

**SociALL. Making social care technologies accessible to all**

**WP2. Assessment of upskilling needs & Dissemination I**

## **Activity 2.4 - Transnational report**



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## Overview

SociALL, an Erasmus-funded multinational initiative, seeks to harness the accelerated adoption of technological advancements, notably accelerated by the impact of COVID-19, to streamline the responsibilities of social care professionals while enhancing the quality of care provided to patients.

The core mission of SociALL revolves around democratizing technology access for care professionals. It does so by identifying and addressing the digital literacy and readiness gap within this group, thereby crafting and piloting training programs aimed at enhancing the utilization of technology-enhanced care, benefiting both caregivers and patients.

At its essence, SociALL strives to elevate the digital competencies of care professionals. Within the framework of SociALL's Work Package 2 (WP2), the specific objective is to comprehensively ascertain the genuine upskilling requirements among care professionals with respect to the utilization of technology-enhanced tools and practices in the field of home care.

The project's primary focus centers on vocational education and training (VET) specifically tailored to enhance the digital skills of care professionals. Achieving this goal necessitates a meticulous and up-to-date comprehension of the existing skill gaps and the most effective strategies for addressing them. The activities within this WP build upon the focused needs analysis conducted during the project's preparation phase. WP2 adopts a dual-pronged approach to pinpoint and thoroughly investigate the most pertinent upskilling needs within the care professional community, as they constitute the primary target group and end users of SociALL's anticipated outcomes. This approach begins with country-specific desk research followed by extensive surveys among care professionals.

In this regard, the research and surveys are designed to delve deeply into the knowledge and skills gaps associated with the use of technology-enhanced tools and practices in home care. This encompasses a wide array of technologies, including high-precision telemedicine devices for remote monitoring, smartphone applications, care management software, population health algorithms, sensor-based technologies

such as pendants and bracelets, as well as social networking and communication technologies such as senior-friendly smartphones, computers equipped with accessibility features, and communication platforms like Zoom and Skype. Each technological category undergoes both quantitative and qualitative assessments to gauge the current state of knowledge and skills among care professionals. This approach empowers project partners to address the most immediate and extensive skill deficiencies. Therefore, SociALL's overarching methodology aims to pinpoint the precise digital upskilling requirements necessary to fulfill the project's general objective: enhancing on-the-job digital proficiency in the utilization of digital tools and practices, thus augmenting the digital skills of care professionals.

This undertaking serves as a pivotal step toward enabling the consortium to grasp the national trends and unique nuances surrounding the adoption of technology-enhanced tools and practices in home care. Armed with this invaluable data, the partners can judiciously incorporate best practices into the development of the SociALL training package.

## Comprehensive Summary of the National Analysis:

Across Austria, Norway, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, there is a growing recognition of the transformative potential of digital technology within healthcare and social care sectors. This recognition has been reinforced by recent global events, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which expedited the adoption of tech-enhanced tools and services across the board.

### Digital Integration in Healthcare:

In all four countries, healthcare professionals and social care organizations are increasingly leveraging digital tools and techniques to enhance the quality and efficiency of care delivery.

Notably, e-health tools and services, such as telemedicine and electronic health records, are gaining ground. This signifies a shift towards more connected and data-driven healthcare systems.

The pandemic acted as a catalyst in this transformation, pushing the adoption of technology to the forefront and necessitating the modernization of healthcare practices.

In all four countries, around 35% of the population, as per a 2018 European Commission study, reported using e-health tools and services, such as telemedicine and electronic health records, in the past 12 months. This signifies a shift towards more connected and data-driven healthcare systems.

## **Skills Gap and Training Needs**

A consistent theme in Austria, Norway, Slovakia and the Czech Republic is the presence of a skills gap among healthcare and social care professionals regarding the effective utilization of digital tools.

This gap affects a significant portion of the workforce, with 80% of municipal health and care managers in Norway feeling that their staff needs more relevant technological skills.

