

National Implementation Plan of the Council recommendation on VET¹: Estonia

Introduction

In the recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Council has defined reform principles to ensure that vocational education and training equips people with the knowledge, skills and competences to thrive in the evolving labour market and society, to manage the just transitions to the green and digital economy, and to cope with emergencies and economic crises. Within 18 months of the adoption of the Recommendation, i.e. by 31 May 2022, Member States have undertaken to establish national measures to implement – and monitor the implementation of – the Recommendation. The European Commission is tasked with ensuring qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the objectives set out in the Recommendation. The implementation plans, containing national measures, form the basis for the annual monitoring carried out by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

The VET Recommendation defines vocational education and training broadly, covering different types of VET, aspects of adult education and skills policy.

The Estonian National Implementation Plan of the Recommendation is based on the national, sectoral and regional development plans in force and the measures developed and planned for their implementation in the fields of VET, adult education and skills policy. National measures are planned in accordance with European priorities and recommendations and based on the Estonian context and needs.

1. Brief overview of the national context and baseline²

1.1. Strategic context and legal framework of VET

The Estonian education system is decentralised and, due to its relatively small size, flexible. Responsibilities are clearly divided between the state, local governments and schools. Most VET institutions are state-owned. Education providers have a high degree of autonomy in performing their tasks, including allocating resources, and teachers have a great deal of autonomy in the choice of teaching methodologies, materials and approaches. VET forms a part of the Estonian education system and, in the context of lifelong learning, has a major role both in initial and continuous training, and in up- and reskilling of diverse target groups. VET is free for learners of all ages, incl. adults.

The Education Act (Parliament, 1992) establishes the organisation and principles of the Estonian education system. The basic legal framework for VET is set by the Vocational Education Institutions Act (2013), regulating the establishment, maintenance, transfer, reorganisation and termination of the activities of VET institutions, the bases for the right to provide instruction, management, organisation and financing of studies, the tasks of the school, the rights and obligations of the staff and learners,

¹ Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (OJ C, C/417, 02.12.2020, p. 1–16).

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01)&from=EN)

² VET in Europe: Estonia (2019).

[https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/Vocational Education Training Europe Estonia 2018 Cedefop ReferNet.pdf](https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Estonia_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf)

VET in Estonia. Short description (2017). https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4155_en.pdf

Developments in VET 2015-19.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/developments_in_vocational_education_and_training_policy_in_2015-19_estonia.pdf

and administrative supervision over the activities of schools. The 2013-15 VET reform introduced a more practical approach to studies and increased the coherence between the curriculum system and labour market needs. VET curricula became outcome-based and were linked to the levels of the Estonian Qualifications Framework (referenced to the European Qualifications Framework). To express the volume of vocational training, Estonian vocational education credits were introduced (referenced to ECVET). The Standard of Vocational Education (2013) establishes uniform requirements for formal VET, including the principles for drafting and amending the curricula, recognition of prior learning and professional experience, and classification of curricula. VET is offered at EQF levels 2-5. Professional higher education programmes (EQF6) are not formally considered VET.

The developments of Estonian VET and lifelong learning (outcome-based curricula linked to the qualifications framework, introduction of VET credits, etc.) have been in line with the European priorities and recommendations for the development of national VET systems, increasing the international comparability of the Estonian system and its compliance with the European framework and policy developments.

The strategic development of the field of education and training in Estonia, including VET and lifelong learning, is ensured through goalsetting in long-term development plans. The Education Strategy for 2021-35 (the follow-up to the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (MoER et al., 2014)) guides the most important developments in all education sectors, and continues to address the remaining and emerging challenges in VET in the context of lifelong learning. The Education Strategy contributes to the achievement of the goals of the national long-term development strategy 'Estonia 2035'³. Among the thematic areas of the Estonia 2035 strategy, Education Strategy contributes more to the area of skills and labour market, where the goal is to develop an education system that is learner-centred, flexible and forward-looking. The Education Strategy supports the development of people's knowledge and skills in line with the needs of the labour market and changes in the economic structure, as well as migration and integration policies.

The general objective of the Education Strategy 2021-35 is to equip the population of Estonia with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare people to fulfil their potential in personal, occupational and social life, and contribute to the promotion of quality of life in Estonia, as well as global sustainable development. The strategy is implemented through four-year implementation programmes, which are updated annually.

