

A photograph of a man and a woman in a green inflatable boat on a calm river. They are wearing orange life jackets and are seen from behind. The river is surrounded by lush green trees, with their reflections visible in the water. The scene is peaceful and scenic.

Lifelong Guidance in Estonia

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Welcome to the new edition of Lifelong Guidance in Estonia!

Are you a career guidance expert or practitioner? Are you interested in developing your skills and competencies in relation to global education and the labour market? Would you like to expand your professional network and establish contact with colleagues from other countries? Do you think that fresh inspiration from other countries and cultures might be good for your professional development?

If yes, then [Euroguidance Estonia](#) is at your disposal, and this publication is just the resource to accompany you on this exciting journey!

With this publication, we would like to:

- introduce the Estonian guidance community,
- share how career development is ensured by a lifelong guidance system in Estonia, and
- inspire you with our ways of working.

You will find an overview of career guidance in education and employment, but also in the private sector, with chapters focusing on the professional development of practitioners, digital solutions available for users and professionals, information about international relations, and also some facts on education and the labour market.

We are convinced that the meaningful exchange of practices and policies, and learning from one another across borders in career guidance, is an important element in our globalising and rapidly changing world.

Ensuring practitioner professionalism is key to supporting clients in managing learning and work, and moving towards a personally determined and evolving future.

On behalf of the Estonian Euroguidance team

Margit Rammo
May 2026



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You are welcome to visit the [e-publication](#)! All text in blue refers to valuable online references.



Strategic View

The national long-term [development strategy](#) “[Estonia 2035](#)” focuses mainly on the health of our citizens, our preparedness for change, and our relationship with the living environment.

The strategy sets out five long-term strategic goals:

- Estonia’s people are smart, active, and care about their health
- Estonia’s society is caring, cooperative, and open
- Estonia’s economy is strong, innovative, and responsible
- Estonia offers a safe and high-quality living environment that takes into account the needs of all its inhabitants
- Estonia is innovative, reliable, and people-centred

EDUCATION POLICY

The **Education Strategy 2021–2035** sets out the key educational goals for 15 years. The strategy focuses on the key strengths and challenges that need to be addressed to keep pace with changes, both in Estonia and worldwide, and to prepare the education system and its participants for the future in the best way possible. Planning for future development should take the ageing population, people's changing preferences, climate change, globalisation, and technological progress into consideration. These develop-

ments change the nature of work and people's lives, and imply changes in education.

The general objective of the strategy is to equip the population of Estonia with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that prepare people to fulfil their potential in their personal, occupational, and social life, and contribute to promoting quality of life in Estonia as well as global sustainable development. To achieve the general objective, the strategy sets out three strategic goals; see below.

Education Strategy 2021–2035: strategic goals

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

Source: *Ministry of Education and Research*

To ensure supported learning, we need to continue developing the career services system and career education at school, including the formation of a comprehensive system to discover and develop individuals' capabilities.

During the period 2024–2029, efforts to improve the effectiveness of career services in the education sector will be supported through activities under the European Union co-funded programme. These activities in-

clude, among other things, the development of guidance materials for schools, training for teachers, piloting the organisation of regional career services, monitoring the organisation of career services, and updating learning materials.

We also need to improve continuing training and retraining opportunities to respond swiftly to labour market changes and ensure that people are equipped with the right knowledge and skills for employment.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The strategic goals of the employment policy are covered in the [Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030](#). The main goal is that labour demand and supply compliance ensures high employment and quality working conditions that support long-term participation in working life. The following activities are planned to support the goal:

- Implementing employment policies that are sustainable and responsive to societal and economic developments.
- Supporting structural changes in the economy and labour mobility.
- Preventing the loss of capacity to work (i.e., when temporary incapacity develops into permanent incapacity) and keeping workers in employment.

- Meeting environmental and climate objectives and achieving balanced regional development.
- Improving the working environment and industrial relations of workers, maintaining health in the workplace and preventing injuries.

