



Structures of Education,
Vocational Training
and Adult Education
Systems in Europe,

ESTONIA

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION	7
1.1. Background.....	7
1.2. Basis for the education system: principles - legislation	7
1.3. Distribution of responsibilities for the organization and administration of the education and training system	8
1.4. Inspection/supervision/guidance	9
1.5. Financing	10
1.6. Advisory and consultative bodies	11
1.7. Private schools.....	12
2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION	13
2.1. Organization	13
2.2. Program of activities.....	14
2.3. Assessment	14
2.4. Teachers	14
2.5. Statistics	15
3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION/TRAINING.....	16
3.1. Organization of the school	17
3.2. Curriculum	17
3.3. Assessment/certification.....	17
3.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements	18
3.5. Teachers	18
3.6. Statistics	19
4. POST-COMPULSORY GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION	20
4.A. General Secondary Education (<i>üldkeskharidus</i>).....	20
4.A.1. Organization of the school	20
4.A.2. Curriculum	20
4.A.3. Assessment/certification	21
4.A.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements	21
4.A.5. Teachers	21
4.B. Vocational Secondary Education (<i>kutsekeskharidus</i>)	21
4.B.1. Organization	22
4.B.2. Curriculum	23
4.B.3. Assessment/Certification	23
4.B.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements	23
4.B.5. Teachers	24
4.B.6. Statistics	24
5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALTERNANCE 25	
6. HIGHER EDUCATION	26
6.A. Non-university tertiary education	27
6.A.1. Admission requirements.....	27
6.A.2. Fees/Financial support for students.....	28
6.A.3. Academic year.....	28
6.A.4. Courses	28
6.A.5. Assessment/qualifications	28
6.A.6. Teachers	29
6.B. University tertiary education	29
6.B.1. Admission requirements.....	29
6.B.2. Fees/financial support for students.....	29
6.B.3. Academic year	29
6.B.4. Courses.....	29

6.B.5. Assessment/qualifications	30
6.B.6. Teachers	30
6.7 Statistics	30
7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS	32
7.1. Policy and legislative framework	32
7.2. Management/Organizations involved	33
7.3 Funding	34
7.4. Human resources	34
7.5. Organization	34
7.5.1. Types of training institutions	34
7.5.2. Access requirements	35
7.5.3. Objectives of the programs	36
7.5.4. Main principles of the organization of time and venue	36
7.5.5. Curriculum	36
7.6. Guidance/counselling services	36
7.7. Assessment, accreditation and recognition	36
7.8. Statistics	37

INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered ⁽¹⁾ and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter
Head of the EURYDICE
European Unit

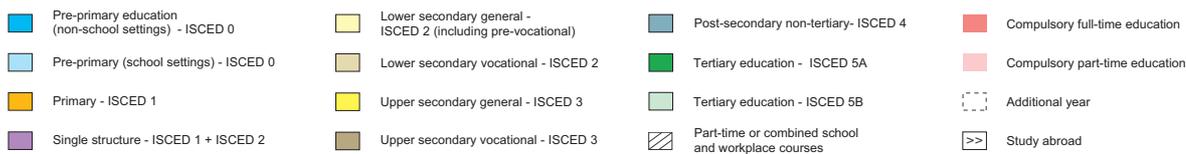
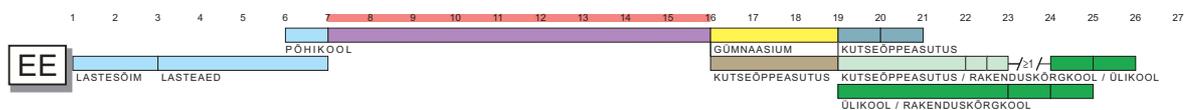
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June 2003

(1) The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in Estonia, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1. Background

Estonia lies on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea and covers 45,227 square kilometres. The country is situated on the level north-western part of the East European platform, on which there are only slight variations in elevation. The highest point (*Suur Munamägi*) stands 318 meters above the sea level. Estonia has over 1500 islands and more than 1400 lakes, and its population is 1,361,242 (1 January, 2002). Its capital is Tallinn, with a population of 398,434. The ethnic divisions are Estonian 67.9%, Russian 25.6%, Ukrainian 2.1%, Belo Russian 1.3%, Finnish 0.9% and others, 2.2%. The religious denominations are Lutheran, Russian Orthodox, Baptist and others. The main languages are Estonian (official) and Russian.

Independence of Estonia was declared on 24 February 1918. National independence was regained on 20 August 1991.

Adopted by a referendum on 28 June 1992, the Constitution establishes the principles of the rule of law. It recognises the principle of the separation of powers, enforces the system of checks and balances, the independence of the courts, and guarantees fundamental human rights and liberties according to universally recognised principles and norms. Estonia is a democratic parliamentary republic; the head of state is the President of the Republic. Supreme power is vested in its citizens who have the right to vote by electing 101 members to the *Riigikogu* (State Assembly or parliament), and by participating in referendums. Executive power rests with the Government.

Estonia is divided into 15 counties (*maakond*), 202 rural municipalities (*vald*), and 46 towns (*linn*). Since 20 June 1992, the national currency has been the Estonian kroon (1 kroon = 100 sents). Estonia has been a member of the United Nations since September 17, 1991 and a member of the Council of Europe since May 1993.

1.2. Basis for the education system: principles - legislation

The fundamental principles of provision of education in the Estonian Republic are established in the Constitution of the Republic (*põhiseadus*) of 1992, the Child Protection Act (*lastekaitseadus*) of 1992 and the Education Act (*haridusseadus*) of 1992.

According to the Constitution (*põhiseadus*), education in Estonia is supervised by the State. Everyone has the right to an education. Parents have the final decision in making educational choices for their children. Everyone has the right to receive instruction in Estonian. Education is compulsory for school-aged children to the extent specified by law and free of charge in state and municipal general education schools. In order to make education accessible, the state and local governments must maintain the requisite number of educational institutions. Other educational institutions, including private schools, may also be established and maintained pursuant to law.

According to the Child Protection Act (*lastekaitseadus*), every child has the right to an education, which develops the child's mental and physical abilities and forms a healthy personality. Instruction must not involve physical violence or mental abuse. Instruction must not be ideologically biased or promote hate or violence. Instruction shall focus on the individual, take into consideration the differences between the sexes and be based on recognition of the students' achievements. Teachers and caregivers of disabled children (physical disabilities, sensory disorders, speech disorders or combinations thereof, mental disabilities, nervous disorders, psychiatric disorders or behavioural disorders) must have attained special education and be suitable for such work.

The Education Act (*haridusseadus*) determines the general principles of the Estonian educational system. The Act enunciates the following general goals of the system: to promote development of a personality, family and the Estonian nation, as well as those of national minorities, of Estonian economic, political, and cultural life and nature

preservation in the global economic and cultural context; to educate loyal citizens; and to set up the prerequisites of continuing education for all.

The Estonian State guarantees the instruction of the Estonian language in all minority-language public schools and minority-language study groups. In basic schools, the owner of school (the state or a local government) makes the choice of the language of instruction. In upper-secondary schools, the language of instruction is Estonian but it may be any other language, if the Government of the Republic approves the according application. Religious studies are voluntary for students. A school is required to teach religious studies if at least 15 students in a stage of study wish so.

The Estonian educational system is based on the laws shown below:

The Republic of Estonia Education Act (*Eesti Vabariigi haridusseadus*) of 23 March 1992 (last amended in 2003) is a framework law, the main aim of which is to lay down the general principles of the Estonian educational system.

The Pre-primary Childcare Institutions Act (*koolieelse lasteasutuse seadus*) of March 1999 (2003) sets out the conditions for establishing, operating and closing pre-primary institutions in municipalities, as well as the principles governing the pre-primary education system.

The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (*põhikooli- ja gümnaasiumiseadus*) of September 1993 (2003) sets out the conditions for establishing, operating and closing state and municipal primary schools, basic schools and gymnasias, as well as the principles governing basic and general secondary education.

The Vocational Educational Institutions Act (*kutseõppeasutuse seadus*) of June 1998 (2003) lays down the conditions for establishing, running and closing state and municipal vocational education institutions, along with the principles governing vocational secondary and applied higher education in accordance with the vocational secondary and applied higher education curricula.

The Private Schools Act (*erakooliseadus*) of June 1998 (2003) sets out the conditions for establishing such schools as the property of private individuals or legal entities, together with the principles for running these institutions, and the requirements for the education that the schools deliver.

The Applied Higher Education Institutions Act (*rakendus kõrgkooli seadus*) of June 1998 (2003) lays down the conditions for establishing, running and closing state applied higher education institutions as well as the

principles governing higher education in accordance with the curricula of applied higher education and master studies.

The Universities Act (*ülikooliseadus*) of January 1995 (2003) sets out the conditions for establishing, running and closing public universities, along with the principles governing higher education in accordance with the curricula of applied higher education and bachelor studies, and master and doctoral studies.

The Higher Education Standard (*kõrgharidusstandard*) of June 2000 (2002) determines requirements for different levels of higher education and for teacher training.

The Adult Education Act (*täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*) of November 1993 (2003) lays down the legal conditions for training adults, along with legal guarantees for life-long learning in accordance with the wishes of the persons concerned.

The Organization of Research and Development Act (*teadus- ja arendustegevuse korraldus seadus*) of March 1997 (2003) sets out the basic principles governing activity to ensure the future development of creative science and technology as an integral part of Estonian cultural and economic life.

1.3. Distribution of responsibilities for the organization and administration of the education and training system

The administration of education has been divided between different leadership / government levels. The following bodies are responsible for the education system:

National level

The Parliament (*Riigikogu*) approves the laws regulating education, through which the main directions of education policy and the principles of school organization are defined. It also approves tuition fees.

The Government of the Republic (*Vabariigi Valitsus*) decides the national strategies for education, establishes national educational standards, establishes salary scales for educational staff, and draws up rules for compulsory school attendance.

The Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of education policy; ensuring the satisfactory implementation of – and compliance with –

educational legislation; drafting the requirements for the general content of education (national curricula and standards); establishing the rules on national supervision and ensuring that it is satisfactory; accrediting and issuing licenses to educational institutions and financing them in accordance with the State Budget Act (*riigieelarve seadus*); enforcing the financial norms for use by institutions in the design of local and school budgets; supervising administration of the methodological services of institutions; and administering the public assets used by public educational institutions and the education system as a whole.