The National Implementation Plan of the VET Recommendation is also related to the Youth Field Strategy 2021-35⁴, sharing common goals with the youth field to reduce early leaving of young people from formal education and the risk of becoming NEETs, supporting young people's participation in education and transition to the labour market, and validating learning and work experiences acquired in various environments.

The National Implementation Plan is linked to the Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021-35⁵ through the common goal of closer cooperation between VET institutions, universities, research institutions and enterprises, especially in areas of national importance and at the local level within county development plans.

Among the regional development plans, in the development strategy of Ida-Viru County 2019–2030+⁶, the goals of the field of education are aimed at improving the quality of education, linking it to the changing external environment and shaping entrepreneurial attitudes necessary to cope with environmental change. In vocational training, the focus is on interaction with the county's business community.

The Just Transition Fund (2021-27) finances, inter alia, support measures to increase the number of training places in vocational and higher education and in in-service training in both school-based and

³ <https://valitsus.ee/en/estonia-2035-development-strategy/strategy/strategic-goals>

⁴ https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna_arengukava_2021-2035_kinnitatud_12.08.2035.pdf

⁵ https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/taie_arengukava_kinnitatud_15.07.2021_211109a_en_final.pdf

⁶ Ida-Viru maakonna arengustrateegia 2019–2030+. RT IV, 21.12.2018, 72.

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/421122018072?leiaKehtiv>

work-based learning, based on the needs of businesses in the region and the focus areas of RDI and entrepreneurship.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (2022-26) will support the digital transition, including the development of VET modules, the organisation of in-service training to ensure the supply of ICT and cyber security specialists, and the creation of an in-service training programme for SMEs. In order to broaden the workforce's knowledge and skills related to the green economy, updating of the content and organisation of HE and VET programmes will be supported, and in-service training and retraining will be provided for the development of green skills and the introduction of new technologies.

The VET-related activities planned within the strategies of Youth Field, RDIE, Ida-Viru County and the Recovery and Resilience Facility are detailed in the following description of the measures.

Besides the national funds, the following foreign sources will be used for the implementation of the action plan: EU structural funds for the period 2014-20 and 2021-27, as well as the European Economic Area and Norway grants.



1.2. Main policy initiatives and ongoing reforms

Recent policy initiatives are, on the one hand, based on long-term trends and challenges, and on the other, seek to offset the effects of the COVID19 pandemic, which has transformed the global situation, including the economy and labour markets, but also education and training, since 2019.

The Estonian Education Strategy 2021-35 highlights the need to increase the coherence and flexibility of all levels and types of education. The state and local governments ensure diverse and accessible learning opportunities, including an optimal network of educational institutions that create equal opportunities for all learners, regardless of their gender, age, place of residence, nationality, special needs, etc. The learners are responsible for their own learning and consciously shape their learning path in order to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help them cope in life and achieve their goals.

The long-term challenges include the need to raise the quality of VET and adapt the VET offer to the changes in the economy and labour market, both responding to and forecasting the needs of employers, to raise the popularity of VET among youth, to decrease the rate of early leaving from VET, and to reduce the share of adults without professional education or with outdated skills.

VET curricula have been outcome-based for a decade, consisting of modules and based on vocational standards. The types of VET are related to the levels of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, and VET students take vocational examinations to complete their studies. From 2013, a new quality assurance system for VET has been implemented. Employers' representatives participate in the

independent external evaluation of curriculum groups, and the results provide feedback on the quality of learning both to schools and to school managers and employers.

During the period of the current implementation plan, the updating of VET curricula will continue, both to strengthen the acquisition of key competences in vocational secondary education and in accordance with the establishment of a common standard for secondary education, and to increase the flexibility in offering professional training in other types of education, including micro-qualifications. In parallel, the learning resources and environments and the competences of teachers and supervisors are being developed.

The jobs and skills forecasting system OSKA, which has been in operation since 2015, creates a good basis for linking education and the world of labour. Education and the labour market are systematically linked through the professional qualifications system and professional standards. Employers have a major role in key educational processes (e.g. curriculum development, traineeships) and in anticipating skills needs. The methodology of the professional qualification system and the jobs and skills forecasting system is being updated to bring them in line with the requirements of the labour market. The reform is planned to be fully implemented by 2025.

