



Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health

# Application of the Government Decision on VDU Work and the effects of the Decision at Finnish workplaces

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# Introduction

- The effects of the EU directives on the situation at workplaces have been studied very little.
- Six EU member states (The Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and The United Kingdom) decided to carry out a survey concerning the application and effects of the legal European provisions in workplaces.
- The directive on display screen equipment (Directive 90/270/EEC) was selected as the first topic for the survey.
- The survey was implemented among employers and employees

# Finnish Government Decision on VDU

- The VDU Directive is a regulatory framework which had to be transposed into national law in each EU country
- Directive provisions have been transposed in Finland to the Government Decision on VDU work (1405/93)
- The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health were in charge of the implementation of the survey in Finland.
  - In the **Finnish** evaluation, in addition to employers and employees, also occupational health care professionals were included, using a slightly modified questionnaire.

# Material and methods

- In Finland the study method consisted of a questionnaire form and a theme questionnaire distributed via e-mail.
- 2980 employers (934 responses, 32%) → who distributed questionnaire addresses further to 4316 employees (1872 responses, 43%) and to 666 occupational health care units (289 responses, 43%).
- Thematic interviews with semi-structured questions were carried out with relevant stakeholders
  - employer and employee organizations (13 responses)
  - occupational safety authorities (4 responses)
  - VDU office furniture and accessory suppliers and manufacturers (5 responses)
  - associations of visual specialists (3 responses).

# The main topics in the questionnaire:

- VDU working time, computer type in use, teleworking time
- Awareness and knowledge of the legislation in general
- Application of the legislation at the workplace:
  - the analysis of the workstation
  - information and training of the employees
  - application of provision regarding daily work routine
  - protection of workers' eyes and eyesight (by way of providing eye-tests and specific corrective appliances)
  - consultation and participation of employers

# Results (employees)

- About 80% of the respondents reported computer use for over 4 hours a day
- The most common computer type was a desktop computer (85 %). About one third (30 %) of employees had also a portable computer.
- Of the respondents 23% reported working with VDU partially at home (telecommuting). The average number of hours worked at home per week was 4 hours.

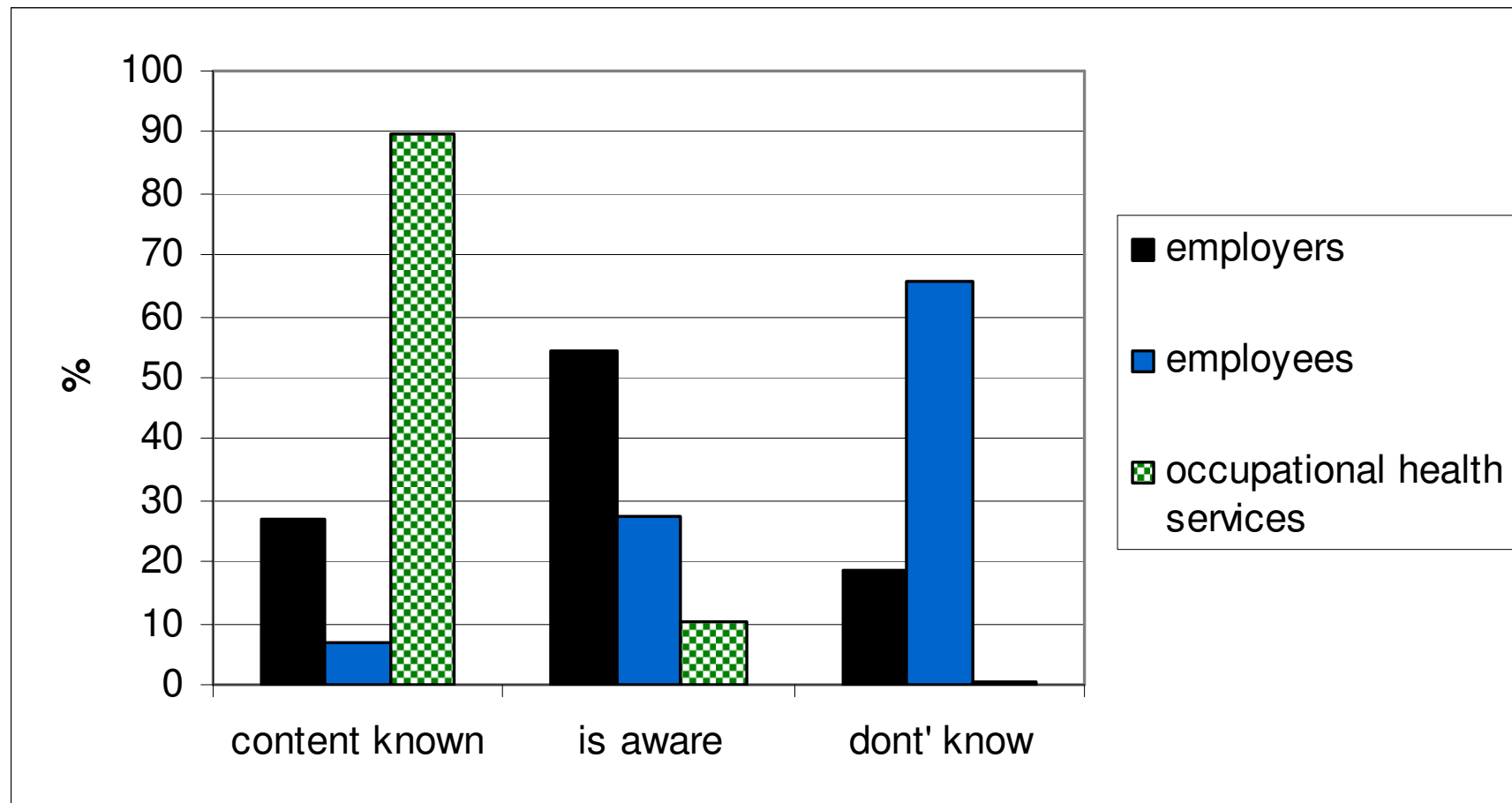
# Aware of the existence of VDU legislation (employers)