This gap arises from limited training opportunities, inadequate access to essential technology, and a lack of technical proficiency among professionals.

Austria and Norway have identified the pressing need to equip care professionals with more relevant technological skills, emphasizing the role of targeted training programs.

## **Variability in Adoption**

There is notable variability in the adoption of technology across healthcare and social care sectors within all partner countries.

For instance, in Austria, healthcare professionals currently spend between 15% and 70% of their working hours on administrative tasks, with disparities in the use of technology among organizations.

Some healthcare organizations and professionals are at the forefront of technological advancements, capitalizing on the benefits of digital tools.

However, others face significant barriers, including financial constraints, limited resources, and insufficient support from organizational leadership or policymakers.

## **Training and Support Programs**

A common thread is the shared recognition of the importance of specialized training and support programs for care professionals.

Policymakers and organizations are urged to invest in comprehensive training initiatives to bridge the skills gap and empower professionals to use technology effectively.

## **Infrastructure Challenges**

Several regions within all partner countries, such as Slovakia, have highlighted infrastructure challenges, particularly limited broadband internet access.

These infrastructure limitations can significantly hinder the ability of healthcare professionals to access and effectively use technology, underscoring the importance of addressing these gaps for equitable access.

## **Client-Centered Technology**

An overarching principle is the importance of designing and implementing technology solutions with the needs and preferences of both care professionals and clients in mind.

User-friendly technology that seamlessly integrates into existing workflows is crucial for fostering widespread adoption and effectiveness.

## **Digital Transformation and Modernization**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for change, pushing the healthcare and social care sectors towards digital transformation and modernization.

Norway, for instance, recognizes the need to bring its healthcare system up to modern European standards.

In conclusion, all partner countries collectively acknowledge the transformative potential of digital technology within healthcare and social care, emphasizing the need to address skills gaps, provide comprehensive training and support, and ensure that technology is thoughtfully designed to meet the unique needs of these sectors. Policymakers and organizations are urged to take proactive steps to facilitate the digital transformation of these crucial areas, recognizing that the effective use of technology can lead to improved quality and efficiency of care delivery, benefiting both care professionals and clients.

## Comprehensive Summary of the Surveys

The aim of the questionnaire was to gather information from social care professionals about their digital skills, experiences, and preferences. It seeks to achieve the following objectives:

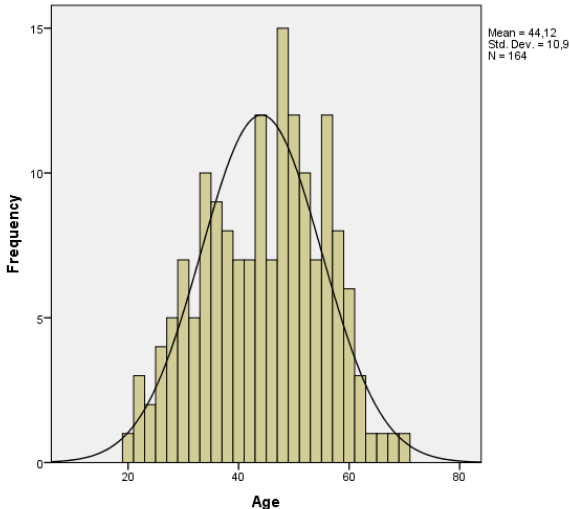
- Collect demographic data
- Assess education and profession
- Identify experience and target groups
- Evaluate computer and digital skills
- Assess IT training and support
- Examine software and technology usage
- Investigate COVID-19's impact on technology adoption
- Evaluate satisfaction with digital support tools
- Identify need for higher-level digital skills
- Gather software recommendations

The distribution of the 178 respondents:

- 55 - Czech Republic
- 46 - Austria
- 44 - Norway
- 32 – Slovakia

# Demography

Regarding demographics, the average age of 44 suggests a relatively mature workforce. The wide age range from 22 to 70 indicates a diverse group of individuals with varying levels of experience and perspectives. The gender distribution reveals a significant majority of women (88%) compared to men (12%), highlighting potential gender dynamics within the healthcare industry.



