

OSKA Social Work Survey

Summary of key findings

Employment in the sector of social work is expected to increase by approximately 20% by 2030

- Employment and labour needs in this sector are strongly influenced by demographic changes, including population ageing. The development of technology does not significantly reduce the labour needs of the key professions in the sector.
- The forecast of the employment and labour needs of this sector does not provide for a decrease in the number of people employed in any of the key professions. Both the number of people employed and the need for new workers will increase in all key professions. Secondary employment also contributes to the increase in labour needs.
- During the forecast period (2020–2030), the highest demand is for care workers. There is also an increased need for client workers for people with mental health problems, support persons, social workers and counsellors, child protection officials, family workers, and childminders for children with special needs.

The main concern in the sector is the high turnover of graduates

- During the 2019–2020 period, approximately 1,800 people terminated their employment in the key professions of the sector, representing nearly 12% of all those employed in the key professions in 2019.
- While there are no issues finding employment for graduates, there are issues with employee retention.
- The main reasons for high employee turnover are low wage levels, high workload/stress, and undervaluing this work in society.
- Due to direct client contact, social workers have a higher risk of burnout, which is why self-awareness skills and the availability of supervision and co-vision are of key importance in working in this sector.
- Foreign workers may be considered a possibility for covering the need for labour, but in this case, the needs for a high level of knowledge of the mother tongue and for the integration of foreign workers into society must be taken into account.

There has been a shift in emphasis on the need for knowledge and skills in the last five years

- At expert level, the growing need for legal competences has become pronounced, including knowledge of administrative procedures and teleconsultation skills.
- In the case of skilled workers, there is a growing need for various health-related forms of knowledge and skills.
- The trend of increasingly complex client problems creates a need for knowledge of more complicated mental and physical special needs and trauma competence.
- In addition to knowledge and skills, the values and attitudes characteristic of the field of social work, such as empathy, ethics, tolerance and care, are equally important.

Background

- In 2020, more than 16,000 people worked in the key professions of the social work sector and, with secondary employment also taken into account, workers in key professions accounted for 3% of all those employed in Estonia.
- Social work specialities can be studied:
 - at the level of higher education, at Tallinn University, the University of Tartu, and TTK University of Applied Sciences;
 - at seven vocational education institutions offering four different programmes.
- The OSKA survey on social work analysed the needs for labour and skills of social work managers, social workers and counsellors, child protection officials, family workers, care workers, client workers for people with mental health problems, childminders, substitute home and family house educators and support persons until 2030 and provided recommendations for the education system on how to meet these needs.
- OSKA surveys on the needs for labour and skills allow wise career choices to be made and forward-looking labour and education policies to be developed.