Konsulenttjenesten*)

Organisations in charge: CO-industri (The Central Organisation of Industrial Workers in Denmark, CO-i) and Dansk Industri (Danish Industry, DI, an employers' organisation that represents the manufacturing industry, among other sectors)

Year of implementation: 1998 (expanded to include psychosocial risks around 2001; ongoing initiative)

Type of programme: Social partner service for all companies in the manufacturing sector that have established a so-called cooperative committee (as part of a collective bargaining agreement, companies with more than 35 workers are required to establish a cooperative committee if requested by workers; companies with fewer than 35 workers can also do so by mutual agreement between management and workers)

Reach: More than 230,000 workers and approximately 6,000 companies are eligible to use the service because they are covered by one of the two 'industrial bargaining agreements'.

Target groups: The primary target group consists of cooperative committees within companies covered by a collective bargaining agreement between CO-i and DI. The secondary target group includes all workers in these companies.

Interviews conducted: A total of five interviews were conducted for this study. Three involved TEKSAM representatives: two individual interviews with operational managers (one from CO-i and the other from DI) and a joint interview with two of TEKSAM's field consultants. The remaining two interviews took place at company level, involving the chair (also a line manager) and vice-chair (a workers' representative) of a cooperative committee at a firm with substantial experience of collaborating with TEKSAM.

2 Context

The Danish industrial relations system has long been underpinned by strong cooperative traditions between employers and workers, ever since a cooperative agreement (*Samarbejdsaftalen*) was signed in 1947 by the main labour market confederations: the Cooperating Trade Unions (*De Samvirkende Fagforbund*, DsF) and the Danish Employers Association (*Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening*, DA). Danish workplaces maintain parity-based cooperative committees, which require management to share information on company strategy, technological developments and operations with workers and provide workers with an institutionalised channel for advice and dialogue.¹ Companies with more than 35 workers have to establish a cooperative committee upon request from either management or staff, and smaller companies may do so voluntarily by mutual agreement on both sides.

¹ Christensen, S. & Westenholz, A. (1999). *Medarbejdervalgte i danske virksomheder: Fra lønarbejder til borger i virksomhedssamfundet*. Copenhagen: Handelshøjskolens Forlag. <https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/medarbejdervalgte-i-danske-virksomheder-fra-l%C3%B8narbejder-til-borge>

To strengthen this collaborative infrastructure, a cooperation board was established in 1964 by DA and DsF, and was later joined by the main managers' organisation, *Ledernes Hovedorganisation*. This board decided to employ 'cooperative consultants' to assist companies in setting up and maintaining effective committees. Building on this model, the sector-specific social partners Dansk Industri (DI) and CO-industri (CO-i) founded TEKSAM in 1995. TEKSAM was designed to oversee cooperative agreements within the industrial sector and to support companies in sustaining constructive employer-worker relations.

There are two different participatory structures within Danish companies: cooperative committees, which are mandated by collective agreements, and so-called safety committees (*Sikkerhedsorganisationer*), which are internal representative committees required under the national occupational safety and health (OSH) regulation. While physical OSH issues such as physical, chemical and biological risks were handled by safety committees, psychosocial risks (PSRs) such as bullying, harassment and stress – issues closely linked to work organisation and managerial decisions – were often addressed within cooperative committees.²

In 2001, a public debate on bullying and harassment led to the reclassification of these issues as occupational health concerns under the Danish Working Environment Authority (*Arbejdstilsynet*, WEA). However, DI and CO-i applied for the right to enforce PSR regulations themselves, as permitted under Danish law, arguing that they could offer more contextually relevant expertise than the generalist WEA. This arrangement enabled TEKSAM consultants to investigate breaches, help companies resolve issues and escalate cases to WEA if necessary.^{3 4} In 2008, this mandate was formalised through a new collective agreement on well-being and healthy psychosocial work environments.⁵ This agreement confirmed that social partners, through TEKSAM, had executive authority to ensure compliance with PSR regulations within all companies covered by industrial collective agreements (*industriens overenskomster*). Therefore, social partners jointly oversee companies' handling of matters regarding PSRs at work. Cooperative committees are responsible for maintaining company guidelines on well-being and PSRs, forming the basis for TEKSAM's consultancy activities.

TEKSAM functions as a joint consultancy service operated by DI and CO-i. Its consultants provide a wide range of services beyond PSR-related matters, including guidance on establishing cooperative committees and advice on broader sustainability issues such as the green transition and circular economy. These services are offered free of charge to companies, as TEKSAM is financed through contingent funding (funded by contributions from the collective agreements). A key element of its work is a worker survey implemented in the respective company, with a focus on aspects of the psychosocial work environment. This is followed by tailored support to help cooperative committees interpret findings and plan improvements.

TEKSAM's effectiveness is rooted in the deep institutional trust that characterises Danish industrial relations. This trust, often described as 'organised decentralisation',⁶ is embedded at sectoral level, workplace level and even in specific departments within larger organisations, and enables consultants to foster open dialogue and reinforce cooperative structures.^{7 8}

A distinctive aspect of TEKSAM's approach is its continuous responsiveness to new developments and emerging challenges within the industrial sector. For example, recent additions to its portfolio have included activities supporting the green transition and adapting interventions to address issues related to gender, sexuality and harassment in response to the broader societal impact of the #MeToo movement. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the use of digital tools within TEKSAM's operations. As a consequence, consultants rely on virtual communication platforms for internal

² Hasle, P., Petersen, J. V. & Wiegman, I.-M. (2003). Partsaftalers rolle i regulering af arbejdsmiljøet. *Tidsskrift for Arbejdsliv*, 5(2), p. 27. <https://doi.org/10.7146/tfa.v5i2.108398>

³ Hasle, Petersen & Wiegman (2003).

