



Social 2030: Future Skills



**FUTURE
STATION**

Spot the early signs
of future change

**FORESIGHT REPORT
NOVEMBER 2021**





**FUTURE
STATION**

Spot the early signs
of future change

FORESIGHT

What you'll read


- **A bit of context**
- **Looking into the FUTURE**
- **Process & Methodology**
- **Key drivers and signals driving change in the social field**
- **Inventory of future skills**
- **Future scenario 2030: A day in the life of a social professional**
- **Becoming Future Fit**



A bit of context

FOCUS - Forward Looking SoCial EUrope Skills is a project funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission and coordinated by CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization (Romania) together with partners from 4 countries – National College of Social Workers (Romania), Fachhochschule Vorarlberg GmbH (Austria), SOSU Østjylland (Denmark) and Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali – IFOA (Italy). The project aims to involve different stakeholders in the social field in the identification of skills and competences necessary to the professionals working in this field to deal with future challenges, having in mind the 2030 horizon. In this respect, a process lead by Future Station (Romania) and based on foresight methodology was used.

The social sector is one of the most important sectors at European level. And it is currently changing dramatically. Specific drivers define what kind of change each period and domain faces, and what tools are needed to best deal with it. Thus, within the first part of this document, we addressed certain **forces that are driving change in the social field**, emphasizing on concrete signals of such change. But thriving in today's fast changing world requires a breadth of skills, such as digital literacy, innovation and resilience, alongside with critical thinking, know how to deal with mistakes, networking or personal branding. These skills are in fact interconnected. Thus, in the second part of this report, we will illustrate an **array of skills relevant for the future of social professionals**. Finally, it presents a possible **future scenario – A day in the life of a social professional**, as inspiration for how to plan for the future of social field as a practitioner in 2030.

 Plan for the future, because that's where you're going to spend the rest of your life.

MARK TWAIN

FORESIGHT

Looking into the FUTURE

Within FOCUS project, **foresight discipline and tools** were used to investigate the future of social field and the skills needed by professionals in the perspective of 2030.



Looking into the future

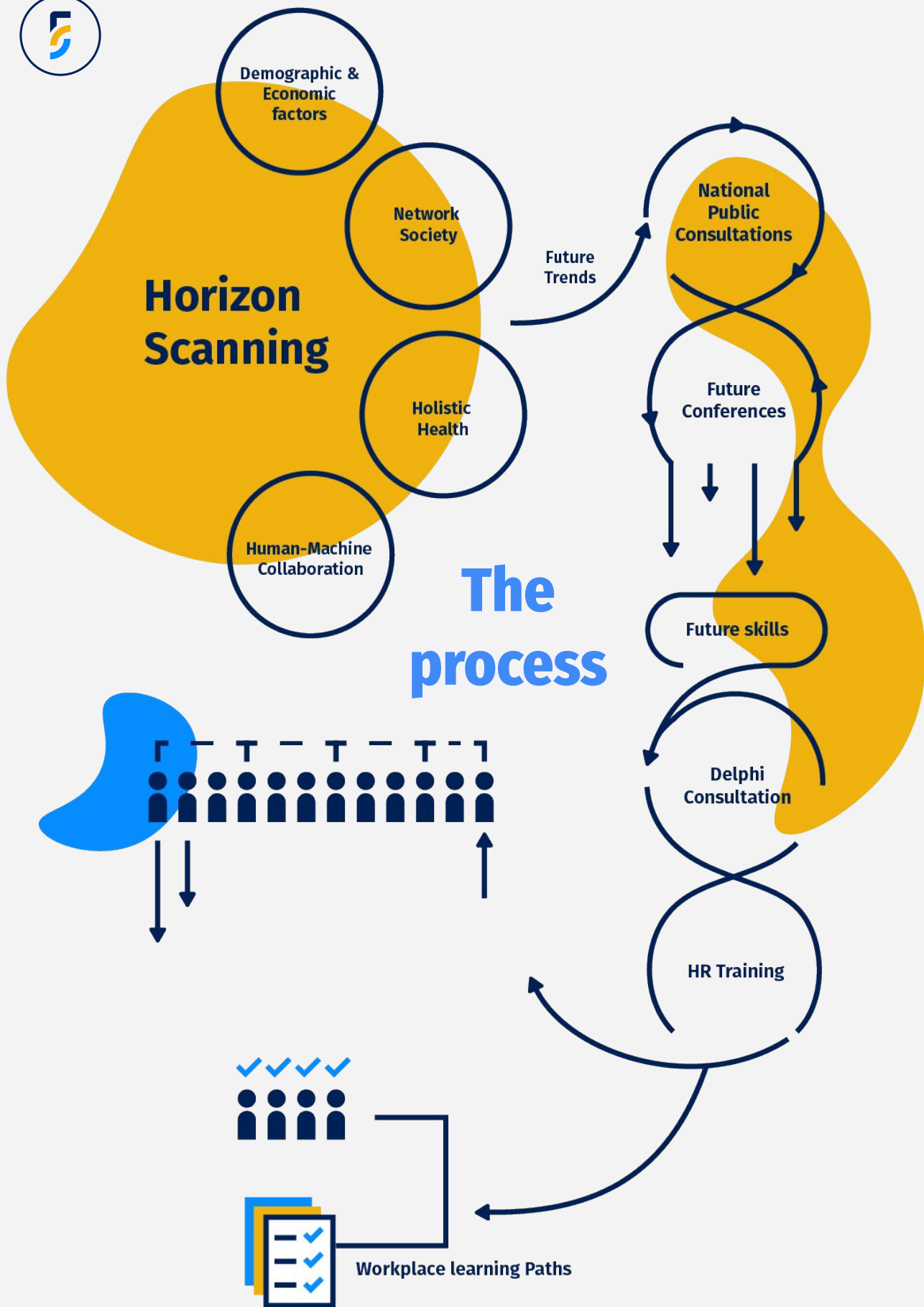
Foresight is a participatory vision building, strategy designing and leadership supporting process. By using foresight, organizations can better cope with uncertainty, anticipate change and prepare for it.

