



SUMMARY OF NFA'S RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Economics of Occupational Health and Safety

NFA's research programme on the Economics of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) contributes as a cross-cutting discipline to the national occupational health and safety goals in Denmark from 2020 onwards, focusing on the priority areas for a healthy and safe working environment regarding accidents, chemical, ergonomic, and psychosocial working environments.

The economic aspects of occupational health and safety are an underexplored area where there is a significant demand for research-based knowledge from NFA's stakeholders. The research of the Economics of Occupational Health and Safety unit is both supported by and contributes to NFA's broader epidemiological and intervention research, while also continuing to consolidate an independent professional profile and maintaining strong links to relevant external professional economic research environments.

Overall Objectives

NFA has four overarching objectives for its research on the Economics of Occupational Health and Safety:

- 1 Improve the basis for prioritising possible strategies to enhance workplace health and safety from an economic perspective by:**
 - Conduct research to develop improved methods for economic evaluation.
 - Further developing an OHS-relevant outcome measure from both a theoretical and empirical perspective.
 - Contribute to the economic evaluation of all intervention studies at NFA.
 - Explore the theoretical basis for productivity measurement in order to propose supplementary productivity metrics beyond sickness absence.
 - Disseminate knowledge about economic evaluation methods at NFA as input for future intervention studies.
- 2 Uncover economic links between labour market characteristics, health, and occupational health and safety by:**
 - Investigating (causal) relationships between labour market characteristics and working environment, health, productivity, and retention using register-based and survey-based research.
 - Conducting research on the relationship between organisation and management in companies and their working environment challenges regarding well-being and health, and productivity.
- 3 Build knowledge on the economic consequences of the working environment at the societal and industry level by:**
 - Developing methods to estimate the economic consequences at societal and industry level of occupational health interventions and regulatory changes.
 - Calculating the economic consequences at societal and industry level of specific interventions and regulatory changes.
 - Identifying the occupational health risk factors that have the highest detrimental effects on the national economy and public health, in order to identify areas with the greatest potential for prevention.
- 4 Further develop and strengthen a sustainable research environment in economics and a critical mass of economic research competencies at NFA by:**
 - Focusing on recruitment, retention, and professional development.
 - Hosting regular scientific conferences aimed at the development and profiling of NFA.
 - Initiating new PhD programmes at NFA on the Economics of Occupational Health and Safety.



Priority Themes

NFA will prioritise the following themes in its research from 2025–2028:

Theme 1 **Economic evaluation**

Economic evaluation is an essential tool for selecting the most cost-effective policies and interventions in occupational health and safety in a context of limited resources.

We will e.g. conduct economic evaluations of all relevant OHS interventions developed at NFA to provide a stronger foundation for prioritisation.

Theme 2 **Effects of the labour market and working environment on health, productivity, and retention**

We will e.g. examine how various labour market characteristics can influence the working environment, and thereby affect employee health and productivity.

Theme 3 **Economic consequences of interventions and regulation**

We will develop models to estimate the effects and costs at societal and industrial levels following the implementation of interventions targeting occupational health and safety.

Theme 4 **Economic burden of poor working environments**

This theme will contribute to improved standards for economic impact assessments of the working environment and will highlight areas with particularly high potential for improvements in the working environment.

The economic burden of a poor working environment will be calculated as the costs associated with the burden of disease and includes health system costs, lost productivity during illness absences, and other cost categories arising during periods of illness.

Theme 5 **Productivity-adjusted work years**

The economic consequences of occupational health and safety can be quantified using productivity-adjusted work years – a concept currently under development in the academic literature.

We will explore a number of themes, including:

- Which factors influence the relationship between lost work time and productivity?
- Are there alternative or supplementary indicators of productivity beyond changes in time spent at the workplace?