The question to employers:

"is aware of the existence of VDU legislation"

- Finland 81 %
- United Kingdom 93 %
- Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic 50 - 60+ %

# The knowledge of the Finnish Government Decision



# The knowledge of the Finnish Government Decision and size of the organization

Size of the organization (employees)	Employers %		Employees %	
	Content known %	Not at all known %	Content known %	Not at all known %
1 - 9	19	30	3	67
10 - 49	17	28	3	72
50 - 99	17	15	5	72
100 - 249	34	13	6	62
250 or more	41	12	11	60

# Application of the work station analysis

	Employers %	Employees %	Occup health %
When employee starts his or her work	36	10	52
When employee changes his or her work	18	3	31
After a rearrangement of the workplace	62	44	61
When needed	72	25	94
Regular intervals	40	7	40
No analysis at all	2	19	0

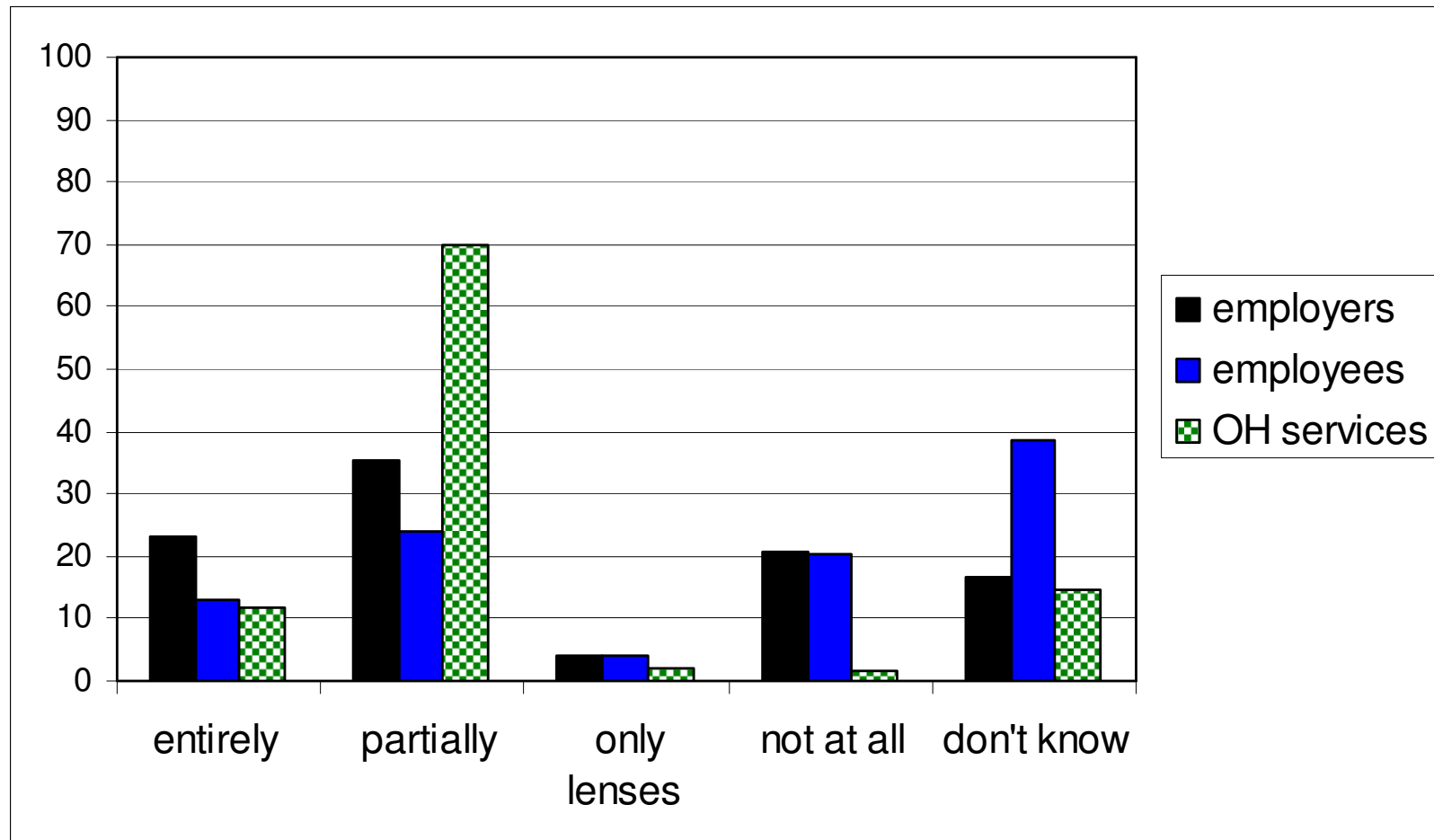
# Protection of the workers' eye and eyesight

The Directive prescribes that workers should be entitled to an eye and eyesight test

79 % of employers offer eyesight tests to the employees

Eye site tests done by occup health	Employers %	Occup health %
When employee starts his or her VDU work	60	87
Regular intervals (age > 45 years)	34	59
Regular intervals (age < 45 years)	28	48
If employee have problems	57	87
In other associations	8	11

# The cost of special glasses for VDU work covered by employer in Finland



# Thematic interviews

- **Employer organizations and occupational safety authorities:**
  - large and medium-size companies comply with the Government Decision more often than small workplaces
- **Representatives of employee organizations and eye specialists:**
  - problems had arise when determining the scope of employer compensation for special eyeglasses.
- **Eyesight specialists:**
  - would like to have more specific rules and practical guidelines regarding the prescription and reimbursement for eyeglasses necessary for display screen work (so called special corrective appliances).

