
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

ESTONIA

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements (1)

Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research and is crucial to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce. Professional standards in the eight-level Estonian qualifications framework are outcomes-based and are the basis for VET curricula. Social partners are involved in VET policy development and implementation. They participate in national professional councils and are involved in drafting VET-related legislation, including curricula. At provider level, their representatives belong to VET institution advisory bodies.

Recognition of prior learning and work experience has improved accessibility to VET for learners from diverse education and professional backgrounds.

VET providers offer both initial and continuing programmes. Initial VET is offered at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Estonian qualifications framework (and European qualifications framework, EQF). Learners can choose between full-time studies and those where the emphasis is on self-study (referred to as 'non-stationary' studies in the national context). Full-time studies are available as school-based tracks, and as apprenticeship. Financial assistance is available for VET learners to guarantee equal access to education.

There are no minimum admission requirements at levels 2 and 3 but learners must be at least 17 years old to enrol. Entry to level 4 studies usually requires completed basic education but there are exceptions (2) for those over 22 without basic education.

VET programmes at ISCED level 354 are referred to nationally as upper secondary vocational education.

The ratio of learners in general and vocational upper secondary programmes is three to one. The qualification achieved in vocational secondary education gives access to higher education. This may require learners to pass State examinations that are compulsory for general upper secondary education graduates: an optional additional year of general education is available for upper secondary VET graduates (ISCED 354) to help prepare. Around 7% of upper secondary VET graduates continue in tertiary education. Upper secondary education gives access to EQF level 5 initial VET programmes (ISCED 454). These post-secondary programmes prepare learners for technical and associate professional occupations and further studies.

Continuing VET is offered at EQF levels 4 and 5. To enrol in these formal programmes, learners need a VET qualification or relevant competences, in addition to completed upper secondary education.

Tertiary VET does not feature in Estonian legislation, though tertiary education may also comprise professional qualifications. These are accessible to all graduates of upper secondary education and post-secondary VET.

Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning. Its forms, duration and content vary. To support up- and reskilling of vulnerable groups (e.g. with obsolete, low-level or no qualification), VET providers and professional higher education institutions offer free courses for working adults.

Distinctive features (3)

Although the number of VET learners has been decreasing, the share of adult learners (age 25 and over) in initial and continuing VET has more than doubled since 2010/11, reaching 42.4% of the total VET population in 2020/21. This pattern reflects demographic trends but also changing labour market needs. Since 2010, the proportion of higher educated adults entering VET has also been increasing. In both initial and continuing education, learners have the right to take study leave.

The share of practical training in VET programmes is 35% or more, depending on the type of programme. In the school-based track, it is usually divided equally between school workshops and workplace learning, featuring work and study assignments with specific objectives.

Participation in apprenticeships has been increasing since 2016/17 and now accounts for 9% of VET learners. This is a result of the education ministry's efforts to develop a functioning and sustainable work-based learning system with stronger employer involvement, including more ESF (European Social Fund) investments.

General secondary education has remained the more popular option among basic education graduates despite the government's efforts to increase the attractiveness of VET. Preferences in education paths vary greatly by region and gender. Many basic and upper secondary education graduates make a choice in favour of VET within several years of graduation; within 3 years after basic school completion, 37% of young people reach vocational training.

The most common VET study fields are engineering, manufacturing and construction, with 50% of upper secondary vocational graduates earning a qualification.

VET programmes are mainly offered in Estonian but, to a lesser extent, also in Russian and English.

[1] Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/667443>

[3] Based on Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://data.europa.eu/10.2801/10.2801/667443>

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

The Estonian labour market has a high level of skills mismatch. A labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system (OSKA) was launched in 2015 to improve alignment between education and the labour market. Results are available online and are used in curriculum development, career counselling, and planning of State-funded education.

Dropping out from VET is a challenge. Compared with 1.2% of dropouts from general upper secondary education, the rate in the first year of vocational upper secondary education was 19.2% in 2020. There are career counselling services, vocational orientation programme at EQF level 2 and other measures to prevent early leaving.

In 2020, 26% of adults aged 25 to 64 had no professional or vocational qualification; the objective is to reduce this share. Several measures have been introduced to encourage adults without a qualification to return to formal education.

Participation in lifelong learning increased from 6% in 2005 to 20.2% in 2019 and VET has been playing a great role in this. A COVID-19-related setback to 17.1% in 2020 is expected to be temporary. The goal is to increase it to 25% by 2035. There is a focus on broadening access to non-formal education, training courses for developing key competences, and career services.

During the COVID-19 crisis, regulatory flexibility of VET has facilitated the transition to distance learning. WBL was reorganised case by case: postponed, suspended or continued. State-level support was tailored according to VET providers' needs. The success factors in coping with the crisis were:

- sufficient learner and teacher digital skills, adequate digital infrastructure in VET schools and at homes;
- information and clear messages for reorganising studies;
- good governance, cooperation, partnership and information-sharing between stakeholders (4) .

[4] Based on Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/667443>

CHAPTER 3.

External factors influencing VET

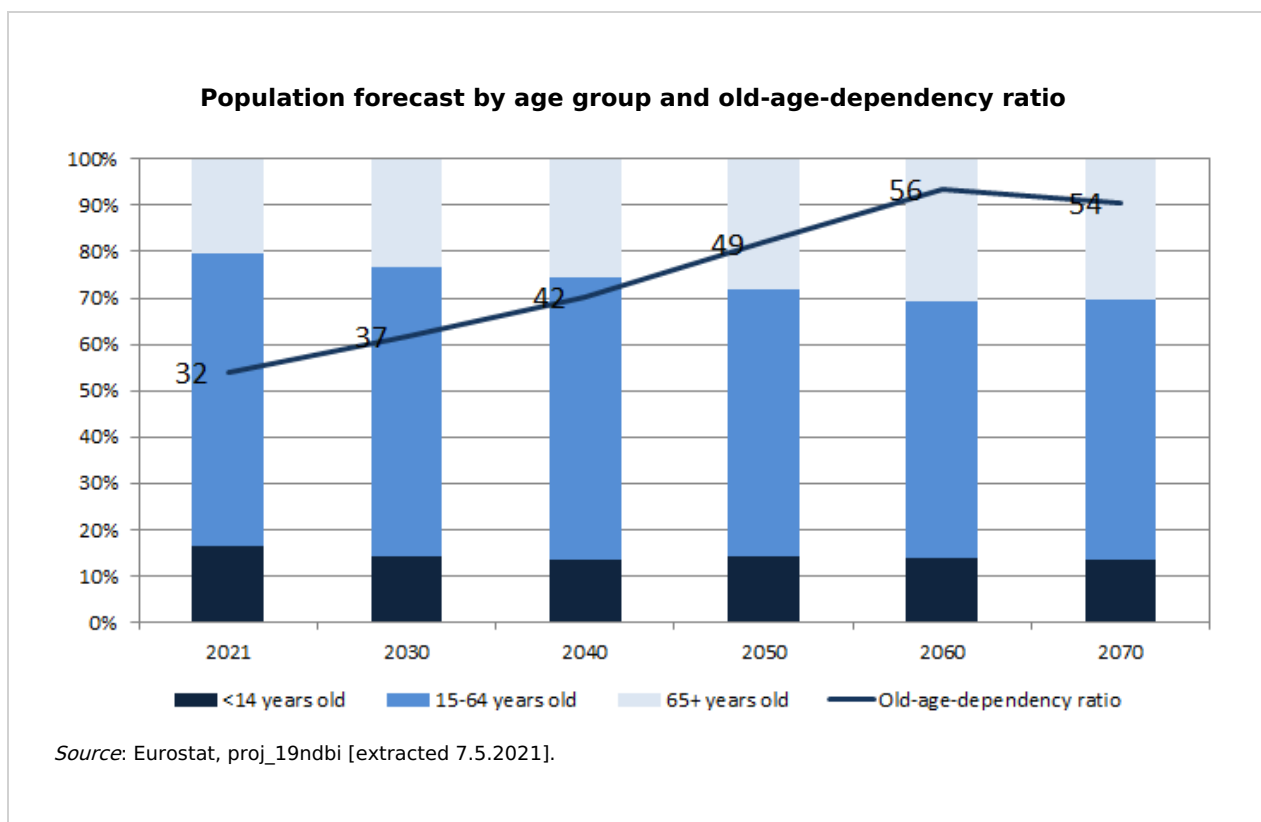
3.1 Demographics

Population in 2021: 1 328 976 (5)

It increased since 2015 by 1.1% due to positive natural growth and migration (6) .

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age dependency ratio is expected to increase from 29 in 2015 to 54 in 2070 (7) .



Demographic changes have an impact on vocational education and training (VET).

Participation has been decreasing since 2010/11 due to the low birth rate in the second half of the 1990s.

This has led to rearrangement of the VET institutions network: the number of State-owned VET providers has been reduced from 54 in 2002/03 to 31 in 2020/21.

To increase the quality and efficiency of VET, many small providers were merged into regional VET centres offering a wide range of qualifications. Adjustments will continue in line with demographic trends.

The country is multicultural and has a bilingual community. In 2021, about 69% of the population is Estonian. Most VET institutions teach in Estonian, though there are schools where they use Russian or

both Estonian and Russian.

3.2 Economics

Most companies are micro- and small-sized.

Main economic sectors:

- information and communications;
- electronics and components;
- machinery and metalworking;
- transport and logistics;
- timber and furniture.

VET qualifications are required in these sectors.

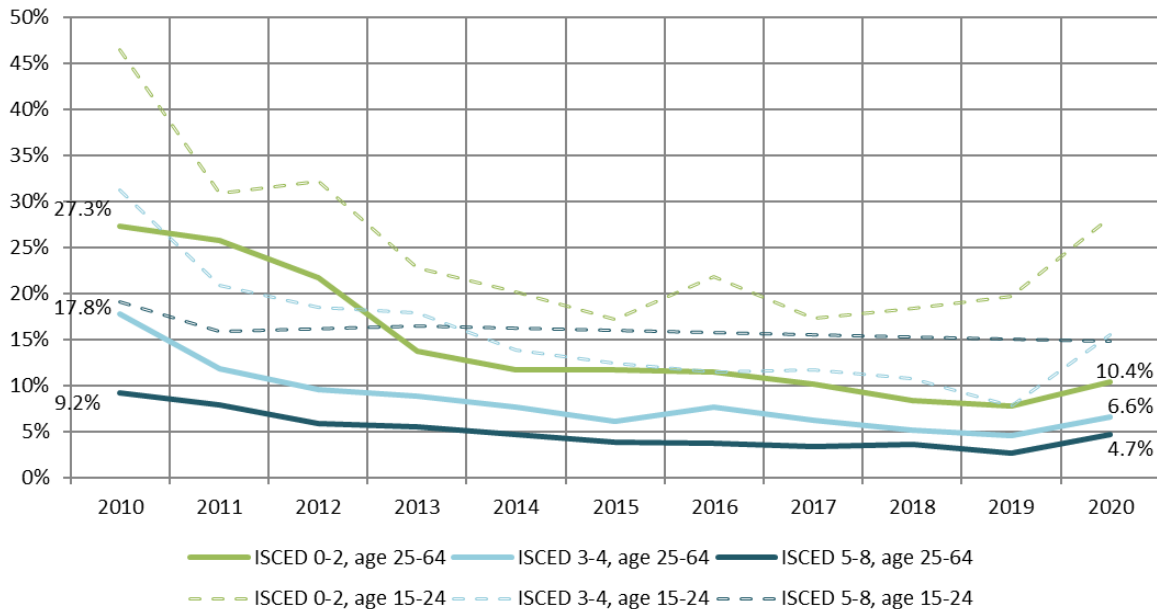
Exports mainly comprise electronic equipment, machinery and equipment, mineral products, metals and metal products, timber and wood products, food and transport vehicles, agricultural products and food preparations.

3.3 Labour market

A limited number of occupations/professions is regulated and the labour market is considered flexible.

Total unemployment (8) in 2020: 5.9% (6.0% in EU-28); it increased by 0.3 percentage points since 2016 (9) .

