

Developing VET excellence and cooperation

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 ESTONIA

Timeline

2022 Design

2023 Design

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 44121

Background

Collaboration and coherence between levels and types of education and training (general and vocational education, vocational and higher education, and formal and non-formal) has been limited.

Secondary vocational education and training (VET) is not an attractive learning option for all: only a quarter of basic education graduates continue in vocational secondary education; the drop-out rate is high.

Given the limited resources, the diversity and regional availability of VET are declining.

Objectives

To ensure an inclusive and sustainable network and infrastructure of education institutions providing high-quality VET to different target groups in a learning environment that supports contemporary approaches to learning and teaching.

Description

The following measures are foreseen:

- (a) carrying out a study on the VET institutions network in 2023;
- (b) designing the network of VET institutions in line with the reorganisation of secondary education and in connection with the development of the school network in other areas of education;
- (c) implementing a performance-based funding model for VET;
- (d) defining selection principles and criteria for centres of excellence in VET, defining R&D links, and drawing up a concept for centres of excellence;
- (e) empowering centres of excellence in VET to ensure the quality of learning, to provide in-service training, including the provision of training for trainers, training of practitioners and supervisors, curriculum development, support for national and international cooperation, including participation in the Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) projects, support for cooperation with employers, higher education and research institutions;
- (f) mapping cooperation opportunities between VET and research institutions in areas of

national importance (smart specialisation), and drawing up roadmaps for these areas;
(g) initiating cooperation between VET institutions, research institutions, higher education institutions and employers, including local level.

2022 Design

In order to support the emergence of centres of excellence in VET, two Estonian VET centres participated in Erasmus+ CoVEs projects as partners. Comprehensive mapping of cooperation opportunities between VET institutions, research institutions, higher education institutions and employers was set to be based on the study of the VET institutions network (planned for 2023).

2023 Design

In the context of extending compulsory education, a VET reform was launched to enhance upper secondary VET provision, optimise the network of VET institutions, and develop VET excellence and cooperation. Preparations were made to consolidate the network of VET institutions, and allocate areas of responsibility geographically and by curriculum group, depending on the capacity of the schools. Activities were parallel to the VET reform, aiming to strengthen upper secondary VET. Consolidation is seen as a prerequisite for the development of CoVEs.

2024 Implementation

Consolidation of the VET institutions network continued with a consultation phase. Possible options include refocussing of some VET centres, merger of regional VET centres under a single management or reorganisation into regional education centres.

2025 Implementation

Consolidation of the VET institutions network continued: Raplamaa Vocational College was established by merging two VET Centres in Central Estonia, and the process of merging Tallinn's VET centres advanced. In 2025, there were 30 institutions providing VET, compared to 32 in 2022.

Revision of the funding model was launched in line with the extension of compulsory education to respond to the growing number of young learners and learners with higher support needs. The current VET funding model is largely based on student numbers and does not adequately take into account schools' real needs or the differences between young and adult learners. The new model was scheduled to be launched in January 2026.

Work continued on developing the legal framework for defining the areas of responsibility of VET Centres of Excellence. The Estonian VET team under the Estonian Erasmus+ Agency continued supporting excellence in VET in line with national and EU priorities. The team broadened its focus from green skills to sustainable vocational education, including civic education, participation and democracy. VET Team supported capacity building and quality improvement in project development through mentoring and training activities. School teams were guided in preparing Erasmus+ partnership projects, and coordinators' seminars provided opportunities to share good practices in mobility, digitalisation, and blended learning. The team expanded its international network and explored the work of VET Centres of Excellence in the Netherlands.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research

Target group

Entities providing VET

Companies
VET providers (all kinds)

Other

Higher education
institutions

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Optimising VET funding
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Related policy developments

2022 Completed

Amending the financing principles of VET (until 2022)

The financing model for VET has been renewed and amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act were adopted in 2018. They came into force in 2019. Financing principles were changed to increase VET institutions' motivation and autonomy.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

2021 Completed

Vocational education programme 2015-21

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:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2022 Completed

Labour market and education cooperation programme

The programme was adopted in 2015. It sets out a roadmap and offers a framework for increasing the qualification levels of the labour force, decreasing the structural labour shortage and enhancing the employability of graduates by responding better to changes in labour demand.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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