



# Thematic Overview: Description of Estonian VET system

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### 0101 - Political and socio-cultural/economic context

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

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, 39 towns, and 202 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 2005, about 68% of the population were Estonians. There are vocational educational institutions where instruction is in Estonian, institutions where instruction is in Russian and mixed types. One common feature is the significant improvement in knowledge of English. Knowledge of languages is becoming more expected on the labour market.

The experience of bilateral co-operation with the Nordic countries (especially Finland) is also a feature of the VET system. Active co-operation between (vocational) educational institutions has lasted over 10 years and has influenced their development.

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

### 0102 - Population and demographics

The area of Estonia is 54,227 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 1,344,684 in 2006. In 2002-03 the population decreased by 0.4% 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. From 2007, the number of potential students at secondary education level will start to fall which creating a problem for schools and vocational education providers. In

addition to financial problems (as providers are funded through a capitation system), the decreasing number of students will affect the quality of instruction (to have modern and high-quality facilities and teachers requires a certain number of learners). At the same time, the need for further training and retraining will be growing. Developing measures to meet these needs will be a challenge.

The decreasing number of potential students (about 50% in 10 years) will require a concentration of vocational training both in regions and sectors as well as a specialisation of institutions. Preparing for this demographic situation started during the past couple of years. It will be difficult to concentrate provision in certain regions as the success and viability of a region depends on the availability of education and its quality.

Population in Estonia ('000)								
Total population ('000)	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	1448	1372	1367	1361	1356	1351	1347	1344

(Source: Statistics Estonia, [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee))

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	1356	1314	1252	1190	1077	1062

(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).

### 0103 - Economy and labour market indicators

The economic activity of the population increased in 2005: employment increased and unemployment fell, a trend observed since 2001. In 2005, there were 607,400 persons employed (62.9% of the people aged 15-74). Compared to 2004 the number of employed people increased and the number of unemployed people decreased remarkably. The employment rate had not exceeded 600,000 since 1998.

Breakdown of economy by sectors (% in agriculture, % in manufacturing and % in the service sector)						
	1995	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Agriculture	10.2	7.2	6.9	6.2	5.9	5.3
Manufacturing	34.2	33.3	31.3	32.5	34.9	34.0
Service	55.6	59.5	61.7	61.4	59.3	60.7

(Source: Statistics Estonia, [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee))

Employment decreased in the agriculture sector (5.3% of total employment in 2005) and in the manufacturing sector (34% of total employment) over the last three years. Employment in the service sector was 60.7% of total employment in 2005.

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

The acquisition of manufacturing and engineering specialities has become more popular although the trends in the three economic sectors are different in more specific fields.

Employment Rate (Men, Women) (%)						
	1995	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Men	65.7	54.7	61.1	62	61.3	61.5
Women	52.9	60.0	51.4	52.1	52.9	54.8
Total	58.8	50.1	55.9	56.7	56.8	57.9

(Source: Statistics Estonia, [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee))

The greater proportion of students (66%), acquiring upper secondary vocational education, are young men with lower secondary education. On the other hand, in post-secondary vocational training there are "softer" areas of specialisation and the share of women is higher.

The unemployment rate between 1995 and 2003 (at a peak of 13.6%, in 2001), has decreased in recent years. In 2005, it was 7.9% which is the lowest rate since 1994. The unemployment rate decreased among both men and women in 2005 (8.8% among men and 7.1% among women). Unemployment has been higher among men than women since 1995.

Unemployment rates (total, men, women, young people under the age of 25, %)						
	1995	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total	9.7	13.6	10.3	10.0	9.7	7.9
Men	10.5	14.5	10.8	10.2	10.4	8.8
Women	8.9	12.6	9.7	9.9	8.9	7.1
Young people under the age of 25	14.4	23.8	17.6	20.6	21.7	15.9

(Source: Statistics Estonia, [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee))

Expenditure (% of GDP) on education and training					
	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Hariduskulud (% SKPst)	5.41	5.48	5.50	5.38	5.07

(Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, analysis department)

Public spending on VET has increased since 2001. Until 2003 the growth was 5-7% per year, in 2004 14% and 42% in 2005, reaching 958 million kroons. This

counterbalanced the previous period VET funding was lower than for other types of education. In 2005 VET expenditure, as a percentage of all education expenditure, was 11% (same as in 1995-1996). This rise was achieved through foreign aid in investment projects.

### 0104 - Educational attainment of population

In comparison to the EU average, the proportion of the population with low level qualifications is small (11%). For tertiary education, the percentage of the population aged 25-64 with higher education was higher than in most of the EU member states in 2004. Education has been traditionally highly valued (both in Soviet times and currently) and at the present time, education is valued (for example, 68% of upper-secondary general school graduates continued their studies at higher level both in 2005 and 2006).

Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 by ISCED level % (2005)			
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU-25	30%	46%	23%
Estonia	12%	55%	33%

(Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey)

In 2005, 14% of the population aged 18-24 had not achieved upper-secondary education and were not continuing their studies. The figure dropped to 13.2% in 2006. This indicator is significantly better than the EU average in 2006 (15.1%).

Percentage of the population, aged 18 to 24 years having left education and training with a low level of education.						
	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
EU-25	17.3	16.6	16.2	15.6	15.2	15.1
Estonia	14.2	12.6	11.8	13.7	14.0	13.2

(Source: Eurostat, EU Labor Force Survey)

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

### 0201 - Objectives and priorities

Current education policy follows a general liberal economic and political approach, dominant in Estonian society over the last decade. Attention has been given to privatisation and decentralising control of schools to the municipal level, as well as rationalising and improving cost-efficiency. This is less the case for policy towards employment services, where state offices still play an almost monopolistic role.

The aim of the vocational education and training (VET) system is to prepare young people, both socially and vocationally, for working life and produce a skilled labour force, which is competitive in Estonian and international labour markets.

