Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes \% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

Education and training in figures

Further information


Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 22.4.2016.


Further information

www.kne.ee Ministry of Education and Research
www.mek.ee Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
www.see.ee Ministry of Social Affairs
www.ekke.ee Foundation Innove
www.hkko.ee/min/molii Referier Estonia
www.kulka.ee Estonian Qualifications Authority
www.ikka.ee Information Technology Foundation for Education
www.andra.ee Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andra
www.arkid.ee Foundation Archimedes
www.stat.ee Statistics Estonia
www.vaal.ee Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskkomb)
www.epemee.ee Estonian Employers’ Confederation
www.tootukassa.ee Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund
www.vika.arkid.ee Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency

This Spotlight is based on input from the Ministry of Education and Research (ReferNet Estonia 2015).
Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia is the key to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce capable of adapting to changes in the labour market. It is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research and the institutional framework includes a network of VET schools, a quality assurance body, sectoral skills institutions, and awarding organisations.

ISCED 244
Programmes at this level give learners the skills needed to enter, but there are exceptions for over 18-year-olds. Studies require completed basic education to meet minimum admission requirements. Curricula are designed to prepare learners for technical and professional occupations.

Financial assistance is available as school-based tracks and include specific requirements. Post-secondary VET programmes prepare learners for technical and professional occupations. Continuing VET (CVET) is offered at EQF levels 4 and 5. It includes vocational courses for adults, which focus on the acquisition of specific competences. To enrol in CVET, learners need to have at least a vocational qualification or validated competences and an educational qualification at EQF level 4.

Higher education programmes start at EQF level 6 and the first level of tertiary education has both an academic branch and professional higher education branch. These are accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET.

Additional education is divided into formal education and continuing education. Formal education acquired within the adult education system allows adults to acquire general lower and upper secondary education at adult upper secondary schools. Schools implement individual curricula when needed. In addition to formal education and higher education institutions provide continuing education and retraining courses.

VET in Estonia’s education and training system

**TERTIARY LEVEL**

- General education plus vocation
- Tier 1: 3 years
- Tier 2: 3-4 years
- Tier 3: 5-6 years

**NON-FORMAL ADULT LEARNING**

- VET programmes
- 0.5 to 2.5 years
- WBL: min. 50% 

**POST-SECONDARY LEVEL**

- Professional retraining
- 1.5 years
- WBL: min. 50%

**SECONDARY LEVEL**

- VET programmes
- 3 years
- WBL: min. 35%

- General programmes
- 3 years
- WBL: min. 35%

- Vocational programmes
- 2-2.5 years
- WBL: min. 70%

**FIRST LEVEL**

- VET programmes
- 1 year
- WBL: min. 50%

**GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

- General programmes
- 3 years
- WBL: min. 35%

**ESTONIA**

It is possible to pursue a VET programme not only in Estonia, but also in other languages. In 2015, 78.5% of VET students studied in Estonian and 19.4% in English and Latvian. In the case of a foreign-language curriculum, Estonian language classes are mandatory. To complete the studies, curriculum developers and the Ministry of Education and Research are responsible for the curriculum and language classes. Mastery of a professional occupation or profession is tested in exams. Post-secondary VET programmes are also available in the following languages: Russian, English, Latvian and German.

Distinctive features of VET

- Providing access to tertiary education
- Qualifications allowing access to the next education level
- Programmes combining VET and general education
- General education programmes
- VET programmes

Challenges and policy responses

Among adults aged 25 to 64, 39.2% have neither a professional nor a vocational qualification. The objective is to reduce this share to less than 25% by 2020. Several measures have been launched to encourage adults without a prior professional or vocational qualification to return to formal education.

There is a high level of skills mismatch. To improve alignment between education and the labour market, a labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system (OSKA) was launched in 2015. Results are used in curriculum development, career counselling, and planning of State-funded education.

Early leaving from education and training is a significant problem in Estonia. The rate in the first six years of VET was 24.7% in 2013. The goal is to reduce it to less than 20% by 2020. To prevent early leaving, career counselling in schools is offered and several other measures implemented.

Participation in lifelong learning had been steadily increasing up to 12.5% in 2013 but dropped to 12.2% in 2015. The goal is to increase it to 20% by 2020. Age appears to have a substantial impact. Only 4.5% of people aged 55 to 64 participated in lifelong learning in 2015, in comparison with 25.3% in the 25 to 34 age group. To increase participation rates, the focus is on broadening access to non-formal education, training courses for developing key competences, career services and facilitating the participation of adults in formal education.

Participation in apprenticeship training is low (2.4% of all VET students). The number of participants started to increase gradually in 2015 due to the education ministry’s effort to develop a functioning and sustainable work-based learning system with stronger employer involvement.

In 2015, 78.5% of VET students studied in Estonian and 19.4% in English and Latvian. In the case of a foreign-language curriculum, Estonian language classes are mandatory. To complete the studies, curriculum developers and the Ministry of Education and Research are responsible for the curriculum and language classes. Mastery of a professional occupation or profession is tested in exams. Post-secondary VET programmes are also available in the following languages: Russian, English, Latvian and German.
**VET in Estonia**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia is the key to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce capable of adapting to changes in the labour market. It is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research and the national framework includes a network of VET schools, a quality assurance body, sectoral councils and awarding organisations.

