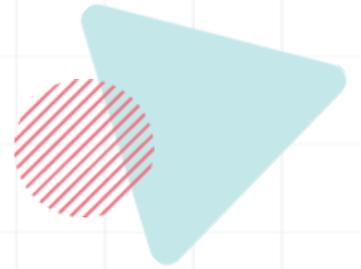




onlinehulp-Vlaanderen



# A framework for digital competences of social work professionals

22 January 2025

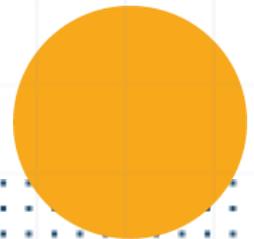
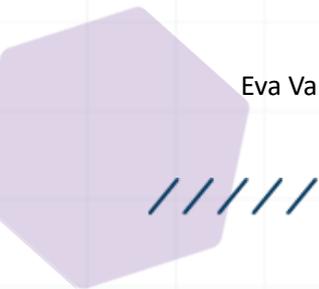
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## Colophon

***A framework for digital competences of social work professionals*** is an achievement of [Onlinehulp Vlaanderen](#) in collaboration with SAM, Steunpunt Mens en Samenleving, Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, UCLL University of Applied Sciences, Thomas More University of Applied Sciences and Howest University of Applied Sciences.

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## 1. Reference page

This competence framework is constructed by answering the following questions:

*[Click on a tile to go to the answer]*



**You can also just read through this entire document from A to Z.**

## 2. Why a framework for digital competences of professional social workers

The required digital competences for professional social workers are often described in general terms. There are vague expectations about what these competences involve precisely – think of media-literate communication, secure data sharing, of knowing and applying the right digital tools. It is rarely specified what precisely is expected. This lack of clarity means that organisations, when implementing digital options, encounter a lack of employee trust when it concerns the use of digital tools.

This framework was constructed to create more transparency and clear communication about the expectations and demands in the field of digital competences of social professionals. It describes the various competences that are needed to develop a set of digital options in line with a range of face-to-face-services for their target audiences and their context. It helps the organisation to develop a fitting HR and education-training-development policy.

The term ‘framework for digital competences’ is in line with the (European) jargon on (digital) competence frameworks. This competence framework was inspired by existing frameworks for digital competences such as:

- **DigCompEdu** in which digital competences of teachers in education are being developed (Digisprong, DigCompEdu - Europees referentiekader voor digitale competenties van leraren, 2023)
- **ESF-project ‘Opleidingen van de toekomst – thema zorg’**, in which the digital competences of caregivers are made explicit (KULeuven).

As such a competence framework for teachers and care professions was developed, we also found it desirable to clearly describe the digital competences of professional social workers who are active in welfare work, social work and care.

### Structure

First, this framework provides a structure for determining the digital competences of professional social workers.

We distinguish three viewpoints:

1. Promoting digital inclusion and enhancing digital competences
2. Realising a range of digital options for target groups and their network
3. (Help) developing a range of digital options at the organisational level

### One common language

Additionally, this competence framework provides a common language for all professional social workers in welfare work, social work and healthcare, regardless of their role as relief worker, care provider, social worker, self-employed worker, team coach, staff member, civil society actor, policy officer, researcher or trainer. The framework facilitates conversations about competences for digital options within blended work. This allows involved parties to indicate more clearly and specifically what they expect from one another. This prevents vague statements like 'The professional social worker must be able to work digitally in a professional manner', and promotes concrete and clear arrangements.

## A double challenge

This framework for digital competences of professional social workers is continuously evolving

Formulating digital knowledge, skills and attitude aspects of professional social workers is a challenge. The complexity not only lies in determining what the knowledge and capability of a professional social worker in a specific job, position or mandate should be, but also in the fact that technology keeps on developing at breakneck speed.

That means that a competence framework can never be static, but will continuously be adapted to new tools, communication forms, and digital workplaces.

These dynamics require a flexible and forward-looking framework that supports professional social workers to keep on developing their digital competences, suiting the changing needs of the target audience and the digital world.

## A framework for digital competences of professional social workers requires custom development

Not every professional social worker is meant to have mastered all competences from this framework. The detailed descriptions we provide here serve as a tool to select digital competences and to make them concrete, depending on factors like the job description, assignment, position in the organisation, possibilities of the target group, and the experience of the professional.

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### 3. For whom is this competence framework relevant?

#### For social professionals and their work context

##### Condition

A *digitally competent* professional social worker in the first place is a competent professional who methodically and systematically shapes interventions, taking into account the ethical framework of their own profession.

Or also: a professional social worker can be a good digital professional. An incompetent professional social worker will not be a competent digital professional either.

The digital competences of social professionals are relevant for a broad group of professionals and trained volunteers in welfare work, social work, and (mental) healthcare. We mean basic workers, but also staff members, team coordinators, or policy officers. This framework for digital competences supplements the existing competence frameworks for these professionals.

This framework is also relevant for organisations in which social professionals are active:

- As an inspirational and referential framework to help current staff members verify which competences are relevant for their job, and which competences they have already acquired.
- For the design of the education-training-development policy for staff.
- As a source of inspiration for future staff, by clarifying which competences are expected of them, and what can support them in the design of their assignment.
- To identify missing competences that matter in the development of a new range of digital options.

#### For civil society actors

This framework for digital competences of professional social workers provides a referential framework for civil society actors. Umbrella organisations, employers' federations, support centres and knowledge centres can use it to check with which competences they can better support their support group or sector. Additionally, this framework will help them to better attune their support options to the evolutions, needs, and challenges of professional social workers in the sector.

#### For policymakers in the government

Policy actors who are responsible for social services, welfare work, social work, and (mental) healthcare get a referential framework for the competences that social professionals need for realising digital care, assistance or support. This framework describes the competences that can be expected (in time) of professional social workers and trained volunteers in their professional sector.