	Age
N	164
Minimum	20
Maximum	70
Mean	44,12
Std. Deviation	10,900

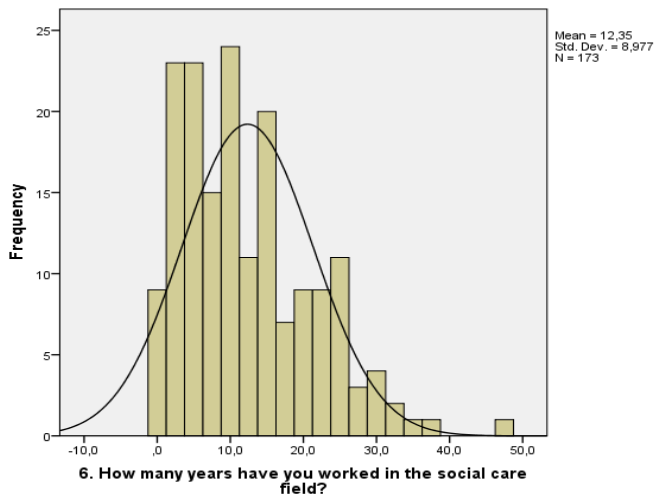
N=164, 173

Year of birth, Gender

The educational background of the respondents shows that almost half have advanced education levels, indicating a focus on acquiring specialized knowledge. Occupationally, social care professionals, nurses, and social workers dominate the workforce, suggesting their pivotal roles in providing care and support.

In terms of experience in the social sector, the respondents have demonstrated a commitment to their careers, with the longest employment duration being 48 years.





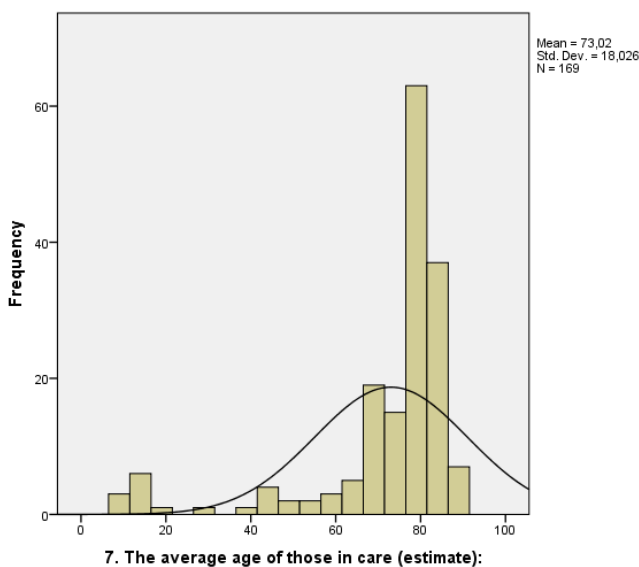
How many years have you worked in the social care field?	
N	173
Minimum	0,0
Maximum	48,0
Mean	12,350
Std. Deviation	8,9772

N= 173

6. How many years have you worked in the social care field?

## Care group

When estimating the average age of people in their care, respondents reported an average age of 73, with a broad range from 9 to 90. This suggests that caregivers encounter diverse age groups, with a particular emphasis on elderly individuals.