The framework for VET policy is decided by the Parliament (*Riigikogu*) while the government decides on national strategies. Changing the VET system has been difficult in the transition period. In the early 1990s, it had to adapt to many challenges, such as: introduction of a market economy and political pluralism; implementation of modern curricular and education structures; the decline in VET participation and social status of VET, together with more recent preparations for a concept of lifelong learning.

While priority was given to general and higher education in the 1990s, more attention has been given to VET since 1998. Reforms have focused on diversifying and reorganising the VET structure, developing flexible funding mechanisms and a decentralised management with the involvement of social partners. These changes are expected to raise the social status of upper and post-secondary (non tertiary) VET and consequently the participation rate (only about ¼ of pupils after lower secondary education opted for VET in 2003).

The main direction of VET policy is laid out in the Concept of Vocational Education and Training (*Kutsehariduse kontseptuaalsed lähtekohad, 1998*) which is to enable individuals to develop and adapt to social change and to ensure broad-based occupational competences. Key principles for the organisation of VET were set out: efficiency, flexibility, functionality, co-operation, quality and availability. Changes have resulted in a new legal framework, providing for: more flexibility in VET provision; the rationalisation and privatisation of VET institutions; the introduction of a higher VET level (ISCED 5B) - applied higher education (*rakenduskõrgharidus*); as well as the establishment of vocational councils and involvement of social partners.

A number of important documents and development plans for VET have been agreed, these include:

- Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) which sets goals for VET development until 2008 and to plan necessary measures, activities and resources. It is based on what was achieved by the *Action Plan for Developing Estonian VET System in 2001-2004* (*Tegevuskava kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks Eestis aastateks 2001-2004*).

- State Vocational Education Institutions Network Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Riigikutseõppeasutuste võrgu arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) provides for a more even distribution of VET providers across the country to ensure: location is based on local needs; resources are used more efficiently; higher quality provision; improved accessibility.
- Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard 2006*) regulates the common requirements for VET at the level of basic and secondary education.
- The Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2005 – 2008 (*Elukestva õppe strateegia aastateks 2005-2008*) to improve adults' opportunities and motivation for participating in formal, non-formal and informal learning to improve their knowledge and skills in compliance with the needs of the country, society and labour market and their personal needs. The goal is to increase the share of 25-64 years old participating in adult training to 10% by 2008 (the percentage being 6.5% in 2007).

Other national policy documents, like the Estonian National Development Plan for the Implementation of the EU Structural Funds SPD 2004-2006 (*Eesti riiklik arengukava Euroopa Liidu struktuurifondide kasutuselevõtuks - ühtne programmdokument aastateks 2004-2006*) and the National Employment Action Plan 2004 (*Eesti Vabariigi tööhõive tegevuskava 2004*) stress the need for a national continuing training and lifelong learning system to improve the employability and quality of the labour force.

Other important developments include the modernisation of curricula whereby modular-based curricula were developed and implemented in a number of pilot institutions with Phare support between 1994-98. By 2001, all study programmes were modular and designed according to a competence-based system appropriate for initial and continuing training for both young people and adults. In 2004 the State Examination and Qualification Centre initiated the preparation of national curricula for vocational education. By the end of 2006 the Minister of Education and Research approved the first 5 national curricula for vocational studies. By the end of 2008 the Ministry wishes to approve all 35 national curricula foreseen for vocational education.

Reforms for VET teachers are also underway. The National Development Plan of Teachers Training 2003-2010 (draft version) (*Õpetajakoolituse riiklik arengukava 2003-2010 (projekt)*) requires a better link between teacher training and labour market skills needs through creating links between schools and enterprises. In recent years, several projects have been initiated through the European Social Fund (ESF) to raise the qualification of vocational teachers, raise their professional skills and involve them in various networks. The Government's European Union Policy for 2004-2006 (*Vabariigi Valitsuse Euroopa Liidu poliitika 2004-2006*) stresses the roles and competences of teachers and the need to modernise teacher training (especially for vocational teachers).

The Estonian National Development Plan for the Implementation of the EU Structural Funds (single programme document 2004-2006) (*Eesti riiklik arengukava Euroopa Liidu struktuurifondide kasutuselevõtuks (ühtne programmdokument 2004-2006)*) was created to plan the use of resources from the EU Structural Funds. The plan contains a detailed overview of the fields of activity which need support. Since 2004 Estonia has received support from the Structural Funds to develop our human

resources (94% of all the funds received have been divided between regions and respective objectives: 12.3% were allocated for developing the policies and systems related to education, training and labour market).

The last substantial change was to merge vocational institutions and to establish vocational training centres as well as to reduce the number of state-owned institutions and to set up private institutes. Regional vocational education centres have been established on the basis of existing VET institutions in 2000, with Phare support. They play a crucial role in the economic and social development of a region, providing various services, such as initial VET, applied higher education, CVT, counselling, continuing training of teachers, labour market analysis, programme development, local networking.

## 03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## 0301 - Administrative framework

The legislative base 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. Some consolidation of the laws would be useful. The main laws related to vocational education:

- Vocational Education Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus, 1998*) regulates the provision of VET at upper and post-secondary (non tertiary) level, foundation and operation of VET institutions. It was amended in 2006 to include new study forms;
- 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;
- Institutions of Applied Higher Education Act (*Rakenduskõrgkooli seadus, 1998*) regulates the foundation and operation of applied higher education institutions; provision of applied higher education, including that in VET institutions;
- Hobby Schools Act (*Huvikooli seadus, 2007*) stipulates the activity of municipal hobby schools;
- Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus, 1993*) regulates education and training provisions for adults;
- Professions Act (*Kutseseadus, 2000*) regulates the work of the Vocational Councils and the qualifications system. The act is the basis for developing vocational qualification requirements and the conditions and procedure for their attestation and award as well as the organisation of work of professional councils;
- Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutsequalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus, 2000*) to be employed in a regulated profession and taking into account European Union Directives.

## 0302 – Institutional framework: IVET

**The Ministry of Education and Research** (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) coordinates the preparation and implementation of education policies through local governments and other relevant Ministries. Their role is: to establish, reorganise and close public educational institutions (except universities and applied higher education institutions); to direct and organise the preparation of curricula, study programmes, textbooks and teaching/study aids (except for universities); and to administer public assets allocated to the education system.

