

STRATEGY  
2016-2025

# STAMI

NATIONAL INSTITUTE  
OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH



STRATEGY  
2025





## Introduction

The National Institute of Occupational Health in Norway (STAMI) works to provide Norwegian working life with the best possible outset for preventing work-related health problems, illness, and injury. STAMI is designated to stimulate Norwegian working life to develop sound working environments characterised by job commitment, well-being, and good work organisation, thus contributing to good occupational health, productivity, and competitiveness.

The development of knowledge in the field of working environment is international. STAMI embodies Norway's primary means of contributing to and disseminating scientific knowledge of special national relevance in this international interchange. Similarly, STAMI is the body that interprets, retrieves, and communicates relevant knowledge to Norway from the international research front. In sum, all nations should gain more than they individually contribute. In this exchange, the knowledge must maintain a high international quality, and this should characterise STAMI's activities.

No other bodies in Norway have the collective expertise to perform STAMI's tasks. STAMI is nevertheless unable to carry out its social mission alone and must cooperate with businesses, the different parties involved in working life and the working environment authorities within the framework of tripartite cooperation to achieve its goals.

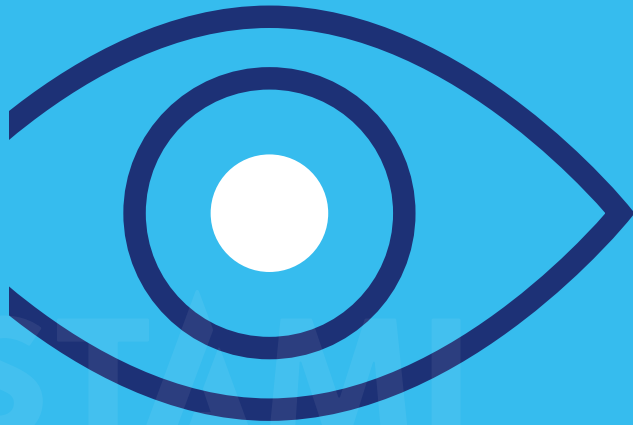
STAMI's strategy is our most important overall instrument to ensure that our activities are based on the needs of working life and maintain a high quality. Research and knowledge development are time-consuming activities, and research strategies should therefore have longer horizons and effective periods than what is common in other fields. At the same time, research strategies must have the necessary flexibility to be able to deal with new developments and any changes during the effective period. The current strategy at STAMI has incorporated these elements and will be a governing document for the Institute's profile for the next 10 years. The strategy will be followed up, inter alia, with two five-year action plans.

During the development of STAMI's strategy, we have assessed and participated in international evaluations of future research needs relating to the working environment and occupational health, reviewed recommendations from assessments under the auspices of the Research Council and been in dialogue with our target groups through STAMI's advisory council. We have also enjoyed broad participation from STAMI's foremost resource – our own employees. The strategy is built on a sound knowledge of the current risk situation and developments in Norwegian working life and seeks to consider conditions that are expected to affect working life in the years ahead and which may impact working environment and health.

Working life is in continuous development, and there is much to indicate that we are on the verge of a period of change and transition in Norwegian working life. This will lead to new knowledge requirements in the field of working environment and health. At the same time, considerable knowledge requirements in relation to current working life remain unsatisfied. With this strategy, STAMI should be well equipped to meet and satisfy the knowledge requirements of the period before us.

Oslo 20.09.2016

Pål Molander Director STAMI



## Vision

A Norwegian working life capable of preventing illness, promoting good health, and creating value through the development of sustainable working environments.

## Purpose

STAMI is the national research institute in the field of working environment and occupational health. STAMI will motivate and facilitate knowledge-based prioritisation in Norwegian companies and the working environment administration.

