



# **Estonia**

## **Overview of the**

## **Vocational Education and Training System**

**2008**

**eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews**



**CEDEFOP**

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**Abstract:**

This is an overview of the VET system in Estonia. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities
4. Initial vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy
8. Accumulating, transferring and validating learning
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
10. Financing - investment in human resources
11. European and international dimensions, towards an open area of lifelong learning

This overview has been updated in 2008 and its reference year is 2007. The latest versions can be viewed from October 2009 onwards at:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information\\_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/) where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found.

**Keywords:**

training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

**Geographic term:**

Estonia

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## 01 - GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

### 0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Estonia is an independent democratic republic. The government and its courts are organised in conformity with the constitution and according to the principle of a separation and balance of powers. Legislative power is vested in the Parliament (*Riigikogu*) with 101 members elected by proportional representation. Executive power is vested in the government (*Vabariigi Valitsus*) which executes domestic and foreign policies and manages relations with other states; directs and co-ordinates the activities of government agencies; administers the implementation of laws and legal acts.

In Estonia, the political context for all policies is defined by the programme of the coalition 2007-2013, which consists of 3 parties. As to education and research, the goal of the Governing Coalition is 'to introduce a policy which would ensure the availability of competitive education for the people of Estonia, providing them with equal opportunities and also ensure the development of research in Estonia and, through this, the skills and knowledge for successful management in the environment of globalisation'. In the measures proposed, the greatest attention is paid on increasing teachers' salaries and supporting academic research. This underscores the importance that has traditionally been attributed to academic learning. We can also say VET does not enjoy similar attention in the programme of the coalition.

The President is the head of state representing Estonia in international relations. Ministries are established, pursuant to law, for the administration of the areas of government. The educational area in Estonia is managed by the Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*).

Estonia is divided into 15 counties, 47 towns, and 194 rural municipalities. County governments, run by governors are the regional administration of the state. All local issues are resolved and managed by local governments, whose responsibilities include management of pre-school child care institutions, basic schools, upper secondary general schools, vocational educational institutions, libraries, community centres, museums, sports facilities, nursing homes and shelters, healthcare institutions and other local institutions in the rural municipality or town, provided they are owned by the local government.

One specific cultural feature of Estonia is its bilingual community (education in Estonian and Russian) and multicultural society. In 2007, about 69% of the population were Estonians. The instruction in most VET institutions is in Estonian, though there are schools where the curricula are taught in both languages. In some institutions the instruction is in Russian only. One common feature is the significant improvement in the knowledge of English. Knowledge of languages is becoming more expected on the labour market.

The experience of bilateral co-operation with the Nordic countries (especially Finland) is also a feature of the VET system. Active co-operation between

(vocational) educational institutions has lasted over 10 years and has influenced their development.

Despite the positive image of some vocational educational institutions, vocational education has traditionally had an unfavourable image. People tend to value upper secondary general education and higher education. However, in recent years the image of industry and production has improved as has the image of skilled labour.

## 0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The area of Estonia is 45,227 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 1,340,935 in 2007. In 2007 the population decreased by 0.11% due to a negative birth rate and migration, this continues a trend which started a decade ago. While the birth rate has been improving the proportion of young people in the population continues to decrease.

TOTAL POPULATION ('000)	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	1 393	1 372	1 367	1 361	1 356	1 351	1 347	1 345	1 342

Source: Statistics Estonia, <http://www.stat.ee>

	2003	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
0 - 24	430	396	343	288	213	250
25 - 59	631	647	638	625	583	531
60+...	295	271	271	277	281	281
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 356</b>	<b>1 314</b>	<b>1 252</b>	<b>1 190</b>	<b>1 077</b>	<b>1 062</b>

Source: World Population Prospects. The 2000 revision. Vol. II: The Sex and Age Distribution of the World Population. United Nations, Populations Division, New York, 2001.

In 2000-2006 the number of students in VET decreased by 11% in total. An even more drastic decrease is foreseen for the coming years due to the low birth rate in Estonia in the 1990s. This will create a problem for the VET providers. In addition to financial problems (as providers are funded through a capitation system), the decreasing number of students will affect the quality of instruction (to have modern and high-quality facilities and teachers requires a certain number of learners). In the context of the ageing population and changing needs of the labour market, the need for further training and retraining is growing. The appropriate measures to counteract these changes

have already been taken by the Ministry of Education and Research who have commissioned state funded study places for CVET in the existing VET institutions.

Table 3. VET, students and teachers by Indicator and Year						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS</b>	79	71	68	57	48	47
<b>STUDENTS TOTAL</b>	28 095	28 183	29 915	29 013	28 651	27 381
<b>STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COURSES AFTER BASIC EDUCATION</b>	16 388	17 132	18 886	18 884	19 004	18 454
<b>STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COURSES AFTER SECONDARY EDUCATION</b>	11 552	10 787	10 762	10 101	9 478	8 620

Source: EHIS, November 2007

Another measure has been the concentration of VET both in regions and sectors. In 2002, there were 58 state owned VET institutions. The number has been reduced to 32 through very decisive actions and the changes will continue. At present, such activities are regulated by the 'Reorganization Plan for State-owned VET institutions for 2005-2008'. The objective of this plan is to increase the quality, accessibility and efficiency by reducing the number of VET institutions. Many smaller institutions have been merged into regional VET centres, the so called 'centres of excellence' with a wide variety of subjects taught in one building.

### 0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

The economic activity of the population increased in 2007: employment increased and unemployment fell, a trend observed since 2001. In 2007, there were 655,300 persons employed (62.6% of the people aged 15-74).

Table 1: Employment Rate (Men, Women)(%)					
	1997	2001	2003	2005	2007
<b>MEN</b>	65.3	60.4	62.0	61.5	67.5
<b>WOMEN</b>	52.6	50.6	52.1	54.8	58.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	58.5	55.2	56.7	57.9	62.6

Source: Statistics Estonia, <http://www.stat.ee>

The unemployment rate between 1997 and 2007 (at a peak of 13.6%, in 2000), has decreased in recent years. In 2007, it was 4.7% which is the lowest rate since 1994. The unemployment rate decreased among both men and women in 2007 (5.4% among men and 3.9% among women). Unemployment has been higher among men than women.

Table 2: Unemployment rates (total, men, women, young people under the age of 25, %)

	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	9.6	13.6	12.6	10.0	7.9	4.7
<b>MEN</b>	10.1	14.5	12.9	10.2	8.8	5.4
<b>WOMEN</b>	9.2	12.6	12.2	9.9	7.1	3.9
<b>YOUNG PEOPLE (&lt; 25)</b>	14.5	23.8	22.2	20.6	15.9	10.0

Source: Statistics Estonia, <http://www.stat.ee>

Table 3: Breakdown of economy by sectors (% in agriculture, % in manufacturing and % in the service sector)

	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	9.2	7.2	6.2	5.9	5.3	5.0	4.7
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>	33.2	33.3	32.5	34.9	34.0	33.5	35.2
<b>SERVICE</b>	57.6	59.5	61.4	59.3	60.7	61.5	60.1

Source: Statistics Estonia, <http://www.stat.ee>

Employment decreased in the agriculture sector (4.7 % of total employment in 2007) in the manufacturing sector, it increased by 1.7% (35.3% of total employment). Employment in the service sector was 61.5% of total employment in 2007.

Planning state financed student places in vocational education has followed the employment trends indicated, i.e. the number of available student places for service specialities has increased most and has decreased for agricultural specialities. This tendency could be observed 10 years ago and has continued. In the last couple of years, the share of student places available in industrial and manufacturing specialities has increased, but it has not yet satisfied demand in some sectors (e.g. transport and logistics, metal processing, electronics, electrical engineering). This is partly due to students finding other specialities more interesting. The acquisition of manufacturing and engineering specialities has become more popular although the trends in the three economic sectors are different in more specific fields.

Table 4: Expenditure (% of GDP) on education and training

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE (% OF GDP) ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>	5.41	5.48	5.50	5.26	5.07	4.63

Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, analysis department

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>EXPENDITURE (MILLION EEK) ON VET</b>	494	493	526	552	590	673	959	1 172
<b>CHANGE IN FUNDING (COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR %)</b>	4,3	-0,1	6,6	4,9	7,0	14,0	42,5	22,3
<b>PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURE IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER TYPES OF EDUCATION %</b>	9,5	9,53	9,16	8,3	8,08	8,53	11,06	12,22

Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, analysis department, (1 EUR = 15,6466 EEK).

Public spending on VET has increased since 2001. Whereas until 2003 the growth was no more than 7% per year, it increased in 2004 to 14% per year, 42% in 2005 and 22% in 2006, reaching EEK 1,172 billion. This counterbalanced the previous period when VET funding was lower than funding for other types of education (being as low as 8,08% in 2003). In 2006 VET expenditure, as a percentage of all education expenditure, was 12% (even 1% higher than in 1995-1996). This rise was achieved through foreign aid in investment projects.

#### 0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

In comparison to the EU average, the proportion of the population with low level qualifications is small (11%). For tertiary education, the percentage of the population aged 25-64 with higher education was higher than in most of the EU member states in 2007. Education has been traditionally highly valued, both in Soviet times and currently, for example, for the past three years (2005-2007), 68% of upper-secondary general school graduates (in daytime study) have continued their studies at the tertiary level.

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
<b>EU-27</b>	29%	47%	23%
<b>ESTONIA</b>	11%	56%	33%

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, 27/05/2008

Table 2: Percentage of the population, aged 18 to 24 years having left education and training with a low level of education

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>EU-25</b>	16.6	16.1	15.4	15.1	15.0	14.5
<b>EU27</b>	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
<b>ESTONIA</b>	12.6	11.8	13.7	14.0	13.2	14.3

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, 27/05/2008

In 2007, 14.3% of the population aged 18-24 had not achieved upper-secondary education and were not continuing their studies. The figure had been at 13.2% in 2006, but bounced back to 14,3 in 2007, thus reducing the difference with EU average significantly. The amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act in 2006 allow such people to get a profession without fulfilling the requirements of the upper secondary education.

## 02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

### 0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

The current education policy follows a general liberal economic and political approach, dominant in the Estonian society over the last decade. The aim of the vocational education and training (VET) system is to prepare young people, both socially and vocationally, for working life and produce a skilled labour force, which is competitive in Estonian and international labour markets. The framework for VET policy is decided by the Parliament (*Riigikogu*) while the government decides on national strategies. The government implements the education policy through the Ministry of Education and Research, in the case of VET, through the Ministry's VET and Adult Learning Department.

VET policy saw the beginning of its deliberate development in 2003-2004, when the new 'Development Plan for VET system 2005-2008' was being put together. Before that, initiatives had been sporadic. Many aims and objectives, set out in the 'Action Plan for Developing Estonian VET system in 2001-2004' had not been realized due to a number of reasons. Thus, bigger changes have taken place since 2005. Significant progress has been made concerning the cooperation with social partners; they are involved in all aspects of VET from planning the provision to evaluating the results (involvement in examination committees). New, flexible study possibilities have been introduced in the context of lifelong learning. There are new study possibilities for different target groups: former dropouts from basic education can now learn a profession, and those who are unable to fulfil the requirements of upper secondary level, can graduate without it. There are additional study possibilities for those who want to go on to higher education (extra year in subjects they want to take a state administered exam in). There are continuous VET and retraining possibilities for adults and VET can now be taught also at general schools. All those changes were introduced in the 2006 amendments to Vocational Education Institutions Act and have been implemented throughout 2007.

Another policy priority in recent years has been to make the VET school system more effective, without compromising on access and availability. In line with the 'Reorganization Plan for State-owned VET institutions for 2005-2008' the number of state owned schools has been reduced to 33 (December 2007) from 58 (2002).