Estonia's labour market policy and the corresponding legal framework is primarily guided by the Employment Programme 2024–2029, established under the Labour Market Measures Act. The programme sets objectives for improving workforce participation, reducing unemployment, and supporting skill development. It defines the conditions for labour market services.



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Responsibility for the development of lifelong guidance lies with the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), which have strategies for governance in the labour market and education areas.

At the implementation level, the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) (the public employment service, PES) has the role of ensuring the provision of career information and counselling to all people regardless of their employment status or age. This includes free career services for individuals across all life stages.

In the education sector, the role of **general education, vocational education, and higher education institutions** is to ensure access to lifelong guidance for their students and support them in reaching the learning outcomes set in curricula. The [Education and Youth Board of Estonia](#) supports educational institutions in the implementation of national curricula. As a result of the curriculum development process, the [Career+ programme](#) helps schools respond to the updated curriculum, labour market changes, and students' needs by promoting a more systematic approach to

career education. The programme provides a common framework for building a consistent, school-wide career education system. Key activities include regional development seminars for education leaders, updating guidance and learning resources, piloting regional intervention models, and strengthening the evidence base. Furthermore, at the [national Euroguidance centre](#), the Board also provides support in the areas of international learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training, and employment to Estonian guidance professionals and professionals abroad.

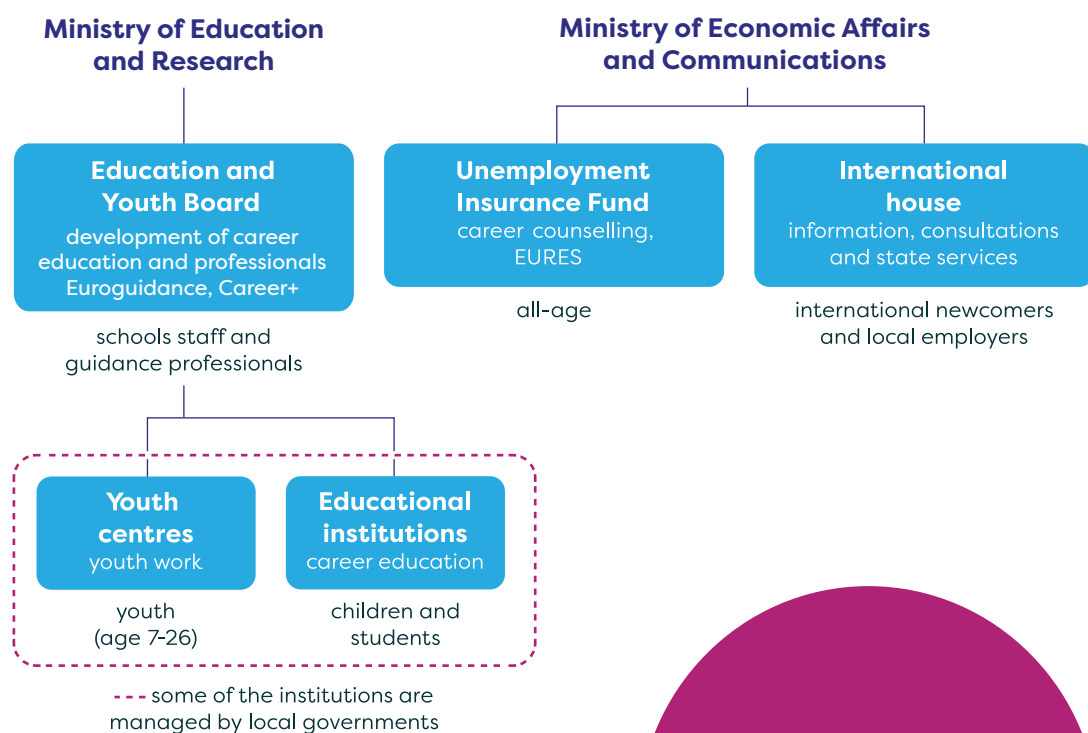
Cooperation also takes place with various counterparts to ensure common ground for different interests. The **National Career Guidance Forum** brings together key partners to monitor how career guidance is developed and accessed across Estonia, and to discuss the main development needs. The members of the forum include the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), the [Education and Youth Board of Estonia](#), the [Association of Estonian Career Counsellors](#), the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#), the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#), the [Estonian School Student Councils' Union](#), the [Estonian School Heads Association](#), the [Estonian Qualifications Authority](#), and the [Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#). The Forum's activities are coordinated by the Estonian PES.