Local level

The county governments (*maavalitsus*) and their structures include the departments of education, which provide supervision at regional level of the educational activities of pre-primary childcare institutions and schools. They formulate the education development plans of the county, provide information on public financing to the Ministry of Education and Research, organise events for pupils and teachers in the counties and advise local government on educational questions.

The local government authorities (*vald, linn*) organize maintenance of pre-primary childcare institutions, basic and secondary schools, schools for extra-curricular activities and school libraries. They also run cultural centres, museums, sports centres and other local institutions in the municipality or town concerned.

In addition, the local government authorities keep registers of children in the compulsory education age-range, monitor their attendance, appoint the heads of municipal educational institutions, draw up and implement plans for the development of regional education, define and approve school districts, appoint school boards and run school medical services and meals.

School level

Schools have to ensure study opportunities for each child subject to the obligation to attend school who resides in the school district, as well as health care for their pupils, and draw up a timetable in accordance with health protection norms. In order to ensure consistent development of a school, the school has to prepare a development plan in co-ordination with the school board (*hoolekogu*) and teachers' council (*õppenõukogu*).

The curriculum of the school, which conforms to the national curriculum, is the source document for studies. The school objectives, lesson plans, content of subjects and the elective courses available are all specified in the school curriculum.

The head (*direktor*) is responsible for the general state and development of the school. He/she has to ensure the effective running and organization of the school; effectively manage its teaching and financial activities, in co-operation with the school board, the teachers' council and the students' board (*õpilasesindus*); sign employment contracts with school staff; and organize job interviews for vacant teaching posts.

Parents, teachers, representatives of local authorities, organizations and alumni form the school board (*hoolekogu*) whose function is to support the school in monitoring the educational activities of the school, and facilitating the creation of better conditions. The school board has to submit proposals to the local authorities in order to resolve the issues related to the school betterment. The head is accountable to the school board.

The teachers' board (*õppenõukogu*) has to define, analyse, and evaluate the teaching activities in the school, and carry out the necessary management decisions.

Teachers (*õpetaja*) select each year the textbooks, workbooks and instructional materials necessary for studies. They draw up work-plans according to the school curriculum, and select or devise teaching methods.

Pupils (*õpilane*) are allowed to choose a school on the basis of their interests and abilities, to select subjects from the elective courses, form representative bodies, establish associations and organise activities at the school.

1.4. Inspection/supervision/guidance

According to the Constitution, education in Estonia is supervised by the State. The national supervision is organised and co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. More specifically, supervision is the task of the monitoring department (*järelevalveosakond*) of the Ministry and the education departments of the county governments.

The state has established educational standards for every level of the Estonian education system (pre-primary, basic (lower-secondary), secondary (upper-secondary) and higher

education) that determines the general goals of studies on each level, the conditions for admission and graduation (the required knowledge, skills and experience) and the methods for monitoring the level achieved. The quality assurance methods on the national level are:

1. issuing teaching licenses for educational institutions and registering their curricula;
2. accreditation of curricula and institutions;
3. national monitoring;
4. training and certification according to qualification requirements of teachers and lecturers;
5. evaluation of the students' study results against the education standard.

Ministry of Education and Research carries out the tasks of the national supervision in co-operation with the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus*) and the Higher Education Evaluation Council (*Kõrghariduse Hindamise Nõukogu*), which both are under its jurisdiction. The task of monitoring of quality assurance the vocational and professional qualifications is mandated to the vocational councils (*kutsenõukogud*), established for that purpose.

For the evaluation and to improve the quality of basic education, the students finishing basic school (9-year studies) have to take three externally set and internally administered final exams. At the end of each school stage standardised national tests are carried out.

At the end of the upper-secondary level (12-year studies), the students have to take five final examinations, three of which must be externally set and marked.

Higher education is evaluated through accreditation (*akrediteerimine*) of a university and its curricula. During the accreditation procedure for a university, the organisation of a university or its structural unit is evaluated, as well as the correspondence of the study environment to the goals of the studies, and the efficiency of the use of resources. During the accreditation of a curriculum, its correspondence to the Higher Education Standard (*kõrgharidusstandard*) is evaluated.

1.5. Financing

Based on the number of children/pupils in the educational institution, the salaries of the teaching staff of a pre-primary education institution, a school and a vocational education

institution, and expenses related to in-service training are covered from the state budget. The amount of the resources for in-service training is 3% of annual salary fund of teaching staff. This concerns also the private education institutions.

Pre-primary education institutions receive their funding from the state and local budget, parents, and donations (from institutions, enterprises, organizations, and individuals). The parents cover catering expenses. Other costs (maintenance, salaries of non-teaching staff and study materials) are covered by the local government, or partly by parents, in accordance with a decision by the local government council.

Both lower and upper secondary schools receive their funding from the state and local budget. They can receive additional finances by participation in various educational programs / projects and from donations.

In addition to the funds for salaries of teaching staff and resources for in-service training, also the expenses related to the acquisition of textbooks, are covered from the state budget.

The owner – local government – covers all other expenses of a municipal school.

Vocational education institutions receive funding from the state and local budget, from foundations, fee-charging services related to the main activities of schools and other funds.

The study costs of students studying on the basis of basic education are covered from the state budget within the limits of the number of student places financed by the state, pursuant the cost of a study place and the indexes of curricula and study forms (daytime studies, evening studies or distance studies). In order to cover the study costs related to the teaching of students studying on the basis of secondary education, the contract should be signed between corresponding municipality or city government and the Ministry of Education and Research. The Government establishes the cost of a student place for each budgetary year.

From the state budget, on the basis of a contract between the corresponding rural municipality or city government and the Ministry of Education and Research, also the study costs related to preliminary vocational training (*kutsealane eelkoolitus*) for persons acquiring basic education in municipal schools may be covered.

Applied higher education institution (*rakendusõrgkool*) receives their funding from the state budget to the extent of the state commissioned student places. An applied higher education institution has the right to offer paid services related to its basic activities (in-service training and distance studies, contracted activities, professional counselling etc).

The study places are financed in correspondence to the number of graduates from applied higher education or master's studies, determined by the state commission. Financing is realised in the amount of calculated cost of a student place during the nominal duration of applied higher education or master's studies.

The calculated cost of a student place established by the state commission is calculated as the result of multiplication of the basic cost and the index established for the field of study. The Government endorses both the basic costs and indexes.

University, in order to finance its operations, uses resources obtained from the state budget, tuition fees, paid services, resources gained from research and development activities and other sources. The costs of student places of a university are covered from the state budget to the extent of state commissioned education. The study places are financed according to the number of graduates with a master's degree established by the state commission contract. Financing is carried out within the limits of the calculated cost of a master's study place from the beginning of bachelor studies until the end of the nominal duration of master's studies but not longer than 5 years. Based on the state commission, a university establishes per one student place of master's study for its calculated cost the minimum of 1.5 student places of bachelor study.

1.6. Advisory and consultative bodies

The Ministry of Education and Research is assisted in defining its policy by different consultative bodies as follows:

- The Subject Panels (*ainenõukogud*), consultative bodies for general education;
- The Pre-Primary Education Council (*Alushariduse Nõukogu*), the advisory body at the Ministry for pre-primary education;
- The Primary Education Council (*Algõpetuse Nõukogu*), the advisory body at the Ministry for primary education;
- The Vocational Education Council (*Kutsehariduse Nõukogu*), the advisory body at the Ministry for vocational education.
- The Special Educational Needs Council (*Hariduslike erivajadustega õpilaste nõukogu*), the advisory body at the Ministry, which is concerned with problems of students with special needs.

- The General Education Management Board (*Hariduskorralduse Nõukoda*), the consultative body of heads of regional educational departments;
- The Student Advisory Chamber (*Õppurite Nõukoda*), a consultative body for the Minister, consisting of secondary, vocational and university student representatives and their organizations;
- The Educational Forum (*Haridusfoorum*), an advisory body of different interest groups discussing development issues in education;
- The Higher Education Advisory Chamber (*Kõrghariduse Nõukoda*), a consultative body of university representatives at the Ministry, which is concerned with problems of the university education;
- The Science Competence Council (*Teaduskompetentsi Nõukogu*), the advisory body at the Ministry, which is concerned with targeted financing of research topics;
- The National Adult Education Council (*Täiskasvanuhariduse Nõukogu*), the advisory body established by the Government, which is concerned with adult education problems.

The list is not complete.

In order to successfully participate in the legislative process of the EU, the Ministry of Education and Research recently formed three more working-groups at the Ministry which consist of executive officials and experts of various fields both from the Ministry of Education and Research as well as from other ministries, government agencies and authorities and representatives of social partners:

- 1) national working-group of education, training and youth;
- 2) national working-group of science and research;
- 3) national working-group of recognition of professional qualifications.

The task of the working-groups is to analyse the initiatives of the European Commission and the positions of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament and assess Estonian national positions regarding education, training, youth and research.

1.7. Private schools

The Ministry of Education issues licenses to private schools in accordance with their curricula, if they meet the necessary requirements. One of them is that the curriculum should correspond to the educational standards fixed for the level of education concerned.

Private schools are also eligible for support from the national budget to cover expenditure on teacher salaries and instructional materials, in much the same way as in schools that are responsible to the central government and municipalities. However, the owners of private schools have to bear their maintenance costs.

Recognition of private higher education institutions, including their right to award degrees and diplomas, is dependent on accreditation.

Out of 653 institutions of general education in the 2002/03 school year, 32 are responsible to the central government and 587 to the municipalities, while 34 are privately owned. In 2002/03, private general education, private VET, and private higher education accounted for 1.8%, 5.0% and 20.3% respectively of all pupils and students in Estonia.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The role of pre-primary institutions is to support and complement the family contribution, by promoting the growth, development and individuality of children.

The aims and tasks of pre-primary education are set out in the 1999 Pre-primary Childcare Institutions Act and in the 1999 National Curriculum for Pre-primary Education.

The aims of pre-primary education are: to support the development of children according to their abilities and interests, to instil values in children; and to teach them basic skills for learning at school and their whole life.

Pre-primary institutions are coeducational, intended for children aged up to seven. Considering the age of children, the pre-primary institutions are nurseries (*lastesõim*) – for children up to the age of three, and kindergartens (*lasteaed*). For children with special needs, special pre-primary institutions are established.