Other Ministries involved include:

- **The Ministry of Social Affairs** (*Sotsiaalministeerium*) is responsible for the organising and financing training for unemployed people and for the administration of Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre;
- **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;
- **The Ministry of Internal Affairs** (*Siseministeerium*) – administers the following VET institutions: Rescue School of the College of the Public Service Academy of Estonia, Police School of the College of the Public Service Academy of Estonia, Muraste Border Guard School.

Several advisory bodies assist the Ministry of Education and Research in policy development, for example Teachers' Union, Education Organisation Council, Estonian Education Forum, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation, Estonian Qualification Authority, Estonian Research and Development Council, Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras, Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development Innove, and many others.

### **Role of local governments**

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

VET providers can be under local or central government or privately owned. They have a common management form by a director with the involvement of the teachers' council and the council of VET institutions. Directors are legal representatives and are accountable for their operation including the lawful use of funds. They are selected by public competition organised by the council of the VET institution pursuant to the procedure established by a regulation of the Minister of Education and Research. They are appointed by the founder of the VET institution and the term of office may not exceed five years. The head of an educational institution enters into employment contracts with its staff (including teachers), a competition is organised to fill the vacancies and the whole procedure is carried out with the approval of the council of the educational institution.

### **Role of social partners**

Social partner participation in VET is regulated by national legislation as well as by their own charters, action plans and agreements with other stakeholders. Their involvement in the administrative and consultative bodies of the education system has increased in the last decade. In particular, employers play a more active and influential role through their participation in Vocational Councils (established under the Vocational Educational Institutions Act) and in creating a national employee

qualification system. Vocational Councils develop qualification requirements and vocational standards, which are used as a basic reference in curricula development at educational institutions. At local level, social partners are less involved.

At national level, social partners are represented by Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda*) and Estonian Employers' Confederation (*Eesti Töoandjate Keskkliit*). Membership includes enterprises, employer/employee unions, and other employer associations. As a result of trilateral negotiations, the Agreement on Joint Activities (*Ühise tegevuse kokkulepe, 2000*) was signed to develop the national qualification system for employees, as well as to ensure a sufficient number of study places in IVET, to make the labour market more youth friendly and to improve in-service and re-training.

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.

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL PARTNERS	TYPE OF ROLE MAKING, (ADVISORY/DECISION DIRECT/INDIRECT)
<b>NATIONAL LEVEL</b>	Participating in the development of the professional qualifications system, preparing preliminary laws, elaborating strategies and the vocational/professional conception.	Advisory/direct
<b>REGIONAL LEVEL</b>	Developing professional standards	Advisory/direct
<b>SECTORAL LEVEL</b>	In-company training sessions, which are organised by employers or co-operation contracts between vocational associations and VET institution in order to ensure the compliance of theory with practical work /match required qualification standards and curricula	Decision making/direct
<b>ENTERPRISE LEVEL</b>	Training the necessary skilled workers personnel by employers/companies	Decision making/direct

### 0303 – Institutional framework: CVET

The institutional framework is the same for CVET and IVET. For detail, please see 0302.

## 04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**0401 - Background to the IVET system and diagram**

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

The 2006 amendment of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act defines the following structure for VET:

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

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

As of September 2006, there were 50 VET providers: 34 were public, 13 private and 3 municipally owned. In the past decade the number of students in VET has been stable (30 000 – 29,013 in 2005-06). 2/3 study at lower secondary and 1/3 at upper secondary level. 29 providers offer both lower and upper secondary level training, 8 offer lower secondary only and 16 offer upper secondary level only.

1/3 of graduates of lower secondary school and about 13% of graduates of upper secondary school continue their studies in VET institutions. The majority of students

are male (in 2005/2006, the proportion of female students was 45%). The proportion of female students is higher in post-secondary VET mainly because more female students acquire upper-secondary general education and there are more relevant areas of specialisation (i.e. health and beauty, service, social sciences, business and law). The number of students acquiring VET in Estonian (68%) is higher than the number of those studying in Russian, but the number of non-Estonian citizens has increased over the past decade.

About 38% of students are aged between 19-29 years. Compared to 1996, the number of students aged over 29 years has increased (from 4% in 1996 to 10% in 2005) so that the proportion of over 19-year-olds in VET is 48%.

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

#### 0402 - IVET at lower secondary level

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

#### 0403 - IVET at upper secondary education (school-based and alternance)

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

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

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

Students who have interrupted their upper-secondary vocational studies, have the right to continue in upper-secondary general school. A student can transfer in grades 11/12 on presentation of a study progress sheet with approval of the teacher's council.

Students in upper secondary education by programme orientation (general/vocational), 2000	
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION TOTAL ENROLMENT	51617
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS	32%
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION GENERAL AND PRE-VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS	68%

(Source: Eurostat, 2005)

#### 0404 - Apprenticeship training

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

An apprenticeship project was piloted in a number of countries including Estonia under Phare in 2002 targeted at people without lower secondary education. The project was followed by a more Estonian tailored project within the National Development Plan. The project started in 2005 and will last until 2008. It targets both young people and adults with only lower secondary level education who are aged 16 or over. Its general characteristics are:

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

In 2006 apprenticeship training as a work-based study form was entered in the Vocational Educational Institutions Act.

## 0405 - Other youth programmes and alternative pathways

### Pilot project "New opportunity"

The project "New Opportunity" was piloted in one Estonian VET institution from 01.09.2004 to 01.09.2007. 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.

## 0406 - Vocational education and training at post-secondary (non tertiary) level

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

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

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

## 0407 - Vocational education and training at tertiary level

Higher education (HE) system consists of an academic branch (ISCED 5A) and a professional branch or applied higher education (ISCED 5B).

Professional HE may be provided by:

- 1) applied HE institution (*rakenduskõrgkool*);
- 2) university college (*ülikooli kolledž*);
- 3) 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 3 to 4.5 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 (*rakendus kõrgharidusõppe 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.