The most important priority at present is improving the quality of VET provision. The VET standard was adopted by the government in 2006. There is a methodological centre for VET at the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (NEQC) - (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus (REKK)*) that deals with establishing state curricula, the competence based modular curricula in all the fields on which the school curricula have to be based on. By 2007, 5 curricula had been approved; others are waiting for

approval by the end of 2008. The VET methodological centre also organizes continuous training for VET teachers and trainers and prepares methodological materials.

There is also an internal evaluation department at the NEQC whose responsibility is to counsel schools in undergoing the internal audit. Since Sept 1st, 2006 the internal evaluation has been obligatory for VET schools; it will be applied step-by-step until 2010 when the schools have to prepare and present their first internal evaluation report.

One sign of quality for a VET institution is that the graduates are competitive on the labour market. To that end, it is possible for a VET graduate to choose a Professional Exam instead of the Final Exam of the School. Developing the qualification system and improving professional standards has been a priority. This development has been funded from ESF funds and is carried out by the Estonian Qualification Authority (EQA) - (*Kutsekoda*).

With the help of ERDF funds of the 2004-2006 programming period the facilities of 10 VET schools had been renovated and modernised. Almost EEK 700 million was spent on that together with co-financing from the state. Within the 2007-2013 programming period EEK 3.63 billion will be spent on upgrading VET facilities. (1 EUR = 15,6466 EEK).

## 03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### 0301 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### IVET

The legislative framework for the education and training system originates from Parliament (*Riigikogu*). The government (*Vabariigi Valitsus*) decides national strategies by adopting and implementing state education development plans. It determines procedures to establish, reorganise and close public educational institutions and to determine remuneration principles for staff.

The legal basis for VET was created in the late 1990s. The main laws related to vocational education:

- Vocational Education Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*, 1998) regulates the provision of VET at upper and post-secondary (non tertiary) level, foundation and operation of VET institutions. It was amended considerably in 2006. The changes stipulate the involvement of social partners in VET, provide new and flexible ways to enter VET and continue to general higher education, etc.
- Private Schools Act (*Erakooliseadus*, 1998) regulates the provision of training longer than 120 hours organised by legal persons in private law as well as the foundation and operation of private educational institutions.
- Applied Higher Education Institutions Act (*Rakenduskõrgkooli seadus*, 1998) regulates the foundation and operation of applied higher education institutions; provision of applied higher education, including that in VET institutions.
- Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993) regulates education and training provisions for adults.
- Professions Act (*Kutseseadus*, 2000) regulates the work of the Vocational Councils and the qualifications system. The act is the basis for developing vocational qualification requirements and the conditions and procedure for their attestation and award as well as the organisation of work of professional councils. In 2007 a new draft was being prepared to make the qualifications system more compatible with EQF. The new Professions Act was adopted by the parliament in May 2008.
- Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutsevalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus*, 2000) to be employed in a regulated profession and taking into account European Union Directives.

## CVET

CVET is guided by the same laws and regulations as IVET, as they are both part of the formal VET system. The only additions for CVET are hobby Schools and non-formal popular adult education schools. The following law, together with many other laws described above, addresses these cases.

- Hobby Schools Act (*Huvikooli seadus*, 2007) stipulates the activity of municipal hobby schools.

## 0302 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

### ROLE OF EU

The EU has had a monumental impact in guiding the planning and administration, as well as funding of IVET. Policy priorities of the Copenhagen Declaration are the guiding principles in planning VET at the Ministry of Education and Research. In addition, investments from Phare, ESF and ERDF have taken the whole VET system to a completely new level in the past 10 years. Extensive EU support will continue during the next programming period 2007-2013.

### ROLE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The VET and Adult Learning Department of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeeriumi Kutse- ja Täiskasvanuhariduse osakond*) co-ordinates the preparation and implementation of education policies through local governments and other relevant Ministries. The role of the Ministries is: to establish, reorganise and close public educational institutions (except universities and applied higher education institutions); to direct and organise the preparation of curricula, study programmes, textbooks and teaching/study aids (except for universities); and to administer public assets allocated to the education system. Other Ministries involved include:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs (*Sotsiaalministeerium*) is responsible for the organising and financing training for unemployed people.
- The Ministry of Culture (*Kultuuriministeerium*) participates in devising state education in culture and sports and co-ordinates in-service training in their area of government;
- The Ministry of Defence (*Kaitseministeerium*) – administers the *Võru* Battle School of the Defence Forces;

Several advisory bodies assist the Ministry of Education and Research in policy development, for example Estonian VET Promotion Organization, VET Teachers' Union, Education Organisation Council, Estonian Education Forum, Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation, Estonian

Qualification Authority, Estonian Research and Development Council, Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras, Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development 'Innove', and many others.

## ROLE OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

At local level, county and local governments have an administrative role to play in VET. County governments and their education departments prepare and implement education development plans for their administrative county. They provide supervision of pre-primary institutions and organise vocational guidance and counselling of children and young people. Local governments plan and implement the educational programmes on local level, coordinate and organise the activities of municipal educational institutions.

VET providers can be under local or central government or privately owned, but they have a common management form. A VET school is managed by the head of the school whose function is to ensure the effective operation of the school. The head of a school (director) is responsible for the activities, general state, development and legitimate use of financial resources of the school. The head of a school reports to the school board and to the person who authorised him or her to office. The head of an educational institution enters into employment contracts with its staff (including teachers), a competition is organised to fill the vacancies and the whole procedure is carried out with the approval of the school board.

## ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partner participation in VET is regulated by national legislation as well as by the partners' charters, action plans and agreements with other stakeholders. Their involvement in the administrative and consultative bodies of the education system has increased in the last decade. In particular, employers play a more active and influential role through their participation in professional councils, by creating professional standards for each profession (Professions Act, 2000). Professional Councils develop qualification requirements and vocational standards, which are used as the basic reference in curricula development at educational institutions. At local level, social partners participate in School Boards (established under the amendments to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act, in 2006), which consist of at least 7 people, out of which more than one half have to be social partners (representatives of local municipalities, registered organisations and trade associations of employers and workers and labour market boards).

At national level, social partners are represented by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda*), the Estonian Employers' Confederation (*Eesti Töoandjate Keskliit*) and the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (*Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit*). The trilateral Agreement on Joint Activities (*Ühise tegevuse kokkulepe kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks ja kvalifitseeritud tööjõu ettevalmistamiseks aastatel 2006–2009*) underlines the importance of good

cooperation in the VET priority areas, especially regarding the following type of activities:

- implementing the VET development plan 2005-2008 as fully as possible,
- increasing the flexibility and access to VET,
- using the ESF funds to enhance the study environment in VET schools,
- developing lifelong learning opportunities in VET schools,
- developing VET schools into regional and sectoral attraction centres,
- developing further the national qualification system in the context of EQF, and
- increasing the reputation and attractiveness of VET.

At regional level, social partnership depends on the cooperation agreed between VET providers and enterprises. Good cooperation exists at provider/enterprise level especially within specific sectors. This cooperation applies to initial and continuing training provision.

Table 1: The roles and responsibilities of the social partners		
	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL PARTNERS</b>	<b>TYPE OF ROLE (ADVISORY/DECISION MAKING, DIRECT/INDIRECT)</b>
<b>NATIONAL / REGIONAL LEVEL</b>	Participating in the development of the professional qualifications system,  preparing preliminary laws,  elaborating strategies and the vocational/professional conception. Developing professional standards	Advisory / direct
<b>SECTORAL LEVEL</b>	In-company training sessions, which are organised by employers or co-operation contracts between vocational associations and VET institution in order to ensure the compliance of theory with practical work /match required professional standards and curricula  Organizing skills competitions	Decision making / direct
<b>ENTERPRISE LEVEL</b>	Training the necessary skilled workers personnel by employers/companies	Decision making / direct
<b>LOCAL (SCHOOL) LEVEL</b>	Participation on School Boards, participation on examination committees	Decision making / direct

## ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of non-governmental organizations promoting and developing VET. Foundation 'Innove' started in 1998 as Foundation 'VET Reform in Estonia'. It mediated Phare support and started piloting the Apprenticeship program, career guidance and entrepreneurship as well as housing the Estonian National Observatory. In 2003, Foundation 'VET Reform in Estonia' was reorganized into Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development 'Innove' and started mediating EU support on education and training from ESF and ERDF. In 2004, 'Innove' initiated the following ESF projects: Apprenticeship program, Quality Award in VET Institutions, Entrepreneurship and Career guidance. 'Innove' is now an official member of Worldskills and Euroskills.

There is a methodological centre for VET at the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (NEQC) - (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus (REKK)*) that deals with establishing state curricula and the competence based modular curricula in all the fields the school curricula have to be based on. The VET methodological centre also organizes continuous training for VET teachers and trainers and prepares methodological materials. There is an internal evaluation department at the NEQC whose responsibility is to counsel VET schools in undergoing the internal audit.

QA - Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekvalifikatsiooni Sihtasutus*) was established in August 2001 in order to continue developing the professional qualifications system launched by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1997. Their aim is to facilitate the establishment and development of an integrated and organised professional qualifications system, and to establish prerequisites for achieving the comparability of the qualifications of Estonian employees as well as the acknowledgement of other countries.

*EKEÜ* – 'Estonian VET promotion organization' unites VET schools directors and teachers, as well as officials who are connected with VET in any way. The organization meets twice a year in the form of a 2-3 day conference and stays connected throughout the year via an electronic mailing list which consists of ca 150 addresses. The organization also has a board, which at present consists of 6 school directors and 3 representatives of organizations directly related to VET development (Foundation 'Innove', REKK, the QA). The Board makes decisions and gives input on important matters in the interim period between the conferences. The conference held in February 2008 was focused on VET in 2015. It is a custom for the VET department of the Ministry of Education and Research to ask for input from *EKEÜ* regarding strategic developments, legal acts and other initiatives, which has led to a more holistic policy-making.

In recent years, VET teachers are organized into the VET teachers union (*EKÜ*) and also into several sectoral networks.

### **0303 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET**

The institutional framework is basically the same for CVET and IVET. For detail, please see 0302. In addition to Employers' and Employees' associations described above, there are two more organizations, specifically connected with adult education.