Building the information society has been a strategic priority in Estonia for several decades. Previous education strategies have set specific goals for this, and consistent activities have been implemented. Integration of digital culture into the learning process at all levels of education and in all curricula, systematic educational innovation in pedagogy and school organisation, inspired by technological innovation, and provision of educational and technological support in all educational institutions have been key objectives throughout the different development plans. During the period of the current implementation plan, the development of digital competences will be continued, and the diversification of learning will be supported, including through digital solutions. Constraints imposed during the pandemic and periods of distance learning enhanced the development of digital skills for teachers, trainers and learners, but also highlighted the uneven level of digital skills among VET institutions, teachers and students, the need to improve both digital skills and awareness of digital learning opportunities, and to further develop digital learning environments and aspects in VET curricula supporting digital transition.

The necessity to support the green transition through education and training has been recognised in Estonia, in line with the EU skills agenda. Based on the results of the recently completed special survey on knowledge and skills needed for the digital and green transition⁷, there are plans to update both VET, higher education, and the in-service training offer in the coming years.

1.3. National situation regarding the quantitative objectives set in the Recommendation

Among the three quantitative objectives set in the Recommendation, the share of employed graduates from VET and exposure of recent graduates from VET to work-based learning during their studies have long been monitored as relevant indicators to measure the achievement of strategic goals set in Estonian education and training policy.

Objective 1. The share of employed graduates from VET should be at least 82%.

The employment rate for graduates of both vocational and higher education has been on an upward trend in recent years, fluctuating between 77% and 83%, depending on the economic and labour market situation. The employment rate of recent graduates from VET and HE (20 to 34-year-olds; one to three years after leaving education) has been one of the key indicators for the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy (2014-20). In 2019, it reached 83.3%, i.e. the target set for 2020 (82%) was surpassed; the indicator improved due to the increase of employment rates in general. As an impact of COVID-19 the general employment rate dropped in 2020 and the unemployment rate grew. The largest decrease was in the employment rate of VET graduates (from 86.2% to 77.4%).

⁷ OSKA overview of the skills required for the digital and green revolution (2021). https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OSKA_ylvevaade_dig_ja_rohepoordeks_vajalikest_oskustest.pdf

Objective 2. 60% of recent graduates from VET benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training.

Work-based learning is an inherent part of all VET programmes, ranging from a minimum of 35% of studies in vocational secondary education (EQF4) to min. 70% in EQF2 level programmes. VET learning options include school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer), practical training at school and in-company practice.

Work-based learning as a standalone form of study was introduced to VET in 2006 and is considered a national priority. Therefore, the participation rate in work-based learning is also an important national indicator. In WBL programmes, work-based learning (according to Estonian legislation, work practice) comprises at least two thirds of the volume of studies. The number of VET students in workplace-based learning programmes is increasing: in 2020/21, slightly more than 2300 students were engaged in those programmes, which is approximately 9% of all VET students and 15% of all VET graduates. The number of WBL graduates is constantly increasing, e.g. in 2018 it was 11.9%, in 2019 12.4% and the target for 2025 is 21%.

Objective 3. 8% of learners in VET benefit from learning mobility abroad.

In Estonian VET policy, a goal has been set that every VET student should benefit from learning mobility abroad during their studies. Short-term learning mobility in VET has been added as a new indicator in the Education Strategy 2021-35. According to the developed methodology, graduates who have participated in learning mobility abroad for at least two weeks during their studies will be taken into account.

In order to collect data on the participants in learning mobility, the *Tahvel* learning management system for VET institutions has been upgraded. The system directly feeds the Estonian education information system with mobility data. The collection of mobility data started in January 2022. Data collected on learning mobility by 2023 will be used to set the baseline and target level.

The measures of the National Implementation Plan of the VET Recommendation are based on the action trajectories set in the Estonian education strategy, its implementation programme and other development plans mentioned above. Thus, the progress towards the objectives of the implementation plan will be monitored using the indicators set in these documents. Indicators related to specific activities are presented in the description of the respective activities.

2. General objectives of the national implementation plan

The national implementation plan of the VET recommendation is based on the general objective of the Estonian Education Strategy 202-35:

To equip the population of Estonia with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare people to fulfil their potential in personal, occupational and social life, and contribute to promoting the quality of life in Estonia as well as global sustainable development.