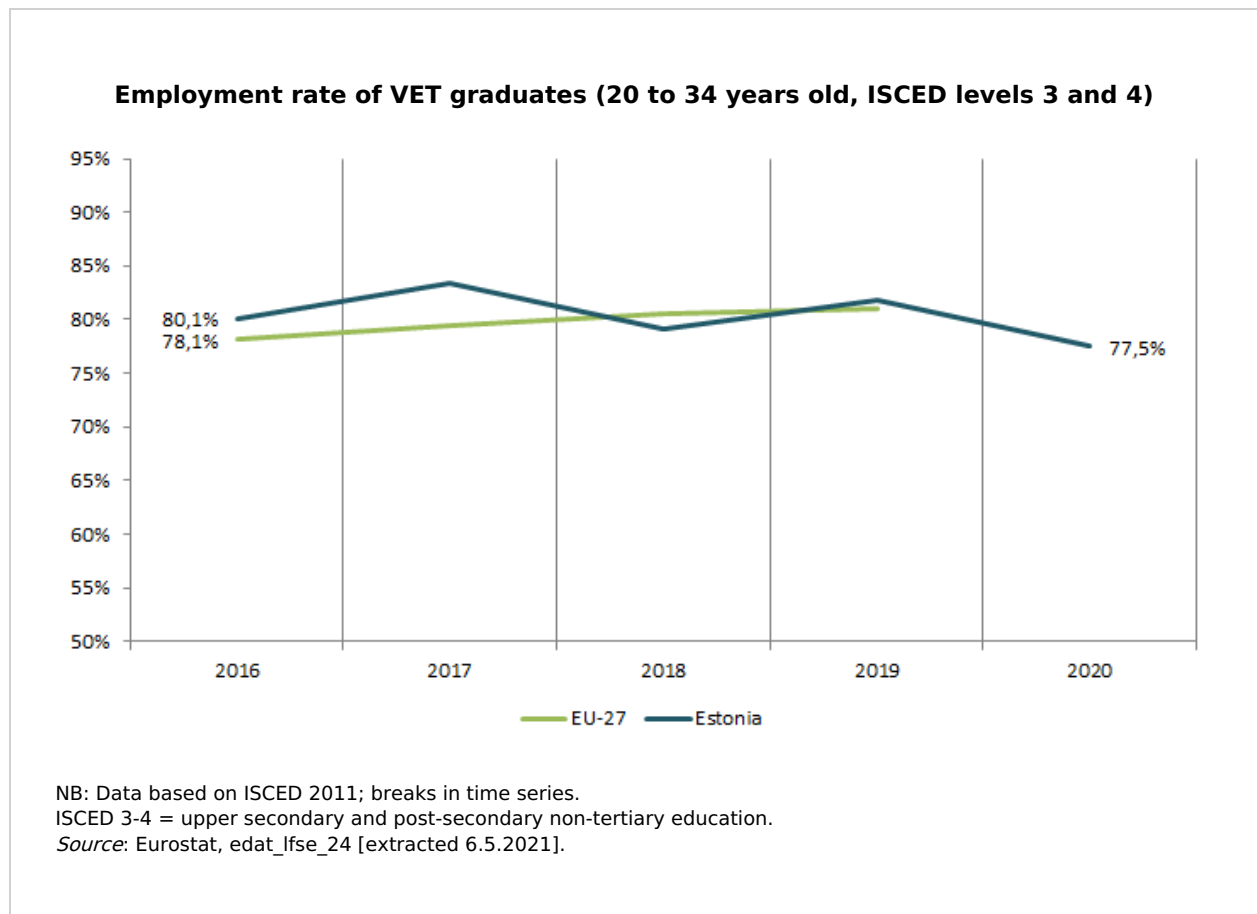
Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2010-20



NB: data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8, age 15-24.
ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education. ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.
Source: Eurostat, lfsa_urgaed [extracted 6.5.2021].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. The gap has increased during the crisis as unskilled workers are more vulnerable to unemployment. In 2020, the unemployment rate of people with medium-level qualifications, including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3 and 4) was higher than in the pre-crisis years. It is lower compared to the total unemployment rate (10) in Estonia (5.9% in 2020).

Employment rate of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates increased from 75% in 2016 to 77.2% in 2020 (11)



The increase (-2.6pp) in employment of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates at ISCED levels 3 and 4 in 2016-20 was negative compared to the increase in employment of all 20 to 34-year-old graduates (+2.2 pp) in the same period in Estonia (12) .

The employment rate of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates at ISCED levels 3 and 4 in 2020 in Estonia (77.5%) was similar to the employment rate of all 20-34 year-old graduates in the same year in Estonia (77.2%) (13) .

For more information about the external drivers influencing VET developments in Estonia please see the case study from Cedefop's changing nature and role of VET in Europe project (14) .

[5] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 7.5.2021].

[6] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 7.5.2021].

[7] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64 years). The value is expressed per 100

persons of working age (15-64).

[8] Percentage of active population, 25 to 64 years old.

[9] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 6.5.2021].

[10] Percentage of active population, 25 to 64 years old.

[11] Eurostat table edat_lfse_24 [extracted 6.5.2021].

[12] NB: Break in time series. Eurostat table edat_lfse_24 [extracted 6.5.2021].

[13] NB: Break in time series. Eurostat table edat_lfse_24 [extracted 6.5.2021].

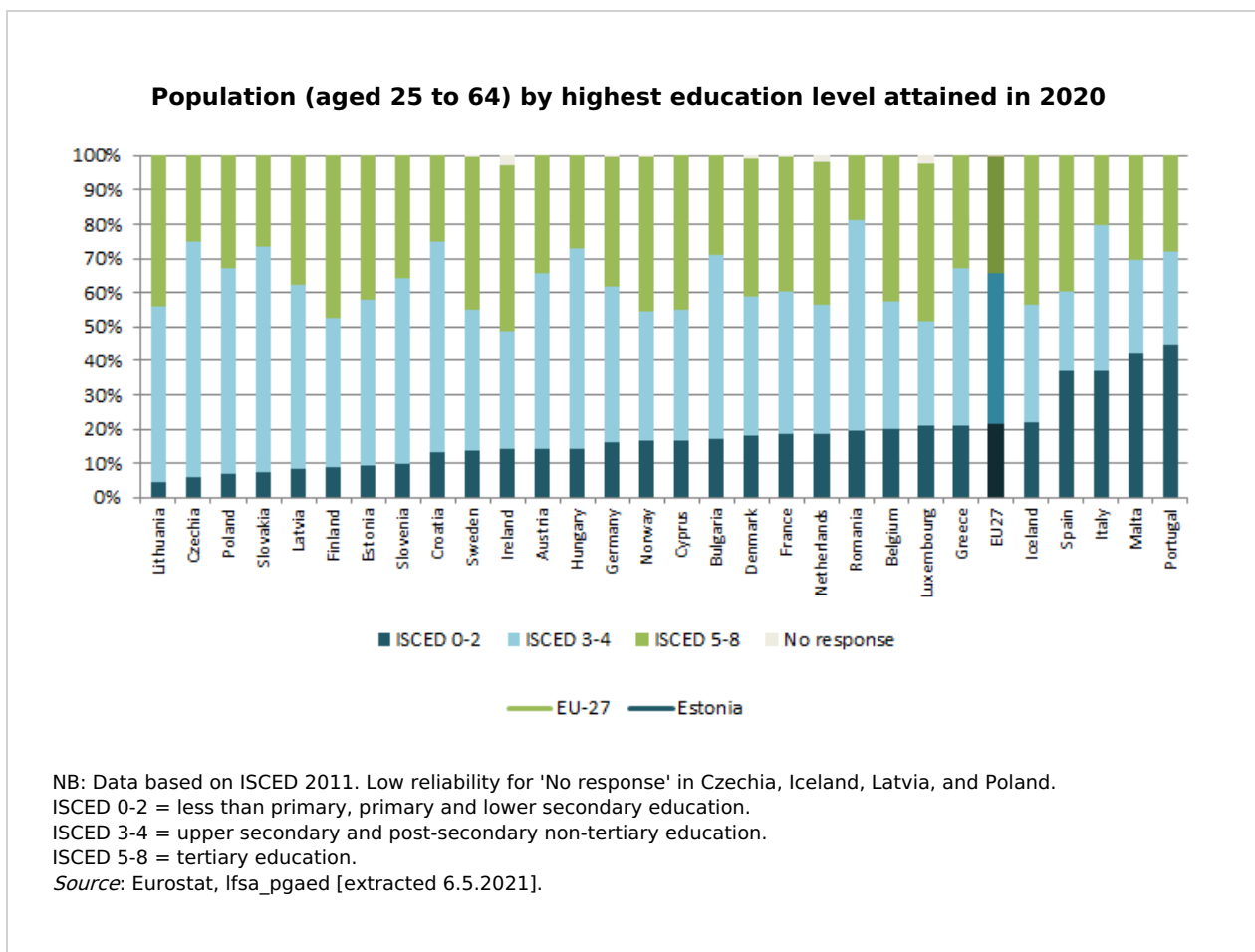
CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education traditionally has a high value in Estonia. For many years, the share of the population aged up to 64 with higher education has been greater in Estonia than in most EU Member States.

The share of those with a low qualification, or without a qualification, is the seventh lowest in the EU, behind Lithuania, Czechia, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, and Finland.



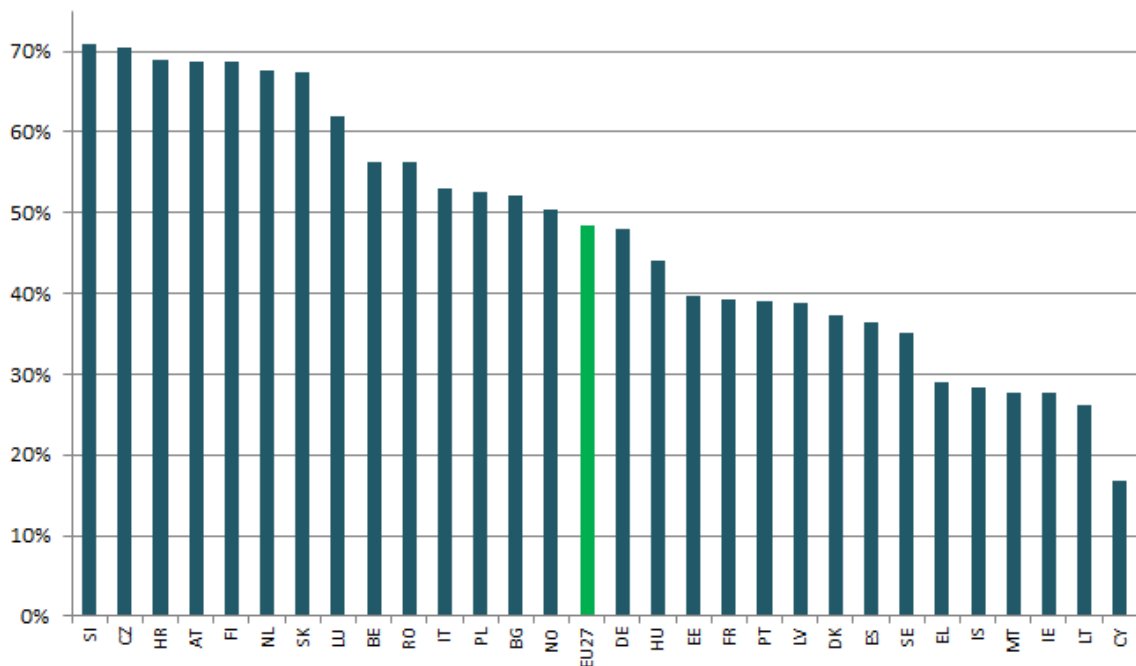
4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2019

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
2.8%	39.8%	100%

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_ens01, educ_uoe_ens04 and educ_uoe_ens07 [extracted 6.5.2021].

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2019



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 6.5.2021].