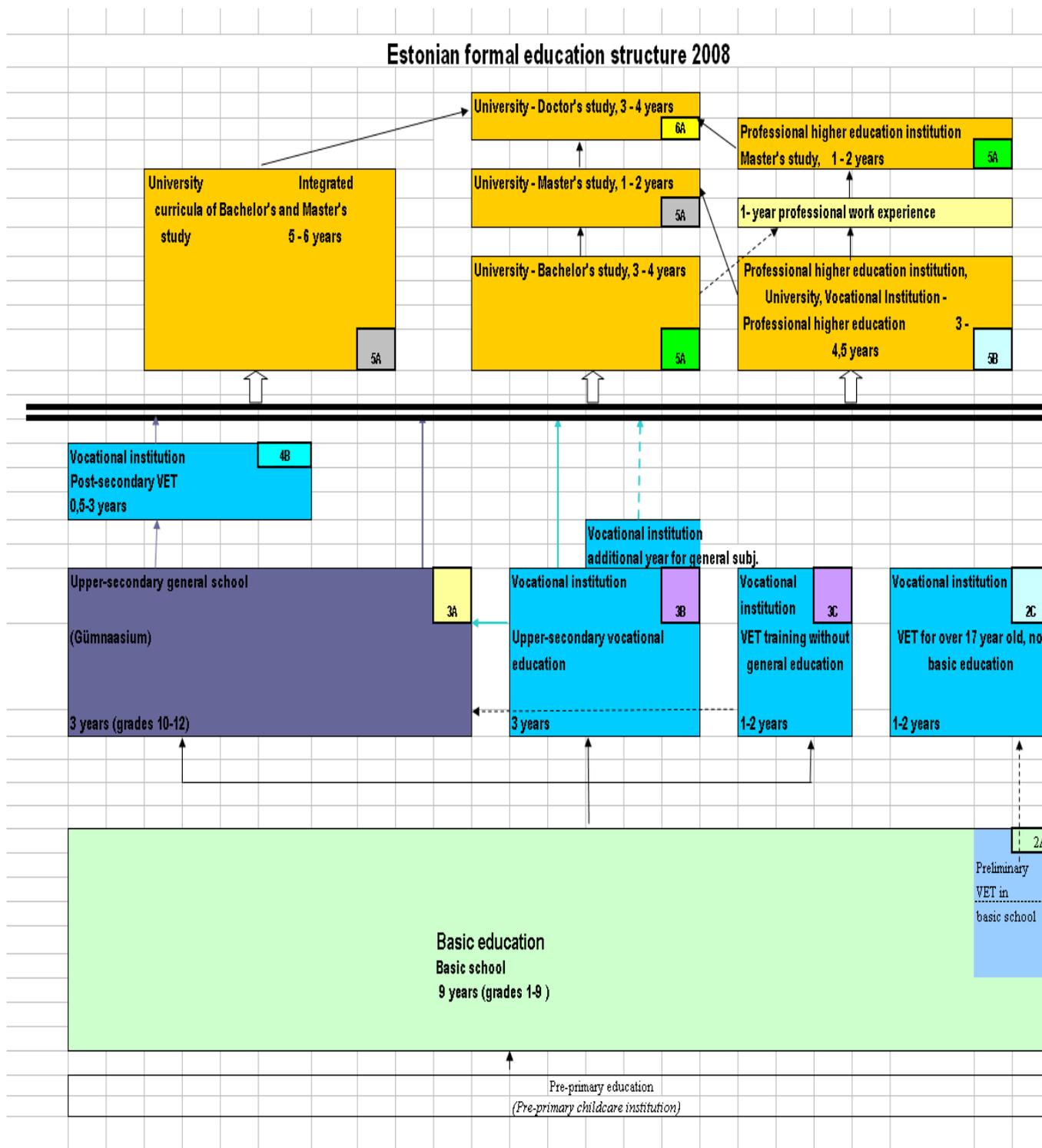
The Association of Estonian Adult Educators *Andras* has been established in 1991, as a non-governmental institution. *Andras* unites the representatives of different branches of adult education in Estonia; it also represents Estonian adult education in Europe and the rest of the world and aims at increasing the competence of adult educators

The Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association unites the organizations offering non-formal adult education in Estonia.

## 04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

Diagram 1: The structure of the Estonian IVET system:



In 1998, the VET reform programme started and the Vocational Education Institutions Act was passed (applicable to VET at upper and post-secondary levels, amended in 2006). Reforms were based on dialogue between trainers and social partners to ensure that they met the needs of the labour market and corresponded to social changes. Reforms included making VET more accessible, viable and attractive. In 2006, the Vocational Education Standard was prepared which defines a set of requirements for VET at basic and secondary education level.

The 2006 amendments to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act define the following structure for VET:

- Preliminary VET (ISCED 2A and 3A) lasting up to 15 study weeks is based on co-operation between lower and upper secondary schools and VET institutions.
- Vocational education in lower secondary school (ISCED 2A) and *gümnaasium* (upper-secondary education – ISCED 3A) is based on a separate curriculum and can last from 15 to 40 study weeks.
- VET for over 17-year-olds without basic education allows drop-outs to re-continue their education. The study volume is 20-100 study weeks of which school-based practical work and practical training in enterprises constitute at least 50% (ISCED 2C).
- Upper-secondary vocational education lasts at least 120 study weeks and students are required to have passed basic education. Students acquire the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for independent work. 25% of VET is dedicated to school-based practical work and 25% is passed at practical training in enterprises (ISCED 3B).
- VET without general education suits students who have difficulty acquiring general upper-secondary education. General subjects are limited to that required for learning the vocation. Like in other VET options, 50% is undertaken as school-based practical work and practical training in enterprises. The study volume is between 40 and 100 study weeks. In order to graduate, students are required to sit a vocational final examination or a professional examination (ISCED 2B).
- Post-secondary VET lasts from 20 to 100 weeks and students must have passed upper-secondary education (ISCED 4B).

VET institutions can also provide applied higher education and in-service training for adults.

As of December 2007, there were 47 VET providers: 32 public, 12 private and 3 municipally owned. In the past decade the number of students in VET has fallen by 11% and is expected to fall even more due to the low birth rate in 1990s. The lower secondary - upper secondary ratio of VET students is 2:1. The majority of the providers (29) offer both lower and upper secondary level

training, however, there are providers representing only the lower secondary (8) or only the upper secondary (16) level.

The greater proportion of students (65%), acquiring upper secondary vocational education, are young men with lower secondary education. On the other hand, in post-secondary vocational training there are 'softer' areas of specialisation and the share of women is higher (67%).

One-third of the graduates of lower secondary schools and about 13% of the graduates of upper secondary schools continue their studies in VET institutions. The majority of students are male (the proportion of female students was 45%). The proportion of female students is higher in post-secondary VET, mainly because more female students acquire upper-secondary general education and there are more relevant areas of specialisation (i.e. health and beauty, services, social sciences, business and law). The number of students acquiring VET in Estonian (72%) is higher than the number of those studying in Russian. However, the number of non-Estonian citizens has increased over the past decade.

In post-secondary VET studies, the number of students aged 25 and over has increased considerably. Their ratio has risen from 36.7% in 2004/2005 to 43.1% in 2007/2008. In 2007/2008, 81.8% of students were 20 years and older. The rise of the number of older students denotes the growing importance of lifelong learning in VET.

VET students can choose from different study forms (school or workplace-based) and study load (full and part-time study). For school-based training, the proportion of practical work is no more than 50% of the total. For workplace-based training, practical training is at least 2/3 of the total. Practical training in enterprises is approved. Full-time students must pass at least 75% of curriculum subjects (part-time students can pass less) in each academic year.

Quality assurance as a principle and several instruments to assure quality in VET have been developed. In 2003 Quality Award model and competition, based on EFQM was developed for Estonian VET schools. Also, relevant training programmes were developed. Since then, the schools have been taking an active part in competing for the Quality Award. More and more VET schools implement it as a tool for internal evaluation and improvement. A set of indicators, a bit different from the ones presented in CQAF/EQARF, for better describing the performance of VET schools, is also being developed. The indicators' set is connected to the online Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), and made public online.

Since Sept 1st, 2006 internal evaluation has been obligatory for VET schools; it will be applied step-by-step until 2010 when the schools have to prepare and present their first internal evaluation report.

## **0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL**

IVET does not systematically exist at lower secondary level although preliminary VET is offered. Preliminary VET is a short (up to 15 weeks) introductory course available in certain specialisations that take place in lower or upper secondary schools. Courses passed can be taken into account if the student wishes to continue their studies in the same specialisation. In 2006, approximately 500 students in lower secondary school participated in VET.

## **0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)**

On graduating from lower secondary school a young person can continue studies at upper-secondary general school (*gümnaasium* – ISCED 3A, chosen by 70%) or at a VET institution to acquire upper-secondary vocational education (ISCED 3B, chosen by approximately 30%). The state and local authorities must provide upper secondary level learning opportunities for all people.

The objective of VET is to develop the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes required for independent skilled work. The curricula of upper-secondary vocational education define minimum study duration of three years or 120 study weeks, half of which is dedicated to subjects related to the profession or area of specialisation. As stipulated by the Vocational Education Standard, school-based practical work and practical training in enterprises form 25% of studies and 40 weeks are given to general education subjects. Upper-secondary vocational education differs from general education in that students are not required to take state examinations to graduate. Nevertheless state examinations are obligatory for VET students wishing to continue their studies in universities. These students have an opportunity to take an additional year (up to 35 study weeks) in subjects they want to pass the state exam in. There are fewer pre-requirements for participating in VET compared to general education.

Practical training in enterprises is an integral part of the curricula of upper-secondary VET (defined in the Vocational Education Standard of 2006). The training is based on a contract between a VET institution, the student and (either a public or private) enterprise. VET providers must ensure training places for students and guarantee appropriate placements in accordance with curricula objectives. Providers are also responsible for supervising and assessing the training.

Students, who have interrupted their upper-secondary vocational studies, have the right to continue in upper-secondary general school. The student can transfer the grades on presentation of a study progress sheet with the approval of the teacher's council.

Table 1: Students in upper secondary education by programme orientation (general/vocational), 2005

	TOTAL ISCED 3	VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ISCED 3		
		VOCATIONAL (%)	PRE-VOCATIONAL (%)	VOCATIONAL AND PRE- VOCATIONAL (%)
<b>EU27</b>	26 036 676	55.9	4.6	60.5
<b>EU25</b>	24 597 064	55.5	4.9	60.4
<b>EE</b>	60 952	31.0	0.0	31.0

Source: Eurostat, 2005

#### **0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING**

Apprenticeship training or work-based study is a new study form for students learning a profession. Additional theoretical and practical courses are provided by the VET institution.

The apprenticeship project was piloted in a number of countries including Estonia under Phare in 2002. It targeted people without lower secondary education. The project was followed by a more Estonian tailored project, which started in 2005 and lasted until June 2008. It targeted both young people and adults with only lower secondary level education aged 16 or over.

In 2006 apprenticeship training as a work-based study form was entered in the Vocational Educational Institutions Act. In March 2007, a regulation was issued by the Ministry of Education and Research concerning the procedure of workplace based training. The general characteristics of Apprenticeship program are:

- study duration of at least 40 weeks (dependent on the curriculum) for students with lower secondary education and at least 20 study weeks for students with upper secondary education;
- 1/3 of the curriculum is delivered through theoretical instruction and 2/3 through practical training in an enterprise;
- apprentices sign a study and work contract and have a 4-month probation period;
- apprentices receive a wage during enterprise training and study allowance during theoretical studies in school;
- study groups are small (up to 8 apprentices);
- the structure of study is based on an agreement between the school and the enterprise;
- studies are complete after passing a professional or final examination.

## **0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS**

### **PILOT PROJECT "NEW OPPORTUNITY"**

The project "New Opportunity" was piloted in one Estonian VET institution from 01.09.2004 to 31.12.2007. The aim of the project was to give young men who have not finished compulsory lower secondary education (ISCED 2A), an opportunity to finish their studies and to continue their education and training. During the project, they were helped to acquire knowledge, skills and experience necessary for life as well as preliminary vocational training in a study group with military type rules.

Training was based on lower secondary and preliminary vocational education curriculum with additional civic education course. 60 students were admitted each year and during the study period, students had free food and clothes and received an allowance to cover routine costs (study materials, etc.). During free time, students were encouraged to pursue interests to develop their physical and mental abilities and their character.

Another alternative pathway is the VET education in prisons. According to the amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act in 2006, all VET institutions can offer VET courses in prisons. This will ensure the comparable level of education with other VET students. In addition, the graduates cannot now be discriminated against, based on the diploma (which was possible earlier, since prison VET schools were easily distinguishable by name).

## **0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL**

After acquiring upper-secondary general (ISCED 3A) education or upper-secondary vocational (ISCED 3B) education, students can choose to continue their studies in post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education (ISCED 4B). The objective is to prepare workers for skilled work and students are given the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes to perform complicated work independently. Some studies are only available at post-secondary (non tertiary) level, such as: social services, environmental protection and security services. Other subjects can be studied at upper-secondary and post-secondary level, e.g. business and administration, engineering and engineering trades, manufacturing and processing agriculture.

About 13% of secondary school graduates continue their studies in VET although most students wish to pursue higher education which is valued higher. 8% of graduates of VET institutions continue in post-secondary VET. Post-secondary VET is also targeted at graduates from higher education who wish to complement their academic education with practical skills.

Study duration is between 1-2.5 years, i.e. 40-100 study weeks of which the practical work at school and workplace training in an enterprise form 50%. Graduates receive the Certificate of Acquiring Vocational Secondary Education Based on Secondary Education (*Tunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta*).

## 0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Higher education (HE) system consists of an academic branch (ISCED 5A) and a professional branch or applied higher education (ISCED 5A). Higher education is available for all graduates of upper-secondary general (ISCED 3A) education or upper-secondary vocational (ISCED 3B) education, as well as post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education (ISCED 4B).