Based on this competence framework, policy actors can develop policy initiatives that stimulate and support organisations to deal with these expected competences.

Additionally, the framework can serve as an assessment tool to evaluate to what extent the support they provide in the field of digital competences has already been realised, or must be developed further.

## For study programmes that are aimed at social professionals

We first focus on professional bachelor programmes in the social-agogic field: Social Educational Care Work, Family Science, Early Childhood Education, Social readaptation Sciences, Social Work, and Applied Psychology.

- As a touchstone for which digital competences are dealt with in the study programmes
- To consider which additional competences should be paid attention to
- To put attention for digital competencies on the map in the development of study programmes
- As a framework in the design of new study programmes and as an evaluation framework in the review, evaluation or revision of study programmes
- As a framework for shaping professional social worker profiles across departments
- as an inspiration framework for developing lifelong learning options
- as an inspiration framework for research and development projects

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## 4. How is this framework for digital competences of professional social workers constructed?

Professional social workers are not soloists. They work in a society in which digital inclusion poses a social challenge. They work increasingly online or blended with their target audiences. And additionally they are often part of a team, an organisation, and always of a professional network too.

That is why we want to formulate this framework for digital competences for professional social workers based on **three complementary focal points**.

**Focus 1: Promoting digital inclusion and promoting digital competences**

**Focus 2: Providing digital care, help and support**

**Focus 3: Help shaping the digital options in the organisation**

Each focal point in its turn contains **three competence clusters**. These clusters assemble the knowledge, skills and attitude aspects per competence element.

**Focus 1: Promoting digital inclusion and promoting digital competences**

Cluster 1: Promoting digital inclusion

Cluster 2: Enforcing the personal digital competences

Cluster 3: Being alert for digital competences of the target audience

**Focus 2: Providing digital care, help and support**

Cluster 4: Conscious selection of technology

Focus 5: Providing digital care, help and support

Cluster 6: Managing safe digital client details

**Focus 3: Help developing the digital options in the organisation**

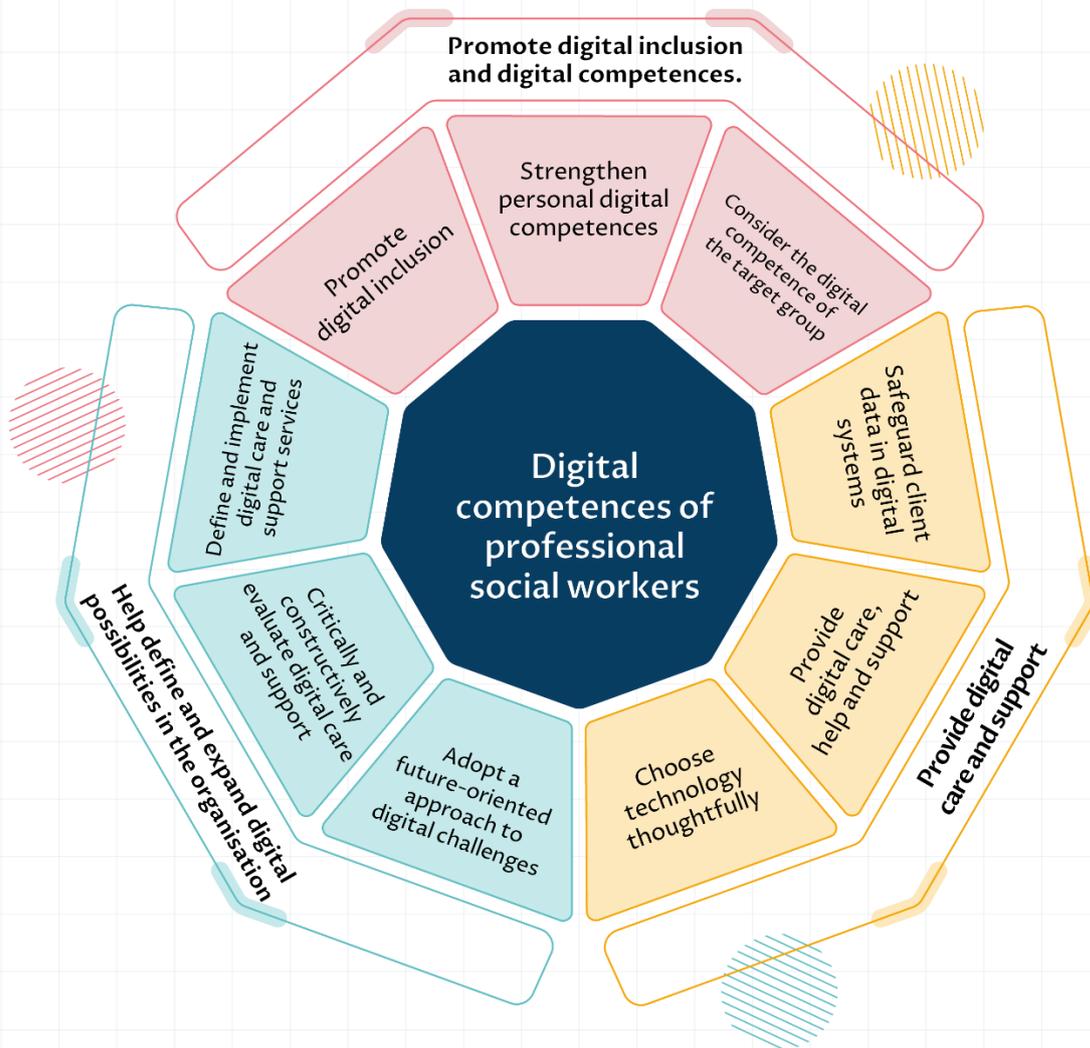
Cluster 7: Vision development and implementation of a range of digital options

Cluster 8: Constructive and critical evaluation of available digital options

Cluster 9: Making forward-looking contributions to digital challenges

This results in a framework of **nine competence clusters** with, for every competence cluster, the possibility to formulate the required digital knowledge, skills and attitudes in line with a certain position, mandate, and assignment of the professional social worker.