Several novel practices have emerged in nineties, including family care, 'integration' groups (in which children with special needs are able to mix with other children and develop alongside them while remaining close to home), family advice services, private kindergartens and children centres. Pre-primary education may also be provided in preparatory groups by basic schools.

It is not compulsory to attend a pre-primary institution in Estonia. The parents have the responsibility to ensure that a child has an adequate pre-primary education and local authorities must provide for all the children in its service area the opportunity to attend a pre-primary institution.

The number of pre-primary children in classes immediately preceding basic schools is greater than in pre-primary classes for the very youngest.

2.1. Organization

Pre-primary education institutions are mainly municipal nurseries and kindergartens. They have a director and a board of trustees

(*hoolekogu*). In general, a pre-primary institution operates all year round with a break during the summer holidays of one to one and a half months (usually in July and August). Children who need a place in a pre-primary institution in summer have access to a regional operating childcare institution.

Pre-primary groups are based on the age of children, as follows: nursery group, aged up to three; younger group, aged from three to five; middle group, aged from five to six, and older group, aged from six to seven. A composite group, aged from two to seven may also be established by parental application. The maximum size of a nursery group is 14 children; a kindergarten group – 20 children, and a composite group – 18 children. Groups are not based on children's level of personal development. Evaluation is informal and plays no part in the possible transfer of children from one group to another.

Special pre-primary learning groups and institutions support children who have problems with their eyesight, hearing or speaking, or physical or mental handicaps. The number of children in these groups is usually smaller. In addition, family advice centres have been established to run regular rehabilitation sessions for children unable to attend pre-primary institutions.

A pre-primary institution is entitled to draw up its plan of activity and daily work schedule, in accordance with national tradition and the cultural peculiarities of its region. The local government authority determines which language should be used in institutions employing only a single language for their classes.

Education and instruction activities in a pre-primary institution are organized according to a group timetable determining, corresponding to the children's age, on the daily routine, sleep and wakefulness. The timetable also establishes daily procedures (eating, washing, dressing, tidying the room etc.), children activities (play, creative work, physical exercise etc.) and planned study and schooling activities designed by the group teacher.

Specific activities and games are planned in the group timetable on a weekly basis.

A pre-primary school may share premises with the primary grades of basic school.

2.2. Program of activities

The National Curriculum for pre-School Education governs the work of pre-primary institutions. The curriculum foresees an all-round development and preparation of children for proceeding to the next level of education. Through learning and activities related to learning children's creativity, communication skills, and mental and physical skills are developed.

The contents of education and instruction activities have to be given in five categories: 1) language and speech; 2) mathematics; 3) art; 4) music; 5) physical exercise. With the above categories additional topics like nature conservation, local history, national traditions etc. are combined. In a pre-primary institution where education and instruction activities are not carried out in Estonian, the sixth category of the Estonian language is added, studying of which starts at the age of 5-6.

Children with special needs are cared for and taught according to special programs, with the goal to reduce the treated special need to a minimum before the child reaches the age of compulsory school attendance. In order to develop co-operation between the family and the pre-primary institution, counselling centres have been opened where help is given to children with special needs and their parents.

Teaching staff is responsible for methods of instruction and the materials used in support. Institutions have to establish rules for the effective evaluation of teaching and children's progress, in accordance with the curricular requirements. It is necessary to tie study and educational activities with forming a child's physical development and hygienic habits and most importantly with play and activities in the open air. During the recent years, the role of audiovisual and multimedia facilities has grown in study and educational activities.

Some of the privately owned pre-primary institutions use alternative pedagogical methods that correspond to the institution's general approach (Waldorf-kindergartens, Tartu catholic Congregation's Kindergarten etc.). Alternative pedagogy is also implemented in special pre-primary institutions.

In order to improve their children's readiness for basic school, most parents of 5-6-year-olds try to make the most of opportunities offered by pre-primary establishments. Special school preparation groups are also quite common, although attendance at them is not a precondition for entry into the first grade.

2.3. Assessment

The teacher follows regularly the physical, mental and social (including aesthetic and moral) development of a child. Once or twice a year the teacher provides the parent with a written description of developments. In preparing the development descriptions and providing oral evaluation, the basis is the expected child development at the age of three, five and seven. These indicators are presented as indicators of physical, mental and social development. The division is relative, since one and the same indicator may be analysed from different points of view. The expected results of child development are not treated as compulsory for all children but are merely generally accepted results that help plan the activities useful for the child's development.

In the evaluation process, observation is mostly used. Indirect methods like interview or analysis of children's works are also suitable. The methods used are introduced to the parents. The development of a child is described from the standpoint of the child, valuing his or her own achievements.

The condition for admission to grade 1 is reaching the age of compulsory school attendance. Children who attain 7 years of age by 1 October of the given year are subject to the obligation to attend school. A parent may apply to an advisory commission for postponement of the obligation to attend school.

2.4. Teachers

In addition to the core teaching staff, music teachers and physical education instructors are employed in pre-primary institutions.

The pre-primary teacher study program should comprise 120-160 credits; see 6.A.3.

Pre-primary teachers work with a group of children.

Pre-primary teacher's training seeks to impart the necessary theoretical and practical skills. It emphasises the importance of familiarity with the early development of children and the environment in which it occurs, bearing in mind individual needs and character on the one hand, and familiarity with the demands of the curriculum on the other. It also stresses the need to approach teaching creatively. The content

and organization of training are conditioned by the goals of subsequent education, and the need for readiness to accept changes in social circumstances and design further study activities accordingly.

As regards of initial training institutions, legal status and in-service training, see 3.5.

2.5. Statistics

By 31 December 2000, 67% of children aged between one and six attended pre-primary institutions. For three- to six-year-old children, the ratio was 79%.

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Pre-primary institutions	713	744	767	671	667	670	668	663	646
Number of pupils, thousands	83,5	90,4	81,1	60,9	58,4	56,3	53,5	51,1	50,6
Gross enrolment rate for age-group 1-6, %	63	69	56	57	59	61	62	64	67
Net enrolment rate for age-group 3-6, %	68	65	69	72	74	76	79
Number of pupils per 100 places in institutions	106	99	84	120	118	115	111	99	101

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION/TRAINING

The Estonian legislation doesn't define the aims of compulsory and secondary education but the aim of general education as a whole. The Education Act defines general education as a system of knowledge, abilities, skills, values and rules of behaviour, which help an individual to become a constantly developing person, able to lead a dignified life, to respect himself or herself, his or her family, fellows and nature, to choose and acquire a suitable occupation, to be creative and bear citizen responsibility.

Children who attain 7 years of age by 1 October of the given year are subject to the obligation to attend school. It continues until they have satisfactorily completed basic education (9 grades), or have reached the age of 17.

With the acquisition of general education deals the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (1993).

The Estonian educational system does not differentiate between primary and lower secondary education but forms a single structure.

Basic education is normally acquired on school premises, although study at home or in hospitals are allowed under exceptional circumstances. If children are absent from school for long periods because of ill-health, teachers may visit and help them at home. Similarly, if children are ill in hospital, teachers are available to give them lessons, subject to medical approval.

If necessary, the following classes are established, in a state or municipal school:

- 1) classes for children with physical and sensory disabilities, speech impairments, sensory disabilities and mental disorders;
- 2) opportunity classes (*tasandusklass*) for teaching children with learning difficulties;
- 3) supplementary learning classes (*abiklass*) for teaching children with slight learning disabilities;
- 4) coping classes (*toimetulekuklass*) for teaching children with moderate learning disabilities;
- 5) nursing classes (*hooldusklass*) for teaching children with severe and profound learning disabilities.

School classes in general education are usually mixed, although separate classes for girls and boys are possible. The upper limit of the size of a class is 36 pupils. In order to help teachers work effectively, classes are reduced in size if they include pupils with special needs or significant learning difficulties (each of whom is considered equivalent to three pupils for this purpose). Composite classes are formed, if the number of pupils in two or more classes together is 20 or less. In 2001/02, special education was provided for 15% of pupils at basic school level (with 4.1% attending special schools and classes). Every attempt is made to place children with only minor disabilities into mainstream schools, reserving special schools for those with more serious problems.

The executive bodies of local governments establish, if necessary, special groups for children of grades 7-9 with behavioural disorders. Bearing in mind individual needs and interests of students as well as the corresponding conditions for their upbringing, the local governments shall create boarding school facilities at the school where studying and living is supported by the state.

The school head may, with the consent of the local government, form preparatory groups for pre-primary children to provide opportunities to acquire pre-primary education, form remedial groups (groups formed to provide learning support outside of lessons for students with learning difficulties), long day groups (to provide students from grades 1 to 9 support and supervision in organising time free of studies) and school dormitories in the school. Also hobby groups, activity classes and other forms of extracurricular activities may be established at a school.

There are textbooks for every subject, mostly by grade. Every year a textbooks list is prepared, of which the school/the teacher can choose the most suitable, and the school procures according to the number of students (in most subjects, there are two parallel textbooks). The textbooks in the list are financed from the State budget. Teacher may use any teaching material to achieve given objectives. The school is not obliged to buy textbooks.

3.1. Organization of the school

Basic schools operate in one or more shifts. The school year usually lasts from 1 September in the calendar year until June the following year. It consists of a study period and school holidays, which include one week in the autumn, two weeks at Christmas and one week in the spring, in addition to the summer break. The study period is a minimum of 175 days (35 weeks, five days of study in a week). Each period lasts 45 minutes, with the number of lessons that pupils should attend during the week specified in the school curriculum. The maximum number of lessons per week for the different grades is as follows:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lesson/ week	20	23	25	25	28	30	30	32	34

3.2. Curriculum

The basis of instruction and study activities is the National Curriculum of Basic and Upper-secondary Schools (1996, revised version, 2002). It covers grades 1-12. Children with special need study on the basis of the simplified national curriculum for basic schools or the national curriculum for pupils with moderate and severe learning disabilities.

The national curriculum lays down the basic principles of schooling, providing a framework for the organization of teaching and course content for all institutions of general education, regardless of their language of instruction and ownership. Schools have to base their individual work program (the school curriculum) on the national curriculum. Schools need to specify the content of the compulsory topics/subjects they will teach as well as the content of the elective subjects they offer.