Professional HE may be provided by:

- applied HE institution (*rakenduskõrgkool*);
- university college (*ülikooli kolledž*);
- VET institution (*kutseõppeasutus*) that offers post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education curricula.

Applied higher education is the first level of tertiary education and it was established in 2002-03 academic year. Studies last for 3 to 4 years and practical training forms at least 30% of the total volume of the curriculum. Graduates who have completed their studies are awarded a diploma (*rakenduskõrgharidusõppe diplom*). In full-time study, a student can cumulatively complete at least 75% of the study load by the end of each academic year, and in part-time study – less than 75%. The minimum study load per academic year is determined by the school. For example, at present health sector specialties (nursery, therapy and recovery treatment) can only be studied on the tertiary level.

According to the Standard of Higher Education, applied HE provides students with the competences necessary for employment in a particular profession or to continue his/her studies at Masters' level. People completed upper-secondary level education or training or who have equivalent foreign qualifications have the right to compete for admission to professional HE. Each provider may set more specific entry requirements which can differ by specialisation. The number of study places at public-sector HE institutions is decided by the Ministry of Education and Research, who determines the state-commissioned education provision taking into account propositions by schools, other ministries, employers as well as budget restrictions of the state. Each HE institution is also allowed to admit students on additional study places which are subject to fees. 40% of those who continue their education and training at tertiary level attend applied higher education institutions.

Where applied higher education is provided by VET institutions, it is subject to all regulations of the Applied Higher Education Institutions Act (*Rakenduskõrgkooli seadus*). In 2007/2008, professional higher education was provided by 11 university colleges, 21 institutions of professional HE (11 of them are private schools) and 3 VET institutions (including one private school).

Students are evaluated through a unified system for both academic and applied HE branches. The same system is also used to evaluate students studying applied HE curricula at VET institutions. An examination or an assessment is considered positive if a student receives a grade ranging from 1 (E) to 5 (A).

## 05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

### 0501 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adult education is governed by the Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993) which defines adult learners as those who study by distance learning, evening courses, part-time study or as an external student participating in in-service or non-formal training. Adults who participate in daytime or full-time training are not included.

The main types of adult education are:

- formal education;
- professional education and training;
- non-formal education.

The law does not differentiate initial and continuing VET, so it is not possible to determine the proportion of adult participants in formal education.

Formal education gives adults the opportunity to acquire lower secondary education (ISCED 2A), upper secondary general education (ISCED 3A), or participate in VET (ISCED 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B). It can be acquired through evening courses, distance learning or as an external student at adult upper-secondary schools (*täiskasvanute gümnaasium*) or in evening or distance learning departments of general education schools. In 2006/2007, there were 43 schools where adults could acquire general education or non-formal education.

Adults can also acquire upper and post-secondary VET in part-time study or as an external student. The 2006 amendment of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act allows VET institutions to offer various flexible study forms for preliminary VET, IVET and CVET according to previous levels of education (e.g. only lower secondary or upper secondary general, etc.). The government funds upper and post-secondary part-time study at VET institutions on the same basis as full-time study. In September 2007 the Ministry of Education and Research started funding short term CVET for working adults in all the counties of Estonia, using the resources of EU structural funds. The legal framework for funding such study form had been adopted in June 2007 (under the Policies for Arranging Professional Training for Working Adults in VET Institutions).

Adults can also acquire higher education (HE) at institutions of applied higher education (*rakenduskõrgkool*) and universities (*ülikool*), both offer flexible forms of study. In general, a fee is charged for part-time study.

Table 1: Formal adult education			
EDUCATION TYPE	PROVIDER	STUDY FORM	FINANCING
<b>BASIC EDUCATION, UPPER SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION</b>	adult upper-secondary schools, evening or distance learning departments in upper-secondary general schools	evening courses, distance learning, external study	state financing
<b>UPPER OR POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION</b>	vocational educational institutions	part-time study	state financing
<b>(APPLIED) HIGHER EDUCATION</b>	universities, applied higher education institutions	part-time study, external study	adult student, employer, state financing in the fields of state priority and for specific target groups (i.e. teachers without higher education)

Professional education and training provides opportunities to develop occupational and/or vocational knowledge, skills and experience and the opportunity for retraining at the place of employment or at an educational institution. Training is mostly organised as short- or long-term courses and do not change the educational level of the participant although it can be used to achieve higher-level qualifications (sometimes obligatory for people working in regulated professions). Training can take place at the workplace, at higher education institutions (i.e. teachers, doctors) and at private providers.

Non-formal education/popular adult education is targeted at developing personality, creativity, talents, initiative and a sense of social responsibility and to accumulate the knowledge, skills and abilities needed in life. It is provided by training centres which are located in county centres across Estonia and folk universities.

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGES REGARDING LIFELONG LEARNING**

The Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005 – 2008 (*Elukestva õppe strateegia aastateks 2005-2008*) aims to improve opportunities for people to participate in formal, non-formal and informal learning according to their personal as well as social and labour market needs. The aim is to raise the participation rate for people aged 25-64 to 10% of the total population by 2008 (the figure in 2006 was 6.5%).

The objectives are to be met by: increased provision; transparent funding; reliable quality assurance; improving information and guidance; creating a professional qualifications system; encouraging public/private partnerships to ensure relevant training opportunities; preparing reliable statistical data including skills needs forecasts; and implementing a system to recognize prior learning and work experience – RPL (*Varasema Töö- ja Õpikogemuse Arvestamine*) (VÕTA).

## **POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGES REGARDING ACCESS TO LEARNING**

Studies indicate that the main reason for people not participating in training are lack of interest and lack of resources so, to promote participation, it is important to raise motivation and to invest additional resources. The funding model for adult education consists of three pillars and each pillar is under the responsibility of a different ministry.

- 1st pillar: funding the training of employed adults through enterprises (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications);
- 2nd pillar: funding professional in-service training and retraining through educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Research);
- 3rd pillar: employment training for the unemployed through the Labour Market Board (Ministry of Social Affairs).

The new programming period 2007-2013 of EU structural funds offers ample opportunities for lifelong learning. 136.9 million EEK is going to be spent on developing CVET for adults, 20.6 million on promoting adult education and 60 million EEK on non-formal popular adult education courses. In all three programs a lot of attention is paid to training the trainers of adults (1 EUR = 15,6466 EEK).

There are several activities to address attitudes towards learning and to develop a support structure for promoting learning, for example through guidance and counselling, and implementing a system for recognising prior learning and work experience.

The role of libraries, museums, theatres and other cultural establishments is becoming more important in promoting lifelong learning through offering learning opportunities. Much attention is also paid to learning at home through various e-study opportunities. Formal education institutions are especially keen on using e-learning for adult education.

## **PLANNING AND FORECASTING MECHANISMS**

Forecasts of labour force needs are prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.. The opinions of employers' representatives and professional associations are also taken into account as well as local authorities and other government offices and providers. Both labour market needs and individual preferences are analysed. Possibilities of providers and regional needs in terms of curricula, teachers, practical training facilities are also considered.

Planning vocational training and defining its volume and content is decided by training providers. Their decisions are often based on long- or short-term forecasts for labour market demand based on information gathered from employers, professional associations and employment offices. Training providers usually co-operate with the institution that commissions training in order to prepare suitable training.

## 0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

Adult education (governed by the Adult Education Act) is a broad field of activity financed by several ministries (Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications).

Formal education acquired within the adult education system: lower and upper secondary general education is free of charge including evening courses, distance learning and external study. This also applies to vocational education.

Professional education and training of adults: professional and non-formal education and training is charged and paid for either by the participant or the employer. Participants can be exempt from income tax on the training cost, if the trainer has a valid training licence, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. If an employer pays non-formal training costs for employees, expenses are considered as taxable fringe benefit. Due to the availability of European Social Fund resources, participants and employers have paid little to participate in training.

In-service training in regulated professions: in the few professions regulated by law, regular professional in-service training can be compulsory. Where this is the case, funds for training are prescribed in the annual salary fund of these employees (e.g. 2-4% of the annual salary fund of health care workers and 3% of the annual salary fund of teachers). For other professions, training costs may be covered by both the employer and the employee.

### TARGET GROUP AND PROVISION

Formal and professional education and training of adults in institutions of higher education (HE): people who have completed upper or post-secondary VET may continue studies in professional HE at a VET institution, a professional institution of HE or at university. Studies are available part-time, through evening courses or distance learning and participants may have to pay a fee.

Formal and professional education and training of adults in VET institutions: In June 2007, 'the policies for arranging professional training for working adults in VET institutions' (*Täiskasvanute tööalase koolituse kutseõppeasutuses korraldamise tingimused ja kord* <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/ert/act.jsp?id=12979838>) was adopted. According to that, a VET institution shall organise adult professional education and training if there is a demand and the relevant material resources and teachers exist. Both state and private VET institutions offer training to individuals and enterprises. Courses can be organised in the daytime, evening and through distance learning. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate.

Formal and professional education and training of adults in institutions of higher education (HE): adult education and training is provided by all HE institutions. Training programmes differ in content and duration and provide an opportunity to improve one's knowledge and skills in all professions taught in formal education.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Professional education and training is under the responsibility of training institutions and providers. Private training providers must be licensed by the Ministry of Education and Research according to the Private School Act (only training at licensed providers is tax deductible). A training licence is valid for three to five years. New principles and criteria for issuing training licences are being prepared. The licences will be replaced by the right to register the curriculum at the Education Information System (EHIS), an online database of the whole educational system in Estonia.

Quality issues are gaining more attention as the provision of adult training increases. Raising awareness of participants and employers has had a positive impact on training quality.

### **0503 - TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

The Employment Services and Benefits Act (*Tööturuteenuste ja toetuste seadus*, 2006) regulates the provision of employment services to job seekers (including training provision) and to employers.

Training is commissioned by county employment offices and paid for by the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Sotsiaalministeerium*), local authorities may also allocate resources for this purpose. Training may be commissioned from any licensed body approved by the Ministry of Education and Research.

In 2007, the Labour Market Board (*Tööturuamet*) commissioned employment training from 50 educational providers (adult education institutions, VET institutions and institutions of higher education) for 6530 persons, 26.7% less than in 2006 (8905). The decrease is due to the drop in the number of the unemployed. Thus, in 2007, 18.5% of all the unemployed participated in training, slightly more than in 2006 (16.2%),

## TARGET GROUPS AND PROVISION

Employment training may be professional training, retraining and continuing training. Upon course completion, a certificate is issued and some training participants may sit an examination and obtain a professional qualification. Courses may last up to 6 months (20 credit points) and may be provided in employment offices or in a range of other education and training providers.

Employment offices offer a package of services - information, training and re-training, vocational counselling, subsidy to start a business, etc.

## PROVIDERS

The Labour Market Board has 16 regional employment offices. Its aim is to reduce unemployment and assist job-seekers and employers. Employment services can also be provided by private agencies although the services must be free of charge.

EURES (European Employment Services) have consultants to advise people wishing to work in an EEA (European Economic Area) country and employers who wish to recruit new employees from EEA. EURES is co-ordinated by the Labour Market Board.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is guaranteed by the requirement to verify the training commissioned with professional standards. In addition, all training must be commissioned from providers with a licence.

## 0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

Numerous policy documents emphasise the importance of continuing training for the workforce. While employers are paying more attention to continuing and re-training, there is room for improvement regarding training places, assuring content relevance, and assessment procedures.

Professional training at company level is not regulated by law, however, the Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993) provides for everybody's right to improve oneself and the state's, local authorities' and employers' obligation to co-ordinate and organise adult education.

Some enterprises have their own training agreements which may include additional support for study leave, funding, etc. There is a training support programme operated by Enterprise Estonia (*Ettevõtluse Arendamise Sihtasutus*) and co-financed from the EU Social Fund (*Euroopa Sotsiaalfond*). The aim is to support in-service training and retraining of entrepreneurs and people: working in the companies to maintain or increase labour market competitiveness; developing entrepreneurship; working in research and development activities and technological change.