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 people who have completed upper-secondary level education or training or who have equivalent foreign qualifications have a right to compete for admission to applied HE (as determined by the Ministry of Education and Research). Each provider may set more specific entry requirements which can differ by specialisation. The number of places at public-sector HE institutions is decided by the state.

The Ministry of Education and Research determines the state-commissioned education provision on the basis of propositions by schools, ministries and employers as well as according to budget restrictions. 40% of those who continue their education and training at tertiary level attend applied higher education institutions. Each HE institution is also entitled to allocate a number of additional places which are subject to fees.

Where applied higher education is provided by VET institutions, it is subject to all regulations of the Applied Higher Education Institutions Act (*Rakendus kõrgekooli seadus*). As of September 2005, applied HE was provided by 9 university colleges, 21 institutions of applied HE (13 of them are private schools) and 7 VET institutions (including one private school).

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

## 05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

### 0501 - Background information on continuing vocational education and training

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

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

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

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

Adults can also acquire upper and post-secondary VET in part-time study or as an external student. The 2006 amendment of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act allows VET institutions to offer various flexible study forms for preliminary VET, IVET and CVET according to previous levels of education (e.g. only lower secondary or upper secondary general, etc.). The government funds upper and post-secondary part-time study at VET institutions on the same basis as full-time study.

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

Formal adult education			
Education type	Provider	Study form	Financing
basic education, upper secondary general education	adult upper-secondary schools, evening or distance learning departments in upper-secondary general schools	evening courses, distance learning, external study	state financing
upper or post-secondary vocational education	vocational educational institutions	part-time study	state financing
(applied) higher education	universities, applied higher education institutions	part-time study, external study	adult student, employer, state financing in the fields of state priority and for specific target groups (i.e. teachers without higher education)

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

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

### **Policy developments and changes regarding lifelong learning**

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

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

### **Policy developments and changes regarding access to learning**

Studies indicate that the main reason for people not participating in training are lack of interest and lack of resources so, to promote participation, it is important to raise motivation and to invest additional resources. The Ministry of Education and Research is currently coordinating the preparation of a new adult education funding model (initially from ESF resources and then the state budget). The model consists of three pillars and each pillar is under the responsibility of a different ministry.

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

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. It is supported by EU programmes and organisations of other countries. Much attention is also paid to learning at home through various e-study opportunities. Formal education institutions are especially keen on using e-learning for adult education.

### **Planning and forecasting mechanisms**

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

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

### **0502 - Publicly promoted CVET for all**

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

**Formal education acquired within the adult education system:** lower and upper secondary general education is free of charge including for evening courses, distance learning or external study. This also applied for vocational education, although places are limited.

**Professional education and training of adults:** professional and non-formal education and training is charged and paid for either by the participant or the employer. Participants can exempt training expenditure from their income tax. If an employer pays non-formal training costs for employees, expenses are considered as taxable fringe benefit. Due to the availability of European Social Fund resources, participants and employers have paid little to participate in training.

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

### **Target group and provision**

**Formal and professional education and training of adults in institutions of higher education (HE):** people who have completed upper or post-secondary VET may continue studies in applied HE at a VET institution an applied institution of HE or

at university. Studies are available part-time, through evening courses or distance learning and participants may have to pay a fee.

**Formal and professional education and training of adults in VET institutions:** pursuant to the Minister of Education Regulation No. 61 of November 2001 The Conditions and Procedure for Organisation of Adult Professional Education and Training in Vocational Educational Institutions (*Täiskasvanute tööalase koolituse kutseõppeasutuses korraldamise tingimused ja kord*), a VET institution shall organise adult professional education and training if there is a demand and the relevant material resources and teachers exist. Both state and private VET institutions offer training to individuals and enterprises. Courses can be organised in the daytime, evening and through distance learning. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate.

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

### **Quality assurance**

Professional education and training is under the responsibility of training institutions and providers. Private training providers must be licensed by the Ministry of Education and Research according to the Private School Act (only training at licensed providers is tax deductible). A training licence is valid for three to five years. One of the priorities for 2007 is to prepare new principles and criteria for issuing training licences.

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

### **0503 - Training for unemployed people and others vulnerable to exclusion in the labour market**

The Employment Service Act (*Tööturuteenuse seadus, 2000*) 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 2003, the Labour Market Board (*Tööturuamet*) commissioned employment training from 50 educational providers (adult education institutions, VET institutions and institutions of higher education) for 1592 persons. In 2004, 668 people participated in training or 1.8% of all people registered as unemployed.

### **Target groups and provision**

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

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

### **Providers**

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

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

### **Quality assurance**

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

### **0504 - CVET at the initiative of enterprises or social partners**

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

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

Some enterprises have their own training agreements which may include additional support for study leave, funding, etc. There is a training support programme operated by Enterprise Estonia (*Ettevõtluse Arendamise Sihtasutus*) and co-financed from the EU Structural Funds (*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. A survey examining training activities called the Consultancy and Training Market in the Estonian Business Sector (*Konsultatsiooni- ja koolitusturg Eesti äriectoris*) undertaken in 2005 found that from 764 companies questioned, 85% have organized external

training (Ariko Marketing, 2005). The results showed that there was a direct correlation between company size and willingness to offer training.

	Size class (number of employees)			
	Total (%)	10-49 (%)	50-249 (%)	250 or more(%)
EU-25	61	56	80	95
Estonia	63	58	85	96

(Source: Ariko Marketing, 2005)

### 0505 - CVET at the initiative of the individual

The Adult Education Act provides the right for employees to take study leave on the basis of a notice from the educational institution. The length can be at least 30 days in an academic year (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 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.

There are many reasons why people participate in continuing training and retraining as shown by various surveys. These show when people participate in education and training on their own initiative (e.g. in the case of non-formal education). However, only general statistics are available.