STAMI will contribute to, and retrieve knowledge from, international research on working environment and occupational health, to the benefit of Norwegian working life



## Objectives

**To produce, refine and disseminate knowledge about working environment and occupational health by:**

- creating new knowledge through relevant research projects
- maintaining an overview of and interpreting the international scientific knowledge front
- monitoring and trends and identifying new risk factors in Norwegian working life
- presenting knowledge of risk factors and preventive measures to Norwegian working life
- contributing to knowledge-based exercise of authority
- educating and upskilling occupational health and safety personnel





## Value base

STAMI's organisation and activities shall be characterised by quality, relevance, integrity, academic independence and power of execution.



## Management and personnel policy

STAMI will aid the development of its own work and working environment based on the knowledge we make available to working life in general. STAMI will seek to utilise knowledge in the field to promote quality, productivity, job commitment and health through planning, organising and implementing the work in the best way possible





## STAMI's social mission and framework

STAMI is an administrative body with special authorisations under the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. This form of association aims to secure STAMI's professionally free and independent role. STAMI is the national agency for knowledge in the field of working environment and health. STAMI's endeavours include research, working environment surveillance, public administrative and working life supporting activities, as well as education and communication.



The various activities are continuously developed in line with new or altered needs and partially overlap and underpin each other. Seen as a whole, these activities enable STAMI to fulfil its social mission in the best interests of Norwegian society and working life.

Central to STAMI's sectoral responsibility is the role as national research institute in the field of working environment and occupational health in Norway. All other activities at STAMI are based on this sound scientific tradition through the multidisciplinary integration of knowledge about the working environment and occupational health.

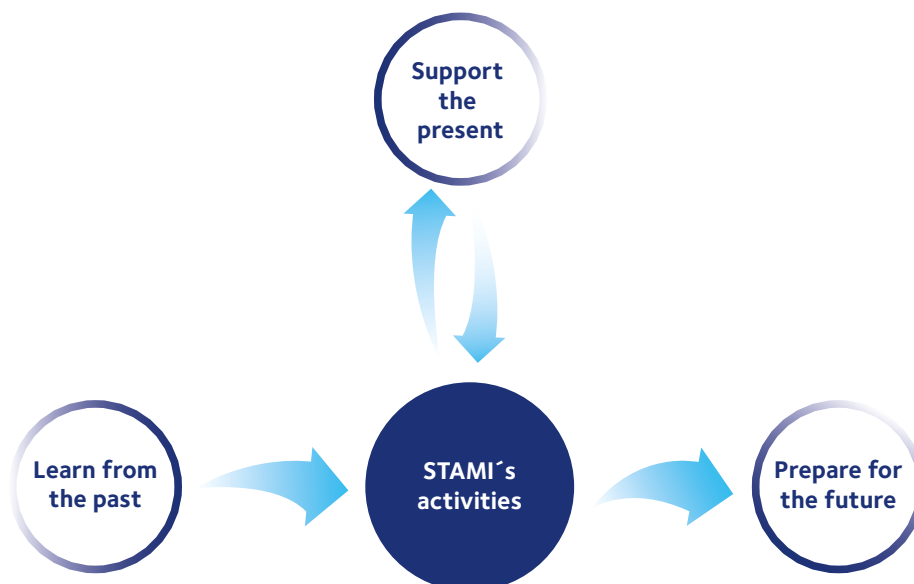
STAMI will strive for a good balance between knowledge and research needs relating to working environment and health and other tasks, as well as possess sufficient professional contingency capacity to effectively be able to assess issues from Norwegian working life and initiate required activity when appropriate. STAMI's contingency function shall be given high priority.

Over time, STAMI should have an appropriate distribution of resource investment between research tasks and other tasks, as well as seek to utilise the synergy effects inherent in these partially overlapping functions.

### IN LINE WITH THE TIMES

At the outset of this strategy period, there are indications that both Norwegian and international working life will face change and transition. Technological development will help enable the automation and robotisation of numerous work operations, and the service production to be offered more directly and interactively. One effect of this may be an increase in precarious work and remote work. We stand, moreover, on the threshold of a green transition, through which new technologies and industrial processes will be developed, while others are phased out or changed. Internationalisation and migration are also expected to continue increasing. There are additional demographic challenges in Norway linked to both entry and exit from working life. Altogether, this may lead to new forms of work and work organisation in many Norwegian companies.

