

# Estonia

## VET in Europe - Country Report

2009

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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 context - framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Legislative and 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. Matching VET provision with labour market needs
8. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
9. Financing - investment in human resources
10. National VET statistics - allocation of programmes

This overview has been prepared in 2009 and its reference year is 2008. Similar overviews of previous years can be viewed at:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information\\_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/)

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

**Keywords:**

vocational education and training (VET) systems; initial vocational training; continuing vocational training; lifelong learning; VET policy development; financial crisis and VET policies; VET legislative and institutional frameworks; validation of non-formal and informal education; teachers and trainers; anticipation of skill needs; vocational guidance and counselling; VET financing mechanisms; allocation of national VET programmes; national and international qualification systems.

**Geographic term:**

Estonia

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## 1. GENERAL CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

### 1.1 POLITICAL AND SOCIO-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 now consists of 2 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. Also, at the time of the present crisis the priorities are re-examined and the support promised to teachers' salaries and academic research, is no longer available.

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 2008, 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. That has contributed to the situation where over 45% of Estonians have no skills, they have mostly upper secondary general

education and some years of higher education without any finished degree. However, in recent years the image of industry and production has improved as has the image of skilled labour.

## 1.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The area of Estonia is 45,227 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 1,340,415 in 2009. In 2009 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.

TABLE 1. TOTAL POPULATION					
		2002	2005	2007	2009
EU (27 COUNTRIES)	(b)	491023535	495090294		499673325(s)
EU (25 COUNTRIES)	(b)	461603958	465845885		470574546(s)
ESTONIA		1361242	1347510	1342409	1340415

Source of Data: Eurostat, 2009; Statistics Estonia, 2009;

b = Break in series; s = Eurostat estimate

TABLE 2: AGE-SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS FOR 2003, BASELINE SCENARIO UNTIL 2025 ('000)						
	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
TOTAL	1 356	1 314	1 252	1 190	1 077	1 062

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.

TABLE 3 - PROJECTED OLD-AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO %											
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	2060
EU (27)	25,9	28,26	31,05	34,23	38,04	42,07	45,36	48	50,42	52,45	53,47
ESTONIA	25,01	26,7	29,18	31,88	34,42	36,11	38,96	42,17	47,19	53,68	55,55

Source: Eurostat; Date of data extraction: 10/03/2009

**Note:** This indicator is defined as the projected number of persons aged 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the projected number of persons aged between 15 and 64. If we take the EU 27 countries, we will see that in 2010 the proportion will be 1 to 4, meaning 1 retired against four employed/active population; whereas in 2060, the proportion will be 2 to 2, meaning 2 retired against 2 employed/active population.

The government has an attractive bonus package for new mothers to encourage new births and counteract the impact of the ageing society. The Parental Benefit provides parents with their average salary from the preceding calendar year for the time that they temporarily take off work to care for their children. Any parent, adoptive parent, step-parent, guardian or foster parent who is raising a child and who is a permanent resident of Estonia or a foreigner living in Estonia on the basis of a temporary residence permit has the right to the parental benefit. The right to receive the parental benefit ends after 575 days have passed from the first day of pregnancy leave and maternity leave (18 months). Also, as one of its measures promoting the national birth rate, the state partially annuls the study loans of graduates of vocational and higher education institutions who are raising small children.

TABLE 4. VET SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS BY INDICATOR AND YEAR							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	79	71	68	57	48	47	45
STUDENTS TOTAL	28 095	28 183	29 915	29 013	28 651	27 381	27 239
STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COURSES AFTER BASIC EDUCATION	16 388	17 132	18 886	18 884	19 004	18 454	18 153
STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COURSES AFTER SECONDARY EDUCATION	11 552	10 787	10 762	10 101	9 478	8 620	8672

Source: EHIS, November 2008

In the past 5 years the number of students in VET decreased by 9% in total. The greatest slump has been in postsecondary IVET where the decrease has been almost 20%. Young people prefer to continue their studies at the level of higher education as the opportunities have widened. There are however some signs that this falling trend might be reversed. 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. These students are older than the usual IVET students who come from the upper secondary school.

30% of students go to IVET after the basic school. The falling trend in admissions will continue only unless this ratio is maintained. There are some signs, however, that this ratio is growing and more students opt for a VET institution after the basic school.

Another measure to counteract the falling number of students 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. The objective of these actions was 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.



### 1.3 ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

		2002			2005			2007		
		15_24	25_49	50_64	15_24	25_49	50_64	15_24	25_49	50_64
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	TOTAL	36.7(i)	77.3(i)	50.2(i)	36,1	78,1	53,3	37,4	80	55,6
	ISCED0_2	25.7(i)	65.9(i)	40.5(i)	24,7	66,2	42,5	25,3	67,5	44,2
	ISCED3_4	47.8(i)	79.1(i)	54.3(i)	47,1	79,4	56,8	48,9	81,4	59,2
	ISCED5_6	61.7(i)	88.2(i)	71.8(i)	60,5	88	73,6	62	89	74,9
	NO ANSWER	15.3(i)	73.4(i)	37.9(i)	4,6	73,7	5	5,1	74,6	6,6
ESTONIA	TOTAL	25,4	78,5	58,7	29,1	80	64,1	34,5	84,9	69,3
	ISCED0_2	8.8 (u)	60,6	38,5	11.9(u)	59,7	40,4	16,4	65,7	45.2(u)
	ISCED3_4	41,1	77,5	61	43,8	79,1	62,2	51	84,7	69
	ISCED5_6	78.9(u)	85,4	69,5	75.2(u)	86,4	80,2	77.5(u)	90,2	81

Source Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17 Mar 09;

u: Unreliable or uncertain data; i: See explanatory text

Note: Isced 0\_2; 3\_4; 5\_6 refer to the ISCED levels of education;

15\_24; 25\_49; 50\_64 refer to the age groupings

In 2007 the labour market indicators were at their highest. 655,300 persons were employed (62.6% of the people aged 15-74). The starting economic recession had not affected employment and unemployment yet. The rapid economic growth of the last years, which entailed a growing demand for labour force, brought a record number of people to employment in 2007 and in the beginning of 2008. Both the employment and unemployment indicators were comparable with the levels prevailing in the beginning of the 1990s.

The unemployment rate between 1997 and 2008 (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.

The second half of 2008 saw a rapid increase in unemployment thanks to the economic crisis. The rate of unemployment rose to 11,4% in the first quarter of 2009.

	2002	2005	2007	2008
TOTAL	10,8	8,3	4,9	5,7
MEN	11	9,1	5,5	5,9
WOMEN	10,6	7,6	4,2	5,5
YOUNG PEOPLE (< 25)	17,6	15,9	10	12

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

TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, AGE 15+, MALE AND FEMALE, NACE REV. 1.1 - (1000) - 2008 Q2						
COUNTRIES	PRIMARY SECTOR AND UTILITIES	MANUFACTURING	CONSTRUCTION	DISTRIBUTION AND TRANSPORT	BUSINESS AND OTHER SERVICES	NON MARKETED SERVICES
EU27	5,20%	15,50%	7,30%	22,20%	17,10%	21,20%
EE	6,30%	23,00%	12,90%	25,60%	12,90%	19,10%

Source: Eurostat, Extracted on 12.03. 2009

Employment increased in the agriculture sector (4.7 % of total employment in 2007) in the manufacturing sector, it decreased by 12,7% (35.3% of total employment in 2007). The present crisis has rendered these figures meaningless. The drop has been the highest in the construction sector.

TABLE 4: EXPENDITURE (% OF GDP) ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING						
	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
EXPENDITURE (% OF GDP) ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING	5.41	5.48	5.50	5.26	5.07	4.63

Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, analysis department

TABLE 5. EXPENDITURE (MILLION KROONS, EEK) ON VET								
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
EXPENDITURE (MILLION KROONS) ON VET	494	493	526	552	590	673	959	1 172
CHANGE IN FUNDING (COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR %)	4,3	-0,1	6,6	4,9	7,0	14,0	42,5	22,3
PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURE IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER TYPES OF EDUCATION %	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; (1EUR = 15.6466 EEK).

Public spending on VET increased from 2001 to 2007. Whereas until 2003 the growth was no more than 7% per year, it increased in 2004 to 14% per year, 42% in 2005, 22% in 2006 and 21% in 2007, reaching 1,425 billion kroons. 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 2008 public spending on VET decreased to 5.4%.

**TABLE 6 - TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON SECONDARY EDUCATION, BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION, 2005**

	ISC 234			ISC 234_GEN			ISC 234_PVOC		
	IN MILLION EUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE	IN MILLION EUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE	IN MILLION EUR PPS	AS % OF GDP	AS % OF TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE
EU25	247426.0	2.3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
EE	441.3	2.3	6.9	345.3	1.8	5.4	96.0	0.5	1.5

Source: Eurostat;

ISC 234: secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels of education

ISC 234\_GEN: general orientation programmes at secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level of education

ISC 234\_PVOC: pre-vocational and vocational orientation programmes at secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level of education

#### 1.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

In comparison with 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.

**TABLE 1: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE POPULATION AGED 25-64 BY ISCED LEVEL % (2007)**

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

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

**TABLE 2: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS: PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION AGED 18-24 WITH AT MOST LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION AND NOT IN FURTHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING (PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION)**

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

Source: Eurostat, EU Labor 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.

COUNTRY	SEX	2004			2006		
		ISCED3VPV	ISCED4VPV	ISCED5_6	ISCED3VPV	ISCED4VPV	ISCED5_6
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	T	2366669(s)	421341(s)	3595504(s)	2853434(s)	428945(s)	3846498(s)
	M	1263141(s)	195713(s)	1482590(s)	1545275(s)	199261(s)	1573072(s)
	F	1103528(s)	225628(s)	2112914(s)	1308159(s)	229685(s)	2273425(s)
ESTONIA	T	3274	3775	10235	3712	3483	11546
	M	2294	1386	2907	2446	1188	3306
	F	980	2389	7328	1266	2295	8240

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 9 Mar 09 T - total; m- males; f - females Vpv - vocational and pre-vocational

	2002			2005			2007		
	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	76.7	79.3	74	77.5	80.2	74.9	78.1	80.8	75.5
ESTONIA	81.4	85.8	77.1	82.6	87.6	77.6	80.9	89.6	72.2

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 27 Feb 09

The figures on education attainment are high for Estonia (table 4), the EU benchmark has already been reached. As mentioned before, the problem here is that almost a half of these people enter the labour market without any skills, because they prefer higher education, but are not able to stay in the program and graduate.