## 06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

**0601 - Types of teachers and trainers in VET**

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

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

**Vocational teacher**

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

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

Requirements for vocational teachers			
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
V	1 year experience as VET teacher (adaptation year)	Master's degree or equivalent in the subject taught	Teacher training pursuant to the standard
	3 years of work experience in the subject taught or 5 years of experience as VET teacher	Master's degree or equivalent	Teacher training pursuant to the standard

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

Teacher training takes place at higher education institutions and teacher training curricula has to be registered with the Ministry of Education and Research. Training must meet the Teacher Training Framework Requirements (*Õpetajakoolituse 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.

### Developments for VET teachers and trainers

The Estonian Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) sets forth new objectives: to create a training system for workplace supervisors; to develop of a professional standard and new qualification requirements for vocational teachers; to implement vocational teacher training and in-service training to involve more teachers and to raise their qualification levels.

The development of professional standard has already been achieved whereas the rest of the activities are still in progress.

## 0602 - Types of teachers and trainers in IVET

### Vocational teachers and trainers 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

### **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, 5B) or vocational upper secondary or post-secondary (non-tertiary) (3B, 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 number (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 worklife 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 is paid for jointly by the state budget and through a training fund collected from teacher wages (3% of their salary). As for the general population, VET teachers are also entitled to study leave lasting for the duration of the course or for at least 30 days in an academic year. A higher number of days can be awarded for teacher studying for higher education. Teachers continue to receive average wages

for 10 days and then at least the minimum wage for the remainder of the leave (see 0505 for more information on study leave).

### 0603 - Types of teachers and trainers in CVET

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

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

### 0701 - Mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

The anticipation of skills and human resources needed on the labour market is organised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. In 2003, annual employment forecast reports were created and in 2005, the anticipation of skill needs was included. Each report forecasts for 6-7 years.

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 creating forecasts of training need in vocational and higher education. In turn the forecasts constitute a basis for determining the national training need by study fields and levels (ISCED 97 – *International Standard Classification of Education*).

The anticipation of skill needs has become an essential part in education planning, especially taking into account the future needs of the labour market. The Development Plan for Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2005-2008 (*Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava 2005-2008*) declares that adequate long-term forecasting of labour market demand as well as strategic research form the basis for determining state-funded student places in formal education.

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

### 0702 - Bridging pathways and new educational partnerships

The Estonian VET system has been thoroughly reformed since the mid-1990s. Some reforms have been designed to encourage more partnerships in the VET system. For example, vocational education providers are expected to build partnerships with local enterprises to ensure that their students are able to complete the work-based part of their training (as required within new curricula and qualifications). To do this, enterprise representatives participate in VET providers' councils (with local authority representatives) and therefore can also influence provision. The rationale of such cooperation is to ensure that provider specialisation meets local labour market needs and that teachers keep up to date with local skills needs. In some areas, VET providers occupy the same premises as general education providers and share teaching staff and teaching aids.

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

Public institutions (ministries, Estonian Qualification Authority, State Examination and Qualification Centre) coordinate the preparation, provision and recognition of areas of specialisation. The state, professional associations and schools participate in

international councils, co-operation groups and networks which enable the exchange of best practices and the development of new curricula.

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

### 0703 - Renewal of curricula

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

In 2004 the State Examination and Qualification Centre initiated the preparation of national curricula for vocational education (supported by the state budget and Structural Funds). By the end of 2006 the Minister of Education and Research approved the first 5 national vocational curricula. By the end of 2008 the Ministry wishes to approve all 35 proposed national vocational curricula. The preparation is co-ordinated by the State Examination and Qualification Centre and the work is organised in working groups of vocational education experts.

At the same time, the development of professional standards has also been underway. Development has been project based through sectoral initiatives or through regional demand. Initiatives have also been taken by VET providers themselves.

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 development has motivated providers to strengthen their contacts with employers and graduates as a way to gauge labour market skills needs.

Studies are finished after completing the curriculum and the final examination of state vocational education. It is also possible to finish by taking the voluntary professional examination organised by the Estonian Qualification Authority. The Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education 2005-2008 aims to merge 80% of final and professional examinations by 2008.

Several learning possibilities based on e-learning enable employed people to participate in training and allow them to plan their career and their training needs more easily. E-learning provides VET schools with the possibilities to go international in their activities. New technologies and methods via e-learning improve learner motivation and give people with different learning styles the opportunity to choose the way they want to learn. E-learning allows teachers to do more practical work in the classroom and students can acquire the theoretical part online. In Estonia e-learning is coordinated by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre which administrates two consortiums: Estonian e-University and Estonian e-VET. Estonian e-VET

consortium (<http://www.e-vet.ee>) 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.

## 0801 – Accumulating, accrediting and validating formal learning

### Initial vocational education and training

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

The system has been amended recently due to two main developments: the introduction of competence-based vocational education curricula; and the increasing number of people who pass professional qualifications. The introduction of standardised qualifications based on standard curricula with standard exams has increased confidence in the value of certification procedures. Passing an examination is proof of a certain standard within a professional qualification. This process will be completed for all curricula and exams by the end of 2008 (see Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008: *Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) when 35 national curricula should be approved by the Ministry of Education and Research.

VET graduates can nonetheless apply for the accreditation of their professional qualifications according to the Professions Act. This started in 2003 as a PHARE pilot project; professional committees were formed and examination materials were prepared for 9 professions. In 2004, 641 VET graduates passed the professional qualification examination (about 9 % of graduates), in 2005, the number had doubled. In 2006, 25% or 1706 of all graduates passed the professional examination. According to the Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008, the final examinations of VET and professional qualification examinations will be combined by 2008 when 70% of VET graduates should pass.

There is no such national regulation for recognising prior education and work experience for those who wish to continue their VET studies. The Vocational Education Standard stipulates that providers must recognize the knowledge and skills acquired in lower secondary school if a student continues studies in the same specialisation.

