



Everyone wants to,  
and can, create a good  
work environment

# Everyone wants to, and can, create a good work environment



Photo: Urban Orzolei

Between February and August of 2008, the Swedish Work Environment Authority was engaged in a project involving its organisational goals and vision, the intention being to describe the position that it is striving to achieve in the future and to collectively devise a strategy that will take it there. This project has drawn on a pool of know-how and experience and has provided a means of discussing important issues it faces in the future and allocating priorities. In view of the fact that society, the labour market, and the work environment are all in a constant process of change and development, the Authority must take due note of changes in the wider world and be prepared for the challenges that it will face.

The current economic downturn that is now upon us will doubtless have a varied effect on efforts to improve the work environment, which, at many workplaces, will be continue to be seen as an investment in the future, although there will be others, where such systematic efforts will be downgraded. I am convinced that if companies and other organisations maintain their serious, systematic and long-term approach to work environment issues, they will be both profitable and successful.

The document “Goals and Vision 2009–2011” is designed to ensure the strength of the Authority as a public authority that can generate social utility through sustaining the positive development of the work environment. To comply with this remit, with the resources at the Authority’s disposal, efforts must focus on key, long-term development areas and also ensure efficient and high-quality operations.

Working life must be sustainable and take into account individual capabilities, and to achieve the shared objective of a work environment reflects a utopian vision in the widest sense of that term. In five years, noticeable progress in that direction will have taken place, but until this becomes a universal objective and striving, active efforts will continue to be made by making demands and taking preventive measures to ensure a better work environment.

until this becomes a reality,  
active efforts will continue to  
prevent work environment  
hazards 🙏🙏

I see ahead of me a state in which a decent work environment will be a shared objective that we can all achieve. If every company and organisation shared this aim, Sweden would be a richer country, with companies that would be more competitive and a workforce comprised of healthier individuals.

*Mikael Sjöberg*  
Director-General  
The Swedish Work Environment Authority

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# Vision and operational concept

The Authority's vision reflects its long-term aspirations and guides the orientation and organisation of its operations, while the operational concept defines its role, identity and purpose.

## Vision

A decent work environment is a shared objective that we can all achieve.

## Operational concept

- ★ Working for the right to healthy, safe and stimulating working conditions and promoting active work environment measures at every workplace, in which everyone will want to play their part and be able to do so.
- ★ Motivating and stimulating a deeper commitment to work environment issues and preventing health hazards by means of regulations, information and inspection.
- ★ A nationwide public authority that evolves to respond to changes in the world of work and functions in a manner characterised by its dynamic, efficient and uniform approach.
- ★ Engaging in a broad-based collaboration and ensuring social utility.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority will make it clear to companies that the right conditions can increase profitability and productivity and reduce

absenteeism due to illness. This can be achieved by supporting those employers who want to act correctly but are unable to do so, as well as by finding those who have no such desire. Taking effective work environment measures is frequently more straightforward than it is believed by some to be.

The Authority's remit is to ensure that such measures are in operation at all

workplaces, but some employers are neither willing nor able to play their part. They fail to understand the point of this and appear not to have any qualms about the hazards to which they subject their employees. Their behaviour is harmful to society and they will be influenced so that they choose to mend their ways. This is important not only in order to protect individual employees from harm but also to ensure competitive neutrality so that no serious company should go to the wall because unscrupulous employers are willing to risk their employees' health.

The Authority is convinced that the majority of employers are willing to ensure a decent work environment and want to do so but are unable to make a start. The Authority will therefore facilitate this task by ensuring easy access. Its website will offer information adapted to the needs of each industry and its regulations will be made more comprehensible and easier to observe.

»» The Authority is convinced that the majority of employers are willing to ensure a decent work environment



# Through uniformity and work towards common goals

It is essential that the Authority as a single entity pulls in the same direction. To this end, a strategy document entitled “Goals and Vision 2009–2001” has been produced that gives a clear description of what these collective efforts need to achieve by 2011.

This document will be used as a basis for strategic discussions and for operational planning and follow-up.

The Authority’s remit, its organisation and the various roles within it will be more clearly defined, and every employee will receive assistance in prioritising their work duties so as to ensure that operational goals are reached. Support will be further improved so that a greater

a greater number of workplaces will be encouraged to take more efficient work environment measures 📌📌

number of workplaces will be encouraged to take more efficient work environment measures. Inspections and the use of regulations and information will ensure greater efficiency and uniformity in efforts to disseminate our collective know-how, especially among those who lack the willingness or the ability to ensure a decent work environment.

The strategy document is reviewed and updated annually; all employees are to contribute to keeping it topical and relevant through discussion and participation in this process.