	2002			2005			2007		
	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.8	10.5	9	9.5	10.3	8.6
ESTONIA	5.4	6.9	3.6	5.9	7.3	4.3 (u)	7	9.3	4.6

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 27 Feb 09

u: Unreliable or uncertain data

The figures in table 5 can be misleading. Estonians have always been participating in non-formal study courses as a way of spending free time (amateur singing and theatres, handicraft, etc). When surveyed, such courses are not considered lifelong learning though in essence, they are.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS

### TERM: GENERAL EDUCATION

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially, but not necessarily, with a view to preparing participants for further (additional) education at the same or a higher level. Successful completion of these programmes may or may not provide the participants with a labour-market relevant qualification at this level. These programmes are typically school-based. Programmes with a general orientation and not focusing on a particular specialization should be classified in this category.

*Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED 1997", Paris, November 1997*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.

### TERM: PRE-VOCATIONAL OR PRE-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour-market relevant vocational or technical qualification. For a programme to be considered as pre-vocational or pre-technical education, at least 25 per cent of its content has to be vocational or technical.

*Source: ISCED 1997*

The Estonian does not differ from the international one

### TERM: VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.).

*Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED 1997", Paris, November 1997*

The term does not differ from the international one

### TERM: TERTIARY OR HIGHER EDUCATION

In Estonia, higher education provides programmes on the level of 5A and 6A. 5A provides access to the labour market but also gives access to 6A.

#### TERM: POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

Programmes that lie between the upper-secondary and tertiary levels of education from an international point of view, even though they might clearly be considered as upper-secondary or tertiary programmes in a national context. They are often not significantly more advanced than programmes at ISCED 3 (upper secondary) but they serve to broaden the knowledge of participants who have already completed a programme at level 3. The students are usually older than those at level 3. ISCED 4 programmes typically last between six months and two years.

*Source: ISCED 1997*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one

#### TERM: INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IVET)

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is defined as training undertaken typically after full-time compulsory education (although it may start before) to promote the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for entry to an occupation or group of occupations. It can be undertaken purely within a school-based and/or work-based environment. It includes apprenticeship training.

*Source: Glossary of the EknowVET database*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one

#### TERM: CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CVET)

Education or training after entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to:

- improve or update their knowledge and/or skills;
- acquire new skills for a career move or retraining;
- continue their personal or professional development

It can be provided and undertaken at the initiative of public authorities, social partners, sectors, enterprises, individuals as well as a range of voluntary and community organisations. Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) relates to the further professional, vocational or personal development of people who are already in the workforce. It can take place in a societal, industrial sector and/or in a specific organisational or company context. Having passed IVET is not a prerequisite for CVET. The term is synonymous with "adult education".

The Estonian term differs from the international terminology. CVET is a synonym for adult education, and it is not the next logical step after IVET.

#### TERM: SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES

In school-based programmes instruction takes place (either partly or exclusively) in educational institutions. These include special training centres for vocational education run by public or private authorities or enterprise-based special training centres if these qualify as educational institutions. These programmes can have an on-the-job training component, i.e. a component of some practical experience at the workplace.

*Source: UOE data collection on education systems, Volume 1, Manual, Concepts, definitions and classifications*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.

#### TERM: ALTERNANCE TRAINING

Education and training combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace. The alternance scheme can take place on weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Depending on the country and applicable status, participants may be contractually linked to the employer and/or receive the remuneration.

Comment: the German "dual system" is an example of alternance training.

*Source: Terminology of European education and training policy, Cedefop, 2008.*

There is no alternance training in Estonia apart from apprenticeship.

#### TERM: APPRENTICESHIP

Systematic, long-term training alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.

*Source: Terminology of vocational training policy, Cedefop.*

(Please note this definition is not prepared specifically for the context of statistical data collection. Further definitions exist at Eurostat, but no single standard definition has been agreed).

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.

#### TERM: QUALIFICATION

A formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

*Source: EQF, 2006*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.

#### TERM: SKILLS

The ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

*Source: EQF, 2006*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.

## TERM: COMPETENCE

The proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/ or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

*Source: EQF, 2006*

The Estonian term does not differ from the international one.



## 2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT – OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT AREAS OF VET

#### 2.1.1 NATIONAL LLL STRATEGY

The previous National Lifelong Learning Strategy set the course for 2005-2008. At present, the new strategy for 2009-2013 is being developed and will be passed this year. The main objectives of the new strategy are to provide a better access to both, formal and non-formal learning, to increase the level of education of the population and increase the rate of 25-64 year old participants in lifelong learning to 12,5% by 2013. Increasingly more people will be able to increase their level of education or qualification by one level. The strategy will decrease the number of people with general education and without vocational training to 40% of the population. These objectives will be achieved by focusing on five priority areas

Firstly, to help improve the labour market and economic situation by training adults three measures are foreseen: to make the labour market training more effective and diversify the training opportunities for the unemployed, to offer training to those in danger of losing their jobs and partially employed and to assure the relevance of training for the adults.

Secondly, to make the education system more open to offer formal education to adults access will be increased both in general education and VET institutions.

Thirdly, non-formal training will be offered at the workplace and through non-formal courses to increase the competitiveness of adults and develop creativity, initiative and social responsibility.

Fourthly, supporting measures will be developed to assure the quality and flexibility of training and to increase awareness. Training provision will be matched with the needs of the labour market and target group, the quality of non-formal training will be increased, recognition of prior learning will be implemented and awareness of training opportunities and the need to study will be raised.

Fifthly, the management of adult education is inclusive and effective by implementing sustainable financing mechanisms, and assuring effective and efficient management.

#### 2.1.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MAIN VET POLICY AREAS

The initiatives and latest developments in the following fields are as follows:

- **Governance and Funding;**

The school network has been optimized, many schools have been combined into regional centres of excellence, yet, highly specialized schools have been preserved. The number of state-owned VET institutions has decreased from 58 in 2002 to 32 in 2009. This has enabled to pool the resources and improve training provision. The remaining school buildings will all be renovated by 2013, 10 VET institutions were already modernised by 2008.

The new scheme of state funded study places (*riiklik koolitustellimus - RKT*) was first implemented in 2007/2008 study year. The previous funding scheme was based on

approving the number of new applicants to a VET institution for the coming school year by curricula groups, giving the school the right to decide the distribution of students between the different curricula in the same curriculum group and types of training, as well as forms of study. Based on the new scheme, study places within the curriculum group are approved for the next 3 years. The school retains the right to decide the specific curriculum, types of training and forms of study, there is an additional right to decide the number and time of admission of the new applicants. At the same time the schools are obligated to fill all the state funded study places during the whole calendar year. Thus, if the school sees it cannot admit enough students in some curricula, it can go to a local basic or secondary school and offer to teach VET courses for their students in the same curriculum group. The measure has increased the flexibility of funding and autonomy of the school.

In 2007, the scheme of state funded study places scheme was used to provide for continuous and retraining of working adults, who can themselves choose what and where to study. This measure was taken to prevent unemployment.

In Estonia, there is one infrastructure for both, IVET and CVET. The school network has been optimized and the study environment will be upgraded. In 2004-2008 10 VET colleges got major investments, in 2007-2013 3,6 billion kroons (231 million €) will be invested in the remaining schools.

According to the Amendments to Vocational Education Institutions Act (2006) at least fifty per cent of the people on VET school boards have to be social partners, representatives of employers, employees and local governments. Thus, the the circle of people involved in crucial decisions about VET on the local level has been broadened.

- **Guidance and counselling**

In March 2008, a contractual 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. As an outcome, the new ESF programme "Development of Career Services system in the Republic of Estonia" was started and the National Career Guidance Forum (NCGF) was set up. The forum unites policy makers and practitioners from many different levels and sectors. The National Resource Center for Guidance (NRCG) hosts a web page for the NCGF. The NRCG organises bi-annual information and training seminars for all the career practitioners (see 7.3 for detail).

- **Teacher and trainer training**

An ESF project (2005-2008) for developing VET teachers' further training possibilities and system as a whole was very successful and many initiatives were taken and carried out as a result, Curricula for continuing education for vocational teachers and practical training supervisors were established and VET teacher's career model was compiled in 15 curriculum groups.

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.

VET teachers can 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.

Thanks to the aforementioned projects a systematic continuous training network for VET teachers was re-established. VET teachers receive training according to their needs, there

are several networks they are involved in. The activities will continue within the new programme „Modernizing the content of VET“.

- **Curriculum reform and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment;**

In 2005-2008 there was an ESF project “VET curricula development” by which 44 new national curricula, which are a basis for school curricula, were developed. The new curricula are based on qualification standards and thus correspond to the needs of the labour market. The unified content of the new curricula assures equity and comparability of all VET programmes across the country. The process will be followed up in the new ESF programme “Modernizing the content of VET” in 2007-2013. Curriculum development continues in 2008-2013, when ECVET will be implemented.

The Educational Institution Internal Evaluation Counselling Department was established under the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre in 2006. Its main activities are to analyze the internal evaluations performed by educational institutions and to provide counselling for educational institutions in matters of internal evaluation and the analysis and development of internal evaluation systems.

Since Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, internal evaluation has been obligatory for VET schools. It is a continuous process, bringing out the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on which an operation plan of the development plan will be drawn up. The evaluation report will be submitted at least once in every 3 years. By 2010 the schools will have to have prepared and presented their first internal evaluation report.

The ESF project *E-Võti* (E-key) launched in 2006 aimed to create a modern study environment. 2,310 teachers, IT- and education specialists took part in the training focusing on the compilation of electronic study materials (mainly web-based). As a result of the training, 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 project, 11 professional networks 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 Examination and Qualification Centre.

- **Skills needs strategy;**

The anticipated skills needs have been studied by the Ministry of Economics and Communications since 2003. These forecasts have been used to plan formal education and training, both in VET and in higher education. The anticipated skills needs forecast is one of the factors considered in putting together the scheme of state funded study places in VET. That will ensure that the quantitative side of VET provision corresponds to the labour market needs. For planning the adult education courses in IVET and CVET, there is a task force, which consists of different stakeholders who gather twice a year and set priorities for immediate training needs, thus responding quickly and flexibly to labour market changes.