The standards of basic education are laid down in the national curriculum. The national curriculum specifies the educational aims, the basic principles of national curriculum, competencies to be acquired for completing stages of education (stage I: grades 1–3; stage II: grades 4–6; stage III: grades 7–9), the basic principles for organization of educational activity

and student assessment, and provides directions for elective subjects. It also provides a list of compulsory subjects with a number of lessons for each subject, and syllabi. A brief rationale and general aims (objectives of teaching) and expectations precede each syllabus. Then follows a list of attainment targets, which summarises the outcomes of education in terms of knowledge and skills.

The total period of study and its requirements may also be regulated by individual curricula. Optional subjects jointly selected by pupils or students and the school contributes to around 5% of basic school courses.

The elective subjects offered by a school may contribute to its own special identity related to a chosen subject bias, whether in languages, arts, science, or economic or other disciplines. In other cases, schools may provide for a diversity of grades, and teach students involved in broad and varied elective courses, in accordance with their own preferences and the skills of teaching staff.

Teachers are free to decide on the teaching methods and materials used for meeting the aims of the curricula.

3.3. Assessment/certification

Assessment is an integral part of educational activities. Abilities may be assessed verbally, study results (knowledge and skills) are usually indicated by numerical grades based on a 5-point system, where 5 stands for 'very good', 4, 'good', 3, 'satisfactory', 2, 'unsatisfactory' and 1, 'poor'.

The national curriculum specifies that acquiring required study results, obtaining knowledge and skills should be assessed. A student should know what will be assessed, when it will occur and what means and criteria will be used. Pupils are graded at the end of a complete school session or part of it (term, or half-term), or at the end of an entire school course.

The academic achievements of pupils, including final satisfactory completion of schooling, are formally recorded in the award of a certificate. Pupils receive grade/form certificates for each school year, as well as a school-leaving certificate at the end of basic school.

To finish basic school, pupils have to pass three final externally set examinations. The examination papers are marked internally at the school. For evaluating and influencing the quality of basic studies, standardised national

tests are also administered at the end of the 3rd and 6th grades. The analysis of the standardised national tests and the externally set final examinations is sample based.

3.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

As a general rule, pupils are entitled to progress to the next year, if they have been assessed in all compulsory subjects and not marked 'unsatisfactory' at the end of the school year. In fact, the law also enables teachers to allow pupils to move on to the following year, if they have had one or two of such 'unsatisfactory' grades. Pupils in difficulty can be made to repeat the year.

Satisfactorily completed basic education is regarded as the normal stepping-stone to secondary education.

School psychologists are usually employed for pupils and students in basic and upper secondary general institutions (grades 1-12), with one psychologist for 600 students. Several local government authorities have developed services to provide psychological counselling to all schools in their region. In some cases, psychologists only work in large schools, since there tend to be fewer students with problems in smaller schools. School and local government staff may refer students or their parents to family advice service centres, which have been established in several towns to provide psychological advice.

Positions of speech therapists are established for pupils with speech and writing impairments for grades 1 through 4, in particular cases also for older pupils. Lessons of speech therapy are held outside the lessons of the curriculum. The most common forms of study are group and individual lessons. Lessons take place two to three times per week.

According to the Education Act, the local municipality is obliged to provide special aid and training for pupils with special needs.

For determining individual curriculum or a school for children with special needs, regional counselling centres have been opened.

Young people wishing to remain anonymous can receive information and help via the telephone, e.g. from the crisis aid, the life line or youth help lines. In recent years, help and counselling are also provided via the Internet.

3.5. Teachers

Class teachers (*klassiõpetaja*) and subject teachers (*aineõpetaja*) work in basic schools. A class teacher generally teaches all subjects in his or her class in grades 1–6. A subject teacher teaches one or several subjects in grades 5–9, according to his or her qualifications.

Teachers are employed by the head. Usually teachers have permanent contracts. The work of teachers, who are generally full-time, is organized essentially with respect to specific grades and subjects.

Besides direct classroom teaching and its preparation, teachers may also be involved in the development of teaching materials, organization of school events and activities (such as club activities), study tours and excursions, consultations, remedial classes, school/home intercommunication and contributions to school publications. They may also substitute for other teachers who are absent for any reason.

Teachers are trained in universities or in applied higher education institutions. According to the renewed Framework Requirements for Teacher's Training (2002, came into effect 1 January 2003), both, the class teacher and subject teacher study programs should comprise 200 credits (see 6.A.3).

The Estonian higher education system is under reform now. According to the new system, teacher training is organized as a 3-4-year bachelor's study + 1-2-year master's study or as an integrated 5-year bachelor's and master's study. There also exists a possibility to take a 1-year teacher's training (40 credits) after graduating from general courses.

The introduction of the new system started in the 2002/03 academic years, therefore several different programs exist at the same time and a great deal of them last 4 years now. At the moment, graduates are awarded a diploma or a diploma and an 'old' bachelor's degree depending on the program (*diplomiõpe* or *bakalaureuseõpe*). After the end of the transition period, a master's degree (*magistrikraad*) is needed for qualification. A bachelor's degree is since the academic year of 2002/03 an intermediate degree, with the only exception of pre-primary teacher training where it gives a qualification.

The final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase (*kutseasta*) will be introduced from the 2003/04 academic years. Nominal duration of the phase is one year. The certificate awarded

provides evidence of teaching qualifications. If a teacher is not fully or appropriately qualified, only a one-year employment contract may be signed with him or her.

Depending on qualifications, effectiveness of work and length of service, a teacher is appointed to the position of: junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher and teacher-methodologist. A teacher is appointed to the one position, regardless of the number of subjects taught.

In every five years all teachers must undergo professional in-service training for at least 160 hours (equal to 4 credits).

3.6. Statistics

Out of a total of 653 general education institutions in 2002/03, 32 are centrally administered; the municipalities run 587 and 34 are privately maintained. There are 117 primary schools (either grades 1-3, 1-4 or 1-6) including those with pre-primary grades, 280 basic schools (grades 1-9) and 256 secondary schools (grades 1-12).

Basic education (grades 1-9) in 1996/97 – 2002/03

	Pupils	Teachers*	Pupils/ Teacher	Pupils/ Class
1996/97	185.163	14.216	13.0	22.3
1997/98	186.025	13.913	13.4	22.7
1998/99	186.684	14.807	12.6	23.4
1999/00	184.779	13.550	13.6	22.7
2000/01	180.649	14.235	12.7	22.7
2001/02	174.435			22.5
2002/03	166.866			21.9

* The number of teachers is estimated.

4. POST-COMPULSORY GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

After satisfactorily completing basic school, pupils are entitled to continue their education free of charge in upper secondary general schools (*gümnaasium*) or vocational education institutions (*kutseõppeasutus*).

4.A. General Secondary Education (*üldkeskharidus*)

As pointed out in the previous section, the Estonian legislation doesn't define the aims of compulsory and secondary education but the aim of general education as a whole. (See section 3).

A general upper secondary school includes classes from 10 through 12. In Estonia, general upper secondary schools are normally in the same premises with the basic school. There are only very few separate gymnasias. Almost 100% of basic school graduates continue at secondary education level. In 2002, 74% of them attended general upper secondary schools.

To attend secondary school is not compulsory. Admission to general upper secondary school is based on basic school graduation results. The state and the local authorities provide an opportunity for the acquisition of secondary education for applicants. Schools that are obliged to offer services to an entire town or to the whole country establish additional criteria for admission in order to ensure that the limited number of study places are filled by students with best qualifications to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. Upper-secondary schools with specific study branches may organise entrance testing to help students make conscious choices.

With regards to textbooks, general upper secondary school is similar to basic schools (see section 3).

4.A.1. Organization of the school

Organization of the general upper secondary school is also similar to that of basic schools. The only difference being that the maximum number of lessons per week is not defined but the minimum is- the lowest permitted weekly study load in the upper secondary school stage is 32 lessons.

4.A.2. Curriculum

The national curriculum for secondary education has been developed in accordance with the same principles as described in Section 3.2. on basic education.

In the curriculum of upper-secondary schools, the subject programs are compiled as courses, whereas the word 'course' refers primarily to a 35-hour study unit.

In addition to the compulsory subjects taught at this level, which account for around 75% of total provision, the remaining 25% comprise subjects selected jointly by the students and the school. The details of compulsory topics, also the list of optional subjects and conditions for selection are established by the school curriculum. Each school forms its specialization(s) through optional subjects or intensified studies in some of the subjects. A student's study program is compiled of compulsory subjects and subjects (courses) chosen by him/her, i.e. the chosen specialization. A school may have more than one field of specialization.

In the scope of alternative courses, an upper-secondary school may offer preliminary vocational training in co-operation with vocational training establishments.

Teachers are free to decide on the teaching methods and materials used for meeting the aims of the curricula.

4.A.3. Assessment/certification

The whole process of assessment in general upper secondary education is similar to that of basic education.

To complete their upper secondary schooling, students have to pass five school-leaving examinations (*gümnaasiumi lõpueksamid*). At least 3 of them have to be national examinations (*riigieksamid*) and 2 may be school-set examinations (*koolieksamid*), but students may also choose to take all 5 exams as national examinations. The only compulsory national examination for school-leavers is the Estonian or Russian language as the language of instruction. In schools where instruction is in a language other than Estonian, an exam of the Estonian language is also obligatory. Two others then have to be chosen by students from the list of national examination subjects.

The main aim of the national examinations is to unify marking across all schools, enhance the credibility of school leaving certificates, and to unify school final examinations and university entrance examinations.

National examinations were introduced in 1997. The national examinations are set centrally by groups of experts in the following subjects: Estonian or Russian as the language of instruction, Estonian as the second language, English, German, Russian and French as modern foreign languages, mathematics, history, biology, chemistry, physics, social studies and geography. The examinations are mainly in written form (Estonian as the second language and modern foreign languages include also an oral part), and the papers are administered centrally and marked externally on a 100-point scale. A special certificate is issued to show the results if the subjects the student has taken their national examinations.

The students who pass the examinations receive the school-leaving certificate (*Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus*) and national examination certificate (*riigieksamitunnistus*). The national examination certificate is issued by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre (*Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus*). The school the student is finishing issues the graduation certificate. A national examination certificate is valid only together with a certificate of graduation from an upper-secondary school and vice versa.

4.A.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

With regards to progression to the next class, see 3.4.