4.4 Female share

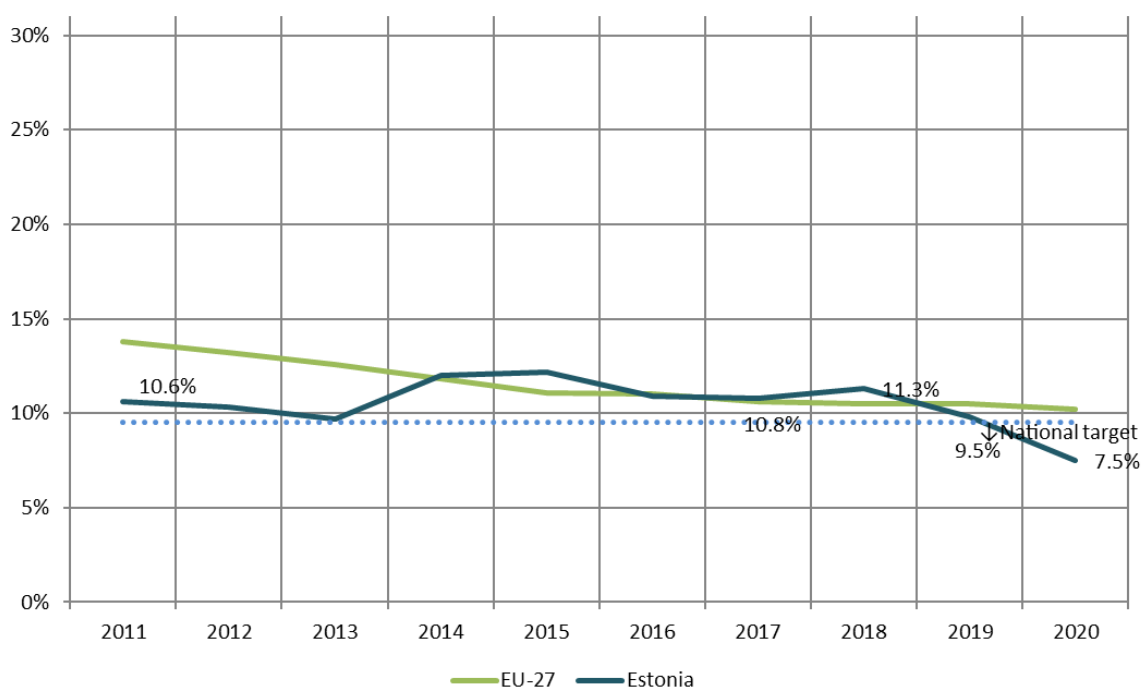
Traditionally, there are more males in VET (52%), except at post-secondary level.

Males prefer engineering (the most popular option), manufacturing and construction, science, and services programmes, while females more often enrol in services (the most popular option), business and administration, production and processing, and arts.

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 10.6% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2020, thus reaching the national target of lower than 9.5%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2011-20



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training; break in series.

Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted 6.5.2021] and European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en [accessed 14.11.2018].

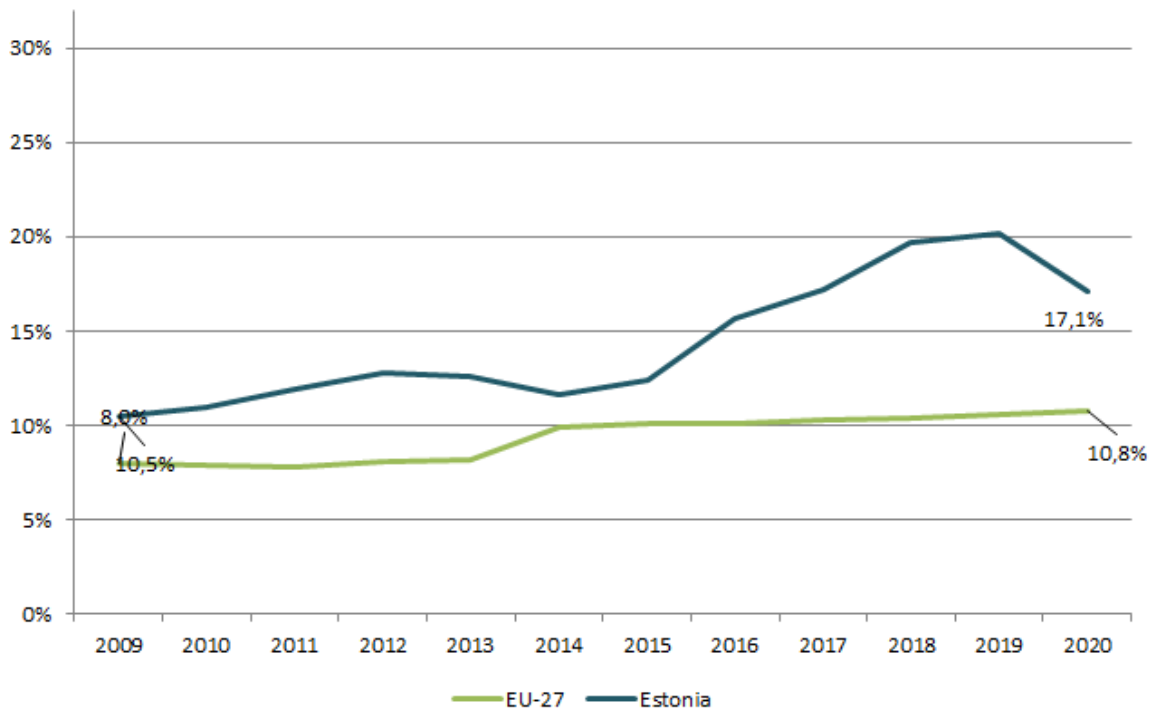
Despite recent positive developments, the dropout rate (15) from VET during a school year is high (19.2% in 2020). The risk of dropping out is at its highest in the first school year and the challenge for VET providers is to keep the most vulnerable learners in VET programmes.

Typical examples of dropout are those who had low grades in basic education (16) and may not have had a positive learning experience or had not developed study habits. Dropout rates also vary by region, school and curriculum group.

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education and training.

Participation in lifelong learning in 2009-20



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 6.5.2021].

Participation in lifelong learning in Estonia has been increasing in the past decade; in 2019, it reached 20.2%, more than nine percentage points above the EU-28 average. Due to COVID-19, it has dropped to 17.1% in 2020. The government has set the 2020 goal of 20% and VET has been playing an increasing role in achieving this goal.

[15] Measured on 10 November each year; excludes those who: attended classes less than 31 days, were readmitted within 31 days, applied but never attended or who changed programme in the same curriculum group and in the same institution.

[16] See Chapter 2 for the information on education levels.

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- preschool education (ISCED level 0);
- integrated primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) (hereafter basic education);
- upper secondary education (ISCED level 3);
- post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED level 4);
- higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8).

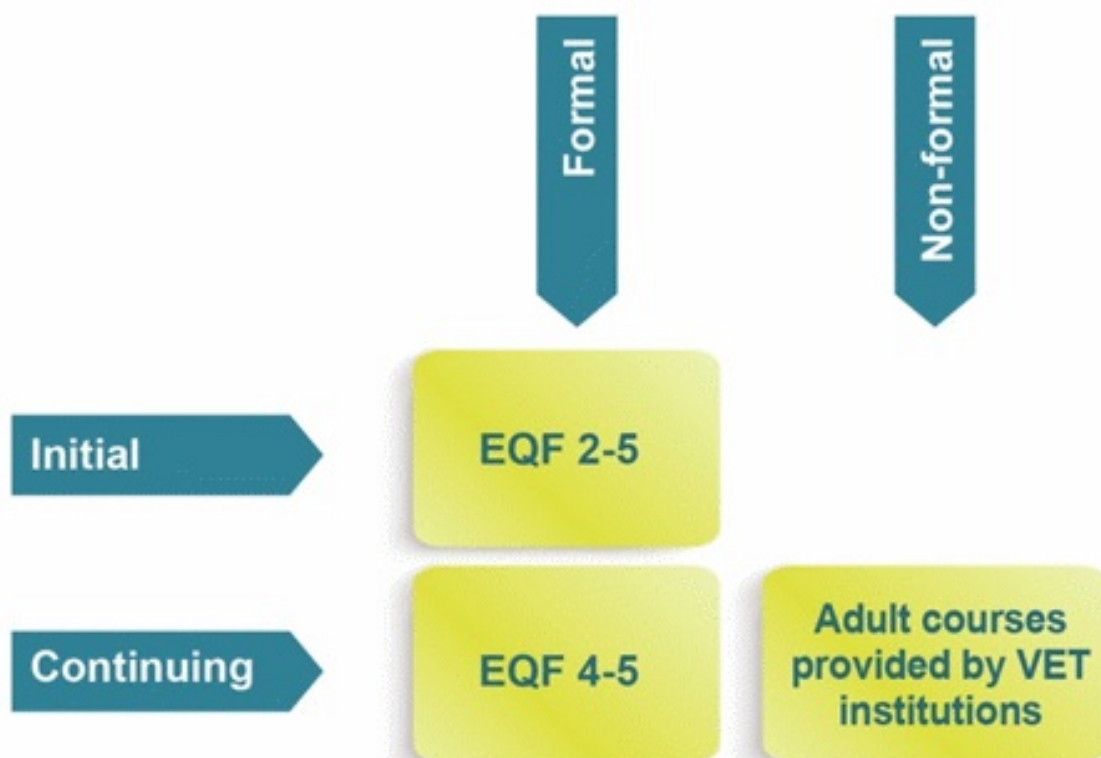
Preschool education is not compulsory and is generally provided at childcare institutions (*koolieelne lasteasutus*) for one-and-a-half to seven-year-old learners.

Compulsory education starts at age seven and includes 9 years of basic education or until a learner reaches age 17. Primary and lower secondary education are usually offered together in basic schools. However, primary education (grades 1 to 6) can also be offered in separate schools, usually in rural areas to ensure better accessibility for learners.

General secondary education is provided at upper secondary schools (*gümnaasium*). This 3-year programme gives graduates access to higher education, provided through academic and professional programmes. Professional higher education programmes are not formally considered VET. Professional higher education institutions may also provide post-secondary VET programmes along with higher education.

The Vocational Educational Institutions Act (17) distinguishes between initial and continuing VET.

Formal, non-formal, initial and continuing VET



Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia.

While both types provide the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enter the labour market, initial VET also gives learners access to the next qualification level. Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning regulated by the Adult Education Act (18) .

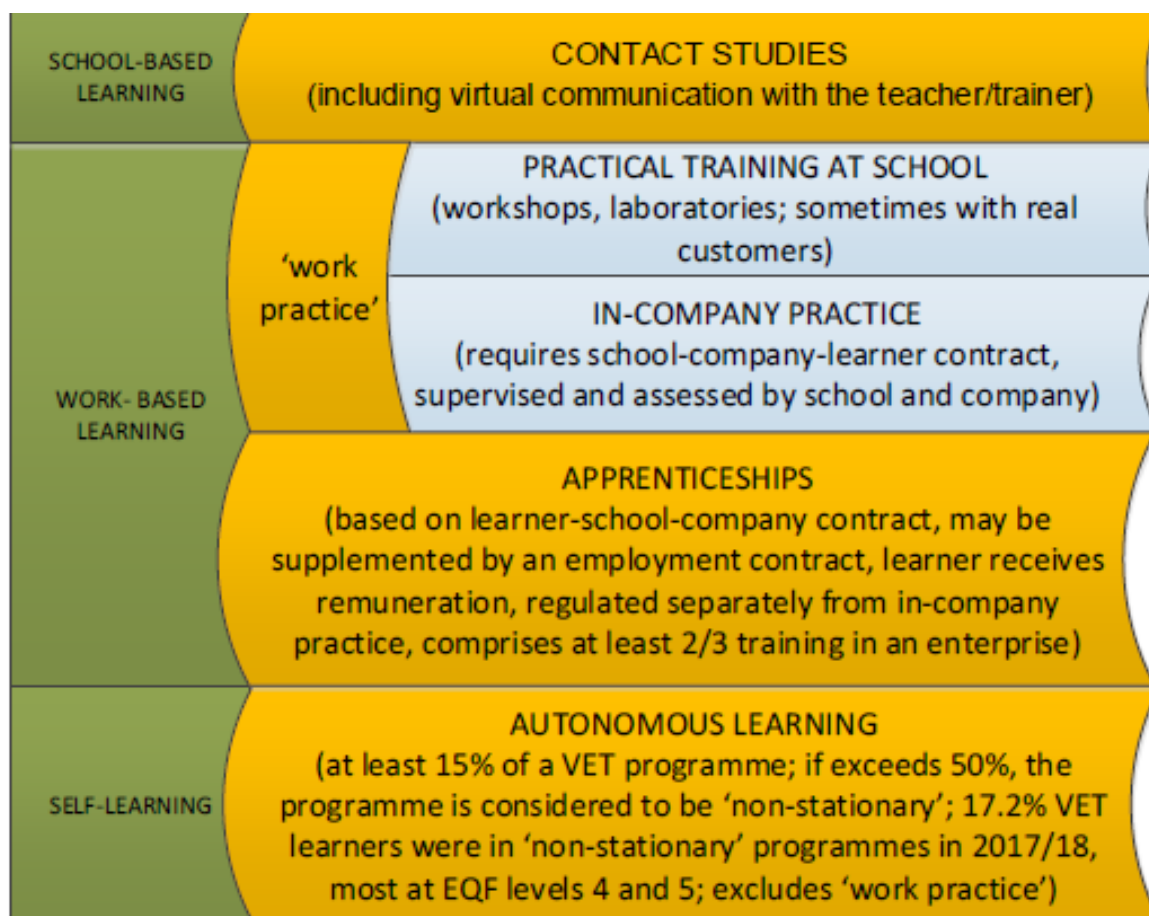
Formal VET leads to four qualification levels (2 to 5) that are the same as in the European qualifications framework (EQF). The VET standard specifies the volume (number of credits), learning outcomes, conditions for termination and continuation of studies for each VET type (19) .