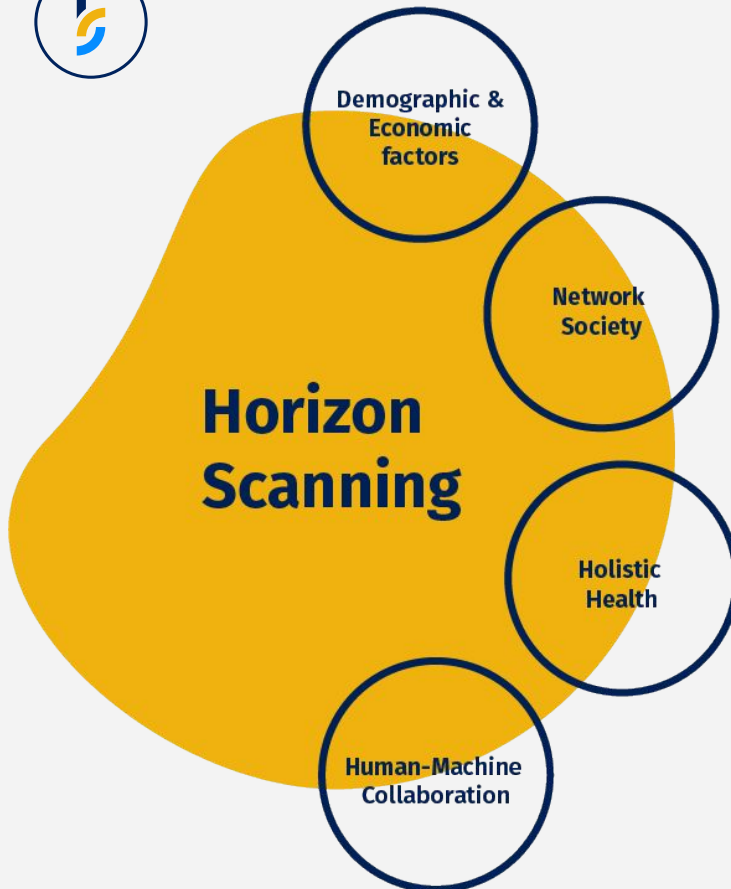
Modern neuroscience has taught us that we, humans, think about the future because our brain is literally built, by natural selection, to do so. Parts of our minds choose when and how much to think about what's next, whether we consciously want to be future-oriented thinkers or not.

When we save money for a vacation, we prospect the future by using basic foresight skills. The same goes when we study for an exam or when we check the weather on our smartphones' app for a future event.

“Our species is misnamed. Though homo sapiens defines human beings as wise, what humans do especially well is to prospect the future. We are homo prospectus.”

(M. E. P. Seligman, “Homo Prospectus”)





For identifying the needed skills that future challenges will request from different professionals working in the framework of the social system at European level in 2030, we have undertaken the following main activities:

Horizon scanning is a foresight method defined as “the acquisition and use of information about events, trends and relationships in an organization’s external environment. Its knowledge would assist management in planning the organization’s future course of action” (*Chun Wei Choo, The Art of scanning the Environment, 2005*).

Further to our process of horizon scanning we have identified several drivers of change – Future Trends, among which: Demographic and Economic factors, Network Society, Holistic Health and Human Machine Collaboration – each detailed further in the report.

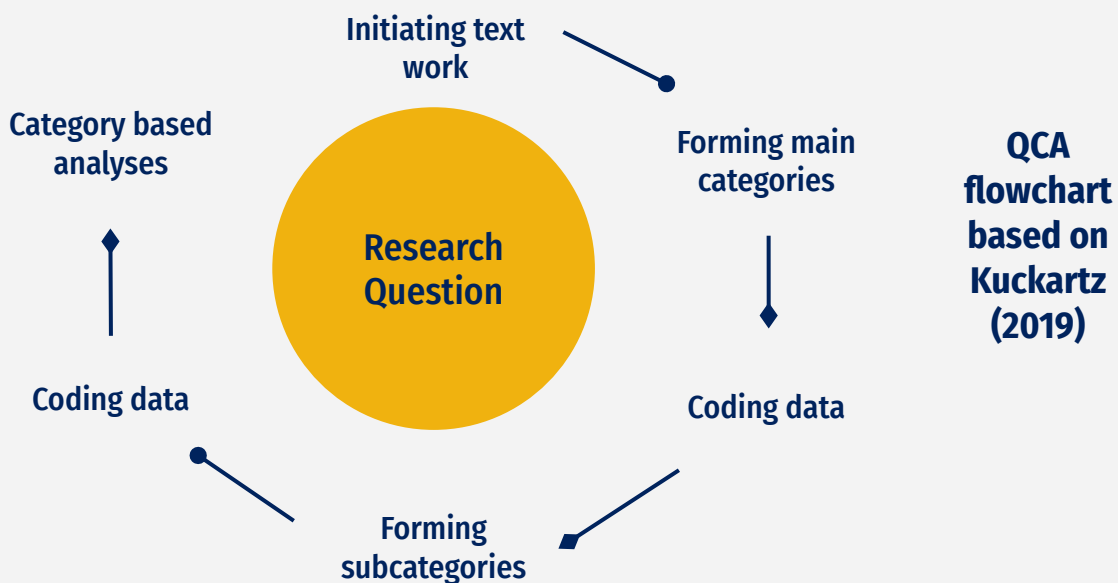
National Consultations workshops

During 2020, each project partner has organized national consultation workshops with selected stakeholders - employees, employers and decision-makers. The aim of these consultations was to gather inputs from different perspectives regarding the future challenges and skills needs in social field for the 2030 horizon.



The reports drafted further to each national consultation have been subject to a **Qualitative Content Analysis** (QCA) performed by the evaluation team (Austrian project partner). QCA is a category- based method for systematic analysis of qualitative data. The following figure shows a typical workflow for a QCA. The research question guiding the analysis was formulated as follows: What are the future challenges and skills needs in the social field for the 2030 horizon? The results of such analysis are illustrated [here](#).

Red ca aici e



Future Conferences

Due to the pandemic context, two Future Conferences were held: one online in June 2021 and another one face to face in October 2021. The online event lasted for 2 days and hosted ~60 participants from Austria, Denmark, Italy and Romania. The aim was to foster discussions around the relevant skills for the future and around how can social organizations better develop / catalyze / maintain an environment suited for such future skills.

Main output of the steps presented so far in this process is the **Inventory of Future skills**, as presented in the current report.



Delphi consultation

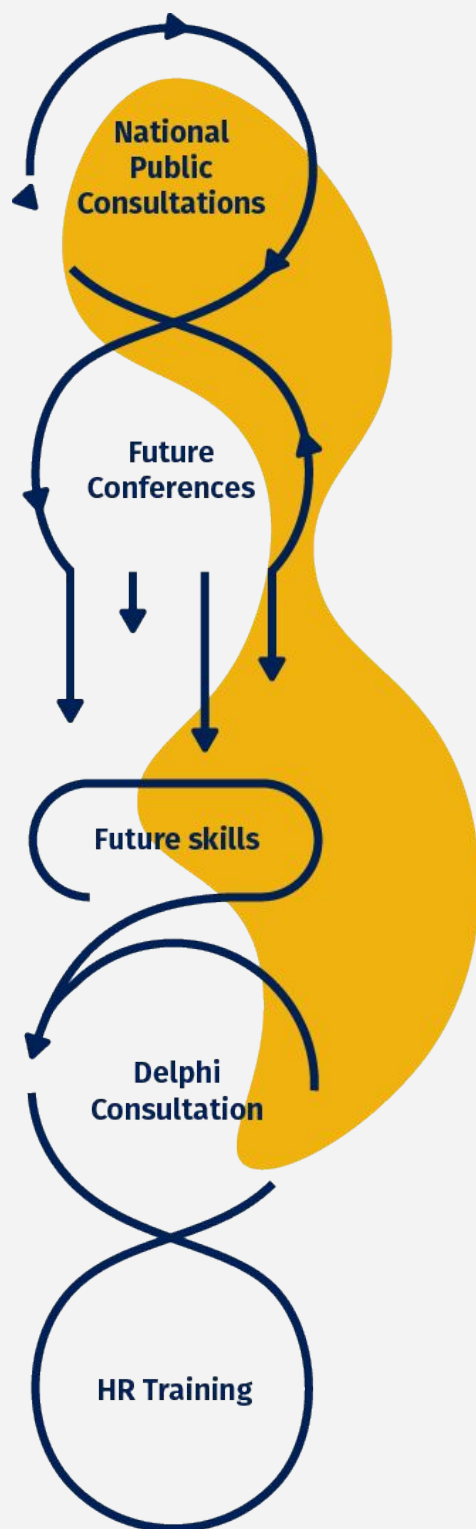
Building upon the results of the national consultations and following the discussions in the Future Conferences, a Delphi consultation involving 8 key stakeholders from the all 4 project countries was organized.

