



# *Task support, delegation, and shifting in social security assessments in Europe*

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## Background

- Physicians assess work disability
- Assessments have developed differently
- Shortage of physicians, financial constraints
- Task transfer: Move tasks to other professional groups
- In health sector:
  - WHO: “the rational redistribution of tasks among health workforce teams”. To maximize use of resources. The task-shifting paradigm is now applied to many fields
- In social security: examples. No overview



## Aim

- to describe the implementation of task transfer (support, delegation, and shifting) in disability assessments in European social security
- to obtain a detailed and comparable description of task transfer in social security in selected European countries

## Types of task transfer

Task support

*administrative/logistic  
support tasks to AS*

Task delegation

*move tasks – supervision  
/responsibility of SIP*

Task shifting

*task redistribution between  
professions*

## Design: a descriptive study

- Survey: questionnaire to 19 EUMASS countries



- Literature search



- Case studies: Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom



## Survey questions

- Are you working with task support/task delegation/task shifting in your country?
- Is it considered?
- Which tasks are transferred?
- Legal and administrative regulations?
- How is supervision arranged?
- Is education and training provided? Content?
- Outcomes?



## Survey results

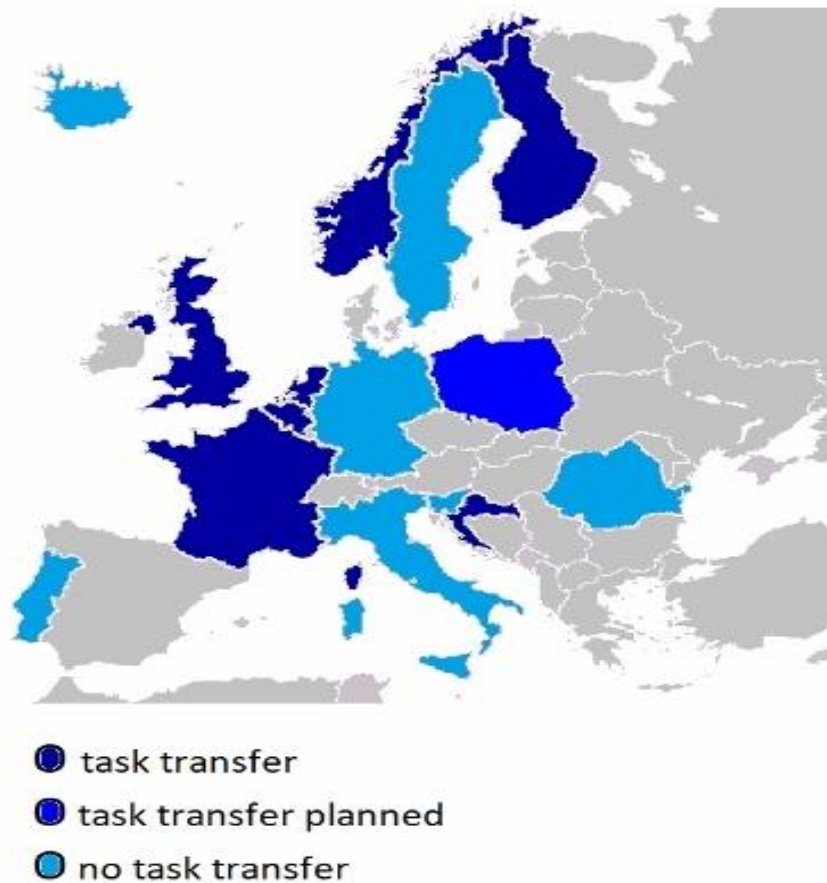
- At least one reminder by email/phone/person meeting
- 15 replies (response rate: 79 %)
- 3 countries: EUMASS representative was long term absent

Table. Existing or planned task transfer in disability assessments in 15 EUMASS countries