⁴ Uhrenholdt, C., Limborg, H. J. & Nielsen, K. T. (2020). *AFRÅST – Aftalebaserede Rådgivningstjenester: Rapport fra et forprojekt*. Copenhagen: Arbejdsmiljøforskningsfonden.

⁵ Nisbeth, P. (2014). Afdækning af det retslige grundlag Psykisk arbejdsmiljø og samarbejdssystemet i juridisk belysning. In *Psykisk arbejdsmiljø og samarbejdssystemet inden for LO-området*. LO-Dokumentation 1, vol. 2014. Copenhagen: Landsorganisationen.

⁶ Ilsøe, A. (2012). The flip side of organized decentralization: Company-level bargaining in Denmark. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 50(4), pp. 760-781. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2011.00875.x>

⁷ Hull Kristensen, P. (2005) *Danmarks unikke innovationsstyrker* [Working paper]. CBS Working Papers. <https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/danmarks-unikke-innovationsstyrker>

⁸ Lind Larsen, M. (2012). *Produktivitet, vækst og velfærd: Industrirådet og efterkrigstidens Danmark 1945-1958* (Ph.D.-serie, 2012:5) [Doctoral dissertation]. Copenhagen Business School.

coordination and preliminary consultations with cooperative committee representatives. This shift has improved flexibility and resource efficiency, allowing for more focused in-person interventions and better use of consultants' time.

3 Description of activities implemented at sectoral level

TEKSAM's sectoral activities play a central role in the practical implementation of Denmark's tradition of cooperative industrial relations and the effective management of PSRs in the manufacturing sector. Unlike general regulatory bodies, TEKSAM functions as a sector-specific, partnership-driven consultancy and enforcement mechanism, designed to provide both supportive and corrective services aligned with the values and agreements negotiated between employers and workers.

At sectoral level, TEKSAM's role is threefold: to offer proactive support to improve workplace cooperation and psychosocial work environments; to enforce agreed standards where companies fail to comply; and to act as a bridge for knowledge exchange, translating research insights and policy developments into practical tools and interventions for use at company level.

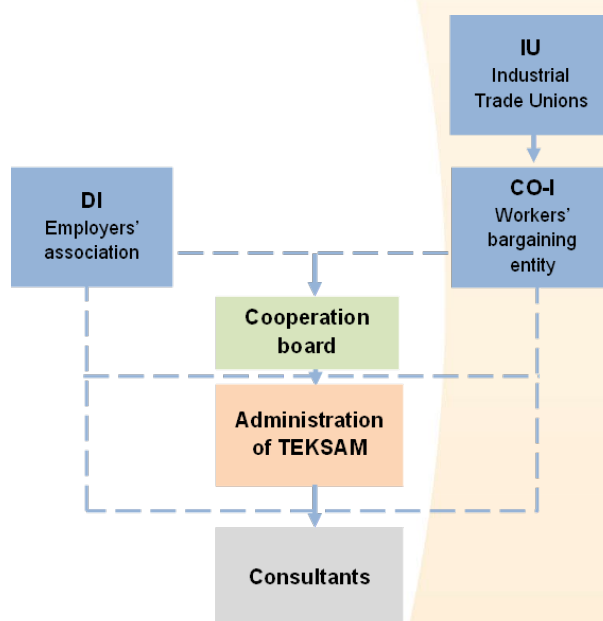
TEKSAM's activities in relation to PSRs can be grouped into five main strands: (1) tailored consultancy and enforcement visits to companies; (2) provision of well-being and PSR assessments; (3) design and delivery of training courses, workshops and thematic seminars; (4) development of tools, guidelines and educational materials; and (5) active collaboration with key OSH research and policy actors to ensure evidence-based practice. These will be described in more detail after the main actors have been introduced.

3.1 Actors, roles and implemented activities

Actors and roles

TEKSAM is the result of cooperation between many actors. The main actors within TEKSAM are CO-i and DI, which have jointly managed its secretariat and consultancy since 1998. While DI is a federation, and thus has autonomy in terms of negotiations, practices and politics in relation to TEKSAM, CO-i is itself a cooperative structure with nine member unions, all of which are involved in the governance of CO-i. Furthermore, TEKSAM has an internal organisational structure, with three different sections (board, administration and consultants). Figure 1 provides an overview of TEKSAM's structure.

Figure 1: Organisational structure of TEKSAM



DI is the largest employers' association in Denmark. It represents 20,000 Danish companies divided into 11 sectoral communities, ranging from biotechnology to transport companies. DI no longer exclusively represents industrial or manufacturing employers, since its members now also include consultancies, media organisations and tech startups. It does, however, still represent employers in the two industrial bargaining agreements – one for workers (commonly referred to as blue-collar workers) and the other for salaried employees (commonly referred to as white collar workers) – within the manufacturing sector. The two bargaining agreements cover more than 6,000 of DI's member companies.

CO-i functions as a bargaining entity made up of nine trade unions, collectively representing approximately 230,000 workers and salaried employees in the industrial sector. Its largest affiliates are the Danish Union of Metalworkers (*Dansk Metal*) and the United Federation of Workers in Denmark (*Fagligt Fælles Forbund*, 3F), which currently hold the positions of chair and vice-chair of CO-i, respectively. The other member unions are the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark (*HK Danmark*), the Danish Union of Professional Technicians (*Teknisk Landsforbund*), the Danish EL-Federation (*Dansk El-Forbund*), the Danish Tin and Plumbing Workers' Union (*Blik- og Rørarbejderforbundet*), the Danish Railway Union (*Dansk Jernbaneforbund*), the Danish Union of Workers in Service Trades (*Serviceforbundet*) and the Danish Union of House Painters (*Malerforbundet*).