Its aim was to provide inputs for a transnational policy for fostering workplace learning in social field, taking in consideration the ways in which organizations could become more involved in systematic work-place training of their employees, the structure and content of possible continuous learning paths as systemic initiatives, how to enhance motivation of employees in participating in continuous training through different incentives.

HR Training

The final result of the FOCUS project is a training curriculum that will be piloted in the 4 partner countries – Austria, Denmark, Italy and Romania. Managers, HR specialists and representatives of employees from 80 social organizations will learn about the essential future skills and understand how to attract, motivate and develop professionals who are ready for future challenges.

Moreover, through the FOCUS project, we aim at developing a **workplace learning policy** which will offer valid insights to public authorities, decision makers, organizations and educational institutions on how to train and nurture such competencies in the perspective of 2030.





Drivers of change

FUTURE TRENDS

The process of foresight and more specifically, the horizon scanning performed by the foresight consultant, allowed us to identify 4 main drivers of change influencing the social field in the next decade.

Demographic and economic factors, like the share of the aging population or the rising economic inequality, increase the demand for social assistance services, especially for the most vulnerable (whether they are children, single mothers, the elderly or migrants).

We witness how through the **power of network** and communities, social professionals bring to life greater projects for their beneficiaries.

Plus, we are observing an expansion of health as a concept and social professionals, due to their involvement in the forefront of activities at **community** level, are in the best place to make a substantial contribution to approaching **health in a holistic way**.

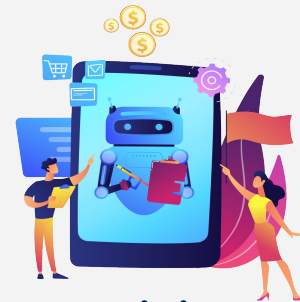
And to all that, we add the advances in **technology and digitalization** bringing in enhanced **human-machine collaboration opportunities** and their impact into the work of social professionals.



Demographic & Economic factors



Network Society



Holistic Health



Human-Machine Collaboration



Demographic & Economic factors

Increased lifespan and growth of the aging population, urbanization, migration flows, income polarization are among the Demographic & Economic factors which could influence the future of social field. These changes could imply more social and emotional skills for the social professional, as well as increased communication and empowerment capacities.

The next decade could be a time of painful restructuring as the economy grows more competitive and jobs themselves unbundle, plus the envisaged crisis generated by the current pandemic. Social professionals need to be prepared to work with diverse users from seniors to migrants, while counselling them on financial, employment, education, and other issues related to their economic well-being.



Concrete signals of change

- **Professional courses for seniors**

In 2019 the government in Brasília launched a training program for seniors with the aim to promote a more active and healthier lifestyle for citizens over 60 in low-income areas. They provide among others free professional level courses in informatics and entrepreneurship. ([LINK](#))

- **Online instrument that increases awareness upon the inequality**

El Privilegio de Decidir (by Oxfam and Domestic Data Streamers) is a campaign aimed at raising awareness on the direct impact of inequality in daily life. The online interactive experience has a ruler that measures a user's personal level of privilege and offers the possibility to sign a petition calling on the government to include measures to combat inequality. ([LINK](#))



Concrete signals of change

- **Intergenerational coaching network**

DUO for a JOB is a platform that brings together young immigrants looking for a job with people over 50yo who can use their professional experience to mentor and support young people looking for a job. ([LINK](#))

- **Crowdfunding for educational hub**

Two teachers from the Teach for Romania program managed, through a crowdfunding campaign, to transform a disused bus into an educational hub in a village in Brasov, Romania. ([LINK](#))

- **Examples of crowdfunding solutions:**

Crowdfunder - a crowdfunding platform for community groups, businesses, charities and social enterprises.

Spacehive - crowdfunding local projects to transform public spaces.

Start some good (the platform also offers crowdfunding courses!)

Consolid8 - Romanian platform launched in 2020.

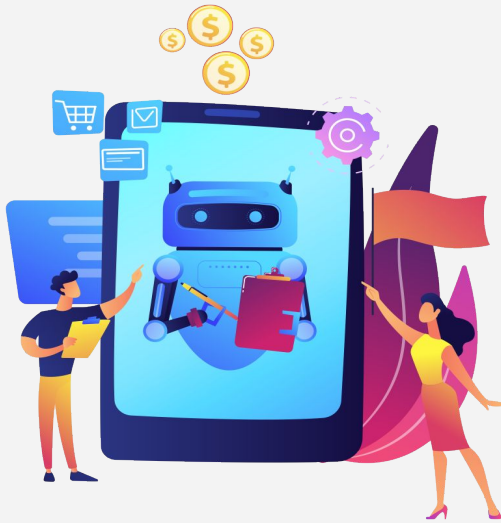


Network Society

This cluster of change is about the process of interaction and creation among the people, cultures, organizations, and governments of different nations.

By leveraging the power of network and communities, social professionals could achieve a greater impact within their projects and for their beneficiaries. An interesting resource in this perspective is the [Community Tool Box](#) - a platform that provides access to countless tools useful for building and developing communities.

The power of networks and crowd could also be leveraged to fund and bring various projects to life, through crowdfunding - a method of raising funds through a collective effort.



Holistic Health

Social professionals, due to their involvement in the forefront of activities at community level, are in the best place to make a substantial contribution to approaching health and care services in a holistic way.

Even at individual level, we are more aware of an expansion of health as a concept. We are talking more and more about alternative approaches such as those proposed by NEWtrition, preventive or remote healthcare.

Signals show change in areas such as: redistribution of power to service users, an increasing importance of peer-to-peer support groups or the evolution of the place of service provision / treatment.



Concrete signals of change

- **Service beneficiary in control**
The Esther project in Sweden brings together doctors, nurses, social and other professionals to analyze how the care system could work from the patient's perspective. To do this, the specialists involved in the project created the profile of a fictional person, whom they named Esther. Esther is a woman in her 80s who suffers from chronic lung disease and lives alone. ([LINK](#))
- **Online support community**
Togetherall is an online peer support community for mental health. Innovative technology, a holistic approach and trained moderators create a unique environment for members. ([LINK](#))
- **Innovative Swedish bottom-up management model**
According to Tubbemoddelén, senior homes are run and organised by the residents, with the support of the staff, not the other way round. ([LINK](#))



Concrete signals of change

- **Artificial Intelligence gives hunger a unique face**

For a 2019 campaign, Feeding America used AI to “personalize” hunger. Images of 1,000 people who had visited food banks were merged and turned into a unique, “average” AI face in order to raise awareness on the topic. ([LINK](#))

- **IBM Digital assistants for social services**

Digital assistants could provide the support needed to cover bureaucratic / routine tasks, allowing professionals to devote more attention to case assessment, to critical decisions and more time to empathize with those in need. ([LINK](#))

- **Platform for community health workers**

Medic Mobile offer access to healthcare documents and information for healthcare workers in hard-to-reach areas with or without internet. ([LINK](#))



Human-Machine Collaboration

This driver of change is about technology and about how could social professionals harness and leverage technology to advance their work.