In this way, the framework provides room for **at least 120 different competence elements**.



## Focus 1: Promoting digital inclusion and digital competences

In addition to many other exclusion mechanisms, 'digital exclusion' poses an additional risk of experiencing less well-being and health. Professional social workers are aware of the importance of digital inclusion and the necessity to promote the digital competences in their target groups.

### Cluster 1: Promoting digital inclusion

Professional social workers are aware that digitisation in society is here to stay and that many people from their target audience are currently missing the boat. They are committed to explaining, detecting and addressing digital exclusion.

'Digital inclusion' refers to all actions and solutions needed to prevent digital exclusion and to provide equal access to digital technologies, competences and opportunities, so that everyone can fully participate in today's digital society. Digital access, digital competences, a good support network, a

set of digital-inclusive options, and the design of digital applications that are accessible to all are the five conditions for digital inclusion. This approach strives for a world in which everyone has the same digital opportunities, which plays an important part in the promotion of education, employment opportunities and economic growth.

That is why it is important that professional social workers can estimate what their role, position and assignment is in the prevention of digital exclusion and that, where needed, they can refer and notify. Professional social workers are also alert for unequal digital skills at their own workplace or in the collaborations they work in, and search for ways to address these with those in charge, and arrange that the required support is provided.

## Cluster 2: Strengthening personal digital competences

To provide a decent range of options for digital care, help or support, and to support target audiences in the enforcement of their digital skills, professional social workers have to possess the competences to work with diverse devices, digital programmes and tools. This comprises the ability of professional screen-based reading, screen-writing, ability to share digital materials, and to handle social media professionally.

Social professionals realise that they are part of a mediatised society, and that it is important to be media-literate themselves. This enables them to act critically and professionally via the ever-evolving digital communication channels and to support target audiences in the increase of digital and media-literate skills.

## Cluster 3: Being alert for digital competences of the target audience

Professional social workers are actively alert for the digital competences of the target audience. Where possible, they talk about the digital possibilities and promote digital skills in them. If they do not have the required expertise, they will refer their target audience appropriately to specialised digital support.

To do so, professional social workers must be able to discuss the possibilities and effects of digital communication with their target audience. At the same time, it is important that they identify and tackle the risks of digital communication, so that their target audience can deal with digital means in a safe and responsible manner.

### Focus 2: Providing digital care, help and support

Social professionals are able to make a strategic and purposive combination of face-to-face support and the use of digital technology, with the aim of improving their target audience's wellbeing. We call that blended work. This approach is attuned to the requirements, objectives and agreements with the target audience, for which technology is used to make the services more efficient, accessible and personal.

Blended work is more than the switching between face-to-face and online contact; it concerns an integrated approach in which digital applications form an addition to the personal interaction. This may lead to improved continuity, flexibility and commitment of target groups. Additionally, it offers target audiences the opportunity to work on their own pace and get access to the services when they need them the most.

## Cluster 4: Conscious selection of technology

Social professionals combine a face-to-face approach with digital services. In this, they strive for a well-thought-out mix that is attuned to the needs and possibilities of the target audience, in agreement with them. They know which apps, websites, wearables or immersive technologies can be useful to achieve the objectives, while doing customisation.

This requires knowledge of online and blended options and the competence to employ digital tools effectively and let the target audience use them. Basic workers don't have to do this alone; they are supported by the organisation or the collaboration, so that not every social professional has to reinvent the wheel.

## Focus 5: Providing digital care, help and support

Social professionals are prepared to explore digital options with the target audience and to work on an appropriate communication mixture.

Social professionals can communicate digitally in a professional manner. This means that, within the frames of their assignment and the facilities of the organisation, they can use text messages, email, chat, video calling and social media.

In addition, they can – if it fits within their assignment and organisation – make use of relevant apps and websites. They also make use of digital tools to optimise the interaction with their target audience, so they can work more efficiently and effectively and customised.

Proper blended work also means: being able to use digital tools to organise your own work. Examples are: being able to use planning software and time management tools.

## Cluster 6: Managing digital client details securely

Social professionals are aware that secure electronic data sharing with and about the target audience is vital. They can deal with this professionally, while they keep on reflecting critically about the necessity and relevance of sharing and keeping sensitive personal data.

This applies to the use and value of the file of the target audience in the organisation, as well as for broader data-sharing with other professionals and possibly with the broader society. The professional conduct in this context requires a careful consideration of privacy, security, and effectiveness, in which the importance of the target audience is always key. Social professionals do not make these considerations in a vacuum, but they can fall back on a general policy in the organisation and they know whom they can turn to with questions or insecurities.

## Focus 3: Help shaping the digital options in the organisation

Professional social workers usually work in an organisation and are part of a professional network. So they are not on their own to realise digital options. The following competences are important for professional social workers who are committed to help develop digital care, help or support on the level of the organisation or network.

## Cluster 7: Vision development and implementation of digital options

In their organisation or network, professional social workers get the opportunity to contribute to the development and updating of a vision on online and blended options. That also means that they reflect on the following questions concerning the implementation:

- How can we involve the target audience in the development of the options?
- How can we choose the appropriate methodologies, tools, apps ... ?
- How do we deal with questions relating to (professional) ethics?
- How do we create support from colleagues and the target audience?
- How do we contribute to innovation, research and development?