Experience shows that changes often bring about new and unforeseen work environment challenges, or that former challenges reappear in a new guise. From such a perspective, it is important that STAMI creates knowledge to prevent any negative working environment effects of these changes, and thus contributes to sustainable, productive transitions. In this context, STAMI may rely on valuable expertise from both experience and current efforts as a basis for being able to anticipate future challenges and propose solutions.



During the strategy period, STAMI will maintain a flexible and proactive approach to emerging needs for knowledge, and initiate activity in step with changes in Norwegian working life. This will ensure the implementation of preventive activities in parallel with the courses of development in working life.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that working life has been in continuous change for a long time, and that there still are great needs for knowledge and communication relating to the current situation. The development of scientific expertise is extremely time-consuming and requires long-term perspectives to ensure good quality.

In the current strategy period, STAMI will attempt to strike a good balance between the further development of established areas of expertise and the development of new such areas, where the input factors must be guided by the knowledge needs and developments in Norwegian working life.

STAMI will base the selection of activities, especially research activities, on the following criteria:

- knowledge needs
- national importance
- potential for prevention
- scope and severity
- scientific potential and significance
- possibility of implementation in the form of resources and expertise

### STAMI'S STRENGTHS

STAMI's main strengths are consistently vigorous interdisciplinary scientific expertise within most of the subject areas relevant to working environment and occupational health, as well as the ability and tradition of integrating this multi-disciplinary knowledge into a whole. The knowledge that is integrated and gathered under one roof at STAMI would, in a typical university organisation, have been spread between several different faculties with no tradition or infrastructure for collaboration.

Results from, and consequences of, occupational health research have the potential to create conflict between

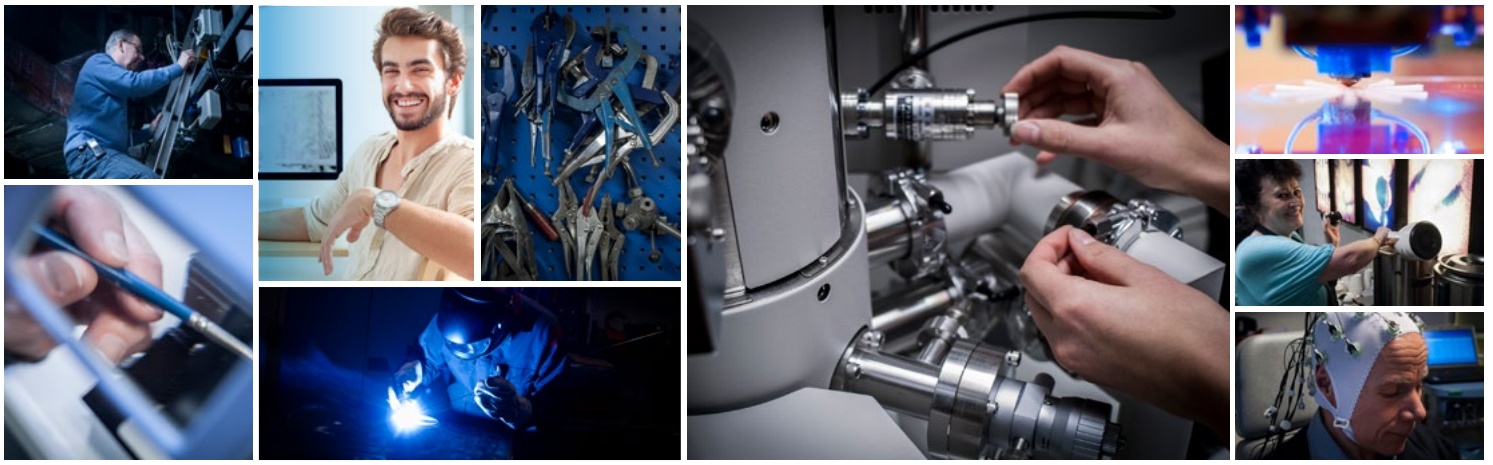
opposing parties.