With regards to career or vocational guidance, students are provided with information about different professions and qualifications needed for them, as well as about study options in Estonia and abroad. They are taught to analyse the demands and opportunities of the labour market, to formulate and evaluate their aims and options, and to prepare themselves consciously for choosing a profession.

4.A.5. Teachers

Information regarding teachers at post-compulsory secondary level is the same as that applicable to teachers in compulsory education (see section 3.5.).

4.B. Vocational Secondary Education (*kutsekeskharidus*)

The Estonian VET (Vocational Education and Training) system must ensure the social and vocational readiness for young people starting their working life and must prepare a labour force that is competitive on both the Estonian and international labour markets.

The acquisition of vocational education is regulated by many juridical acts. With professional education specifically, deals the Vocational Educational Institutions Act. (*kutseõppeasutuse seadus*), which do not regulate the contents of the curriculum.

In recent years, the tendency to continue education at upper secondary level (*gümnaasium*), instead of in VET institutions, has increased among pupils satisfactorily completing basic education. The proportion of those who opted for upper secondary schooling in this way rose from 56.2% in 1991 to 73,9% in 2002/03. Meanwhile, the number of basic education certificate holders who went on to Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions fell to 25,4%. At the same time, however, interest in VET has increased among

those successfully completing upper secondary education.

In the end of nineties, a reform of the VET system was launched.

In 1998, the Government of the Republic approved the VET Concept. The concept establishes the main points of VET policy and reform: to increase responsiveness of VET to the labour market changes and thus employability of VET graduates; to upgrade teacher qualifications; to use resources more effectively and efficiently; to support development of the National Employee Qualification System; to further decentralise VET management; to improve co-operation of key actors at all levels; to raise the attractiveness of VET by improving its contents and facilities and to popularise the principles of life-long learning.

In 2001, the programme for reforming the vocational training system in the years 2001-2004 was adopted by the Government of the Republic.

The social partners in VET are involved in it via the professional councils (*kutsenõukogud*) established at the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Eesti Kaubandus- ja Tööstuskoda*) already at the end of nineties and working now by the the Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekoda*) that was established in 2001 in order to continue developing the professional qualifications system launched by the above mentioned Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Professions Act (*kutseeadus*) adopted in 2001 regulates the work of professional councils.

According to the Act, the professional councils are co-operative bodies consisting of the representatives of employees, employers and professional associations of the corresponding area of activities and the representatives of the Ministry. These councils deal with the development of professional standards necessary for meeting the needs of labour market and the development, implementation and updating of the system of attesting and awarding professional qualifications.

Secondary vocational education is acquired in vocational education establishments. The nominal duration of the curriculum is at least 3 years for students studying on the basis of basic education and 1 to 2,5 years for students studying on the basis of secondary education.

Most students who acquire vocational secondary education after basic education (*põhiharidus*) are aged 16–18 years; the students who acquire vocational secondary education after general secondary education (*üldkeskharidus*) are mostly aged 18–20 years.

Admission to VET curricula after basic school (*põhikool*) requires a Basic School Graduation Certificate (*põhikooli lõputunnistus*). Admission to curricula after general secondary education (*üldkeskharidus*) requires a graduation certificate from a general secondary school (*Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus*) and the National Examination Certificate (*Riigieksamitunnistus*).

The majority of VET schools in Estonia belong to the state. In the 2002/03 academic year, there were 79 VET schools of which 57 were state VET schools, the municipalities were responsible for one and private organizations – for 23 schools. To raise efficiency of the VET system, the reorganization of the network of institutions has been launched. Recently a decision has been made to establish regional centres of vocational training (*kutseõppekeskus*), which provide initial vocational education, adult education, training for people with special needs, counselling services etc.

The state and the local municipalities must ensure learning opportunities for all young people who wish to acquire VET after acquiring basic education (*põhiharidus*).

Out of the total of 79 institutions, which provide VET courses, 61% use Estonian as the language of instruction, while 16% use Russian, and the remaining 23% use both languages.

4.B.1. Organization

The schools decide the size and number of study groups in VET schools. Evening and distance learning are authorised in VET establishments where daytime instruction is the norm. One academic year involves at least 40 weeks of study, while holidays must be for a minimum of eight weeks.

In the academic year of 2002/03, 27 of 79 Estonian VET schools provided curricula both on the basis of basic (*põhiharidus*) and general secondary education (*üldkeskharidus*), 6 institutions after basic education only and 46 after general secondary education, some of the last mentioned also provide curricula of applied higher education (*rakenduskõrgharidus*).

VET schools provide, in the framework of optional subjects foreseen by the basic and general secondary education curricula and on the basis of initial vocational training curriculum, preliminary vocational training (*kutsealane eelkoolitus*) for students acquiring basic or general secondary education. Preliminary vocational training is also provided

to those students acquiring basic education who have exceeded compulsory school age and therefore study in an evening or distance form of basic school.

4.B.2. Curriculum

VET school provides training following the school curriculum.

A school curriculum is the source document for studies related to the corresponding vocation, profession and occupation, which sets out the list of subjects, together with the extent and general outline of the subjects, the possibilities of and conditions for choosing subjects, and the requirements for the commencement of studies and graduation from the VET school, including the requirements for the preparation of final papers.

A VET school must have a curriculum for every vocation, profession and occupation it offers.

A VET curriculum is based on modules. A module is a content unit of a curriculum that consists of subjects or parts of subjects and in exceptional cases of only one subject. Using modules provides flexibility of curriculum and enables to take into consideration students' and regional needs as well as quick changes on the labour market. The capacity of modules in terms of time is not limited. A module is measured in weeks. One study week is 40 hours of any kind of training undertaken by a student.

The objective of a VET curriculum for graduates from basic school is to prepare them for starting work or for continuing in the applied higher education level. It aims to encourage development of the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes required to perform independent skilled work, on the assumption that trainees have enough general education and ability to apply this know-how in both large and small enterprises after they have qualified. The length of studies is a minimum of 120 study weeks, of which the VET-related dimension (incl. practical training) must account for at least 50%. At least 50 study weeks must be devoted to the general education subjects, of which 32 weeks are compulsory and common to all curricula of vocational secondary education. The other 18 weeks should be devoted to general education subjects most relevant to the specialization, and teaching must be integrated with vocational subjects.

The objective of a VET curriculum for graduates from general secondary education (*üldkeskhariduse*) is to prepare workers for

complicated skilled work, service personnel and clerks. It should provide the student with knowledge, skills, experiences and attitudes for performing independent, complicated skilled work, assuming upper-secondary general education background and maturity, ability to understand technological processes and analysis at graduation. The length of studies is 1–2.5 years, i.e. 40–100 study weeks. VET-related training must account for at least 85% and general education subjects for 6 study weeks of the total volume of training.

4.B.3. Assessment/Certification

Assessment of students at VET institutions is also on a five-point scale (see 3.3.). Preliminary examinations are rated 'passed' and 'not passed'.

Students who complete courses at VET institutions receive a certificate. At present, however, these certificates do not represent a formal qualification as such, but merely evidence that the holder has covered a certain program, at a certain level in a given school. This may change in the future, with implementation of an employee qualification system and more thorough assessment of qualifications.

A student who graduates from a VET school, from a curriculum after basic education, gets a Certificate on acquiring vocational secondary education based on basic education (*Lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta*).

A student, who graduates from a VET school, from a curriculum after general secondary education, gets a Certificate on acquiring vocational secondary education based on secondary general education (*Lõputunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta*).

4.B.4. Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

A student is considered a graduate from a VET school if the student has covered the full curriculum, meaning that he/she has acquired all the material foreseen in the curriculum, has taken all necessary tests and passed all required assessments, practical training and the final paper. Students acquiring VET after basic

education in language other than Estonian must pass the national examination in the Estonian language.

The required examinations are fixed in the school curriculum. The examinations can be oral, written, practical or a combination of these. The national general education examinations are not compulsory. These examinations need to be taken and they must be passed on the same grounds as graduates of general secondary schools pass them if the student wishes to continue studies in applied higher education study or bachelor study, in an applied higher education institution or university.

4.B.5. Teachers

Information regarding VET teachers is mainly the same as that applicable to teachers in compulsory education (see section 3.5).

Teachers who have received the similar training like teachers who teach in upper general education schools, teach general education subjects in VET schools. Passing an additional course of vocational pedagogy is required.

Specialists, who have passed the additional teacher training or those who are qualified as vocational subject teachers, mainly teach subjects related to professional training. The vocational subject teachers are trained in universities, their study program should comprise 120 credits (see 6.A.3.).

A vocational teacher must undergo professional in-service training in scope of at least two months in every three years. With a staff/student ratio of 1:5, VET institutions are currently (2000/01) overstaffed and inefficient. One aim of reform is to increase the teacher/student ratio from around 1:12 to 1:16. The average ratio of teachers to other personnel is only slightly over one, indicating that overstaffing is mainly attributable to the large number of administrative and financial employees. In recent years, VET institutions have been unable to attract younger staff, with the result that more than 42% of the teachers in them are aged over 50, and mainly women.

4.6. Statistics

Pupils in 1997/98 – 2002/03

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
General upper secondary (ISCED 3A)	38061	36976	37421	37906	39339	39835
Vocational education total	30233	30264	31065	30676	29622	27940
Vocational education based on basic education (ISCED 3C)	1793	1437	654	30		
Vocational education with upper secondary general education (ISCED 3A)	12238	12793	15287	16296	17641	16306
Post-secondary technical education based on basic education (ISCED 3A)	4231	3740	2069	1192	300	82
Vocational education based on upper secondary education (ISCED 4B)	3449	4231	9016	11817	11442	11551
Post-secondary technical education based on upper secondary education (ISCED 5B)	8522	8063	4039	1341	239	1

Pupils per class

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
General upper secondary (ISCED 3A)	28,3*	25,8*	24,6	25,8	25,8	26,4
Vocational education total						
Vocational education based on basic education (ISCED 3C)	22,9	18,9	18,7	12,0		
Vocational education with upper secondary general education (ISCED 3A)	23,2	23,1	21,9	20,9	22,2	22,4
Post-secondary technical education based on basic education (ISCED 3A)	20,6	21,25	25,3	23,9	14,3	10,3
Vocational education based on upper secondary education (ISCED 4B)	26,7	22,9	19,5	17,7	24,0	23,2
Post-secondary technical education based on upper secondary education (ISCED 5B)	23,9	22,6	25,1	24,2	23,9	

* Special education is excluded.