Three strategic goals have been set to achieve the general objective:

1. Learning opportunities are diverse and accessible and the education system enables smooth transitions between levels and types of education.
2. Estonia has competent and motivated teachers and heads of schools, a diverse learning environment and a learner-centred approach to learning and teaching.
3. Learning options are responsive to the development needs of society and the labour market.

The movement towards the general objective of the strategy is monitored using, among other things, the following indicators:

1. Share of 18 to 24-year-olds with low educational attainment not in education or training (2035 target: 9%)
2. Average pay of VET teachers compared to average pay in Estonia (2026 target: 120%)
3. Share of adults with professional qualification (25 to 64-year-olds) (2035 target: 80%)

4. Adults' participation rate in lifelong learning (2035 target in formal and non-formal learning: 25%, in informal learning a new indicator has been developed and the first data will be collected in 2023)

The packages of measures of the national implementation plan are based on the challenges highlighted in the Education Strategy and the action trajectories planned to achieve the three strategic goals. The measures include activities supporting the development of the VET and adult education system, skills policy, education and labour market coherence, and the promotion of the digital and green transition, as set out in the Education Strategy, its implementation programmes and other related documents.

The timetable for the actions (i.e. start of implementation, if set already) is in the description of the main activities. Many activities are still at an early planning stage and the timetable for their implementation is still to be determined.

3. Description of measures

1. Learning opportunities and the organisation of VET
<p>Rationale/background, challenges addressed</p> <p>The key words for the next years will be lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways in a seamless learning environment that enables personalisation. The dividing lines that prevent mobility between formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well as between general and vocational education, will be reduced.</p> <p>Learners can design their learning paths according to their needs and abilities, i.e. by learning in smaller modules or learning bites that can be taken into account as part of the formal curriculum. The education system is also affected by changing demographics: population decline means that the school network needs to be adapted. Increasing migration entails risks and puts an additional pressure on support services, while increased learning mobility creates opportunities to improve the quality of education.</p> <p>Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaboration and coherence between different levels and types of education, i.e. general and vocational education, vocational and higher education and formal and non-formal education is limited. 2. Vocational secondary education is not an attractive learning option: only a quarter of basic school graduates continue in vocational secondary education. 3. Vocational secondary education curricula do not support sufficiently the development of the key competences of students and the organisation of studies does not favour the implementation of curricula. 4. Drop-out rates from vocational secondary education curricula are high. 5. Given the limited resources, the diversity and regional availability of VET are declining. 6. The existing support systems are not effective enough to implement inclusive education and ensure access to education. 7. The level of development and acquisition of digital skills is uneven among schools, teachers and students. 8. Recognition of prior learning and work experience has not taken root in society. Knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning and work experience are not sufficiently recognised in formal education and awarding professional qualifications. 9. Although the participation of adults in VET and lifelong learning is generally high, it is not sufficient among target groups who would benefit most from raising their qualification and updating their skills. <p>To ensure that learning opportunities are diverse and accessible, and that learners are able to move smoothly between levels and types of education it is important that vocational education</p>

and training be highly valued in society, of high-quality and diverse, and that VET institutions continue to be autonomous and cooperative.

Specific objectives

Action trajectory 1.1

Ensuring an inclusive and sustainable network and infrastructure of educational institutions providing high-quality VET to ensure access to education for different target groups and a learning environment that support contemporary approaches to learning and teaching.

Action trajectory 1.2

Ensuring flexible learning opportunities, accessibility of high-quality education and training and supported learning to reduce drop-out and early leaving rates and to exploit every individual's potential to the fullest.

Action trajectory 1.3

Promoting quality assurance and internationalisation in order to diversify learning opportunities.