## Cluster 8: Constructive and critical evaluation of digital options

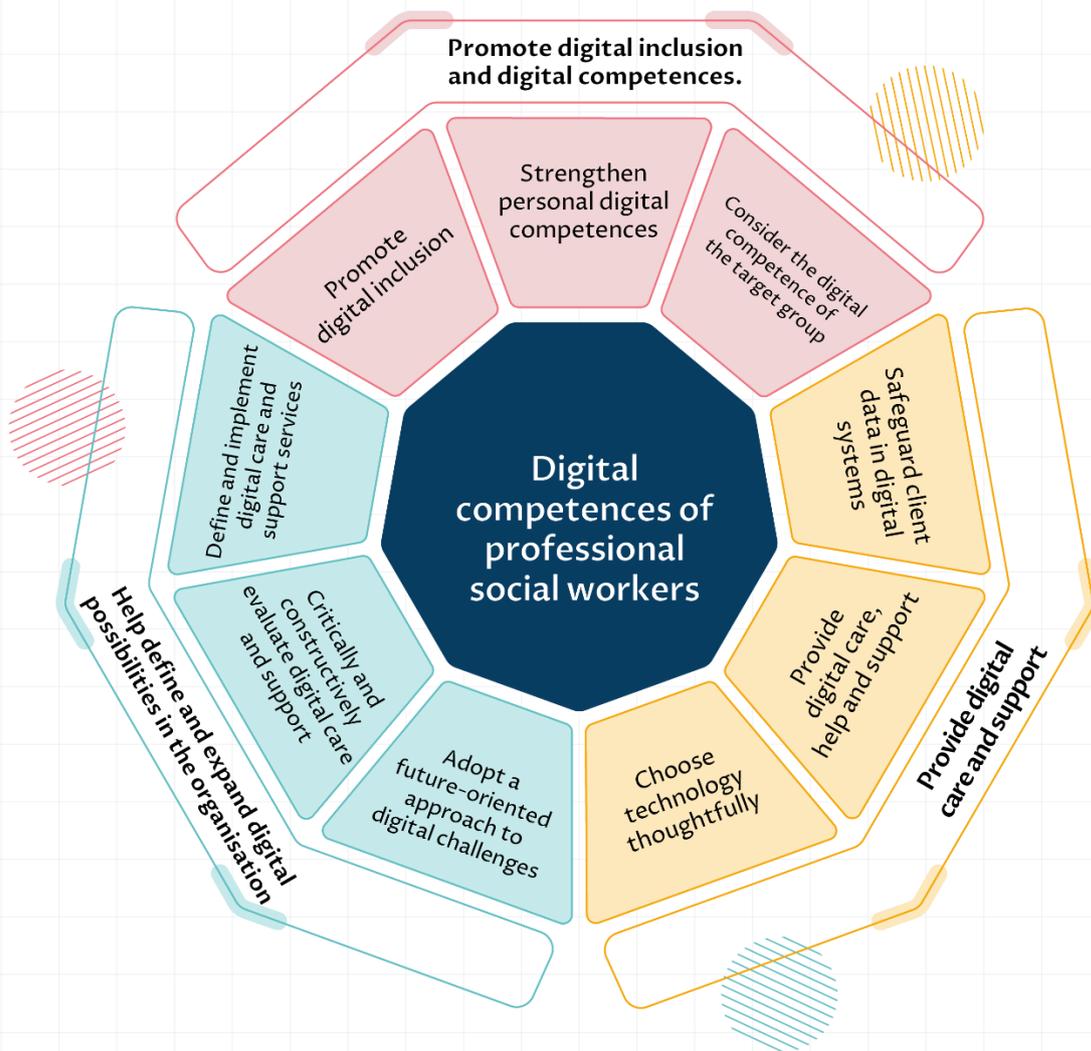
Social workers can – insofar as it is part of their assignment and it is being facilitated in the organisation or network - help underpin and critically and constructively evaluate the quality of the digital options in the organisation. To this end, they can also use and interpret digital monitoring and evaluation tools.

## Cluster 9: Making forward-looking contributions to digital challenges

Professional social workers are aware of their own attitude towards technology. They realise that technology will continue to evolve. They are willing to be attentive to this, try out the relevant possibilities, and continue to reflect positively but critically on the value of these evolutions.

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## 5. This competence framework in one glance



Focus	Cluster	Description
<b>Promoting digital inclusion and digital competences</b>	1. Promoting digital inclusion	Professional social workers are aware that digitisation in society is here to stay and that many target audiences currently miss the boat. They are committed to explaining, detecting and addressing digital exclusion.
	2. Strengthening your digital competences	Professional social workers realise that they are part of a digital society, and that it is important to strengthen your own digital competences and to be media-literate. This enables them to act critically and professionally via the ever-evolving digital communication channels.
	3. Being alert for digital competences of	Professional social workers are actively alert for the strengthening of the digital competences of the target audience, especially in the fields for which the target audience

	the target audience	contacts them. Where possible, they promote these skills in their target audience. If they do not have the required expertise, they will refer their target audience to appropriate specialised digital support.
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Focus	Cluster	Description
<b>Provide digital care, help and support</b>	4. Conscious selection of technology	Professional social workers combine face-to-face contact with digital options. In this, they strive for a well-thought-out mix that is attuned to the needs and possibilities of the target audience, in agreement with them. They know which apps, websites, wearables or immersive technologies can be useful to achieve the objectives, while doing customisation.
	5. Provide digital care, help and support	Professional social workers can communicate digitally in a professional manner. This means that, within the frames of their assignment and the facilities of the organisation, they can use text messages, email, chat, video calling and social media to keep in touch with the target audience in an appropriate manner.
	6. Managing digital client details securely	Professional social workers are aware that secure electronic data sharing about the target audience is vital. They can deal with this professionally, while they keep on reflecting critically about the necessity and relevance of sharing and keeping sensitive personal data.

<b>Help developing the digital options in the organisation</b>	7. Vision development and implementation of a set of digital options	Professional social workers can contribute to the development of a vision on online and blended work at team, organisation, or network level, and are willing to help update it. That also means that they make practical and ethical challenges concerning digital options open for discussion and help search for solutions. They can participate in enhancing the trust of employees and target audiences in online options. That is why they are willing to participate in innovative research and development projects.
	8. Constructive and critical evaluation of digital options	Professional social workers can – insofar as it is part of their assignment and it is being facilitated in the organisation or network – help underpin and evaluate the quality of the digital options. To this end, they can also use and interpret digital monitoring and evaluation tools.
	9. Forward-looking contributions to digital challenges	Professional social workers realise that technology will continue to evolve. They are prepared to be attentive to this, try out the relevant possibilities, and continue to reflect positively but critically on the value of these evolutions.