5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALTERNANCE

In Estonia, initial vocational training is provided in schools. Although other forms of vocational training are not introduced in Estonia, in some occupations (for example, smith, and goldsmith) only apprenticeship is used for initial training.

Enterprises or managers sometimes train individuals or small groups at their own expense.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

General principles of higher education are determined in the Universities Act (*ülikooliseadus*), the Applied Higher Education Institutions Act (*rakenduskõrgkooli seadus*) and the Higher Education Standard (*kõrgharidusstandard*). The Vocational Education Institutions Act (*kutseõppeasutuse seadus*), the Private Schools Act (*erakooliseadus*) and the Adult Education Act (*täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*) also regulate some aspects of higher education.

In the higher education sphere, during 2001-2003 numerous legislative changes were made in order to render the Estonian higher education system comparable to the systems of other countries in the region and open up better opportunities for higher education graduates to be competitive on the European labour market.

The main change that had to be made in Estonia after the signing of the Bologna Declaration was related to the transition to the two-stage study system. Before that time specialists were usually prepared on the basis of a four-year program, which granted them access to positions requiring higher education. The former bachelor's studies were acquisition of the end qualification, but the new bachelor's degree only indicates that the basic knowledge and skills have been acquired. Although according to law, Estonian universities can choose whether bachelor's programs last three or four years most of the universities have opted for a 3-year bachelor's program. The restriction imposed by the state is related only to master's programs and it is confined to the 5-year financing scheme.

The knowledge and skills of a professional along with more specific specialization are acquired in two years. Similar principles of structure of the programs promote the national mobility of students, allowing them to choose between master's programs of different universities after completion of their bachelor's studies. The transition to the two-stage structure of curricula was not performed in all programs: there are deviations from the general two-stage system, which are mostly related to regulated professions (doctors, dentists, architects, engineers, etc.) where the studies are based on a long-term program.

Transition to the new structure of the curriculum was performed relatively quickly in Estonia. After adoption of the renewed Universities Act in June

2002, the legal preparations had been fully completed for securing the desired transition.

Several other topics mentioned in the Bologna Declaration do not require as many changes for application in Estonia. The calculation of the volume of curricula based on the workload of the student was already launched in Estonia in the beginning of the 90's following the example of the Scandinavian countries, a system of accreditation based on collegial assessment, where stronger emphasis on external experts for the purpose of objectivity has been applied as well. The state supports the mobility of Estonian students and teachers in the framework of European programs, and all necessary preparation for the implementation of the uniform diploma supplement as of academic year 2004/05 will be completed.

In Estonia, higher education comprises two branches: academic higher education (*akadeemiline kõrghariduslik õpe*) and applied higher education (*rakenduskõrgharidusõpe*). Since the 2002/03 academic year, the general structure of academic higher education comprises three stages. The first level is a bachelor's study, ISCED 5A (*bakalaureuseõpe*) and the second level is a master's study, ISCED 5A (*magistriõpe*). Bachelor's and master's study are in basic medical study, pharmacist study, dentist study, architect-engineer study and class teacher study integrated into one unit. The third and the highest level in academic studies is a doctor's study, ISCED 6 (*doktoriõpe*).

Applied higher education study, ISCED 5B is the first level in the higher education system and is equal to the bachelor's study of the academic branch.

Each stage of higher education study is considered as graduation from a university. A graduate shall have the right to continue studies according to the procedures determined by law. Finishing studies based on integrated curricula of bachelor and master's study gives a qualification corresponding to the master's degree and universities have the right to issue the master's degree to the graduate.

Academic study is conducted in universities; universities may also offer applied higher education study.

Students wishing to continue their studies in Estonia on the strength of a foreign academic certificate, diploma or degree should apply

directly for admission, or for recognition of their qualifications, to the higher education studies or ENIC/NARIC program co-ordinators.

Estonia has adopted the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act, which entered into force 1 January 2001. The issues of academic recognitions are regulated by the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, which was ratified in the Estonian Parliament 1 April 1998.

The beginning of the 2002/03 academic year also marked the transfer to a new financing system for all higher education institutions. Under the new system performance-related funding is introduced where the allocation of funds to institutions of higher education depends on the number of graduates and placing an order for broader disciplines of study instead of determining the admission figures for single curricula. The fore-mentioned principles were implemented as of the beginning of the 2002/03 academic year.

In addition to the performance-related funding system a broad consultation process with social partners for identification of national priorities with regard to strategic subjects that need growing was launched. On the basis of national development plans approved by employers, the Government and the Parliament, engineering and technology, biosciences, computer sciences and environmental sciences, were set as national priorities for the academic year of 2002/03. Along with the priorities the declining fields were identified as well, including programs where students are significantly willing to pay for their studies themselves, such as law, economics and business administration. The said fields are considered as declining at the state level and the state funds allocated to them are minimal, aimed only at securing the critical number of students for the development of the field.

6.A. Non-university tertiary education

According to the renewed Higher Education Standard (*kõrgharidusstandard*, put into effect 19 August 2002), an applied higher education (*rakendus kõrgharidus*) is the only form of non-university tertiary education in Estonia. Applied higher education study is developed on the basis of vocational education study (*kutsekõrgharidus*) and diploma study (*diplomiõpe*) determined by the old Higher Education Standard that was valid until the admissions of the 2002/03 academic year.

Nevertheless, diploma studies and vocational higher education studies are still conducted for students who started their studies before 2002.

An applied higher education is provided in applied higher education institutions; universities may also offer applied higher education studies.

It is also possible to study in a vocational education institution (*kutseõppeasutus*) working on the basis of upper-secondary education, on the basis of the applied higher education curriculum.

Since 2003, master's study may be provided in applied higher education institution in co-operation with a university. An applied higher education institution may independently provide master's study according to the curricula of theology and military study.

6.A.1. Admission requirements

The prerequisite for admission to higher education study is secondary education obtained in Estonia or an equivalent education obtained abroad.

Two general requirements are common to higher education. They are a secondary school leaving certificate (*gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus; lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta; lõputunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta*), and a certificate of national examinations (*riigieksamitunnistus*).

Within the framework of the general rule, every higher education institution establishes the conditions and procedures for admission. In general, the basis of admittance to a higher education institution is the results of national examinations; entrance exams passed in the institution; sometimes a colloquium or a discussion (professional aptitude test).

In certain cases, a summarised average grade of the grades from an upper-secondary general school certificate or a gold or silver graduation award from an upper-secondary school is accepted as special conditions for admission. For artistic curricula, aptitude is tested by the presentation of a creative work or through a creative competition.

Students are admitted to higher education study according to the number of student places commissioned by the state and the additional number of student places outside the number funded by the state budget. The Minister of Education and Research approves the number

of the state commissioned student places. Students compete for the state-commissioned student places. When making state commission to a private applied higher education institution, the Minister signs a respective contract with the institution.

6.A.2. Fees/Financial support for students

The council of the institution sets the number of student places beyond the state-commissioned places. An applicant who has not been allocated in a state-commissioned place has the right to contest for a student place outside the number funded by the state but within the set quota. The institution signs a contract regarding payment of tuition fees with the person allocated in a non-state-commissioned place. For non-state-commissioned student places, the tuition fees are equal to the calculated cost of the student place commissioned by the state. The procedures for admission and covering of tuition fees of persons who are not residents of Estonia are set in accordance with the agreements signed between Estonia and the respective foreign states.

Study loans are available for all full-time students. Students have social guarantees and benefits, e.g., use of public transport.

6.A.3. Academic year

Divided into two semesters, the academic year begins in September and ends in the first half of June (although generally lectures finish in May). As a general rule, it comprises 40 weeks of lectures, seminars and practical training, along with a period for examinations.

The volume of study, or course workload, is measured in credits (*ainepunkt*). One credit corresponds to forty hours (one study week) of coursework (lectures, seminars, practical training and independent work) completed by students. The normal study year comprises 40 credits, equalling to 60 credit points of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

6.A.4. Courses

The nominal duration of studies in applied higher education is 3-4,5 years (120-180 credit points).

Practical work comprises the minimum of 30% of studies determined by a curriculum. Practical studies in a work environment under the tutor's supervision comprise the minimum of 50% of practical study. In the transfer period from the old Higher Education Standard to the new one, practical study may, until 1 September 2003, form a minimum of 20% of the capacity of studies determined by the applied higher education study curriculum.

Applied higher education study consists of auditory study, practical work and independent work. Auditory study is contacted in the form of lectures, seminars, practical work, training lessons, laboratory work, and colloquia or in any other form determined by the education institution. The practical work is carried out in a study environment in the form of practice course, laboratory work or in any other form determined by the education institution.

6.A.5. Assessment/qualifications

The Higher Education Standard sets up general requirements for studying and teaching. This is a collection of requirements drawn up by the Government for all stages of higher education to set goals for instruction geared to acquisition of a specialist, vocational or professional skills and general requirements for graduating from a university, including those related to the final thesis.

All higher education establishments are obliged to end subject courses with an examination (*eksam*) or a preliminary examination (*arvestus*), and separate stages of a given subject might also be examined. Usually oral and written examinations are held at the end of each semester during the 4-week examination session.

The results of an examination and preliminary examination are given by grade or may be expressed in words 'pass' or 'fail' (*arvestatud* or *mitte arvestatud*).

Since the 1999/2000 academic year, all universities and applied higher education institutions started using a unified grading scale:

GRADE	DESCRIPTION ESTONIAN/ ENGLISH	PERCENTAGE OF KNOWLEDGE	ESTIMATED EQUIVALENT IN ECTS*
5 or A	<i>Suurepärane / excellent</i>	91 – 100	A
4 or B	<i>väga hea / very good</i>	81 – 90	B
3 or C	<i>Hea / good</i>	71 – 80	C
2 or D	<i>Rahuldav / satisfactory</i>	61 – 70	D
1 or E	<i>Kasin / sufficient</i>	51 – 60	E
0 or F	<i>Puudulik / insufficient</i>	0 – 50	FX/F

The right to award diplomas or degrees lies with public universities and other institutions of higher education that have an operating license. The right to award academic degrees lies only with universities. Following graduation, students are awarded the Diploma with a bachelor's or a master's degree or a doctorate. Following the graduation of vocational higher education (*kutsekõrgharidus*), students are awarded with the Diploma that certifies the completion of the program.

