

## **NQF state of play**



**Estonia 2020**

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# Overview

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**Stage of development:** Operational stage

**NQF linked to EQF:** 

**Scope of the framework:**

Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training and from the system of occupational qualifications.

**Number of levels:**

Eight

**Legal basis/stage of development:**

Professions Act (2008) (in Estonian) (in English)

**NQF/EQF website:**

- [!\[\]\(d27edc55493507da2f9b8c7a52b3b96f\_img.jpg\) Website 1](#)
- [!\[\]\(9bf7a72a60a57323fa980b9b0338593f\_img.jpg\) Website 2](#)

**Qualifications register/database:**

- [!\[\]\(69baca079ef3ab6f03d58fd7e9f950f1\_img.jpg\) Register](#)
- [!\[\]\(2da321c3dc978a55192cb9c452297973\_img.jpg\) Estonian register of occupational qualifications \(professions register\)](#)

# Introduction and context

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According to the 2018 Programme for international student assessment (PISA) results ([1]), the Estonian school system is among the best performing in the EU, with the lowest percentage of underachievers in science, reading and mathematics. Government investment in education is above the EU average (6.2% of GDP in 2018) ([2]). The rate of early school leaving was at 9.8% in 2019 ([3]), slightly lower than the previous year and the EU average; education outcomes of students in rural and Russian-language schools are lower than those of their peers. An education strategy for 2021-35 is being prepared, which aims to introduce gradual changes to the system, including curriculum revision, a new approach to learning, and more flexible transitions within education and between education and the labour market (European Commission, 2019). Estonia has been making efforts to improve participation in VET and its relevance to the labour market; a vocational orientation year at EQF level 2 was introduced in 2018 to facilitate transitions between compulsory education and VET (Cedefop, 2020). In 2018, 40.1% ([4]) of upper secondary students were enrolled in VET pathways; the proportion of students choosing programmes with work-based learning has doubled, though it remains low. Of the 9% of VET graduates who went on to higher education in 2017, three quarters chose professional higher education. Development of entrepreneurial skills in VET is promoted through in-service training for teachers and trainers, cooperation projects and a network for career and entrepreneurship teachers. Tertiary education attainment is relatively high (46.2% in 2019, compared to the EU average of 40.3%) ([5]). However, the country faces skills and labour shortages in several sectors. Forecasts predict that future labour market demand for both higher education and VET graduates will not be met; employers view the practical and transversal skills of higher education graduates and the general knowledge of VET graduates as insufficient. The employment rate of recent graduates was relatively high, at 83.3% in 2019. Participation in adult learning is also high (20.2% in 2019, compared to the EU average of 10.8%) ([6]), but the need for upskilling and reskilling remains and there is a large gap between the highly educated and those with low education and skills. A quality evaluation system for adult education is being developed by the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education since autumn 2018 as per contract concluded with the Ministry of Education and Research ([7]) (European Commission, 2019).

Estonia established a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) for lifelong learning, the Estonian qualifications framework (EstQF), in 2008 through the Occupational Qualifications Act. It has eight levels and includes all State-recognised qualifications. The overarching framework brings together four sub-frameworks: for higher education qualifications ([8]), for vocational education and training (VET) qualifications ([9]), for general education qualifications ([10]) and for occupational qualifications ([11]). The sub-frameworks include specific descriptors as defined in the corresponding national educational standards, underpinning quality assurance activities. The EstQF is operational and it is implemented in legislation and regulatory documents of the education and training, VNFI and qualifications system.

Referencing of the EstQF to the European qualifications framework (EQF), and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA), was completed in 2011; the joint report was endorsed in the EQF advisory group in October 2011. The referencing report was revised and updated in 2016 to include new developments in the education system (Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016).