Professional in-company training for adults is provided by many private training providers, but increasingly also by applied higher educational institutions, universities and VET institutions as well as professional associations. As we can see from the table below, Estonian markers are higher than the EU average in all 4 categories in 2005. The results also showed that there was a direct correlation between company size and willingness to offer training.

	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999
<b>EU27</b>	60	:	55	:	78	:	91	:
<b>EU25</b>	61	61	56	56	80	80	92	95
<b>EE</b>	67	63	62	58	85	85	96	96

Source: Eurostat; 2nd and 3rd continuing vocational training survey in enterprises (CVTS2 and CVTS 3)

## 0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Adult Education Act provides the right for employees to take study leave on the basis of a notice from the educational institution. The length can be at least 30 calendar days in an academic year at the person's request (except in the case of day time study and full-time study). Additional study leave is granted to complete the course. The duration of study leave depends on the level of education acquired. The employer continues to pay the average wages for ten days and the established minimum wage for the remaining days. To participate in professional education and training, study leave of at least fourteen calendar days in a year is granted and the employee continues to receive his/her average wage. To participate in non-formal education, study leave without pay of at least seven calendar days in a year is granted. These rights and benefits are applied in both public and private sector, in small, medium size and big companies.

Individuals or their employers usually pay for work-related training and non-formal education. According to the "Lifelong Learning 2007: survey", commissioned by the Adult Education division of the Vocational and Adult Education department of the Ministry of Education and Research, 17% of the respondents declared they had paid for the continuing training themselves (including their parents and partners), 70% said the training was paid by the company; 46% of the respondents declared they paid for formal education themselves, whereas 49% said their formal education had been paid by the state. In both cases the respondents could indicate up to 2 sources of financing.

The state contributes through tax reductions for employers and individuals paying for their own training. Pursuant to the Income Tax Act (*Tulumaksuseadus*, 1999) people can be exempt from income tax up to the extent of the sum spent on training if the training provider has a valid licence from the Ministry of Education and Research.

## 06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

### 0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

The Teacher Training Framework Requirements (*Õpetajate koolituse raamnõuded*, 2000) describes all teaching and training occupations. Specifically for VET, there are two types of teacher at VET institutions:

- teachers of general education subjects (*üldaineõpetaja*); and
- vocational teachers (*kutseõpetaja*) for both theory and practice.

#### VOCATIONAL TEACHER

The role of the vocational teacher is: to manage the process of vocational training (supervision, assessment, etc.); to prepare study materials; to prepare and improve subject syllabi and curricula.

Pursuant to the Vocational Teachers Professional Standard (*Kutseõpetaja kutsestandard*, 2006) the aim of the vocational teacher is to support the acquisition of skills and knowledge required at work. Vocational teachers must also support the personal development of students and foster a lifelong learning attitude. The Standard defines vocational teachers according to professional levels III, IV and V.

PROFESSIONAL LEVEL	WORK EXPERIENCE	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	OTHER REQUIREMENTS
III	3 years work experience in the subject taught and 1 year experience as VET teacher (adaptation year)	Secondary education	Passed vocational education or professional qualification in the subject taught
IV	3 years work experience in the subject taught and 1 year experience as VET teacher (adaptation year)	Higher education or equivalent in the subject taught	Teacher training pursuant to the standard
	3 years work experience in the subject taught and 1 year experience as VET teacher (adaptation year)	Higher education or equivalent	Teacher training pursuant to the standard, professional qualification in the subject taught
	1 year experience as VET teacher (adaptation year)	Master's degree or equivalent in the subject taught	Teacher training pursuant to the standard
V	3 years of work experience in the subject taught or 5 years of experience as VET teacher	Master's degree or equivalent	Teacher training pursuant to the standard

The Standard defines the functions of vocational teachers as: creating and maintaining study and work conditions; planning, applying and analysing the study process; knowing the work environment and fulfilling work tasks; analysing and assessing study results; supporting the development of students and directing them towards lifelong learning; self-assessment and self-development; development of vocational studies; supervising and counselling colleagues; active participation in promoting VET (level V only).

Teacher training takes place at higher education institutions and teacher training curricula has to be registered with the Ministry of Education and Research. Training must meet the Teacher Training Framework Requirements (*Õpetajate koolituse raamnõuded*) and be equal to 180 ECTS (bachelor study).

### WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS

Workplace supervisors (vocational trainer – *ettevõtte praktikajuhendaja*) supervise students during their work placement. They provide students with practical skills and theoretical knowledge at the workplace in a real working situation. They help students to adapt to working life and provide feedback to the VET provider on student performance. The activities, obligations and liability of and qualification requirements for workplace supervisors are not regulated by national legislation.

The Estonian Employers' Confederation launched a training project for workplace supervisors in the Apprenticeship programme. Together with The Open University Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) of Tallinn University, the Confederation set up a curriculum and trained 400 teachers and mentors-supervisors (325 of whom completed the course) from the 200 participating enterprises in 2005-2007.

In 2007 In September 2007 the Estonian Employers' Confederation, with the help of partners, launched an e-learning course, Implementing supervisor programmes in enterprises, which targets beginning trainers, implementers and coordinators. Thanks to the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and the support from European Structural Funds, this material is available free of charge at <http://www.ettk.ee/opipoiss/index.html>.

### DEVELOPMENTS FOR VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

An ESF project (2005-2008) tackled the developing VET teachers' further training possibilities and system. Some results of the project, which, as a whole, has been successful, are as follows:

- A study was conducted which gave a picture of a career model of today's VET trainer and comparison to the relevant practise in Europe (June 2006)

- VET teacher's subject-specific competencies were described in 15 curriculum groups and proposals were made to enhance the frame requirements for teacher preparation (September 2006)
- Approved centres for continuing education were created on the basis of the existing vocational institutions (December 2006)
- Curricula for continuing education for vocational teachers and practical training supervisors were compiled (April 2007).
- Curricula for continuing education were tested and amended (January 2008)
- Models for the vocational teacher's training and continuing education will be compiled in 15 curriculum groups (June 2008)

Through the 2005-2008 project "The Development of VET Curricula" VET teachers were involved in revising the content of VET training through participation in curricula committees and creating the school curricula.

A project *E-Võti* (E-key) was launched in 2006. Through this project, the teachers were involved in creating a modern study environment. 2 310 teachers, IT specialists and education specialists have taken part in the training of how to compile electronic study materials (mainly web-based). As a result of the training, the teachers have created 615 weeks of electronic study courses and over 600 study aids, which are all gathered in one data mart, available for everybody. Thanks to the programme, 11 professional networks have emerged, which have been conducive to promoting the new learning and methodology. E-VET thematic networks work together with E-University networks in Estonia, and cooperate with specialists in the fields and national VET curricula development work groups of National Exam and Qualification Centre. VET teachers have been able and will be able to take part in courses conducted for trainers of adults, preparing them for work with adult population. They also have an opportunity to apply for the profession of a trainer of adults.

## 0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

TEACHER	INSTITUTION	QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
<b>VOCATIONAL TEACHER (KUTSEÕPETAJA)</b>	Vocational educational institution (ISCED 3B, 4B)	<p>1) higher education in vocational pedagogy or other pedagogical higher education (5A, 5B) and at least 3 years experience in the respective profession or</p> <p>2) higher (5A,5B) or post-secondary vocational education (non-tertiary) (4B) in the respective field, at least 3 years experience in the respective profession and completed 320-hours course in vocational pedagogy or</p> <p>3) higher (5A,5B) or post-secondary vocational education (non-tertiary) (4B) in the respective field, at least 3 years experience in the respective profession and ongoing working in the respective profession</p>
<b>WORKPLACE SUPERVISOR (VOCATIONAL TRAINER– ETTEVÕTTE PRAKTIKA- JUHENDAJA)</b>	Companies, enterprises	No requirements

### PRE-SERVICE (INITIAL) TRAINING

Vocational teachers' training is provided at the level of higher education. Access to the teaching profession depends upon previously acquired professional education, be it higher education (5A) or vocational upper secondary (3B) or post-secondary (non-tertiary) (4B) coupled with teacher training (one or three years). Vocational teachers tend to receive their training together rather than according to the subjects they plan to teach due to low numbers of applicants (a maximum of 5 specialists in the same field commence teacher training each year). This means that they must have the necessary professional qualifications before embarking on a pedagogical qualification.

Under the Teacher Training Framework Requirements, studies include: general education; subject studies; pedagogy; psychology and didactics. It also includes a practical training placement lasting at least 10 weeks. Teacher training is provided in two stages: initial training, induction year for novice vocational teacher. The induction year eases novice teachers into work life and it also serves as a way to give feedback to the institution on the effectiveness of the teacher training curriculum. Novice teachers are

supervised by a mentor who assesses their performance at the end of the year.

Studies are organised in the form of lectures and seminars, involving issue studies, presentations, discussions and group work. Depending on the university, students are assessed on an A-F scale or on a five point scale, where: A (5) is excellent and F (0) is fail.

### CONTINUING, IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Vocational teachers often acquire their pedagogical qualification while they are working. The Qualification Requirements for Teachers (*Pedagoogide kvalifikatsiooninõuded*, 2002) requires that vocational teachers who have professional higher education or post-secondary vocational education (non-tertiary) complete a 320 hour vocational pedagogy course. The content was defined in 2003 by the National Examination and Qualification Centre. Courses must include: organisation of vocational education and legislation, integration of general and vocational education, communication and working environment, education psychology, special education, adult education and didactics of vocational education.

Other types of in-service training is to some extent governed by the Teacher Training Framework Requirements, which states that it is provided in a state or municipal school or a private school which holds an education license. It must be provided by an accredited person. A vocational teacher is required to participate in in-service training for at least two months during each three years of service. Participation is taken into account in their evaluation.

Pursuant to the Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993), in-service training of teachers is paid for from the state budget and amounts to at least 3% of the respective teacher's annual salary. Like the general population, VET teachers are also entitled to study leave lasting for the duration of the course or for at least 30 days in an academic year. A higher number of days can be awarded for teacher studying for higher education. Teachers continue to receive average wages for 10 days and then at least the minimum wage for the remainder of the leave (see 0505 for more information on study leave).

### 0603 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

There is no difference between IVET and CVET teachers, although the following can be noted:

- VET teachers work in VET institutions which provide both initial and continuing training and the requirements are the same. CVET courses at VET institutions are conducted by VET teachers who have completed both professional and teacher training.
- At private training institutions which offer in-service training, the teachers are usually specialists in their field and the Teacher Training Framework Requirements and Qualification Requirements for Teachers are not applied to them.
- For non-formal company training for employees, no special requirements are set in place for supervising specialists.

## **07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY**

### **0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS**

The anticipation of skills and human resources needed on the labour market is organised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. Annual forecasts have been available since 2003. The Ministry and its partners prepare forecasts on sectoral basis (ISCO 88 – International Standard Classification of Occupations). The Ministry of Education and Research uses this document as a basis for allocating state funded study places in vocational and higher education.

There are no systematic regional labour force forecasts. Some remarks can be found in regional development plans, but no methodological basis to systematically evaluate their needs has been set up: existing forecasts tend to be based on expert opinion.

### **0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

The mobility of trainees within VET and between different study levels has improved considerably thanks to several changes that have taken place.

The mobility of trainees inside VET is facilitated by the Vocational Education Institutions Act (VEIA). The changes from 2006 stipulate that a student, having started the studies in one institution, can continue them in another institution, provided there are vacancies in the same curriculum group. The student has to pass the exams that the curriculum of the previous school did not have.

The new VEIA also provides the graduates of the upper secondary VET with an optional one year of studies in upper secondary school for adults or the evening or distance learning courses at a general school, where they can continue studies of general subjects for 35 study weeks. The purpose of the additional year is to enable the VET graduates to prepare better for the state exams to be competitive in entering higher education institutions.