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## 6. How to phrase the digital competences of professional social workers with more detail?

Formulating digital knowledge, competences and attitudes for professional social workers is a complex assignment. Determining what knowledge and capabilities someone should have in a specific role is one aspect. The fast technological developments make it extra challenging. Below, we present a first step for inspiration. It is not an exhaustive list of digital competences for every professional social worker, but intended to help sectors and organisations in the development of their own framework.

### Focus 1: Promoting digital inclusion and digital competences

#### Cluster 1: Promoting digital inclusion

##### Knowledge relating to attention for and promotion of digital inclusion

- knowing what digital exclusion and digital inclusion mean (Mediawijs, 2022)
- Recognising the digital gap between generations, between people, and between professionals and target audience (Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019)
- Knowing the different dimensions of the digital gap at both micro and macro level (Mariën, 2020)
  - o availability of technology
  - o availability of technical competences
  - o being able to deploy digital tools concerning well-being and health
  - o (consequences of) digitisation of society
  - o knowing what are the digital needs, requirements and possibilities of specific vulnerable target groups (people in poverty, people with disabilities, etc.)

##### Skills relating to attention for the promotion of digital inclusion

- Capable of effective and warm referral to digital inclusion initiatives (Mediawijs, 2022)
- Cooperate in the strengthening of digital inclusion of the target audience by taking initiative or by supporting digital inclusion initiatives
- Ability to identify the focus areas of the target audience concerning digital inclusion (Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019) (Mediawijs, 2022) (Broekhuis, 2021)
- Ability to appeal to policy actors' role and responsibility in case of digital exclusion of the target group
- Ability to appeal to superiors' role and responsibility in case of digital inequalities of staff members at the workplace (department, support, devices, internet, etc.)

##### Attitudes relating to attention for and promotion of digital inclusion

- Focus on digital inclusion of the target audience and awareness of their own role and position
- Focus on digital inclusion of the target audience and awareness of the role and position of other actors
- Focus on the promotion of digital possibilities and the creation of digital growth opportunities of the target audience
- Having attention for colleagues who are less digitally skilled and help them find solutions and support

## Cluster 2: Strengthening personal digital competences

### Strengthening knowledge of your own digital competences

- Understanding the mediatisation and how that affects the wellbeing and the cohabitation (for instance screen addiction, loneliness, complaints related to digital wellbeing, etc.)  
(Netwerkmediawijsheid.nl, 2018)
- Having knowledge of forms of harmful digital behaviour (disinformation, online hatred, polarisation, cyber bullying, etc.)
- Having knowledge of relevant laws and regulations (privacy laws, right of publicity, GDPR, data sharing, etc.)
- Having knowledge of the functioning of topical social media platforms

### Strengthening skills concerning your own digital competences

- Possessing general ICT skills (operation of (mobile) digital appliances, apps and common software (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, translation software, etc.)) (Verheijdens, 2022) (Digivaardig in de zorg, 2023)
- Using apps for browsing the internet, communication and collaboration
- Ability to work with apps and the internet in a secure manner (Verheijdens, 2022) (Digivaardig in de zorg, 2023)
- Possessing digital information skills (using appropriate search strategy/search terms and digital sources, gathering, selecting, processing and presenting digital information) (Digisprong, 2023)
- Ability to use social media professionally
- Ability to deal with opportunities, risks and limitations concerning privacy (Verheijdens, 2022) (Digivaardig in de zorg, 2023)
- Ability to do professional screen-based reading (analyse what is (not) written, what is intended with what is (not) written, and what evolution screen-based writing knows (e.g. chat)
- Ability to do professional screen-based writing
- Ability to professionally make and share inclusive content and materials
- Ability to think critically about new technological evolutions like AI and its effect on the job

### Strengthening attitudes concerning your own digital competences

- Continuous desire to optimise their own digital competences and that of colleagues (Opgroeien, 2024)  
(Pote, et al., 2020)
- Ability to weigh informed choices concerning GDPR, privacy and ethical issues
- Awareness that your own attitude towards technology also affects your attitude towards blended work
- Awareness that 'being digitally skilled' is a dynamic, conceptual, personal, theoretical concept  
(Anrijs, 2024)
- Ability to reflect on the own professional use of social media (Netwerkmediawijsheid.nl, 2018)

## Cluster 3: Being alert for digital competences of the target audience

### Knowledge concerning the strengthening of digital competences of the target audience

- Having knowledge of the information and initiatives focussed on digital inclusion and the increase of digital competences of vulnerable target audiences (youths, people with a disability, older people, people in poverty, people who are not linguistically skilled or who speak a foreign-language, etc.)
- Knowing the pitfalls of being online and social media for the target audience and their network (phishing, hacking, sexting, fake news, AI, etc.)
- Knowing the added value of conscious and critical use of internet and social media

### Skills concerning the strengthening of digital competences of the target audience

- At the start of a track, pay attention to the digital competences of the target audience and attune their blended track accordingly (McGrath, 2018)
- Connecting with the level of digital competences of the target audience and help to raise it
- Ability to make warm and effective referrals for the target audience to organisations committed to the strengthening of digital competences
- Help to strengthen the target audience so they can make use of digital options (volksgezondheid, 2022)
- In all this, pay explicit attention to the cultural diversity of the target audience (Wikipedia, 2020) (Pote, Rees, Holloway-Biddle, & Griffith, 2020) (Tiggelovend, 2019)