# Policy objectives

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The Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020 ([12]) has set five goals for 2020, aiming to tackle existing challenges in a holistic approach: a change in the approach to learning; competent and motivated teachers and school leadership; concordance of lifelong learning opportunities with labour market needs; a digital focus in lifelong learning; and equal opportunities and increased participation in lifelong learning. An increase in the participation rate in lifelong learning activities among adults (25-64) to 20% in 2020 was set as a national target in the Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020; this objective has been reached (20.2% in 2019). National programmes in response to the strategy goals in the different education and training subsystems, a programme for closer links between education and the labour market, and a programme for digital transformation have been implemented based on the strategy. Similar programmes for the period 2020-23 have been approved. Educational institutions will develop their curricula taking into account developments in the labour market and the occupational qualifications system (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). To make better use of Estonia's high-quality education and R&D systems for the benefit of people, society and the economy of the country, the Ministry of Education and Research is preparing strategies for the future (2021-35) in the fields of education, research, youth, and language policy ([13]).

The NQF's function in Estonia is twofold: to be a tool for transparency and communication and to support lifelong learning. More specifically, policy objectives addressed by the EstQF are to:

- a. improve the link between education/training and the labour market;
- b. increase consistency of the education offer and of the qualification system;
- c. provide transparency for employers and individuals;
- d. increase understanding of Estonian qualifications within the country and abroad;
- e. introduce common quality assurance criteria;
- f. support validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- g. monitor supply and demand for learning.

It is expected that implementation of an overarching NQF would increase coherence of education and training and help introduce coherent methods for standard setting. The referencing process has already

provided a stimulus in this direction, and 'convergence of the formal educational system and occupational qualifications system has taken place' (Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016), while the barriers between the two systems have been lowered. The purpose of the EstQF has not changed over time.

# Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

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The comprehensive EstQF has eight qualification levels; its descriptors are identical to EQF level descriptors. They are defined in terms of learning outcomes, as knowledge (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive – use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking; and practical – manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) and degree of responsibility and autonomy. More detailed descriptors have been developed in the four sub-frameworks for general education, initial vocational education, higher education and occupational qualifications.

Two types of State-recognised qualification are included in the EstQF:

- a. formal education qualifications, awarded after completion of educational programmes at all levels (general, vocational and higher education);
- b. occupational qualifications ([14]), where individuals are issued a professional certificate, giving the evidence of knowledge, skills and competences required for working in a specific occupation or profession.

Qualifications in sub-frameworks are described in the corresponding national educational standards, which are learning-outcomes-based:

- a. national curriculum for basic schools ([15]);
- b. simplified national curriculum for basic schools ([16]);
- c. national curriculum for upper secondary schools ([17]);
- d. standard of VET ([18]);
- e. standard of higher education ([19]);
- f. occupational qualifications standards ([20]).

Introducing a learning outcomes approach is an important part of the national reform programme for general education, VET and higher education; the topic is covered in various regulatory acts and by the strategic goal 'change in the approach to learning' in the *Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020*. There is also an increased focus on recognition of prior learning (RPL). Higher and vocational education are more advanced in implementing the learning outcomes approach. While learning outcomes have been embedded in curricula for a long time, the focus in education delivery has been on process rather than learning outcomes.

The role of employers could also be more extensive and constructive to derive full benefits from applying the approach (Cedefop, 2016). The new education development plan 2035 follows the principle of learning outcomes even more as its general objective is to enable plentiful learning opportunities which allow for a smooth transition between levels and types of education.

Learning outcomes of different types of VET are described in the vocational education standard and correspond to levels 2 to 5 of the EstQF. The vocational education standard describes the requirements for national and school curricula, including objectives, expected learning outcomes, volumes of study and graduation requirements for different types of initial and continuous VET programmes and requirements for pedagogical professionals. Learning outcomes are defined as occupation-specific knowledge and skills as well as transversal skills: communication; learning, social and entrepreneurial skills; self-awareness; independence and responsibility. Both national and school curricula in VET have been reformed, starting in 2013 ([21]). Additional amendments were implemented in 2016 – amended school leaving conditions, in 2017 – adapting the International Standard Classification of Education Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F 2013), and in 2019 – amended school leaving conditions with emphasis on achieving learning outcomes ([22]). In adult education, the learning outcomes approach was introduced with the Adult Education Act of 2015 ([23]); a new continuing education standard was introduced, specifying quality criteria for adult education curricula based on learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2020).