Almost half of the global population is now an Internet user (from only 1% in 1995). It is clear that technology will continue to progress and become integrated into people’s lives.

In the future we will be entering into a new kind of partnership with machines that will build on our mutual strengths, resulting in a new level of human-machine collaboration and codependence. Social professionals will need to learn to adopt and adapt technology for their needs and those of the people they serve.

They will also need to continue to use research and advocacy to push back when technology could cause harm.

SOCIAL FIELD 2030

Inventory of Future skills

Based on our research and participatory process, we have identified **16 Future Skills** to be considered. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of skills needed for the future.



Inventory of future skills



Demographic & Economic factors



Network Society



Holistic Health



Human-Machine Collaboration

Augment your foundation

Self-care

Ethics

Resilience

Empowerment

Gather your crowd

Masters of Community

Visibility management

Gig fluency

Diversity & Cultural agility

Think and act

Critical Thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems Thinking

Design Thinking

Get tech fluent

Work with(in) machines

Virtual collaboration & engagement

Data knowledge

Gamification

Long Life Learning



Augment your foundation

The future of work is deemed fluid. With technology rapidly changing the way we work, hard skills can get obsolete faster than before. Plus, social professionals can possess all the hard skills needed to execute projects at work, but if they don't have the ability to understand what the beneficiary or stakeholders want from these projects or the ability to interact with and empower their team members to execute these projects or the ability to take care of the mental wellbeing of the team, it is not sufficient.

Latest events and trends in human behaviour show that people become more fragile and tired, especially related to facing new external challenges and/or when working with the most vulnerable individuals. Work-life balance, acting on strong values, knowing how to take failure and trusting yourself are more needed than ever.

Augment your foundation is a skills category about developing non-technical skills that help us all do the above and indirectly perform our career-related tasks, regardless of the job position we are in. We have selected 4 such skills as relevant for the future of the social field professional, that we will briefly describe in the following pages.

Self-care

Ethics

Empowerment

Resilience



Augment your foundation

Self-care

Ethics

Resilience

Empowerment

Self-care: This is a set of skills about how can people play an active role in managing their health and wellbeing. Being able to take care of yourself and your everyday energy is critical for social professionals. Stress and burnout in social work are real. There is no “one-size-fits-all” self-care plan, but a common thread to all self-care plans could be: making a commitment to attend to all the domains of your life, including your physical and psychological health, emotional and spiritual needs, and relationships.

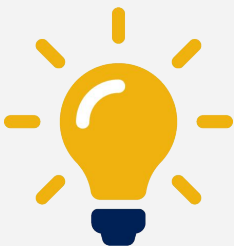
Do you actively use supervision, set boundaries, seek out professional development opportunities? It is a valuable skill as a social professional to outline and follow a self-care plan.

Also, a compassionate cultivation of self-awareness is essential. Developing such skill could help in knowing and developing your authentic self, building stronger relations, better your moods and decision-making, work or communicate more effectively.

Start now!

Self-care is important to me. How can I augment it?

Start from writing down 3 new ways in which you could do that, one that can be done in 5 minutes, another in 5 days and one in a year.



Inspiration: Check out this material on are assessment and how to develop a self-care plan.[\(LINK\)](#)

Or check-out Thinkladder - Self-awareness & Mental Wellness! Thinkladder is a guide that helps link symptoms to underlying limiting beliefs and then offers the opportunity to challenge those beliefs with insights collated by mental health experts. [\(LINK\)](#)



Augment your foundation

Self-care

Ethics

Resilience

Empowerment

Ethics: Ethics is how one objectively analyzes, assesses and evaluates an issue or situation to form a judgment and make a decision. More than that, ethics is about developing a personal set of strong values and acting upon them.

We can and we do take decisions

every day, but what are those based on and what is the process we follow?

In the future, one of the main concerns related to work ethic in the social field could be at the intersection of humans and technology (e.g. data privacy).

I want to engage in **ethical** decision-making.

Start from reflecting on 3 examples of how you / the team used ethical decision making in your work with others in the last year.

Start now!



Inspiration: Check out the ethical code for social work professionals provided by the Swedish Association of Graduates in Social Science, Personnel and Public Administration, Economics and Social Work ([LINK](#))

Or learn from Data Science for Social Good - based out of Chicago, Illinois, their mission is to use data and analytics for social good. ([LINK](#))

For those involved in research, it is worthwhile checking the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings - a resource for all stakeholders who want to ensure that research is carried out ethically in lower income settings and without 'ethics dumping', the export of unethical practices from high income to lower income countries ([LINK](#))



Augment your foundation

Self-care

Ethics

Resilience

Empowerment

Resilience: Resilience is about how you position yourself toward obstacles, about how you learn from them and how they help you to become stronger. According to this [article](#), resilient social professionals rely on habits of mind and actions to foster attitudes of open curiosity and awareness of judgment that sustain them through the vicissitudes of their often difficult work. Juggling a caseload, managing interns, finding time for case notes, handling crisis

situations—these responsibilities require social professionals to have a great dose of resilience. In the same time, being able to articulate how you manage pressure is critical for resilient social professionals.

If you haven't read it yet, we highly recommend the famous book of Nassim Taleb called "[Antifragile](#)" which talks about resilience for the future and takes it even a step forward, towards antifragility.

Start now!

I want to become more resilient! What could help me?

Start from informing yourself and writing down 3 ways to achieve that!



Inspiration: A great read on the subject is this practical guide for *Developing emotional resilience and wellbeing for social professionals*. ([LINK](#))

Check out the Resilience App - an evidence-based toolkit for organizations who want to understand the resilience strengths and risk areas within their team ([LINK](#))

Or befriend a virtual coach from the Driven Resilience App: Resilience in 5 minutes a day ([LINK](#))



Augment your foundation

Self-care

Ethics

Resilience

Empowerment

Empowerment: We often hear social professionals need to empower their beneficiaries/clients. But what about themselves and their colleagues? Empowerment is a skill about the art of creating an environment within which a given professional or his/her team can grow, learn, take initiatives and responsibilities, feel empowered enough to make decisions, develop their autonomy, access and share feedback (and feed forward),

experiment new performance solutions, and generally increase their organization's value.

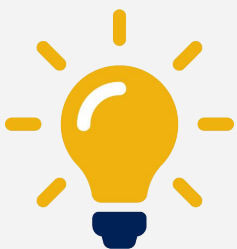
Plus, in the future, social work would involve more advocating for policies that promote greater social justice and equity. It all should start with social professionals feeling confident and empowered in their everyday work.

I want to practice **empowerment** more often!

List 3 persons / organizations that you consider thought leaders for empowerment and identify ways of learning from each of them.

Start now!