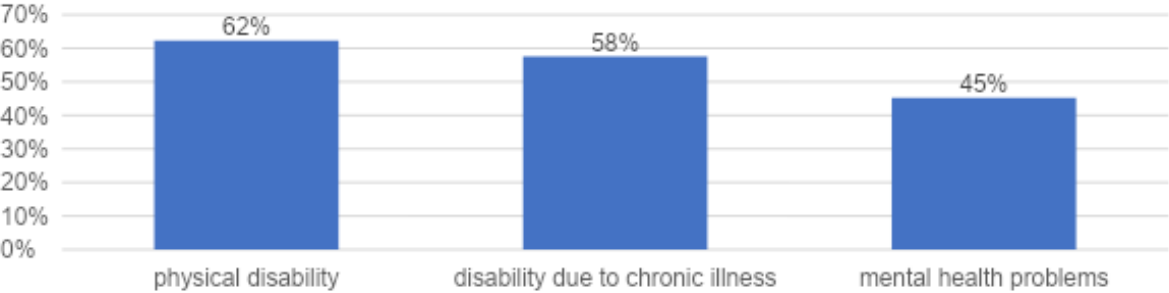


The average age of those in care	
N	169
Minimum	9
Maximum	90
Mean	73,02
Std. Deviation	18,026

N=168

7. The average age of those in care (estimate):

62% of respondents care for someone with a physical disability and more than half care for someone with a disability due to a chronic illness.



N= 170

8. Which respective target group do you care for?

## Digital skills and education

Approximately 60% of respondents can easily navigate and use digital services independently. However, there is a significant portion that rarely participates in training relevant to their use of new technologies, indicating potential gaps in acquiring necessary digital skills.

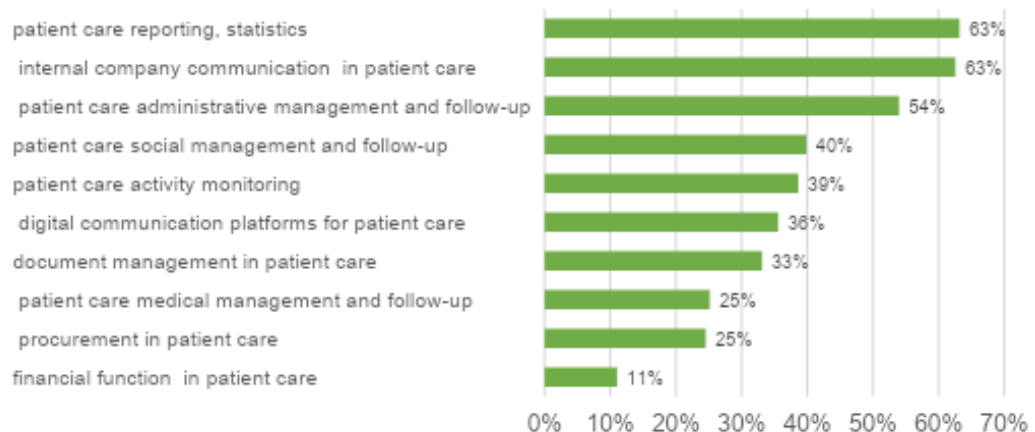


N= 176

9. How would you rate your computer and digital skills?

## Technical requirements and tech - enhanced tools at work

Most respondents use email, messenger, Skype or other chat software, and least use internet games and e-government. Usually, they need to use software for patient care reporting and statistics, or internal patient care communications. Financial function in patient care is the least needed. Software usage is prevalent among respondents, particularly for tasks such as patient care reporting, communication, and administration. However, the lack of detailed information provided for mentioned software tools (Cygnus, Teamwire) raises questions about their widespread adoption and effectiveness.