- **Validation of non-formal and informal learning.**

Previously, the skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning were validated case by case, taking into account the accomplishments of the applicant. The process was governed by arbitrary rules, the validating depended on the person or organization doing the validation. In 2005, an ESF sub-project *VÕTA (Varasema Õppe ja Töökogemuse Arvestamine)* or RPEL (Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning) was started to promote lifelong learning and to develop the procedures how to take into

account the previous study and work experience. In higher education, the principles of VÖTA have been adopted and included in the Standard of Higher Education. The new VET standard has been prepared and is waiting for the approval of the government.

### 2.1.3 CURRENT DEBATES

The two guiding strategic documents, the development plan for the VET system and the Lifelong Learning Strategy are being developed for 2009-2013. These development plans will set the priorities for the next five years. The new development plan, which will go into effect in August, will approach all the developments in a holistic way, including all the stakeholders.

There is a debate in the society on how to distribute the ESF funds designated to train the unemployed more flexible and add additional ways besides the present public procurement system. A voucher system is being planned. The Ministry of Education and Research has proposed using their system of state funded study places for imminent training needs.

## 2.2 THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN TOOLS

The development of a holistic qualifications system was explicitly set in the political agenda by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2007, supported by the corresponding master plan and legislation. The goal is to develop a holistic, flexible and sustainable, competence based qualifications system, which supports lifelong learning and mobility of the people, and enhances the competitiveness of the society. The system will integrate two major processes:

- Translation of society's and labour market expectations for competences and learning outcomes into educational or professional (vocational) standards and curricula;
- Assessment, valuation and certification of persons' actual competences and learning outcomes.
- This system is envisaged as part of a quality assurance system in lifelong learning, functioning as flexible interface between the society and the lifelong learning system, or in case of the professional qualifications system, an interface between the labour market and the lifelong learning system. As a result, the academic recognition and professional recognition of competences will be integrated into a single qualifications system compatible with EQF.

The following major conceptual and cultural changes are underway:

- Systematic shift towards learning outcomes based curriculum development in all sectors of formal education (general, vocational, higher and adult education);
- Development of competence (learning outcomes) based professional standards, which can serve as an input for curriculum development, and as a standard for assessment, valuation and certification of persons' competences;
- Modularized approach to professional standards and curriculum development, complemented with rules and procedures for modularized assessment, valuation and certification of qualifications and partial qualifications;
- Unit based credit system will be implemented and ECVET will be incorporated into the modules, in parallel with renewing the qualification standards, where different skills and competences will be expressed through ECVET.
- Gradually widening valuation of prior learning. The development has been faster in higher education sector as part of the Bologna process, also supported by ESF

sponsored projects and underpinned by the corresponding amendments in the Higher Education Standards (2008). Similar developments are underway in the VET sector.

The geographic mobility of students is more widespread in higher education. However, as part of Leonardo da Vinci programme, 41 applications for the mobility projects were accepted in 2007 and 548 individuals were able to improve their skills abroad. Leonardo beneficiaries have gone to 24 different European countries. The most popular destinations have been Germany and Finland where almost 60% of all participants have carried out their exchanges or placements. Finland, is culturally and geographically very close to Estonia and is also highly valued for its success in the education sector.

## **2.3 POSSIBLE PROJECTIONS OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS ON VET POLICIES**

### **2.3.1 THE FORESEEN CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS ON VET**

The present economic crisis gives many opportunities to raise the prominence of VET in the society. Retraining and continuous training are especially important. The Ministry of Education and Research has designated state commissioned study places for VET for working adults.

The number of young students is falling due to demographic reasons, the number of older students (24+) has been increasing every year. VET colleges would previously face the challenge of losing their students to companies, as often they would not return from practical training, but stay in the company and work. This situation has changed and drop out rates have decreased.

It is difficult for schools to find places for practical training in the companies. The situation varies sector by sector. Generally, the student can no longer expect any stipend from the employer, which used to be the case previously.

### **2.3.2 THE MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN OR ENVISAGED TO BE TAKEN AS RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS**

The state commissioned study places have been allotted to those working adults who are contemplating career change or want to raise their qualification level. It is especially important in the present situation where they may be only partially employed, thus the time off work could be dedicated to studies. The use of resources has already been optimized as VET colleges work both, as centres of IVET and CVET. There is a lot of discussion how to use the same system to train the unemployed. So far for such training, the Ministry of Social Affairs has only used public procurement procedures which take too much time in the present time of need.

The school curricula are being restructured. Students can study a speciality as part of their initial training and later come back for advanced training or opt for an additional speciality. The system will be more flexible and correspond better to the labour market needs.

To solve the problem of the lack of places for practical training, the schools have opened their own workshops or model companies and sell their services to the general public, so that the students can practice their skills.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK – PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

#### 3.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR 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, as well as the 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.
- Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard, 2006*) is a set of uniform requirements for vocational and professional training at the level of basic and secondary education. It applies to all vocational education institutions which organise vocational training. The new VET Standard is in the process of being accepted.
- Policies of Implementing Workplace Based Training (*Töökohapõhise õppe rakendamise kord, 2007*) regulate the provision of apprenticeship training.
- 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 (tertiary education); provision of applied higher education, including that in VET institutions.
- Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus, 1993*) regulates education and training provisions for adults.
- Conditions and Policies for Arranging Professional Training for Working Adults in VET Institutions (*Täiskasvanute tööalase koolituse kutseõppeasutuses korraldamise tingimused ja kord, 2007*) regulates the provision of IVET, CVET and retraining in VET institutions.
- 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. The new Professions Act to make the qualifications system more compatible with EQF was adopted by the parliament in May 2008.
- The recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutsequalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus, 2000*) is employed in regulated professions and takes European Union Directives into account.

- Youth Work Act (*Noorsootöö seadus, 1999*) regulates the required conditions for youth activities (for 7-26 year olds), which take place outside the family and formal education/work and on the voluntary basis. This act is not directly related to VET.
- Study Allowances and Study Loans Act (*Õppetoetuste ja õppelaenu seadus. 2003*) provides the bases, conditions and procedure for the grant of study allowances and study loans in order to ensure access to secondary vocational education and higher education and students to study full time and successfully and to complete the study programme in the nominal period.

### 3.2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

#### DECISION MAKING (POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE LEVEL)

##### 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. The implementing arm of the Ministry is the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (NEQC)- (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus (REKK)*), whose main objective is to implement the national education and language policy in the field of primary, basic and secondary education as well as in vocational and adult education.

There is a methodological centre for VET at the NEQC that deals with establishing state curricula and the competence based modular curricula in all the fields on which the school curricula have to be based on. The VET methodological centre also organises 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.

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 the Estonian VET Promotion Organization, the VET Teachers' Union, the Education Organisation Council, the Estonian Education Forum, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Estonian Employers' Confederation, the Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation, the Estonian Qualification Authority, the Estonian Research and Development Council, the Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras, the 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.

#### ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partners' 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 been 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*) and the Estonian Employers' Confederation (*Eesti Töandjate Keskkliit*) and the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (*Eesti Ametiühingute Keskkliit*). The trilateral Agreement on Joint Activities (*Ühise tegevuse kokkulepe kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks ja kvalifitseeritud tööjõu ettevalmistamiseks aastatel 2006-2009*) declared that good will will be shown by all participants to develop VET in the following priority areas: to implement the VET development plan 2005-2008 as fully as possible, increase the flexibility and access to VET, use the ESF funds to enhance the study environment in VET schools, develop lifelong learning opportunities in VET schools, develop VET schools into regional and sectoral attraction centres, develop further the national qualification system in the context of EQF, and increase the reputation and attractiveness of VET. At regional level, social partnership depends on 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.

#### IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

##### LOCAL SCHOOL LEVEL

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). Vacancies are filled via competitions and the whole procedure is carried out with the approval of the school board.

### ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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 began with the following projects from ESF funds: Apprenticeship program, Quality Award in VET Institutions, Entrepreneurship and Career guidance. Innove is now an official member of Worldskills and Euroskills. In 2008, a VET promotion programme was added.

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 qualifications of Estonian employees as well as the acknowledgement of the qualifications other countries.

EKEÜ - "Association for Advancement of Vocational Education" 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. It is a custom for the VET department of 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, the VET teachers have organized in the VET teachers union (*EKÜ*) and also by sectors into several networks. More active VET students have also organized into their union, but they are not very active yet.

### 3.3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CVET

IVET and CVET are largely governed by the same laws and regulations, as the training takes place on the same premises and is administered by the same staff. Please see 3.1 for more information.

### 3.4 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET

Institutional framework for IVET and CVET is the same as the training takes place on the same premises and is administered by the same staff.