There are several VET learning options:

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary'; 21% of VET learners were in 'non-stationary' programmes in 2020/21, mostly at EQF levels 4 and 5).

Apprenticeships were introduced to VET as a stand-alone study form in 2006.

VET learning options



Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia.

Upper secondary VET learners receive two qualifications simultaneously: an upper secondary education qualification and a professional qualification verifying learning outcomes for a specific occupation or profession (20) .

To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination, if available. That can be replaced by a final examination if unsuccessful in the professional qualification examination. Both examinations are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.

In addition to VET examinations, State examinations (mother tongue, mathematics and foreign language) are available for upper secondary VET graduates as an option. They are organised centrally by the Education and Youth Authority (21) .

[21] Education and Youth Authority - State examinations: <https://harno.ee/riigieksamid>

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships (*töökohapõhine õpe*) were introduced in 2006 .They can be offered at all VET levels and in all its forms (initial and continuing), and lead to qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 5. Apprenticeships follow the same curricula as school-based programmes. VET institutions cooperate with employers to design implementation plans for apprentices based on the existing curricula.

General characteristics of apprenticeship programmes are:

- training in the enterprise comprises at least two-thirds of the curriculum;
- the remaining one-third of the programme (school part) may also comprise of training at school; in some cases, schools have better equipment than companies;
- the apprenticeship contract between the school, learner and employee stipulates the rights and obligations of the parties as well as the details of the learning process; the contract is usually initiated by schools, but can also be proposed by companies and learners; it should be in accordance with the labour code but learners retain student status even if an employment contract is signed in addition to the apprenticeship contract; apprentices have the same social guarantees as learners in school-based VET;
- the total study duration is from 3 months to 3.5 years (22) , equal to school-based VET programmes;
- employers recompense students for tasks performed to the amount agreed in the contract; it cannot be less than the national minimum wage of EUR 584 per month or EUR 3.48 per hour (2021);
- apprentices have to pass the same final examinations as in school-based VET;
- each apprentice is supported by two supervisors: one at school and one at the workplace.

The apprenticeship grant covers the training of supervisors and other costs (23) . Within an apprentice contract, schools may transfer up to 50% of the grant to the training company to pay a salary to supervisors at the workplace.

In 2015/16, there were 678 apprentices. By 2020/21, the number of apprentices exceeded 2000, which is 9% of all VET learners. A total of 73% of vocational education institutions and around 400 companies offered apprenticeship training. During 2015-23, the government's intention is to attract a total of 7 200 apprentices.

The most popular apprenticeship study fields (curriculum groups) are wholesale and retail sales, social work and counselling, hairdressing and beauty services, motor vehicles, home services, and electricity and energy. Approximately 70% of apprentices are studying in initial and continuing VET programmes leading to EQF level 4.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

[22] Currently, apprenticeships are not provided in upper secondary VET (ISCED 354).

[23] Salaries, training materials and maintenance (such as heating and electricity).

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

According to legislation (24) , the parliament (*Riigikogu*), the government (*Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus*) and the education ministry jointly oversee the VET system at national level. The VET legislation was substantially renewed in the late 1990s and in 2013. Social partners, including trade unions and employer organisations participated in the working group on developing legislation.

The parliament adopts legal acts. The government approves national education policy, with the [Estonian Education Strategy 2021–35](#) guiding the most important developments in education. It also approves higher education and VET standards and framework requirements for teacher training.

The VET standard (25) defines:

- a learning outcomes approach;
- requirements for VET curricula;
- the volume and structure of programmes, including joint programmes, for example between VET and professional higher education;
- entry and completion requirements;
- key competences;
- principles for curriculum updates;
- principles for recognition of prior learning and work experience;
- the list of programme groups, study fields and curriculum groups combining several programmes. Examples of the curriculum groups are 'travel and tourism', 'social work' and 'banking, finance and insurance'.

A new [Education Strategy for 2021-35](#) has been adopted. The education ministry is responsible for delivering the strategy and its implementation programme. The education minister also approves national VET curricula.

The Education and Youth Authority (26) implements the national education policy, including VET policy, as designated by the education ministry.

Several advisory bodies and social partner organisations participate in policy implementation. Local government prepares and implements local education development plans and coordinates activities of municipal education institutions. Social partner participation in VET is regulated by national legislation and partnership agreements.

At national level, the Chamber of Commerce (*Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda*), the Employers' Confederation (*Eesti Töandjate Keskkliit*) and the Confederation of Trade Unions (*Eesti Ametiühingute Keskkliit*) represent social partners. Employers play an active and influential role in the professional councils (*kutsenõukogud*) and in drawing up standards for each occupation.

At local level, social partners participate in VET school counsellor boards (*kutseõppeasutuse nõunike kogu*), established under the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (27) . The boards comprise at least seven members in total. Advisory bodies link VET schools and society, advising the school and its management on planning and organising education and economic activities.

VET schools can be owned by central or local government or can be privately owned. They all have a similar management structure in line with the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (28) . The highest collegial decision-making body of the school is the council (*nõukogu*), which organises the activities and plans school development. The head of a school (*direktor*) is also the head of the council, managing the school according to the development plan of the school, including financial resources.

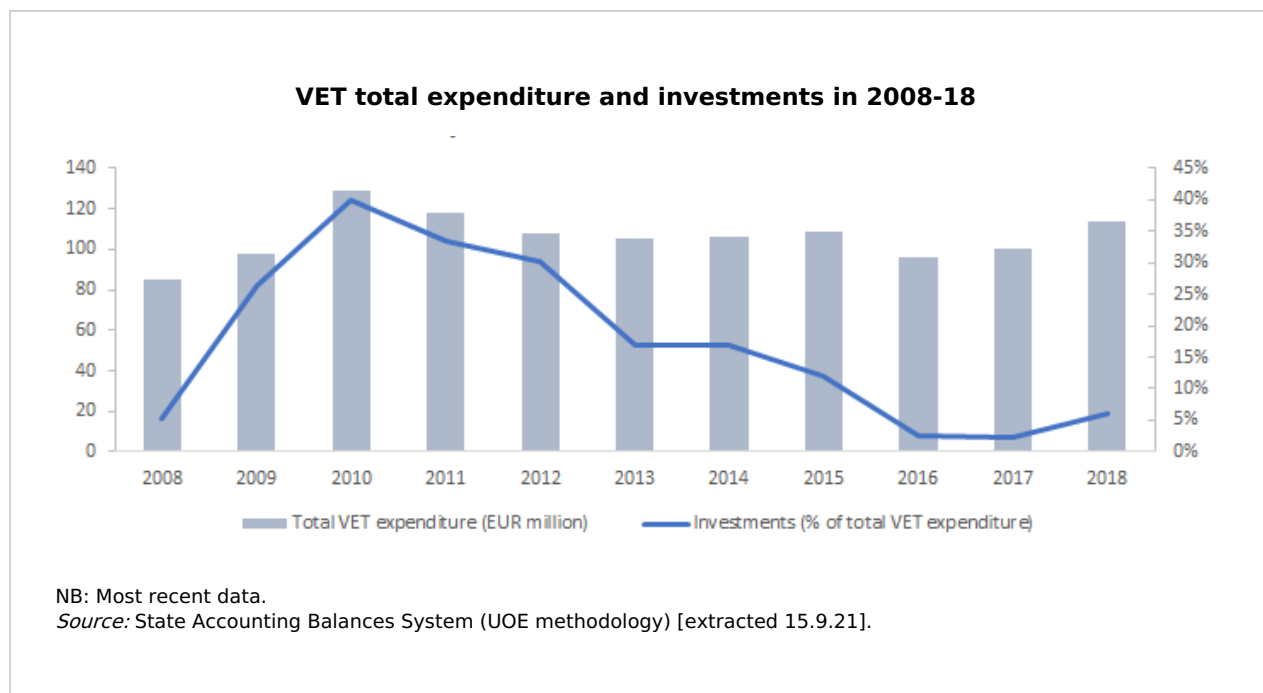
In 2020/21, 31 of 37 VET institutions were State-owned and run by the education ministry. Municipalities ran two VET schools and four were private. In addition, five professional higher education institutions provided VET programmes at the post-secondary level (ISCED 4) along with higher education (ISCED 6).

- [24] Vocational Educational Institutions Act (Parliament, 2013); Vocational education standard (Government, 2013), work-based learning regulation (MoER, 2007); Private Schools Act (Parliament, 1998b); Professional Higher Education Institutions Act (Parliament, 1998a); Adult Education Act (Parliament, 2015); Professions Act (Parliament, 2008a); Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (Parliament, 2008b); Study Allowances and Study Loans Act (Parliament, 2003a); Youth Work Act (Parliament, 2010b).
- [26] Until the end of 2011 this function was performed by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (NEQC) (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus*). In 2012, NEQC joined Foundation Innove, and in 2020 Foundation Innove joined the Education and Youth Authority.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

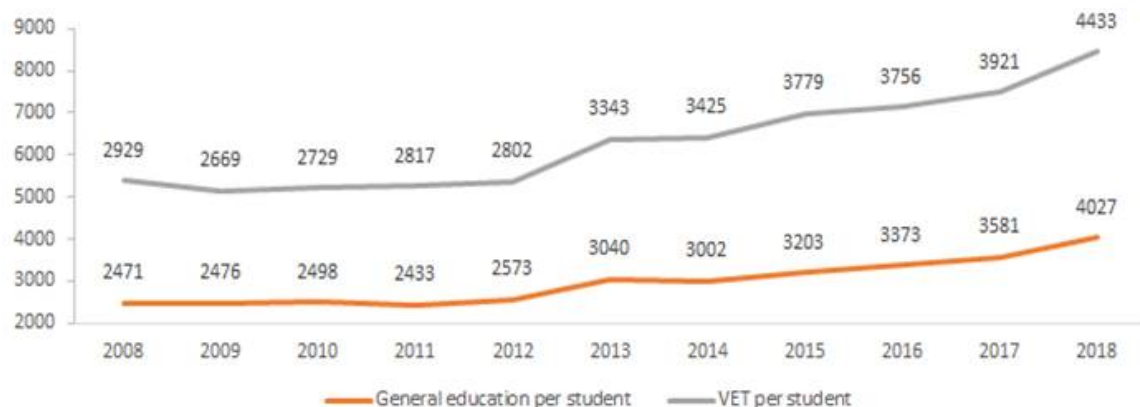
Total expenditure on VET has decreased from EUR 129 million in 2010 to EUR 114 million in 2018 due to reduced investment in infrastructure and equipment as several big VET investment projects have been completed.