# Conclusions

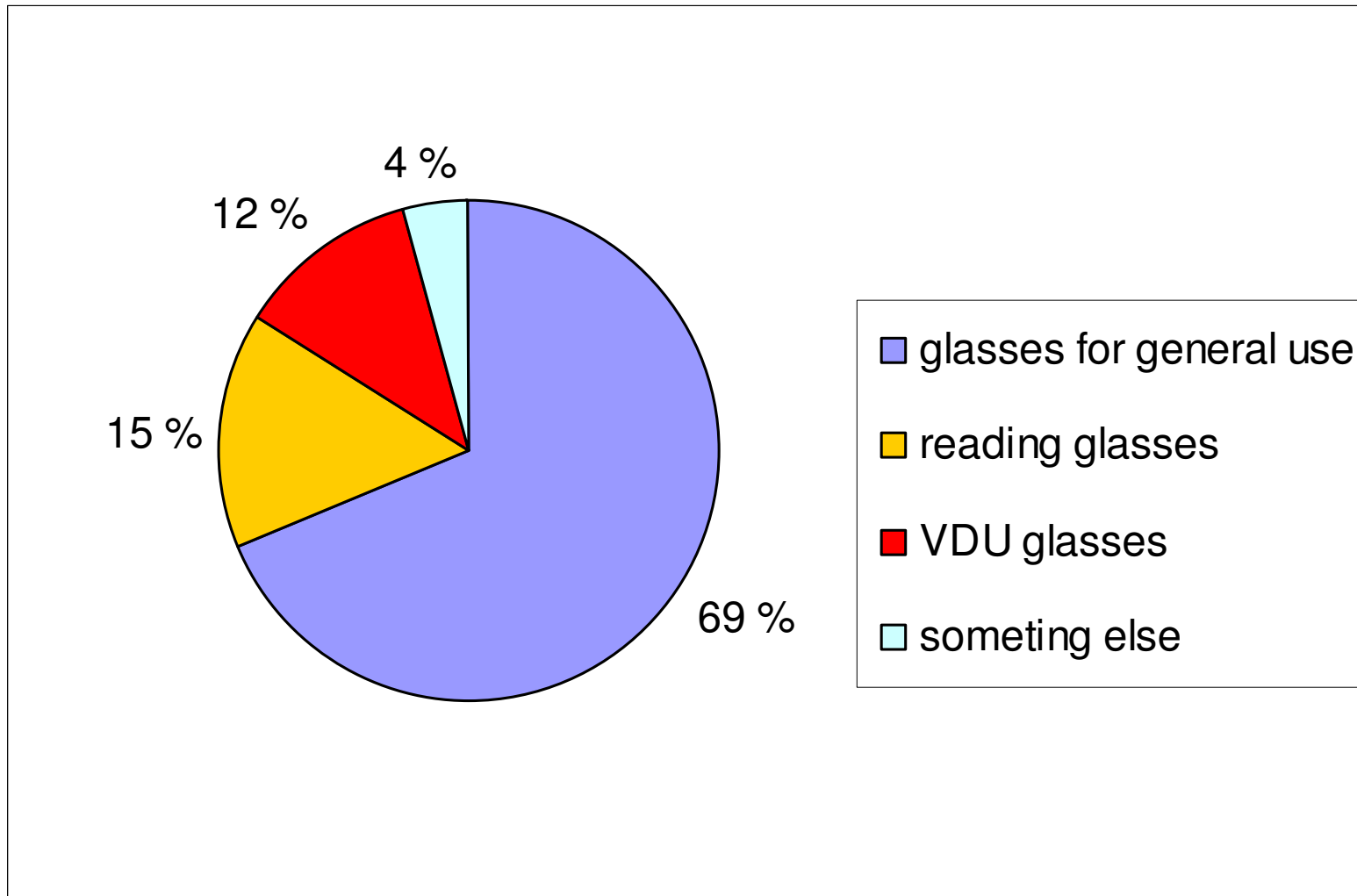
- In Finland the content of the national VDU regulation is known only partially among employers.
- Occupational health care knows VDU regulation very well.
- The employees experience very often that they don't know the content of the regulations.
- The application of the main provisions of the Directive is better realized in medium and large companies than in smaller ones.
- More cooperation between employers and occupational health care actors is needed.
- Preventive eyesight tests are often not made.
- More detailed information should cover sight questions, like sight examinations and compensation of VDU spectacles.

<http://de.osha.europa.eu/topics/evaluation>

# Conclusions

- The final decisions on the data collection methodology and details of sampling etc. were agreed on a national level.
- This led to a certain variety of methodologies in the various countries which again puts some restrictions for the cross-national comparison.
- Regardless of these methodological limitations, the central general results of the different evaluation projects can be compared and analysed in a cross-national perspective.
- <http://de.osha.europa.eu/topics/evaluation>

# The type of glasses used in VDU work (n=1317)



# Eyesight tests

EU country (employers)	Done in companies %
<b>Finland</b>	<b>79 %</b>
United Kingdom	75 %
Czech Republic	17 %
Denmark	65 %
Netherlands	43 %
Germany	28 %
Czech Republic	17 %

# The cost of special glasses covered by employer in six EU countries

EU country	Entirely or partially %
Finland	79 %
United Kingdom	?
Czech Republic	4 %
Denmark	80 %
Netherlands	30 %
Germany	10 - 50 %
Czech Republic	4%