One of STAMI's strengths is the ability to develop, implement and communicate results from knowledge development and research projects in working life in a balanced, academically independent, and quality-assured manner. This requires constructive dialogue with companies, the social partners involved in working life and the working environment authorities. Understanding and mastering the context in which occupational health research is carried out is a prerequisite of STAMI being able to fulfil its social mission in a manner that inspires confidence.

STAMI's ability to understand the public administration's tasks and needs is also considered a strength and is essential when carrying out tasks relating to, and in support of, the public administration. The ability to balance and master the combination of academic independence and the role as subagent agency ensures good knowledge of both the cultures and mechanisms of science and administration. This provides a solid platform for STAMI's tasks performance.

STAMI's most important expertise and support competencies are:

- knowledge about Norwegian working life and its agencies
- knowledge about important exposures in working environments, mechanisms and health effects, and the associations between them
- high scientific standard and expertise
- wide range in methodological knowledge and infrastructure
- the ability to combine research, surveillance, education and working life and administrative support functions in an independent, quality-assured, and resource-efficient manner
- the ability to translate research into advice and guidance in preventive activities, through communication and education
- quality-assured, academically independent, balanced and readily understandable communication of risk



### STAMI'S TARGET GROUPS

STAMI's target groups are Norwegian working life and parties of significance to Norwegian working life. The core target groups are represented in STAMI's advisory council, which is a key forum for dialogue with these parties.

### BUSINESSES

Norwegian businesses constitute the key target group and end user of STAMI's knowledge development and communication. Fulfilment of STAMI's social mission is linked to the application of available knowledge in these organisations. Business Managers are a particularly important target group in view of their responsibility for the work organisation and the working environment.

### PARTIES INVOLVED IN WORKING LIFE

The social parties involved in working life jointly set the premises for most efforts to improve the working environment and the development of knowledge in the field, both centrally and in the individual organisation. The parties involved in working life are therefore key target groups for the Institute's work, and important advisors in relation to STAMI's activities and priorities.

### THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITIES

In addition to the research-based knowledge development of direct relevance to the working environment authorities, STAMI carries out several tasks relating to, and in support of, the public administration. STAMI communicates specialist knowledge to the working environment authorities as a basis for legislation and regulations and provides knowledge and knowledge development as a basis for the authorities' strategies and priorities. The

Working Environment Programme is an important arena for developing and fortifying the collaboration between STAMI and the other government agencies in the field.

### POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

The Institute will contribute value-neutral knowledge to policy and decision-makers at societal level, so that priorities of importance for work and occupational health are made on the best possible basis.

