



Extract from the report to the  
Public Accounts Committee on  
the Knowledge of the Effect  
of Social Interventions

June  
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## Introduction and Results

1. This report concerns the activities pursued by the Ministry of Social Welfare to ensure that social interventions are based on knowledge of effect. Usually, social interventions have significant impact on the lives of the affected citizens, and it is therefore essential to distinguish between the effective and the ineffective programmes. Currently, the knowledge of the effect of social interventions is limited and generally the data available cannot be used to provide this knowledge. Therefore, social interventions are predominantly based on knowledge generated from other areas, i.e. knowledge of social problems and causes, social target groups, and organisation of social work.

2. The Ministry of Social Welfare estimates that the 2006 expenditure for social interventions amounted to around DKK 69 million (stated in 2008 prices). The municipalities are responsible for the financing, implementation and documentation of social interventions implemented under the Social Services Act. Due to the limited knowledge of effect, it cannot be ascertained that funds allocated to social interventions are spend efficiently.

The Public Accounts Committee has in several reports noted that the Ministry of Social Welfare's basis for assessment of the effect of the social policy pursued was limited.

Generally, the political focus on the effect of public initiatives is on the increase. This development is reflected in the agreements on the municipalities' budgets for 2006, 2007, and 2008, which call upon the local governments to provide further documentation of the effect of local government initiatives. Also the political parties behind the agreements on the Rate Adjustment Pools<sup>1)</sup> for 2006, 2007, and 2008 have enquired into the effect of the social interventions which are being financed by funds from these public pools.

3. The Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for the management of the Rate Adjustment Pool and the law preparatory work related to, for instance the Social Services Act. The Ministry can contribute to set the framework of the social interventions and exert influence on the local governments' organisation and implementation of social interventions through guidance, collection and communication of knowledge of effect.

4. Rigsrevisionen has not examined the concrete effect of the social interventions, because the data available do not represent the result of systematic registration of social interventions, which makes it difficult to implement effect measurements within the area.

Therefore, the objective of this report is to assess whether the Ministry of Social Welfare has increased its efforts to ensure that social interventions are based on knowledge of effectiveness. The examination will provide answers to the following four questions:

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<sup>1)</sup> Public pool of funds (satspulje) earmarked for the implementation of initiatives within social services, the health sector, and the labour market. The purpose of the initiatives is to improve the living conditions of recipients of cash benefits and implement preventive measures etc. directed towards marginalised citizens.

- Has the Ministry of Social Welfare developed a strategy for its efforts to base social interventions on knowledge of effect?
- Does the Ministry of Social Welfare contribute to ensure that future legislation within the social service area is based on knowledge of effect?
- Has the Ministry of Social Welfare ensured increased focus on effect when managing the Rate Adjustment Pools for exposed groups of citizens?
- Does the Ministry of Social Welfare contribute to ensure that the municipalities – in future – can base their social interventions on knowledge of effect?

## RESULTS OF THE EXAMINATION

According to Rigsrevisionen's overall assessment, the Ministry of Social Welfare has contributed to ensure that social interventions are based on knowledge of effect. For instance, the project owners are required to demonstrate a correlation between the social intervention implemented and the effect of projects financed by the Rate Adjustment Pools. However, generally the knowledge of the effect of social interventions is extremely limited. The Ministry of Social Welfare has therefore launched a long term project to obtain more knowledge of effect. In this connection, Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the Ministry of Social Welfare, e.g. in cooperation with the municipalities, should give selected social care areas high priority in order to establish a basis for systematic collection of data which can be used to obtain knowledge of effect.

This assessment is based on the following:

**The Ministry of Social Welfare has developed a strategy to base the future organisation of social interventions on knowledge of effect. A specification of the social areas most in need of systematic data collection in order to provide the Ministry with more knowledge of the effect of social interventions could be included in the strategy.**

- Current knowledge of the effect of social interventions is limited. In 2005, the Ministry of Social Welfare defined an overall objective according to which the management of future social interventions shall be based on knowledge of effect. However, to obtain more knowledge of effect, the municipalities will, for instance, have to conduct systematic registration of social interventions.
- Since 2005, the Ministry of Social Welfare has developed one-year strategies, specifying concrete objectives and activities which support the ambition to base social service policy and social interventions on knowledge of effect. The objectives and activities are directed towards the Ministry's law preparatory work, administration of the Rate Adjustment Pools, knowledge collection, and knowledge sharing with the municipalities.
- Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the strategy work could – with advantage – be supplemented with a list of the areas where systematised registration of social interventions should be prioritised in order to obtain more knowledge.

**The Ministry of Social Welfare contributes to ensure that future legislation within the social service area may be based on knowledge of effect of social interventions. Since 2006, the Ministry of Social Welfare has launched several initiatives which will make it possible to follow up on the effect of the legislation in future.**

- The Ministry of Social Welfare is preparing relevant legislation in a manner which ensures that the effect of social interventions can be assessed subsequently. Since 2006, the Ministry of Social Welfare has conducted fixed procedural reviews of new legislation in the social service area in order to incorporate clearly specified target groups and objectives into the legislation. The Ministry refers to this process as the “effect check”. At the same time, the Ministry considers whether current knowledge of the correlation between the social intervention and the effect of the intervention should be written into the explanatory notes.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare is not at the present time able to follow up on the effect of legislation in the social service area. The procedure for effect checks laid down by the Ministry in combination with a new concept for the monitoring of legislation provides the Ministry with a better basis for assessment of the correlation between social interventions implemented under the law and the effect of the interventions.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare does not regularly collect, analyse or report systematic documentation of the correlation between social interventions and effect. Registration of social interventions implemented, e.g. broken down on social security number, is a pre-condition for systematic collection of data for research into effect. Registration can be authorized by law as is the case with the database which has been established to obtain knowledge of the maximum wait for treatment of drug addicts. Registration could also take place in cooperation with the municipalities as, for instance documentation projects, designed to show the development within the area of the elderly and exposed children and youngsters.

**The Ministry of Social Welfare ensures increased focus on effect of projects financed by the Rate Adjustment Pools.**

- The Ministry of Social Welfare’s business procedures ensure that funds for projects are allocated from the Public Funding Pool on the basis of clear objectives of effect, specified target groups and clearly stated correlation between intervention and effect.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare reviews the correlation between intervention and effects as stated in the project proposals, before funds are being allocated.
- Once a year, the Ministry of Social Welfare’s follows up on the effects of the projects by collecting data on the interventions and their effect.

**Overall, the Ministry of Social Welfare contributes to ensure that the social interventions implemented by the municipalities may in future be based on knowledge of effect. The Ministry's knowledge of effect and any other knowledge may with advantage be used to implement systematic data collection in relevant prioritised social service areas.**

- When the municipalities are planning to launch concrete initiatives, the Ministry of Social Welfare provides guidance within definition and delimitation of the contents of social interventions, and formulation of the correlation between intervention and effect.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare collects current knowledge of effect and other relevant knowledge, resulting from research activities and practical experience. The Ministry also supports research and building of knowledge of effect through The Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI) and its subsidiary SFI Campbell, and through external cooperative relationships.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare communicates current knowledge of effect to the municipalities and has established channels of communication to this end.