Institutions and Services

Lifelong guidance has been practised in Estonia for years. Services have been provided for different target groups by various service providers and have also been known by a number of names – the latest version being *karjääriteenused* (in English: career services). Content-wise, both lifelong guidance and career guidance are used to mean “A range of activities that enable citizens of any age,

at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competencies and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competencies are learned and/or used” as agreed by the [ELGPN members](#) in 2013.

Lifelong Guidance institutions and services in the public sector



Career guidance in Estonia is based on three pillars – career education, career counselling, and career information provision – and is provided by both education and employment systems.

Career education is integrated into curricula at various education levels and is a long-standing tradition.

EDUCATION SECTOR

In the education sector, guidance is provided as both part of youth work and formal education. The development of general skills, including career management skills, begins in pre-school education. Children start to discover education, their parents' workplaces, and the concept of work and the labour market in general. Children are supported in developing general skills, such as cognitive and learning skills, social skills, and self-management skills, which are all essential for coping in education, the labour market, and society at large. The development of such skills and competencies is supported throughout the period of study – at all levels of education. The [Education Act of the Republic of Estonia](#) stipulates that the career guidance of children and youth is the responsibility of local governments.

Development and implementation of the national curricula, including career education, is supported by the [Education and Youth Board of Estonia](#). In general education, this includes the implementation of the **compulsory central topic 'Lifelong learning and career development'**, and a **career-related elective subject**, so that the development of career management skills is supported in schools. In vocational education (VET), the focal point is the 'Learning path and working in a changing environment' module, which consists of career topics integrated with entrepreneurship competencies and is an obligatory part of every

VET curriculum at the upper secondary level.

Regarding **international mobility**, Estonian students are advised on numerous student exchange options, and incoming exchange students are supported throughout their application process and during studies.

Some schools have their own career or educational counsellor, who supports learners throughout the learning process from admission to further education pathways; some invite external professionals from the PES or the private sector. According to [PISA 2022](#), most students feel well-informed about their future education and career opportunities, although awareness is greater among students from higher socio-economic backgrounds and those studying in Estonian. Students mainly search for information on the internet. About half of Estonian 15-year-old students have spoken with a school career counsellor, usually only once, and a quarter have received counselling outside of school. Over 40% have participated in school visits, while practical experiences (such as internships or job shadowing) and attending job fairs are less common. The results suggest that although many students are exposed to career-related activities, there are differences in access and participation, and counselling is associated with greater awareness of the available opportunities.

GENERAL EDUCATION

The goal of the [Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act](#) is to set out the bases for the organisation of studies in general education schools and the conditions for completing basic and upper secondary education. **The national curricula** establish the [standard for basic](#) and [general secondary education](#). The curricula are implemented in all basic (grades 1–9) and upper secondary schools (grades 10–12) in Estonia. The national curricula do not dictate to schools the precise actions to be taken to achieve the set goals for career education, but provide a flexible framework that allows each school to select the best ways, methods, and means based on the specifics and capacities of the school.

The school is obliged to ensure the availability of career-related services. This includes career counselling and career information services provided by the PES or other means for making career services accessible to students

(e.g. employing a career practitioner on the staff). As a result of extending compulsory education to the age of 18 (applicable from the 2025/26 school year for students completing grade 9), career guidance has gained increased importance in supporting students' informed choices and the smooth transition from basic education to the next levels of education. The national basic school and national upper secondary school curricula include eight **compulsory central topics**, one of which supports pupils' career development – **'Lifelong learning and career development'**. In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi of an elective subject and elective courses in career education, encouraging schools to strengthen career education within their own curricula.