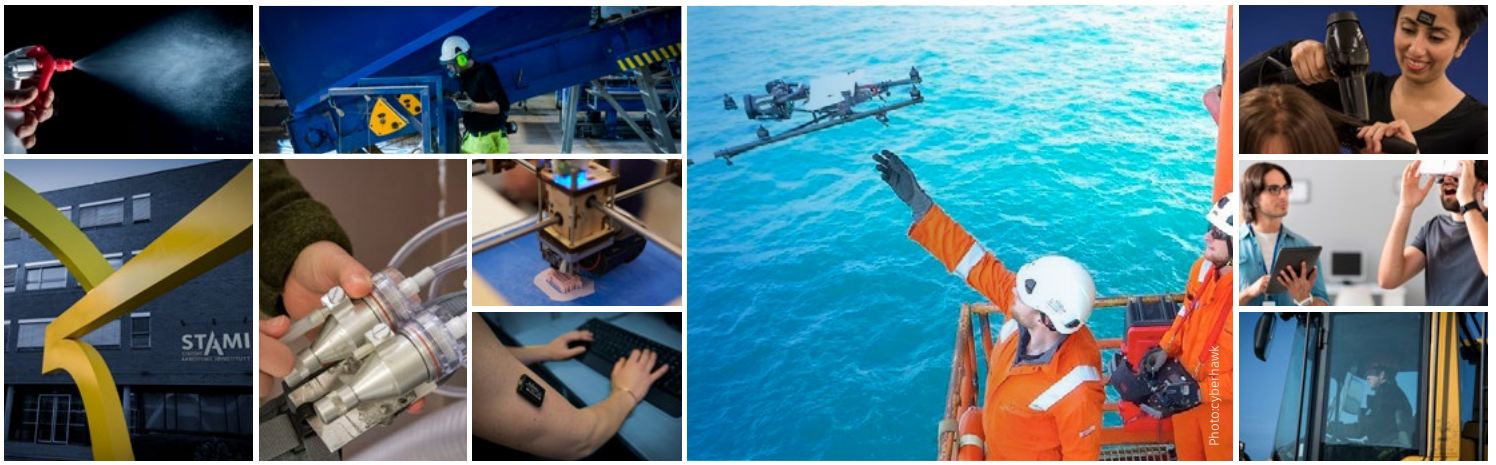
### HEALTH AGENCIES

STAMI is the central scientific community for information, education, advice, and guidance in the field of working environment and health. The primary health service and the occupational health service are thus important target groups. STAMI has been assigned the function of coordinator for cooperation and joint knowledge development between the occupational medicine departments at the health institutions, and the institute should be a link between the departments and the working environment authorities.

### RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

To other research communities, both nationally and internationally, STAMI shall be an attractive partner for collaboration within the Institute's specialist fields. STAMI embodies Norway's primary means of contributing knowledge to the international research front and is responsible for making knowledge from the international research front available to Norwegian working life.





## STAMI'S FUNDING BASIS

There is a long tradition in Norway for working environment and health research to be predominantly publicly funded. This helps secure levels of investment and independence. The possible consequences of working conditions upon health can be severe, and the field possesses the potential for conflict between parties. Therefore, the field is not especially suitable for the commission market. In addition, experience shows that the market for knowledge development on prevention in general, including working environment research, is limited. Public funding of this activity has therefore proved to be both necessary and effective in Norway as in most other comparable countries. The funding of STAMI through the ministry's letter of allocation is the main Norwegian means of contributing to the international production of knowledge about working environment and occupational health.

Nevertheless, STAMI is, as a rule, dependent on external co-funding of research projects, usually through public funding in research council programmes, EU framework programs or other national or international research funds. Access to such funding in the field of working environment and occupational health is currently scarce, both nationally and internationally. To ensure proper economic conditions for STAMI, research projects will therefore often be co-financed, with contributions from both STAMI's basic funding and from external funding sources. Such co-financing requires that the external funding is granted in a contribution context, and that the project has a general interest beyond the potential special interest of contributors. Such projects should therefore generate positive professional ripple effects for both STAMI, Norwegian working life and society in general. The knowledge generated in these projects must be openly published and made available for general use. Such conditions must be documented for every project

in STAMI's research administrative systems, by elaborating on the projects' working environmental relevance, social benefits and plans for publication and dissemination.

To avoid any uncertainty about potential cross-subsidisation of STAMI through the basic funding, STAMI does not carry out so-called commission projects, where the client has special interests in the project and a greater control over hypotheses and choice of method. This market is anyway extremely limited in the field of working environment and health and would, in certain cases, result in suspicion about the independence and quality of the results.

STAMI has a social mission that extends beyond pure research, and STAMI's other activities are mainly funded by public basic funding, except for certain educational or working life support services that are offered at cost as there is no well-functioning commercial market for these services.

STAMI can thus be seen as a public instrument placed at the disposal of Norwegian working life to develop knowledge aimed at creating sound working environments and promoting employees' health, and thereby contributing to a sustainable and competitive Norwegian working life.

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

STAMI participates as the Norwegian representative in international scientific fora dealing with working environment and occupational health, thus ensuring that knowledge from Norway and STAMI is made available for international application and, likewise, that international knowledge is made available to the Norwegian working life. STAMI's contingency role, which gathers and facilitates knowledge for Norwegian working life, shall be prioritised.



## Research

The working environment field is extremely wide and embraces a raft of specialist disciplines. On an international scale, STAMI is one of the smallest national research institutes on occupational health. This means that STAMI's prioritisation criteria for its own research must be significantly focused to be able to maintain international quality.

