



The European way(s) back to work

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Return to work in Finland

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RETURN TO WORK IN FINLAND

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1. Background

Rehabilitation of disabled persons and persons with impaired functional capacity is provided in Finland by a wide range of sectors such as insurance companies, pension institutions, The Social Insurance Institution, labour administration, occupational health care, public health care, public welfare and educational authorities. Locally as well as nationally cooperation between these systems is essential in order to provide the best possible chain of rehabilitation services to the rehabilitee.

Before paying any claim for permanent loss of income under motor liability or workers' compensation insurance, insurers are required to assess the claimant's rehabilitation potential.

Under the law on rehabilitation covered by workers' compensation insurance and motor liability insurance, persons injured in road accidents or workplace accidents or who have contracted an occupational disease are entitled to rehabilitation whenever the need for such rehabilitation originates from injuries covered by motor liability or workers' compensation insurance.

At present, there are 12 companies in Finland which conduct the workers' compensation insurance business. There are about 98 000 accidents at work, 16 000 commute accidents and 4 800 occupational diseases every year. Will there be enough clients for claim handlers to get experience of the return-to-work processes? Will the claim handlers know the rehabilitation services available well enough in our sparse resided country? What opportunities there are in connecting medical treatment and vocational services?

2. The Role of Insurance Rehabilitation Association (VKK)

In Finland, the solution has been outsourcing the case-managing of rehabilitation matters to separate joint venture non-profit enterprise, Insurance Rehabilitation Association.. The organisation exists since 1964, and, it's role is to assess the needs and possibilities of the injured . As the insurance industry does not own any rehabilitation facilities or similar service providers, the Insurance Rehabilitation Association also acquires the required rehabilitation services from the service providers. In addition to administration of rehabilitation services, the Insurance Rehabilitation Association works as a specialist between rehabilitation and insurance, voicing the views of the insurance industry in relation to other systems and service providers. VKK has prepared the rules for cooperation for a wide variety of rehabilitation service providers consisting of rehabilitation institutions, employment offices, hospitals and private medical centres. We also have arranged an IT network to handle the procedure between us and the rehabilitation service providers.

3. The Rehabilitation Process

The planning of rehabilitation under the Workers' Compensation Act and Motor Liability Insurance can be roughly divided into three areas, which are (i) evaluation of rehabilitation need and potential, (ii) planning and implementation of vocational rehabilitation programmes and (iii) measures taken to support the employment of the rehabilitees after the rehabilitation programme has been completed.

(i) The evaluating of the client's rehabilitation need is carried out mainly by collecting data from the insurance company, hospitals and workplace. The most important data is, however, obtained by a thorough interview of the rehabilitee. Furthermore, very often the medical experts of VKK are consulted on the prognosis of the injury or disease, remaining functional capacity and medical suitability for the type of work planned. The crucial question is to find out, whether the need for rehabilitation originates from the injury or disease the claim concerns or whether there is an other noticeable e.g. degenerative disease causing the need for rehabilitation.

(ii) The second area, assessment of rehabilitation possibilities is the key point where the benefits of centralised rehabilitation function is clearly to be seen. The good experience and the longstanding cooperation with rehabilitation centres and employment offices make it possible to get multidimensional and realistic view of the situation of the rehabilitee.

In our Association rehabilitation counsellors plan the rehabilitation programme on the basis of the information gathered from the rehabilitee and earlier mentioned network. The rehabilitation counsellors propose a rehabilitation programme to the commissioners. The insurance companies decide on the programme on the basis of our preparations. The client has the right to appeal from the decisions.

(iii) In many cases rehabilitees can return to work after job-coaching and trial work, and, when possible rearrangements in the work place have been made. These on-the-job programmes are appropriate rehabilitation methods for both aged rehabilitees and those who lack motivation or cognitive skills for extensive retraining.

If the workplace programme alone is not sufficient the rehabilitee may return to work through retraining. Especially those who have got an occupational disease often need a totally new occupation with no harmful exposure. The duration of the new education is determined by the length of person's earlier education, earlier incomes and probable difficulties in employment because of the injury. A business support is also possible if there is a new business to be set up due to the rehabilitation programme or if remarkable changes have to be made to the old one.

If the rehabilitation programme includes retraining it is also possible to arrange a work trial period of 3-6 months to improve possibilities of employment.

Study on Rehabilitation costs and savings

We made a study to 49 rehabilitees on the economical influences of rehabilitation. We took a representative proportion of our clients comparable with age, sex, diagnosis and occupational background. We asked the real costs of investments, benefits paid and future allocations from the insurance company to find out the real expenses of the claims and the possible saves acquainted by the rehabilitation. Also we asked experienced claim handler supervisors to appraise what would have been their final decision on future pension if there would have been no rehabilitation. This estimate was based on their experienced of cases with similar state of health, age and occupational background.

Results

The rehabilitation programmes were mainly job coaching and retraining.