The current national curricula in general education were introduced in 2011 and amended in 2013, 2014, 2018 and 2020. They set out goals and objectives, expected learning outcomes, assessment criteria and requirements for the learning and teaching environment, graduation and school curriculum. The General Education Programme prepared within the framework of the Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020, i.e. the education strategy, aims to align the content and volume of general education with the objectives and learning outcomes of national curricula and to change assessment principles. ([24]) External quality assurance in general education is coordinated by the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research. ([25])

New study programmes based on learning outcomes were implemented in higher education as of September 2009. The Estonian standard of higher education refers to learning outcomes at basic level (outcomes that any graduate must achieve) and achievement of learning outcomes

above the minimum level is differentiated by grading. The Universities Act ([26]) and the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act ([27]), since 2009, allow for accreditation of prior and experiential learning in higher education curricula.

Occupational qualification standards describe expected competences in terms of learning outcomes (performance indicators and knowledge). They are the basis for national VET curricula, higher education curricula and other training programmes, and for assessment of individuals' competence. The Estonian Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*) is responsible for implementing the quality assurance system in the occupational qualifications system.

A credit point system that conforms to the ECTS is used in higher education, and a credit point system that conforms to the ECVET is used in VET.

# Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

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The EstQF was adopted in 2008 through the Occupational Qualifications Act (with subsequent amendments) ([28]). The Act provides the basis for the eight-level comprehensive framework and for the organisation of the occupational qualifications system; it regulates activities of awarding authorities and sectoral councils, the adoption of occupational qualifications standards and the award of occupational qualifications.

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*) are the main bodies in charge of developing and implementing the EstQF. The Qualification Authority was established in 2001 to develop a competence-based professional qualifications system, operating in parallel to the formal education system under the Ministry of Education and Research. In 2010, by decision of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Qualifications Authority was nominated as the national EQF coordination point (EQF NCP). The NCP is staffed by two part-time employees and one full-time employee of the Qualifications Authority and financed from the State budget and the EQF NCP grant. The NCP is tasked with ([29]):

- a. organising the referencing of Estonian qualifications to EQF levels, ensuring involvement of stakeholders and transparency of the process;
- b. implementing the quality referencing principles agreed at EU level;
- c. informing stakeholders and the public about the referencing of Estonian qualifications to the EQF levels and about NQF-related developments;
- d. participating in the activities of the [NCP's network](#).

A broad-based steering committee was also established to ensure the involvement of all key stakeholders in NQF-related processes. It includes representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, State Chancellery, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, Estonian Qualifications Authority, Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Estonian Association of Pupils' Unions, Estonian Association of Student Unions, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education and the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre. The mandate

of the steering committee was limited, at first, to the referencing process. It was renewed in 2017 and 2018 and expanded to include the monitoring of EstQF implementation and, if necessary, making proposals for amendments. The NQF steering committee's activity was terminated by order of the Minister of Education and Research on 21 January 2020.

([30]) The steering committee will be reassembled if changes occur to the EQF and NQF implementation process. Currently, the implementation process is stable and coherent with declared aims in the referencing report. The Qualifications Authority coordinates the 14 sectoral councils and provides technical support to the board of chairmen of these councils. Typically, the sectoral councils consist of: representatives of employers, employees and professional associations in the sector; education and training institutions; and responsible ministries. They are responsible for preparing, amending, renewing and approving professional standards, and for deciding on the levelling of occupational qualifications to the EstQF. The board of chairmen of the sectoral professional councils coordinates cross-sectoral cooperation.

The Qualifications Authority also cooperates with other institutions, disseminates information and provides guidance and advice on the application of the framework to various stakeholders, mostly those participating in the occupational qualifications system: the sectoral councils, professional examination committees, and experts.

Dissemination and information events are organised annually to share information with education providers, policy-makers and employer and employee organisations.

# Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

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[31]

Validation practices in Estonia are sector-specific and present in all sectors, but are more developed in formal education. If an applicant meets the requirements, non-formal and informal learning can be validated to enable meeting of enrolment criteria, completion of the curriculum, or award of an occupational qualification. Higher education has been leading developments, with vocational education and training and general education following.