# Goals and vision 2009–2011

The Authority's vision and operational concept form the basis for its efforts to devise its strategy and have also been used to formulate nine target areas that are classified by reference to four different perspectives. Each target area will in five years' time consolidate this vision; the nine areas are as follows.

- ★ The Authority is to be perceived as an attractive workplace.
- ★ Systematic expertise provision is to be undertaken.
- ★ Long-term measures are to be implemented with a holistic approach and an external focus.
- ★ The Authority is a public authority with uniform and efficient working procedures.
- ★ The Authority is to be viewed as a professional body concerned with essential issues.
- ★ The Authority is to be considered active, accessible and communicative.
- ★ The Authority is to be perceived as having a highly visible presence at work places where there are serious work environment hazards.
- ★ Authority operations generate great social utility.
- ★ The Authority is the best public authority in Sweden.

Dividing up operations by reference to different perspectives is intended to provide a means of control that focuses on overall activity and to clarify internal and external demands and requirements. The four perspectives are those of the workforce, processes, stakeholders, and clients; they are inter-related, while neither the target areas nor the perspectives have any mutual ranking.

to fulfil the remit with the resources available to us, the Authority must focus on key, long-term development areas 

The operational concept clarifies the vision while the perspectives provide a basis for operational control. Within each target area, strategic goals and activities have been defined.

Unless otherwise stated, these activities should result in target area realization being achieved within three years and it should be possible to implement monitoring of these strategic targets.

By 2011, thirty-two strategic activities shall have been implemented and eighteen strategic targets reached.



# Typical strategic activities

## **Affirming the value base**

The workforce perspective

Participation and dialogue are the tools that will forge a new value base, that is, the values that are to apply and permeate internal and external operations. Every employee should understand the connection between this value base and Authority operations, while a coherent value base will make the organisation a more attractive employer.

This process is to be characterized by dialogue, a willingness to listen, openness, and a greater sense of context and belonging. Every manager is to provide a positive role model and provide the employees with the means to do a good job that will ensure commitment and personal growth.

The objective is that the Authority shall have a value base that will provide all the employees with a natural work ethos and, in addition, function as the foundation for a credible brand.

## **Devise a new method of prioritising and describing inspection and regulatory measures**

The process perspective

The processes within The Swedish Work Environment Authority require enhancement so as to provide positive support for its inspection efforts, and it is vital that inspection resources are used in areas where they achieve the greatest effect and where work environment hazards are most serious.

## **Clarify what is needed to heighten the impact of inspection efforts by utilising all in-house methods, relations and expertise.**

The stakeholder perspective

Measures taken by the Authority should achieve the maximum possible impact. Internal co-ordination focused on key information and inspection measures can raise awareness of the Authority's work in this field and encourage greater activity at the country's workplaces. Co-ordination with external stakeholders should be encouraged, which, for example, may provide an effective means of reaching an entire industry, thus promoting a long-term raising of safety standards in the area of work environment.

## Investigate the pre-requisites for reaching a larger number of workplaces by increasing time spent in the field by inspectors to 40% by the end of 2011

The stakeholder perspective

Innovative thinking and major changes will increase time spent in the field by inspectors to 40%, while an analysis of how they use the rest of their working time will also be performed. In addition, there will be a review of all aspects of their job, including preparation, implementation and follow-up, together with their other duties. Subsequently, consideration will be given to the possibility of removing sections of preparatory work or follow-up measures from the inspection process without this impacting on the effects of these inspections.

The introduction of new technology and resource-effective administrative routines in conjunction with inspection is a key component in the ability of the inspectors to spend more time in the field and visit a greater number of workplaces. This study must take into account that these inspections are performed in a resource-lean manner in order to achieve the greatest possible effect in the workplace. Priority will be given to any changes that are resource-effective in the

Dividing up operations by reference to different perspectives will provide a means of control that focuses on overall activity 🗨️🗨️

short term and also support Authority operations in the long term.

These efforts will continue during 2009 and conclude in December of that year, when a decision will be taken on implementing the proposed improvements in conjunction with planning for the year 2010.