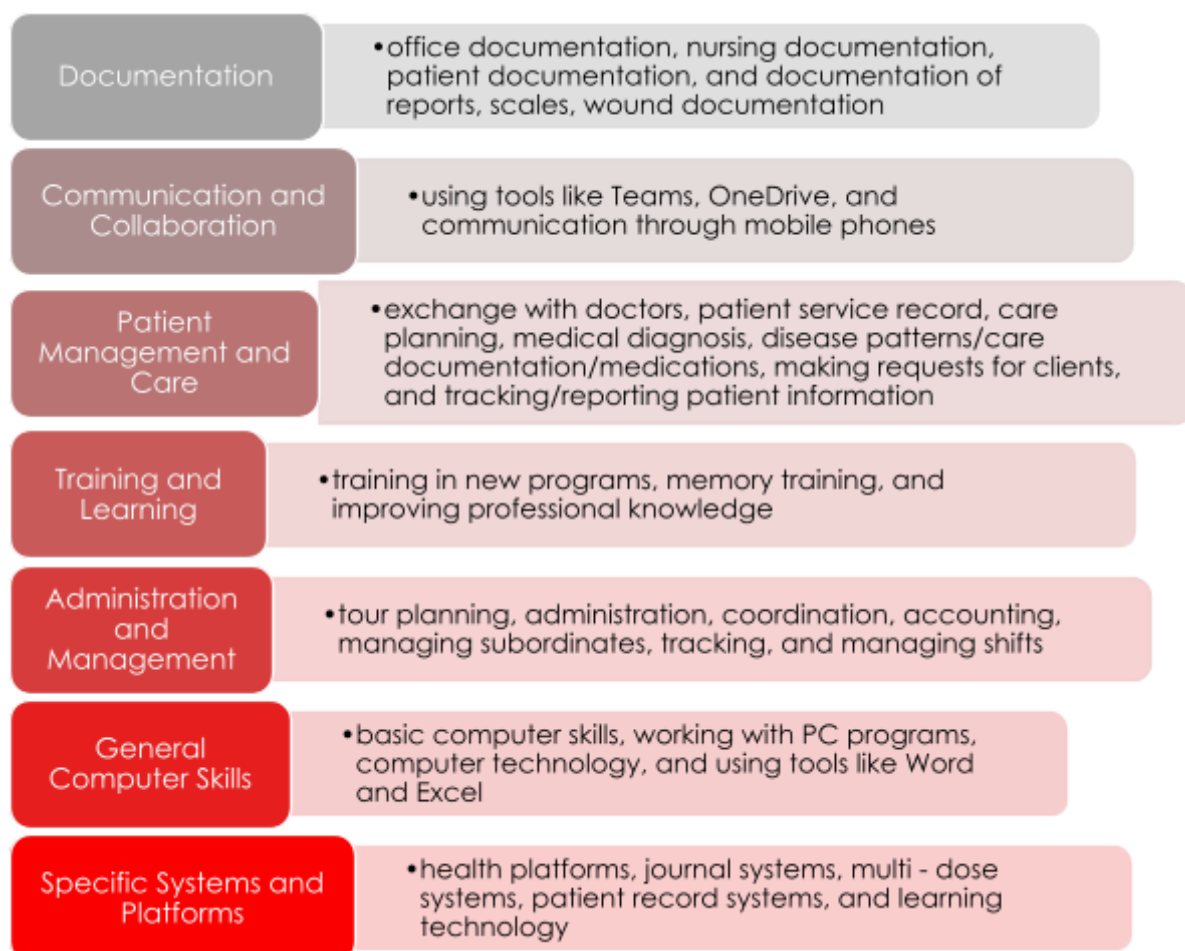
N= 163

14. In which areas do you have to use a software/tech - enhanced tools at your work?

7 out of 10 respondents use digital tools in their work every day. The introduction of new technologies has not been affected by the COVID epidemic in the daily work of most respondents, with the average response being 2.5. In each category, the majority of respondents rated their satisfaction with digital support tools and technologies at 3 out of 5.

- **Documentation:** Several respondents mentioned the need for digital skills in documentation - related tasks, such as office documentation, nursing documentation, patient documentation, and documentation of reports, measurements, wound documentation, etc. This indicates a common need for skills in utilizing digital tools for efficient and accurate documentation.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Skills in using digital tools for communication and collaboration were mentioned by some respondents, including the use of tools like Teams, OneDrive, and communication through mobile phones. This emphasizes the importance of effective digital communication in the workplace.
- **Patient Management and Care:** Some respondents mentioned the need for digital skills in patient management, exchange with doctors, patient service record, care planning, medical diagnosis, disease patterns/care documentation/medications, making requests for clients, and tracking/reporting patient information. This highlights the significance of digital skills in providing quality patient care and managing healthcare services.
- **Training and Learning:** Training in new programs, memory training, and improving professional knowledge were mentioned as areas where higher - level digital skills are needed. This suggests a desire to enhance skills and stay updated with the latest digital advancements in their respective fields.
- **Administration and Management:** Skills in using digital tools for tour planning, administration, coordination, accounting, managing subordinates, tracking, and managing shifts were mentioned by a few respondents. This indicates the importance of digital skills in administrative and managerial tasks within the healthcare sector.