To support schools in shaping their approach to career education, updating curricula, and developing a career guidance system that meets students' needs and aligns with national requirements, recommendations entitled [Supporting the development of students' career competencies](#) have been published in cooperation with the ministry and the [Association of Estonian Career Counsellors](#).

[Rajaleidja](#) centres organise the provision and development of **educational counselling** services for parents, teachers and other educators of young people with **special education needs** (ages 1.5–18). The centres employ speech therapists, psychologists, social pedagogues, and special educational teachers. The centres operate as part of the [Education and Youth Board of Estonia](#). [Rajaleidja](#) services contribute to inclusive education and help prevent early school leaving by supporting learners' individual educational pathways.

As part of the [Youth Guarantee](#), local governments identify and support young people aged 16–29 who are not in education, employment or training. Youth welfare specialists use a national registry to contact them, inform them about opportunities, help create an individual action plan, and coordinate support from different services (such as social work, youth work, career services, police, or healthcare). Nationally, local governments are supported by the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#) and the [Social Insurance Board](#).

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The goal of the [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#) is to set out the basics of the organisation of studies in vocational educational institutions.

The task of a vocational educational institution is to create opportunities for students to obtain the knowledge, skills, and ethical guidance necessary for life and work, including professional training and retraining, considering the needs of society, students, and the labour market.

The [Vocational Education Standard](#) establishes general requirements for the organisation of vocational education studies and embeds career competencies within key competencies (initiative, self-management, lifelong learning). Vocational upper secondary studies are regulated by national upper secondary vocational education and training curricula within various fields.

A career management module, **‘Learning path and working in a changing environment’**, is compulsory in current 3-year vocational secondary education programmes (level 4) and is recommended in vocational education programmes at levels 2–5.

4-year upper secondary vocational education and training National Curricula integrate career competencies across the curriculum. Core studies explicitly include career competencies. The **‘Skills for Life and Work’ module** is a key location for systematically developing career management and lifelong learning skills. New curricula are broad-based, sectoral, and include several specialisation options. Instead of choosing a specific speciality immediately upon admission, students enter a sectoral curriculum and “mature” into the right speciality choice. The learning outcomes of their general

education studies are comparable to those of general secondary education and provide a stronger basis for taking state examinations, which is often a prerequisite for continuing in higher education. As a result of the additional volume of general education studies, the volume of the vocational secondary education curriculum was also extended from three to four years. An introductory part was added to all curricula in the first semester, which allows students to develop the competencies and skills necessary for lifelong learning and coping in social life, which support them in their further lives and studies.

The **elective module ‘Entrepreneurship’** offers an opportunity to develop career management and entrepreneurship competencies. The aim of the studies is to make students capable of developing their careers in a modern economic, entrepreneurial, and working environment based on the principles of lifelong guidance, and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to be enterprising workers and create a job for themselves. Passing the module will help learners acknowledge professional studies as one step in their career path and take responsibility for their learning and development. The school is obliged to offer students elective courses related to entrepreneurship and national defence in vocational secondary education curricula, which have the same name, scope, and learning outcomes in all curricula, and the descriptions of which are presented in [Appendix 3 of the vocational education standard](#).

Career development competencies are developed **throughout the course**. Great emphasis is placed on practice, with the preparation for such and direct feedback from the supervisor helping learners understand their studies,

set goals, and determine the need for development. From 2021, the new occupational qualification standard for VET teachers brings attention to the relevant activities that support students' personal and professional development.

Furthermore, vocational educational institutions also have the possibility to include career development **as an elective subject**.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The goal of the [Higher Education Act](#) is to set the procedure for the organisation of studies in universities and graduation from universities, as well as the forms and conditions of obtaining higher education. The act applies to private universities insofar as the [Private Schools Act](#) does not provide otherwise.

Guidance is available for student candidates and students at six public universities and in several universities of applied sciences.