Development of the EstQF has supporting validation among its objectives, and the updated referencing report (September 2016) clearly signals this. For all qualifications included in the framework, the curricula and the relevant regulations of each subsystem ([32]) enable education providers to recognise non-formal and informal learning.

In the higher education legislative framework, from 2007 there has been no limitation on how many credits can be obtained via validation but higher education institutions cannot award whole diplomas or certificates on the basis of prior and experiential learning. In practice, this means that the entire curriculum may be recognised on the basis of prior learning, except for the thesis or final examination. Subjects and modules completed through validation must be marked as 'recognised on the basis of prior learning' in the Diploma Supplement. For admission to higher education, a specified level of education needs to be achieved. The Higher education programme 2016-19 ([33]) features validation as a means for flexible study by supporting access to higher education for various groups of learners.

In VET, prior learning may be taken into account to fulfil admission requirements, to complete the curriculum, except the final examination, and to recognise a previously passed vocational examination. The Vocational education programme 2016-19 ([34]) states that an increase in the number of validation applications is expected and assessment quality has improved. It is expected that validation-related initiatives will be supported in the future.

In general education, validation is possible, but processes and practices have not been clearly defined. Secondary education curricula for initial

education and adult education are the same; evaluating prior knowledge can cut study duration for adults.

Although validation of non-formal and informal learning against occupational standards is not regulated by law, in principle full occupational qualifications can be awarded through RPL, regardless of how the competences were acquired.

In the past, the leading responsible institution for the development of validation arrangements has been the adult education department at the ministry. The Adult education programme 2016-19 (*Täiskasvanuhariduse* programme) ([35]) supported the development of validation practices for the needs of adult learners, with a focus on early school leavers. While mostly prior formal learning was recognised previously, more attention is given now to validation of non-formal and informal learning. Training has been provided to validation practitioners in adult gymnasiums (counsellors, assessors, teachers) and in higher education and vocational education institutions, the networks of validation practitioners are established, and e-instructional materials are worked out. Overall validation data collection is implemented through the educational information system.

## NQF implementation and impact

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The Estonian NQF has reached operational stage. Its legal basis is provided by the amended Professions Act of 2008 and responsibilities and roles of key stakeholders have been agreed. Quality criteria for inclusion and positioning of qualifications in the framework have been adopted. The framework includes all State-recognised qualifications, which have to meet two basic criteria: to be defined in learning-outcomes-based qualifications standards (curriculum or occupational standards) and to be awarded by nationally accredited institutions.

The EstQF is well established, especially the sub-frameworks for VET, higher education and occupational qualifications. General education is formally connected to the overarching framework through relevant State programmes but common awareness about learning outcomes and qualification levels is rather weak in this subsystem.

Two main qualifications registers are in use. The Estonian education infosystem (EHIS) includes all formal education qualifications. The Occupational qualifications register covers all occupational qualifications, with 558 valid occupational qualification standards for 93 subfields included to date (October 2020). It indicates the mandatory fields of Annex VI of the EQF recommendation ([36]), including a description of learning outcomes. Adult training courses have not been assigned to NQF levels and are not included in a register.

EstQF and EQF levels have been indicated on higher education and occupational qualifications (that meet the requirements for inclusion in the EstQF) since 2012, and on general education and VET qualifications since 2013. Including the EstQF and EQF levels on Europass diploma and certificate supplements is general practice. The levels are also indicated in the EHIS database and the Occupational qualifications register. It has been decided to include EstQF and EQF levels in the envisaged new version of the Estonian education database (EHIS2). For a better comparison of curricula, EQF levels or for a variety of background information, there is a webpage [www.haridussilm.ee](http://www.haridussilm.ee), and the latest improvement for informing the public is the Education Portal <https://haridusportaal.edu.ee/>, a one-stop-shop for all Estonian education services presented from an end-user viewpoint.