Occupational standards in the eight-level ISCED qualifications framework are all outcomes-based and serve as the basis for VET curricula. Social partners are involved in VET policy development and implementation to help respond to labour market needs. At national level, they participate in sectoral skills councils and are involved in drafting VET-related legislation, including national VET curricula. At school level, their representatives belong to the boards of VET institutions.

Recognition of prior learning and work experience has improved accessibility to VET for learners from diverse education and professional backgrounds. The VET infrastructure has recently been upgraded.

VET institutions offer both, initial and continuous VET programmes. Initial VET is offered at the second, third, fourth and fifth levels of the Estonian qualifications framework (corresponding to European qualifications frameworks). Learners can choose between full-time studies (independent learning is less than one third of the study volume) and studies where the emphasis is on self-study and contact hours are lower (referred to as “non-study” studies in the national context). Full-time studies are available as two-, three- and four-year programmes and up to 70% work-based learning, and apprenticeships.

Finance and funding are available for VET students to guarantee equal access to education, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances.

At second and third levels there are no minimum admission requirements and curricula are designed to meet labour market needs in elementary occupations. As a rule, fourth level studies require completed basic education to enter, but there are exceptions for over 22-year-olds without basic education.

Programmes at this level give learners the skills needed to perform more complex jobs. It is possible to follow vocational programmes (ISCED-P 351) only or to study VET along with upper secondary general education (ISCED-P 354). The qualification achieved (certificates in vocational secondary education) is a pre-condition for accessing higher education. National State examinations are compulsory for upper secondary general education graduates, but VET graduates also take them as they function as entrance examinations for most higher education programmes. Vocational secondary education certificate holders can study general education subjects of their choice to prepare for the State examinations. Upper secondary education also gives access to EQF level 5 VET programmes (ISCED-P 454). These post-secondary programmes prepare learners for technical and administrative professional occupations.

Continuing VET (CVET) is offered at EQF levels 4 and 5. It includes vocational courses for adults, which focus on the acquisition of single competences. To enrol in CVET, learners need to have at least a vocational qualification or validated competences and an educational qualification at EQF level 4.

Higher education programmes start at EQF level 6 and the first level of tertiary education has both an academic branch and professional higher education branch. These are accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET.

Adult education is divided into formal and continuing education. Formal education acquired within the adult education system allows adults to acquire general lower and upper secondary education at adult upper secondary schools. Schools implement individual curricula when needed. In addition to formal VET and higher education institutions provide continuing education and retraining courses.

**Distinctive features of VET**

It is possible to pursue a VET programme not only in Estonia, but also in other languages. In 2015, 78.5% of VET students studied in Estonian, while 21.5% also learned in English and Latvian. In the case of a foreign-language curriculum, Estonian language classes are mandatory. To complete the studies, secondary school students must pass the following State examination in Estonian as a second language or undergo a similar professional examination in Estonian. The aim is to equip graduates with language skills sufficient for professional activities in an Estonian-language working environment. The share of adult learners in VET is increasing. By 2015, the number of VET students aged 55 to 64 was 27% in 2015 (in 2009). At the same time, the number of VET students aged 16 or younger fell between 2009 and 2015. The participation rate of those aged 25+ in VET reached 32%, in 2015 (15% in 2009) while the share of pupils below 20 decreased to 47% in 2015 (43% in 2009). Since 2010, the proportion of adults who are university degree holders entering VET has been increasing.

The share of work-based learning (WBL) forms at least half of the VET part of the curriculum. Depending on the type of training, WBL can vary between 30% and 70%, and is usually equally divided between workshops at school and learning at a workplace. It features work and study assignments with specific study objectives.

Most basic education graduates pursue general secondary education. Preference in education paths vary greatly across regions: only 10% of VET learners in the Tallinn and Tartu county vocational education, while this option is preferred by over 80% of VET learners in the North-Eastern part of the country.

**Challenges and policy responses**

Among adults aged 25 to 64, 32.9% have neither a professional nor a vocational qualification. This objective is to reduce this share to less than 25% by 2020. Several measures have been launched to encourage adults without a prior professional or vocational qualification to return to formal education.

There is a high level of skills mismatch. To improve alignment between education and the labour market, a labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system (OSKA) was launched in 2015. Results are used in curriculum development, career counselling, and planning of State-funded education.

Early leaving from education and training is a significant problem in Estonia. The rate in the first year of VET was 24.7% in 2013. The goal is to reduce it to less than 20% by 2020. To prevent early leaving, career counselling is offered and several other measures implemented.

Participation in lifelong learning had been steadily increasing up to 12.5% in 2013 but dropped to 12.2% in 2015. The goal is to increase it to 20% by 2020. Age appears to have a substantial impact. Only 4.5% of people aged 55 to 64 participated in lifelong learning in 2015, in comparison with 24.5% in the 25 to 34 age group. To increase participation rates, the focus is on broadening access to non-formal education, training courses for developing key competences, career services and facilitating the participation of adults in formal education.