STAMI's social responsibility encompasses more than our own research, and we have a responsibility to possess or absorb science-based knowledge from international quality-assured literature. STAMI's research expertise should strike a balance between performing our own research and following up on, interpreting and evaluating research carried out by others. Thus, STAMI's priorities should safeguard the long-term needs for knowledge and expertise within the sector area.

With a risk-based main approach, STAMI will build and disseminate knowledge about the impact of the working environment on health, sick leave and absenteeism, and shed light on the positive effects of working environment conditions on, among other things, job satisfaction, job commitment, belonging and well-being. This knowledge must contribute to uncovering and clarifying both risks and benefits.

### STAMI'S RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Through relevant, effective, and quality-assured research at a high international level, STAMI will make scientific contributions within our field and seek to publish our work in leading international peer-reviewed journals. Our research activities shall support and align with STAMI's other tasks.

STAMI will emphasise the utilisation of its full range of expertise in cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary research projects. STAMI's advantages are the institute's breadth of methods and infrastructure that covers, inter alia:

- epidemiology and health knowledge
- characterisation of exposures at workplaces and in experimental laboratory studies
- chemical, physical, biological, psychological, and other health-related measurements
- human, animal, and cellular models

STAMI aims to build further on these advantages.

STAMI's research strategy provides scope for studying working environment conditions in the broadest sense, and the project portfolio should reflect this as far as possible. Due to resources, STAMI's main priority must however be narrowed down and aimed at working environment conditions of importance for health, focusing on exposures and outcomes, as well as the underlying mechanisms that govern these relationships. Knowledge of causes presupposes both knowledge of risk conditions and mechanisms, and STAMI will strive for such a holistic approach in all our projects. STAMI has a special responsibility for facilitating prospective and longitudinal studies when possible.

During the strategy period, STAMI will give priority to developing knowledge about the following exposures, including relevant mechanisms and health outcomes of such exposures:

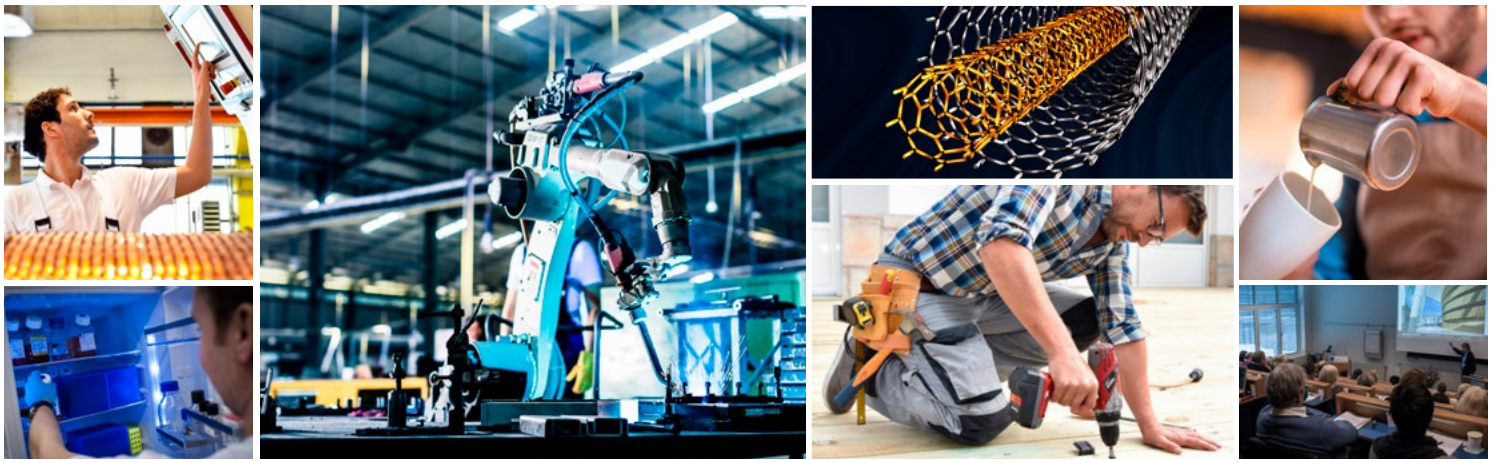
- psychosocial and organisational conditions
- mechanistic conditions
- chemical and biological and physical conditions

Exposures can often be understood as risk-oriented, and it is therefore necessary to specify that positive health impacts of conditions and measures in the working environment are included in the category of psychosocial and organisational conditions.