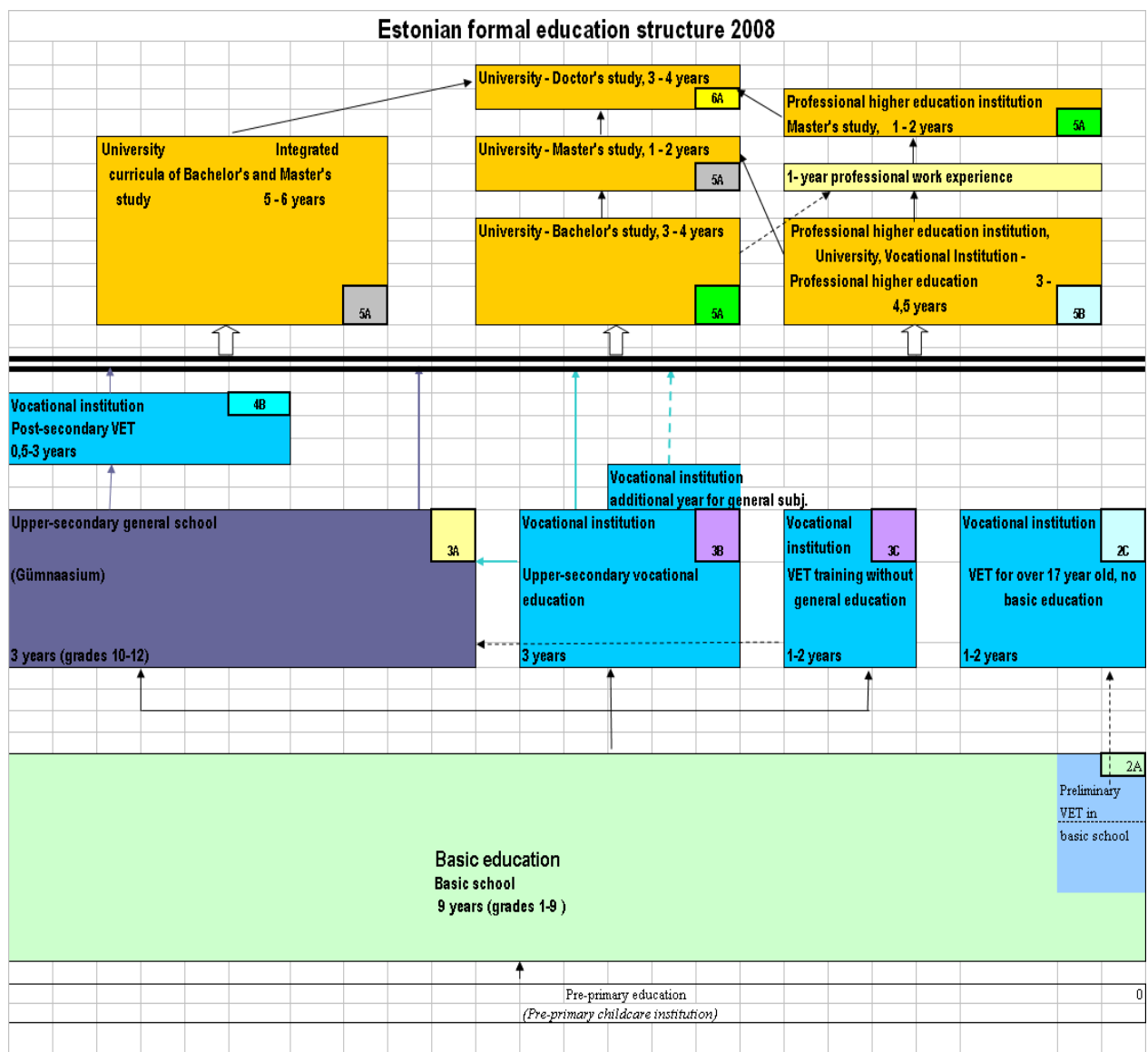
#### 4. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

##### 4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

According to the education and training system students are obligated to finish the basic school (the first nine years of training) or attend the basic school until the age of 17.

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. Such courses do not require a curriculum. Their focus is on career guidance and they are offered as elective courses and are not funded separately by the state. The courses are funded from the general school budget.

DIAGRAM 1: THE DIAGRAM OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM:



Vocational education in lower secondary school (ISCED 2A) and *gümnaasium* (upper-secondary school - 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 (ISCED 2C) 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%.

At the end of compulsory schooling, one can choose between several options. If the student wants to go to a university, he/she will choose the general upper secondary school (*gümnaasium*) (ISCED 3A). In order to graduate, one has to pass state exams and the successful graduate will receive a certificate.

Upper-secondary vocational education (ISCED 3B) lasts at least 120 study weeks and students are required to have basic education as a prerequisite. 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. In order to graduate, students are required to sit a vocational final examination or a professional examination.

VET without upper secondary general education (ISCED 3C) suits students who have difficulties with 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.

Post-secondary non tertiary VET (ISCED 4B) lasts from 20 to 100 study weeks and students must have upper-secondary education (ISCED 3A) as a prerequisite. In order to graduate, students are required to sit a vocational final examination or a professional examination.

Social partners support participation in IVET. Several municipalities support their students with different financial subsidies. There are also good examples of grants implemented by the private sector for VET students in their sector.

The majority of VET institutions (32) belong to the state and are run by the Ministry of Education and Research. 3 of 47 VET institutions are run by municipalities (Tartu VET Centre is the biggest even among all VET schools), 12 are private institutions. 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. Public and municipal VET schools have become more independent, as the School Board is the most important administrative body whose responsibilities include, among other to prepare and supervise the fulfilment of the development plan and activity plan and approve a draft school budget and the investment plan.

Private institutions are supported by the government to the extent that the scheme of state funded study places is also applied to the private schools if the state considers it important to order such specialities (e.g. hotel management). Private schools are always invited to policy discussions and other such initiatives. They take active part in the Association for Advancement of Vocational Education (EKEÜ). The private schools, even though they are generally expensive to study at, are well accepted by the general public. Private schools are autonomous and are managed by their school boards.

As to quality assurance, self-assessment (internal evaluation) has become mandatory for VET institutions. The plans to implement external evaluation or accreditation are underway. The system will be fully operational by 2012.

The curriculum development process is the same on all the levels and programmes.

The national curriculum is a document which determines the purposes and functions of vocational training, the requirements for starting and graduating from the studies, the modules of curricula and the volumes thereof together short descriptions, the possibilities of and conditions for electing modules and possibilities of specialisation.

The national curricula are reviewed and if necessary, a new version is approved if the professional standard which constitutes the basis for the national curriculum is repealed, a new professional standard is established, or the name of the professional standard or the requirements for professional skills provided in the standard are amended.

The school curriculum is the source document of vocational training. Schools prepare a curriculum for each profession or speciality being taught and for every type of vocational training, basing such curricula on the Vocational Education Standard and the national curriculum, and taking into account the different forms of study. The school curriculum is registered in the Estonian Information System for Education (EISE) formed on the basis of subsection 366 (4) the Republic of Estonia Education Act. The volume of study prescribed by a school curriculum shall be calculated in weeks of study whereas the volume of one academic year shall be at least forty weeks of study. In the case of curricula for internationally regulated professions or specialities, the prescribed volume of study shall arise from the requirements established by international conventions.

Where necessary, a school shall prepare an individual curriculum for a student on the basis of the curriculum of the corresponding institution of vocational or speciality education. Subjects of general education make up an independent part of the curricula of secondary vocational education. The volume of study prescribed by the curricula for vocational training which is based on secondary education may be up to two thirds of the volume of study prescribed by the curricula for applied higher education.

The school curricula consist of the general part, modules of general and basic skills determined by the national curriculum and modules of elective studies. The general part of a school curriculum sets forth: the purpose and functions of the school curriculum; the requirements for the commencement and completion of studies; the structure of the school curriculum; a list of general, basic and elective study modules, and their volumes. The school curriculum sets forth the purposes of the general, basic and elective study modules, contents of study, study results and principles for assessment of modules. If necessary, the school may amend the school curriculum once a year concerning the elective study modules. The renewed version of the school curriculum shall be approved by the head of the school after co-ordinating it with the teachers' council and school board.

The content of vocational training established by a school curriculum shall be set forth in the form of modules. A module is a comprehensive content unit within a curriculum which is directed towards study results and determines the knowledge, skills and attitudes conforming to the professional requirements. A module is made up of one or several subjects or topics. The volume of a module depends on the purpose and content of the module. The volume of study prescribed by a module is calculated in weeks of study whereas the volume of a module shall be expressed in full numbers and the smallest volume of a module shall be one week of study. One week of study corresponds to forty hours of work that a student spends on the studies. If in several areas of specialisation, the general and basic study modules within a single programme coincide to the extent of at

least 25 %, the content of study of such specialities may be described in a single national curriculum. Modules are divided into general, basic and elective study modules. General study modules define sets of knowledge and skills which run through broad groups of studies and are common to several areas of specialisation. Basic study modules define sets of knowledge and skills necessary for operation in a profession, speciality or occupation. Subjects of general education are included in general and basic study modules in the volume and selection which is necessary for acquiring the corresponding profession or area of specialisation. Elective study modules define the knowledge and skills which support and extend professional skills or are related to additional qualifications. Elective modules may make up 5-30% of the volume of a curriculum.

Studies take place in the form of auditory work, practical work, practical training and independent work. Auditory work is a study in the form of lectures, seminars, lessons or other formats established by the school. Practical work means the application of the acquired skills and knowledge in a study environment. Practical work takes place in the form of practical lessons, training lessons, laboratory work or other formats established by the school. Practical training is a practical work with specific study goals which is carried out within the framework of a curriculum in a working environment under the instruction of a supervisor. Independent work is the independent activity of a student for reaching a study goal. Independent work shall make up at least 10 % of the entire volume of studies.

The new national curricula have just been prepared and are being implemented. Study materials are being developed as part of the ESF programme "VET content development", carried out by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre. At present, the immediate aim is to map the existing study materials systematically.

As a result of the ESF project *E-Võti* (E-key) (2006-2008), run by Estonian the IT Foundation EITSA, the teachers' involvement in creating a modern study environment has been increased. 2,310 teachers, IT specialists and education specialists took part in the training of how to compile electronic study materials (mainly web-based). As a result of the training, the teachers 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 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 Examinations and Qualifications Centre.

The assessment in VET programmes is analogous to that in the general schools. An examination or assessment is considered positive if a student receives a grade ranging from 1 (E) to 5 (A). The practical learning outcomes are described in the modules and those outcomes are evaluated at the end of the learning process.

The implementation of national curricula is in progress. Once completed, the standardized national curricula will be the main tool allowing progression, The new system will bring along a systematic approach to study programmes. The national curricula are connected to the new NOF through professional standards which are the basis for the curricula. New study materials are being created, a special focus will be on study aids for students with special needs.

## 4.2 IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS <sup>1</sup>	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL / ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
Vocational training in basic schools (and upper secondary schools)	Humanities and arts Engineering, manufacturing and construction Services	(VET for students in 2a)	General subjects mostly, VET subject is optional	N/A	15 weeks	3a, 3b
Vocational training for persons beyond minimum school-leaving age, lacking basic education	Humanities and arts Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture Services	2c	Vocational subjects only	50/50%		2a

Two programs can be identified in IVET at lower secondary level “Vocational training in basic schools and upper secondary schools” is organized by the VET school in cooperation with the basic school. The students follow the basic school curriculum and are enlisted as the students of a basic school. The study is conducted according to a VET curriculum which is a shortened version of a school curriculum.

There is no official minimum age limit, the training is usually offered in grades 7-9, thus the students are about 13-16 years of age. The training is offered to students by a VET institution, yet the students remain the students of a basic school. The training can be carried out on the premises of either the basic school or the VET institution. The volume of the studies is usually 15 study weeks. The graduates receive the diploma of the basic school and a certificate of the VET school, which certifies the course taken. The courses will be taken into account if the student continues in a VET school. The graduate can also enter the labour market or attempt to take a professional exam.

