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## Fight against burn-out

**Our correspondent Petra Sjouwerman reports from Denmark, where a Danish municipality takes the lead in the fight against physical burn-out.**

**T**ough competition in the cleaning sector has forced cleaners to swing the mop faster than ever. This is also the case for cleaners working for municipalities - in Denmark amongst the biggest clients on the cleaning market. And the financial crisis together with the reduced municipality budgets have put the cleaning sector under even more pressure.

Already the cleaning sector in Denmark is one of the industries with the highest rates in physical burn-out. According to 3F, the trades union that represents cleaners in Denmark, the pace of work has been dramatically accelerating and it is therefore no coincidence that employees can't keep up physically.

### Taking the lead

The municipality of Vordingborg (11,000 inhabitants) now takes the lead in the fight against these developments. Instead of outsourcing the municipal cleaning to the company that offers the best cost-to-quality, the city council made an unexpected choice.

This summer Vordingborg, situated 100 kilometres from Copenhagen, opted for the company that systematically focuses on a good working environment for its staff. "We are aware that this choice is rather unusual, but we feel this as an obligation to the cleaners, who often are citizens in our own municipality," said city manager Tomas Therkilsen to the Danish press.

The municipality chose Compass Group Denmark for its focus on working methods,

ergonomic equipment and environmentally friendly cleaning products. The decision resulted in a great deal of positive media publicity for the Danish branch of this international company.

### Talent teams

"Our motto is great people, great service, great results. And without great people we cannot achieve great results," says Søren Braüner, public relation officer for Compass Group Denmark. Worldwide Compass Group has 471,000 employees. In Denmark there are 5,000, of whom 1,600 are cleaners.

"If our employees show certain talents, we offer them a place on our so-called talent team, where they can enroll in a management course. At the moment the youngest in this team are in their early twenties and the oldest in their late fifties. After the course they get the chance to manage several cleaning teams," explains Søren Braüner. For most of them this is the first chance to make a step higher on the career ladder. "It is really fantastic to see their beaming faces," Braüner adds.

### Regular monitoring

The municipality of Vordingborg will keep an vigilant eye on the working environments for the cleaners. An evaluation is scheduled for later this year. The municipality will also have access to results from the employee satisfaction surveys. City manager Tomas Therkilsen is aware that promises on paper do not necessarily mean the same in reality. "It is necessary to evaluate the situation along the way," he stated earlier this summer.

The union 3F hopes that in the future more municipalities in Denmark will take this kind of employee interest into account when choosing a cleaning company.

*Le secteur de la propreté au Danemark est l'un de ceux où les cas d'épuisement physique sont les plus nombreux, rapporte notre correspondante Petra Sjouwerman.*

*Unsere Korrespondentin Petra Sjouwerman berichtet, dass in Dänemark die Reinigungsbranche zu denjenigen Branchen mit dem höchsten Anteil an körperlichem Burn-out zählt.*

*In Danimarca, l'industria del cleaning è uno dei settori con il più alto grado di esaurimento fisico, come riferisce la corrispondente Petra Sjouwerman.*