

# OSH research priorities 2013 – 2020

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NATIONAL RESEARCH  
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# Framework – Danish perspective

- While EU OHS strategy 2013-20 is still uncertain and we have to settle with the evaluation report of the previous strategy
- Danish government adapted an ambitious working environment plan or strategy in 2011
- Prioritized areas, goals and specific targets to be achieved by 2020.
- Three main areas identified:
  - Accidents at work
  - Psychosocial working environment
  - Musculoskeletal disorders

# Targets and influence on OSH research

- The number of serious accidents at work is to be reduced by 25% in proportion to the number of employees
- The number of employees who are psychologically overloaded is to be reduced by 20%
- The number of employees who experience musculoskeletal disorders is to be reduced by 20%
  
- This type of strict focus → marked influence on OSH research at a national level (doesn't dictate the research but certainly sets the scene – as it should)
- To a large extent it is from this framework or through these lenses I view the current report
- My feedback has its main focus on demographic changes
- Include some overall comments on the report

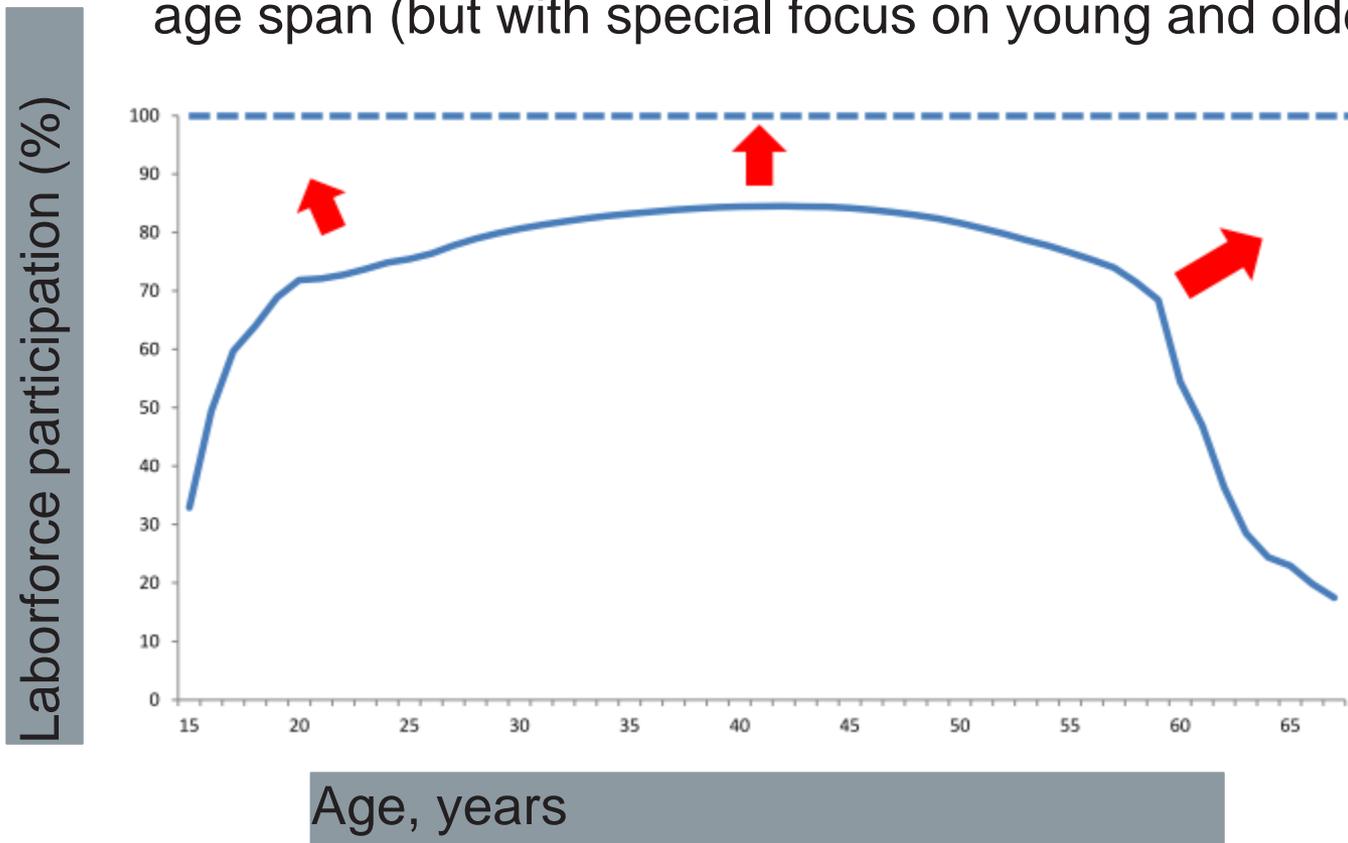
# Thematic area - Demographic changes

- Successful in pinpointing some of the main areas for OSH initiatives and research in the coming years (close labor market issues and economy)
- Adheres to min elements in the Danish governmental strategy in two ways
- Efforts to adopt working environment to a diverse workforce (young, old, employees with a chronic disease)
- In addition to benefiting these vulnerable groups 
- Strong, independent effect on accidents/MSD injuries and psychosocial workload in the general work force