In terms of governance, TEKSAM is overseen by a parity-based cooperation board. DI and CO-i each appoint up to seven board members, with the main managers' organisation also entitled to representation. This board exercises decision-making authority over new initiatives, strategic priorities and resource allocation.

Operationally, TEKSAM's day-to-day activities are managed by a joint secretariat, which coordinates administrative tasks, financial management and logistics. Each social partner appoints a co-manager, and the secretariat staff operate within their respective organisations, making TEKSAM a virtual rather than a physically centralised office. The secretariat also arranges training courses for workers' representatives and managers, and provides support to consultants in the field.

The core of TEKSAM's work is carried out by its team of consultants. These professionals are employed by either DI or CO-i, and come from a variety of backgrounds: on the worker side, consultants are typically former union staff or former workers' representatives with extensive experience in cooperative committee work. On the employer side, they may include former managers, occupational health professionals or advisers from DI's member companies. Regardless of their background, all consultants must possess practical experience and a deep understanding of cooperation committees and social partner dialogue. There are no requirements in terms of formal qualifications and no standardised induction training is provided; instead, new consultants learn through peer mentoring and by studying the cooperative agreement in detail.

Implemented activities

TEKSAM's consultancy service is demand driven. Cooperative committees contact TEKSAM for support when needed, often returning for follow-up surveys or interventions after the initial engagement. The consultancy process typically involves three phases: an initial meeting with the company committee's chair and vice-chair to assess needs and agree on objectives; onsite delivery of the main intervention, such as a workshop, survey or facilitated discussion; and a concluding session to formalise follow-up actions and embed outcomes. Regarding the main intervention, TEKSAM delivers a comprehensive set of activities designed to support cooperative committees and ensure compliance with agreed standards for PSR management within Denmark's industrial sector. Key services include:

1. Tailored consultancy and enforcement visits

Consultancy visits are the most visible and most commonly requested service offered by TEKSAM. These visits begin with a preparatory meeting involving the cooperative committee's chair and vice-chair – one from management and the other from the workforce – and two consultants, representing DI and CO-i, respectively. At the pre-meeting, consultants clarify the committee's needs, present possible intervention formats and plan concrete steps.

The main visit takes the form of a problem-solving session, a participatory workshop or a mediation dialogue, depending on whether the aim is to address existing PSR issues, resolve conflicts or strengthen cooperative committee functioning.

An example of such engagement is when a company is facing high reported stress levels and asks TEKSAM to facilitate a dialogue between production managers and workers' representatives to jointly develop an action plan that balances productivity demands with worker well-being. In cases where non-compliance with PSR prevention obligations is discovered – for example, repeated harassment complaints that management has ignored – TEKSAM's consultants attempt to resolve the matter directly. If unsuccessful, they escalate the case to WEA for statutory enforcement.⁹

2. Well-being and PSR diagnostic surveys

TEKSAM's well-being survey service is a robust diagnostic tool adapted to the industrial context. It is based on the scientifically validated Danish Psychosocial Work Environment Questionnaire (DPQ), developed by the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE).¹⁰ Consultants deploy the survey through an accessible application, which has been designed to facilitate participation among workers with diverse literacy and language skills.

The survey benchmarks company-specific scores against sectoral and cross-sectoral norms on indicators such as social capital, mutual trust, workload and clarity of roles. Consultants then present the results to the cooperative committee, explain concepts and facilitate a discussion to prioritise follow-up actions. Many companies repeat the survey every two or three years to track progress, often requesting TEKSAM's support to interpret and explain the new findings and trends found in the results, as well as to adopt an action plan.

3. Training courses, workshops and thematic seminars

Beyond individual consultancy visits, TEKSAM runs an extensive programme of training activities for cooperative committees and wider audiences within its member companies. Standard services include:

- **An introduction to the cooperative agreement:** This is a foundational course for newly elected workers' representatives and managers, covering legal responsibilities, committee operations and training on basic conflict resolution.¹¹
- **Workshops on PSR themes:** An example of this is a practical seminar on handling negative behaviour uses real-life scenarios to teach managers and workers' representatives how to identify, address and prevent unacceptable behaviour, bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.
- **The basic pedagogical model:** This is a two-year professional development programme equipping participants to act as local facilitators, thus enabling them to deliver future training and mediate discussions within their own workplaces.

A notable example is the 'Here is the line!' (*Her går grænsen*) seminar.¹² This interactive session challenges participants to decide whether a series of workplace behaviours are acceptable, borderline or clearly unacceptable. By comparing perceptions across generations and cultural backgrounds, this exercise fosters mutual understanding and encourages committees to establish clear internal guidelines on respectful conduct.

To complement these training sessions, TEKSAM also offers a series of dialogue-based workshops designed to help committees and company stakeholders map and address PSR challenges in their own specific contexts. The 'Chronicle workshop' reviews company development and current PSR conditions; the 'Shared understandings' seminar develops consensus on key issues and causal factors; and the 'What is to be done?' seminar identifies

⁹ Hasle, P., Møller, N., Hvid, H., Seim, R. & Scheller Nielsen, V. (2016). *Hvidbog om arbejdsmiljørådgivning*. Aalborg Universitet.

