



A&D work Environment discussion – van der Nootska – 7 February 2019

The Cluster was asked to comment and make a list of positives and negatives that could be improved in their general work environment. From the list of things we could improve we were encouraged to discuss the most pressing issues of concern.

Positives!

- Firstly, there are many positives from working at SIPRI – we work in a nice clean renovated building, providing good meeting rooms and offices with adequate working space and proper furniture. We have förtroende arbetstid (flexible working hours); this is trust based and allows a lot of freedom. The social aspect is appreciated with morning fikas and of course the regular staff receptions. The atmosphere in general at SIPRI has been described as largely pleasant and cordiale.

Could be improved!

- There are some concerns that our communication tools for meetings involving external groups or individual persons could be better – Skype is not an ideal solution. Internal communication in general can improve.
- There is a general sense that at times people work too much overtime and are stressed by this or from personal relations with other colleagues. Think about how we can improve this?
- There is sense that employee and employer relations can have a different dynamic when it comes to an employee on a time limited contract. The employee can feel less inclined to speak up if unhappy and feels restrained.
- The pressure of fundraising has been described as a stress factor. Too much?
- Availability and expectations beyond normal working hours – for actually working overtime, checking emails and taking phone calls can be an issue for some.

From the list of things that could be improved - the issue of overtime was expressed as being the most problematic.

- Part of the issue is we have to inform ourselves. A better understanding of Swedish labour law would be useful when it comes to working hours. There are actually very clear rules – 40 hours per week, and one can only work 3 months in a row of doing 48 hours per week in terms of overtime and then it has to stop. Perhaps make this clearer in the handbook. When can employees

take time off in lieu of overtime? Who authorizes it? What is asked for is a better explanation of Förtroende Arbetstid (flexible working hours) so employees understand their rights and duties. HR can play a role and staff is always welcome to go and discuss with Helena and receive advice.

- How do you prevent overtime? Planning and communication is key. Build it in as part of the planning process and be realistic and don't be a time optimist. If you anticipate the time is not feasible then you need to flag this up in advance. If we communicate then we can find solutions and both the Researchers and Managers have a responsibility to ensure this happens.
- True or not - it is important for Managers and those in tenured positions are sensitive to those employed on a time-limited contract and the perception that if they are not always available they may not get a contract renewed. This perception counts here and it should be taken in account.
- You have no obligation or one should not be expected to check work e-mails during vacation or weekends. Unless you have a previous agreement and one is voluntarily willing. Again, good communication is key. For Senior Management it's different as there are some standby expectations.
- Point was made that if you are particularly task heavy that you can setup an internal limited availability message on your email to cover certain busy periods.

Summary

It's key to plan well and communicate in good time. On the overtime issue, it is suggested this issue should be brought up at Programme meetings and check if people had an overtime issue during the last week/month. If there's an issue one can figure out why and address for the next time. We can bring back to the Cluster level at some point to see if the issue is improving.