The second programme is “Vocational training for persons beyond minimum school-leaving age who lack basic education” (ISCED 2C). In vocational training, students beyond the minimum school-leaving age who lack basic education acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for performing skilled work in a profession, speciality or occupation. No restrictions related to the level of education shall be set for persons beyond the minimum school-leaving age who lack basic education upon commencing vocational training.

<sup>1</sup> It is very difficult, if not impossible, to convert ISCED classification to NACE - (Primary sector and utilities; Manufacturing; Construction; Distribution and transport; Business and other services; Non-marketed services). In Estonia, the statistics follow only the ISCED classification and the NACE allocation is not available. Therefore, only ISCED classification can be given in this table and onwards.

The volume of studies established by school curricula for persons beyond the minimum school-leaving age who lack basic education shall be 20 to 100 weeks of study. Practical work and practical training shall make up at least 50 % of the volume of vocational training.

Upon graduation, the person has completed, to the full extent, the studies prescribed by the school curriculum and passed the final exam of the profession or area of specialisation. Instead of a final examination prescribed for the profession or area of specialisation, a student may graduate from a school by taking a professional examination. Upon graduation from vocational training, the school issues a graduation certificate together with a results report in proof of concluding the vocational training to a graduating student beyond the minimum school-leaving age who lacks basic education. A person beyond the minimum school-leaving age who lacks basic education may acquire basic education pursuant to the general procedure, simultaneously with vocational training or after graduating from vocational training.

TABLE 1 - STUDENTS IN LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION: GENERAL, PRE-VOCATIONAL, VOCATIONAL 2006							
	TOTAL ISCED2	ISCED2GEN	%	ISCED2PV	%	ISCED2VOC	%
EU 27	22892085	22329149	98	297528	1	265408	1
ESTONIA	59253	59185	100	40	0	28	0

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 26 Feb 09

*gen - general; pv - pre-vocational; voc - vocational*

In the case of Estonia, students in general education (isced2gen) contain students in prevocational training (isced2pv). In 2006, 180 students were involved in isced2pv. If isced2voc is interpreted as vocational training for persons beyond minimum school-leaving age, lacking basic education, then 169 students were in these programs.

### 4.3 IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS (PLEASE REFER TO FOOTNOTE 1)	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL/ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS	Humanities and arts Social sciences, business and law Science Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture Services	(VET for students in 3a)	Mostly general subjects	50/50%	0,25-1 year	3b- can go directly to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year in VET school if takes 1 year of VET subjects
SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	Humanities and arts Social sciences, business and law Science Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture Services	3b	2:1	50/50%	At least 3 years, general subjects at least 1 year.	4b, 5a (with the help of an optional year)
VOCATIONAL TRAINING BASED ON BASIC EDUCATION	Social sciences, business and law Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture Services	3c	VET subjects only	50/50%	0,5-2 years	3a, 3b

Three programmes can be distinguished in Secondary Vocational Education:

- Ad 1: “Vocational Training in Upper Secondary Schools”.

Students studying under the curriculum for secondary vocational education (ISCED 3A) acquire the vocational, professional and occupational knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for independent skilled work and the general education knowledge and skills prescribed by the curriculum. The prerequisite for commencing studies under the curriculum for secondary vocational education is the acquisition of basic education.



The volume of studies prescribed by the curriculum for acquisition of secondary vocational education shall be at least 120 weeks of study, including at least 40 weeks of study for general education subjects. The volume of vocational training shall constitute at least 50 % of the volume of studies prescribed by the curriculum. Practical work and practical training shall make up at least 50 % of the volume of vocational training.

In order to graduate, the person has to have completed, to the full extent, the studies prescribed by the school curriculum and passed the final exam of the profession or area of specialisation. Instead of a final examination prescribed for the profession or area of specialisation, a student may graduate from a school by taking a professional examination. A person graduating from secondary vocational education shall be issued, by the school, a graduation certificate together with a results report in proof of concluding secondary vocational education.

- **Ad 2: “Secondary vocational education” (ISCED 3B)**

Students studying under the curriculum for secondary vocational education acquire the vocational, professional and occupational knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for independent skilled work and the general education knowledge and skills prescribed by the curriculum. The prerequisite for commencing studies under the curriculum for secondary vocational education is the acquisition of basic education.

The volume of studies prescribed by the curriculum for acquisition of secondary vocational education shall be at least 120 weeks of study, including at least 40 weeks of study for general education subjects. The volume of vocational training shall constitute at least 50 % of the volume of studies prescribed by the curriculum. Practical work and practical training shall make up at least 50 % of the volume of vocational training.

In order to graduate the person has completed, to the full extent, the studies prescribed by the school curriculum and passed the final exam of the profession or area of specialisation. Instead of a final examination prescribed for the profession or area of specialisation, a student may graduate from a school by taking a professional examination. A person graduating from secondary vocational education shall be issued, by the school, a graduation certificate together with a results report in proof of concluding secondary vocational education.

- **Ad 3: “Vocational Training Based on Basic Education” (ISCED 3C);**

The students undergoing vocational training based on basic education acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for performing skilled work in a profession, speciality or occupation. The prerequisite for commencing vocational training based on basic education is the acquisition of basic education. The studies take place at the VET school and the students are enrolled as VET students.

The volume of studies based on basic education prescribed by a school curriculum shall be 40 to 100 weeks of study and up to 120 weeks of study under the programmes of music and performing arts. Practical work and practical training shall make up at least 50 % of the volume of vocational training.

Upon graduation the person has completed, to the full extent, the studies prescribed by the school curriculum and passed the final exam of the profession or area of specialisation. Instead of a final examination prescribed for the profession or area of specialisation, a student may graduate from a school by taking a professional examination. A person graduating from vocational training based on basic education shall be issued, by the

school, a graduation certificate together with a results report in proof of concluding vocational training based on basic education.

	TOTAL ISCED3	ISCED3GEN	%	ISCED3PV	%	ISCED3VOC	%
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	22205390	10723395	48	1185480	5	10296515	46
EUROPEAN UNION (25 COUNTRIES)	20782183	10183168	49	1185480	6	9413535	45
ESTONIA	61033	42149	69	-	-	18884	31

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 26 Feb 09

gen - general; pv - pre-vocational; voc - vocational

This proportion has been fairly stable in the past five years. It is the objective of VET policies and initiatives to increase the participation in VET.

#### 4.4 APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS (PLEASE REFER TO FOOTNOTE 1)	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL / ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK- BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
Apprenticeship training	Humanities and arts Social sciences, business and law Science Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture health and welfare Services	2c, 3c, 3b, 4b	Depends on the programme	1/3 school based, 2/3 practical	0,5-1 year	Varies

In March 2007, a regulation was issued by the Ministry of Education and Research concerning the procedure of workplace based training (apprenticeship training).

Apprentices can study on all levels and in all programmes in the Estonian VET system. The only exception is 3C, where the apprentices can enter directly, while the other students have to enter the 3B programme first and show that they have difficulties with the general education part of the curriculum. There is no age limit in the apprenticeship programme. Based on the school curriculum, the school works out an individualised curriculum for the apprentice. The programme is meant and has been popular for people already working and

need formal qualifications. The programme has been very successful in the Retailing and Services sectors in recent years.

The general characteristics of an apprenticeship program are:

- the 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.

The school has to evaluate the workplace before sending an apprentice there to make sure the workplace is ready to meet the objectives of the curriculum and ensure the safety and health of the apprentice. The result of the assessment is an expert opinion, which will be appended to the three party contract between the school, the apprentice and the workplace. The school cannot carry out apprenticeship training if the expert opinion is negative.

The apprentice has 2 appointed supervisors, one from the school and the other from the workplace. If the apprentice has a valid work contract, he/she does not get an extra wage for being in the programme. Apprenticeship programme is usually funded by the state according to the state funded study places scheme. In that case, the school pays also the salary for the supervisor in the enterprise. There can be other arrangements to fund the programme. The law has provided that the student with special needs (especially with limited legal capacity) must have a legal guardian.

The Estonian Employers' Confederation carried out an ESF project aiming to develop a continuing education system for VET teachers. It included training courses organised for both school and enterprise supervisors. As an outcome of the project, instruction materials for the enterprise supervisor were created. The preparation of practical training supervisors will be continued in the next programming period 2007-2013.

#### **4.5 OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS**

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.

One other 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).

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

TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS <i>(PLEASE REFER TO FOOTNOTE 1)</i>	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL/ ORIENTATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	TRANSFER TO OTHER PATHWAYS
Vocational Training Based on Secondary Education	Humanities and arts Social sciences, business and law Science Engineering, manufacturing and construction Agriculture health and welfare Services	4B	No general subjects	50/50%	0,5-2 years	5a

Students undergoing vocational training based on secondary education acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for independent skilled work requiring secondary education. The prerequisite for commencing vocational training based on secondary education is the acquisition of secondary education.

The volume of studies based on secondary education prescribed by a curriculum shall be 20 to 100 weeks of study and up to 120 weeks of study under the programmes of music and performing arts. Practical work and practical training shall make up at least 50 % of the volume of vocational training.

There are 10 national curricula where one can only study on the post secondary level. These are: Military Management for senior officers, business, secretarial work, accounting, hairdressing, small port specialist, air traffic services, land surveying, photography and massage.

It is also possible to acquire the skills and competencies as partial qualifications. For example, in Construction, there are 5 different professional standards which can all be acquired separately. Yet, in IT there is only one professional standard and partial

qualification is not possible. The school is responsible to create a school curriculum for a partial qualification. 45% of Estonians have only general education and have no specialty. Therefore, it is a growing trend to take part in courses on this level, especially to acquire partial qualifications. There is no age limit for entering the programme. The student body has become older in the recent years.

Upon graduation, the person has completed, to the full extent, the studies prescribed by the school curriculum and passed the final exam of the profession or area of specialisation. Instead of a final examination prescribed for the profession or area of specialisation, a student may graduate from a school by taking a professional examination. The person graduating from vocational training based on secondary education shall be issued, by the school, a graduation certificate together with a results report in proof of concluding the vocational training based on secondary education.

Post-secondary VET is a growing trend, since 45% of Estonians have no occupational skills. Thus, especially older students are returning to VET schools to get a specialty. Since there are no general programmes on ISCED 4 level, the programme orientation is purely vocational.