Public VET expenditure as a share of total government expenditure has also decreased, from 0.6% in 2012 to 0,4% in 2019, because total government expenditure has increased nominally more than the expenditure on VET. Nearly 60% of total expenditure is staff remuneration.

Formal VET is mostly State-financed. In 2018/19, 99% of the 23 387 initial and continuing VET learners were in State-financed programmes.

Expenditure per student in 2008-18 (EUR)



NB: Most recent data. Investments in infrastructure and equipment are excluded.
Source: State Accounting Balances System (UOE methodology) [extracted 15.9.21].

Until 2018, the education minister defined the number of learners to be financed from the state budget for the following 3 years according to curriculum group and VET provider (for example 'media technologies' that comprises curricula from related fields such as 'multimedia', 'printing technology' and 'photography'). The figures were updated annually for the next 2 years.

Since 2018, a new model for financing vocational education was introduced, which no longer proceeds solely from the number of State-commissioned student places. Instead, the school, its activities and performance will be financed as a whole.

The new financing model consists of basic financing and performance-based financing. This secures the budgetary stability of the management and HR expenses of schools.

Basic financing considers the number of learners, the areas taught, the salary rates of teachers, the specific features of specialties, students with special needs, the need for support specialists, and the buildings used by the school. Basic financing is fixed for 3 years and guarantees the funds required for the main activities of the schools.

Performance-based financing, which values the outstanding achievements of schools, is based on performance indicators, which comply with the strategic goals important to the State. These include the share of students who graduate after the nominal period of study, the share of graduates who go further in their learning or participate in employment, the share of students who graduate by taking a professional examination, and the share of students participating in apprenticeship training. One of the ideas behind performance financing is to guarantee that vocational schools have the funds they need for cooperating with companies and general education schools. Performance financing will comprise up to approximately 20% of the money the school receives from the State budget.

A few privately financed VET programmes are available in State-owned and municipal VET schools. Such programmes are usually in high demand (as with cosmetician programmes) but are not part of the State-financed programmes.

Apprenticeships are also co-financed by ESF.

State and municipal vocational schools may provide continuing training for adults for a fee without age restrictions. They can also attract additional financing from other sources, such as international projects.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- general subject teachers;
- vocational teachers.

The Vocational Educational Institutions Act (29) uses the term 'teacher' for both teachers and trainers. The Act specifies that qualification requirements of VET teachers are determined by the professional standards of a teacher or a vocational education teacher. There are different standards at different EQF levels for general education subject teachers and vocational teachers in VET.

General education subject teachers can work in VET but also in general education schools. They need a master's degree (also called 'second cycle higher education diploma') equal to 300 ECTS (30) credits and teach, for instance, mathematics, physics and languages.

Vocational teachers offer knowledge and skills in the field of their professional expertise (the so-called 'speciality subjects'). Qualification requirements are more varied and at different EQF levels compared to teachers of general education subjects, allowing more flexibility for professionals who want to teach. This also improves the link to the labour market. The professional standard of vocational education teacher (31) (*kutseõpetaja*) defines three qualification levels (EQF levels 5, 6 and 7). According to the professional standards, a VET provider cannot employ more than 20% of staff with the minimum level qualification (at EQF level 5).

Teachers are employed through contracts. The head of a school concludes, amends and terminates employment contracts with teachers in accordance with the labour code. Employment contracts are of indefinite duration; reduced working time (35 hours per week) applies.

The lifelong learning strategy up to 2020 supports creating conditions for competent and motivated teachers as one of its five strategic goals. It aims at offering competitive wages and working conditions, leading to a positive image of a teacher in society. Since 2014, the basic salary of teachers has been constantly raised and has passed the average salary in Estonia. This is a strategic decision and political priority (32) .

Currently, the teaching profession is not an attractive option for young people. The highest share of VET teachers (51.4%) are aged 50 and above (33) and their share has been increasing in the past decade. Most VET teachers are female; however, the share of males in VET (39%) is more than double the share in general education.

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

The Vocational Educational Institutions Act (34) stipulates that each teacher is obliged to self-monitor their professional competences and upskill them according to their needs. Self-evaluation is done annually and discussed with their immediate head. This approach takes account of teachers' individual needs depending on their current competences and tasks and the needs of VET providers. This approach applies to all VET teachers.

Teacher practice at an enterprise or institution (35) may also be counted as continuing professional development. It is professional work performed in a work environment with a specific purpose and has a direct link with the teachers' area of expertise. Teachers are exempt from teaching during practice.

The leading continuing professional development providers are universities, followed by VET providers,

private companies and central courses.

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers (36) .

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- [30] European credit transfer and accumulation system.
- [31] Kutsekoda: https://www.kutsereregister.ee/en/standardid/standardid_top2/
- [32] <https://www.haridussilm.ee/ee/tasemeharidus/haridustootajad/opetajate-palgaanalus/palk-2007-2019> Õpetajate keskmine brutokuupalk 2007-19
- [33] Source: *Estonian education information system (Eesti Hariduse Infosüsteem)*.
- [35] E.g. healthcare or social services.
- [36] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/teachers-and-trainers>

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Anticipation of skill needs in the Estonian labour market is based on labour market forecasts by the economics ministry (37) , updated annually since 2003. They show demand in the national economy for employees by sector and qualification level. Forecasts are based on the population forecasts and labour force surveys conducted by Statistics Estonia. They cover 39 economic (sub)sectors and five major professional groups:

- managers;
- specialists;
- service staff;
- skilled workers;
- unskilled workers.

The forecasts reflect changes in employment and the need to replace employees leaving the labour market. The latest forecast considers the period 2020-29 (38) .

Since 2015, a new labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system OSKA assesses skill needs by economic sector (such as information and communications technology, accounting) and develops new evidence and intelligence for stakeholders in education and the business world. The system comprises 23 expert panels of employer representatives, education professionals, researchers, public opinion leaders, trade unions and policy-makers.

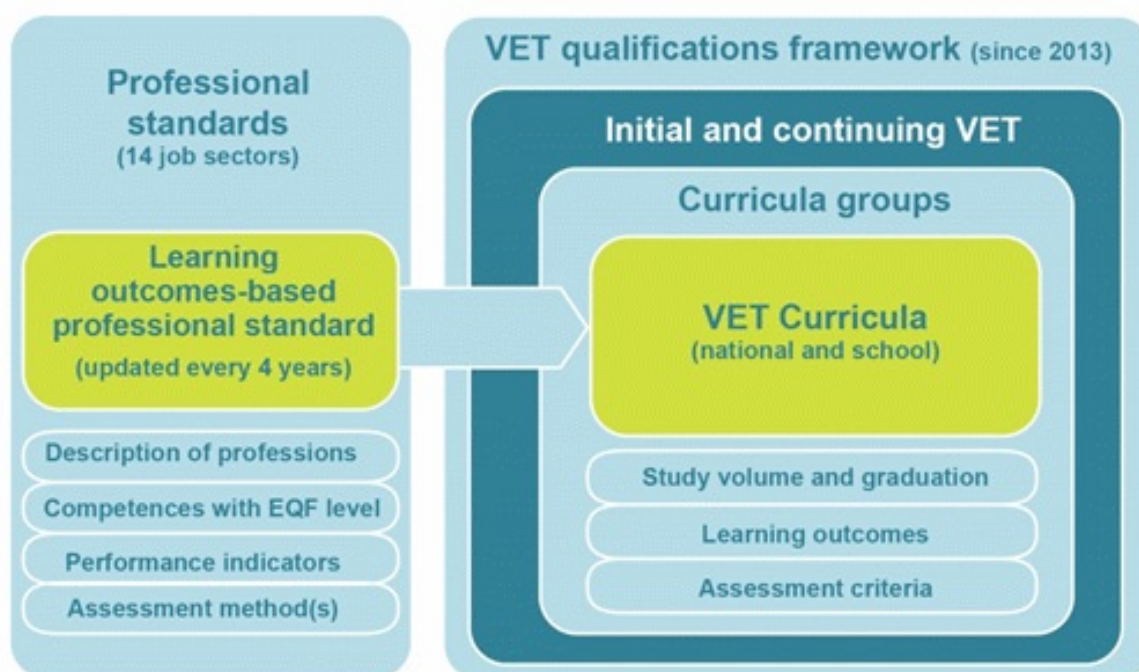
Each year, the need for labour and skills is analysed and recommendations for training requirements are prepared in five OSKA sectors. The sectors to be analysed are approved by the OSKA Coordination Council. All economic sectors are analysed once in 5 or 6 years. In the intervening years, the relevant sectoral expert panels keep an eye on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the survey conclusions. Based on the sectoral reports, a 10-year forecasting report on changes in labour market demand, developments and trends is updated and presented to the government annually. The forecasting results are used for career counselling, curriculum development and strategic planning at all education levels, including vocational education and training (VET) (39) .

See also Cedefop's skills forecast (40) and European Skills Index (41) .

10.2 Designing qualifications

Initial and continuing VET qualifications are based on professional (occupational) standards that are part of the professional qualifications system.

VET qualifications and professional standards



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet Estonia.

Professional standards

Professional standards are used for designing VET curricula, curricula for higher education and other training programmes, for assessing learner competences, and awarding a professional qualification. They:

- are based on a job analysis and describe the nature of work; analyses are carried out by working groups designing professional standards;
- describe expected competences as observable and assessable;
- define the method(s) for assessing learner competences and a 'satisfactory' threshold;
- define qualifications (EQF) levels.

All professional standards are available in the State register (42) .

VET qualifications

Uniform requirements for VET curricula and qualifications are stipulated by the VET standard (43) . The standard:

- describes the requirements for national and school curricula and the curriculum groups in line with ISCED levels, their objectives and expected learning outcomes;
- determines the terms and conditions for recognising prior learning, volume of study and graduation requirements by initial and continuing VET curricula;
- defines requirements for teachers and trainers;
- assigns the national qualifications framework levels to VET qualification types.

VET schools design curricula for every qualification offered.

Upper secondary VET programme curricula that give access to higher education are based on the

national curricula. National curricula are based on professional standards, the VET standard and the national (general education) curriculum for upper secondary schools. Foundation Innove coordinates the process of curriculum design, including cooperation with social partners.

Other VET curricula are based on the VET standard and the respective professional standard(s). Where such standards do not exist, the school must apply for the curriculum to be recognised by social partners.

The vocational orientation curriculum (legal framework introduced in 2018) is not required to correspond to a certain professional standard. This facilitates transitions from compulsory education to VET and/or the labour market, especially for vulnerable groups.

National upper secondary VET curricula that give access to higher education are approved by the education minister.

The VET standard determines how learning outcomes of modules are described:

- profession-specific knowledge are facts and theories acquired through the learning process;
- profession-specific skills are the ability to apply knowledge for performing tasks and solving problems; skills are described in terms of their complexity and diversity;
- autonomy and responsibility describe to what extent the graduate is able to work independently and take responsibility for the results of work;
- learning skills are the ability to manage the learning process using efficient strategies and appropriate learning styles;
- communication skills are the ability to communicate in different situations and on different topics orally and in writing;
- self-management competence is the ability to understand and evaluate oneself, give sense to one's own activities and behaviour in society, develop oneself as a person;
- operational competence is the ability to identify problems and solve them, plan one's own activities, set goals and expected results, select adequate tools, act, evaluate the results of one's own actions, cooperate with others;
- ICT competence is the ability to use ICT tools and digital media skilfully and critically;
- entrepreneurship competence is the ability to take initiative, act creatively, plan one's own career in the modern economic, business and work environment, apply knowledge and skills in different spheres of life (44) .

Managing qualifications

Several bodies are involved in designing, updating and awarding qualifications:

- the education ministry;
- professional councils;
- awarding bodies;
- qualifications committees;
- assessment committees.

Stakeholders participating in the design and award of qualifications



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet Estonia.

The education ministry is responsible for developing a professional qualifications system. This task is delegated to the qualifications authority (*Kutsekoda*), a private foundation led by a council comprising representatives of the: Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Employers' Confederation; Employees' Unions Confederation; Confederation of Trade Unions; and the education, finance, economic and social affairs ministries. The qualifications authority organises and coordinates the activities of professional councils and keeps the register of professional qualifications.

