



## Summary of proposals of the OSKA expert panel on **social work**

As a result of the analysis of the demand for labour force and professional skills in the social work sector, the expert panel has identified the key messages and the proposals.

**KEY MESSAGE 1.** The demand for labour force in the social work sector is growing. The demand for care workers with vocational training is twice higher than the supply, while the supply of social workers in higher education exceeds the demand by two times.

The aim is to meet the supply of education and the actual demand for labour force in the social work sector. There is the need for more care workers with vocational training, but the demand for social work specialists with higher education is covered in excess even if the number of graduates decreases by half.

### Activities

When concluding administrative contracts with the institutions of higher education, the Ministry of Education and Research considers the fact that 140 graduates per year cover the need for labour force in the social work specialties of higher education.

During admission, the institutions of higher education will consider the motivation and suitability of the candidate to start working in the sector (e.g. volunteering or working experience in the sector).

The Ministry of Education and Research, vocational education institutions and the Unemployment Insurance Fund will take into account that degree courses as well as in-service training and retraining are suitable for covering the need for labour force of personal care workers. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Unemployment Insurance Fund will increase the possibilities of free in-service training for personal care workers who do not have professional qualification.

The Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Foundation Innove, schools and trainers who provide training for babysitters, and awarding bodies of professions initiate the analysis of the curricula leading to the professional examination of babysitters and agree on the necessary volume of studies.

When allocating resources, the Ministry of Social Affairs plans means which support the popularisation of social work specialties, including volunteer work. The Estonian Social Work Association in cooperation with local governments, schools and professional associations introduces the possibilities of working in the specialties of social work sector to career advisors and young people.



Institutions of higher education describe realistic opportunities to start working in the sector (including client work and salary) in the overviews of the specialities.

Together with employers, the Ministry of Social Affairs plans means for organising peer group supervisions, including for learning from each other and for organised work supervision, for all employees of the social work sector, and encourages the use of existing means.

**KEY MESSAGE 2:** The demand for labour force in the sector depends largely on public funding and the existence of the clients able to pay for themselves, project-based development and provision of services and efficiency of supervision.

The aim is to ensure sustainable and high-quality provision of social services.

### Activities

The organiser and provider of welfare services (the local government, the Social Insurance Board, the Unemployment Insurance Fund, etc.) involves clients in the development of innovative solutions of services in order to better meet the actual needs of every person. Exact targeting of the need by the clients themselves creates a prerequisite for the client being willing to cover part of the expenses of the service.

The organiser and provider of welfare service (the local government, the Social Insurance Board, the Unemployment Insurance Fund, etc.) involves the local community in the provision of services. The participation of the community creates an opportunity to increase the responsibility of the community and to better use the possibilities of the community when developing services.

The Ministry of Social Affairs supports the application and systematic development of advisory supervision. Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre determines the training needs of supervisory officials and develops a training plan of advisory supervision commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs for training supervisory officials, as well as quality instructions of social services.

Initiated by local governments, regular joint discussions take place for cooperation between various agencies (education, health care, law enforcement, and social work) for early noticing and solving of problems. Parties are called together on a case-by-case basis by the local government or the institution (e.g. the Unemployment Insurance Fund) starting the proceeding of the case.

**KEY MESSAGE 3:** Finding people who meet qualification requirements is very difficult when recruiting employees in the social work sector.

The aim is to increase the proportion of employees who meet qualification requirements by supporting flexible study and work organisation.



## Activities

The Ministry of Social Affairs initiates a discussion on the need of distinguishing professional levels of education of employees of foster care (assistant teacher, junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher and family parent) and considers the need for the time limit of complying with the prescribed qualification requirements specified in the law (full qualifications immediately vs acquiring them within three years of starting work).

The providers of welfare and substitute home services ensure professional supervision and mentoring for care workers and substitute home employees without professional qualification who start working in the sector.

Educational institutions and employers allow flexible work and study organisation for people without professional qualifications who are working in the social work sector in order to give them possibilities to acquire professional qualification while they work.

The Ministry of Social Affairs initiates a discussion with various parties (welfare, health care, education and law specialists) for giving the right to conduct simpler medical procedures presented as a limited list (e.g. muscle injection; administration of medications) to care workers with certified additional competence. The Ministry of Social Affairs starts the amendment of respective legislation, if necessary.

The Estonian Qualifications Authority initiates a discussion for implementing changes for people working in the social work sector for getting a profession by partial professions or competences (professional examination). Passing the professional examination and graduating with a professional examination are made available upon graduating the institution of higher education.

The Ministry of Education and Research ensures free basic training of activity instructors.

## KEY MESSAGE 4. Employers value people with practical skills who enter the labour market of the sector.

The aim is for the graduates of vocational and higher education to have practical skills in addition to having good theoretical knowledge for starting work in the sector.

## Activities

Vocational and higher education institutions use more active learning methods (incl. video trainings of client work, team work trainings) and support academic thesis of practical work (participation-activity study, assessment of projects and programmes). In addition, institutions of higher education are considering organising more practical final examinations in addition to academic thesis (including master's level).



In the curricula, vocational and higher education institutions focus more on the development of general competences (e.g. client work, team work and networking, communication skills, ICT skills, incl. data management).

During basic training, vocational and higher education institutions provide, in addition to knowledge about specificities of clients with special needs, also the practical skills needed for handling them.

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre provides in-service trainings in the rehabilitation sector in cooperation with educational institutions.

Institutions of higher education find the means for remunerating the internship supervisors.

The Estonian Social Work Association initiates a discussion on the content, volume, organisation and financing of the internships in the studies of the social work sector so that the skills of the graduates would meet the needs of the labour market in the best way possible.

Vocational and higher education institutions increase the proportion of sector-specific ICT skills in the curricula of the social work sector; focus on developing technological competences of the sector; add an overview of technologies in the speciality studies of the sector, including ICT development trends and opportunities created this way in the sector.