

ISF Report 2013:11

Sjukskrivningsmiljarden

The Swedish county councils and regions view
on financial incentives that affect sickness
absence

Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate

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Summary

The Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate (Inspektionen för socialförsäkringen, ISF) is an independent supervisory agency for the Swedish social insurance system. The objectives of the agency are to strengthen compliance with legislation and other statutes, and to improve the efficiency of the social insurance system through system supervision and efficiency analysis and evaluation.

The ISF's work is mainly conducted on a project basis and is commissioned by the Government or initiated autonomously by the agency. This report has been commissioned by the Government.

Background

In 2006 the Swedish state and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) signed their first agreement for the so-called Sjukskrivningsmiljarden, the intention of which was to provide Sweden's county councils and regions with financial incentives to priorities and improve the quality and efficiency of the sickness certification process. This agreement has since been renewed on an annual basis.

Organized in two parts, the Sjukskrivningsmiljarden is made up of one billion Swedish kronor (SEK) per year, to be distributed among the county councils and regions depending on their results concerning sickness absence among the population in the county or region. The first part of the agreement is linked to changes in sickness absence in each county council or region (referred to as the variable part), while the second part is subject to specific requirements that each county council should meet in order to receive disbursement (referred to as the conditional part).

Objectives

The objective of this report is to study the significance of the variable part of Sjukskrivningsmiljarden when the county councils and regions plan and perform measures related to the sickness certification process. In 2013, 230.8 million Swedish kronor (SEK) were allocated for measures within the variable part.

Method

An online survey was distributed to the civil servants, politicians and medical staff responsible for, or otherwise involved with, work concerning sickness absence and Sjukskrivningsmiljarden at the county councils and regions. The response rate was 65 per cent.

Findings

The result demonstrates uncertainty among the respondents, in terms of what the variable element of Sjukskrivningsmiljarden is used. There is also contradictory information from respondents within the same county council.

However, the result also indicates a positive attitude towards the design of the variable part. The majority of respondents acknowledge the set-up of the variable part as an incentive to affect the sickness absence rate in the county.

The measures taken by the county councils and regions are mostly needed to provide information and education for employees working with either the sickness certification process or the administration of Sjukskrivningsmiljarden. Targeted measures towards a certain group of people on sick-leave are also common.

In view of this study and previous evaluations of Sjukskrivningsmiljarden, the ISF is doubtful as to whether the set-up will serve its purpose as an incentive to decrease sickness absence, given the lack of knowledge of the matter amongst respondents. It is unclear to what degree Sjukskrivningsmiljarden actually works as a financial incentive, as intended.

The ISF concludes that, if the system of Sjukskrivningsmiljarden were to be changed, it might be possible to connect the variable element to quality-enhancing measures that the county councils would control themselves.