Professional councils represent 14 job sectors. The councils approve and update professional standards and are represented equally by trade unions, employer organisations, professional associations and public authorities. Chairs of professional councils form a board of chairmen for these councils to coordinate cooperation between them.

Professional councils select awarding bodies (public and private) to organise the assessment of competences and issue qualifications. The awarding bodies are selected for 5 years through a public competition organised by the qualifications authority. VET providers may also be given the right to award qualifications, if the curriculum of the institution complies with the professional standard and is nationally recognised. Qualifications are entered into the [register of professional qualifications](#). As of 2021, there are a relatively large number of institutions (128) awarding professional qualifications.

The awarding body sets up a committee involving sectoral stakeholders: employers, employees, training providers, and representatives of professional associations. It often also includes customer representatives and other interested parties. This ensures impartiality in awarding qualifications. The committee approves assessment procedures, including examination materials, decides on awarding qualifications, and resolves complaints.

It may set up an assessment committee that evaluates organisation and the results of the assessment and reports to the qualifications committee.

The assessment committee verifies to what extent the applicant's competences meet the requirements of the professional qualification standards. The assessment criteria are described in the rules and

procedures for awarding the qualification or in the respective assessment standard (45) .

A person's competences can be assessed and recognised regardless of whether they have been acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

[37] Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.

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

[40] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/skills-forecast>

[41] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-skills-index>

[42] Kutsekoda: State register of occupational qualifications: <http://www.kutsekoda.ee/kutseregister>

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

VET quality is assured through external and internal processes that do not differentiate in their approach between school-based learning, work-based learning, self-learning (including 'non-stationary') (46) and apprenticeships.

External quality assurance

External quality assurance of schools' curriculum groups (47) is confirmed by awarding the 'right to offer VET programmes'.

Following changes in the approach to learning and teaching, the approach to quality assurance (i.e. external assessment process) was changed in 2019. The former extension of the right to provide instruction based on the accreditation results in the curriculum group was replaced with a permanent right to provide instruction in curriculum groups, where schools have accreditation for the full period (six years).

The external assessment is organised by the Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA). A quality assessment in curriculum groups will take place once in 6 years and the result of the assessment is not directly connected with the right to provide studies. The process is more focused on achieving constant improvements in the teaching and learning process and the development of quality culture at school.

An assessment of the right to provide instruction, giving a school this right for a term of 3 years, shall be conducted in curricula groups, and repeated if necessary, by 31 August 2022. The minister responsible for the area shall make one of the following decisions:

- to grant the right to provide instruction without a term;
- to grant the right to provide instruction for three years;
- not to grant the right to provide instruction.

A school that has received the right to provide instruction in a curriculum group for a specified term, in order to obtain the right to provide instruction without a term, should submit an application for a repeat assessment, together with the internal assessment report, at least 6 months before the expiry of the right to provide instruction. Schools that have received the right to provide instruction in a curriculum group for a specified term, but have not submitted an application to the Ministry of Education and Research, or if the minister responsible for the area makes a decision not to grant the right to provide instruction as a result of the repeat assessment, shall have its right to provide instruction terminated upon the expiry of the term.

Internal evaluation

In 2006, internal evaluation of education institutions became mandatory, the objective being to support the development of VET providers. VET providers regularly (formally at least every three years) conduct an internal evaluation of each curriculum group and draft a report. EKKA consults them on this process.

The internal assessment shall form the basis for preparing the development plan of a school and the assessment of quality. The internal evaluation criteria are similar to those for external evaluation: leadership and administration; resource management (including human resources); cooperation with interest groups; and education process. Methods of internal evaluation are chosen by VET providers (48) . They often use activity and performance indicators provided in the education statistics database HaridusSilm (49) .

The education information system collects data about the internal evaluation and feedback reports, so the ministry is able to check whether internal evaluations have been conducted and supported by advisory services. The results of internal evaluations are public but education institutions are not obliged to make them available on their websites.

EKKA provides free counselling to VET schools that support self-assessment and internal evaluation reporting.

[46] Comprising more than 50% self-learning.

[47] A curriculum group (e.g. media technologies) comprises curricula from related fields (e.g. multimedia; printing technology; and photography).

[49] <https://www.haridussilm.ee>

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning helps assess applicant competences against stated criteria, indicating whether these competences match education programme enrolment requirements and learning outcomes or those in occupational standards. The process helps value competences regardless of the time, place and the way they have been acquired, supporting lifelong learning and mobility, improving access to education for at-risk groups, and supporting more efficient use of resources (50) .

The VET sector in Estonia has introduced recognition of prior learning following developments in the higher education sector. The recognition process is legally established by the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (51) . General principles for all VET providers are set in the VET standard (52) .

Awarding bodies, including VET providers, are responsible for developing detailed recognition procedures. Education institutions may consider prior learning when admitting learners to their programmes. Learners may also be exempt from a part of a curriculum, if they have achieved and demonstrated relevant learning outcomes. In such a case, the level of learning outcomes demonstrated can be considered as the final grade for the subject or module.

VET providers offering recognition of prior learning make public the terms, conditions and procedures that apply, including deadlines and fees. They must also provide counselling to candidates.

Successful recognition results in a certificate or diploma. Experiential learning, hobby activities or any other everyday activity are certified by reference to the work accomplished upon presentation of a qualification certificate, contract of employment, copy of assignment to the post or any other documentary proof. A description of vocational experience and self-analysis is added to the application. If necessary, VET providers may give applicants practical tasks, conduct interviews or use other assessment methods (53) .

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database (54) .

[60] Elukestva oppe strateegia täiskasvanuharidusprogramm 2019-22 [Lifelong learning strategy adult education programme 2019-22]. <https://www.hm.ee/et/tegevused/arengukavad>

[54] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/european-database-on-validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

Allowances, meals and travel subsidy

VET learners can apply for basic and special study allowances:

- the monthly basic allowance is EUR 60 and is available from semester two in formal full-time programmes. Around 40% of VET learners receive the allowance based on performance merit;
- a special allowance can be granted to learners in a difficult economic situation; the board of the education institution approves the procedure to use the provider's special allowance fund.

VET providers create allowance funds (basic and special) which are financed from the State budget. The special allowance fund can be up to 50% of the resources of the basic allowance fund.

Lunchtime meals are also paid for by the State. This applies to VET learners up to age 20 who have not completed secondary education (55) according to the initial training curricula (56) .

VET learners (57) are reimbursed public transport tickets for travel between the learning venue and home. Dormitory residents and those who rent apartments close to the learning venue are reimbursed one return ticket to their hometown per week and an additional ticket during national and school holidays.

Study loans

In 2003, study loans were introduced to improve access to full-time post-secondary VET and on-time graduation. Secondary education graduates who wish to enrol in at least 6-month formal VET programmes, can apply. Since 2015/16, part-time students have also been able to apply. In 2019/20, 1% of VET learners benefited from the loan . In 2020/21, the loan can be up to EUR 2 500 per year.

Tax exemption on training costs

Estonian residents can be exempt from income tax on training costs for programmes and courses at a State or local government education institution, or licensed private/foreign provider (58) .

Study leave for employees

The Adult Education Act (59) provides the right for employees to take leave of up to 30 calendar days per year while in formal education or professional training. On application, the employee must present written proof of studies from the provider. During leave, employers pay the average study leave for 20 calendar days. Additional study leave (15 days) is granted for preparing for final exams; study leave pay is calculated on the basis of the national minimum wage (EUR 584 per month or EUR 3.48 per hour in 2021). An employee also has the right to leave without pay to sit entry examinations. These rights and benefits are applied in the public and private sector, in small, medium-sized and large companies.

Incentives for the unemployed

The social affairs ministry (*Sotsiaalministeerium*) is responsible for training the unemployed. Vocational training for the unemployed is funded by the public employment service (60) . This allocates resources to employment services to purchase and organise labour market training. It commissions training from education institutions from State and private VET providers.

The public employment service also supports work practice placement for the unemployed through agreements. The participant continues to receive unemployment benefit and is granted a scholarship and travel compensation, paid by the employment service.

Since 2009, labour market training for the unemployed is also offered on the basis of a voucher system. Vouchers offer a quick and flexible way for the unemployed to use the resources for further training or to retrain to find a new job. The service covers up to EUR 2 500 per training for 2 years.

In May 2017, the public employment service launched a new package of services for unemployment prevention through continuing training and retraining. Individuals are encouraged to move to jobs that create higher added value. Typical examples are: workers who are likely to lose their jobs but could retain their employment; those without a qualification or whose skills are outdated and do not correspond to the needs of the labour market; workers with poor knowledge of Estonia; and those aged over 50. The package also supports employees who cannot continue their present employment due to health issues.

This service package also offers a study allowance scheme that supports participation in VET and in higher education. People at risk of unemployment now have access to labour market training through vouchers. In addition to direct support to employees, skills development is supported by compensating 50% to 100% of the training costs to employers. Employers can apply for a training grant to support their workers in adapting to the changes in business processes, in technology or changes in formal qualification requirements. Employers can also use the grant to fill vacancies in high demand roles by equipping potential employees with the necessary skills.

More than 9 000 people are estimated to have received this support in 2020, and around 15 000 to 19 000 annually in 2018-20.

[55] Excluding 'non-stationary' programmes, i.e. comprising more than 50% self-learning.

[57] Excluding 'non-stationary' programmes, i.e. comprising more than 50% self-learning.

[60] Unemployment Insurance Fund. <https://www.tootukassa.ee/>

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

Wage subsidy and training remuneration

Employers are reimbursed by the state for supervising work practice for the unemployed (61) , with a daily supervision rate of EUR 27.84 – eight times the minimum hourly wage (EUR 3.48 in 2021) (62) – for each day attended of the first month of training. Reimbursement decreases to 75% of the daily rate during the second month, and to 50% during the third and fourth month.

Tax exemptions

There is no value added tax for formal training; this includes learning materials, private tuition relating to general education, and other training services unless provided for business purposes (63) .

Since 2012, enterprises have been exempt from income tax if they finance the formal education of their employees (64) .

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

Strategy and provision

The [Education Strategy 2021–35](#) promotes diverse learning opportunities and career services that are of good quality, flexible, and take account of the needs of the labour market.

Since January 2019, the Unemployment Insurance Fund has been providing career advice and career information services for everyone, including schoolchildren. The Unemployment Insurance Fund has restructured its system of career services and integrated the services of *Rajaleidja* centres offered to young people into the existing career services. Counselling includes topics related to learning, workplaces and choice of specialisation. Since 2019, in addition to career counselling and the mediation of career information, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund is responsible for the development of the methodology of career services, quality management, and monitoring and analytical activities. Career counsellors offer their services in all the offices of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. Career counselling is offered to everyone and the service is free of charge.

The Ministry of Education and Research is still responsible for providing high-quality career lessons in basic schools and upper secondary schools, ensuring curricula development in the field, quality learning materials, and enhancing career teachers' skills and knowledge with in-service training. Development activities and monitoring activities are planned jointly in order to enhance the capacity of education institutions and further develop the integrity of the field of career services.

Career studies focus on the implementation of the topic 'Lifelong learning and career planning' in a school environment. It is important to support the implementation of cross-curricular topics in order to develop the key competences across all subjects, as a result of which students will have the necessary career skills by the end of basic school.

Career education focuses on the optional subjects offered in basic school and upper secondary school. Career education relies on the developed career competence model, the main competences of which are self-determination, acknowledgment of opportunities, planning and acting. The optional career education subjects are being taught in most schools.

The modernisation of the national VET curricula has been in process during recent years. New curricula include the learning outcome: 'the student understands his/her responsibility to make informed decisions in lifelong career planning processes'. This means that career management has become an integral part of VET. In developing career planning skills in VET there is a focus on self-evaluation, how best to use the learner's professional skills in the labour market, how to keep and raise professional qualifications through continuous self-improvement, how to combine family life and work, and how to value health.