The total costs (direct costs and allowance paid from the rehabilitation period) were 525 000 euros. The biggest cost was the allowance from the retraining period, about two thirds of total costs. The total allocations made for these rehabilitees were mean 6 850 000 euros. So the benefit/cost ratio would have been 12.0. If we take in to account also the expenses for the rehabilitation counselling on persons on whom the outcome is that there are no possibilities to rehabilitation, the benefit cost ratio is 8.3. And finally, if we take in to account also the probable decision on future pension in case of no rehabilitation, the benefit/cost ratio is still 2.6

Conclusions

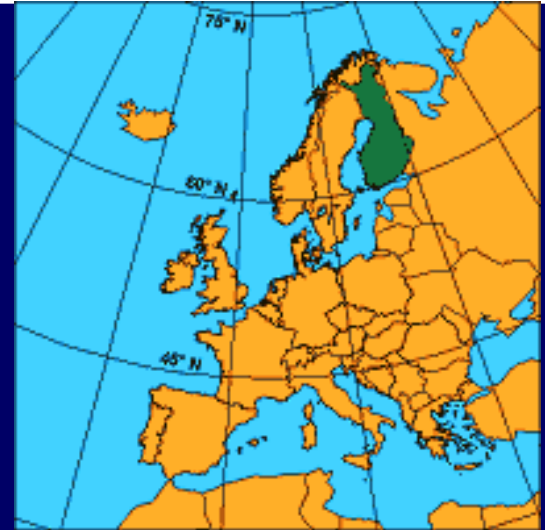
According to our statistics, vocational rehabilitation is very cost-effective. In a small country, a joint venture enterprise offers rehabilitation counsellors a fine opportunity to become real experts in rehabilitation matters. Objectivity and fairness between commissioners and between rehabilitees and commissioners have to be taken into account as well as antitrust legislation. But still, the most important part of our work is very close cooperation between claim handlers and rehabilitation counsellors. At the moment we have sheltered connects to rehabilitation service providers and we are making it also to claim handlers.



Return to Work in Finland

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Small Economy in the north



- 5,3 m inhabitants
- GPD 200 bill. €, 2,100 bill. Hk\$
- 20 insurance companies offering workers' compensation
- Annual claim prevalences
 - 98 000 accidents at work
 - 16 000 commuting accidents
 - 4 800 occupational diseases



Insurance Rehabilitation Association

- Non-profit joint venture enterprise offering services to all insurance companies
 - Present since 1964
 - Staff 30
 - Turnover 2,3 m€
 - Rehabilitation counselling
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Insurance Rehabilitation Association

- Aim to help insurance companies in dealing with clients needing rehabilitation
 - Evaluating the need and potentials for rehabilitation
 - Acquire the required rehabilitation services
 - Specialist between rehabilitation and insurance sectors
 - Rules for cooperation between insurance and rehabilitation service providers
 - IT-network to handle individual client processes with rehabilitation service providers
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Vocational Rehabilitation Process

1. Evaluation of rehabilitation need and potentials
 - data collection
 - interview of the rehabilitee
 - medical consultations
 - rehabilitation examinations

Is the need for rehabilitation based on injury behind the claim?



Vocational Rehabilitation Process

2. Planning and implementation of vocational rehabilitation programmes
 - vocational guidance
 - support and follow-up

Is the rehabilitation programme sufficient to compensate the loss caused by injury?



Vocational Rehabilitation Process

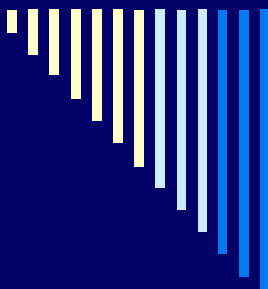
3. Support of employment after completion of rehabilitation programme
 - job coaching
 - business support

Does the injury hamper employment after rehabilitation?



Vocational Rehabilitation Programmes

- Workplace programm
 - Arrangements in the work place
 - Trial work
 - Job coaching
 - Retraining
 - In relation to previous education
 - Mostly up to 3-4 a
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Study on Rehabilitation Outcomes and their Stability

□ Study population

- 49 rehabilitees

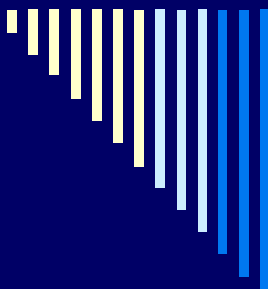
- Age

- 18-29 a 13

- 30-39 14

- 40- 23

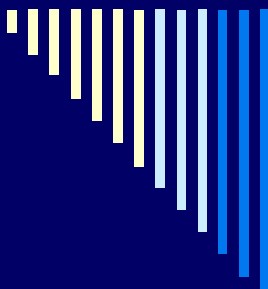
- Male/female 10/39



Study on Rehabilitation Outcomes and their Stability

□ Methods

- Statistical data
 - Expences asked from insurance companies
 - Primary allocations for future pension
 - Costs of rehabilitation
 - Allowances during rehabilitation
 - Allocations after rehabilitation
 - Probably decision on future pension, if there would be no rehabilitation
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Study on Rehabilitation Outcomes and their Stability

□ Rehabilitation programmes

■ Direct employment	1
■ Job coaching	14
■ Retraining	37
■ Ergonomic device	1
■ Support for entrepreneurship	1



Costs and savings, €

- Total costs of rehabilitation 525 000 benefit/cost
- Primary allocations 6 85800 12.0 x
 - + expences of rehabilitation counselling for persons not going to rehabilitation programme 8.3 x
 - - saving for for persons who probably wouldn't get pension without rehabilitation 2.6 x



Benefits of centralising

- More experience
 - Bigger volume
 - Effectiveness
 - Better loss control
 - Better control of services
 - Better opportunities for interest control
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Challenges of centralising

- Antitrust legislation
 - Fairness between companies
 - Objectivity between commissioners and rehabilitees
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Thank You !