Description of main activities and timeline

Action trajectory 1.1

Development of VET institutions, centres of excellence and cooperation between stakeholders

- carrying out a study on the VET institutions network 2023
- designing the network of VET institutions in line with the reorganisation of secondary education and in connection with the development of the school network in other areas of education 2023+
- implementing a performance-based funding model for VET
- defining selection principles and criteria for centres of excellence in VET, defining R&D links, and drawing up a concept for centres of excellence 2023+
- empowering centres of excellence in VET to ensure the quality of learning, to provide in-service training, including the provision of training for trainers, training of practitioners and supervisors, curriculum development, support for national and international cooperation, including participation in the Erasmus+ Centres of Excellence projects, support for cooperation with employers, higher education and research institutions
- mapping of cooperation opportunities between VET institutions and research institutions in areas of national importance, in the RDIE Strategy's focus areas, i.e. areas of smart specialisation,⁸ and participating in the process of drawing up roadmaps for the focus areas 2022+
- initiating cooperation between VET institutions, research institutions, higher education institutions and employers, including at local level in the framework of regional development plans⁹

Flexible and diverse continuing training and retraining

⁸ Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021–2035

⁹ Ida-Viru County Development Strategy 2019–2030+

- module-based up-skilling and retraining courses for a wide range of adults, including micro-qualifications for transformed skills 2022+
- implementing flexible learning pathways in VET to support the continuation of studies for adults with low educational attainment, motivation and skills 2022+
- developing learning pathways that support flexible and personalised learning, empowering school support teams, developing a study counselling system, incl. linking formal and non-formal learning 2022+

Supporting vulnerable target groups

- diversifying professional and training choices for vulnerable groups 2022+
- supporting SEN learners in schools and in providing supported employment 2022+
- supporting students with a native language other than Estonian, including those from a migrant background, in learning Estonian and providing additional Estonian language tuition
- reforming support systems for SEN students, incl. coordinating information systems to support flexible transitions for SEN students
- supporting NEETs in entering vocational education and training
- promoting gender balance in the study choices of VET students, e.g. in the framework of IT Academy and Engineering Academy initiatives

Supporting informed educational choices

- cooperation with basic and upper secondary schools, provision of elective vocational training modules in general education schools
- developing and providing career information and guidance, incl. in basic education

Action trajectory 1.2

Seamless transitions between levels and types of education and into the labour market

- developing and implementing a common standard for secondary education to integrate general and vocational secondary education 2024+
- updating the Standard of Vocational Education, including specifying the differences between IVET and CVET 2023+
- supporting access to education and the continuation of education, incl. in the framework of the Youth Guarantee Action Plan
- developing opportunities for learner-centred learning and flexible learning pathways at upper secondary education level and vocational training, providing learners with the conditions and opportunities to acquire education in smaller modules (e.g. micro-qualifications, bitesize learning) tailored to learners' needs and abilities 2023+
- contributing to the development of the principles of micro-qualifications and supporting their implementation in VET 2022+
- developing the system of recognition of prior learning and experience (RPL, accessibility, user-friendliness, training of assessors and counsellors)
- ensuring access to RPL information and counselling, user-friendly RPL assessment and skills recognition

Supporting skills-based approaches, green and digital transitions in VET

- developing the principles for skills-based curriculum development in VET 2022+
- developing principles for addressing the skills needed for the green transition, including competences supporting the development of environmental awareness in VET 2022+
- a total of 2,830 people will be trained in VET, higher education and continuing education institutions under the green transition actions 2022-24
- a total of 2,000 people will be trained in VET, higher and continuing education institutions as part of the digital transition actions 2022-24

Action trajectory 1.3

VET quality assurance

- quality assessment of VET and further development of the quality model, to ensure, inter alia, the quality of work-based learning and continuing training 2022+
- developing a culture of quality assurance and cooperation under EQAVET10 2022+
- participating in and supporting skills competitions and contests, network building

Supporting internationalisation in VET

- supporting the internationalisation of VET, incl. supporting the implementation of Europass, improving data collection and analytics, monitoring and analysis of learning mobility 2022+
- participating in Erasmus+ and other development projects, cooperation projects and mobility schemes to mobilise best international experience
- supporting the implementation of Europass 2022+
- participating in EU-level debate and development activities on the creation of key profiles for VET in Europe
- participating in international skills competitions and contests

Indicators

- Share of 20 to 24-year-olds with at least secondary education: 2019 level 84.8%, 2035 target 90%
- Share of 25 to 34-year-olds with tertiary education attainment: 2020 level 40.8%, 2035 target 45%
- Share of VET graduates who have participated in learning mobility abroad for at least two weeks during their studies (to be established)
- Share of students who have obtained vocational education five years after the completion of basic school (2019 level 23%, increasing)
- Share of school leavers in VET institutions (vocational upper secondary education level, first academic year) <11% by 2025

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET

- A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges.
- B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET.
- C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.
- D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills.
- E. VET promotes equality of opportunities.