¹⁰ Clausen, T., Madsen, I. E. H., Christensen, K. B., Bjørner, J. B., Poulsen, O. M., Maltesen, T., Borg, V. & Rugulies, R. (2019). The Danish Psychosocial Work Environment Questionnaire (DPQ): Development, content, reliability and validity. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 45(4), pp. 356-369. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3793>

¹¹ TEKSAM (2023). *Præsentation af Samarbejdsaftalen for tillidsvalgte*. <https://www.teksam.dk/media/rx1jateu/praesentation-samarbejdsaftalen-og-psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe.pdf>

¹² For a detailed description of the rules, see <https://www.co-industri.dk/artikler/et-spil-uden-tabere#:~:text=TekSam%20er%20oprettet%20af%20DI,r%C3%B8dt%2C%20gult%20eller%20gr%C3%B8nt%20felt>

concrete actions. The process concludes with an evaluation phase to assess both internal committee dynamics and the broader psychosocial impact.

4. Development of tools, guidelines and materials

TEKSAM actively translates policy and research findings into practical resources. It publishes handbooks and checklists on PSR prevention, good practices for running effective cooperative committees and sector-specific guidance on new challenges such as digitalisation and the green transition. For instance, recent materials have addressed how companies can plan environmentally sustainable changes without undermining job security or overburdening staff, an increasingly important topic as Danish industry aligns with EU Green Deal goals.

5. Collaboration with OSH research and policy actors

TEKSAM's credibility and the quality of its services are underpinned by close, sustained collaboration with a range of expert organisations and recognised institutions within Denmark's OSH ecosystem.

A central partner is NRCWE, which plays a key role in ensuring that TEKSAM's diagnostic tools are scientifically rigorous. Both DI and CO-i managers highlight the importance of this partnership in the development and ongoing refinement of the TEKSAM well-being survey, which builds on the validated questions from the Danish Psychosocial Work Environment Questionnaire (DPQ).^{13 14} In practice, consultants maintain regular contact with NRCWE researchers, drawing on their methodological expertise to interpret nuanced survey findings and ensure that company-level assessments reflect the latest research insights.

In addition to NRCWE, TEKSAM collaborates with a broader circle of academic experts who contribute specialised knowledge in subfields of PSR management, such as prominent university researchers who have developed targeted articles and thematic content for TEKSAM's online library,¹⁵ given interviews to explain new research projects and designed workshop content specifically adapted for the manufacturing sector.¹⁶ This ensures that training materials and consultancy advice are grounded in up-to-date, peer-reviewed evidence, while remaining relevant and practical for industry stakeholders.^{17 18}

A partnership with the Sectoral Community for Work – Industry (*Branchefælleskab for Arbejdsmiljø – Industri*, BFA-Industri)¹⁹ further extended TEKSAM's reach and enhanced its range of services for companies. Together, TEKSAM and BFA-Industri co-organise thematic workshops and presentations on topical PSR challenges. Recent joint events have addressed themes such as how to develop company policies to support the inclusion of older workers, effective procedures for addressing bullying and harassment, and strategies to reduce sickness-related absenteeism.²⁰ The collaboration also involves co-producing or promoting publications that can be used for training and discussion purposes. A notable example is the widely used guide 'Stress prevention with help from the IGLO-model'.²¹ TEKSAM uses such publications as a basis for arranging thematic training days where the original authors present their work and consultants facilitate discussions tailored to the industrial context.

In its enforcement role, as mentioned, TEKSAM works closely with WEA. According to the 2008 agreement on workplace well-being and psychosocial work environments, TEKSAM is empowered to handle PSR compliance for companies within its sector. If a company fails to comply with recommendations or refuses to cooperate during a consultancy process, TEKSAM

¹³ See <https://www.teksam.dk/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe/om-psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe/arbejdet-med-det-psykiske-arbejdsmiljoe>

¹⁴ Clausen et al. (2019).

¹⁵ See <https://www.teksam.dk/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe>

¹⁶ Uhrenholdt et al. (2020).

¹⁷ See interview with Jeppe Busk Sørensen from NRCWE on stress and health risks at <https://www.teksam.dk/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe/stress/stress-kan-foere-til-kroniske-sygdomme>, or with Niels Møller from the Technical University of Denmark on how to implement lean without PSR at <https://www.teksam.dk/media/rqqla14a/lean-uden-stress.pdf>

¹⁸ See one-day course with Eva Gemzøe and Tina Ravn on bullying and harassment prevention at <https://www.teksam.dk/arrangementer/gennemfoerte-arrangementer/2024/kursus-forebyggelse-og-haandtering-af-krænkende-handlinger-paa-arbejdspladsen>

¹⁹ Denmark: Psychosocial risk prevention – strategies and legislation | Safety and health at work EU-OSHA

²⁰ See <https://www.teksam.dk/>

²¹ See <https://www.teksam.dk/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe/stress/goer-god-trivsel-til-en-del-af-kulturen>

refers the matter to WEA, which resumes direct statutory oversight and may pursue further regulatory action. This clear escalation pathway ensures that PSR obligations are upheld consistently across the sector.