The opportunities for the students of general schools to acquire preliminary VET knowledge and skills have widened. Students in basic and secondary education have been given two options:

- Vocational preliminary training – VET orientation course which lasts up to 15 study weeks.
- VET in basic school and upper secondary school – courses that enable the students to acquire realistic VET skills in a VET institution studying a VET curriculum whose volume is 15-40 study weeks. If the student continues his studies in a VET school, the courses taken will be credited to his account.

Both of these courses are provided by a local VET institution, if the two schools reach an agreement. Thus, the quality of training at a general school is comparable to that at the VET school.

The cooperation between VET institutions and institutions of professional higher education regarding curriculum development in post-secondary studies is encouraged. Thus, many institutions of professional higher education take into account courses taken at a VET school in meeting the requirements of their curriculum.

VET providers also cooperate in international networks as a way to provide opportunities for students to study abroad for their practical training. This allows local providers to become aware of international skills demands. The Leonardo da Vinci projects are an example of successful exchange of experience and adaptation of study materials.

Public institutions (ministries, Estonian Qualification Authority, State Examination and Qualification Centre) coordinate the preparation, provision and recognition of areas of specialisation. The state, professional associations and schools participate in international councils, co-operation groups and networks which enable the exchange of best practices and the development of new curricula.

The awareness on new qualifications is raised by using different channels for information dissemination – workshops, information seminars, printed media, internet, etc. This information is required by career specialists in schools and employment offices as well as by enterprises, professional associations, local governments and policy-makers.

### **0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA**

The preparation of curricula is based on the Vocational Education Standard as well as on national curricula and school curricula.

In 2004 the State Examination and Qualification Centre initiated the preparation of national curricula for vocational education (supported by the state budget and EU Structural Funds). By early 2007 the Minister of Education and Research had approved the first 5 national vocational curricula. By mid-March of 2008 the Ministry approved 10 more national vocational curricula. The preparation is co-ordinated by the State Examination and Qualification Centre and the work is organised in working groups of vocational education experts. The new national curricula are based on professional standards which now have a new format as a result of an ESF project in 2005-2008. The qualifications according to the new format have to be output based, taking into account the learning outcomes and the actual competences of an applicant. Thus the new national curricula, which are based on the new qualifications, are also output based.

A VET school prepares a curriculum for each area of specialisation taught. The curriculum is a basic document for studies in a specific area of specialisation which takes into account the requirements of professional

standards and the relevant national curriculum. It also defines the list of elective courses with their volume and short descriptions as well as the possibility and conditions for choosing courses. The introduction of competence-based curricula has motivated providers to strengthen their contacts with employers and graduates as a way to gauge labour market skills needs.

Several e-learning opportunities enable employed people to participate in training and allow them to plan their career and their training needs more easily. E-learning provides VET schools with the possibilities to go international in their activities. New technologies and methods via e-learning improve learner motivation and give people with different learning styles the opportunity to choose the way they want to learn. E-learning allows teachers to do more practical work in the classroom and students can acquire the theoretical part online. In Estonia e-learning is coordinated by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre which administrates two consortia: Estonian e-University and Estonian e-VET. Estonian e-VET consortium consists of 27 VET schools and 7 applied higher education institutions. The objective of the consortium is to achieve a high quality and sustainable e-learning development and implementation system for e-VET schools and applied higher education institutions.

## 08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

### 0801 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING FORMAL LEARNING

#### INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Most IVET in Estonia takes place in a formal structure where study places are state commissioned. IVET is also provided by companies, in particular in professions in which worker demand is higher (e.g. welders, sewing machine operators, construction workers). The VET system provides education and training programmes for over 17-year-olds without basic education and vocational education at upper-secondary and post-secondary (non-tertiary) levels.

Studies are finished after completing the curriculum and the final examination of state vocational education. It is also possible to graduate by taking the voluntary professional examination organised by the Estonian Qualification Authority instead. In 2004, 10,5% of the graduates took the professional exam, in 2007, 25,6% opted out of the school graduation exam.

It is one of the objectives of the VET System Development Plan 2005-2008, that the final examinations of VET are integrated with professional qualification examinations by 2008, wherever possible. It is expected that 70% of VET graduates should pass the professional examinations.

According to the amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act from 2006, a student, having started the studies in one institution, can continue them in another institution, provided that there are vacancies in the same curriculum group. The student has to pass the exams that the curriculum of the other school did not have. (The regulation covers only those cases when unfinished studies are continued in another institution.)

An ESF project *VÕTA* (recognizing prior learning and work experience) (2005-June 2008) tackles the issue much wider, whereby all the knowledge and experience will be taken into account. As a result of this project, the principles of *VÕTA* have been incorporated into the Standard of Higher Education and the process has started to incorporate these principles into The Vocational Education Standard (VET Standard).

The VET Standard stipulates that providers must recognize the knowledge and skills acquired in lower secondary school if a student continues studies in the same specialisation. Thus, at present, prior learning and work experience is recognized in VET schools, but it happens case by case and depends on the applicants and evaluators.

There is cooperation between VET institutions and institutions of professional higher education regarding curriculum development in post-secondary studies. Thus, many institutions of professional higher education take into

account courses taken in a VET school in meeting the requirements of their curriculum.

Legal framework for validating formal learning:

- Professions Act (*Kutseseadus*, 2008) provides the basis for developing requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedure for their attestation and award. In 2007 preparations were being made to update the Professions Act. The existing 5-level qualification system was replaced by the 8-level system, making it correspond to the EQF. The new Professions Act was adopted in May 2008.
- Vocational Education Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*, 1998) regulates the provision of VET, foundation and operation of VET institutions; it also stipulates ways to continue unfinished studies in VET institutions.
- Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard*, 2006) stipulates the structure of VET, the requirements for national and school curricula and the procedure for graduation.
- Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993) regulates education and training provision for adults.
- Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutse kvalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus*, 2000) regulates the recognition to be employed in a regulated profession and taking into account European Union Directives.
- Regulation No. 120 of the Government (June 2005) regarding the conformity of Estonian qualifications and the qualifications of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics prior to August 1991 (*Vabariigi Valitsuse 6. juuni 2005 a. määrus nr 120 Eesti Vabariigi kvalifikatsioonide ja enne 20. augustit 1991. a antud endise NSV Liidu kvalifikatsioonide vastavus*).

The bodies related to certification of formal education:

- The Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) co-ordinates the implementation of education policy to direct and organise the preparation of curricula, study programmes, textbooks and teaching/study aids.
- The National Examination and Qualification Centre (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus - REKK*) is a state agency administered by the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main purpose is to implement national education and language policies. It also prepares and directs the development of national vocational education curricula. It verifies upon the registration of VET curricula that they are compliant with the professional standard of the relevant profession approved by the professional council.

- In 2001, the Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsevalifikatsiooni Sihtasutus*) was established to develop a professional qualifications system and establish prerequisites for achieving comparability of employee qualifications and their acknowledgement by other countries. The Authority is under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research. It organises activities of professional councils and is responsible for developing, supplementing and improving professional standards, and establishing evaluation criteria. It also manages the state register of professions. All vocational qualifications should meet standard quality criteria in their design and operation and be clearly located in the framework for professional standards.
- The Professional councils (*Kutsenõukogu*) are joint bodies of confederations of employers/employees, professional and vocational associations in various professions and authorised representatives of state. Any Council's objective is to implement systems of professional qualifications. It appoints experts who map the main vocations within a profession; develop the professional standard, grades of qualification as well as the scheme for awarding professional qualifications.

To recognise professional qualifications, all graduates are treated on an equal basis with any other person who has applied for accreditation, i.e. for assessment of professional qualifications through professional qualification examinations. To promote professional qualification, the costs of examinations are paid by the graduates' school from the funds allocated for study purposes.

## CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The basis of adult education is the Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993). Pursuant to the Private Education Institution Act (*Erakooliseadus*, 1998), if adult education institutions provide training which exceeds 120 hours in a year, they must apply for an education licence from the Ministry of Education and Research. Institutions providing professional training are required to hold an education licence in order to organise labour market training that is funded by the state. However, a number of institutions do not have a licence and provide professional training and hobby education which is not recognised as formal education (although certificates may be accepted by awarding bodies).

### 0802 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING

The recognition of prior learning and work experience (*varasema õppe- ja töökogemuse arvestamine - VÕTA*) found its way to the Higher Education Standard in September 2007. Amendments are being prepared for the VET Standard to regulate the implementation of accreditation of prior learning and work experience (VÕTA).

The Vocational Education Standard now stipulates that VET providers must recognise the knowledge and skills acquired in lower secondary school if a student continues studies in the same specialisation. VET institutions have also laid down this procedure in their statutes.

## ATTESTATION AND AWARDING OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

According to the Professions Act (*Kutseadus*), awarding of professional qualifications is a process by which a person displays the level of his or her professional competence. Attestation methods are a written or oral examination, test assignment, attestation on the basis of documents or a combination of methods. They are set by the awarding body.

Generally, for lower level professions (level I and II), the qualification attestation does not demand a formal education certificate as a prerequisite. The awarding body should validate and recognise the results of non-formal education. Standards in higher levels (IV-V) demand a higher education diploma. In a re-attestation process, the awarding body takes into account the results of non-formal education certificate or higher education diploma.

In 2006-2008, the number of institutions which have been given the right to award qualifications has risen considerably and thus, also the number of professions and qualifications, acquired through non-formal and informal learning has risen considerably, as well.

At the same time the principles of non-formal and informal learning and quality assurance principles are being worked out in a partnership project between public universities, institutions of professional higher education and Estonian Qualification Authority. The project is co-financed by the EU structural funds.

## EUROPASS NATIONAL CENTRE

The Europass centre was founded in Estonia in 2005, under the umbrella of the Estonian Qualification Authority. The use of the Europass document package has been introduced via the media but also widely in enterprises and educational institutions. Through professional councils, coordinated by the Estonian Qualification Authority, Europass and its adoption have been introduced to a large circle of employers' and employees' organizations. In the Europass web portal it is possible to fill in the CV and language pass in Estonian; it is being used very actively. Study visit (mobility) certificates are also actively issued by the Europass centre. Another task of the Europass centre is compiling certificate supplements and translating them into English.

## 0803 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

EU policies for raising the level of vocational skills and knowledge and recognition of qualifications have been guiding the Estonian national education policy. The principles of the Helsinki communiqué were incorporated into the new Professions act, adopted in May 2008, when the

existing 5-level competence-based professional qualification system was replaced with the 8-level framework described in the European Qualification Framework which unites both general and vocational qualifications.

Estonia has a similarly positive attitude towards the European credit system for VET. Several activities are in progress (structuring new national curricula according to the descriptions of competences, preparation of the conception for partial qualifications, implementation of the system for recognising former learning and work experience (VÕTA).

#### **0804 - FACILITATING EU MOBILITY**

The Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutsekvalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus*, 2000) regulates the recognition to be employed in a regulated profession, taking into account European Union Directives.

The Ministry of Education and Research founded the Estonian Euroguidance Centre in 1998 to support practitioners in promoting mobility and the European dimension within education and training. Since then, the activities of the Centre have expanded to include the development of the national guidance system in general.

Students who have passed their theoretical studies often go abroad for practical training in the framework of different European projects and networks (e.g. Leonardo, Cedefop's Study Visits). This enables them to acquire practical work-experience and skills in a different environment. VET institutions also co-operate through international networks created in the course of international projects. This type of co-operation enables them to make their curricula more orientated on the learning outcome and gives teaching staff the possibility to acquire new pedagogical methods and skills.

## 09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

### 0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Guidance in Estonia is publicly provided in the education and labour market structures. The provision in the education sector is complex and divided across many institutions. While private career services exist, they tend to provide a different type of service.

The agreement regarding career and guidance services in Estonia was signed between two ministries – the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research, on March 12, 2008. Until then, the provision of career services had been very fragmented. From now on, the development of career services will take place in close cooperation with the two ministries, who have seen the need for the integrated model.