Legal framework for validating formal learning:

- Professions Act (*Kutseseadus, 2000*) provides the basis for developing requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedure for their attestation and award;
- Vocational Education Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus, 1998*) regulates the provision of VET, foundation and operation of VET institutions;
- Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard, 2006*) stipulates the structure of VET, the requirements for national and school curricula and the procedure for graduation;
- Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus, 1993*) regulates education and training provision for adults;

- Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act (*Välisriigis omandatud kutsekvalifikatsiooni tunnustamise seadus, 2000*) regulates the recognition to be employed in a regulated profession and taking into account European Union Directives;
- Regulation No. 120 of the Government (June 2005) regarding the conformity of Estonian qualifications and the qualifications of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics prior to August 1991 (*Vabariigi Valitsuse 6. juuni 2005 a. määrus nr 120 Eesti Vabariigi kvalifikatsioonide ja enne 20. augustit 1991. a antud endise NSV Liidu kvalifikatsioonide vastavus*).

The bodies related to certification of formal education:

- The Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) coordinates the implementation of education policy to direct and organise the preparation of curricula, study programmes, textbooks and teaching/study aids;
- The National Examination and Qualification Centre (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus - REKK*) is a state agency administered by the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main purpose is to implement national education and language policies. It also prepares and directs the development of national vocational education curricula. It verifies upon the registration of VET curricula that they are compliant with the qualification standard of the relevant profession approved by the professional council;
- In 2001 the Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekvalifikatsiooni Sihtasutus*) was established to develop a professional qualifications system and establish prerequisites for achieving comparability of employee qualifications and their acknowledgement by other countries. The Authority is under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research. It organises activities of professional councils and is responsible for developing, supplementing and improving professional standards, and establishing evaluation criteria. It also manages the state register of professions. All vocational qualifications should meet standard quality criteria in their design and operation and be clearly located in the framework for professional standards;
- The Professional council (*Kutsenõukogu*) is a joint body of confederations of employers/employees, professional and vocational associations and authorised representatives of state. Its objective is to implement systems of professional qualifications. It appoints experts who map the main vocations within a profession; develop the professional standard, grades of qualification as well as the scheme for awarding professional qualifications.

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

### **Continuing vocational education and training**

The basis of adult education is the Adult Education Act (*Täiskasvanute koolituse seadus, 1993*). Pursuant to the Private Education Institution Act (*Erakooliseadus,*

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

## 0802 – Accumulating, accrediting and validating non-formal/informal learning

The accreditation of prior learning and work experience (*varasema õppe- ja töökogemuse arvestamine - VÕTA*) is not regulated by legislation. In higher education, providers set down their own rules which can include accrediting work experience. Higher education institutions do recognise studies passed in other HE institutions and can accredit this learning. In-service training can be accredited if courses have been finished by taking an examination. Amendments are being prepared for the Higher Education Standard to regulate the implementation of accreditation of prior learning and work experience (*VÕTA*).

When accrediting prior work experience, the focus is on the skills and knowledge acquired and on the compliance of the work experience with the curriculum. The Vocational Education Standard stipulates that VET providers must recognise the knowledge and skills acquired in lower secondary school if a student continues studies in the same specialisation. VET institutions have also laid down this procedure in their statutes.

### **Attestation and award of professional qualifications**

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

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

### **Europass National Centre**

Increasing the transparency of qualifications is an important component in ensuring a better linking of education and training systems. The national Europass centre started its activities in Estonia in May 2005 and promotes the use of Europass documents to describe their learning and work experience. The centre also coordinates the issue of study leave documents and keeps a record.

### 0803 – Impact of EU policy cooperation

EU policies for raising the level of vocational skills and knowledge and recognition of qualifications have an impact on Estonian national education policy. The principles of the Helsinki communiqué address VET issues in Estonia. To respond, Estonia will convert the current 5-level competence-based professional qualification system to the 8-level framework described in the European Qualification Framework which unites both general and vocational qualifications. The necessary legislation to convert will be in place at the end of 2007 and the change will occur between 2008 and 2012.

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

### 0804 – Facilitating EU mobility

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

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

## 0901 - Strategy and provision

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

### **Guidance in the education sector**

Guidance is provided within formal education and as part of youth work (extra-curricular activities). Within youth work, a network of information and counselling centres (*maakondlikud noorte teabe- ja nõustamiskeskused*) has operated since 1999, contracted regionally by county governors and funded annually by the Ministry of Education and Research and local governments.

Pursuant to the Youth Work Act (*Noorsootöö seadus*) the organisation of information and guidance services is the responsibility of the county governor. There is at least one centre in each county which provide young people with information on educational options. They provide on-the-spot information and guidance services and visit schools; they also support teachers in giving good quality guidance services. The centres organise regular thematic trainings, seminars, lectures as well as tests for evaluating characteristics and abilities. Services are targeted at students in general education schools, parents, students entering general/vocational education schools, drop-outs and VET school students.

Within general education, guidance is usually provided by classroom teachers or as a cross-curricular theme. Since September 2004 all schools must implement Professional Career and its Development (*Tööalane karjäär ja selle kujundamine*). Guidance is also discussed in elective courses, student evaluations, during aptitude and professional suitability evaluations and discussions with students with learning difficulties. The schools organise information sessions and visits to fairs, seminars and lectures, include experts from outside the school or in case of sufficient financial resources create a post for in-school specialist (part-time career coordinators work in about 30% of the schools).

As career services for young people are under the responsibility of different parties, they can be disparate: the Ministry of Education and Research is preparing a new, more coherent model for delivering services to young people. The Estonian Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008 includes the following measure to create and implement a coherent guidance system: to provide career counselling to 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> year and 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> year students; and to introduce vocational and labour market options. Due to the lack of financial resource and trained specialists, only a few VET institutions have taken up the initiative. Some provide specific lessons (e.g. job seeking skills) or occasionally invite a counsellor from outside to make some personality and ability tests for students, and deliver lectures on labour market information.

The Ministry of Education and Research prepared the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008 approved by the government in December 2005. The main aim is to

create a common information system for adults on their education and training options and to provide career services. The Ministry also supports the National Resource Centre for Guidance (*Karjäärinõustamise Teabekeskus* – within the Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development – Innove) to support guidance practitioners in promoting mobility and the European dimension within education and training and to develop a national guidance system. Since 2005, it has been working on a project co-funded from the Ministry and Structural Funds to improve the quality of guidance services. This project will run until 2008. It also cooperates in an international project (MEDSUI) to build a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network.

