

Initiatives supporting adults' key competences and participation in lifelong learning (until 2022)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** **ESTONIA**

Timeline

2019 Implementation**2020 Implementation****2021 Implementation****2022 Completed****ID number 28177**

Background

The government aimed to reduce the share of adults aged 25-64 without any professional or vocational education from 28.5% in 2016 to less than 25% by 2020, and to increase their participation in lifelong learning. Barriers to achieving this goal are low motivation and lack of key competences.

Objectives

To promote adult education and broaden learning opportunities for adults.

Description

The activity is part of the National adult education programme. In 2017-18, nine projects were set up for equipping adults with social and learning skills, entrepreneurship competence, skills in foreign languages and Estonian for non-native speakers. The projects offer support and follow-up activities that increase the sustainability of learning outcomes and bridge the development of key competences and provide motivation for the continuation of studies in formal and non-formal education. Courses are available in regions for adults without a professional or vocational education certificate, or with disabilities, or with poor knowledge of Estonian. A special training package aimed at improving the digital competences of medical staff (accessible also through VET) is being prepared. Altogether, around 5 400 people may benefit from the projects.

In total, 18 projects were supported for re-engaging adult dropouts in basic and general secondary education. The projects ran from September 2018 to August 2020. Based on regional specifics and needs, education institutions developed a suitable range of activities to help develop learning skills and abilities, support additional and levelling courses in the most important subjects, counselling of students, individual supervision and childcare services. Attention was paid to making learning more flexible, for example by developing and running e-courses. Various actors have been involved in counselling people with a low level of education, including the Unemployment Insurance Fund, local authorities and the

2019 Implementation

In 2019, 14 328 adults acquired new skills in State commissioned training (GNP) courses in VET institutions and 13 400 of them (93%) received a certificate. The priority target groups of the GNP training courses were adults without professional or secondary education and adults with outdated skills at the age of 50+. The recommendations of OSKA, the labour market needs' monitoring and skills forecasting system, were considered when offering the training.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, 599 State-commissioned training courses were provided by VET institutions for 7 298 adults. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, most courses (94%) were completed using e-solutions. The dropout rate did not increase significantly and 91% of the participants received a certificate.

Most courses were in the field of engineering, production, and construction. In response to the urgent labour demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 29 courses were added to alleviate the shortage of care workers and to support the agricultural sector.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, 555 State-commissioned training courses were provided by VET institutions for 6762 adults; 91% of participants completed the course. Due to COVID, only 81% of planned courses took place (compared to 99% in 2019 and 94% in 2020).

Most courses focused on the development of ICT skills and digital competences necessary for distance work. Courses also aimed to support the introduction of new technologies, development of green skills, and in the light of COVID-19 crisis, risk management and analysis. Several courses were organised to address the labour shortages in manufacturing, ICT, agriculture, and to support the relaunch of the tourism sector. In-service training for care workers and nurses was continued to ensure the continuity of the healthcare sector.

2022 Completed

In 2022, a total of 705 VET courses were offered to 8 890 learners; 92% completed the course. As in 2021, the courses focused on mitigating the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis and aimed to support the transformation of companies according to the changed circumstances. Training topics were selected based on OSKA's skills and jobs needs analyses, including a special study of the effects of the COVID-pandemic, and an overview of the skills needed for the digital and green transition. Courses focused on the introduction of new technologies, including digital and green skills; digital skills necessary for remote work, including basic digital skills; support to the mental health of employees; skills needed to enter sectors experiencing labour shortages (manufacturing industry, ICT, social sector, agriculture, water and waste management, internal security); retraining of workers in the tourism sector; in-service training for care workers and nurses. To support the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees, additional funds were allocated to provide professional and Estonian language courses to refugees, and develop the skills of trainers, teachers and support specialists dealing with them.

For progress as of 2023, see related policy developments.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research

- Unemployment Insurance Fund

Target group

Learners

Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Developing and updating learning resources and materials
Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

[Webpage on the initiative at the website of the Ministry of Education and Research \(in Estonian\)](#)

[Directive by the Minister of Education and Research on the list of courses under the initiative \(in Estonian\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Developing the professional qualifications system and jobs-and-skills forecasting

The following measures are foreseen:

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Supporting skills-based approaches, green and digital transitions in VET

The following measures are envisaged:

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Initiatives supporting adults' key competences and participation in lifelong learning (until 2022): Estonia. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28177>