Osnabrück Declaration

- 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET.
- 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.
- 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET.
- 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

¹⁰ European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IVET	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CVET	
Scope (national, local)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local	
Beneficiaries and target groups	
students, adult learners, teachers, traineeship instructors, support staff, school teams, school managers, businesses, other educational institutions and research institutions	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Unemployment Insurance Fund, Education and Youth Board, educational institutions, employer organisations, businesses	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
Public funding, including EU Structural Funds (ESF, RDF); Just Transition Fund (JTF); Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF); Erasmus+	

2. Teacher, learning environments and approaches to teaching and learning
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
<p>Teachers and trainers are key actors in planning, providing feedback and supporting the teaching and learning process. Heads of VET institutions should create a learning culture and environment that supports learning and wellbeing, skillfully managing and implementing changes. To guarantee high-quality education and diverse learning environments, initial teacher training and professional development opportunities must remain at a high level.</p> <p>Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The supply of qualified teachers, vocational teachers and support specialists is insufficient. The teaching community is ageing and the retainment rate of novice teachers is low. 2. The skills of teachers, vocational teachers, supervisors, trainers and school heads in diversifying the learning process and environment and their readiness to introduce educational innovations is uneven; the potential of digital solutions is not fully exploited. 3. The readiness of VET institutions to manage a multilingual and multicultural learning environment and to support students with a mother tongue other than Estonian is insufficient. <p>The following strengths of the Estonian VET system help to meet the challenges: the great autonomy of teachers and school leaders, efficient and active networks of teachers and heads of schools, and high-quality digital infrastructure of VET institutions.</p>

Specific objectives

Action trajectory 2.1

Teachers, heads of schools and other staff in the field of VET are empowered to provide quality education and training.

Action trajectory 2.2

The principles of the contemporary approach to learning and teaching are implemented in order to ensure that the process and content of learning support the development of self-directed learners, empowering both learners and teachers.

Description of activities and timeline

Action trajectory 2.1

Developing competences of teachers, trainers and heads of school

- developing the capacity of schools to develop the content of VET, including curriculum development and in-service training for vocational teachers
- pedagogical-methodological in-service training courses (incl. in special pedagogy and andragogy) for VET teachers, in-service training in digital pedagogy for vocational teachers 2022+
- field-related training for vocational teachers, training for school teams and support specialists, in-service training for heads of schools
- training for school and company traineeship instructors under the VET and HE development programme PRÕM+ 2022+
- didactics training for IT practitioners under IT Academy in VET 2022+
- support for Erasmus+ placements abroad for vocational teachers
- training in Content and Language Integrated Learning for VET teachers; in-service training in language teaching methodology for VET teachers; Estonian language training for VET teachers whose native language is other than Estonian; counselling for school teams on teaching in multilingual and multicultural learning environment and supporting pupils whose native language is other than Estonian

Action trajectory 2.2

Developing teaching and assessment methods

- supporting the development and implementation of diverse learning methods, including digital pedagogy 2022+
- developing future skills (e.g. purposeful use of technology, problem solving, analytical thinking, etc.), methods and didactics to support teaching, in particular in the context of in-service teacher training and the activities of the IT Academy and Engineering Academy
- broadening output-based learning and assessment in vocational secondary education, developing assessment models and updating methodological guidelines
- developing and introducing digital solutions as tools for educational innovation in teaching and learning, to allow for diversification and personalisation of VET, including assessment for learning
- raising awareness of the opportunities and risks of the information society among the participants in the learning process 2022+

Developing curricula and learning environments

- analysing the curricula system and developing VET curricula in cooperation between different levels of educational, educational institutions and non-formal education
- cooperation with employers, e.g. in the framework of IT Academy and Engineering Academy
- supporting the development and implementation of curricula
- development of learning resources, including the acquisition of simulators, etc.
- using state-of-the-art ICT solutions and flexible teaching formats to deliver in-service training

Developing information systems

- improving the systemic character, user-friendliness and interoperability of information systems (Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), Vocational Education and Training Information System Tahvel, Education Portal, Digital Learning Resource Portal e-Koolikott, Continuing Education Information System Juhan) 2022+