#### 4.7 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, health sector specialties (nursery, therapy and recovery treatment) can only be studied on the tertiary level at present in Estonia.

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. All the people having 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).

TABLE 4 - PARTICIPATION RATES IN HE BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION - 2006							
	TOTAL ISCED5_6	ISCED5A	%	ISCED5B	%	ISCED6	%
EUROPEAN UNION (27 COUNTRIES)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
ESTONIA	68287	42899	63	23416	34	1972	3

Source of information: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 9 Mar 09

*gen - general; vpv - vocational and pre-vocational*

*: - information not available*

Higher education has always been very popular and desired. Now that the opportunities have increased, students tend to favour higher education over vocational education.

## 5. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

### 5.1 FORMAL EDUCATION

#### 5.1.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)

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. For example, a 40 year old who is studying full time is not an adult learner in the sense of this official categorization, yet a 17-year-old who is studying part time or by correspondence, is considered an adult learner.

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, either. Thus, if a person returns to study as an adult, he might have studied the profession previously (CVET) or be first exposed to it (IVET). Both are considered the cases of adult education, yet no distinction is made between IVET and CVET. Thus, in this paragraph and elsewhere we will be talking about adult education, not CVET, because there is no data available for CVT.

The main objectives of adult education according to the new Lifelong learning strategy are to provide a better access for adults to both, formal and non-formal learning, to increase the level of education of the population and increase the rate of 25-64-year-old participants in lifelong learning to 12,5% by 2013. Increasingly more people will be able to increase their level of education or qualification by one level. The strategy will decrease the number of people with general education and without vocational training to 40% of the population.

National and school curricula have been developed on the principle of modules and on the basis of professional standards. Curricula ensure the acquisition of the general and basic skills required in the modern world, and enable students to specialise within the curriculum. The new professional standards, whose new format has been designed within the framework of an ESF project, are competence based and measure learning outcomes. These standards are approved by professional councils, which consist of representatives of employees, employers and professional associations of the corresponding area of activity and the representatives of the state. The national curricula are based on these professional standards, which are renewed once every four years. Consequently, the curricula are also output based and are also renewed once every four years. Thus the formal qualifications correspond to labour market as much as possible.

Since 2007 the Ministry of Education and Research has applied the state funded study places scheme to provide short term training for working adults in the existing VET colleges and professional higher education institutions in order to raise the

competitiveness and well-being of workers and to improve the quality of work. The free occupational training is available in all counties of Estonia.

Enterprise Estonia has a programme by which enterprises can apply for a grant for development of knowledge and skills by providing, among other things, professional in-service training of employees and/or managers lasting up to 12 months in the company. The minimum amount of grant to be applied is 35 000 kroons (2237€) per project. Up to 50% of eligible costs incurred are reimbursed.

E- learning is widely used in most VET colleges and universities thanks to an ESF project E-key (E-Võti). The project will be further developed within the new project "Vanker".

### 5.1.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL CVET

Since there is no formal CVET separate from IVET, topics, such as: the existing levels of qualifications, their role and main characteristics; main private and public institution/providers; main characteristics/elements of the curricula; Quality assurance mechanisms; main characteristics of the training programmes in formal education by levels of qualifications are discussed under chapter 4.

There are no obstacles for anybody to start studies at VET colleges. The previous academic background is not taken into account (unless it is a prerequisite for a programme), thus people with academic background are admitted on an equal basis with all the others as they start the studies from the very beginning.

Students who have graduated from IVET are encouraged to return to take advanced courses and acquire a higher qualification and/or an additional profession. The structure of the curriculum supports this approach that the graduate with basic training is expected to return to upgrade his/her knowledge and skills.

Distance learning no longer exists as an official category. However, the schools can offer this study form if there are interested students and the school is ready to offer it. E-learning options are widely used in such programs. The duration is usually longer than a full time/day time study. The certification takes place on an equal basis with all the other study forms.

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

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 the employer pays for non-formal training costs of the employees, the 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, as individuals can apply for the state funded study places for short term professional training and enterprises can apply for grants from Enterprise Estonia.

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.

The Adult Education Act provides the right for employees to take a study leave if a written proof is presented to the employer 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 the 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 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 a year is granted. These rights and benefits are applied in both public and private sector, in small, medium size and big companies.

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.

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.

The measure that is envisaged to be introduced as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis is to develop more flexible ways for continuing training and retraining. There is a plan to use the state funded study places scheme which so far has been successfully applied to working adults to retrain the unemployed. Also, in the Ministry of Economics and Communications there is a plan to offer a package to foreign investors, complete with the staff with the right skills to revive the economy and bring in FDI. VET colleges can help prepare for those skills.

## 5.2 NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

### 5.2.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)

To promote participation in adult education, it is important to raise motivation and to invest additional resources. 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). 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. 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. As in formal CVET, various e-study opportunities enabling to study at home gain more importance.

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 a 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.

In June 2007, "policies for arranging professional training for working adults in VET institutions" (*Täiskasvanute tööalase koolituse kutseõppeasutuses korraldamise tingimused ja kord*) were adopted. According to that, a VET institution shall organise adult professional education and training (non-formal CVET) 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.

The non-formal CVET 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.

### 5.2.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-FORMAL CVET

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 coordinate 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 (*Ettevõtlike 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.

Enterprise Estonia and the Ministry of Economics and Communications initiated a voucher system since June 2009 for small-sized (up to 9 people) enterprises and sole proprietors (*füüsilisest isikust ettevõtja*), who can apply to have their training reimbursed up to 100%

in the sum no more than 15,000 kroons (950€) and not more than once a year. The training providers have to be approved by the ministry.

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. 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.

### 5.3 MEASURES TO HELP JOB-SEEKERS AND PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION FROM 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 recent years the Ministry of Social Affairs has commissioned employment training from more than 50 education providers (adult education institutions, VET institutions and institutions of higher education) annually. The types of employment training are 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.

The administrative arm of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (*Töötukassa*) has 16 regional employment offices. Its aim is to reduce unemployment and assist job-seekers and employers. EURES (European Employment Services) has 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 Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. Employment services can also be provided by private agencies although the services must be free of charge.

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.

## 6. TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

### 6.1 TYPES OF TEACHER AND TRAINER OCCUPATIONS IN VET

#### 6.1.1 TEACHING AND TRAINING OCCUPATIONS 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 teachers 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

TABLE 2. THE FUNCTIONS AND ROLES OF VET TEACHERS BY PROFESSIONAL LEVEL			
ROLES AND FUNCTIONS	III	IV	V
1) CREATES AND MAINTAINS STUDY AND WORK CONDITIONS	X	X	X
2) PLANS, APPLIES AND ANALYSES THE STUDY PROCESS	X	X	X
3) ANALYSES AND ASSESSES STUDY RESULTS	X	X	X
4) KNOWS THE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND TAKES IT INTO ACCOUNT WHEN FULFILLING WORK TASKS	X	X	X
5) SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT IN LIFELONG LEARNING	X	X	X
6) SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS AND DIRECTS THEM TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING	X	X	X
7) DEVELOPS PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS	-	X	X
8) SUPERVISES AND COUNSELS COLLEAGUES	-	-	X
9) PARTICIPATES ACTIVELY IN PROMOTING VET	-	-	X

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.

There are no studies that could indicate the attractiveness of VET teacher and trainer professions. If it is an indication, the teachers' salaries in general are lower than the average national salary.

#### 6.1.2 RESPONSIBLE BODIES

The National Examination and Qualification Centre (NEQC) regulates teacher and trainer training arrangements. From the many different departments, the following are the most pertinent to VET teachers:

##### THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

- organises the compilation and development of national curricula for vocational education institutions;
- organises the compilation of methodological and other resource materials supporting the implementation of the national curricula;

- organises the evaluation of study materials;
- makes proposals to the Ministry of Education and Research regarding legal acts pertaining to implementation of the national curricula;
- evaluates curricula of institutions providing vocational education, provides consultation to the institutions on curricula issues;
- makes proposals regarding in-service training for teachers in vocational education.

#### THE TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT:

- organises the evaluation of teachers' professional skills and issuing professional certificates;
- organises the work of the national evaluation committee, provides consultation to the evaluation committees of educational institutions;
- evaluates the qualifications of teachers and makes prognosis for the need for in-service training and retraining;
- evaluates conformity of in-service training curricula to teaching qualification requirements;
- analyzes teachers' professional preparation and teachers' participation in in-service training on the basis of the EHIS;
- is competent to recognize teaching qualification acquired abroad.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION INTERNAL EVALUATION COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT:

- provides counselling for preschool children's institutions, general educational schools and vocational educational institutions in matters of internal evaluation;
- analyzes the internal evaluations performed by educational institutions, provides feedback to managers and owners of the institutions;
- prepares an analytical summary for the Ministry of Education and Research once a year.

### 6.1.3 RECENT REFORMS TO VET TEACHER/TRAINER TRAINING

An ESF project (2005-2008) tackled 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, creating the output based national 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 took part in the training of how to compile electronic study materials (mainly web-based). As a result of the training, the teachers 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 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 Examinations and Qualifications Centre.

As to the developments for workplace supervisors, the Estonian Employers' Confederation launched a training project for workplace supervisors in the Apprenticeship programme in 2007. Together with the 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 September 2007 the Estonian Employers' Confederation, with the help of partners, launched an e-learning course, *Implementing supervisor programmes in enterprises*, which targeted beginning trainers, implementors and coordinators.

## 6.2 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

### 6.2.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN IVET

TEACHER	INSTITUTION	QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
VOCATIONAL TEACHER ( <i>KUTSEÕPETAJA</i> )	Vocational educational institution (ISCED 3B, 4B)	1) higher education in vocational pedagogy or other pedagogical higher education (5A, 5B) and at least 3 years experience in the respective profession or  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  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
WORKPLACE SUPERVISOR (VOCATIONAL TRAINER- <i>ETTEVÕTTE PRAKTIKA-JUHENDAJA</i> )	Companies, enterprises	No requirements

### 6.2.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF IVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

#### 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; pedagogics; 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).

### 6.3 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

#### 6.3.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN CVET

There is no difference between IVET and CVET teachers, 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.

#### 6.3.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF CVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

VET teachers, whether in IVET or CVET in state schools have to correspond to *Teacher Training Framework Requirements and Qualification Requirements for Teachers*. For the requirements, see 6.1.1 and 6.2. The pre-service and in-service requirements are the same. As to training adults, 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.