6.A.6. Teachers

Teachers in higher education institutions have mostly an academic degree as established in the Higher Education Standard.

Higher education teacher's training is provided in master and doctoral study and comprises a minimum 4 credit of the capacity of the corresponding curriculum. Higher education teacher's study consists of training in the field of education science, psychology, subject didactics and practice.

According to the Higher Education Standard, in applied higher education studies teachers, having master's degree should teach 75% of the curricular subjects.

6.B. University tertiary education

Academic study is conducted at universities. The Higher Education Standard determines the objectives of the stages of academic higher education.

The first level of academic higher education is a bachelor's study, ISCED 5A (*bakalaureuseõpe*). During bachelor's study a student advances the existing basis of his or her general education, developing basic knowledge and skills to work on a profession chosen, and for studies on the next level of education.

Master's study (*magistriõpe*) forms the second stage of academic studies, consisting of acquisition of deeper theoretical and specialist knowledge and developing proficiency in research, professional or creative work endeavouring to obtain preparedness for individual use of knowledge and skills and for doctorate study.

Doctorate study (*doktoriõpe*) forms the highest stage of academic studies, with the goal of acquiring knowledge and skills in the chosen field to the level of an independent professional of research, development, or professional work.

6.B.1. Admission requirements

See section 6.A.1.

6.B.2. Fees/financial support for students

See section 6.A.2.

6.B.3. Academic year

See section 6.A.3.

6.B.4. Courses

The nominal duration of a bachelor's study is 3-4 years, with a maximum of 120 credits (180 ECTS credits), in particular cases 4 years, with a maximum of 160 credits (240 ECTS credits). Bachelor's study is a wide-ranging study based on a scientific approach.

The nominal duration of a bachelor's study by the curricula registered before 1 June 2002, is

mostly 4 years, together with the curriculum of a teacher training the duration is up to 5 years. On the conditions and procedures established by the university, this bachelor study may be regarded as a part of a master's study.

The nominal duration of master's study is 1-2 years, with a scope of 40-80 credits (60-120 ECTS credits) but together with bachelor studies the nominal duration of studies is no less than 5 years, with a capacity of 200 (300 ECTS) credits.

In case of a completion of a master's curriculum registered before 1 June 2002, the master's degree is obtained as either research or professional degree. In the curriculum of the research master, research comprises a minimum of 50% of the capacity of study and the master's thesis presents a new scientific approach to the subject problem. In the case of a professional master's degree, research, development or creative work comprises a minimum of 25% of the capacity of study and study is targeted on finding a solution for a profession-related creative problem. On the conditions and procedures established by the university, a master's study registered before 1 June 2002 may be regarded as a part of doctoral study.

Integrated bachelor's-master's study is a one-stage study, the curriculum comprises both basic and specialist study. Graduates get a qualification that can be compared to a master's degree. One-stage integrated studies are those of basic medical study, dentistry study, pharmacy study, architect study, construction engineer study and teacher training of class teacher study. The nominal duration of basic medical study, since the admission of the 2002/03 academic year and also the duration of veterinary study is 6 years, the capacity of study is 240 credits (360 ECTS credits). The nominal duration of other study areas is 5 years, the capacity of studies is 200 credits (300 ECTS credits). On the decision of the university, a master's degree may be obtained after the completion of an integrated study.

The nominal duration of the doctorate study is from 3 to 4 years, capacity of study is from 120 to 160 credits (180-240 ECTS credits). Research, development or professional creative work, including writing of doctorate thesis, forms no less than 70% of the capacity of the doctorate study. A doctorate thesis is independent scientific research that presents a new solution of a problem, essential to the field of research; or creative work. Graduates obtain the doctorate degree, which is a research degree.

6.B.5. Assessment/qualifications

See section 6.A.5.

6.B.6. Teachers

The Higher Education Standard determines that no less than 50% of the curricular subjects of the bachelor's degree, 75% of the master's degree, and 60% of the integrated bachelor's and master's degree should be taught by academics with doctorates or equivalent qualifications, or by acknowledged creative artists in the field of art and music. All curricular subjects at the doctorate level have to be supervised by holders of doctorates. See also section 6.A.6.

6.7 Statistics

School year (1996/97 – 2002/03)

	1996/ 97	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 00	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03
Vocational higher education							
Total				3165	5623	7623	5098
Public				2846	4840	6605	4533
Private				319	783	1018	565
Applied higher education							
Total							6183
Public							3936
Private							2247
Diploma programs:							
Total	7772	10,481	14,997	16,465	17,136	17,435	12,904
Public	4255	5849	8284	9243	10773	11902	9148
Private	3517	4632	6713	7222	6363	5533	3756
Bachelor programs:							
Total	18,770	20,489	21,731	25,246	27,892	28,703	29,344
Public	16,639	17,518	18,281	20,796	22,277	22,679	23,679
Private	2131	2971	3450	4450	5615	6024	5665
Integrated bachelor and master programs							
Public							2155
Master programs:							
Total	2803	2673	2822	3447	4339	5140	6354
Public	2613	2458	2513	3037	3834	4689	5697
Private	190	215	309	410	505	451	657
Doctoral programs:							
Total	727	899	1071	1251	1447	1508	1587
Public	727	899	1065	1251	1447	1499	1561
Private			6			9	26

Higher education institutions

		96/ 97	97/ 98	98/ 99	99/ 00	00/ 01	01/ 02	02/ 03
Universities	Total	7	10	12	14	15	16	14
	Public	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	Private	1	4	6	8	9	10	8
Applied higher education institutions	Total	20	21	21	19	19	17	21
	State	8	8	9	8	8	7	7
	Private	12	13	12	11	11	10	14
Vocational education institutions (vocational higher education)	Total				8	12	18	14
	State				7	9	11	9
	Private				1	3	7	5

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

7.1. Policy and legislative framework

In Estonia, lifelong learning has not yet found a permanent place in the education policy⁽¹⁾. Initiating the work with the Strategy on Lifelong Learning in Estonia (*elukestva õppe strateegia*) (2001, draft) was the first time that the Government officially acknowledged adult education and lifelong learning as a part of the educational system and a key for national development.

For the moment the National Development Plan 2003-2006 (*riiklik arengukava*) has been prepared. One of the priorities in the NDP is human resources development. General goals of the priority are to increase and better the use of the labour force potential of Estonia. Measures of that priority concerning adult education are:

- To develop a flexible system of lifelong learning providing access to everyone and guaranteeing employability of labour force;
- To increase the competitiveness of the economy in small and medium enterprises and research and development sectors;
- To implement active labour market measures.

The basis of adult education is the Adult Education Act (*täiskasvanute koolituse seadus*, 1993; last amended in 2003). On the basis of the Adult Education Act, other legal acts regulating the operation of educational system are valid in adult training, namely: the Private Schools Act (*erakooliseadus*), the Basic and Upper-secondary Schools Act (*põhikooli- ja gümnaasiumiseadus*), the Vocational Education Institutions Act (*kutseõppeasutuse seadus*), the Applied Higher Education Act (*rakenduskõrgkooli seadus*) and the Universities Act (*ülikooliseadus*).

The Adult Education Act sets out the aims and legal guarantees for adults for their lifelong learning, defines the term of adult education institutions, the procedure of providing opportunities for learning, classifies adult

education according to its targets and regulates the financing of adult education. The Act does not determine the age of the target group: an adult learner is defined as a person for whom learning is not the main activity.

The Adult Education Act also regulates the opportunities to apply for an academic vacation, work-related training and non-formal education, and determines the principles of remuneration of an academic vacation when participating in level education and in work-related training. An important part of the Adult Education Act regulates the financing of adult education.

The Private Schools Act determines the conditions and procedures of applying for a training permit for acquiring adult training. The Act regulates the operation of the private sector in education, setting quality requirements; these may be regarded as quality guarantees for adult education, as well.

The Basic and Upper-secondary Schools Act and the pursuant regulation of the Minister of Education and Research regulate the provision of basic and upper-secondary education in distance or evening study.

The Vocational Education Institutions Act regulates provision of vocational education and training in the distant form of study. According to the Act, VET schools provide preliminary vocational training to students who have exceeded compulsory school age and therefore study in an evening or distance form of basic school. The Act together with a pursuant regulation of the Minister of Education and Research also regulates work-related training in VET institutions.

The Applied Higher Education Act and the Universities Act determine that the right on decision-making on rules for providing adult education in higher education institutions belongs to the competencies of the management of the institutions. By 1 September 2004, all higher education institutions are obliged to develop and start implementing the system of acknowledgement of students' former study and work experiences.

The Universities Act establishes the forms and levels of study at universities. The Act enacts public universities to give all people, including adults, the possibility to acquire a diploma or a

⁽¹⁾ The publication *Adult Training in Estonia: Needs and Availability*, Tallinn, 2003, ed. by Talvi Märja is used in drafting this chapter.

degree, and also to continue their learning in different kinds of programs and courses organised by Open Universities and/or Centres of Continuing Education.

7.2. Management/Organizations involved

According to the Adult Education Act, the general co-ordination of adult education is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research. An adult education institution is independent in the organization of its study activities, choosing study forms, curricula and study methods, also in the use of resources, within the boundaries established by law.

The following institutions manage adult education:

The Government of the Republic approves national priorities in adult education and establishes the resources for adult education and research on adult education in the state budget.

The National Adult Education Council (*Täiskasvanuhariduse Nõukogu*) established by the Government is an advisory body that counsels the Government in the matters of adult education. It advises the Government in composition of the draft of the state budget within the scope of resources for adult education and evaluates the use of resources on adult education from the state budget. It also identifies national priorities in adult education.

Local authorities provide persons who are residents of the territory of the local authority an opportunity for acquisition of basic and secondary education. The law establishes that local authorities can support work-related and non-formal education, including support to the training of the unemployed and job seekers, other persons in a socially insecure position, and people with special needs, and foresee resources for supporting non-formal education. Local authorities are however focused on guaranteeing basic and secondary education for people permanently residing on their territory.

The employers primarily assume the responsibility for forming the necessary developmental conditions for their personnel, however, should the opportunity arise, also the liability for more extensive social concerns by providing wider sets of the community with learning opportunities.

Social partners (trade unions, professional associations etc) negotiate on all possible levels

and aim at concluding agreement that would esteem the employee's right for learning at least 14 days per year and receiving also payment for the named educational leave.