### Attitudes concerning the strengthening of digital competences of the target audience

- Being interested in the strengths and possibilities of the target audience in the field of digital competences
- Being interested in positive examples of smart digital work of the target audience
- Focus on the strengthening of the digital competences of the target audience
- Desire to learn co-creative digital competences: participative learning from each other, thinking on digital competence together

## Focus 2: Providing digital care, help and support

### Cluster 4: Conscious selection of technology

#### Knowledge on the conscious selection of technology

- Knowing (the organisation's) vision on blended work and on the position of online options within it.
- Knowledge on diverse aspects to make choices on blended work (criteria for choosing communication channels and tools, conditions for a successful blended track, etc.)(Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019) (Zhu, 2022) (Pote, et al., 2020)...
- Ability to describe and identify sense-of-urgency, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of digital tools, (Pote, et al., 2020) (Bocklandt P., Blended hulp wordt het nieuwe normaal, 2017)
- Understanding legal and ethical aspects of working professionally with digital tools

#### Skills relating to the conscious selection of technology

- Ability to work with the online tools that are used in the own practice (communication tools, apps, registration tools, digital files)
- Ability to work with the online tools to better organise the work (planning tools, evaluation tools, digital calendar, etc.)
- Ability to identify the personal educational needs concerning the 'realisation of blended options'(Bocklandt P. &, 2016) (McGrath, 2018)
- Ability to determine smoothly if and when face-to-face conversations, email, chat, video calling and apps and other tools can be used responsibly in the professional practice (Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019)
- Ability to be expert advisor and coach of the target audience and their network in how they deal with online tools (Timmer, eHealth in de langdurige zorg, 2015)
- Ability to consciously choose, together with the target audience, which online tools can be used in line with one's own strengths and weaknesses and those of the target audiences and the aims of the intervention
- Always have the target audience help making an informed decision on whether or not to use certain ICT technologies. (Pote, et al., 2020)
- Ability to critically reflect on the added value of digital tools in the blended options

#### Attitudes concerning the conscious selection of technology

- Being open-minded about the digital tools which the target audience is already using and about their communication preferences(Zhu, 2022)
- Having a positive attitude towards the use of digital applications in communication with the target audience (Limper, 2014)
- Being aware that working digitally implies a larger transparency (digitally means there is usually a record – 'speaking' is less permanent) (Timmer, eHealth in de praktijk, 2011) (Limper, 2014)
- Ability to reflect ethically on the value of digital tools in the services to the target audience
- Being alert that use of ICT always benefits the target audience (Fonds Daniël De Coninck, 2020)
- Ability to adopt a constructive-critical attitude towards the added value of digital and blended work

## Cluster 5: Providing digital care, help and support

### Knowledge about digital care, help and support

#### Online information

- knowing how to find and select relevant and accurate general and personalised digital information about and for the target audience (Zhu, 2022)(Digisprong, 2023)
- Knowing what the points of concern are to provide clear and inclusive digital information (Bocklandt, Bergmans, & Travers, HINCL - helder en inclusief online informeren over opvoeding, 2021) (Aerts, 2018) (Atlas - integratie en inburgering Antwerpen, 2020) (Kenniscentrum WWZ, 2018) (Diversiteitsmanagement antwerpen, 2012) (Tiggelovend, 2019) (Wablieft)

#### Online communication

- knowing the diverse aspects of the organisation policy regarding professional texting, emailing, chatting and video calling
- Knowing the diverse aspects of the policy on the professional use of social media in the options for the target audience (Bocklandt, De Zitter, & Franssen, Sociaal werk netwerk online, 2016)
- knowing the possibilities of making (secure) digital appointments with the target audience
- Knowing the frameworks of effective and systematic professional texting, emailing, chatting and video calling with the target audience – individually and in group (Vlaeminck, 2009) (Saelens, 2012) (Bocklandt P., Professioneel beeldbellen in welzijnswerk, sociaal werk en geestelijke gezondheidszorg, 2021) (Fransen, 2011)
- knowing the specific technical and deontology aspects of professional texting, emailing, chatting and video calling
- Knowing the frameworks for professional use of social media
- Knowing the specific technical and deontology aspects for professional use of social media
- Knowledge about digital inclusive communication

#### Using apps, websites and other tools

- Knowing relevant apps, websites, wearables, augmented and virtual reality applications in the professional sector and knowing on which platforms you can find these (screened) tools (volksgezondheid, 2022) (Gezondheidsraad, 2024)
- Knowing what the essential quality requirements are for apps, websites, wearables, augmented and virtual reality applications within the professional sector and where to find these (for instance on onlinehulp-apps.be)

## **Skills concerning digital care, help and support**

### Online information

- Ability to find, evaluate, use and share relevant general and personalised information about and for the target audience (Zhu, 2022)
- Ability to provide and create clear and inclusive digital content (Bocklandt, Bergmans, & Travers, HINCL - helder en inclusief online informeren over opvoeding, 2021) (Aerts, 2018) (Atlas - integratie en inburgering Antwerpen, 2020) (Kenniscentrum WWZ, 2018) (Diversiteitsmanagement antwerpen, 2012) (Tiggelovend, 2019) (Wablieft)
- Ability to use copyright and source citation correctly (Digisprong, 2023)
- Ability to create and process new digital content, re-edit former content and dealing with and application of intellectual property rights and licences (Zhu, 2022)

### Online communication

- Ability to work within the organisation's texting policy, email policy, chat policy and video calling policy
- Ability to communicate professionally with the target audience, their network and other professionals via text messages, email, chat and video calling (Zhu, 2022) (Nieuwboer, Oefenen met methodische online hulpverlening -, 2020) (Nieuwboer, Professionele online communicatie in zorg en welzijn: hoe maak je de klik, 2019) (Schalken, 2013) (Vlaeminck, 2009) (Saelens, 2012) (Bocklandt P., Professioneel beeldbellen in welzijnswerk, sociaal werk en geestelijke gezondheidszorg, 2021) (Fransen, 2011)
- Ability to use texting, email, chat and video calling technically as well as what concerns professional ethics.
- Ability to use social media challenges (hacking, phishing, etc.) technically as well as what concerns professional ethics.
- Ability to professionally use and restrict social media within the social media policy of the organisation or profession
- Ability to use digital communication channels to strengthen the professional work alliance and (therapeutic) relation (Pote, et al., 2020)