In addition to the exposure-oriented general approach, STAMI will, during the strategy period, focus especially on building new expertise and increase the level of activity related to the following issues concerning the occupational health:

- new technologies and organisational forms
  - green technologies nanomaterials and -technology
  - automation, robotisation and artificial intelligence
  - working time arrangements
  - forms of employment and association
- working conditions for immigrants, migrant workers, and guest workers
- working in cold conditions and arctic climate
- impacts on health of interventions and measures
- working in small and medium-sized enterprises
- age-group specific issues related to health and working life participation
- injuries and accidents
- evidence synthesises work-related skin disorders
- development of biomarkers for exposure and effect





## Monitoring of the working environment

Through National Occupational Health Surveillance (NOA), STAMI monitors trends and risk factors in the working environment of significance for occupational health, injuries and accidents, as well as for work-related sick leave and withdrawal from work among employees in Norway. The factual basis must be adapted to accommodate the respective needs of the authorities, involved parties and occupational health services for quality-assured information.

NOA must ensure that the parties involved in working life and the working environment authorities have a shared, suitably adjusted, objective knowledge base as a foundation for the tripartite dialogue in the working environment field.

NOA's analyses of the working environment in Norway must be of high standard and based on the use of up-to-date, quality-assured national data sources and scientific methodology. The factual basis obtained will contribute to effective prevention both nationally and locally at individual workplaces and provide a basis for the authorities' and working life's priorities.

During the strategy period, STAMI will maintain particular focus on:

- describing status and trends in the working environment every three years through the preparation of the Factbook on working environment and health (the Factbook)
- continuing to develop the Factbook as a format for the national status in relation to risk concerning the working environment and health
- continuing to develop monitoring data, making it available in an electronic format providing possibilities for the extraction of data accommodated to the user
- assuring the quality of the indicators in the monitoring system through scientific analyses of the associations between risk factors in the working environment and health outcomes
- assessing and contributing to the further development of relevant data sources with information related to work-related crime and social dumping that are significant in terms of the working environment and health.
- strengthening the data set in relation to chemical exposures in Norwegian working life
- strengthening the data set in relation to immigrant workers' working environment and health
- strengthening cooperation with other European supervisory bodies to further develop existing surveys on working environment and occupational health
- support functions for the public administration



## Support functions for the public administration

STAMI's knowledge development shall contribute to knowledge-based management in the field of working environment and occupational health, and knowledge disseminated by STAMI shall be of direct relevance to the other working environment authorities. STAMI shall provide and convey specialist knowledge to the working environment authorities as a basis for the drafting of laws, regulations, strategies and priorities. STAMI has support functions for, and cooperates closely with, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority and the Petroleum Safety Authority and shall assist the ministry in professional matters when necessary. STAMI's contingency function shall ensure that the working environment authorities are updated as soon as possible on new risks that may have an impact on Norwegian working life.

During the strategy period, STAMI will further develop the collaboration with the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority relating to knowledge-based inspection priorities.

Certain tasks in the border area between research and public administration have been delegated to STAMI. These administration-related tasks would drive up costs if the supervisory authorities were to carry them out themselves, as this work requires specialist, scientific expertise that is best managed and cultivated in a scientific environment, and which, from an efficiency perspective, can best be reconciled with STAMI's other tasks.