Please also see:

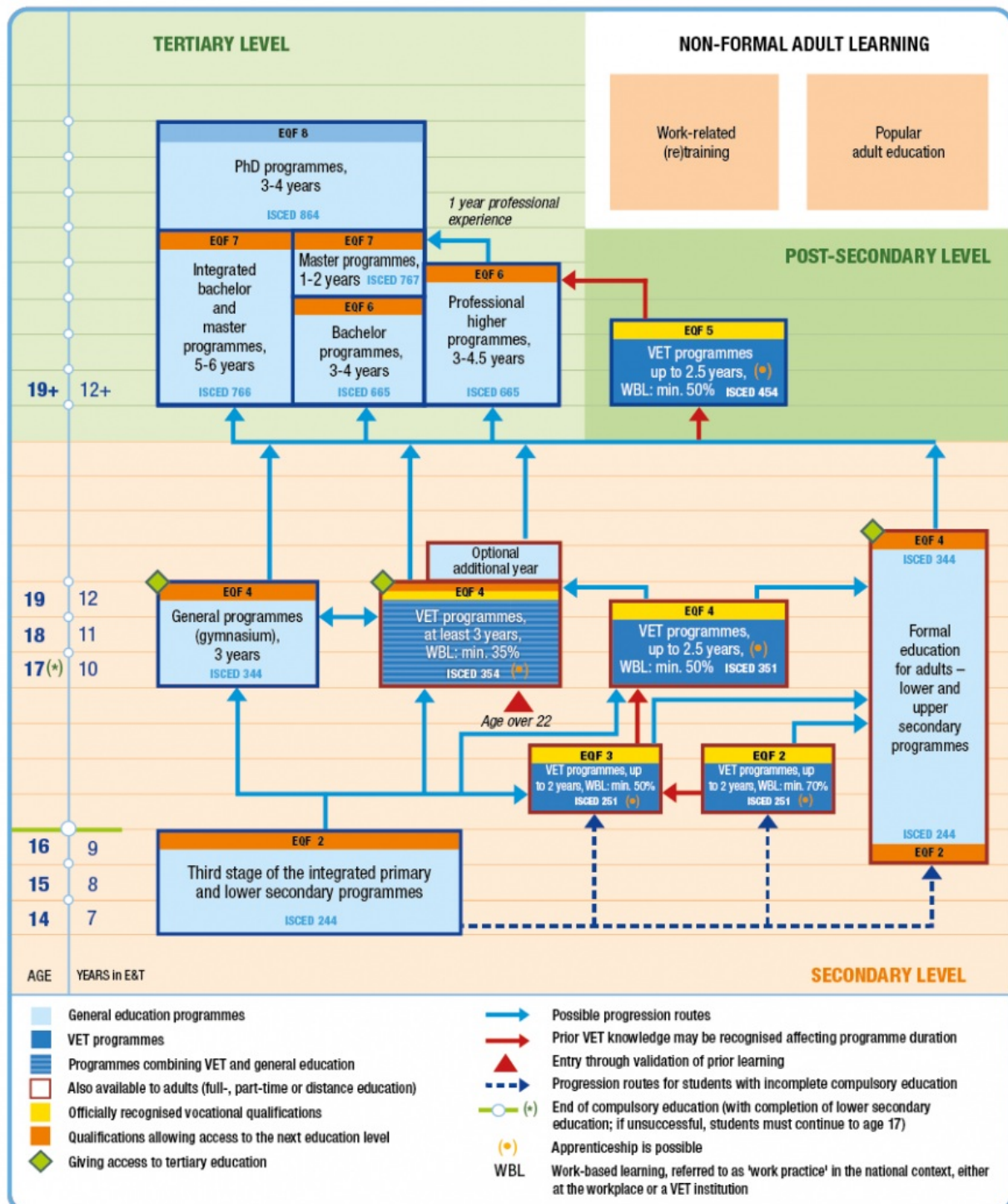
- guidance and outreach Estonia national report (65) ;
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit (66) ;
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices (67) .

[65] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports>

[66] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/resources-guidance/toolkit/where-can-you-find-more-information-in-your-country-and-elsewhere>

[67] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices>

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia, 2022.

VET Programme Types

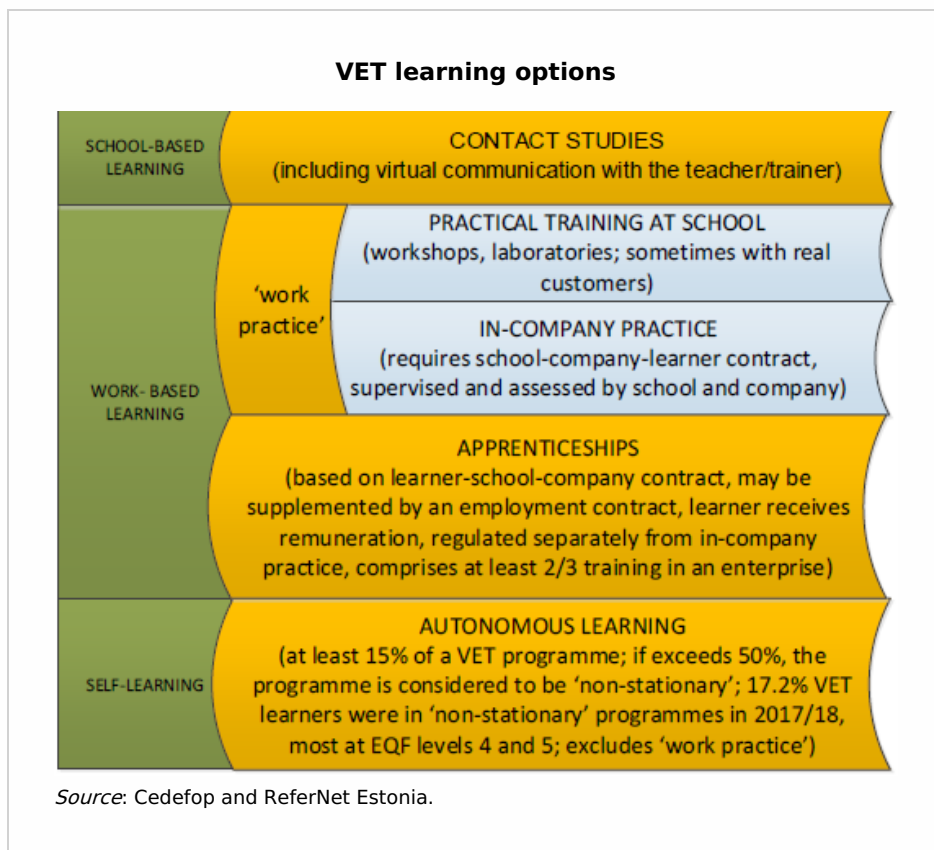
EQF 2
VET programme, up to 2 years, WBL: min. 70% ISCED 251

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 2, ISCED 251 (teise taseme kutseõpe).

EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	251
Usual entry grade	No entry requirement	Usual completion grade	Not applicable
Usual entry age	17	Usual completion age	Depends on entry age
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Information not available	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	30 to 120 credits depending on the programme (68) .		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary');
- apprenticeships.



Main providers	Information not available
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥70%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school; • in-company practice.
Main target groups	<p>Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.</p> <p>Many curricula at this level, for example for assistant cleaners, are also suitable for learners with special educational needs, such as those with moderate and severe disability. Special arrangements are available for them in VET schools and social welfare institutions.</p>
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	There are no minimum entry requirements but learners must be at least 17 years old to enrol.

Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination, if available, that can also be replaced by a final examination. Both examinations are similar. They are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.
Diplomas/certificates provided	VET learners receive a formal education qualification awarded after completion of a programme and a professional qualification that is a professional certificate verifying learning outcomes for a specific occupation or profession (69) . We refer to them as VET qualifications and professional qualifications. Those who have been simultaneously enrolled in general education and meet basic education requirements are issued with a basic education certificate by general education schools in addition to a VET qualification.
Examples of qualifications	Cleaner assistant, assistant gardener, electronics assembly operator, logger (70)
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can enter the labour market; • can continue their studies at EQF level 3; • can continue their studies in general education; schools for adults leading to general basic education.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	1% (71)

[68] The Vocational Educational Institutions Act (Parliament, 2013) defines credits for VET curricula describing the time required to achieve learning outcomes. One credit is 26 hours of learner 'study load'. The number of credits per programme and school year is 60.

[69] Cedefop (2017). *Estonia: European inventory on NQF 2016*.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/estonia-european-inventory-nqf-2016>

[70] As described in ILO; ISCO 08: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/>

[71] 2019/20

EQF 3

VET programmes,
up to 2 years,
WBL: min. 50%
ISCED 251

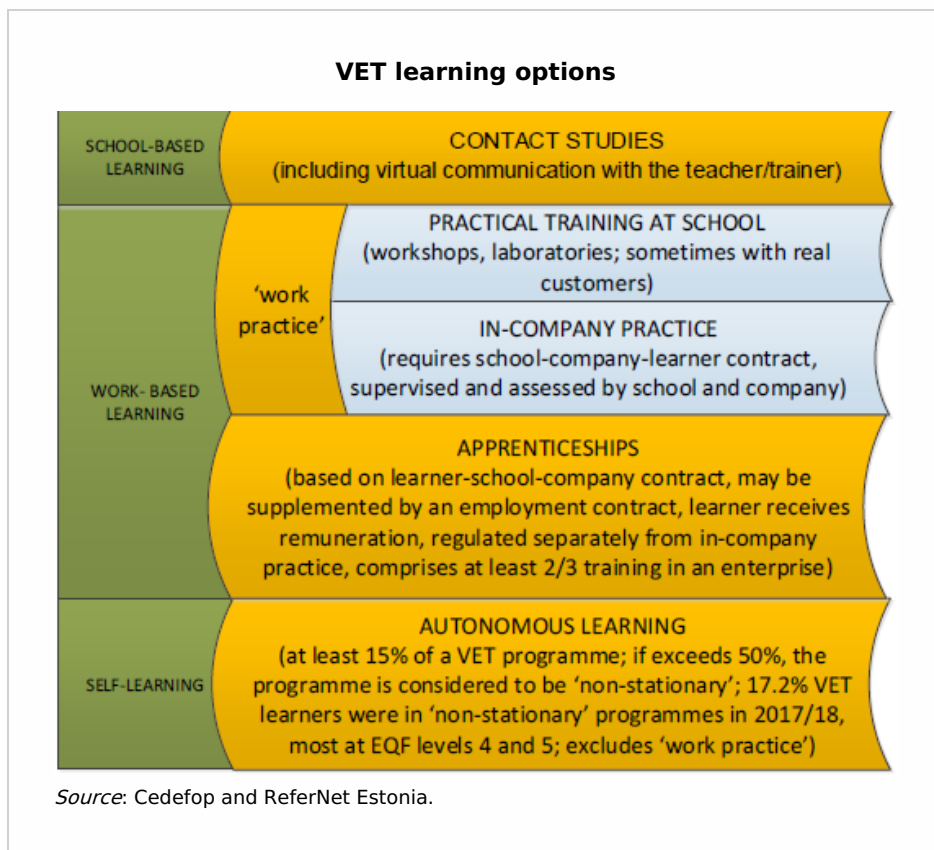
Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 251 (kolmanda taseme kutseõpe)

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	251
Usual entry grade	No entry requirement	Usual completion grade	Not applicable
Usual entry age	17	Usual completion age	Depends on entry age
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Information not available	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits 30 to 120 credits.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary');
- apprenticeships.



Main providers	Information not available
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥50%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half practical training at school • half in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	There are no minimum entry requirements.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination, if available, that can also be replaced by a final examination. Both examinations are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.