	Yes	No	NA
Has task transfer in <u>work</u> disability assessment been introduced?	7	8	0
Is task transfer in work disability assessment considered or planned ?	5	9	1
Has task transfer in <u>general</u> disability assessment been introduced?	6	9	0
Is task transfer in general disability assessment considered or planned?	2	12	1



Fig. Task transfer in work disability assessments



## Type of transfer in 7 countries

- task shifting                    6
  - task delegation                4
  - task support                    4
- 
- Nordic countries: task shifting only
  - Western Europe: Combinations of task shifting, delegation, and support
  - Interpretation: Social security agencies seek flexible and multiple ways to increase efficiency and quality



## Who is taking over tasks in 7 countries?

- nurses (4)
- physiotherapists, psychologists, secretaries (2 each)
- social workers, pedagogues, rehabilitation specialists, and occupational specialists (1 each)
  
- Similar to the health sector
- Interpretation: Choice of new profession depends on needs and local supply

## Education and training

- Careful education and training in all task transfer countries
  - “adequately trained and competent to perform the task”
- Introduced together with the transfer
- Varying extent and content
- Aim: keep quality at the same (or preferably higher) level
- Similar to health sector

## Many reasons for task transfer

### SIP related

*Physician shortage*  
*SIP focus on complex cases*  
*Reduce SIP workloads*

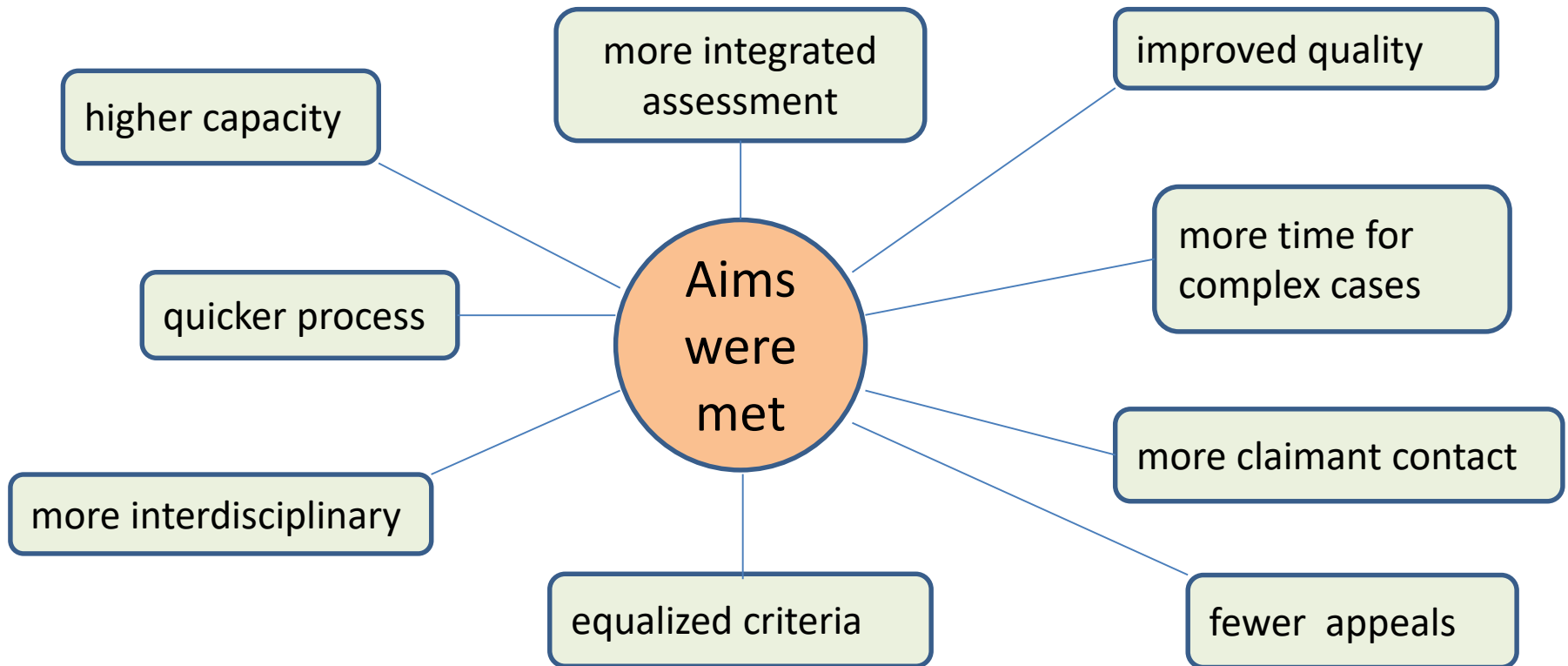
### Population related

*Ageing*  
*Benefits/support extension*

### Efficiency / quality

*Multidisciplinary approach*  
*Financial restraints*  
*Quicker process time*

## Positive outcomes





## Drawbacks

- UK: remaining capacity problems
- Very few formal process and effect evaluations
- No cost/benefit analysis was reported
- Few reported studies on the satisfaction of the claimants

## Task transfer in general disability assessments

- Reported from fewer countries
- In several countries managed by a different authority
- Belgium
  - need for wheelchairs/other mobility equipment
  - home care nursing services
  - institutional nursing care
  - extra compensation for persons with a handicap or needing personal assistance in daily life