Inspiration: Check out *Say it forward* – a platform for women empowerment ([LINK](#))



Check out *Heifer International*, an organization that works to bring sustainable solutions to communities living in extreme poverty. They support people through empowerment: “We don’t come in and say to people, ‘Here is what you need to do.’ We form co-ops and we ask, ‘What do you need?’” ([LINK](#))



Think and act

Remaining relevant in the future could be a lot about connecting the dots and making sense of the complex systems around us. We talk about extreme events – pandemics or natural disasters, about technology changing not only what and how we do, but also changing who we are.

Think and act is a set of cognitive skills that could help social professionals to develop the willingness to accept the uncertainty, the fact that we do not know what we do not know and to find new ways in complex and continuously changing environments. We recommend exploring the following skills and methods:

Critical thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems thinking

Design thinking



Think and act

Critical thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems thinking

Design thinking

Critical thinking: For a social professional, the concept of Critical Thinking involves more than working with the individual client on the basis of an analysis. It also implies an objective and neutral understanding of the information one has about the citizen concerned.

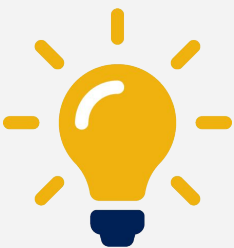
Social work is rooted in sociological

thinking, and just as sociologists are tasked with practicing criticism, social work also has such a task. Social work must be aware of and criticise the social conditions that cause social problems, human suffering, freedom, inequality and injustice, and must make the underlying mechanisms visible and actively work to change them.

Start now!

Am I a **critical thinker**?

Name 3 resources that could help you assess your current status and identify areas for improvement.



Inspiration: Check out *Critical Thinking Assessments and Testing from The Foundation for Critical Thinking*. ([LINK](#))

Book recommendation: *Critical Thinking for Managers*, Radu Atanasiu, Springer 2021 ([LINK](#))



Think and act

Critical
thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems
thinking

Design
thinking

Ambidexterity: This is a skill about maintaining the balance between exploiting the present and exploring the future. In social field this skill could translate as: (i) maximizing qualitative and quantitative returns by aligning and utilizing existing resources and competences and (ii) seeking out new opportunities (e.g. for funding projects, for identifying and solving beneficiaries' needs, for

communicating and interacting) and adapting to changing environments.

On the one hand, social work should achieve results - on the other hand, it should not be based exclusively on standards, previously familiar and old, but always assume that a new (individual) solution is required for every new (individual) problem.

How can I practice more often **ambidexterity**?

How would the process of embedding ambidexterity in your organization / day to day work / team look like? Describe main activities.

Start now!



Inspiration: Check out this research paper - How to Put Organizational Ambidexterity into Practice – Towards a Maturity Model ([LINK](#))

Read more about Foresight and how you can explore, prospect and plan for the future! Here is an interesting article on Foresight and the future of Social Work ([LINK](#))



Think and act

Critical
thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems
thinking

Design
thinking

Systems thinking: Social systems are complex, change rapidly and are not simple cause-effect models. It is never enough to want to explain a situation or a person solely through one factor. We are bio-psycho-social-ecological-economic-spiritual beings and only the mutual interaction of all these levels gives the overall picture of a person and behaviour.

Therefore, we also have to know about these different influencing factors in order to be able to explain the experience and behavior of a person

or of groups. Simply put, systems thinking skill is the skill to perform problem solving in complex systems.

Systems thinking is the basis for holistic approaches in solutions finding. We recognize systems thinking skills in practice in the moment in which we notice the willingness to see a situation more fully, to identify patterns, to recognize that elements are interrelated and to acknowledge that there are often multiple solutions to a problem.

Start now!

How can I make **systems thinking** my default way of thinking?

Name 3 activities that you can be part of in the next 3 months and which could improve your systems thinking capabilities.



Inspiration: Subscribe for the newsletter of *The Systems Thinker*. ([LINK](#))

Together with your team, join the free online course from *Acumen on Systems Practice*. ([LINK](#))



Think and act

Critical
thinking

Ambidexterity

Systems
thinking

Design
thinking

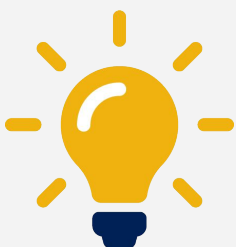
Design thinking: this is a skill of how to think and find solutions like a designer. Tim Brown, the executive chair of IDEO, defines Design thinking as “a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for success.” In social work, thinking like a designer could transform the way beneficiaries’ needs are solved, but also the way services, processes and strategy are created.

The five phases of a typical design thinking process are: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. To be able to master “thinking as a designer”, it is very important to master empathy. Displaying empathy allows social professionals to identify with and understand another person’s experience and point of view; and consequently, to build stronger relationships with the beneficiaries. It is a vital skill that helps social professionals to determine each beneficiary’s real needs based on his or her unique experiences in order to efficiently provide services.

How can I embed **design thinking** into my work?

Identify 3 projects that use design thinking methodology and mindset and learn from them.

Start now!



Inspiration: Get inspired from social professionals who Design website and materials. ([LINK](#))

Check out project Transform – Design Thinking for social innovation. ([LINK](#)) or this article on How to get Design Thinking in as an Element of Social Work ([LINK](#))



Gather your crowd

The future of our society is a lot about the power of crowds and community building. Talking about social issues and justice is a good thing, getting involved or making individual changes in our behaviour helps in building a sustainable future; however, we can't change systems and policy instantly and individually. But we can build and come together in communities that show up for each other, embrace and support one another. And developing skills that harness the power of crowds and capitalize on networks or communities could be vital for social professionals in the future.

Social professionals could find solutions and bring projects to life way easier when they have contacts and communities to leverage. This could mean focusing on developing skills for building, funding and engaging with online and offline communities. For that purpose, the social professionals should be able and willing to make themselves known and to build a personal brand. In the current globally connected world, communities go beyond geographical limits, therefore being able to show diversity and cultural agility be a critical skill, while adapting to the new forms of work and be ready to step into the rising gig economy. The below are some of the skills relevant in these directions:

Masters of Community

Visibility Management

Gig Fluency

Diversity & Cultural Agility



Gather your crowd

**Masters of
Community**

**Visibility
Management**

**Gig
Fluency**

**Diversity &
Cultural Agility**

Masters of Community: Is not easy to build communities, and it is even harder to keep them running and having the desired impact. This skill is not about being part of many communities, networks or associations, but rather creating or being part of those relevant for your (organization) mission.

Although there are many materials and information on this skill of community building, we recommend focusing on the concrete tools and practicalities. An important aspect in community building is the concept of crowdfunding – participatory funding for dedicated causes.

Start now!

I want to be able to harness more the **power of crowds!**

Start by listing 3 persons that have been involved in the process of building a great community. Then, learn about 3 new tools / apps used by these community builders.

Bonus: read a case study about a good crowdfunding campaign – what was the approach, what were the steps, learnings, outcome?



Inspiration: David Spinx, the host of [Masters of Community podcast](#). ([LINK](#))

A good start for identifying tools could be scanning the resources offered by the team at [Community Tool Box](#).

[This](#) is a great article from Acumen on how to crowdfund.