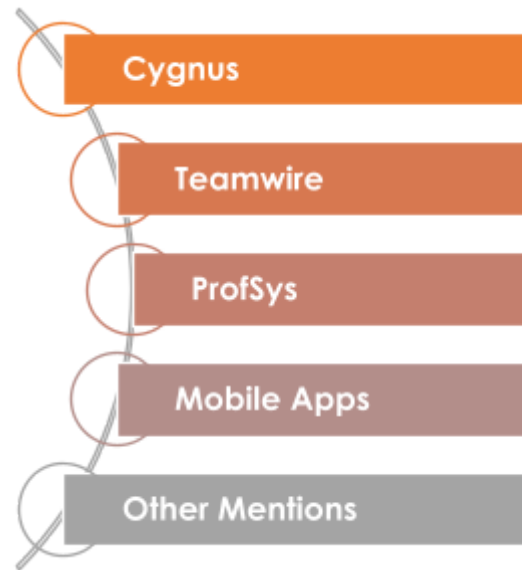
- **General Computer Skills:** Some respondents mentioned a need for basic computer skills, working with PC programs, computer technology, and using tools like Word and Excel. This implies that a foundation in computer literacy is essential for efficient work in various areas.
- **Specific Systems and Platforms:** Several responses highlighted the need for expertise in specific digital systems and platforms used in healthcare settings, such as health platforms, journal systems, multi - dose systems, patient record systems, and learning technology. This indicates the significance of proficiency in specialized tools and platforms used in the healthcare industry.



N=86

19. During your daily work, in which area(s) do you have the greatest need to acquire higher level digital skills?

- **Cygnus:** Several respondents mentioned the use of Cygnus, an electronic medical record (EMR) software. It is utilized by general practitioners and nurses for various purposes such as patient data management, wound photo evaluation, and mobile usage.
- **Teamwire:** Teamwire is a communication and collaboration platform mentioned by a few respondents. It is used for secure messaging and information sharing among healthcare professionals.
- **ProfSys:** ProfSys is mentioned by a couple of respondents, but there is no detailed information available about its specific functions or purpose.
- **Mobile Apps:** Respondents mentioned using mobile apps for various purposes, such as field care services, time recording, information sharing, and fall monitoring. However, specific app names were not provided.
- **Other Mentions:** There are several other mentions of specific software or tools without detailed information about their purpose or function. These include iPad, tablet, laptop, internet, robots, video editing tools, and unspecified software used in the Netherlands.



N=45

20. Is there any specific software that you use or would like to use in your work?

The analysis reveals that there are limited specific software recommendations provided by the respondents. The most frequently mentioned recommendation is Cygnus, an electronic medical record software, followed by mentions of Moka, voice - controlled documentation, Microsoft Teams, Miro, and Birk without detailed information about their purpose or function. Additionally, some respondents express uncertainty or a lack of recommendations. This indicates that there may be a need for

more exploration and awareness of software options within the field to identify suitable tools for various purposes.

### Training needs – must have

Based on the information provided in the questionnaire, the following kinds of IT training or programs could be beneficial for the respondents:

- **Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Software:** Since Cygnus is commonly mentioned among the respondents, the effective use of a general EMR software training would be highly beneficial. It can include modules for various departments and specialties, mobile usage, and optimizing workflows to improve patient documentation and data management.
- **Patient Care Reporting Software:** Since most respondents use software for patient care reporting, training tailored to specific platforms or tools for efficient and accurate reporting could be beneficial.
- **Software for Healthcare Management:** Respondents who mentioned using software for administration and management may benefit from training on software designed for healthcare management, including scheduling, billing, and record-keeping.
- **Online Collaboration Tools:** Given the emphasis on technology-enhanced care and communication, training on online collaboration tools (e.g., video conferencing platforms, project management tools) can improve the efficiency of virtual team communication and coordination.