The overall aim is to support student candidates in their career choices and students in their studies, and to offer a number of services that help students develop personal life skills and achieve success in the labour market.

Career counselling provides students with support in career planning, making study- and job-related decisions and developing their job-seeking skills. Career counsellors support students in making career choices and career plans, self-analysis, searching and applying for a job, writing a CV and cover letter, and preparing for a job interview. Both individual

counselling and group services are provided, involving university staff and external experts.

Tutoring by student volunteers is also available, e.g., for first-year students and international students who are starting their studies. Tutors are senior students who are ready to provide additional guidance and information on several matters, ranging from the study system and student life to living conditions in Estonia.

In addition, students are also supported with **psychological counselling** in the event that problems arise during studies or in their personal lives. Students with **special needs** get help if they need to change or adapt the content of studies arising from the curriculum, the organisation of work or the study environment, in order to guarantee the opportunity for maximum participation in the study process and individual development. Universities help students with special needs upon entering the university, participating in studies, taking exams and tests, providing study materials, as well as creating a suitable social and physical environment.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

The provision of active and passive labour market measures, including career counselling, is available through the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) (*Eesti Töötukassa*, PES) free of charge all over Estonia. The legal basis for the activities of the PES is defined by two laws: The [Unemployment Insurance Act](#), which describes the unemployment insurance system and the organisation of the PES, and the [Labour Market Measures Act](#), which contains the provisions concerning job mediation and related services.

The strategy in the employment sector foresees the

provision of career information and counselling to all people, regardless of their age and employment status.

This includes working adults having the opportunity to participate in career guidance, either at the employment office or in the workplace. In addition to existing labour market measures, a new measure was added that enables the PES to organise employer visits and job-shadowing events to encourage early interaction with the world of work and expand awareness of various career options.

The PES provides unemployment prevention measures. These services are targeted towards employees who need support in changing jobs or remain employed due to a lack of skills, outdated skills, or due to health problems, as well as towards employers to support them in finding and training a suitably skilled workforce and restructuring their companies. These services include:

- a degree study allowance for an employed person or a person registered as unemployed for obtaining vocational education, professional higher education, or bachelor's studies,

- labour market training with a training card for employed persons at risk of unemployment,
- support for obtaining qualifications for employed persons who have undergone labour market or other training with the support of the training benefit,
- a training grant for employers to improve the skills and knowledge of their employees upon their recruitment and help them adapt to changes in the employer's economic activities. Employers (legal persons governed by private law, sole proprietors who operate as employers, and local government authorities) can also apply for a training grant from the PES to develop employees' Estonian language proficiency, employees' proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT), and to develop green skills (co-financed by the European Union). The requirements of the training grant will be introduced to the employer by the PES employers' consultant.
- The PES also supports employers who employ minors aged 13–16 with a subsidy for the employment of minors, which aims to support the provision of work experience for youths.

If employed people want to receive support from the PES in attaining a degree or attending training, as a first step, they need to meet with a PES career counsellor to discuss the skills or knowledge that need to be attained to continue working or change careers. The counsellor discusses with the person whether the training supports the acquisition of these skills and whether the person is in the target group for the training that the PES can provide.

As one of the targets is to support the smooth transition between education and work, students and young people hold special impor-

tance. The PES provides career workshops and individual career counselling for students in grades 8–12 in general education, students in vocational education, or youth in general.

To offer a more creative, open, and exploratory environment for career development, two interactive Career Centres have been opened in

Tallinn and Tartu. The centres provide a range of engaging tools that help visitors discover their skills, strengths, and interests, and learn about study and work opportunities in an enjoyable way. Exhibits include a job interview simulator, virtual-reality experiences introducing different professions, hands-on skill-testing tools, animations, tests, and more.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Growing attention to career development in the media and private sector has made the field more active and accessible. As a result, career professionals now have more opportunities to design and deliver services for a wide range of clients. Based on the main services, companies providing career guidance can be divided into two categories:

Consulting companies mainly provide career counselling (for both outplacement and career development purposes), coaching, and competency assessment. Their main target groups are:

- companies interested in using their human resources as efficiently as possible, assessing teamwork within the company, for outplacement reasons, or as a tool for employer branding and talent retention. In addition, career development services for managerial staff, specialists, and spokespersons; and
- individuals looking for a career change, a new challenge, or considering entrepreneurship. This target group has grown in recent years as lifestyle design has become more available. This has influenced

the rise of individual career counsellors as entrepreneurs, coaches as work-life designers, and marketers as self-marketing (video CV, social media design, blogging) advisors. As entrepreneurship is popularised, self-employment requires a new type of consulting for the individual. Currently, there are several small consulting businesses covering a variety of topics from finding a career path to work interview preparation and personal branding.

Recruitment companies – services for job seekers (tools for inserting CVs, CV revisions, consultations) and recruitment services for companies. As a marketing tool, they usually also offer online information about careers and training opportunities, tests, counselling or coaching, etc. This sector has seen the transition from employer-centred to candidate-centred services. It has resulted in seminars, blogs, and consultations for individuals looking for new challenges. This is partly due to the need to retain good relationships with high-quality candidates, knowing that the lifespan of an engagement with one company is lower than before.



Digital Solutions

E-Governance is a strategic choice for Estonia to improve the competitiveness of the state and increase the well-being of its people while implementing hassle-free governance. The modern infrastructure has made it possible to build a safe e-services ecosystem. An important part of this ecosystem is flexibility and the ability to integrate its different parts while improving e-services and allowing government systems to grow. X-Road has be-

come the backbone of e-Estonia, allowing the nation's public and private sector information systems to link up and operate in harmony. Citizens can select e-solutions from among a range of public services at any time and place convenient to them, as 100% of public services are now available to citizens as e-services. Every resident has an [electronic ID](#), and, in most cases, there is no need to physically visit an agency providing the service.

DATA SOURCES AND TOOLS

The data on the educational system is gathered into the web-based national register, the [Education Information System](#) (EHIS), which stores information about educational institutions, teachers, and graduation documents. It allows teachers to get an overview of their students, for the government to gain insights into educational trends, and is useful for students, as well. The visual educational statistics database [Haridussilm](#) ('educational eye') allows a comparison of schools based on a

series of indicators. For the integration of various education and labour market services, numerous information systems have been developed, which are compatible with the EHIS and facilitate the integration of services. For example, there is the [Examination Information System](#), the [Study Admission Information System](#), the [Study Information System](#), the [Research Information System](#), and the [Register of Occupational Qualifications](#).

Online learning is now a common experience for most people, having become widespread in recent years. Schools have had different access to technical solutions, with the main means of online teaching being via Google Classroom, MS Teams, Zoom or similar, and

the learning platform Moodle. The [Education and Youth Board](#) is offering a variety of digital materials and courses to schools to support learning and adapting to new online tools and methods.

Different tools and solutions for schools

AI Leap educational innovation programme, helping schools adapt to the age of AI and fostering meaningful learning.

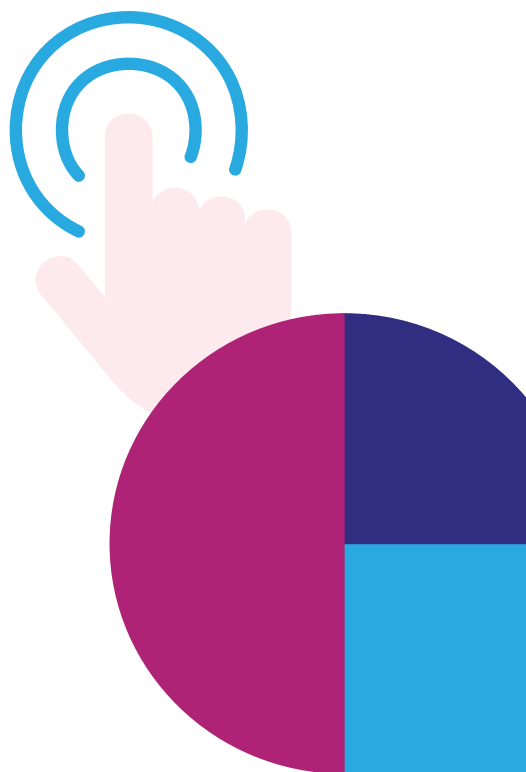
Education Technology Compass helps educators discover and apply technologies in teaching.