Indicators

- Subjective wellbeing of participants in the education process: vocational secondary education students who are fairly or completely satisfied with school (2019: 52.4%, increasing), teachers who are fairly or completely satisfied with their job (2018: 83.7%, increasing)
- Teacher retention: percentage of teacher training graduates who, after completing their training, worked as a teacher for five consecutive years (2035 target: 60%); percentage of first-time teachers who have worked as a teacher for five consecutive years after taking up their post (2035 target: 55%)
- Percentage of 16 to 74-year-olds with digital skills above the basic level (2035 target: 60%)

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET

- A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges.
- B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET.
- C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.
- D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills.
- E. VET promotes equality of opportunities.
- F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.

Osnabrück Declaration

- 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET.
- 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.
- 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET.
- 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IVET
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CVET
Scope (national, local)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> national
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local
Beneficiaries and target groups
teachers, heads of schools, traineeship instructors, support specialists, students and adult learners, employers, businesses, employer organisations
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Research, Education and Youth Board, educational institutions
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
Public funding, including EU structural funds (ESF, RRF), Erasmus+

3. VET, society and labour market
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
<p>Rapidly changing societies and evolving labour markets, including new fields and professions and new forms of work, require the upgrading of existing skills. An ageing population will create new challenges for the labour market and the social sector, changing the way work is done and the expectations for future employees. Demand for technology-related skills will grow. General and future competences, and at least a few in-depth competences in specific fields (the 'T-shaped skills model'), help people to adapt in the labour market.</p> <p>Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incentives and conditions of collaboration between educational institutions and the labour market are insufficient and the potential of work-based learning is not fully exploited. Employers' contribution to VET and continuing training is inadequate. 2. Fewer people continue their education after completing general secondary education. To a significant degree, the population's labour market potential is not fulfilled due to high drop-out rates from vocational and higher education and general upper-secondary schools for adults. The proportion of people without professional qualifications, with low educational attainment and outdated skills is high. 3. Formal education, in-service training and retraining do not adequately match the development needs of the society and labour market. Few in-service training and retraining opportunities, incl. for acquiring green skills, are provided to people with both lower and higher levels of professional skills and education in the growth areas of smart specialisation and areas in need of priority development in society. 4. The level of career and entrepreneurship education and opportunities to learn about the world of labour and the full spectrum of professions are uneven. 5. The process of amending professional qualifications is inflexible and does not permit sufficiently rapid and efficient responses to the changes in the labour market and society. 6. Initial VET curricula, incl. the pace of updating them, do not sufficiently meet the development needs of society and the labour market.

7. The proportion of low value-added jobs in Estonian economic structure is too high, a situation which is not conducive to professional education. The career paths offered by VET are not valued by society.
8. Employers place uneven value on qualifications and professions. Acquired skills and knowledge are not translated into productivity gains and wages.

This implies that individuals must be prepared for career transitions and for continuous retraining and further training throughout lives, and that the VET and adult education systems are able to respond quickly to changing skills needs. Flexible and practical upskilling opportunities and work-based learning are becoming increasingly important.

Specific objectives

Action trajectory 3.1

Developing and implementing a sustainable system of forecasting and monitoring labour and skills needs which takes into account the needs of all target groups and of coordinating actions between different actors in order to promote the acquisition of knowledge and abilities that serve the labour market and to better link education to the labour market.

Action trajectory 3.2

Updating the content of VET curricula and curriculum design principles, based on a skills-based approach and the secondary education standard.

Action trajectory 3.2

Supporting the development of competences that create more added value; improving continuing training and retraining opportunities, including work-based learning, to respond swiftly to the development needs of the world of labour and ensure that people in Estonia are equipped with the right knowledge and skills for employment.

