Vocational education programme 2015-21

POLICY DEVELOPMENT   **STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN**   ESTONIA

Timeline

2016 **Approved/Agreed** 2017 **Implementation** 2018 **Implementation**
2019 **Implementation** 2020 **Implementation** 2021 **Completed**

ID number 28173

Background

Vocational education programme is one of the nine (eight since 2019) programmes implementing the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020.

Objectives

The aim of the programme was to create high-quality, flexible and diverse vocational training opportunities for the Estonian population that meet their needs and abilities and the development needs of the labour market.

Description

The programme was adopted in 2015. It is implemented through a single measure (Correspondence between lifelong learning opportunities and the needs of the labour market and increased participation in learning). Its main activities are:

  (a) developing the quality and organisation of vocational education;
  (b) planning of volumes of studies, provision of study places and students´ support measures;
  (c) regional distribution of curriculum groups in vocational education institutions and modernisation of the learning environment;
  (d) developing international cooperation (including coherence with ECVET and EQAVET).

The programme budget for 2015-20 is EUR 326 million from the EU (ESIF) and the State budget.

> **2016 Approved/Agreed**
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> Following the 2016 amendments, the programme offered analyses on how to improve the quality and efficiency of the general education component of VET (Estonian language, mathematics and foreign languages), to prepare for upper secondary exams and to support progression of upper secondary VET graduates to tertiary education.

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

In 2018, the IT Academy for VET was launched in cooperation with the Information Technology Foundation for Education HITSA, employers, higher education institutions and vocational schools. The aim of the programme is to bring IT studies more in line with the needs of employers and to create flexible opportunities in vocational secondary education curricula (software developer and IT systems specialist) to continue studies in higher education and produce more IT graduates.

2019 Implementation

In 2019/20, the decrease in the number of VET students has turned to growth. The share of adults (25+) in VET rose rapidly to 41.7% by 2019 (compared to 32% in 2015). According to surveys, satisfaction with their studies and work among learners and teachers is very high.

In 2019, under IT Academy for VET, the first students were accepted to the 4-year software developer curriculum at EQF level 4; the development of the IT specialist curriculum has been started.

Other developments included: improving the quality of VET, including modernisation of the general education component, the analysis of opportunities for applied higher education in VET institutions and the development and implementation of respective module-based curricula; planning of State-financed training places in cooperation with school councils and the introduction of operating support in financing; development of in-service training, including cooperation with the Unemployment Insurance Fund; planning the participation of VET institutions in education consortia; and developing the cross-use of practice facilities between schools.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, the IT Academy VET programme continued, aiming to bring the ICT curricula in VET in line with the needs of employers and to create more flexible opportunities for graduates of ICT curricula to continue their studies in higher education.

Despite the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, VET institutions were able to reorganise their activities and VET students completed their studies by autumn 2020. Flexible learning arrangements included a significant expansion of the use of distance learning environments, digital tools and study materials. The successful transition to distance learning built on the long-term development of digital learning and on education institutions having sufficient autonomy for organising their activities.

2021 Completed

Compared to 2020/21, the number of VET students decreased most in services and health and wellbeing, and increased most in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary medicine. The share of early leavers from VET has remained high (19.2% in 2020, 20.3% in 2021). A VET learner satisfaction survey showed that the impact of distance learning due to the COVID pandemic depended on the extent to which learners were able to reshape their learning habits. The negative effects of distance learning on learners' mental health were confirmed.

For progress as of 2022, see related policy developments.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research
- Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA) (until 2020)

- Education and Youth Board

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities
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
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Acquiring key competences

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020

Vocational education programme 2018-21 (in Estonian)

Related policy developments

2024 **Design**

Developing VET excellence and cooperation

The following measures are foreseen:

ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 **Design**

VET quality assurance

A working group was set up to review the national approach to quality assurance. The group was composed of representatives of the education ministry, employer and employee organisations, VET schools and other partners.
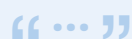
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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET