Swedish sickness insurance has undergone several changes in recent years. In 2008, the government introduced the so-called “rehabilitation chain” in order to standardize the sick-leave process and facilitate early return to work. The reform consisted of stricter activation principles in terms of fixed time limits and an end point for entitlement to sickness benefits. This thesis takes a closer look at these policy changes in local practice by analysing how they are received, implemented and experienced by welfare state actors, employers and sick-listed workers. The studies identify strong organizational boundaries in the implementation process of activation policies, showing that organizations appear to be governed by their own organizational logics and interests. Overall, this thesis illustrates an emerging social climate where sick-listed individuals are positioned as active agents who must take responsibility for their sick leave and their return to work. In a Swedish context, return to work is a matter of activating the sick-listed rather than activating the workplace.

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