## Devise a new method for evaluating social utility

The client perspective

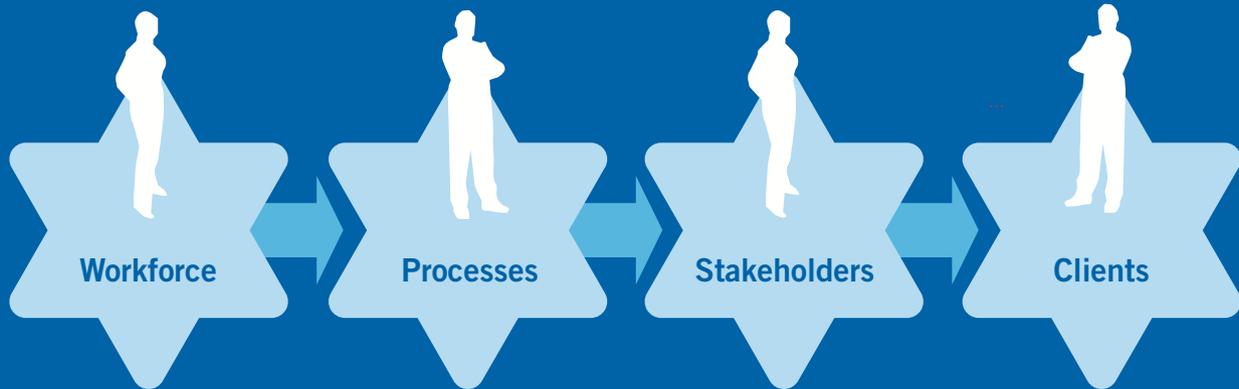
The Authority will demonstrate the social utility derived from a decent work environment, both social economic utility and utility aspects that cannot be expressed in purely economic terms. This task will make demands on our client expertise in the fields of statistics and corporate or macroeconomics and require input from external researchers.

A preliminary study of suitable methods and task delineation will be performed, and the experience of other public authorities and that of the Authority's counterparts in other Nordic countries will be examined.

Various methods will be tested before one of these is selected for the continuation of the work of the Authority.



## Value creation



Contented employees who have the right expertise...

...and who work in efficient, rational processes...

...have the means of creating value for the stakeholders...

...and thus satisfying the client...

## Operational perspectives

# Organisational perspectives

The Authority generates a considerable degree of social utility, which will increase thanks to its vision of a society where a decent work environment is a shared objective we can all achieve.

Dividing up operations by reference to different perspectives should characterise the entire planning process, which ranges from working on the strategic plan to the annual result contracts that are drawn up by each department and unit.

Below is an explanation of these four perspectives.

## Workforce

Authority employees have expectations of, and make demands on, their employer, and vice versa. The workforce perspective involves creating the right conditions so that everyone can perform their duties correctly. Participation, dialogue and a good team spirit together with varied and stimulating work duties are important elements in achieving these goals, while the leadership role of senior managers has also been given prominence.

## Process

The funding provided will be used to achieve the greatest possible utility, which means that operations must be undertaken in an efficient and strategic manner, and the process perspective expresses the idea that things must be done correctly. The integration of improved external

factor analyses into a strategic planning function can increase the quality and forward planning of operations. Other key ingredients for success are staff participation and simple, clear and modern working practices.

## Stakeholder

Efforts are directed toward achieving a decent work environment for all employees, which can be achieved by the Authority addressing itself to employers and other actors and collaborating with labour market partners and other parties. The stakeholder perspective expresses the means used to reach its goals, which requires uniform evaluations and working procedures together with a risk-based inspection approach. Other success factors are more comprehensible regulations and communications as well as actively seeking out collaboration with other interested bodies.

## Client

The Swedish parliament and the government are the clients, who control the Authority by means of instructions, appropriation letters and allocations. This perspective may also be expressed in terms of the need for balanced operations and finances. In order to be able to satisfy the clients' demands and wishes, it is necessary, among other measures, to develop methods that gauge the impact of Authority operations. Another important success factor is the need for greater administrative order.

 **efficient  
and suitable  
processes**

# Control philosophy

There must be an awareness within the organisation of its management and control philosophy, and operational control must reflect the following.

## External focus

What is happening outside the Authority is actively monitored and attention is focused on those areas where the greatest health hazards are to be found. The Authority is cognizant of what is expected of it on the part of the Swedish parliament, the government, other public authorities and third parties.

## Openness

This means generously sharing know-how, reaching out, and a liberal attitude. Diversity is enriching and allows new solutions to old problems to be found, while the Authority is perceived as supportive and accessible.

## Clarity

Simple, comprehensible language is employed in writing and speech, with regulations and decisions that are clear

and easy to understand. The organisation supports our remit and our goals. The Authority is exemplary in the way that it works and is one step ahead.

## Holistic view

The whole is more important than the individual parts, and active efforts are made to both choose and reject as circumstances dictate. All Authority employees understand their role and take responsibility for their job, thereby contributing to the operational goals.

## Long-term approach

Working with a long-term approach results in strategies and a readiness for a changing future, with a sustainable development of the Authority, which requires the maintenance of a high level of operational quality.

**“ operational control is to be characterised by an external focus, openness, clarity, a holistic view and a long-term approach**



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