### **Guidance in the labour market sector**

In 2006, the Employment Services and Supports Act came into force. Its aims are to achieve a high employment rate and to prevent long-term unemployment and social exclusion by providing career services and employment support. Vocational counselling is provided by 22 career counsellors working in 16 Labour Market Board departments across Estonia. Depending on client needs, a career counsellor will: help assess individual educational and job related aspirations; map their existing qualifications; assess professional suitability; inform about the labour market situation and different training possibilities; advise on how to make well-informed decisions concerning employment and training; and/or provide instructions on job seeking. Pursuant to the new legislation, career counsellors also offer other employment services (13 total), including information on the labour market situation, employment services and support, employment mediation, employment training, professional traineeship, possibilities for working in public sector, etc. Among career counsellors there are four people focusing particularly on counselling people with special needs.

The network of career counsellors is co-ordinated by the Estonian Labour Market Board (*Tööhõiveamet*) that is also responsible for the provision of training. In addition, there is a small network of 5 EURES counsellors who are engaged in job mediation to foreign countries. With the constantly increasing number of people wishing to work abroad, the need for and proportion of career counselling is likely to increase.

### **Private guidance provision**

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

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

### **0902 - Target groups and modes of delivery**

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

information retrieval on learning and working opportunities from the Internet, and in some cases, the completing of various personality and ability tests.

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

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

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

### 0903 - Guidance and counselling personnel

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

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

#### **Qualifications of the guidance personnel in the education sector**

In December 2005, a qualification standard for guidance practitioners (career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools) was approved and in May 2006 the Career Counsellors Association organised the first professional qualification examination for career counsellors. The qualification 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. In the beginning of this year the association started preparing to award the qualification of career information specialist.

No universities offer approved formal study programmes to train career practitioners. Currently they have mostly acquired their basic professional skills through different training courses (including non-formal education).

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

To exchange knowledge related to provision and development of career services the Estonian NRCG organises international study visits in co-operation with colleagues from the Euroguidance network. This enables practitioners to get acquainted with career services in other European countries.

### **Qualifications of the guidance personnel in the labour market sector**

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

## 10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

**1001 - Background information to financing arrangements for training**

The Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) should create a stable budgeting approach for the VET system. To cover costs, efficiency savings should be achieved by a more rational use of resources and a better allocation to priority areas. General goals of the development of vocational education are described in the Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008, approved by the government in July 2005. Future financial planning will focus on the development of regional vocational education centres and regional economic and social development. This will require intensive investment in upgrading the VET framework, e.g. updating the qualifications structure for teaching staff, better forecasting for labour market development, etc.

Since 2005, funding coefficients have been changed to reflect the cost differences in training for different professions. According to the Development Plan for VET Funding in 2005-2008 the factors used in calculating VET provider budgets have changed. From 2005, numbers of students will be the most important factor rather than premises costs. In the next years there will be a substantial increase in the allocation for the basic student cost in VET (1.5 times higher than for general education by 2009: 20% increase). At the same time, funds will be allocated to VET institutions not in receipt of investments by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

**1002 - Funding for initial vocational education and training**

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

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

The number of student places commissioned and funded by the state is decided by the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Sotsiaalministeerium*), the Estonian Labour Market Board (*Tööturuamet*), the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (*Majandus- ja Kommunikatsiooniministeerium*), the Office of Regional Minister (*Regionaalministri Büroo*), employers' and employees' associations and professional associations.

The allocation for each student place for each budgetary year is established by the Government. Similarly, they establish the fields of study (areas of specialisation, different curriculum groups), forms of study (daytime study, evening courses, apprenticeship) and the provision for students with special needs.

In 2007, the student cost in VET institutions was EUR 1150 of which teacher salaries and social taxation amounted to EUR 757 and study materials to EUR 64. To calculate study costs, the student costs are multiplied by the factor given to a field of

study, form of study and, if appropriate, with the special needs' education factor. The student cost also covers management costs, and wages and social tax costs of non-pedagogical staff of EUR 330.

The Ministry of Education and Research covers study costs in accordance with the following formula: annual number of state commissioned student places x student cost x the factor of field of study x the factor of the form of study.

### **Private vocational educational institutions**

Financing for private VET institutions is regulated pursuant to the Private Schools Act (*Erakooliseadus, 1998*). Teacher salaries are calculated on the same basis as public or municipal VET institutions, and the costs of acquiring study materials are covered from the state budget. This applies where the VET institution is providing state commissioned education. Admission numbers are approved by the Ministry of Education and Research on the basis and pursuant to the procedure prescribed by the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus, 1998*). In 2003-04, the Ministry of Education and Research financed a small number (196) of student places in private VET institutions.

Where the state does not commission education from a private VET institution, the institution can receive its budget from tuition fees - the amounts are determined by the owner and are fixed for an academic year. The tuition fee may be increased by up to 10% between two academic years unless otherwise provided for by the contract between the private institution and the student. Private VET institutions may receive subsidies for specific purposes from the state or municipal budget.

### **1003 - Funding for continuing vocational education and training, and adult learning**

Continuing education is not state-financed in Estonia although it is provided in state VET institutions in the case of formal education and by private VET institutions or training centres. Tuition fees are paid by clients i.e. either individuals or employers who want their employees to be trained.

The state contributes through tax reductions for employers and individuals paying for their own training. Some types of continuing training and adult education are covered by public financing and legislation as listed below.

**Formal education:** State funds are available for those participating in:

- Basic and upper secondary education by evening and distance learning in adult upper secondary general schools - available to all;
- post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education by distance learning - 800 to 900 student places;
- part-time education in higher education institutions for certain fields (e.g. teachers without higher education).

**Professional education:** state funding is allocated for some professions to participate in work-related training, for example, for teachers (3% of the salary fund), officials (2-4% of the salary fund), unemployed and job-seekers (in the area of

government of the Ministry of Social Affairs). Enterprise Estonia (*Ettevõtlike Arendamise Sihtasutus*) implements a programme of training support, which is co-funded from the EU Structural Funds. This can be applied for by business and its purpose is to support in-service training and re-training. Learning Estonian among the non-Estonian population is supported by the Interest project.