Participation in apprenticeship training is low (2.4% of all VET students). The number of participants started to increase gradually in 2015 due to the education ministry’s effort to develop a functioning and sustainable work-based learning system with stronger employer involvement.
**Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia is the key to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce capable of adapting to changes in the labour market. It is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research, and the national education framework includes a network of VET schools, a quality assurance body, sectoral councils, and awarding organisations.

**Supported by**

ISCED 2021, Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia.

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**Progression routes for students with incomplete compulsory education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Participation rates</th>
<th>Possible progression routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education (VET) programmes</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>May offer a school-based pathway, apprenticeship in a small-scale firm, or a continuing education course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning (WBL)</td>
<td>up to 2.5 years</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>May offer a school-based pathway, apprenticeship in a small-scale firm, or a continuing education course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing VET (CVET)</td>
<td>0.5 to 2.5 years</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>May offer a school-based pathway, apprenticeship in a small-scale firm, or a continuing education course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Estonia: education and training system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Possible progression routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERTIARY LEVEL</td>
<td>EQF 5</td>
<td>programmes</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Vocational qualification to continue further education or training courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-FORMAL ADULT LEARNING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional or vocational qualification to return to formal education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY LEVEL</td>
<td>EQF 4</td>
<td>programmes</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Vocational qualification to continue further education or training courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-SECONDARY LEVEL</td>
<td>EQF 3</td>
<td>programmes</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>Vocational qualification to continue further education or training courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Distinctive features of VET in Estonia**

- It is possible to pursue a VET programme not only in Estonian, but also in other languages. In 2015, 78.5% of VET students studied in Estonian, 4.6% in Latvian, and 8% in Russian. In English and Latvian. In the case of a foreign-language curriculum, Estonian, English and Latvian, all language classes are mandatory. To complete the studies, equivalences for VET programmes are required.

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**Challenges and policy responses**

Among adults aged 25 to 64, 39.2% have neither a professional nor a vocational qualification. The objective is to reduce this share to less than 25% by 2020. Several measures have been launched to encourage adults without a prior professional or vocational qualification to return to formal education.

**ESTONIA**

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**Spotlight on VET in Estonia**

Adult education is divided into formal education, training courses for adults, which focus on the acquisition of single competences. To enrol in CVET, learners need to have at least a vocational qualification or validated competences and an educational qualification at EQF level 4.

Higher education programmes start at EQF level 6 and the first level of tertiary education has both an academic branch and professional higher education branch. These are accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET.

Adapted education is divided into formal education and continuing education. Formal education acquired within the adult education system allows adults to acquire general lower and upper secondary education at adult upper secondary schools. Schools implement individual curricula when needed. In addition to VET education and higher education institutions provide continuing education and retraining courses.

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**It is possible to pursue a VET programme not only in Estonian, but also in other languages. In 2015, 78.5% of VET students studied in Estonian, 4.6% in Latvian, and 8% in Russian. In English and Latvian. In the case of a foreign-language curriculum, Estonian, English and Latvian, all language classes are mandatory. To complete the studies, equivalences for VET programmes are required. The aim is to equip graduates with language skills sufficient for professional activity in an Estonian-language working environment. The share of adult learners in VET is increasing. By 2015, the number of VET students was about 20% of the population age 15 to 64 (80 000 in 2000). At the same time, the number of VET students increased by 20% between 2009 and 2015.**

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**Early leaving from education and training is a significant problem in Estonia. The rate in the first year of VET was 24.7% in 2015.**

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**The share of work-based learning (WBL) forms at least half of the VET part of the curriculum. Depending on the type of training, WBL can vary between 30% and 70%. It is usually equally divided between workshops at school and learning at a workplace. It features work and study assignments with specific study objectives.**

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**Most basic education graduates pursue general secondary education. Preferences in education paths vary greatly across regions: only 2.6% of EQF level 2 graduates in higher education schools in cities (Tallinn and Tartu) choose vocational education, while this option is preferred by 21.6% in rural areas, and 52% in the North-Eastern part of the country.**
### Education and training in figures

#### Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes as % of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 70.4% is the percentage of students who enrolled in upper secondary programmes with a vocational dimension in 2014. There were no gender differences in upper secondary education at ISCED level 3. Further information can be found in the source.

#### Lifelong learning participation of population aged 25 to 64 % participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This table shows the percentage of adults aged 25 to 64 who participated in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey. Further information can be found in the source.

#### Early leavers from education and training as % of early leavers from education and training, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This table shows the percentage of early leavers from education and training who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (% 2014). Further information can be found in the source.

#### Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3) who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (%), 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This table shows the percentage of employees who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (% 2014). Further information can be found in the source.

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**Further information**


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**This Spotlight is based on input from the Ministry of Education and Research (ReferNet Estonia 2016).**
Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes, % of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28 AVERAGE</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes with a vocational dimension in Ireland at ISCED level 3, these are considered general programmes.

Lifelong learning % of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28 AVERAGE</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early leavers from education and training % of early leavers from education and training, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28 AVERAGE</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education and training in figures

Further information


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