## Secondly – explicit in the DK plan is the necessity of maintaining an adequate workforce

- Requires an increase in labor market participation across the age span (but with special focus on young and older workers)



# Prerequisite – adaption of working environment

- Adaption? Main issue – reduction of exposure (MSD and psychosocial risk factors)
- Two examples
- Best predictor of early retirement

**TABLE V.** Risk Factors for Early Retirement Pension Among Waste Collectors and Municipal Workers in 1997

Risk factor in 1994	N	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		
		OR	CI 95	OR	CI 95	OR	CI 95	
Work environment								
Extreme bending of the back	Yes	95	<b>6.37</b>	2.50–16.21	<b>5.97</b>	2.33-15.29	<b>6.78</b>	2.56-17.96
	No	33	1		1		1	
Health								
Musculoskeletal disorders, knees	Yes	46			1.59	0.71-3.56	1.56	0.67-3.60
	No	103			1		1	
Lifestyle								
Smoking	Current	63					0.80	0.27-2.38
	Former	57					0.64	0.21-1.99
	No	29					1	
Marital status								
Partner	Yes	117					<b>2.79</b>	1.08-7.19
	No	32					1	

All ORs adjusted for age and occupational group at baseline.

# Young workers

- Excess injury rates (days away from work).
- Why – behavioral issue, risk taking etc.? No
- Based on systematic reviews (Canada/USA)

The key message arising from this report is that it is **the characteristics of the workplace and the job that put a young worker at higher risk, not the young worker's individual characteristics**. Exposure to work hazards and work overload have the strongest association for risk.

Systematic review of risk factors for work injury among youth, Breslin et al., 2006

Circle is completed

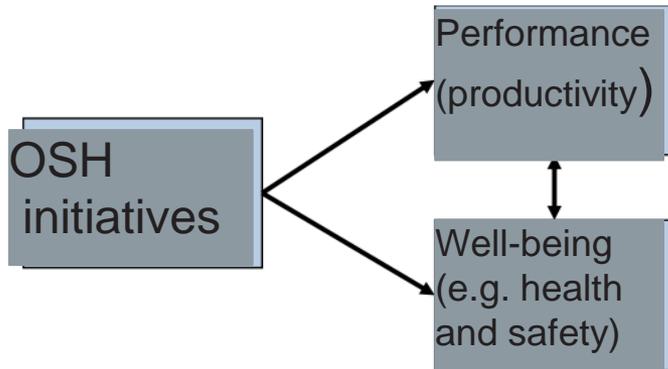
- The focus on "traditional" risk factor reduction in Danish Gov. plan is also the single most important approach to adapt working environments to vulnerable groups



# Summary - feedback on theme 1

- The research items outlined and specified are all highly relevant and in fine alignment with current research priorities at NRCWE
- Items of specific interest – migrant workers, effects of workplace exposure on normal aging, RTW research, gender issues (high labor force participation in Nordic countries)
- Minor problem – Concept not included in demographic changes new employment, work patterns part of demographic changes (part of globalization theme)

# Overall comments



- Strong – maybe too strong – emphasis on productivity and work output and the “association between OSH and the productivity and performance of companies”  
Understand the rationale and the effort to link to common EU politics.
- Advocate the dual scope presented by the IEA in their policy paper – Performance and wellbeing – two related but different outcomes

# Overall comments (cont'd)

- Problem – Major work related health problems (MSDs, stress, mental health) tightly bound to "demographic changes" and aging workforce
- Refer to seven research challenges identified by Perosh



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Summary

**Sustainable workplaces of  
the future – European Research  
Challenges for occupational  
safety and health**



# Seven areas identified

- Sustainable employability (demographic changes)
  - Disability prevention and reintegration
  - Psychosocial well being
  - Multifactorial genesis of work-related MSDs
  - New technologies
  - Nanomaterials
  - Safety culture (accidents)
- Emphasized as separate, prioritized items
  - More weight on more traditional health related issues



# Last points – 1. Sustainability

- Key term in the report (as it should be)
- It's stated that sustainable work
- Requirements of sustainability met in all four dimensions – environmental, economic, human and social – simultaneously
- OSH point of view
- Central issue is the consumption or regeneration of human resources

- *”Sustainable work systems... can be characterized as allowing the workers involved to maintain health and to regenerate their human and social resources while utilizing them”*
- *From Creating Sustainable Work Systems. Eds. Docherty, Forlin and Shani, 2002.*

## 2. Translation research

- Support the importance of this approach
- Claim that European OSH research hasn't devoted the implementation part enough attention
- US and Canada —————> Prominent part of the research agenda
- NIOSH
- "Research to practice" initiative"
- NORA (1996) a "partnership program to stimulate innovative research and improved workplace practices
- Institute of Work (Toronto)
- KTE (Knowledge transfer and exchange" aims at engaging stakeholders in all parts of the research process i.e. from idea to implementation at the workplace.