Diplomas/certificates provided	VET learners receive a formal education qualification awarded after completion of a programme and a professional qualification that is a professional certificate verifying learning outcomes for a specific occupation or profession (72) . We refer to them as VET qualifications and professional qualifications.
Examples of qualifications	Woodworking bench operator and electronic equipment assembler
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can enter the labour market; • those who acquired basic (general) education (before or in parallel to a VET programme) can continue their studies at upper secondary level; • those without completed basic education can continue their studies in general education schools for adults.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	5% (73)

[72] Cedefop (2017). *Estonia: European inventory on NQF 2016*.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/estonia-european-inventory-nqf-2016>

[73] 2019/20

EQF 4

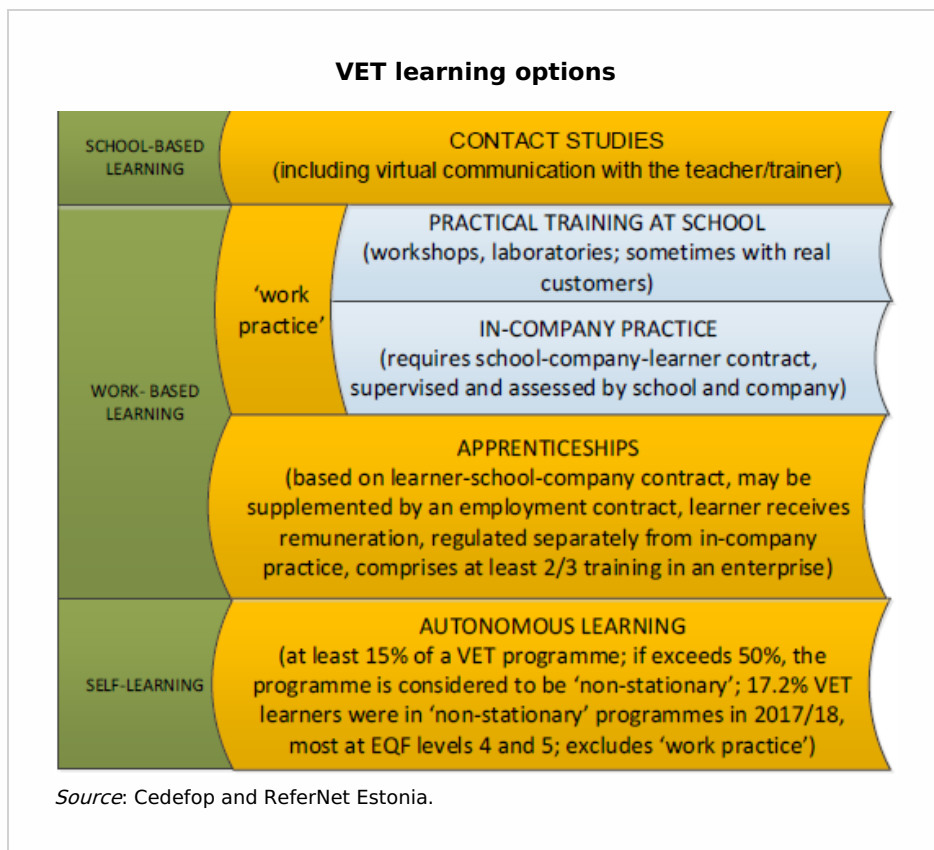
VET programmes,
up to 2.5 years,
WBL: min. 50%
ISCED 351

Initial and continuing VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 351 (neljanda taseme kutseõpe)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	351
Usual entry grade	9	Usual completion grade	Not applicable
Usual entry age	at least 17	Usual completion age	Depending on entry age
Length of a programme (years)	2.5 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Information not available	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	30 to 150 credits (depending on the programme) and 180 credits for music and performance programmes.		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary');
- apprenticeships.



Main providers	Information not available
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥50%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half practical training at school • half in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completed basic education is a prerequisite to enrol in these programmes. Those entering continuing VET programmes must have an EQF level 4 qualification or competences in addition to basic education to enrol.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination, if available, that can also be replaced by a final examination. Both examinations are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.

Diplomas/certificates provided	VET learners may receive a formal education qualification awarded after completion of a programme and a professional qualification that is a professional certificate verifying learning outcomes for a specific occupation or profession (74) . We refer to them as VET qualifications and professional qualifications.
Examples of qualifications	Welder, junior software developer, IT systems specialist, farm-worker
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can enter the labour market; • can continue in upper secondary general education; • can continue in a VET programme at ISCED level 354.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	37% (75)

[74] Cedefop (2017). *Estonia: European inventory on NQF 2016*.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/estonia-european-inventory-nqf-2016>

[75] 2019/20

EQF 4

VET programmes,
up to 3 years,
WBL: min. 35%
ISCED 354

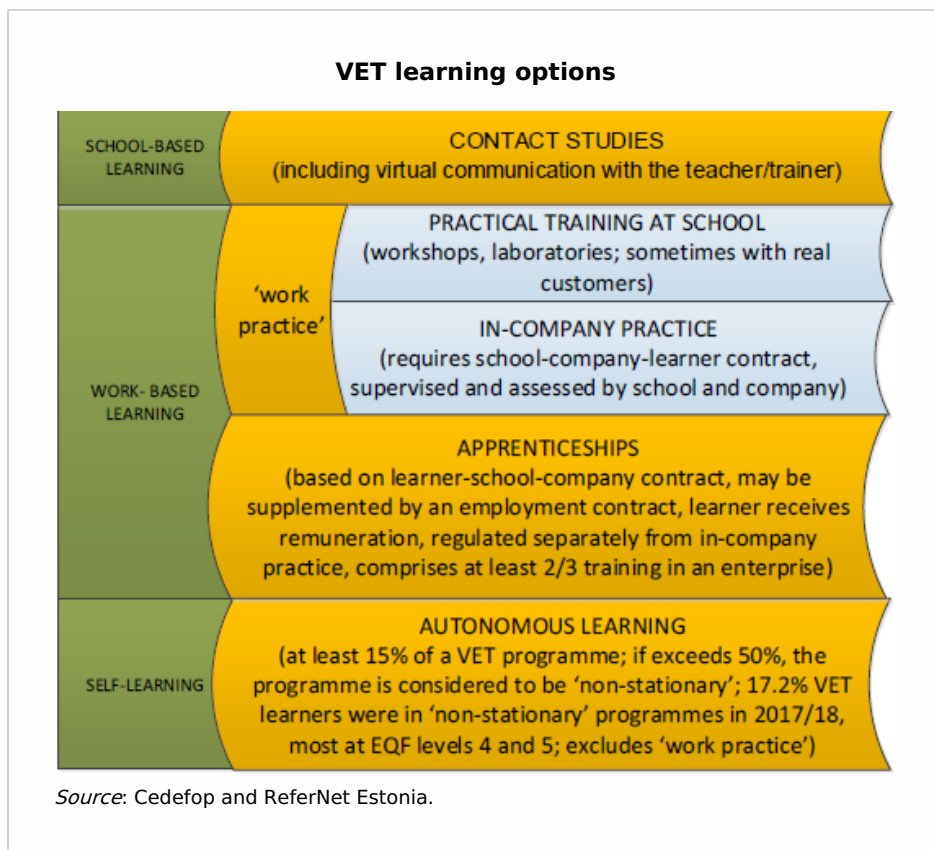
Initial upper secondary VET programmes, ISCED 354 (kutsekeskharidusõpe)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12
Usual entry age	At least 17	Usual completion age	19 Depending on entry age
Length of a programme (years)	3 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Information not available	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits The volume of studies is mostly 180 credits, including at least 60 credits of general education; 30 credits are common for all programmes and 30 are tailored to the programme.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary');
- apprenticeships.



Main providers	Information not available
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥35%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults aged 22 and above.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Students may enter upper secondary VET if they have acquired basic education. The existence of competences corresponding to the level of basic education is required from a person without basic education and who is at least 22 years of age. Schools assess the existence of the required competences.

Assessment of learning outcomes	VET students receive a leaving certificate after the learning outcomes corresponding to the qualification or partial profession described in the curriculum is achieved. To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination, if available, that can also be replaced by a final examination in case of failure to pass a professional qualification examination. Both examinations are similar. They are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.
Diplomas/certificates provided	VET learners receive a leaving certificate after the learning outcomes corresponding to the qualification or partial profession described in the curriculum are achieved and also if a professional qualification examination is passed, a professional certificate will also be awarded.
Examples of qualifications	Heat pump installers and catering specialists
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can enter the labour market; • can continue in higher education, provided the entry requirements are met (76) ; • can continue with an optional year of general education (bridging programme) to prepare for State examinations.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	40% (77)

[76] Higher education institutions may require passing State examinations (mathematics, foreign language and mother tongue) in addition to VET qualifications.

[77] 2019/20

EQF 5

VET programmes,
0.5 to 2.5 years,
WBL: min. 50%
ISCED 454

Initial and continuing VET programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 454 (viienda taseme kutseõpe)

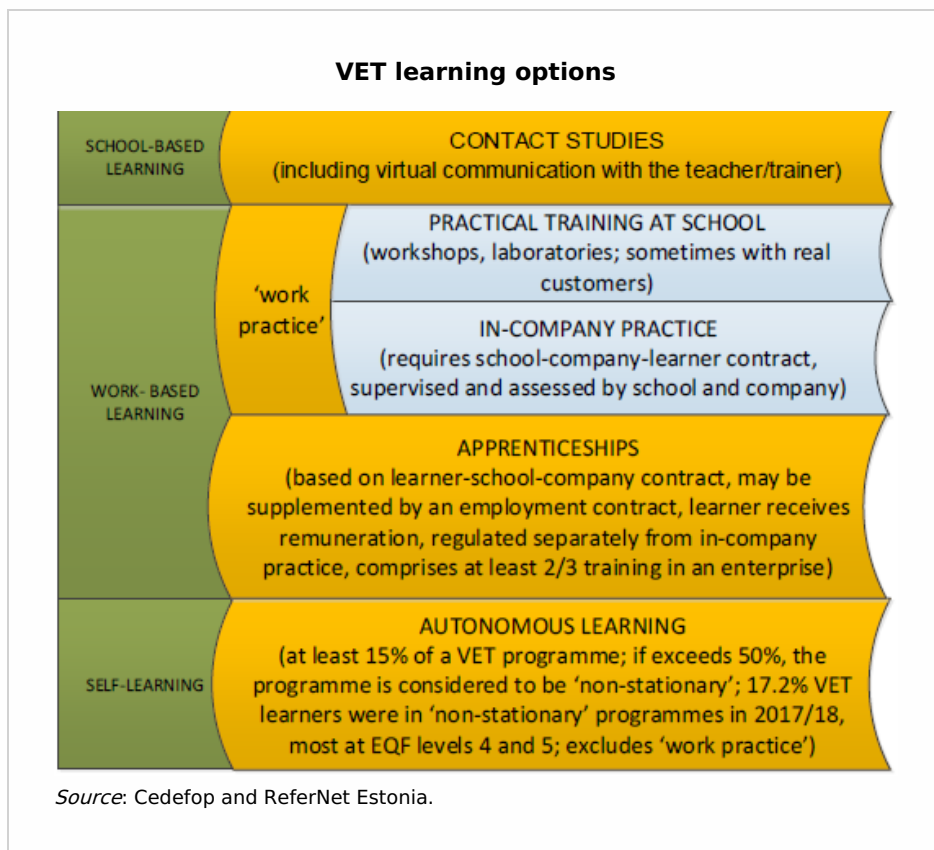
EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	454
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	Usually 19+	Usual completion age	19+
Length of a programme (years)	0.5 to 2.5 years		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Information not available	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	✓ (no age limit)

ECVET or other credits The volume of the studies is 60 to 150 credits and 60 to 150 credits for military and public defence programmes.

Continuing VET programmes study volume is 15 to 60 credits.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary');
- apprenticeships.



Main providers	Information not available
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥50%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half at a VET institution • half at an enterprise
Main target groups	Programmes are available for people who have completed upper secondary education and have an EQF level 4 or 5 VET qualification or relevant competences (depending on IVET or CVET).
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must have completed upper secondary education and must have an EQF level 4 or 5 VET qualification or relevant competences.

Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a professional qualification examination that can also be replaced by a final examination in case of failure to pass a professional qualification examination. Both examinations are learning outcomes based and usually include a practical part.
Diplomas/certificates provided	VET learners receive a leaving certificate after the learning outcomes corresponding to the qualification or partial profession described in the curriculum is achieved. If a professional qualification examination is passed a professional certificate will also be awarded.
Examples of qualifications	Accountant, business administration specialist, sales organiser, and small business entrepreneur.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can enter the labour market; • can follow further pathways in bachelor or professional higher education studies; • those with initial VET may progress in continuing VET.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	17% (78)

[78] 2019/20

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