

Seminar, 21 June 2006, Oslo



SICKNESS, DISABILITY AND WORK: Improving opportunities in Norway, Poland and Switzerland

Preliminary lessons from the OECD draft report

(www.oecd.org/els/disability)

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Structure of the presentation

- General remarks
- Key outcomes
- Recent and ongoing reforms
- Principles for future reform

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Purpose of the review

- Disability is one of the largest challenges for social policy and labour markets
- Understand why reasonably healthy workers exit the labour market
- Identify areas for policy improvement
- Learn from each other



Why comparing Norway, Poland and Switzerland ?

- Wealth does not lead to better policies or outcomes
- All three countries have their special problems
- All three countries have interesting policy elements

Key outcomes

Employment and incomes of disabled people

- Low and falling employment rates
- Segregated and temporary employment in Poland
- Higher unemployment in Norway and Switzerland

As a result ...

- Lower incomes in all three countries
- Higher poverty rates in Poland and Switzerland

Key outcomes

Sickness and disability benefit dependency

- Inflow very high in Norway, persistent in Switzerland and recently falling in Poland
- Outflow very low in all three countries

As a result ...

- 5-11% of the working-age population draw disability benefits
- Public spending on sickness and disability benefits alone reaches 3-5% of GDP

Key outcomes

Explanatory factors for this development

Outcomes and trends are not really related to ...

- Objective or subjective health trends
- Changes in the work environment

But instead to a large extent to the failure of ...

- Policy design
- Policy implementation
- Policy coordination

Recent and ongoing reforms

Policy is moving in the right direction

- Policy *design* is changing, but more will need to be done to improve outcomes and achieve goals
- Little is known about policy *implementation*, and hence little is done to improve it
- Policy *coordination* is also still in its infancy



PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE REFORM

- ❖ Put “work” at the heart of sickness and disability policy
- ❖ Improve sickness monitoring and management
- ❖ Facilitate prevention and early intervention
- ❖ Increase control of decisions in the assessment process



PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE REFORM (cont.)

- ❖ Reassess entitlements systematically
- ❖ Improve follow-up and integration measures for those in need of support
- ❖ Make sure that work always pays
- ❖ Improve governance and coordination



THE BOTTOM LINE

- Policy design and implementation is crucial for success
- Regulations and instruments need to be evaluated
- An appropriate mix of incentives, obligations and support is needed for all actors involved



Thank you !

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<http://www.oecd.org/els/disability>