

ESTONIA IN BRIEF

Type of government:	parliamentary democracy
Capital:	Tallinn
Currency:	EUR (since January 2011)
Neighbouring Countries:	Finland and Sweden across the Baltic Sea; Russian Federation, Latvia
Surface Area:	45 227 sq km
Population:	1 324 000
Population density:	29.6 inhabitants per square km
Official language:	Estonian
Main religions:	Evangelical Lutheran 13.4 %, Russian Orthodox 12.7%, Estonian Orthodox 2%
Labour force:	650 200 of whom 79 934 (12,3%) are unemployed (2010)
Employment sector:	service 67,3%, industry and construction 28,2%, agriculture and forestry 4,5%
Exports by Industries:	Machinery and equipment 19,6%, mineral products 16,8%, agricultural products and food preparations 10,1%
Main trading Partners:	Finland, Sweden, Russia

Further reading: www.innove.ee/career-services

CAREER SERVICES in ESTONIA

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Career guidance has been practiced in Estonia for about 90 years. The service has been called in different ways – the latest version being career services. Later development of this field has 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**.

The former staircase-image of one's career has gradually been replaced by the one of a **road passing through life** and encompassing all contexts that people operate in and all roles that they take.

Career services contain **career education, career information and career counselling** – its development and provision. These may include services in schools, universities, colleges, training institutions, public employment services, and companies, in the community sector and in the private sector.

The services in Estonia are mainly provided by the public sector within the education and labour market structures. Provision in the education sector tends to be more complex and divided across many institutions compared to the labour market sector.

In 2008, a contractual agreement to develop career services was signed between MoER and Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) stating the areas of responsibility in providing high quality career services to the whole population. The agreement is aimed at developing of methodology, training system, service provision, quality and co-operation in the field. The **National Resource Centre for Guidance** (NRCG, established in 1998) is the main partner of MoER and MoSA in developing career services in Estonia.

In cooperation with the members of the **Euroguidance network** NRCG supports guidance practitioners in promoting mobility and the European dimension in the field of guidance. Long term cooperation with the **network Academia** has enabled NRCG to offer international study visits for Estonian career specialists and introduce national experience to the practitioners from other European countries. As an Estonian representative of the **European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network**, NRCG takes part in developing lifelong guidance in education and employment sectors. Since 2010, NRCG is a member of the **University Network for Innovation in Guidance**. The main focus of the network is professionalization of career guidance specialists.

To assure the accessibility of career services, the **national forum for career services** has been established. The forum consists of a wide range of stakeholders, including practitioners, client representatives, employers, institutions from both education and labour sector.

The provision and development of **career services is financed** from the state and local government budget; a significant support comes from the European Lifelong Learning Programme and Structural Funds.

This leaflet has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Published in 2010.



Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium
Estonian Ministry of Education and Research



SERVICE PROVISION

In education sector, career services are provided as part of non-formal and formal education.

The national **basic school** curriculum and national **upper secondary school** curriculum include eight compulsory cross-curricular themes, one of them is the topic which supports pupils' career planning – “Lifelong learning and career planning”. In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi of the elective subject on careers education, which enhance the use of this possibility in the school curriculum. The national curricula define the school's obligation to ensure **the availability of career services** to the pupils. Most national curricula of the **vocational education training** include the theme of life-long learning and career planning.

In many cases, it is often an additional task of an individual staff member to be responsible for the co-ordination of the career management activities at school. **Career co-ordinator's** tasks include co-operation with other service providers and class teachers, supporting subject teachers in the implementation of the cross-curricular theme, organisation of site visits and, in some cases, delivery of an elective subject on career education.

Within non-formal education, the most important provider of career information and career counselling is the network of **regional youth information and counselling centres (YICCs)**. The centres provide career services on site as well as at schools by information specialists and counsellors. The quality requirements for the service provision in YICCs are described in relevant guidelines.



Career information specialists help to fulfil the target groups' need for information concerning education, labour market and professions. They deliver career lessons, instruct clients' career information search, manage information flows and co-operation with relevant networks, organise thematic events, conduct client satisfaction surveys etc.

The aim of the **career counsellors'** work is to help and support people in career planning, including in making decisions about choosing a profession, work, training and education, developing job search skills and forming an effective personal career planning style. The services are provided as face-to-face and distant sessions on an individual or group basis.

Career information and counselling are also provided by the **career centres in higher education institutions** and **regional employment offices**. Higher education institutions are focused on current students, employers and alumni. The provision of national labour market services and the payment of labour market benefits is organised by the **Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund** (the Fund) through its regional departments, which are located in every county. Career counselling is targeted only at registered unemployed people. As a new initiative career information points are opened for everybody.

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

Career practitioners co-operate with a wide network of service providers (i.e. school psychologists, logopedists, social workers, social-pedagogues, health consultants, special pedagogues etc).



TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION OF GUIDANCE PERSONNEL

The quality of the services depends on the providers' level of competency.

In Estonia, the professional qualifications system of career practitioners forms part of the national qualifications system. **The professional standards** establish the requirements on knowledge, skills, experience, values and personal characteristics necessary for the career counsellor, career information specialist and career co-ordinator at school.

The Society of Estonian Career Counsellors is the authorised organisation for accreditation of career counsellors.

The majority of the practitioners have a background in psychology, youth work, teacher training, information sciences or social work.

There are no regular accredited basic training programmes offered to the career specialists in the public universities. Estonian institutions of higher education provide career counselling education (both at the bachelor's and master's levels) primarily within the field of psychology and business management.

NRCG organises various short and long-term courses for the practitioners in the education and labour sector about innovative guidance and information retrieval methods, trends in economy and employment, mobility, mentoring etc.



In cooperation with three main public universities a **joint study programme (9 ECTS) for the career specialists** is offered. The study programme is based on the professional skills requirements set out in professional standards and it is registered with MoER. The study programme forms the basis for carrying out career specialists' continuing professional training.

In addition to the training programmes practitioners are supported by methodological and informational materials which are also available on national web-portal **Pathfinder**. The Pathfinder is targeted at career planners.

To exchange knowledge, related to provision and development of career services, 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.



Team of NRCG