eKool and **Stuudium** e-school solutions for schools to organise teaching and learning.

e-Schoolbag digital learning materials for professionals.

Opiq cloud-based learning environment that contains fully digital textbooks from leading Estonian educational publishers.

Teacher's digital competence model and learner's digital competence model provide learners and teachers with a common basis for analysing digital competence in education.



DIGITAL SOLUTIONS AND LIFELONG GUIDANCE

The daily work of the career guidance practitioners is intertwined with the use of various ICT solutions. The use of ICT here is multi-faceted: practitioners are both ICT users and the creators of new values through their use of ICT solutions. The ICT solutions can be broadly divided into the following two groups:

- For service provision, including web pages, databases, educational software, games, social media channels, and e-tests;
- For internal processes, including documentation management, customer management, feedback solutions, information exchange in cloud-based solutions, and e-learning environments.

Guidance websites and labour force prognosis tools

edu.ee – brings together all central information and services related to education in Estonia, from study opportunities to applying for study allowance and accessing graduation documents.

Study in Estonia – official guide to higher education for international students.

Statistics Estonia – economic, demographic, and social data, including about salaries and employment.

OSKA – long-term prognosis regarding the need for labour and skills. OSKA studies help people make informed career choices and formulate forward-looking employment and education policies.

Labour demand barometer – qualitative method used by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund to forecast short-term labour demand by occupation.

Skills Compass (oskused.ee) is an online platform developed by the [Estonian Qualifications Authority](#) that provides structured information on occupations, skills, and labour market demand in Estonia. The tool helps users explore different professions, understand the skills required in the labour market, identify possible career pathways, and discover learning opportunities related to occupations of interest. The platform is designed for a wide range of users, including students, job seekers, career changers, career counsellors, educators, and employers. Skills Compass also includes a personalised feature that allows users to create their own skills profile and receive suggestions for occupations and additional skills that could support their career development. By connecting skills with occupations, learning opportunities, and labour market information, the platform supports more informed career and learning decisions.

Minukarjäär.ee – is a digital career service developed by the **Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (PES)**, bringing together the key tools needed for making informed career decisions. The platform is designed for a variety of target groups (from youth to adults and career professionals), and offers a wide selection of articles, instructional videos, online courses, career questionnaires, practical tools, and access to career events. As part of minukarjäär.ee, a digital tool was launched in 2026 – the **Interview Studio** (also available in English and Russian) – which helps prepare for applying to a job or school. One can practice for interviews by answering questions asked by a virtual interviewer and recording their responses on video for later analysis.



e-guidance has become a regular way of providing career services for both individuals and groups.

Career practitioners use a variety of **electronically administered tests and evaluation tools**, including personality tests, career choice tests, and aptitude tests, etc. The online tests have been standardised on norm groups consisting of school children and adults, and are developed by a few private companies and, in some cases, by universities. For example, the University of Tartu offers a free app “**Your personality among different jobs**” for an occupational personality profile questionnaire, available in several languages (including English, German, Russian, French, and Italian). It allows you to assess your personality traits in relation to more than 250 occupations.