**Non-formal education:** allocations are made from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research through a competition. The salaries of approximately 45 headmasters and teachers in non-formal education training centres can be funded. The Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (*Eesti Vabaharidusliit*) organises the competition.

Individuals or their employers usually pay for work-related training and non-formal education. The state supports through the tax system. Pursuant to the Income Tax Act (*Tulumaksuseadus, 1999*) people can be exempted from income tax up to the extent of the sum spent on training. Where non-formal education is funded by an employer, it is treated as a fringe benefit. Pursuant to the Value Added Tax Act (*Käibemaksuseadus, 2001*), enterprises are exempt from paying pre-school, lower and upper secondary education, and higher education as well as private tuition related to general education and other training, except for training provided by a company or sole proprietor.

Cost of CVT courses as % of total labour cost (all enterprises), by type of cost (1999)			
	TOTAL COSTS	DIRECT COSTS	LABOUR COSTS OF PARTICIPANTS
EU-15	2.3	1.4	0.8
ESTONIA	1.8	1.3	0.5

In Estonia, the labour costs are lower than in most EU countries and CVT courses are relatively high in price. Hence, total costs of CVT are smaller.

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

**Use of the EU Structural Funds:** since 2004 the Ministry of Education and Research has planned activities for the development of lifelong learning in line with the aims of the European Social Fund (ESF) and described in the Estonian National Development Plan for Implementation of the EU Structural Funds – a single programme document for 2004-2006 (*Eesti riiklik arengukava Euroopa Liidu struktuurifondide kasutuselevõtuks - ühtne programmdokument aastateks 2004-2006*). The Ministry implements programmes under two measures: human resources development and infrastructure and local development.

### 1004 - Funding for training for unemployed people and other groups excluded from the labour market

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

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

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

Costs of social protection of the unemployed (in thousand euros):							
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
TOTAL COSTS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION OF UNEMPLOYED	5781.0	6110.1	15746.2	17162.8	17246.7	12222.9	10307.7
INCLUDING:							
ORGANISATION OF TRAINING	1773.9	1775.2	2044.7	2057.5	2703.7	3037.4	2792.6
STIPENDS	341.4	258.9	384.7	388.7	467.7	456.8	461.8

Source: Labour Market Board

Following EU accession, finances are allocated to increase the competitiveness of unemployed persons. The Estonian National Development Plan contains priorities for programmes, which promote equal opportunities in the labour market and higher social involvement of unemployed people (measure 1.3). Active employment measures tailored to the needs of unemployed people and employers have been developed: long-term training courses are available for skills where there is high demand. Unemployed people can also participate in entrepreneurship training.

## 1005 - Perspectives and issues: from funding to investing in human resources

### IVET

The aim for the immediate future is to allocate additional funding to VET by increasing funding for student costs so that the funding per student place would be 1.5 times higher in VET than in general education. This will enable salaries of VET teachers to be increased and will allow more investment in modern study aids.

The State Vocational Education Institutions Network Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Riigikutseõppeasutuste võrgu arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) will reduce the number of VET institutions by merging and pooling their resources. Currently, the budget of EUR 45 million is divided amongst 49 VET institutions, which will be reduced to 25-9. For 2007-11, resources allocated from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will be approximately EUR 109.3 million for capital investment to renovate and upgrade buildings and to improve the training and living conditions of students.

In future years, additional resources from the European Social Fund (ESF) could be used to develop national priorities. The total amount for the first programme period (2004-06) for measure 1.1 of the Estonian National Development Plan amounts to EUR 53 588 477 (25% of which should come from the state budget and 75% from

ESF). In the longer term, it will not be enough to rely on foreign aid and a much higher contribution of state resources will be needed.

### **CVET**

Funds are being allocated to various activities as defined in the National Priorities of Adult Education 2004-2006 (*Täiskasvanuhariduse riiklikud prioriteetidid aastatel 2004-2006*) approved by the Government in 2004. Based on the Adult Education Act, the Ministry of Education and Research will allocate funds to implement the national priorities.

Both direct and indirect aid will be increased to make education and training more accessible. Over the next couple of years it will be possible to use ESF funds to provide training for people who are less competitive and for unemployed persons. The funds will be used to develop a system for accrediting prior learning and work experience, the system of professional qualifications and the system of counselling – all supporting the principles of lifelong learning.

The Adult Education Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Täiskasvanuhariduse arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) was prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research. According to the draft, a working group will be established to develop a system of funding adult education.

### 1101 - National strategies related to policy priorities, programmes and initiatives at EU level

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

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

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

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

The Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008 (*Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2005-2008*) focuses, among other issues, on two aspects of

promoting lifelong learning: a student should attain the appropriate attitude and skills in the VET system for further studies; and, VET institutions network should play a bigger role in adult education. The infrastructure of VET institutions is currently being changed through investments from the state budget and the EU structural funds to enable institutions to merge and to provide up-to-date skills that are in line with the needs of employers. The same infrastructure will also be used for adult education and training.

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

The focus on increasing training opportunities for adults is also the main objective of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2005 – 2008 (*Elukestva Õppe strateegia aastateks 2005-2008*, approved by the Government in November 2005). The strategy includes an increase in the share of education and training participants aged 25 to 64 to 10% by 2008. The Lisbon Strategy aims for 12.5% by 2010.

Similar priorities are outlined in the National Priorities of Adult Education for 2004-2006 (*Täiskasvanuhariduse riiklikud prioriteetid aastatel 2004-2006*). Also included is the development of a funding model for adult education using the tax system to encourage enterprises to invest in employee training and to co-operate with the EU in the fields of education, training and youth work and the related programmes: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and European Youth.

## 1102 - Impact of Europeanisation/internationalisation on education and training

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

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

vocational studies are considered to be too practical for distance learning for the whole course.

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

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