The EstQF is being used by various stakeholder groups. Education and training providers indicate NQF/EQF levels when advertising study

programmes. In the labour market, to participate in public procurement it is mandatory to have a required qualification at a specific NQF/EQF level. Guidance and counselling practitioners are being trained in the use of the NQF and EQF in their work; training materials for this purpose have been developed by the EQF NCP and the Euroguidance and Europass Centres. The EstQF is used in the external quality assessment of study programmes in VET and higher education. Validation practitioners use the NQF to assess the equivalence between applicants' portfolios and qualification standards or intended learning outcomes. Learners, students, workers and jobseekers use qualification standards and intended learning outcomes to self-assess compliance of their competence to the requirements of study programmes and jobs. The use of the framework has been promoted and supported through a variety of materials and tools, such as articles, handbooks, leaflets and video clips ([37]) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

As all qualifications included in the NQF are expressed in learning outcomes and indicate the NQF level, transparency and comparability of qualifications have increased. The NQF has also had an influence on the design of qualifications, as all occupational qualifications standards, VET and higher education standards, and formal educational curricula are described taking into account the NQF level descriptors. Links to the NQF level descriptors are assessed as part of quality assurance processes in all subsystems of education and training. Numerous adult (continuous) education programmes commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Unemployment Insurance Fund are designed as preparation for occupational qualification exams. The NQF is also thought to have an influence on progression through education and training: entry to higher education programmes in some occupations has been simplified for students who obtained a level 4 VET qualification in a specific area, and the framework supports the implementation of validation policies in VET, general and higher education by describing qualifications in learning outcomes. As occupational qualifications levels are negotiated through the work of sectoral councils, dialogue and stakeholder cooperation across sectors and institutions have increased. As the NQF includes qualifications from the formal education system as well as occupational qualifications, and as VET and higher education programmes are based on occupational qualifications standards where these exist, the NQF is thought to have contributed considerably to the parity of esteem between different types of qualifications.

Academic and professional recognition of foreign qualifications is conducted based on the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications

Act ([38]) and carried out by the ENIC-NARIC Centre, which curates the work of the competent authorities. The Estonian Qualifications Authority is the contact point for any question regarding qualifications, recognition, permissions to work and licencing (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Implementation of the overarching framework has triggered discussions between stakeholders and has been used to identify gaps and imbalances in the provision of qualifications. For instance, the main discussion centred on the fact that there were no qualifications from initial education and training identified at EstQF level 5, only occupational qualifications. The need for these types of qualification in the labour market, supported by different stakeholders, has impacted on policy decisions. The framework has also been used to revisit provision of professional higher qualifications referenced to EstQF level 6.

## **Referencing to the EQF**

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The EstQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in October 2011 (Estonian Qualifications Authority, 2011). Following the 2013 VET reform, the referencing report was updated in 2016 (Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016). The next updated referencing report may be submitted in 2022 following changes in upper secondary education legislation (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

## Important lessons and future plans

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Estonia has developed an eight-level comprehensive qualifications framework, covering all State-recognised qualifications from formal education and from the occupational qualifications system. The framework is believed to have improved transparency, comparability and coherence in the qualifications system. Through the description of qualifications in learning outcomes, the EstQF is supporting the implementation of validation practices. Occupational qualifications meeting strict quality criteria can be assigned to levels 2 to 8 of the EstQF, increasing the parity of esteem between different types of qualifications. VET and higher education institutions, which have curricula based on occupational standards and are accredited against quality standards, can apply to become occupational qualifications awarding bodies. As stated in the EQF referencing report, 'a remarkable convergence' between the education system and the occupational qualification system has taken place (Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016).

The EstQF has reached an operational stage. One of the success factors in its development and implementation has been the systematic involvement and training of stakeholders at different stages of the process. Several stakeholder cooperation structures have been set in place over recent years for EstQF implementation and adjacent developments, including: the EstQF steering committee (currently inactive), whose mandate was expanded from the EQF referencing process to monitoring implementation and making amendment proposals; sectoral councils; the body of chairmen of sectoral councils as the coordination committee for the occupational qualifications system, representing institutions involved in workforce skills development, promotion of competitiveness, and organisation of lifelong learning; and, since 2015, the OSKA coordination committee, governing the development of a labour and skills anticipation system (OSKA) ([39]). Sectoral surveys of labour and skills needs are being conducted by sectoral expert committees, including representatives of business and public sector organisations, and the respective education and training providers, leading to recommendations for quantitative and qualitative changes in sectoral education and training provision (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). Based on the Occupational Qualifications Act, the OSKA coordination committee and the body of chairmen of sectoral councils carry out the steering committee tasks for

implementing the EstQF.