Description of activities and timeline

Action trajectory 3.1

Developing professional qualifications system and jobs and skills forecasting system

- development of the professional qualifications system, modernisation of professional standards and the creation and implementation of skills profiles
- creating, developing and supporting the implementation of a skills classification and competences catalogue in VET
- further development of the jobs and skills forecasting system OSKA – updating of the methodology for general analysis and sectoral surveys, extension of analytical capacity
- supporting the implementation of Europass 2022+

Action trajectory 3.2

Developing VET curricula

- modernising the content of VET studies and the principles of curriculum design, including the initiation, creation, registration, implementation and development of curricula
- supporting and empowering educational institutions to better integrate general competences (including green and digital skills), future skills and professional competences into studies, and to provide more training in these areas 2023+
- developing curricula in IT and engineering, developing and supporting the implementation of 4-year vocational secondary education curricula 2022+
- developing curricula on higher levels of qualification (level 5) 2022+

Action trajectory 3.3

Developing work-based learning and practical training

- VET and HE development programme PRŌM+, empowering professional associations and enterprises to provide work-based learning and apprenticeships and expand work-based learning 2022+
- quality assurance of work-based learning and practical training 2022+

Indicators

- Employment rates among 20 to 34-year-olds with professional education one and five years after graduation: 2020 level 78% and 74%, 2025 target 81% and 76%
- Digital competences above base level among 16 to 74-year-olds (%) (2035 target 60%)
- Rate of graduates of all those who started in work-based learning (2025 target 75%)

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET

- A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges.
- B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET.
- C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.
- D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills.
- E. VET promotes equality of opportunities.
- F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.

Osnabrück Declaration

- 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET.
- 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.
- 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET.
- 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)

- IVET
- CVET

Scope (national, local)

- national
- local

Beneficiaries and target groups
students, educational institutions, professional associations, businesses
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Research, Education and Youth Board, Ministry of Social Affairs, Unemployment Insurance Fund, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, employers' organisations, local and regional authorities
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
Public funding, including EU Structural Funds (ESF, RDF); Just Transition Fund (JTF); Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF); Erasmus+

4. Management and implementation of the plan

The National Implementation Plan was prepared and is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. To implement it, the Ministry of Education and Research works closely with central and specialised employers' organisations, employees' organisations, other ministries and institutions involved in provision of VET. The Advisory Board for Vocational Education and Training brings together all relevant partners and its main task is to advise the Ministry of Education and Research and educational institutions on strategic planning in the field of VET, on the organisation of the network of educational institutions, on the planning and financing of training areas and other important issues in the field of VET. The Board is composed of representatives of: Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, Estonian Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Estonian Association for the Promotion of Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, Estonian Association of Towns and Municipalities, Estonian Qualifications Authority and Estonian Trade Union Confederation.

The Estonian Association for the Promotion of Vocational Education and Training is the Ministry's partner in the implementation of the strategic objectives of VET.

In order to implement the objective and strategic goals of the NIP, there are programmes, conditions for granting the support, etc., which are drawn up and amended as part of the preparation of the budgetary strategy and the national budget. The implementation of the NIP is monitored on the basis of indicators set out in the NIP, and the performance of the actions is reported in the framework of reporting on the national performance areas and the policy developments monitoring system set up by Cedefop. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the achievement of the targets and the monitoring of the indicators.

5. Expected results and impact of the implementation plan

Key outcomes:

1. Estonia's VET system has sufficient numbers of competent and motivated teachers, traineeship instructors, support specialists and school leaders, as well as diverse and learner-centred learning environments, and improved cooperation and coherence between levels and types of education, VET is learner-centred, and different learning pathways in secondary education are equally valued, general and vocational education are integrated, the professional qualifications system underpinning VET curricula is skills-based and micro-qualifications are implemented.
2. VET policy is designed in close cooperation with stakeholders and other levels of education, with an extended network of stakeholders and regular cooperation. As a result, the VET curricula system is holistic, and curricula are up-to-date and match employers' expectations

with students' needs. The learning process is supported by diverse and high-quality learning resources.

3. Learning opportunities meet the needs of society and the labour market, employers contribute to the development of VET by providing traineeships and work-based learning, and are involved in the management of VET institutions, curriculum development and quality assessment.

The actions under the NIP have a significant social impact, in particular on the content, quality, organisation and accessibility of vocational education and training. The positive impact extends to all stakeholders in VET – learners, teachers, managers of VET institutions, partners in business, and society at large, through increased educational attainment and labour productivity.

The outcomes of the NIP have an indirect impact on the economy, including people's livelihoods, the business environment and the activities of enterprises.

Regional development is also affected, as the network of VET institutions is spread across all regions of Estonia. The actions under the Action Plan have a direct or indirect impact on the development of many regions and different population groups, thus also contributing to equal opportunities.