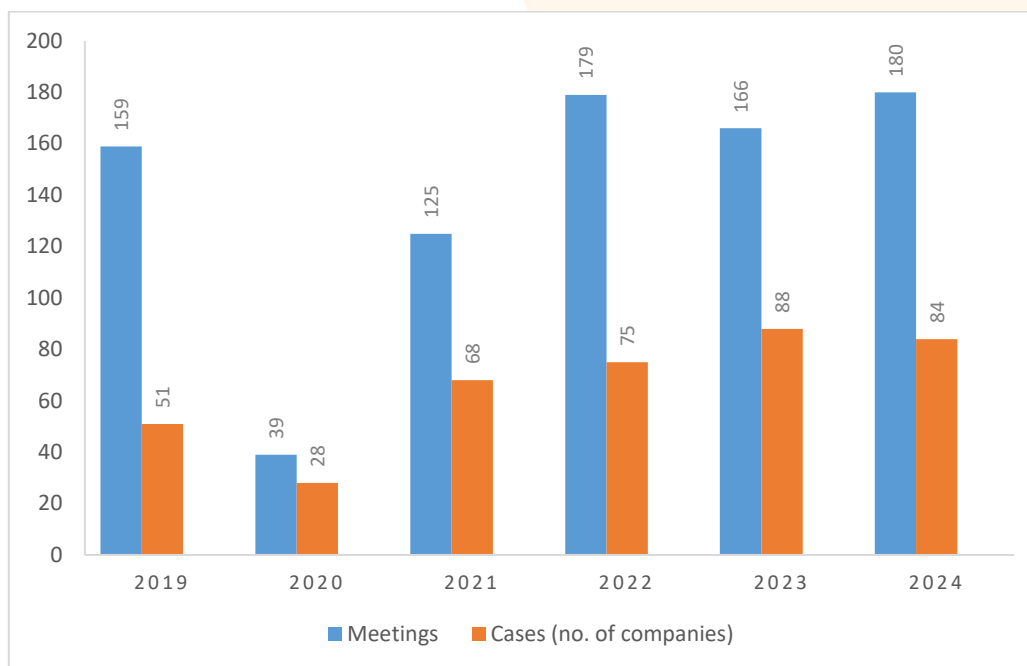
In summary, TEKSAM's activities at sectoral level illustrate a unique approach to safeguarding psychosocial work environments through the strong Danish tradition of social partnership. By combining tailored consultancy, diagnostic surveys, practical training, up-to-date tools and close cooperation with leading research institutions and WEA, TEKSAM ensures that cooperative committees are not only compliant with regulations, but also equipped to foster trust, dialogue and shared responsibility in the workplace.

3.2 Results and outcomes

TEKSAM's activities extend to a significant portion of Denmark's industrial workforce. More than 230,000 workers, spread across approximately 6,000 companies covered by industrial collective bargaining agreements, are entitled to benefit from TEKSAM's consultancy, training and enforcement services. This wide coverage highlights the potential for substantial sectoral impact on PSRs and cooperative relations at workplace level.

Recent operational data indicate that the use of TEKSAM's services is growing. Figure 2 below illustrates that both the total number of cases and the total number of meetings per case have increased over recent years, with a temporary decline during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the data show this positive trend in outreach, the DI and CO-i managers interviewed noted that TEKSAM has not yet reached full capacity, suggesting scope for further expansion and deeper penetration across the sector.

Figure 2: Total number of consultancy meetings and cases with companies (CO-industri 2025)



Beyond case numbers, other indicators also suggest broad engagement. In 2024 alone, 560 cooperative committee members – representing both management and workers – attended the annual TEKSAM conference (*Årsmødet*), thus underlining the value attributed to the service by workplace representatives and the relevance of the topics discussed. Moreover, the consultants organised four targeted courses focused on tackling harassment and bullying, and delivered three thematic half-day courses on topics such as the inclusion of older workers and conflict management in the workplace. To maximise accessibility for representatives across Denmark, these events were held in multiple locations nationwide. The widespread use of virtual online meeting platforms has also enhanced TEKSAM's

national reach by allowing consultants based in different regions to serve more companies efficiently, with fewer resources.

Despite the growing number of cases and high levels of participation in training and events, TEKSAM does not currently have a structured or systematic framework for evaluating the content or long-term effects of its consultancy work. According to the consultants interviewed, follow-up is typically informal and handled on a case-by-case basis, with consultants checking back with cooperative committees after an initial intervention to find out whether the planned actions are still in place. However, no central data collection or systematic performance monitoring takes place to aggregate lessons learned or track outcomes over time.

Nevertheless, repeated engagement by companies provides an important qualitative signal of perceived value and trust in the service. Many firms that have conducted the well-being survey once subsequently request follow-up surveys to assess progress, while others that have hosted presentations or workshops recontact TEKSAM for further sessions or to ask about new topics. Although this pattern cannot be quantified precisely in the available data, both the consultants and the managers interviewed cited it as evidence of sustained demand and positive word-of-mouth within the sector.

Importantly, TEKSAM's services will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Its funding and mandate are established within the collective bargaining agreements, which are renewed every three years. The most recent agreement, signed in 2025, reaffirmed continued support with no planned changes. This institutional stability allows TEKSAM to refine its existing services and to expand its services in line with emerging challenges. For instance, its training portfolio has recently incorporated seminars addressing workplace behaviour and respectful communication in response to #MeToo debates in Denmark. Similarly, it is preparing to support cooperative committees in managing workplace aspects of the green transition, thereby ensuring that sustainability efforts are implemented in a transparent and collaborative manner between employers and workers.

In summary, while TEKSAM does not yet systematically measure its impact, available evidence indicates growing reach, repeated use by companies and interest in new topics. Together, these factors point to a strong foundation for sustaining and further developing TEKSAM's contribution to improving psychosocial work environments in Denmark's industrial sector.

4 Implementation of the measures at company level

4.1 Company involved

Machinismus AS (a pseudonym used to preserve anonymity) is a Danish manufacturing firm that specialises in producing high-precision machines designed for use in industrial production environments. Its primary customers are other companies that purchase products either as customised modules for integration into larger production lines or as complete, ready-to-use systems. The company's machines are deployed across multiple sectors, including the food processing, automotive and electronics industries.