Gather your crowd

Masters of
Community

Visibility
Management

Gig
Fluency

Diversity &
Cultural Agility

Visibility management: This is a skill about making yourself known - by building on what you are interested in (personally or professionally) and leveraging the global community of people. “This is how you’ll manage your reputation and build your personal brand—and learning how to curate your brand in multiple media and many cultures is the first key to success.” cites IFTF in a research about future relevant skills. So imagine that, in the future, your life becomes your resume. With

current technologies, social media and open-source approach, one can get access to a quite detailed level of information about someone’s past work and experience. And it makes you think of how important is to carefully curate and cultivate what is online about you... So, visibility management is also about managing your (organization) reputation. Mastering this skill helps you better gather people around a certain purpose and bring projects to life.

How do I make myself more **visible**?

For sure you master at least few of these future skills described in the report. Choose one and list 3 ways in which you could share more about that specific topic with others so that they could easier linking your name with that specific skill.

Start now!



Inspiration: Carmen Uscatu and Oana Gheorghiu from the Romanian NGO *Daruieste Viata* are constantly visible in social media where they share opinions or do crowdfunding campaign for healthcare related causes. ([LINK](#))

Ryan Levesque made himself known as *The Orchid Guy* by sharing his experience and teaching people how to grow orchids. ([LINK](#))



Gather your crowd

**Masters of
Community**

**Visibility
Management**

**Gig
Fluency**

**Diversity &
Cultural Agility**

Gig fluency: This is a skill about how to remain relevant in a future in which gig economy is rising. Gig economy is everything that has to do with flexible and on-demand work. In a digital future, this could become more present. Usually gig-ers are defined by: always working on diverse projects and employers, but not in a traditional, in-office, full-time job; not in school, but always learning; accessing or renting what is needed rather than owning stuff.

Gig economy and its implications for social dialogue and workers'

protection are yet to be properly regulated, however a possible glimpse into a future of gigs in social field comes from HomeTouch – one of the first online platforms in the UK for personal assistants to advertise as gig workers, and for service users to hire them. Gig approach to work could also favour the increase of transdisciplinarity in social field – the development of more professionals that are “T-shaped” (very good on one field, but knowledgeable in multiple other disciplines or directions).

Start now!

Where do I learn more about **gig economy**?

Scan a platform dedicated to gig workers. Understand its particularities.

Then identify 3 activities in your organisation that could be transformed in independent gigs which could be performed project-based."



Inspiration: Check out Catalant – on-demand platform with experts from around the world which can help organizations from strategy to execution. ([LINK](#))



Gather your crowd

**Masters of
Community**

**Visibility
Management**

**Gig
Fluency**

**Diversity &
Cultural Agility**

Diversity & Cultural Agility: In a truly globally connected world, a social professional could access projects from any number of locations and with very diverse team members. This would demand specific content, such as linguistic skills, but also the agility to adapt to changing circumstances and to sense and respond to new contexts.

The social work profession is built upon culturally sensitive practices that advocate for social and economic justice for those who are

disadvantaged, oppressed, and/or discriminated against.

Cultural competence requires social professionals to examine their own cultural backgrounds and identities, to increase awareness of personal assumptions, values, stereotypes, and biases. Building regional / global communities or applying for international gigs would also mean mastering certain cross-cultural understanding. Plus, organizations increasingly see diversity as a driver of innovation.

Start now!

I want to work in projects with rich **diversity!**

Make a list of 5 ideas that could help you get involved in at least one international project with partners from different countries and diverse cultures.



Inspiration: Check out a nice video on what norm-critical innovation is and how it can enhance innovation capacity and contribute to inclusive social development ([LINK](#))



Get tech fluent

Technology is everywhere and is constantly evolving. Think of technology like a superpower of the social field practitioner: it can help at limiting administrative duties through digitalization and allow social field professionals to focus on other more relevant activities.

Tech fluent social professionals understand how ICTs and other digital tools are appropriately used in all types of social work and they use digital tools in practice. Tech fluency skills can easily become obsolete; to remain competitive, workers will need to acquire new skills continually, which requires flexibility, a positive attitude towards lifelong learning and curiosity. We recommend exploring the 4 set of skills for tech fluency mentioned below:

Work with(in) machines

Data knowledge

Virtual collab. & engagement

Gamification



Get tech fluent

**Work with(in)
machines**

**Data
knowledge**

**Virtual collab. &
engagement**

Gamification

Work with(in) machines: A 2018 IFTF and Dell study states that in the future humans could serve as “digital conductors”, technology would exist within and as an extension of us, rather than separated from us as it is now. Mastering the skills of working with(in) machines could allow social field practitioners for example to:

- understand and leverage artificial intelligence;
- create psychoeducational resources;
- use a virtual assistant to fill in/compute/interpret data about beneficiaries;
- understand and secure digital footprints, etc.

Start now!

Imagine you are requested to assemble a **team of humans, robots, and virtual assistants** and get them all to work together!

Where do you start? Describe the 5 main activities of such process.



Inspiration: Familiarize yourself with the concept of Digital Worker in social field by reading this white paper from IBM and Blue Prism “The Future of Work for Social Services” ([LINK](#))

Read also about Vital, an Artificial Intelligence robot named Board Member in 2014. ([LINK](#))



Get tech fluent

Work with(in)
machines

Data
knowledge

Virtual collab. &
engagement

Gamification

Data knowledge: We all generate vast amount of data, but data is valuable only when it becomes actionable – when it tells us something about the behavior of a beneficiary, for example. Jobs activities and

requirements tend to become more and more data-centric. Someone walking into your job today has even more opportunities to incorporate data. Developing a basic data knowledge is crucial for social professionals.

How do I improve my **data knowledge**?

List 5 sources of learning on data and its impact into the social field – it can be articles, podcasts, communities, but also job shadowing a data scientist.

Start now!



Inspiration: Interesting article on [Why social professionals Need Data Science](#) ([LINK](#))

Nesta' article on [Data-Driven social professional](#) is also a good resource. ([LINK](#))



Get tech fluent

Work with(in)
machines

Data
knowledge

Virtual collab. &
engagement

Gamification

Virtual collaboration & engagement:

Traditional physical collaboration has seen in the last years a shift towards digital experiences. The Covid-19 pandemic is ushering in a new, digital-oriented way of engaging and collaborating. Social practitioners should be able to:

- maintain the culture and the team spirit of the organization
- master the new “phygital” world – combination of physical and digital;
- engage agency stakeholders and advocate for policy change;
- develop virtual communities;
- communicate with clients, track progress of projects, help families stay connected across distance.

Start now!

How can I improve my **virtual collaboration & engagement** skills?

Start by scanning and understanding what is emerging in the field in terms of tools or apps. Share your top within your team or on social media and ask for other people's experience with relevant tools.



Inspiration: NEO, a virtual assistant with he mission to help people to be in 2 places in the same time. ([LINK](#))

Tandem is a desktop app that simulates a "virtual office," allowing you to see what other people are working on and letting you quickly jump onto a video chat (with screensharing) with the click of a button. ([LINK](#))

Otter AI creates automated transcriptions in real time, as speakers are talking. The resulting transcript is searchable, and identifies the different speakers and key phrases. ([LINK](#))



Get tech fluent

Work with(in)
machines

Data
knowledge

Virtual collab. &
engagement

Gamification

Gamification: Human beings have a basic need for playfulness activities, even when they grow old. Gamification is about capitalizing on that need and adding game mechanics into nongame environments in order to better connect or motivate the audience.