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 for supervising specialists.

## 7. MATCHING VET PROVISION WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

### 7.1 SYSTEMS AND MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS (IN SECTORS, OCCUPATIONS, EDUCATION LEVEL)

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. In Estonian skill needs forecasting model 'skills' are defined as 'occupational skills' (based on ISCO broad groups) by business activity (based on NACE). As additional background, the information on the existing structure of employment by graduates' field of education is also included. The forecasting method includes both expansion demand (new jobs creation) and replacement demand (due to mortality and retirement). The supply side is only considered at very general level in the macro model (through wage formation due to unemployment).

Estonian skill needs forecasting is carried out in several stages. First, macro modelling, which is based on Hermin model adapted to the Estonian context, is carried out which produces overall macroeconomic trends, including employment expansion by nine broad economic sectors. These general forecasts are then used as a basis for more disaggregated forecasts which finally give results for 35 business activities. More detailed analysis is done by sector analysts who take a closer look at key business activities. Methods used vary depending on the sector, but in general they consider demand side and productivity developments. Currently, 24 activities are properly covered from a total of 35 for which the forecast is produced by five sector analysts. Very small and public sector activities are not covered by the analysis.

Detailed analysis includes forecasting occupational structure in each economic activity covered. The forecast of the occupational structure mainly grounds on recent trends and on feedback and expert opinions of different business associations.

This way the forecast of employment (including expansion) by business activity and occupation is achieved. In addition to expansion demand, replacement demand is analysed. This is based on employed persons' distribution by age groups across each business activity. At this point of time same retirement age and mortality rates are assumed for all business activities. As a third major component, possible inter-sectoral movements are analysed. Again, it is a new component and currently it is a simple scenario on how employees might change their field of activity based on recent trends and on relative demand for new employment in different sectors.

All these three components - news jobs creation, natural wastage and inter-sectoral movement - form the labour demand for 35 business activities.

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.

## 7.2 PRACTICES TO MATCH VET PROVISION WITH SKILL NEEDS

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

In 2004, the National Examinations and Qualifications 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 Jan 2009 the Ministry had approved 40 national vocational curricula. The preparation is co-ordinated by the National Examinations and Qualifications 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. Having been taken into consideration that during 2008 - 2013 the professional standards will be renewed according to the new 8-levels NQF, all the national VET curricula will be modernized, too.

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.

The main areas of attention of the national program "Developing of VET" are:

- Modernizing national VET curricula according to the renewed professional standards,
- implementing NQF,
- implementing principles of validation of non-formal and informal learning and implementing ECVET,
- working out and publishing study materials and teachers' continuing education.

The program is lead by the National Examination and Qualification Centre and lasts until 2013. The programme uses European Social Funds for co-financing.

Several e-learning opportunities enable employed people to participate in training and allow them to plan their career and their training needs more easily. In Estonia, e-learning is coordinated by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre which administrates two consortia: the Estonian e-University and the Estonian e-VET. The 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. There is a national programme for developing VET e-learning, established for 2008-2013. The programme is co-financed by EU Social Funds and led by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre.

## 8. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

### 8.1 STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Career guidance has been practiced in Estonia for about 90 years. The latest developments on this field have taken place due to the changes in expectations and requirements of the labour market as well as due to the advanced concept of lifelong learning.

Lifelong guidance has been embedded in the national adult education strategy and in the ESF Operational Programme for Human Resource Development. In the lifelong learning strategy, measures are taken to increase the volume of career services to employed and unemployed adults and to develop career guidance for adults in cooperation with two ministries - the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs; the cooperation will be strengthened also on the local level, between the career guidance units and schools.

The ESF Operational Programme for Human Resource Development states that the development of a unified guidance system within the framework of an integrated counselling model will be continued and career guidance will be initiated in vocational education institutions, the availability of the service will be ensured in all vocational education institutions, and these will be linked to other counselling categories. The development of career education, and of other activities supporting career planning for pupils, will be continued in general education schools. In youth work, projects on youth information for the development of information services will be supported, including the training of the practitioners, and the development of methodological and information materials.

In 2006 the Foundation Innove National Resource Center for Guidance (NRCG) carried out a comprehensive survey, whereby the current situation was mapped in Estonia. This survey was used as an input in developing the new ESF Programme for 2007-2011 "Development of Career Services". There are several feedback questionnaires, focus groups and surveys carried out, but they serve a narrower purpose, yet are incorporated in policies and practices wherever possible.

In March 2008, a contractual agreement regarding career guidance services in Estonia was signed between two Ministries - the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research. As an outcome, the above mentioned programme was started and the National Career Guidance Forum (NCGF) was set up in the beginning of 2009. The forum unites stakeholders from many different levels and sectors including policy makers from relevant ministries, practitioners, target groups etc. NRCG acts as an administrative body, hosts a web page for the NCGF etc.

The development and provision of career services is based on the three-service-concept: career education, career information and career counselling.

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. Except for career services, since 2009 the provision of career guidance lies within Foundation Innove. In each county (15), there is at least one centre (called Youth Information and Counselling Centre - YICC). As part of the national strategy, 17 centres (1 from every county, 2 biggest towns) have become partners in the

above mentioned national programme. Centres provide young people with career information and career counselling. In most cases other information and/or counselling services are available. The centres 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 and VET schools. They also cooperate with teachers, parents and companies.

Since 2009 career information and career counselling in the above mentioned 17 centres are provided according to the new service standards, which state the activities, the methodology, the principles, as well as documentation, the minimum volume and quality assurance of the service provision.

In 2008-2011 the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre runs the ESF programme "Developing an educational counselling system" whose objective is to improve the quality of the educational counselling system and create academic advice centres on the county level to prevent students from dropping out of school, and to increase coping strategies and competitiveness for young people in their everyday life and in the labour market.

The programme activities are aimed at ensuring that academic counselling service is available in all regions of Estonia, providers of the educational counselling service are being trained and the counselling system developed.

The programme target group comprises students with special educational needs, the children's parents, providers of counselling service, teachers and specialists at educational institutions, and local government officials responsible for the educational sphere.

Currently, educational and psychological counselling is fragmented and not evenly available from one region to the next. The shortage of support specialists (special education teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, social workers) in schools and kindergartens is a serious problem. The most frequent concerns that parents and teachers bring to counselling centre specialists are related to children's learning problems, behavioural problems, finding a suitable study programme, learning opportunities for children with special needs both in school and after leaving school, and emotional problems and social communication difficulties at school, at home, with peers. In several cases at regional level career guidance services and educational counselling is offered by the same centres, thus the provision is coordinated and easily accessible.

Within general education, career education is usually provided as a compulsory cross-curricular theme. In addition, career issues are taught 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 there are sufficient financial resources, create a post for in-school specialist (part-time career coordinators work in about 30% of the schools). The developments are more coordinated in 35 VET and general education schools, which are also partners in the national ESF career guidance programme. As one of the activities in these schools, the school career education activity plan has been taken in use; also mentoring scheme for school career coordinators is under construction.

Since May 1 2009 the network of career counsellors in the labour market sector is coordinated by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (*Töötukassa*) (EUIF) that is also responsible for the provision of practitioner 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. This year also Career Information Points will be opened to serve clients information needs.

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. Career counselling is provided by 21 career counsellors working in 15 EUIF 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.

## 8.2 TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

The main target groups of regional youth information and counselling centres (YICC) 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.

Career counsellors working at Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund 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.

Groups with special needs receive services on the same basis with all the others. The majority of service providers can relate to Russian speaking cohort in their mother tongue, many of them might be native Russians themselves. There are three counselors working at Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation centre, we can say that these counsellors are focusing particularly on counselling people with special needs.

As the 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.

There are several tools to ensure the quality of the career services offered by the labour market sector: public service instructions, service standards, which state the minimum requirements for the service, and regular client satisfaction surveys.

### 8.3 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). 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.

Career practitioners qualification system is based on three professional standards: the career counsellor, career information specialist and career coordinator at school (including VET institutions). In addition to the professional standards, in Youth Information and Counselling Centres (YICC's) the quality of services is measured also with newly developed service standards (please see 8.1) The quality of guidance is measured by the students' and parents' satisfaction, an existing career plan of a graduating student, the competitiveness and readiness of a graduating student while entering the labour market; and the percentage of drop-outs.

Currently, Estonian universities do not provide higher education 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 one of the three universities. These subjects include career counselling and coordination (3 ETCS), and a career guidance module within human resource management studies.

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 sectors. 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.

## 9. FINANCING: INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

### 9.1 FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Public funding is the main source of funding VET on all levels and types of VET. In lower secondary education, the funding comes from the budget of the general school. The state allocates the funds to the municipality who is then responsible for funding the school. There is very little VET on the lower secondary level.

In upper secondary and post secondary non tertiary education, the VET study places are funded according to the state funded study places scheme, which is provided to the VET institutions directly by the state. The study places within the curriculum group are approved for the next 3 years. The school has the right to decide the specific curriculum within the funded curriculum group, types of training and forms of study, as well as the number and time of admission of the new applicants. At the same time the school is obligated to fill all the state funded study places during the whole calendar year. Thus, if the school sees it cannot admit enough students in some curricula, it can go to a local basic or secondary school and offer to teach VET courses for their students in the same curriculum group. Out of 27,000 students 24,000 study on the state funded study places. The share of private funding in upper secondary and post secondary non tertiary education is about 30%. In very exceptional cases, the funding can be project based.

The tertiary education is administered separately. 46% of student places are financed by the state, there is no information on how much the private sector spends on the 54% of student places in tertiary education. The share of student places through public funding will decrease from autumn 2009.

There are no collective funds for IVET. There are quite a few sectoral bodies that motivate students by providing a small stipend for students. Often these stipends come from a designated fund which has been set up in remembrance of someone deceased.

The funding mechanism for VET in Estonia is the scheme of state funded study places. At present, there is no connection between quality assurance and funding. The concept of accreditation has been worked out, preparations are under way to fully implement it by 2012.

According to the new system, if the curriculum group has not been accredited, there will be no funding for it.

Another change in providing public funding is underway. If the school cannot find enough students for IVET courses, it can use the state funded study places to finance the short term adult education courses (can be called CVET).



