

Current Key Education Reforms in Estonia

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Kristina Kallas, PhD

Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia

Education in numbers

General education:

+ 171,436 students

+ 17,624 teachers

+ 484 schools

Higher education:

+ 47 498 students (incl. 8,2% international)

+ 18 institutions: 6 public & 1 private university,
7 state & 4 private HEIs

VET education:

+ 25,149 students

+ 2,154 teachers

+ 29 VET institutions

Preliminary data from November 2025
for 2025/2026 academic year

Education in Estonia - highly valued through generations

1918-1940

Republic of Estonia

Establishment of the Estonian national education system. From 1920 compulsory and free education for 6 grades.

1991

Republic of Estonia

The modernisation of Estonian education begins:

- + 1992 decentralisation
- + 1992 changes in the national curricula on all education levels and types
- + 1997 Tiger Leap programme: targeted digital infrastructure investments

Before 1918

Under Danish, Swedish, German, Russian rule

- | | |
|---------|------------------------------|
| 13th c. | First monastic schools |
| 17th c. | Schools for peasant children |
| 1860 | Compulsory school |
| 1881 | Literacy rate 94% |

1944-1991

Soviet Occupation

Estonia succeeded in maintaining high-quality teaching and learning in Estonian.

Parallel Russian school system was established

2000s

- + 2002 first Estonian EdTech reaches schools (eKool)
- + 2004 creation of Estonian Education Information System (EHIS)
- + 2018, 2022 PISA top results (leader in Europe)
- + 2025 AI Leap initiative

Ongoing reforms – current status

Extending the **COMPULSORY LEARNING AGE:**

- Finishing upper secondary/vocational education
- Mandatory for students who entered 9th grade in the 2025/2026 school year

Harmonising the quality of **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:**

- New early childhood education law 2025
 - National curriculum for all ECE institutions

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- Integrating upper secondary certificates levels
- New comprehensive 4-year programmes in all VET institutions
 - Broad competence base rather than narrow skill set
- 40-50% of post-primary enrolment by 2035

TEACHER RETENTION

- Increased admissions at universities together with scholarships
 - Salary coefficient in Ida-Virumaa
- Career pathways for teachers as of 2026
- Principals' review system as of 2026

Transition to Estonian language of instruction

AI Leap

Key reform: Transition to Estonian language of instruction

Aim: all children — regardless of home language — receive high-quality education and strong future opportunities.

- + Transition reform 2024-2030, final step in a long gradual process since 1991
- + Involved levels in 2025/26: kindergartens, grades 1, 2, 4 and 5
- + Concerns 50 schools in Estonia (~10%)
- + Language proficiency requirements for teachers
- + Key lessons from the first year of implementation:
 - + more support needed in 4th grades
 - + additional learning materials developed
 - + broad societal and political support

Supporting schools, teachers, children and parents during the transition

Schools and teachers:

- + Extra funding and salary supplements
- + Expanded training, scholarships, flexible pathways for career changers
- + Methodological and language support (Keelesamm, courses, mentorships, cultural programmes)

Children and parents:

- + Gradual transition: full Estonian-medium by 2030
- + Flexible timetables, extra language lessons, teacher guidance
- + Schools handle subject teaching; parents are encouraged to help practise Estonian
- + Individual plans, SEN adjustments, specialist help when needed
- + Online tools and EdTech solutions: Keeleklikk, Keeletee, SayEst, Alpa Kids, Lingvist
- + Continued support for mother tongue instruction and cultural activities

Key reform: AI Leap

- + Training of higher cognitive processes begins at school
- + MOER AI Council — established in January 2024
- + AI Strategy for Estonian schools developed in 2024
- + AI Leap programme launched in August 2025

AI Leap Programme

- + AI Leap Foundation – public-private partnership
- + Partnership with OpenAI and Google
- + 2025/26 school-year launch: access to AI tools and structured support for all upper-secondary level teachers and all 10th & 11th grade students.
- + Dedicated focus on teachers' competencies
- + AI Literacy course for students
- + Scientific monitoring of learning processes

Training of higher order cognitive skills

We need to strengthen democracy, defence readiness and economic competitiveness by:

- + Train people to think deeper, more systematically and more creatively. Train people to be in permanent learning and re-learning mode.
- + Equipping citizens with critical and analytical thinking, alongside ethical decision-making skills
- + Reducing vulnerabilities to misinformation, manipulation, and digital dependency
- + Preparing an AI fluent workforce for the future
- + Positioning digital and AI education as a strategic tool to counter disinformation, cyber threats, and geopolitical risks.

We don't have all the answers — we invite the world to learn with us.

A photograph of three young boys with light-colored hair, wearing dark blue or black shirts, standing outdoors. They are all looking at a tablet held by the boy on the right. The boy on the right is smiling and looking down at the screen. The boy in the middle is also smiling and looking at the screen. The boy on the left is looking at the screen from the side. The background is blurred, showing a building and trees. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

“It is not about using AI the most, but about learning to use it the wisest way.”

Alar Karis
THE PRESIDENT OF ESTONIA

2026: Upcoming international events





ISTP26

International Summit on
the Teaching Profession
Tallinn, Estonia

Switching gears:

Teachers and Learners in the Future Learning Environment

8 – 11 March 2026, Tallinn Estonia

By invitation only

www.istp2026.ee

Meeting of the NB8 Ministers of
Higher Education and Research in
Tallinn in May 2026 (tbc)

during the Estonian presidency of the Nordic-Baltic
Cooperation (NB8)



Thank you!

Kristina Kallas, PhD

Minister of Education and Research
of the Republic of Estonia

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