As the new generations enjoy more and more playing video games and creating virtual worlds, tech-based gamification could be a way to better reach such audience.

How can I embed more **gamification** into my work?

Here you can find several examples of gamification used in social work. Get inspired from them and create with your team minimum 3 ideas of how you can gamify the work with your beneficiaries

Start now!



Inspiration: *Kineage is a serious game for seniors with the aim to improve their health and wellbeing. It is configurable for people with different physical disabilities, promoting exercise and leisure. ([LINK](#))*

Read this study case from Sweden on using gamification for Adolescent Dating Violence - Game-Based Intervention–A Technical Tool for social professionals to Combat ([LINK](#))

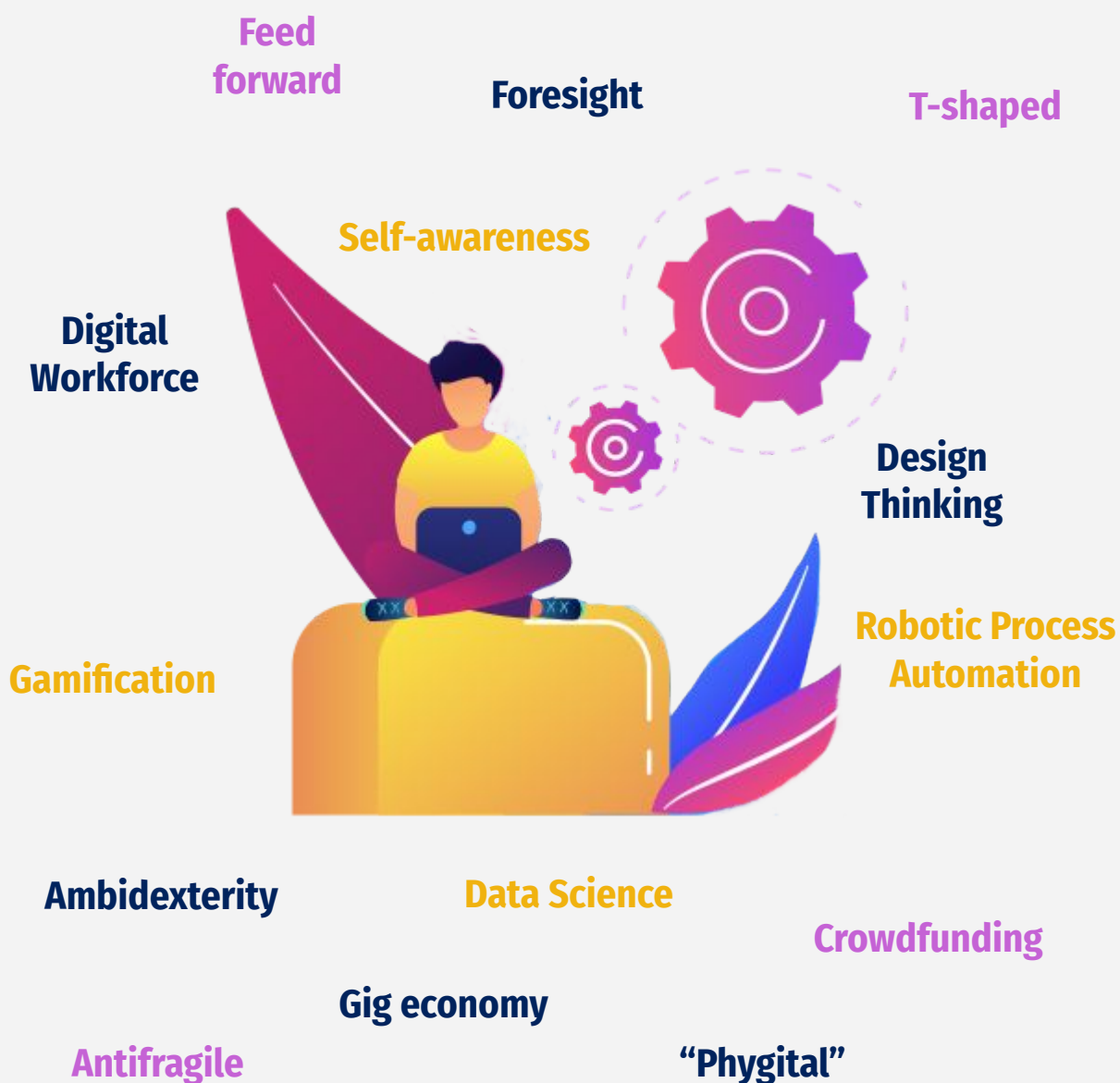
Explore Hi quest – a serious game in which teenagers can learn to become kind and fair adults by getting immersed in this board game and exploring a series of imaginary cities, while being in the classroom ([LINK](#))

Pain Squad – kids with cancer control their pain through gamification with back-up from Flashpoint characters ([LINK](#))



Reflect some more

There are more and more new concepts emerging when thinking of the future of work and the future of social field. Make your own "word cloud" with concepts you want to get more familiar with, in order to be better prepared for the future.



FORESIGHT

Imagine the world of 2030

Based on the future trends and signals of presented, we have developed a narrative about a possible future scenario – A day in the life of a social professional. Future scenarios are not predictions or things that we want them to happen; they are rather narratives about things which could happen.

The scenario invites the audience to reflect on the hypotheses described and could kickstart the conversation about how can we prepare for such a future, both as an organization as well as professionals.