#### GUIDANCE IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Guidance is provided within formal education and as part of youth work (extra-curricular activities). Pursuant to the Youth Work Act (*Noorsootöö seadus*) the organisation of information and guidance services is the responsibility of the county governor, who signs a contract with a provider every year. In each county, there is at least one centre, which provides young people with information on educational options and guidance in general. The centers provide on-the-spot information and guidance services and visit schools; they also support teachers in giving good quality guidance services, as well as organise regular thematic trainings, seminars, lectures and tests for evaluating characteristics and abilities. Services are targeted at students in general education/VET schools. They also cooperate with teachers, parents and companies.

Within general education, guidance is usually provided as a compulsory cross-curricular theme. In addition, career issues are dealt with by classroom teachers and/or as elective courses. Career-related issues are also discussed in student evaluations, during aptitude and professional suitability evaluations and discussions with students with learning difficulties. The schools organise information sessions and visits to fairs, seminars and lectures, include experts from outside the school or, in case of sufficient financial resources, create a post for in-school specialist (part-time career coordinators work in about 30% of the schools).

The Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2005-2008 includes the following measure to create and implement a coherent guidance system: to provide career counselling to 7th to 9th year and 11th to 12th year students; and to introduce vocational and labour market options. Despite the fact that there are many counsellors already in general schools, their work is often biased and targeted at keeping the students in their own secondary school and later, directing them to universities, rather

than offering a comprehensive career model, which would enable the student to make informed choices by taking into account his/her interests and capabilities. The VET system is looking forward to the development of a coherent and comprehensive career guidance system in general schools that would enable the students to find their true calling.

At tertiary level, eight Estonian higher education institutions have established career centres on their own initiative and without any central regulation. Services are provided for current students, employers and alumni. In addition to career consultation these centres often act like a bridge between employers and students, by organising relevant lectures and seminars, company presentations, by providing job and in-service training mediation, and by giving the target groups an opportunity to join relevant databases. The main aim of the university career services is to develop students' job seeking skills, support them in finding employment, and research their career destinations after graduation.

The main aims of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008 regarding guidance services are to create a common information system for adults on their education and training options; and to provide career services. The Ministry of Education and Research also supports the Foundation *Innove* National Resource Centre for Guidance (*Karjäärinõustamise Teabekeskus – Innove*) to support guidance practitioners in promoting mobility and the European dimension within education and training and to develop a national guidance system. Since 2005, it has been working on a project co-funded from the Ministry and Structural Funds to improve the quality of guidance services. This project will run until June 2008. The Resource centre is also a member of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and ELP Euroguidance Network.

## **GUIDANCE IN THE LABOUR MARKET SECTOR**

The network of career counsellors is co-ordinated by the Estonian Labour Market Board (*Tööturuamet*) (ELMB) that is also responsible for the provision of training. In addition, there is a network of 8 EURES counsellors who are engaged in job mediation to EFTA countries. With the constantly increasing number of people wishing to work abroad, the need for and proportion of career counselling is likely to increase.

In January 2006, the Employment Services and Benefits Act (*Tööturuteenuste ja -toetuste seadus*) came into force. Its aims are to achieve a high employment rate and to prevent long-term unemployment and social exclusion by providing career services and employment support. Vocational counselling is provided by 22 career counsellors working in 16 Labour Market Board departments across Estonia. Depending on client needs, a career counsellor will: help assess individual educational and job related aspirations; map their existing qualifications; assess professional suitability; inform about the labour market situation and different training possibilities; advise on how to make well-informed decisions concerning employment and training; and/or provide instructions on job seeking. Pursuant to the new legislation, career

counsellors also offer other employment services (13 total), including information on the labour market situation, employment services and support, employment mediation, employment training, professional traineeship, possibilities for working in public sector, etc. Among career counsellors there are four people focusing particularly on counselling people with special needs.

### **PRIVATE GUIDANCE PROVISION**

The main focus of guidance in the private sector tends to be on job mediation and personnel recruitment (both face to face as well as over the Internet). Links with the public sector are rather rare. Within companies, human resource managers sometimes address staff career management issues but it is not happening on the regular basis.

Private enterprises are involved in guidance activities for young people mainly through participation in “work-shadow” days, career days and related events, company presentations and as in-company training venues.

### **0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY**

The main target groups of regional youth information and counselling centres are young people aged 7–26 who are living, studying and working in each county. Parents and teachers can also access the centres for advice. The majority of services are free of charge, and are provided in the form of both individual and group counselling, often accompanied by computer-based activities. The latter include information retrieval on learning and working opportunities from the Internet, and in some cases, the completing of various personality and ability tests.

Low participation, achievement and high drop-out rates of students in vocational education, suggest a strong need for targeted guidance. Due to the lack of human resources, the co-operation of practitioners from regional youth information and counselling centres with VET institutions has so far been occasional and limited to in-group personality testing. In the few VET institutions where the career practitioner is permanently employed, he/she provides the students with information on the world of work, helps them to develop their job seeking skills, and supports the search for employment. However, these examples are rare and VET students have virtually no career guidance services targeted at them.

Career counsellors working at Labour Market Board generally provide their services to registered unemployed people or those who have received a redundancy notice, i.e. official job seekers. Recently, the services have been extended to working adults contemplating career change. These services are free of charge. Young people aged 16–24 are considered a particular risk group, along with mothers who have small children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Vocational counselling is carried out both in the form of individual interviews as well as in group sessions.

As counsellors have a strong background in psychology, they tend to use a selection of elements from a range of different counselling and therapy approaches. Main methods include solution oriented therapy, humanistic and behaviouristic approaches.

### **0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL**

Career counsellors have a university degree, preferably in psychology, pedagogy or social work. There are 3 professional standards for career practitioners: career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools (including VET institutions and higher education institutions). All three were adopted by the Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekvalifikatsiooni Sihtasutus*) in December 2005. The standard for career counsellors was up-dated on the basis of a previous 2001 standard; the other two standards were new.

### **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE GUIDANCE PERSONNEL IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

In December 2005, a professional standard for guidance practitioners (career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools) was approved and in May 2006 the Career Counsellors Association organised the first professional qualification examination for career counsellors. The professional standards regulate the required level of education and specialisation which provide the right to work in their field after having passed a professional training course. Specialists who have worked for 3-5 years have the right to acquire a professional qualification. At present, 20 career counsellors have a formal qualification.

Currently, Estonian universities do not provide specific higher education courses in the field of career services. However, the knowledge and skills necessary for working in the field of guidance may be obtained by taking an elective subject at three universities. These subjects include career counselling and coordination (3 ECTS), a career guidance module within human resource management studies.

Between November 2005 and June 2006 three Estonian public universities were piloting the first joint course (9 ECTS) training programme within the framework of the EU Structural Funds career services project. It was followed by three separate specialisation courses (3 ECTS) for career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools.

Foundation *Innove* National Resource Centre for Guidance organises information and training seminars aimed at both education and labour sector counsellors. They serve as a meeting point to enhance co-operation and information flow between the two. Topics have included enhancement of practitioners' information retrieval skills, trends in economy and employment, solution oriented counselling, crises psychology etc.

To exchange knowledge on the provision and development of career services the Estonian NRCG organises international study visits in co-operation with

colleagues from the Euroguidance network. This enables practitioners to get acquainted with career services in other European countries.

### **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE GUIDANCE PERSONNEL IN THE LABOUR MARKET SECTOR**

Within the labour sector, vocational counsellors have a university degree, preferably in psychology, pedagogy or social work. The Estonian Labour Market Board (ELMB) has developed a short pre-service training course for all new counsellors. Likewise, the ELMB organises regular further training sessions for all practising counsellors to enhance their professional skills. Three times a year they are invited to participate in information days where new materials and methods are being introduced, and where practitioners can discuss administrative questions and exchange experience.

## 10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

### 1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

As to education and research, the goal of the Governing Coalition is 'to introduce a policy which would ensure the availability of competitive education for the people of Estonia, providing them with equal opportunities and also ensure the development of research in Estonia and, through this, the skills and knowledge for successful management in the environment of globalisation'. (Programme of the coalition 2007-2011). In the measures proposed, the greatest attention is paid on increasing teachers' salaries and supporting academic research. This underscores the importance that has traditionally been attributed to academic learning. We can also say that VET does not enjoy similar attention in the programme of the coalition. However, many positive developments have come to pass in recent years.

The majority of VET institutions (32) belong to the state and are run by the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER). 3 out of 47 VET institutions are run by municipalities (Tartu VET Centre being the biggest even among all VET schools), and 12 are private institutions. The implementation of the Reorganization Plan for State-owned VET institutions for 2005-2008 (*Riigikutseõppeasutuste võrgu ümberkorralduste kava aastateks 2005-2008*) has reduced the number of VET institutions by merging and pooling their resources from 58 state owned VET schools in 2002 to 32 in 2007.

The financing of state and municipal VET institutions happens via state funded study places, where the state orders a specific number of students to be educated in a particular curriculum group. In some cases, the scheme is also applied to the private schools. For the rest of their revenue, private schools depend on tuition fees. Public VET schools can also offer courses where they charge tuition directly from the customer. State funded study places cover study materials, teachers' salaries with taxes and management costs. The scheme does not cover investment needs of the institutions for which 10 schools received EEK 670 million (EUR 42,82 million) from EU Structural Funds (ERDF) and the state in 2005-2007 to renovate their facilities. The rest of the institutions will be renovated in 2007-2013 with ERDF funds.

In 2007 for the first time, the MoER applied the state funded study places for short term CVET to facilitate retraining and further training. The funds were allocated from the ESF. In 2007-2013, EEK 137 million (EUR 8.76 million ) will be spent on CVET courses for adults and EEK 60 million (EUR 3.83 million) on non-formal education from ESF funds.

Enterprises are interested in providing CVET for their employees, though it brings an additional tax burden, as training besides formal training is considered fringe benefit and taxed as if it was additional salary.

The Ministry of Social Affairs funds training for the unemployed by providing courses which are free of charge for the participants. In courses which are 180 hours or longer, the participant also receives a stipend.

## **1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

IVET funding is regulated by the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*), which provides that VET institutions are financed from the state, municipality or city budgets, fee-charging services, revenue from foundations, and other funds. Budgets are delegated to VET institutions.

Students attend public VET institutions which may be owned and funded by the state or municipality. In both cases, costs are covered from the state budget from relevant ministry funds on the basis of student cost and the number of financed study places at the institution.

In 2006-2007, the planning of the system of state funded study places was renewed. Ensuring quality the changes in labour market are taken into account, as well as the premise that all young people should have their study opportunities based on their capabilities and needs, in areas that interest them.

The starting point in planning study places is the social need or the number of students needing vocational training and their preferences.

The second criterion in developing the funding scheme is the economic need or in other words, the demand for labour in the economy and other sectors of the society.

In a complex prognosis prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, which has been approved by very many social partners and different institutions, the study places are distributed between vocational institutions taking into account the regional labour needs. To calculate study costs, the student costs are multiplied by the factor given to a field of study, form of study. In the scheme, study places for students with special needs are brought out separately, as is prison training carried out by VET institutions.

The study places are allotted by curriculum groups, based on the ISCED 97 classifier. At the same time, the schools have the power to decide which types of training or curricula (professions) within the parameters of curricula groups to offer, or change study forms or times of study; so as to respond quickly to the changing labour market needs of the region.

The VET institution is responsible for filling the study places during the whole calendar year. It means that if a student drops out, the school has a responsibility to admit new students on the places that remained vacant (they can have admissions all through the year) or bring at least 85% of students to successful completion.

The base cost of a study place has risen every year since 2002. The last increase was from 1150 EUR (18,000 EEK) in 2007 to 1350 EUR (21,150

EEK) in 2008. The weight of VET in the public sector spending on education was 12% in 2007. The goal is to bring the average rate of study place between VET and general education to 1.5 (the rate at the moment is 1.38). Out of the EUR 1150 (base cost in 2007) teacher salaries and social taxation amounted to EUR 757 and study materials to EUR 64. The student cost also covers management costs, and wages and social tax costs of non-pedagogical staff of EUR 330.

## PRIVATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Financing for private VET institutions is regulated pursuant to the Private Schools Act (*Erakooliseadus*, 1998). The state can order a certain number of study places for certain curriculum groups from private VET schools. In addition, the institution can receive its revenue from tuition fees which are determined by the owner and are fixed for an academic year. The tuition fee may be increased by up to 10% between two academic years unless otherwise provided for by the contract between the private institution and the student. Private VET institutions may receive subsidies for specific purposes from the state or municipal budget.

## 1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

### PUBLICLY PROVIDED VET

Some types of continuing training, for example, post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education by distance learning – (800 to 900 student places a year); are covered along the same guidelines as IVET, funded by the state through state commissioned study places.

The Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993) provides for the funding of adult education from the state budget, requiring the Ministry of Education and Research to allocate funds from their budget to implement the national priorities.

In 2007, the MoER applied the state funded study places scheme, prevalent in IVET for the first time to train working adult learners in all counties of Estonia (in line with the Policies for Arranging Professional Training for Working Adults in VET Institutions - the decree No. 66 of the Minister of Education and Research, 29th of October 2007). It is a measure designed to respond to the changes on the labour market and tackle the falling demographics and the otherwise decreasing number of students by bringing adult learners (back) to study. In 2007 a pilot project with the means from ESF was launched by which a free of charge work related continuing education opportunity was created also for the working adult population. The training is offered by vocational institutions and institutions of professional higher education. Thanks to the new initiative the number of participants in adult professional training has increased by 6,284 people in 2007, half of whom are studying within the state funded scheme. In autumn 2007 the MoER launched

an additional request for professional training within an ESF project. In 2007/08 ca EUR 1.4 million worth of training is offered to adults. Compared to 2006, thanks to the ESF project, the number of participants in continuing education in VET institutions has increased by 31%.

Table 1. Total cost of CVT courses as % of total labour cost (all enterprises) (2005 vs. 1999)								
	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999
<b>EU27</b>	1.6	:	1.1	:	1.4	:	1.9	:
<b>EU25</b>	1.6	2.3	1.1	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.9	2.5
<b>EE</b>	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.3	1.6	1.6

Source: Eurostat; 2nd and 3rd continuing vocational training survey in enterprises (CVTS2 and CVTS 3)

In Estonia, the labour costs are lower than in most EU countries and CVT courses are relatively high in price, compared to the total labour cost.

### ENTERPRISE - BASED CVET

Apprenticeship programme is a work-linked training programme in Estonian VET system, where the enterprises can train students according to their needs. Apprenticeship programs are part of the curriculum of a VET school, yet 2/3 of the study takes place in an enterprise and is co-funded by the enterprise.

There is no legislation or collective agreement to facilitate CVET. In general, if non-formal education is funded by an employer, it is treated as a fringe benefit and additional taxes need to be paid by the employer. Pursuant to the Value Added Tax Act (*Käibemaksuseadus*, 2003), enterprises are exempt from such taxes if they pay for formal education: pre-school, lower and upper secondary education, and higher education as well as private tuition related to general education and other training, except for training provided by a company or sole proprietor.

However, the additional taxes do not stop the companies offering training. In 2005, 67% of enterprises offered CVET courses to their employees. (See 0504 for more information.)

### 1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Vocational training for unemployed people is funded by the Estonian Labour Market Board under the Ministry of Social Affairs (Sotsiaalministeerium). The

Board allocates funds to employment offices to purchase and organise employment training (usually from VET institutions or other licensed bodies). For large education commissions, employment offices arrange public procurement.

Stipends are granted to unemployed persons if they attend a course of at least 80 hours. The employment office keeps records of all stipends.

Table 1. Social protection for the unemployed					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED JOB SEEKERS IN A YEAR</b>	99 048	88 535	71 735	48 167	40 247
<b>EMPLOYED WITH LABOUR MARKET SUPPORT AND BENEFITS</b>					
<b>RECIPIENTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS IN A YEAR</b>	47 454	39 338	31 347	20 086	17 769
<b>EXPENDITURES ON LABOUR MARKET SERVICES AND SUPPORT, THOUSAND KROONS</b>					
<b>UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS DISBURSED</b>	81 154	55 040	42 522	24 711	52 281
<b>EXPENDITURE ON THE TRAINING OF THE UNEMPLOYED</b>	46 511	41 600	62 730	70 996	40 844
<b>GRANTS TO UNEMPLOYED PERSONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TRAINING</b>	7 225	5 372	10 241	9 777	4 535
<b>EMPLOYMENT SUBSIDY DISBURSED TO START A BUSINESS</b>	6 421	5 846	8 916	6 500	2 700
<b>SUBSIDY PAYMENT TO EMPLOYER</b>	3 767	7 173	14 227	7 500	1 681
<b>SOCIAL TAX FOR THE UNEMPLOYED</b>	16 203	9 541	10 199	14 099	31 325
<b>EXPENDITURE ON WORK PRACTICE</b>	-	-	-	1 878	5 477
<b>EXPENDITURE ON COACHING FOR WORKING LIFE</b>	-	-	-	2 425	9 853

Source: Labour Market Board (1 EEK = 0.06 EUR)

Active employment measures tailored to the needs of unemployed people and employers have been developed: long-term training courses are available for skills where there is high demand. Unemployed people can also participate in entrepreneurship training.

## **1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES**

The policy priorities in funding VET are determined by the use of EU structural funds in 2007-2013. Under Priority 1 of the European Social Fund (Lifelong Learning) there are many measures and programmes, designed to develop VET. Measure 1.1.1 is focused on the Development of the Qualification System and the programme underneath is called the 'Development of

professional qualifications system' with the budget of EEK 52 million (1 EUR = 15,6466 EEK). This programme is implemented by the Qualifications Authority.

Measure 1.1.3 'The development of career counselling and services' has two programmes 'Development of guidance system' (EEK 29.8 million) and 'Development of Study counselling' (29.8m EEK), implemented by Foundation *Innove* NRCG.

Measure 1.1.5 'Modernizing the content of VET and quality assurance' comprises 3 programmes: 'Development of the content of VET' (EEK164.7 million) (Implemented by NEQC), 'Development of E-learning in VET' (EEK 35.3 million ), implemented by Estonian Information Technology Foundation and 'VET Promotion Programme' (EEK 26 million), implemented by Foundation *Innove*.

Measure 1.1.6 'Development of Adult Education' has three programmes also: 'CVET for adults and development activities' (136.9m EEK), implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research; 'Adult education Promotion Programme' (EEK 20.6 million), implemented by Association of Estonian Adult Educators *Andras* and 'Training adults in non-formal popular adult education courses' (EEK 60 million), implemented by Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association.

Measure 1.1.7 tackles reducing dropout rates, increasing access to education and enhancing the quality of study in education in general. Two programmes are related to VET in this category: 'The development of study environment for students with special needs' (EEK 25 million), and 'Enhancing the quality through the development of internal evaluation of the schools and external evaluation of study results by means of developing legal framework' (EEK 26,5 million), both implemented by NQEC.

In 2007-2013 EEK 3.68 Billion will be allocated from the European Regional Development Fund to renovate 90% of the study places in VET institutions.

In the 2007-2013 programming period, at least 15% of the resources have to be supplied by the government. The amount of foreign aid is thereby 85%. In longer term, it will not be enough to rely on foreign aid and a much higher contribution of state resources will be needed.

## 11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

### 1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

The general objectives and priorities of the government in relation to the EU are set out in the document *The European Union Policy of the Government in 2007–2011 (Valitsuse Euroopa Liidu poliitika 2007-2011)*. Estonia supports the main objectives of the EU education policy: to create conditions for creating a knowledge-based economy and to develop human capital for supporting a competitive labour force. To achieve those objectives, Estonia supports the creation of a common EU educational space. More specifically, the following activities are valued:

- focusing on the content and quality of education to allow people to acquire a versatile and competitive education that acknowledges different cultures and is based on the modern technological developments;
- development of the European Qualification Framework to promote lifelong learning principles and support the educational and professional mobility of the population. Also to raise the quality and attractiveness of VET and to use ECVET ensuring the recognition and transfer of qualifications as well as increasing the number of participants in adult education;
- development of the European area of higher education which would widen the study leave system. It would contribute to raising the competitiveness of European higher education as a 'brand';
- preserving minority languages and promoting (foreign) language studies and supporting the preparation of the European language competence indicator;
- promoting the participation of young people in different political spheres and the promotion of national and local authorities in creating and implementing such policies;
- contribute to the development of the European research area.

EU legislation and policy strategies such as the Lisbon Strategy, the Copenhagen Declaration, The Bologna Declaration, the Education and Training 2010 programme, the Communication on Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality and the Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning are all taken into account when developing national policy.

Estonia also cooperates with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) allowing a comparison of national educational policy with those of other countries. In 2006 Estonia took part in the PISA comparative study on education.

The Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008 focuses, among other issues, on two aspects of promoting lifelong learning: a student should attain the appropriate attitude and skills in the VET system for further studies; and, VET institutions network should play a bigger role in adult education. The infrastructure of VET institutions has been changed through investments from the state budget and the EU structural funds to enable institutions to merge and to provide up-to-date skills that are in line with the needs of employers. The same infrastructure will also be used for adult education and training.

Given the decreasing number of young students, VET institutions will have more resources available for adults in the future years. Teachers and trainers will also receive teaching experience for teaching adults. Curricula development, teacher training and other content issues will be partly financed from the ESF. According to the action plan, the national qualification system should enable workers' mobility both in the national and international labour markets. The VET system should also encourage more adults to participate through developing non-formal and informal education and their validation. Career guidance for adults will also be developed as will an appropriate qualifications structure.

The focus on increasing training opportunities for adults is also the main objective of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005 – 2008.,. The strategy includes an increase in the share of education and training participants aged 25 to 64 to 10% by 2008. The Lisbon Strategy aims for 12.5% by 2010. Also included is the development of a funding model for adult education using the tax system to encourage enterprises to invest in employee training and to cooperate with the EU in the fields of education, training and youth work and the related programmes: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth in Action.

There is a cooperation project going on with the Democratic Republic of Georgia, which unites 5 Georgian and 4 Estonian VET institutions, and the Ministries of Education of both countries are also involved together with organizations under the jurisdiction of the Ministries. The project (2007-2009) aims to help develop Georgian VET teachers and curricula, VET leaders and leadership, as well as the Georgian VET system on the ministerial level.

## **1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Since joining the EU on 1 May 2004, Estonia's education system is becoming more similar to other European systems. There is more intensive co-operation with member and neighbouring states in the framework of EU co-operation programmes. A significant part of Structural Fund resources support the adaptation of education and of people to the needs of labour market. Both VET institutions and higher education institutions are planning to invite teachers and researchers from foreign states and will improve the study conditions, update their study programmes and provide curricula with instruction in foreign languages, etc. Competition with other European educational and research institutions improves national organisations.

The common EU educational space contributes to co-operation between states as well as to improved language studies and free movement of learners and workers. In principle, students from other countries can access the Estonian VET system (although in practice, there is a great language obstacle). Formal education courses (ISCED 3B) are taught in Estonian and Russian although exceptions can be made for short courses. ICT supported learning is possible for some parts of courses, though vocational studies are considered to be too practical for distance learning for the whole course.

Many initiatives for international co-operation at VET institutions originate from grass-roots, the VET institutions themselves. Almost all work together with VET institutions of same specialisation of other countries/regions. Most cooperation is done with neighbouring countries and is mostly about teacher and student exchange. Those contacts have often been initiated during different EU education and cross-border co-operation programmes projects. There are also examples of curricula development projects with VET institutions abroad through different EU programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> RT= *Riigi teataja*= State Gazette