### Using apps, websites and other tools

- Ability to manage one's own professional digital calendar
- Ability to integrate relevant apps, websites, wearables, virtual reality applications into the help and care that is provided to clients (Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019) (Verheijdens, 2022)
- Ability to enthuse and encourage the target audience to (continue to) use relevant apps, websites, wearables, and virtual reality applications
- Searching for apps, websites, augmented and virtual reality applications together with the target audience, and try these
- Ability to interact digitally with groups or communities on community and cooperation platforms

## **Attitudes about digital care, help and support**

### Online information

- Ability to focus first on the target audience when providing online information
- Attention for the target audience's self-reliance when they search for information online
- Awareness that the use of digital options should be restricted

## Online communication

- Ability to deal with channel reduction (Nieuwboer, Professionele online communicatie in zorg en welzijn: hoe maak je de klik, 2019)
- Ability to restrict the professional use of texting, emailing, chatting and video calling
- Ability to reflect on the organisation's professional social media policy
- Ability to reflect on the organisation's professional texting policy, email policy, chat policy and video calling policy

## Using apps, websites and other tools

- Being open-minded towards the use of apps, websites, wearables, augmented and virtual reality applications in a track
- Ability to present blended communication enthusiastically to the target audience
- Being prepared to share the own professional digital calendar with colleagues and inform the target audience of available moments
- Being convinced that providing the right digital support also results in a more effective set of options (Pote, Rees, Holloway-Biddle, & Griffith, 2020)

## Cluster 6: Managing digital client details securely

### **Knowledge about secure management of digital data of the target audience**

- Being familiar with the purpose and methods of the individual file, the digital portal for the target audience and the digital collaboration platform with colleagues
- Knowing relevant legislation concerning digital management of client data

### **Skills concerning secure management of digital data of the target audience**

- Ability to professionally enter, save and retain client data in an electronic individual file. (Verheijdens, 2022)
- Ability to consult, analyse and interpret client data (McGrath, 2018)
- Ability to enter, save and share this individual data in a secure manner with the target audience and in multidisciplinary collaboration (Zhu, 2022)
- Teach the target audience to work with their individual file and a digital collaboration platform
- Learn how to communicate safely about or by means of digital reporting (Gezondheidsraad, 2024)
- Ability to reflect on the added value of the use of an electronic file, a digital portal and digital collaboration platform

### **Managing attitudes concerning secure management of digital data of the target audience**

- Ability to adopt a critical and constructive attitude towards an electronic file, a digital portal and a digital collaboration platform
- Treating the individual file with integrity

## Focus 3: Help shaping the digital options in the organisation

### Cluster 7: Vision development and implementation of a digital offering

#### Knowledge about vision development and implementation

- Knowledge of support tools that are useful for developing a vision and optimising the implementation of blended options
- Knowing opportunities for solution- and practice-based blended action (Zhu, 2022)
- Knowing the code of professional ethics and challenges that come with the use of digital options (Hartman, Sociaal werk in de digitale samenleving, 2019)
- knowing what is needed to promote the confidence of staff members and the target audience
- Knowledge of ongoing research and development initiatives in this field

#### Skills about vision development and implementation

- Ability to report social issues, challenges and gaps concerning digital work
- Ability to (join in the) work on the continuous process of the development of a vision on blended work in the organisation or profession
- Ability to actively involve the target audience in the development of a vision on digital and blended work in the organisation
- Ability to actively collaborate in the increasing of the trust of the target audience towards digital and blended options in the organisation
- Contributing to the updating of the professional code of ethics within the organisation
- Ability to participate in research and development projects to optimise digital and blended practice

#### Attitudes about vision development and implementation

- Showing an interest in inspiring experiences from other teams and organisations with online and blended work
- Contributing to the design of digital and blended practice from an inquisitive, self-directed and analytical attitude
- Being open-minded about how colleagues and the target audience view blended help. This what concerns benefits as well as resistance.

### Cluster 8: Constructive and critical evaluation of digital offering

#### Knowledge about constructive and critical evaluation of digital options

- Recognising the role of online options for the target audience and the organisation and being able to critically evaluate them
- Knowing how to find the sources of knowledge that bring together research and development expertise on online and blended work (Fonds Daniël De Coninck, 2020)
- Knowledge on strategies and steps to (help) implementing digital options in organisations (McGrath, 2018)

### **Skills concerning constructive and critical evaluation of digital options**

- (Help) identifying what kind of support is helpful/needed to realise more blended work (for instance training, coaching, intervision)
- (Help) challenging, optimising and reconsidering the organisation's vision on digital and blended work (Vlaamse Vereniging Klinisch Psychologen, 2024)
- Ability to use support tools that are useful for developing a vision on blended help
- Ability to use digital tools to have the support offer evaluated by the target audience (and other stakeholders)
- Ability to critically evaluate the physical and digital accessibility of the organisation's support options
- Ability to critically reflect on the online and blended options together with the target audience

### **Evaluating attitudes concerning constructive and critical digital options**

- Being interested in research on the work activities of the digital and blended options in the sector in which they work

## **Cluster 9: Making forward-looking contributions to digital challenges**

### **Knowledge concerning forward-looking contributions to digital challenges**

- Knowledge about the digital and technological developments in society that are relevant for the target group and the profession
- Knowledge about opportunities to make research- and development-oriented contributions to the exploration of innovative perspectives in digital and blended practice

### **Making forward-looking contributions to digital challenges**

- Keeping a finger on the pulse about technological developments in society, and being able to make the link with the potential added value for the organisation and the options for the target group
- Ability to actively contribute to the research for new digital developments for their profession
- Ability to act as a positive role model for colleagues by demonstrating an open and curious attitude towards the introduction of innovative digital work methods, in which new work methods are tried out if needed. (Fonds Daniël De Coninck, 2020)
- Ability to reflect critically and constructively on research and development of new digital applications for the target audience and the profession

### **Attitudes relating to forward-looking contributions to digital challenges**

- Daring to try out new digital technologies in practice settings
- Being curious about evolutions in blended agogic conduct and new technology
- Desire to learn about the possibilities and pitfalls of new forms of digital and blended options (augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc.)
- Viewing new technology (also) with a critical mind and reflecting on its impact and opportunities, also for socially vulnerable target audiences

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## 7. How was this framework for digital competences of professional social workers realised?