## Limitations in the study

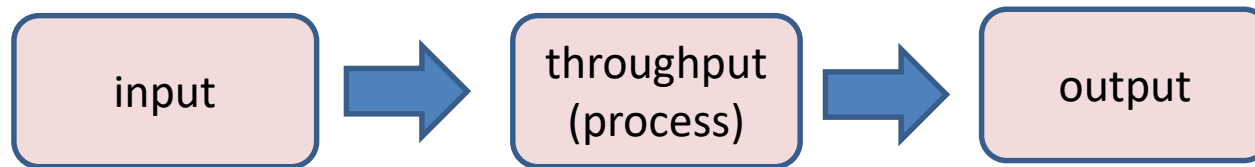
- Great diversity between countries
- Reporting bias
  - Showing positive sides
  - Sensitive to political decisions
- We tried to use several sources to minimize bias – nevertheless caution!!

## Lessons to be learned from health sector (WHO 2008)

- traditional healthcare workers will be reluctant to turn over their traditional roles to less highly trained workers
- the emphasis on task shifting might overshadow persistent challenges with training and retaining high-quality traditional healthcare workers
- task shifting must be aligned with the broader strengthening of health systems if it is to prove sustainable

## New professional roles

- Donabedian (1988):



- Administrative staff
  - tasks in the input phase (collect and summarize information)
- Social medical nurse
  - emerging speciality in social security
  - tasks in all phases of the assessment process, most importantly in throughput

## Multi-professional teams

- Increasing use
  - Belgium, Croatia, Norway, Sweden
  - Higher quality because of increased competence and the multifocal approach
- Linked to transfer of tasks – less SIP work load
- Also in countries without shortage of doctors
- The use of multi-professional team is partly separate from the use of task transfer

## Critical issues

- Inter-professional conflicts (medical vs nurse association)
  - To do: mutual agreements in advance
- Quality of assessments
  - To do: must be shown to be acceptable after task transfer
- Claimants' acceptance of new professionals (lower status, shift of approach)
  - To do: Satisfaction surveys

## Critical issues

- Shortage of other health care professionals after transfer of tasks – just moves from one profession to the other
  - To do: change the content of the job
- A rise in disability rates with new professional groups
  - Other groups have closer contact with claimants
  - Outcome studies in Norway

## Transferability

- Import of social protection from one country
  - must take into consideration legal frame, but also culture, norms, values, and labour market characteristics (MacEachen 2019; de Rijk 2018)
  - comprehensive testing in the different context is necessary before implementation of new approaches