Machinismus AS employs just under 100 people, the majority of whom work at the company's main production site. This facility serves as the company's only manufacturing base. In addition to its production workforce, the company maintains a network of sales representatives operating from various locations worldwide to serve its predominantly international client base. The domestic Danish market, by comparison, represents only a small share of its business activities.

For this case study, insights were gathered through interviews with the chair and vice-chair of the company's cooperative committee, who hold the positions of line manager and machinist (and workers' representative), respectively. To protect their anonymity, certain descriptions of work processes and meeting discussions have been deliberately kept general. The participants were approached via TEKSAM consultants, who recommended Machinismus AS as a representative example to illustrate the consultancy's interventions in practice.

4.2 Actions implemented at company level

Machinismus AS initiated its collaboration with TEKSAM in response to persistent challenges in internal communication and growing tension between management and workers. Prior to TEKSAM's involvement, the company had no formal cooperative committee, which made it difficult to manage workplace dialogue effectively and led to continual misunderstandings. In their interviews, both the line manager and the workers' representative described how inconsistent communication from different managers to various workgroups had created a situation where instructions were interpreted differently in each part of the organisation.

The impetus to seek help came from the current vice-chair of the cooperative committee, who also serves as the company's workers' representative and is a member of the trade union 3F, one of CO-industri's affiliates. Through union channels, the workers' representative learned about TEKSAM's consultancy services and contacted it for support. According to both company representatives, TEKSAM's consultants played an instrumental role in translating the formal cooperative agreement into practical steps, thereby helping Machinismus AS navigate legal requirements and focus on critical priorities. As the vice-chair reflected, 'The first meeting would have taken three days if we only had the agreement to guide us'.

Once the cooperative committee had been formally established, the committee and TEKSAM agreed to conduct a well-being survey among all staff at the production site. This initial survey, carried out in 2022, was conducted in paper form, as the digital tool had not yet been rolled out. To ensure inclusivity, TEKSAM consultants read questions aloud for workers with reading difficulties or limited Danish literacy skills. Following the survey, consultants facilitated a detailed review of the results with the committee, providing clear guidance and practical suggestions for addressing any issues identified. Key actions taken by the company included drafting, publishing and implementing new policies covering acceptable communication standards, clear procedures for addressing bullying and an updated absence policy, which were all credited as having contributed to the positive shift in the findings of the second survey carried out in 2024. This process was complemented by thematic workshops for the whole workforce, addressing harassment, bullying and effective communication in the workplace.

In 2024, Machinismus AS requested a follow-up well-being survey to assess progress and identify any new areas of concern. Building on its earlier work, TEKSAM delivered this second survey using its new digital tool, which allowed for smoother data collection and faster analysis. The new format also meant that workers with dyslexia or other reading difficulties could have the survey read aloud to them in various languages when they answered the survey.

One notable feature of TEKSAM's approach, confirmed by both the company's interviewees and the consultants themselves, is that the tools and services provided are deliberately standardised rather than being tailored to each company's unique circumstances. The cooperative agreement is a binding framework that cannot be selectively adjusted to fit an individual firm's preferences. Instead, TEKSAM's added value lies in helping committees interpret the agreement and use their time and resources efficiently within that fixed structure.

The emphasis on standardisation also extends to the well-being survey, which must remain unchanged to preserve its scientific validity and ensure meaningful benchmarking. Altering questions or answer options would compromise the ability to compare results with national norms and across companies. This standardisation, supported by NRCWE's validation, is a deliberate design choice that underpins the survey's credibility and comparability.

Through this structured yet supportive approach, Machinismus AS has been able to move from fragmented, informal communication to a more organised, balanced form of dialogue between management and workers. While the core tools are standardised, the guidance provided by TEKSAM ensures that each company can interpret the cooperative agreement and sector benchmarks in ways that are relevant to its operational reality.

4.3 Actors involved

The successful implementation of TEKSAM's services at Machinismus AS relied on the commitment and active involvement of several key internal stakeholders. Together, these actors formed the foundation for establishing a functional cooperative committee and for embedding improved communication and PSR management practices within the company.

The **workers' representative**, who also serves as vice-chair of the cooperative committee, was the original catalyst for engaging TEKSAM. Having found out about TEKSAM's consultancy through membership of the Danish Union of Metalworkers – one of CO-industri's affiliates – he recognised the potential value of external support in resolving persistent communication breakdowns and conflicts within the company. He subsequently initiated contact with TEKSAM and has remained a strong advocate for the service, expressing clear appreciation for the consultants' guidance and professionalism throughout the process.

The **line manager** chairs the cooperative committee and has been the primary representative for management in the company's collaboration with TEKSAM. This individual's commitment to the process has been central to ensuring continuity and clear managerial support for the committee's work and TEKSAM's interventions.

Other members of the cooperative committee: although the exact number of committee members at Machinismus AS is not specified and varies over time, it is clear that the committee adheres to the parity principle, requiring equal representation from the employer and worker sides. This balance is a fundamental feature of Denmark's cooperative committees and underpins the trust-based dialogue that TEKSAM aims to foster.

Finally, **higher-level managers** at Machinismus AS were required to give formal approval to establish the cooperative committee. According to the line manager, while this senior-level endorsement was essential for institutional legitimacy, these managers did not play an active role in the daily interactions with TEKSAM or in the committee's routine operations. Their involvement was thus limited to providing the necessary authorisation to proceed, rather than directly shaping the content or delivery of the consultancy work.