The training providers assume the responsibility for the quality of training and for its compliance with the course initially offered.

The prerequisite for widening the access to lifelong learning is the co-operation between public, private and the third sector; between formal, non-formal and informal sector; also between general and vocational education.

The co-ordination responsibilities at the national level are divided as follows:

1. the Ministry of Education and Research co-ordinates the institutional network of formal education and sets national priorities, is responsible for curricular content, imposing quality standards and organising supervision on adult education provision within the system of formal education. The Ministry also invites NGOs to participate in educational projects;
2. the Ministry of Social Affairs co-ordinates regional labour market;
3. other ministries are co-ordinating education in the boundaries of their responsibility area;
4. the Labour Market Board (*Tööturuamet*) at the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for the training and retraining of the unemployed.
 - a) NGOs as societies and unions who co-ordinate co-operation of people with similar interests have played an important part in adult education, international co-operation and the training and methodological guidance of adult educators.

NGOs present their proposals regarding support to the National Adult Education Council, which makes the final decision. State budget support to adult education institutions and research is allocated via the budget of the Ministry of Education.

The role of social partners is mostly related to the labour market and employers' relationship with employees, also with graduated newcomers on the labour market. In the framework of the current vocational education reform, the Observatory Centre of Vocational Education and Labour Force acts as one of the most relevant units of connecting adult VET education and social partners. Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry acts as an umbrella organization of various professional unions who supervise professional qualifications, also

regarding obligatory self-improvement, if necessary. Trade unions operate as advisory bodies in the field of in-service training and re-training of employees.

Estonia does not yet have a national system for employee qualifications. The social partners and professional bodies are currently involved in the creation of such a system, paying increasing attention to the importance of vocational education and training.

7.3. Funding

Adult education is financed according to target groups.

Part-time (evening or distance learning) courses on the basic and upper-secondary levels are free for students. Within the scope of the state commission, free education is also provided for distance-learning vocational education but the number of such study places is limited. Higher education study is mostly not free of charge for people for whom studying is not the primary activity.

Work-related training is generally payable but often the employer of the person finances the studies.

Work-related training of the unemployed and job-seekers, officials and pedagogues is paid from the state budget.

Retraining and supplementary training of the unemployed and job-seekers is commissioned and paid by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The state also pays training grants for the unemployed participants.

The resources for work-related training of civil servants are allocated in the state budget, at 2-4% of the annual salary fund. For teachers whose salaries are covered from the state budget, the resources for work-related training are allocated in the state budget, at a minimum 3% of the annual salary fund. For the work-related training of the officials in local government, resources are allocated in their own local budget.

1. The person or entity participating in it pays for non-formal education. In order to support non-formal education, resources may be allocated from the state or local government budget. Since 1995, the Ministry of Education and Research has, in the form of competitions, offered support for salaries of managers and pedagogues of non-formal education centres (to approximately 45 non-formal education centres per year).

Local government budgets provide support for the professional training of local government staff and the training and retraining of the unemployed, as well as indirect support to local adult education institutions. In 2002, the local authorities were for the first time responsible for the allocation of budgetary money for teachers' continued education.

In most cases of project competitions, partial self-funding of applicants is recommendable.

Private enterprises can organise training themselves and/or pay for courses for training and retraining their staff. Private individuals can pay for courses that match their needs and interests.

7.4. Human resources

There are no special arrangements for the training of personnel involved in continuing education and training for adults.

7.5. Organization

According to the Adult Education Act, adult education institutions are state and municipal institutions, private schools with a teaching license, private or public legal entities if training adults is an activity listed in their statutes, and private entrepreneurs.

7.5.1. Types of training institutions

General Upper-secondary Schools for adult students enable the acquisition of secondary education in evening or distance form. To attend evening courses etc. is permitted for persons who have graduated from basic school (*põhikool*) or are older than 17. The procedures for studying in evening or distance form in a basic or upper-secondary school have been established by an ordinance issued by the Minister of Education and Research. The evening and distance forms of learning are determined, through a decision by the local authorities, at an applicable school founded by the local authorities, or in an applicable department of a full-time upper-secondary school.

Almost all vocational education institutions (*kutseõppeasutus*) offer evening and distance-learning courses for adults. In general, a vocational education institution organises work-related training of adults in the areas that they teach, according to the curricula, in the form of courses and individual study. In the case of the existence of the applicable equipment and teachers, instruction may also be organised in other areas and curricula.

Institutions that specialise only on adult education also provide work-related training. Such institutions provide in-service training, retraining and non-formal education. Institutions like that are mostly privately owned. In case the capacity of training provided is more than 120 hours, the institutions are obliged to apply for a training license from the Ministry of Education and Research.

- Enterprises provide mostly work-related training, foreign languages courses (mostly English and, for non-Estonian staff, also Estonian language courses) and computer training.

Respective aims are related to the betterment of qualification of the employees. Social partners as professional unions can arrange training in their areas of interest.

In municipally funded adult education, vocational education and training seems however to be more important than general education.

There are pilot centres for vocational adult education with highly developed technology in priority areas. They include establishments with modern equipment, teaching materials, and teachers who have training experience abroad (centres develop programs and offer in-service training for all teachers of economics, for adults and the unemployed). There are now pilot centres for geodesy, construction, and hotel and food service specialists as a result of co-operation with Finland, and for metalwork and welding specialists thanks to collaboration with Germany. The Estonian Labour Market Training Centre has also been established jointly with Swedish AMU International.

Most of public universities and state applied higher education institutions provide study for adults.

Public universities may provide courses either in formal or in non-formal education system.

In the first case training is provided in the form of open universities, trainees are provided higher education but the period of study and forms of evaluation are more flexible, depending on the interests of trainees.

Non-formal education courses are mainly regarded as in-service training with the aim of higher qualification.

During the last years, the system of electronic courses is increasing. Open University courses and other courses provided at higher education institutions and universities are payable. Social partners as employers may co-operate by funding participants, subscribing courses or funding teachers' salaries in the areas they are interested in.

The Labour Market Board organises training and re-training courses for the unemployed. The courses are targeted for the unemployed adults and oriented on rising of qualification or obtaining new qualification. In general, these courses operate as short time courses and graduates obtain a certificate.

These institutions may provide work-related training or re-training courses by subscribing them from experts or institutions mentioned, or participate as advisors in decision-making process.

Private sector institutions participate as public or municipal institutions, described above.

Adult education institutions mostly work as hobby schools. Their aim is mostly to provide non-formal hobby training for self-improvement, in the form of courses or in other forms, e.g. as different hobby groups. Their indirect purpose is to develop active attitude towards life and social and communication skills of adult people. Social partners as enterprises may cooperate by funding the activities, funding trainers or providing venue for the activities.

7.5.2. Access requirements

In accordance with the Adult Education Act, the training is divided into formal level training; work-related training; non-formal training.

In case of formal level training, access requirements are similar to those for full-time study.

In case of non-formal training, admission requirements depend on the level of education provided, in accordance with the interests of trainees.

In case of work-related training, starting qualifications required differ.

As regards of recognition of foreign qualifications, see 6.

7.5.3. Objectives of the programs

Formal level training permits the acquisition of basic or secondary education in evening or distance forms, also allows application for an academic degree. A diploma or certificate proves the acquisition of formal level training.

Work-related training permits the acquisition of advanced vocational, professional or occupational knowledge, skills and experiences, also retraining either at the workplace or at an educational institution. A certificate or a report proves the acquisition of work-related training.

Non-formal training permits self-advancement of personality, creativity, initiative and a sense of social responsibility, also to increase the amount of knowledge, skills and competencies useful in everyday life. Teaching/learning is carried out in the form of courses, study circles or any other form suitable for students.

7.5.4. Main principles of the organization of time and venue

In the evening form of basic or upper-secondary schools, study takes place mainly in lessons, but the number of study days and lessons per week is fewer, and the amount of independent study is greater than in full-time study. Studying in the distance form of schooling at a lower or upper-secondary school is in general carried out through independent work of a student. Study is organised as group and individual consultations and assessments.

The duration of study period in evening and distance study is 36 study weeks. In the evening study form, study takes place 3-4 days a week; the weekly study load is 24 hours. In the distance study form, study takes place 2-3 days a week; the number of hours for group consultation (min 12-15) depends on number of students in a group and on grade.

Since 2002, higher education institutions provide also part-time study that is targeted to persons for whom learning is not the primary activity. Part-time study is regarded as study where a student cumulatively passes less than 75% of the annual study load.

In case of work-related training, no fixed requirements concerning time and venue exist. Methods depend on the trainer(s).

7.5.5. Curriculum

The basis of instruction in the evening and distance forms of study on basic or upper secondary level is the National Curriculum like in full-time study, see 3.2; 4.A.2. The differences are that the curriculum does not contain physical education or handicraft and the study of elective courses takes place only at upper-secondary level.

In case of work-related training and non-formal education, providers are free in drawing up their curricula.

7.6. Guidance/counselling services

Employment Service Act (*tööturuteenuse seadus*, 2000) regulates provision of labour market services for job seekers and unemployed people. It gives to unemployed people possibilities to apply for vocational counselling. There are private-firms, who offer counselling service, but they charge for the service and that is why it is not accessible to those groups of people who need it the most.

7.7. Assessment, accreditation and recognition

The process of assessment in formal level training is similar to that of full-time study. Students are issued a diploma or certificate.

A certificate or a report proves the acquisition of work-related training. In general, the result of work-related training is higher qualification, which frequently allows applying for higher positions, also higher salaries.

7.8. Statistics

Adults in the regular education system,
2002/03

	Evening and distance	Their share of all students	Evening	Corres- pondence
<i>Basic education</i>	1380	0,8%	706	674
Upper secondary general	4843	12,2%	2637	2206
Vocational education total	2559	9,1%	343	2216
<i>Vocational education based on upper secondary education</i>	2559	9,1%	343	2216
Higher education	12226	19,2%		12226
<i>Kutsekõrgharidus</i>	1103	1,7%		1103
<i>Rakenduskõrghari- dus</i>	933	1,5%		933
<i>Diploma courses</i>	4577	7,2%		4577
<i>Bachelor courses</i>	4391	6,9%		4391
<i>Integreeritud bakalaureuse- ja magistriõpe</i>	265	0,4%		265
<i>Master courses</i>	957	1,5%		957
<i>Doctor courses</i>				