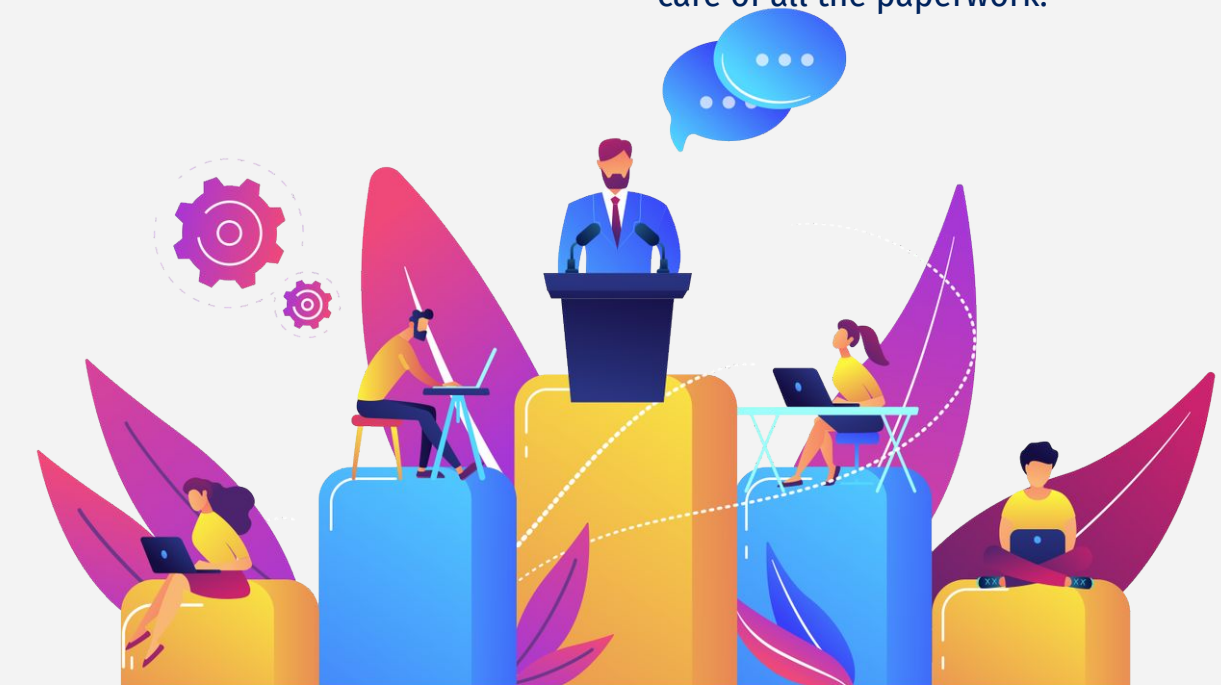


This morning you ordered a car without a driver and went to a meeting with one of your clients. In the afternoon you will meet online the members of the multidisciplinary team you are part of to discuss the new program of support, activation, and involvement of seniors from the community you work with.

The latest training in financial education in which your colleagues participated resulted in spectacular outcomes and your organization is now supporting several start-ups managed by people over 70 years old. This program, as well as the one for the youth, was financed through a crowdfunding campaign in which several thousand people from the country and abroad participated.

Tonight, you will attend this year's edition of the Social Media Awards, where one of the winners was an NGO you collaborate with as freelancer and that works intensely on social media, generating original content, live streaming, and adapted fundraising campaigns. You already know that you will post about this on your personal and NGO branding page.

Your favorite social network shows you a photo from 10 years ago, when you were dealing with a bunch of files and putting together some reports. You can't even believe how much things have changed... The 2020 pandemic has accelerated the digitalization of social and health services infrastructure, so now you have your digital assistant who takes care of all the paperwork.





Next week you will have an evaluation meeting with your coordinator, and you already know what area of personal development you want to focus on in the next year. You must always be prepared for the changes that occur in your field... Should you consider the last 10 years, it is undoubtedly that not many imagined that navigators of social and health services, life coaching, courses on how to age beautifully and so many other things will be part of the basic package of services.

Picture yourself as a social field professional in 2030. You are proud of yourself and of what you have achieved so far.

There have certainly been many challenges and other changes lie ahead for sure, but you are confident that knowing who you are and what you want in life will help you overtake them all. You feel that the education you received and all the online and offline trainings you participated in, the mentoring, coaching, and supervision services you were able to benefit from, helped you get here. You live your profession as a vocation and you like what you do, the fact that you empower people and help them realize their potential, the fact that you work in and with communities that become stronger every day. You enjoy doing that while working in flexible teams in which each professional contributes with their skills.

**Looking back, what were the top skills that helped you remain relevant in the social field and the world of 2030?
How did you develop them?**





A possible action plan for the future

After reading through the report, understanding some of the possible changes affecting the social field and revisiting the future skills presented, we encourage you to make yourself a possible action plan for the future. For kickstarting that, you can consider the below 3 steps:

1 LOOK BACK BEFORE LOOKING FORWARD

In his TED talk "[The psychology of your future self](#)", Harvard psychologist Dan Gilbert mentions: "Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they're finished". Only when we look backwards do we realize how much change happens in a decade. Most of us can remember who we were 10 years ago, but we find it hard to imagine who we're going to be, and then we mistakenly think that because it's hard to imagine, it's not likely to happen. Experts call this the "end of history" illusion. We should all acknowledge this before looking into the future.

Start by watching the above mentioned TED talk.

2 IDENTIFY CURRENT SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Signals of change can mean anything from a new way of doing a service to a new job function you read about or a new digital tool some international colleagues are using. Current report showcases, both under Drivers of change and Future skills sections, numerous concrete examples of changes from social field.

Select some of those that you consider could significantly affect your organization / line of work.

3 FORESIGHT: VISION OF YOUR FUTURE SELF

Project your profession in 2030. Will it still exist? How has it changed compared to 2021? What are those skills that you master now and were deficient in 2021?

(As future enthusiastic ourselves, we would love to read the results of your visioning exercise. If you feel like, please share them with us [here](#).)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

About us

***FOCUS project partners &
Future Station***



About us

CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization

Since 1991, CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization (Romania) helps children and young people to regain their confidence, to develop and start on a new path to an independent life through family-type homes, day centers, schools and social housing. As part of the organization, CONCORDIA Academia is an excellence center in training and professional development and offers certified training programs for practitioners, managers and supervisors, as well as supervision, coaching and consultancy services aiming to contribute to capacitating and increasing the quality of social services.

Colegiul Național al Asistenților Sociali (CNASR)

The National College of Social Workers in Romania (CNASR) is a professional, non-governmental, public, non-political, non-profit, autonomous and independent organization with legal personality, which represents and protects the interests of social workers, at national and international level. CNASR is the largest and the only professional organization of social workers from Romania, representing, on January 1, 2021, the interests of 10.092 members.

Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali (IFOA)

IFOA is a not-for-profit private body appointed since 1999 as a national VET centre, with 10 sites all over Italy. As a Training and Employment Agency born from the experience of the Chambers of Commerce, it offers growth paths, training, professionalization and employment programs for unemployed youngsters and adults, as well as lifelong training, consultancy and technical assistance to individuals, businesses and public bodies. IFOA works both on national and international levels, driven by the desire of transferring useful knowledge to people, businesses and territories.

FH Vorarlberg

The Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences (FH Vorarlberg) is a leading Austrian University of Applied Sciences that offers Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in the fields of social work & health, business administration, engineering, technology and design. FH Vorarlberg is a small university of applied sciences and fosters a culture of open doors and direct communication.



About us

A special feature of FH Vorarlberg is an exceptional lecturer-to-student ratio of 1:12. FH Vorarlberg enjoys excellent relations with business and industry in Vorarlberg, which means that students can choose from a range of internships and graduates have excellent job prospects.

SOSU Ostjylland

SOSU Ostjylland is the second largest social and health care college in Denmark. It provides different educational and training programs for staff of social and health care institutions working with elderly, disabled people, in hospitals and psychiatry wards. SOSU continuously develops innovative pedagogic and didactic training material and organize practical internships working closely together with the employers. The organization has a lot of experience in sharing Danish know-how related to different areas and aspects of education, social and health fields, approaching digitalization as an important tool.

Future Station

Future Station, represented by Diana Stafie, was the Foresight Lead for project FOCUS. Future Station undertook the analysis of drivers of change, the development of future skills inventory and the writing of this report. Future Station is a foresight consultancy practice which engages in activities such as strategic planning (trend scouting and scenario planning) or preparing teams for future realities. Clients served range from corporate to entrepreneurs, NGOs and public institutions.

The creative and design elements of the report were done by our collaborators: [Graphlings](#) and [Innvision](#).

Disclaimer

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Keep in touch with
FOCUS project:



SCAN ME

Foresight Lead:



**FUTURE
STATION**

Spot the early signs
of future change