Together, these actors illustrate how the effective use of TEKSAM's services depends not only on external consultancy expertise, but also on dedicated internal facilitators who can bridge organisational levels, encourage participation and maintain the cooperative spirit that forms the cornerstone of the Danish industrial relations model.

4.4 Results and outcomes at company level

The case of Machinismus AS demonstrates several tangible outcomes resulting from the company's engagement with TEKSAM. Most notably, both the line manager and the workers' representative agree that internal communication has improved significantly since the establishment of the cooperative committee. According to the line manager, the committee now provides a structured forum where management can test ideas and messages before rolling them out more broadly, thus helping to prevent misunderstandings and fostering a more trust-based, constructive dialogue between workers and management. The line manager noted that having trusted workers' representatives 'close at hand' has created a safe space for discussing sensitive topics and developing new initiatives collaboratively.

A key milestone in this progress has been the implementation of well-being surveys, which have served as both diagnostic tools and benchmarks for improvement. The first survey, carried out shortly after the committee was formed in 2022, painted a stark picture: many indicators scored poorly, particularly those relating to communication between management and workers. Additionally, the lack of clear company policies on how to handle bullying, harassment and other psychosocial work environment challenges emerged as a critical gap. While these findings were not surprising to the company representatives, they provided an essential baseline from which the committee could begin making structured improvements, such as agreeing on policies regarding good communication, bullying, 'good tone' and absenteeism.

In 2024, a follow-up survey revealed marked progress across nearly all key psychosocial factors. Improvements were observed in areas such as work organisation and content, workload pressures, management and collaboration, and conflict management. According to the line manager and workers' representative, this progress reflects the cumulative effect of the targeted initiatives developed with TEKSAM's guidance.

However, progress was not uniform across all areas. Worker recognition and participation remained areas requiring improvement. To address this, TEKSAM advised Machinismus AS to introduce annual worker development dialogues (*Medarbejderudviklingssamtaler*, MUS) between each worker and their immediate supervisor. Although the new system has only recently been rolled out, both the committee

and TEKSAM view it as a promising step towards strengthening a sense of value and involvement among workers. To support this, TEKSAM provided practical templates and guidance materials, which were sourced from BFA-Industri's publicly available resources.

Furthermore, the cooperative committee sought TEKSAM's advice on drafting a fair and robust workplace policy on alcohol consumption, demonstrating the trust placed in the consultants to advise on sensitive topics requiring balanced, consensus-based solutions. This policy was supported by both management and workers' representatives.

Looking ahead, Machinismus AS plans to repeat the well-being survey every three years. Both the cooperative committee and management see this regular cycle as a useful way to monitor progress, sustain momentum and avoid slipping back into old habits. In this way, the Machinismus AS case illustrates how TEKSAM's structured services and standardised tools can foster lasting cultural and procedural improvements and encourage companies to return periodically for updated assessments and further guidance as their needs evolve.

5 Success factors and barriers

Understanding the factors behind TEKSAM's sustained success is essential for assessing whether its model could be adapted to other sectors or even to other countries. In 2020, an evaluation of Danish 'social partner-based work environment consultancies', commissioned by the Danish Working Environment Research Fund (*Arbejdsmiljøforskningsfonden*) under the Ministry of Employment, analysed TEKSAM alongside similar sector-specific services in construction and rail (BAMBUS) and the municipal sector (SPARK).²² This evaluation identified a set of causal mechanisms contributing to their effectiveness. Interviews and recent practice within TEKSAM confirm that these mechanisms remain highly relevant five years later, underpinning its impact in 2025.

- **Institutionalised trust in the sector:** A major success factor for TEKSAM is the deep-rooted tradition of collaboration and mutual trust in Denmark's manufacturing sector. Decades of cooperative industrial relations have established a strong foundation of institutionalised trust between employers and worker representatives, often described as 'organised decentralisation'.^{23 24 25} This trust permeates interactions at company and sector level and is consciously reinforced through TEKSAM's everyday practices.
- **Cooperative gestures:** Consultants and social partners are acutely aware of the symbolic power of cooperative gestures, such as the practice of DI and CO-i consultants greeting each other with a handshake before every meeting, even after travelling to the company site together. This small ritual underscores the equal standing and mutual respect that underpin TEKSAM's work and the wider cooperative framework.²⁶
- **Legitimate choice for both workers and management:** A defining feature of TEKSAM's model is its dual representation of employers and workers. This explicit partnership foundation lends the service credibility in the eyes of both parties. As Uhrenholdt and colleagues (2020) note, TEKSAM consultants always arrive in pairs – one from each side – and never work with only one party present. Meetings, workshops and surveys are conducted with full parity, thus mirroring the cooperative committees they support. The case of Machinismus AS clearly illustrates this. When the worker representative proposed that TEKSAM be brought in, management readily agreed because DI – the employers' association – is a core partner in the service. Both the workers' representative and the line manager confirmed that staff trust TEKSAM far more than privately hired consultants or psychologists, who might be perceived as aligned solely with the interests of management. This perceived impartiality is critical to fostering open dialogue on sensitive psychosocial issues.

²² Uhrenholdt, et al. (2020).

²³ Hull Kristensen (2005).

²⁴ Lind Larsen (2012).

²⁵ Ilsøe (2012).