The competence framework is based on a literature study of more than 50 sources. These sources are listed below.

Focus groups were used to get feedback on the design-competence framework (sometimes with focus on the support of children, youths, and families) from actors from the profession and the civil society, policy actors from various Flemish policy domains, representatives of the professional bachelor programmes Social Educational Care Work, Early Childhood Education, Readaptation Sciences and Family Science, social work and Applied Psychology.

The design-competence framework was also presented and discussed at the following conferences:

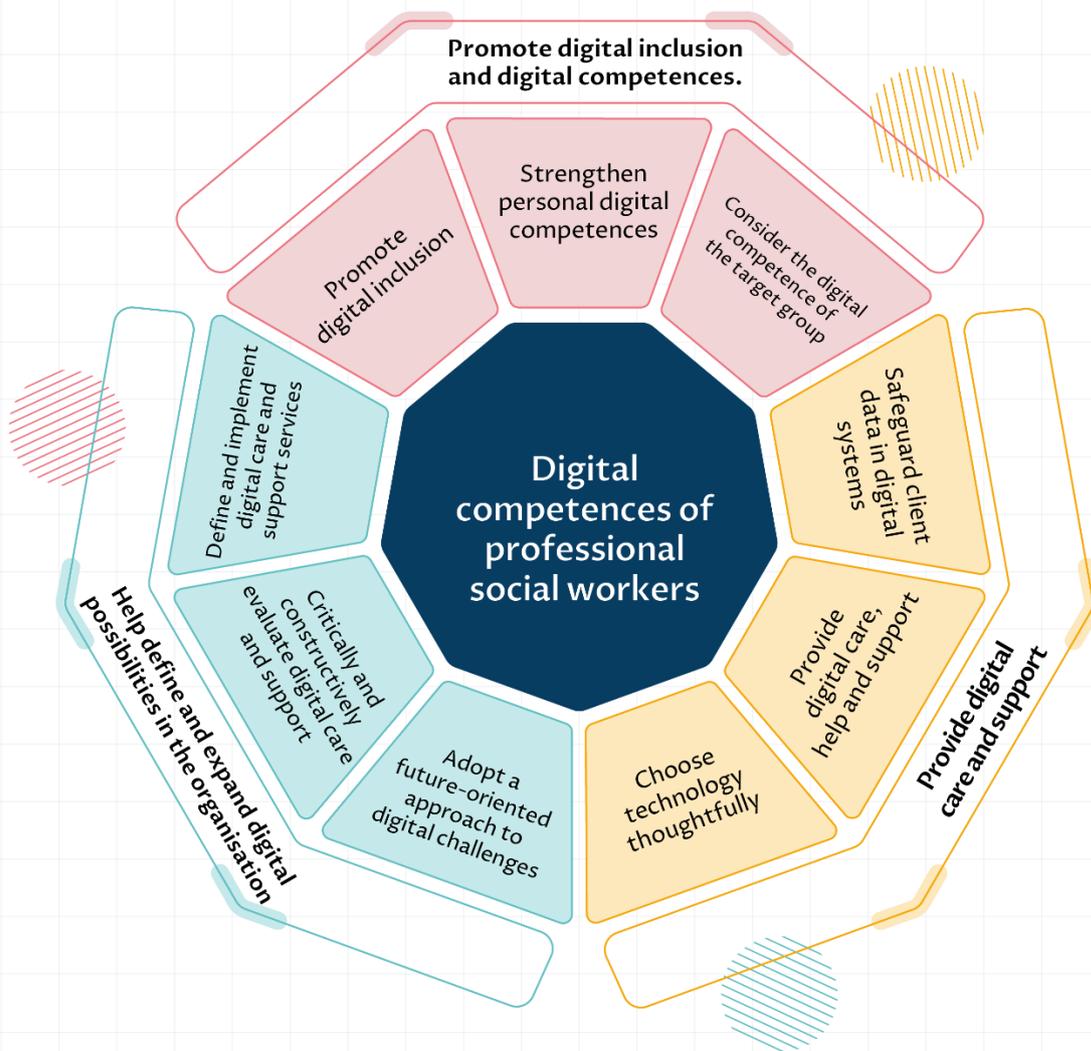
- Onlinehulp Vlaanderen: [Blender](#) – Netwerkdag voor innovatie in online en blended werken in welzijnswerk en geestelijke gezondheidszorg – Antwerpen: 12 maart 2024
- European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA): [Envisioning Future – 13th European Conference for Social Work Research](#) – Litouwen: Vilnius – 16-17 april 2024
- Vlaamse Overheid – departement Zorg: [European Social Work Conference 2024](#) – Brugge: 25-26 april 2024
- The International Social Work & Society Academy (TISSA): [Deinstitutionalising Social Work: rethinking logics of research and practice](#) – Griekenland: Athene – 26-28 augustus 2024
- Vlaams Geestelijk Gezondheidscongres: [Dichtbij de mens: verbindende en gastvrije zorg](#). Gent – 10-11 september 2024

The feedback that was acquired there was also processed.

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## onlinehulp-Vlaanderen