The main current challenge for the EstQF is its further recognition as a backbone of the national qualifications system and as a focal point of the system for lifelong learning. This could be addressed by increasing awareness of the EstQF among end-users. Major challenges of the Estonian education system and ways of overcoming these are described in the Education Strategy 2035 ([40]).

# Main sources of information

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- The Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekoda*) is the EQF NCP:  
<http://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/>
- NQF/EQF webpage: <https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/>
- Estonian education information system (EHIS), including all formal education qualifications: [www.ehis.ee](http://www.ehis.ee)
- Estonian register of occupational qualifications (professions register) [www.kutseregister.ee](http://www.kutseregister.ee)
- Estonian Qualifications Authority (2011). *Referencing of the Estonian qualifications and qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework*  
<https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/kutsekoda-as-national-coordination-point-for-the-eqf-implementation/>
- Estonian Qualifications Authority et al. (2016). *Referencing of the Estonian qualifications and qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework*.  
<https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

# National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	<b>Doctoral degree (Doktorikraad)</b> <b>Category</b> Qualifications awarded in formal education <b>Level 8 occupational qualification - senior specialists, top managers</b> <b>Category</b> Occupational groups and occupational qualifications E.g.: chartered engineer  principal architect	8
7	<b>Master degree (Magistrikraad)</b> <b>Category</b> Qualifications awarded in formal education <b>Level 7 occupational qualification - specialists, managers</b> <b>Category</b> Occupational groups and occupational qualifications E.g.: diploma engineer  diploma architect	7

6	<p><b>Bachelor degree (Bakalaureusekraad)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>Diploma of professional higher education (Rakenduskörgharidusõppemäär)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>Level 6 occupational qualification - specialists, supervisors</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Occupational groups and occupational qualifications</p> <p>E.g.: energy auditor</p> <p>career counsellor</p>	6
5	<p><b>VET certificate, level 5 (5. taseme kutseõppemäär)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>Level 5 occupational qualification - technicians and craft masters, frontline managers, clerical workers</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Occupational groups and occupational qualifications</p> <p>E.g.: master carpenter</p> <p>construction site manager</p> <p>master chef</p>	5

**Upper secondary general education certificate  
(Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus)****Category**

Qualifications awarded in formal education

**Upper secondary VET certificate****(Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus)****Category**

Qualifications awarded in formal education

**VET certificate, level 4 (4.taseme kutseõppe****lõputunnistus)****Category**

Qualifications awarded in formal education

**Level 4 occupational qualification - skilled****workers, machine operators, service and sales****workers, clerical support workers****Category**

Occupational groups and occupational qualifications

E.g.: CNC milling machine operator

carpenter

florist

**Category**

Qualifications awarded in formal education

**Level 3 occupational qualification - skilled workers, machine operators, service and sales workers, clerical support workers****Category**

Occupational groups and occupational qualifications

E.g.: cleaner

electronic equipment assembler

facility maintenance technician

2	<p><b>Basic education certificate (Põhikooli lõputunnistus)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>Basic education certificate based on simplified national curriculum for basic schools (Põhikooli lihtsustatud riikliku õppekava lõputunnistus)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>VET certificate, Level 2 (without basic education requirement) (2.taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p> <p><b>Level 2 occupational qualification - elementary workers</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Occupational groups and occupational qualifications</p> <p>E.g.: cook assistant</p> <p>cleaner assistant</p>	2
1	<p><b>Basic education certificate based on simplified national curriculum for basic schools (for students with special educational needs)</b></p> <p><b>(Põhikooli lihtsustatud riikliku õppekava toimetulekuõppe tunnistus)</b></p> <p><b>Category</b></p> <p>Qualifications awarded in formal education</p>	1

## Acronyms

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ECTS European credit transfer system