- Examples of such tasks are:
- national surveillance of the working environment and health and knowledge-based supervisory priorities
- management of the national centre of expertise relating to injury from chemicals in working life
- regulatory toxicology and knowledge basis for the setting of limit values
- national exposures register for working environments involving chemicals (EXPO)
- laboratory functions for the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority
  - method development when new types of exposure data are needed
  - reference laboratory function
- coordination of cooperation and knowledge development within the field of occupational medicine
  - occupational medicine policlinic
  - national register of occupational medical examinations
  - occupational medical guidelines
  - assessments of work-related illness in connection with occupational injury compensation for NAV
- contingency function when new requirements for knowledge arise
  - cluster investigations of the connections between work and health
  - evidence syntheses
  - alert function
- national centre of expertise for the occupational health service in Norway
- representative in advisory bodies, committees, networks and organisations both nationally and internationally



## Working life support functions

STAMI shall map the relations between work and health, assess risk and propose preventive measures. STAMI's activities shall motivate and enable Norwegian working life and Norwegian enterprises to build sound, sustainable working environments, prevent injuries and promote good health. All knowledge disseminated by STAMI should be directly relevant to working life. STAMI will prioritise direct contact with businesses in need of advice and support, either directly or through the occupational health service, and shall facilitate giving advice accommodated to the users.

During the strategy period, STAMI will maintain its focus on developing approaches and tools that, on the best possible basis, facilitate the application of relevant knowledge in Norwegian workplaces.

As the national research and knowledge agency in the field of working environment and occupational health, STAMI performs specific services, provides advice, and carries out investigations as support for industries and companies, if there is no commercial quality-assured market for these services. The commercial market for such services is small and

decreasing. During the strategy period, STAMI will continue giving high priority to consultancy and support functions for businesses and industries, including the occupational health service, which often represents others.

STAMI shall prioritise the following tasks and services in support of working life:

- assessment, guidance, and advice
- national working environment library
- advisory service for pregnancy and the working environment
- advice related to the choice of sampling strategies for exposure mapping
- rental of sampling equipment for exposure mapping
- chemical service analyses and interpretation thereof
- facilitation of data extraction and graphics from NOA
- facilitation of data entry, data extraction and graphics from EXPO
- education and dissemination activities





## Communication and education

Communication and dissemination activities are important tools for maximising the utilisation of knowledge from STAMI in Norwegian working life. STAMI will achieve this through clear communication, accessible research dissemination and research-based courses and seminars.

STAMI will follow government communication policy and work for full transparency, accessibility, and a high level of integrity. STAMI wishes to facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, direct interactions via suitable channels between experts and the Institute's various target groups.

### COMMUNICATION AND RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

Our communication activities shall make STAMI visible as the national knowledge agency and research institute and clarify our role as a leading provider of knowledge to the parties involved in Norwegian working life.

Our communication activities shall be readily accessible in a format that facilitates and stimulates the application of knowledge through -scientifically based measures. During the strategy period, STAMI will place particular emphasis on developing dissemination strategies that increase the availability and application of knowledge from STAMI in working life, through adaptations of both the messages and the various means of dissemination.

Priority measures in STAMI's communication and reputation building are:

- increased dialogue with target groups
- increased availability and visibility
- increased use of communications technology and new, integrated information channels, including infographics, film versions and e-encyclopaedias

### EDUCATION, COURSES AND SEMINARS

STAMI has a special responsibility for education and upskilling of personnel in the field of working environment and occupational health. STAMI's courses and seminars are research-based and aimed in particular at personnel in occupational health and safety services. The university and college (UoH) sector has only fragmented and limited scope for providing this type of education.

STAMI will seek collaboration with the UoH sector in relation to offering higher education in the field of working environment and occupational health by means of linking STAMI's course provision to the UoH sector. STAMI shall also provide specialisation courses in collaboration with relevant professional associations.

Priority measures in STAMI's course and teaching work will be to:

- provide quality-assured and research-based courses and seminars
- seek to develop and offer an education in the field of working environment and occupational health in collaboration with a university or college
- endeavour to establish more specialisation opportunities at STAMI
- establish course and teaching provision on more platforms, with new technological solutions
- increase course and teaching collaboration in the Nordic countries through, among others, NIVA and Nordic sister institutes