### Training needs – nice to have

- **Mobile Apps for Healthcare:** Given the prevalence of smartphone applications among respondents, training on relevant mobile apps for healthcare, such as health tracking, telemedicine, and patient communication tools, can enhance patient care and accessibility.
- **Continuous Learning and Updates:** Providing ongoing training opportunities and keeping the respondents updated on the latest advancements in digital

healthcare tools and technologies will ensure their skills remain relevant and up-to-date.

- **Mentoring and Peer Support:** Establishing mentoring programs or peer support groups can facilitate knowledge sharing and mutual learning among caregivers, fostering a supportive environment for technology adoption.
- **Basic Digital Literacy Training:** For respondents who rated their computer and digital skills lower, a basic digital literacy program could be helpful. It should cover fundamental computer operations, internet usage, and familiarity with common software applications.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the respondents have a diverse range of needs for acquiring higher - level digital skills in their daily work. The areas that commonly require digital skills include documentation, communication and collaboration, patient management and care, training and learning, administration and management, general computer skills, specific systems and platforms, and specialized tools used in healthcare. These findings highlight the importance of digital proficiency in various aspects of healthcare work, facilitating efficient and effective service delivery.

## Conclusions

The analysis of Austria, Norway, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic collectively unveils a compelling narrative about the role of digital technology in healthcare and social care. It not only underscores the transformative potential of these digital tools but also highlights the critical importance of addressing the skills gap and fostering digital proficiency among professionals in these fields.

First and foremost, the findings reveal a diverse range of digital skill needs among respondents. These needs span across multiple domains, including documentation, communication, patient management, training, administration, computer literacy, specific systems, and specialized tools used in healthcare. Such diversity underscores the multifaceted nature of healthcare work and highlights the far-reaching impact of digital skills.



At the core of these digital needs lies a fundamental truth: digital proficiency is not just a matter of convenience but a pivotal factor in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare and social care services. The ability to effectively document patient information, communicate with colleagues and patients, manage and track patient care, and stay updated through continuous learning are all contingent upon digital skills.

These collective findings underscore that digital proficiency is no longer an option but an imperative. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this imperative by forcing healthcare and social care systems to adapt rapidly. The adoption of telemedicine, electronic health records, and remote monitoring tools is now a necessity to ensure the continuity of care and the safety of both healthcare professionals and patients.

One of the most crucial takeaways from this analysis is the recognition of disparities in technology adoption and digital skills. While some professionals and organizations are at the forefront of technological advancements, others face significant barriers due to financial constraints, limited resources, or lack of support. Addressing these disparities is not just an ethical obligation but also a strategic imperative to ensure equitable access to healthcare and social care services.

Embracing technology and fostering digital skills not only address existing challenges but also unlock opportunities for innovation. Digital tools can streamline administrative tasks, improve care coordination, enhance patient engagement, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Ultimately, these innovations contribute to the delivery of high-quality care and the overall improvement of patient outcomes.

As the healthcare and social care landscape continues to evolve, the ability to adapt and leverage technology will be critical for future-proofing these sectors. The findings of this analysis serve as a call to action for policymakers, healthcare organizations, and educational institutions to invest in training, infrastructure, and support programs to equip professionals with the digital skills necessary to thrive in this rapidly changing environment.

In summary, the collective analysis of Austria, Norway, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic underscores that digital proficiency is not just a desirable skill but an essential component of modern healthcare and social care. It is a catalyst for

efficiency, innovation, and equity in service delivery. As these countries strive to meet the diverse needs of healthcare professionals, they are simultaneously enhancing the well-being of patients and clients, ultimately shaping the future of healthcare and social care in the digital age.