ECVET European credit system for vocational education and training

ENIC European network of information centres

EQF European qualifications framework

EstQF Estonian qualifications framework

NARIC national academic recognition information centres

NQF national qualifications framework

RPL recognition of prior learning

VET vocational education and training

# References

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[URLs accessed 11.12.2020]

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# Notes

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- [1] [https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/pisa-2018\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/pisa-2018_en)
- [2] Data from European Commission, 2020.
- [3] Idem.
- [4] Idem.
- [5] Idem.
- [6] Idem.
- [7] <https://ekka.edu.ee/en/project-quality-enhancement-continuing-education/>
- [8] Referred to as standard of higher education.
- [9] Referred to as vocational education standard.
- [10] Referred to as national curriculum for basic schools and national curriculum for upper secondary schools.
- [11] Occupational qualifications are those associated with a trade, occupation or profession, usually resulting from work-based learning, in-service training and adult education.
- [12] The Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020 is available in English at: <https://www.hm.ee/en/estonian-lifelong-learning-strategy-2020>. A new strategy for 2021-2035 is being prepared.
- [13] <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/strategic-planning-2021-2035>
- [14] Based on the Occupational Qualifications Act in 2001, occupational qualifications were referenced to a five-level occupational qualifications framework with level 1 the lowest and level 5 the highest. Occupational qualifications are now assigned to levels 2 to 8 in the EstQF (Estonian Qualifications Authority; Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016).
- [15] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/114072020024?leiaKehtiv>
- [16] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/128122010014?leiaKehtiv>
- [17] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/128072020013?leiaKehtiv>
- [18] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/515012020003/consolide>
- [19] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/112072019017>. In the sub-framework for higher education, general descriptors follow the logic of the Dublin descriptors, but are adjusted to national needs.
- [20] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/525112013007/consolide/current>
- [21] VET curricula database:  
<https://enda.ehis.ee/avalik/avalik/oppekava/OppekavaOtsi.faces>
- [22] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/515012020003/consolide>
- [23] The Adult Education Act is available at:  
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/529062015007/consolide>
- [24] <https://www.hm.ee/en/estonian-lifelong-learning-strategy-2020>

[25]

[https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/uldhariduse\\_valishindamise\\_ulesanded.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/uldhariduse_valishindamise_ulesanded.pdf)

[26] The Universities Act is available in English at:

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/521032014002/consolidate>

[27] The Institutions of professional higher education Act is available in English at:

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/504112013013/consolidate>

[28] Available in English at:

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/525112013007/consolidate/current>

[29] <https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/kutsekoda-as-national-coordination-point-for-the-eqf-implementation/>

[30] <https://dok.hm.ee/et/document.html?id=bd4d108e-7694-4096-b5be-7ff5ce334dbb>

[31] This section draws mainly on input from the 2018 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Johnson, 2019).

[32] Standard of VET and Standard of higher education.

[33] KÄürgharidusprogramm 2016-19:

[https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa\\_8\\_korghariduse\\_programm\\_2016-2019.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa_8_korghariduse_programm_2016-2019.pdf)

[34] Kutseharidusprogramm 2016-19:

[https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa\\_7\\_kutseharidusprogramm\\_2016-2019.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa_7_kutseharidusprogramm_2016-2019.pdf)

[35] TÄrixkasvanuhariduse programm 2016-19:

[https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa\\_9\\_taiskasvanuhariduse\\_programm\\_2016-2019.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/lisa_9_taiskasvanuhariduse_programm_2016-2019.pdf)

[36] Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ceead970-518f-11e7-a5ca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

[37] Examples can be found at:&#xD;

<https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/>; [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnMgQZ\\_xl-4WrwwOFFMnNBw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnMgQZ_xl-4WrwwOFFMnNBw); <https://europass.ee/karjaarikoolitus-targa-tootsija-tooriistakast>; <https://europass.ee/index.php?lang=et>; <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/et/blog/kuidas-taienduskoolituses-koostada-kutsestandardile-vastavaid-toomaailma-oppekavasid>.

[38] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/502042014002/consolidate/current>

[39] <https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/>

[40]

[https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/preliminary\\_analyses\\_educational\\_system\\_en.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/preliminary_analyses_educational_system_en.pdf)

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