## 9.2 FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

### 9.2.1 FUNDING FOR PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET, PLEASE OUTLINE THE FOLLOWING:

There is no distinction between IVET and CVET in the Estonian VET system. The distinction is made based on the form of study (see chapter 5.1 for lengthier explanation). The responsibility for the education of the adult population is divided between three ministries.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for training working adults, those who need continuous training or retraining, contemplating career change. For all these training needs the Ministry has ordered training from VET colleges based on the state funded study places scheme.

The continuous and retraining of the unemployed is under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The training is administered through the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. So far, in the training of the unemployed the trainers and the courses have been selected by public procurement.

The training needs of the companies are the responsibility of the Ministry of Economics and Communication. The companies can apply to Foundation Enterprise Estonia for the support, whereby 50% of the cost of the training can be reimbursed.

In addition, enterprises and individuals invest heavily in continuous training. The relative share between public and private funding is not known, because no data is gathered on training expenditure in the companies and by individuals.

The changes that are taking place at the moment are extending the ways of selecting the training provider in the Ministry of Social Affairs. In addition to public procurement, applying the scheme of state funded study places for unemployed and the voucher system is under consideration.

As part of the ESF project "Continuous training for working adults", administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, 37 VET institutions in 15 counties have trained over 24,000 adults in 2007-2009 (1 half year). In 2007-2008 39.3 million kroons was spent to train 17792 (16660 finished the course, drop out rate 2.7%). In the first half of 2009, 6513 adults were trained for 21 million kroons. The total cost of the project is over 60 million EEK and over 24,000 adults have been trained. In addition, 1132 adults were trained with the resources from the state budget.

Enterprise Estonia supported training in companies in 2004-2006 programming period till 2007 through 2126 projects and 93.6 million kroons (EEK). In the next programming period (2008-2013) 461 projects have been financed with 50,5 million kroons (as of May 2009).

### 9.2.2 FUNDING FOR CVT IN ENTERPRISES

The state funded study places for working adults can be considered supply-led funding. The training need is identified by a task force which consists of experts across many sectors and fields, training providers and employers. Thus, though clearly supply-led, these short term courses for working adults are based on the needs in the society.

The measures that support demand-led funding of VET are as follows. The companies can apply for a grant to have up to 50% of their training reimbursed. The individuals can choose any training and course they want and get income tax reimbursed.

It is very difficult to comment on the statistics of CVT, as such information on the training which takes place in enterprises is not gathered. In the present economic crisis, the training is one of the first things to be sacrificed. Thus, one can say that probably the training cost will decrease even further in the immediate years.

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

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for the training of the unemployed. Vocational training for unemployed people is funded by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) under the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Sotsiaalministeerium*). The Fund allocates resources 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 EUIF keeps records of all stipends.

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

Source: Labour Market Board

Active employment measures tailored to the needs of unemployed people and employers have been developed: long-term training courses are available for skills of high demand.

Unemployed people can also participate in entrepreneurship training. The system of vouchers for the unemployed is under discussion to help the people cope with the uncertain times of the financial crisis and provide more opportunities for flexible retraining.

#### 9.4 GENERAL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AND MECHANISMS

The following measures are used in Estonia:

- sectoral training funds;

In a 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).

- tax incentives;

Individual 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. 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 in company training and training provided by the sole proprietor.

- learning accounts and vouchers;

Enterprise Estonia and the Ministry of Economics and Communications initiated a voucher system since June 2009 for small-sized (up to 9 people) enterprises and sole proprietors (*füüsilisest isikust ettevõtja*), who can apply to have their training reimbursed up to 100% in the sum no more than 15,000 kroons (950€) and not more than once a year. The training providers have to be approved by the ministry.

- saving schemes and loans.

Study loans are popular with students. An Estonian citizen or a person staying in the Republic of Estonia on the basis of a permanent residence permit, the duration of whose studies according to the study programme is nine calendar months or more, has the right to obtain a study loan if he or she is enrolled in full-time study at an Estonian university in public law, at a state institution of professional higher education or at a private university or private institution of professional higher education; is enrolled in full-time study on the basis of secondary education at a state or municipal vocational educational institution or at a private vocational educational institution operating on the basis of the Private Schools Act; or is studying abroad at an educational institution and in a form of study similar to the two other cases specified above.

## 10. NATIONAL VET STATISTICS - ALLOCATION OF PROGRAMMES

### 10.1 CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL VET PROGRAMMES

#### 10.1.1 MAIN CRITERIA USED TO ALLOCATE VET PROGRAMMES

In Estonia, VET Standard regulates the allocation of VET programmes. Classification of curricula into broad groups of studies, fields of study and programmes is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97, *UNESCO, 1997*).

There are 9 broad groups of studies (education, humanities and arts, social sciences, business and law, science, engineering, manufacturing and construction, agriculture, health and welfare, services). These broad groups are subdivided into the fields of study.

#### 10.1.2 VET LEVELS IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The levels of VET that exist in the Estonian national system are as follows:

	EQUIVALENT IN ISCED	MINIMUM DURATION	MAXIMUM DURATION	AVERAGE DURATION (STATISTICAL)	TYPICAL DURATION	TYPICAL STARTING AGE OF PUPILS
<b>408</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN BASIC SCHOOLS AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS	-	5 months	1 year	7 months	6 months or 1 year	16
<b>409</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR PERSONS BEYOND THE MINIMUM SCHOOL- LEAVING AGE WHO LACK BASIC EDUCATION	2C3	6 months	2 years and 6 months	1 year and 5 months	1 or 2 years	17
<b>410</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING BASED ON BASIC EDUCATION	3C3	1 year	3 years	1 year and 8 months	1 or 2 years	17-18
<b>411</b> SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	3B3	3 years	4 years	3 years and 3 months	3 years	16
<b>412</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING BASED ON SECONDARY EDUCATION	4B3	6 months	3 years	1 year and 11 months	2 years	19

## 10.2 FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The different main fields of the Estonian VET system:

LEVEL	FIELDS OF EDUCATION/STUDY	
<b>408</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN BASIC SCHOOLS AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS	2	Humanities and arts
	3	Social sciences, business and law
	4	Science
	5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction
	6	Agriculture
	8	Services
<b>409</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR PERSONS BEYOND THE MINIMUM SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE WHO LACK BASIC EDUCATION	2	Humanities and arts
	5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction
	6	Agriculture
	8	Services
<b>410</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING BASED ON BASIC EDUCATION	3	Social sciences, business and law
	5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction
	6	Agriculture
	8	Services
<b>411</b> SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	2	Humanities and arts
	3	Social sciences, business and law
	4	Science
	5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction
	6	Agriculture
	8	Services
<b>412</b> VOCATIONAL TRAINING BASED ON SECONDARY EDUCATION	2	Humanities and arts
	3	Social sciences, business and law
	4	Science
	5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction
	6	Agriculture
	7	Health and Welfare
	8	Services

### 10.3 LINKS BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OR CLASSIFICATIONS

The requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedures for their attestation and award are based on the Professions Act (*Kutseadus*). Since 2000, 5-level competence-based professional qualifications' framework has been in existence. There was no one-to-one (level by level) correspondence with the educational system, formal diplomas or certificates.

While adopting the new Professions Act in May 2008, the existing 5-levels qualification framework was replaced by the 8-level national framework, corresponding to the EQF. The new, adopted national qualification framework is overarching, linking competence-based professional qualifications and educational (formal education) qualifications into one system. The implementing period for the new framework is planned for 2008 - 2013.

In 2008, a national program „Development of professional qualifications system“ started. The program is co-financed by the EU structural funds and led by the Qualifications Authority. Among other objectives the program will map and position all the existing professional qualifications into the new national framework.

The learning outcomes for higher education area (ISCED levels 5 - 6) are described in the Higher Education Standard (*Kõrgharidusstandard*) and they were formally referenced with the NQF levels in January 2009. Also, the descriptions of learning outcomes of different formal VET types (ISCED 2-4) and their correspondence with NQF will be introduced into the Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard*). The amended Vocational Education Standard will be adopted by the Government in July 2009.

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Kersti Raudsepp (based on the interviews with and input from A. Pung, K. Toom, K. Piiskop, K. All, M. Rammo, M. Nestor)

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<sup>2</sup> RT= Riigi teataja= State Gazette

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Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (*Eesti Vabaharidusliit*)

<http://www.vabaharidus.ee/>

Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekvalifikatsiooni Sihtasutus*)

<http://www.kutsekoda.ee>

Estonian Association for Advancement of Vocational Education (*EKEÜ - Eesti Kutseõppe Edendamise Ühing*)

<http://www.ekey.ee>

EU Structural Funds (*Euroopa Liidu Struktuurifondid*)

<http://www.struktuurifondid.ee/>

Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development Innove (*Elukestva Õppe Arendamise Sihtasustus Innove*)

<http://www.innove.ee>

Leonardo da Vinci Programme in Estonia (*Hariduskoostöö keskus, Kutsehariduse büroo*)

<http://www.hkk.ee/index.php?leht=8>

National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus*)

<http://www.ekk.edu.ee>

National Resource Centre for Guidance (*Karjäärinõustamise Teabekeskus*)

<http://www.innove.ee/teabekeskus>

The Open University Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) of Tallinn University (*Tallinna Ülikooli Avatud Ülikooli Täiendõppekeskus*)

<http://www.tk.tlu.ee/>

"Pathfinder" web portal (*Portaal Rajaleidja*)

<http://www.rajaleidja.ee>

VET Teachers' Union (*EKÜ - Eesti Kutseõpetajate Ühing*)

<http://www.eky.org.ee>

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### 11.3 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EHIS- *Eesti hariduse infosüsteem* = EISE- Estonian Information System for Education

EITSA - Estonian Information Technology Foundation

EKEÜ - *Eesti Kutseõppe Edendamise Ühing* - Association for Advancement of Vocational Education

ERDF - European Regional Development Fund

ESF - European Social Fund

ETCS - European Transfer Credit System

EURES- European Employment Services

HE- Higher Education

NEQC - National Examinations and Qualifications Centre = REKK - Riiklik Eksami- ja kvalifikatsioonikeskus

NCGF - National Career Guidance Forum

QA- Qualifications Authority

RKT- *Riiklik koolitustellimus* - State funded study places scheme

VÕTA - Varasema Õppe ja töökogemuse arvestamine - Recognition of prior work and learning

YICC - Youth Information Counseling Centres