

Employment programmes 2017-20 and 2021-23



Timeline



ID number 28171

Background

The Employment programme supports the implementation of the Welfare Development Plan 2016-23. Social welfare falls under the administration of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The programme is implemented by the Estonian Unemployment Fund.

The share of adults (aged 25-64) in Estonia without special and vocational education is 27% (2019), i.e., 194 000 people. The most vulnerable adults are those without primary or secondary education. Estonian women aged 25-34 with higher education are the most active group in continuing training. The participation in lifelong learning is lower among men, the elderly and non-Estonians.

Objectives

The objective of the programme is to alleviate labour shortages, prevent unemployment and shorten the duration of unemployment, with a special focus on the long-term unemployed or other vulnerable groups.

Description

The Employment programme includes a package of measures for workers at risk of unemployment. The main target groups are:

- (a) workers with no professional or vocational education;
- (b) those whose skills are outdated;
- (c) workers whose knowledge of Estonian is poor;
- (d) those who are older than 50 years of age;
- (e) workers who cannot continue their present work due to health issues.

The VET and training-related measures include:

- (a) a study allowance scheme to support participation in VET and higher education;
- (b) people at risk of unemployment will be given access to labour market training with a

- training voucher;
- (c) employers will be compensated by payment of between 50% and 100% of their training costs;
- (d) employers can also apply for a training grant to support their workers in adapting to changes in business processes, technology, or formal qualification requirements.

Since June 2018, the target group of workers eligible for preventive measures has been widened.

The study allowance scheme for those taking up formal studies (including VET) is now available not only to those working under employment contracts, but also to those working under a service contract or authorisation agreement. The target group of the training voucher scheme was also widened by lifting the income threshold up to the national average wage.

In 2018, training vouchers were used by 2 100 individuals in employment who participated in 2 380 training courses, 73% of them for taking up an Estonian language course and 13% for training in a field where there are labour shortages.

The inflow to the study allowance scheme was 819 individuals, with the most popular field of study being care work. The reimbursement of training costs to employers covered the training of 682 employees, including 435 studying the Estonian language.

2016 Approved/Agreed
2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation
2019 Implementation
The measure was operational and ran as a regular practice.
2020 Approved/Agreed
<p>An employment programme for 2021-23 has been developed and adopted. It regulated the provision of labour market services and the payment of labour market benefits, except unemployment benefits. The overall goal of the programme was to reduce the duration of unemployment, to help people in vulnerable situations to find employment, to alleviate labour shortages and prevent unemployment.</p> <p>Labour market services have been adapted to the changed labour market situation, such as additional support to prevent people from repeatedly becoming unemployed, coaching for redundant managers, support for employer training and for business start-ups, and changes in counselling services. In order to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, possibilities for in-service training, retraining and counselling were provided.</p>
2021 Implementation
<p>In 2021, the employment programme for 2021-23 was being implemented ensuring that labour market services were provided, and labour market benefits were paid. In addition to existing services, the programme provided, for example, follow-up support for people who have had difficulty retaining employment. Compared to the former programme, the conditions for the employer training support, business start-up support, counselling services and labour market training for jobseekers have become more favourable.</p>
2022 Completed
<p>In 2022, the Unemployment Insurance Fund undertook a significant role in the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Estonian labour market. Refugees who have been granted temporary protection were entitled to the same benefits and allowances</p>

as Estonian residents, and enjoy the same rights, including the right to study and work. In addition to the regular training offer and language support, professional upskilling courses and Estonian language courses were provided to the refugees.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Unemployment Insurance Fund

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies
Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

[Employment programme 2017-20 \(in Estonian\)](#)

[Cedefop publication - ReferNet news- Estonia: new measures to prevent unemployment in 2017](#)

[Employment programme 2021-23 \(in Estonian\)](#)

Related policy developments

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). Employment programmes 2017-20 and 2021-23: 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/28171>