²⁶ Kragh, D. (2020). 'Og indimellem er samarbejdet'. CO-industri. <https://www.co-industri.dk/artikler/og-indimellem-er-samarbejdet>

- **Research-based methods and expert collaboration:** TEKSAM's reliance on validated, evidence-based tools is another cornerstone of its success. The consultants themselves are not academically certified occupational psychologists but maintain legitimacy through close partnerships with recognised research bodies such as NRCWE. The well-being survey, for example, is consistently described by company representatives as scientific and credible, because it is based on the validated DPQ.²⁷ This approach reassures both management and workers that the findings are objective and comparable with sector benchmarks, thus fostering trust in follow-up actions.
- **Contextually relevant experience and sector-specific knowledge:** The fact that TEKSAM consultants have a practical background in the manufacturing sector provides an additional layer of relevance and trust. Many consultants draw on their personal work experience to illustrate points during workshops or policy development discussions. This was evident at Machinismus AC, where the cooperative committee sought TEKSAM's help to draft an alcohol policy. One consultant was able to share a concrete example from another manufacturing workplace, thereby helping the committee develop a realistic and acceptable solution.

By working exclusively within the sector in which they have direct experience, consultants are able to maintain a nuanced understanding of specific production environments and workplace cultures. This depth of context would be difficult to replicate in more generalised consultancy services, which often serve a wide range of industries with varying norms and risk profiles.

While these success factors provide a strong foundation for TEKSAM's effectiveness, certain limitations remain that should be acknowledged. Notably, no significant barriers have been reported either at company level in the experience of Machinismus AS or in broader interviews with consultants and managers. However, at structural level, there is an important caveat: membership of a collective bargaining organisation is not compulsory in Denmark. As a result, companies and workers that fall outside the scope of the relevant sectoral agreements do not have access to TEKSAM's services.²⁸ This means that, although the model is robust in areas where it applies, its impact is inherently limited to firms that are party to the collective agreements negotiated by DI and CO-i. This structural feature must be considered when discussing whether similar approaches could be scaled up nationally or transferred to other contexts.

6 Lessons learned

TEKSAM's consultancy exemplifies how Denmark's distinctive labour market arrangements – particularly its tradition of parity-based cooperation and the high level of institutional trust between employers and workers – can underpin a sector-specific, social partner-driven approach to improving psychosocial work environments. Originally established to help companies implement and sustain cooperative committees, TEKSAM has evolved into a trusted consultancy providing structured guidance on PSRs and workplace relations across the Danish industrial sector.

A core lesson from TEKSAM's development is that its effectiveness relies heavily on the broader institutional environment. The Danish model of 'organised decentralisation' ensures that social partners negotiate frameworks at sectoral level while allowing considerable flexibility at company level. This cooperative backdrop is a fundamental precondition for the model's success. It also explains why TEKSAM is regarded as credible and impartial by both management and workers; it embodies the social partnership principle in practice.

However, it is important to acknowledge that TEKSAM's reach is shaped by the voluntary nature of collective bargaining participation in Denmark. Companies or workers that are not part of an organisation bound by a collective agreement fall outside the consultancy's formal scope. While this does not diminish TEKSAM's effectiveness where it applies, it highlights that the model's coverage is naturally limited by the structure of the Danish industrial relations system. Any discussion on replicating

²⁷ Clausen et al. (2019).

²⁸ No data are available on bargaining coverage rates in individual sectors. The most recent data show that the Danish Employers Association (of which DI is a member) has a bargaining coverage rate of 87% of the workforce within the relevant sectors. If this indeed holds true for the industrial sector, it would mean that between 30,000 and 35,000 employees fall outside the bargaining agreements.

or expanding this type of social partner-based consultancy must therefore consider the extent to which similar collective frameworks exist and are adhered to.

A key lesson from the case is that existing labour market structures and the institutional environment can efficiently address emerging risks, rather than creating new structures that may lack legitimacy in the eyes of social partners. The Danish experience with PSRs in the 1990s provides a clear example. As the topic of PSRs grew in importance – particularly due to pressure from workers – Danish regulators were prompted to take action. In the industrial sector, social partners already had some experience with PSR-related issues, and both employers and workers had incentives to take responsibility for these emerging risks within their existing institutional setup, namely TEKSAM.

This situation is also likely to occur in other sectors and regulatory contexts. However, in the case of the Danish industrial sector, it was only because the regulatory framework allowed authorities to delegate responsibility on clearly defined issues that social partners were able to take control of enforcement and regulation. Therefore, regulations must be flexible enough to allow social partners to assume responsibilities, if they have the capacity and incentives to do so, in relation to specific risks or issues.

TEKSAM's experience offers several additional practical lessons that are transferable to other sectors or countries, provided they are adapted sensitively to the local conditions. These key recommendations include:

- **Build dual legitimacy:** Any similar initiative should ensure that both workers and management view the consultancy as balanced and impartial. Trust is strengthened when neither side perceives the service as biased towards the other. TEKSAM's practice of always sending paired consultants – one from the employer side and one from the worker side – visibly reinforces this neutrality.
- **Use credible, evidence-based tools:** The knowledge and methods deployed must be recognised by all stakeholders as valid and reliable. TEKSAM achieves this through strong ties to expert researchers and by relying on scientifically validated instruments such as the national well-being survey. This gives stakeholders confidence that recommendations are grounded in robust evidence.
- **Ensure consultants have sector-specific expertise:** The consultants who deliver advice must understand the realities of the work environment they are advising on. TEKSAM's consultants often draw on their own practical experience within the industrial sector, which enables them to provide contextually relevant examples and guidance that resonate with company representatives.

As mentioned, TEKSAM's role remained secure at the time of writing, with its funding and mandate reaffirmed in the latest collective bargaining agreement, renewed in 2025. No major changes are anticipated in the immediate future. This stability, combined with the lessons outlined above, positions TEKSAM as a valuable reference point for policy-makers and practitioners considering how to strengthen workplace cooperation and PSR management through collaboration with social partners.

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