E-guidance in Estonia has a long-standing tradition, with various online channels already in use well before the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic accelerated this trend, making the virtual provision of career services – via Zoom, MS Teams, telephone, and e-mail – the only option during certain periods. While these tools were familiar for individual services, they had never been deployed on such a large scale. A new challenge emerged in delivering workshops and group counselling through MS Teams, which required openness, rapid skill development, and experimentation with new methods. Since then, the use of e-channels has continued to grow steadily, and

There have also been some other exciting digital tools for career development, including **virtual reality applications of occupations**, e.g., medical workers, youth workers, the metal industry, **virtual tours of vocational education institutions**, and a **virtual guided tour for guidance professionals to learn digital tools** that are available in **career centres in the PES**. In addition, versatile **technical environments for information exchange and group counselling** are in use. The most popular tools for the involvement of participants are Webquest, Zunal, Kahoot, Padlet, Genially, Coggle, Mentimeter, Actionbound, etc.

Capacity Building of Professionals

The majority of Estonian career guidance practitioners work in the public employment service (PES), in educational institutions or enterprises.

At the national level, the role of a career specialist has been identified in the occupational qualification standard – to help people with their career development and support them in making choices about their career, work, training, and education throughout their lives.

The professionalism of Estonian practitioners in recent decades has primarily been

developed without any specific educational programmes, but instead by courses offered by various **training providers**¹. There is no academic qualification that can be obtained for career professionals – most have a higher education degree in social or educational sciences (e.g., psychology, economics and business administration, pedagogy, and teacher training). However, the occupational qualification system, including the **occupational qualification standard, the system of awarding occupational qualifications, and the register of professions**, is established to ensure the professional development of practitioners in career guidance.

CAREER SPECIALIST AS A PROFESSION

The system was launched in 2006 when the **Estonian Qualification Authority** certified the **Association of Estonian Career Counsellors** for awarding and recertifying occupational qualifications.²

The **occupational qualification standard for the career specialist** describes occupational activities and provides the competence requirements for occupational qualifications and their levels (see Table on page 20). Part A of the standard provides a **general overview of the nature of work, its main areas, necessary tools, and work environment**, including its specificities, the personal characteristics, and skills enhancing occupational activities. The description of work includes activities such as individual and group career counselling, as well as the provision of information concerning education, the labour market,

and professions for groups and individuals. In addition, the main tasks and elective areas of work are identified. The **competence requirements** presented in Part B of the standard serve as a basis for assessing the applicant for the occupational qualification. When applying for a career specialist qualification, there is a need to demonstrate four mandatory competencies and the recurring competence. All competence descriptions include performance indicators. The recurring competence has been identified with performance indicators, such as engagement in self-reflection and continuous capacity building, customer focus, adherence to professional ethics, goal setting, outcome analysis, language proficiency, team building, and the use of technology. In addition, at least one of the elective competencies must be demonstrated in the process; either career information provision or career counselling.

1 Pata, K., Jõgi, L., Lepik, A., Dibou, T. (2022). Karjäärispetsialisti koolitusmudel: võimalused, vajadused ja lahendused elukestvaks karjääri kujundamiseks / Career Specialist Training Model: Opportunities, Needs and Solutions for Lifelong Career Awareness.

2 Rammo, M. (2021). *The relevance of the Estonian occupational qualification sub-framework in the field of career guidance* (pp. 49–62). In Cedefop et al. (2021). Digital transitions in lifelong guidance: rethinking careers practitioner professionalism: a CareersNet expert collection. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper; No 2. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/539512>

Structure of the career specialist standard: description of work and competence requirements

PART A: Description of work

TASKS

1. Promotion of services
2. Networking
3. Service development
4. Mentoring of colleagues
5. Training

ELECTIVE AREAS OF WORK

6. Career counselling
7. Career information provision
8. Career education
9. Career management in organizations

PART B: Competence requirements

MANDATORY COMPETENCES

1. Promotion of services
2. Networking
3. Service development
4. Mentoring of colleagues
5. Training

COMPETENCE OPTIONS

6. Career counselling
7. Career information provision
8. Career education
9. Career management in organizations

RECURRING COMPETENCES

Source: *Estonian Qualifications Authority*

The current **standard for career specialists** is established at two levels: **six** and **seven**, equivalent to a bachelor's degree and a professional higher education certificate (level six), and a master's degree (level seven). The main difference between the levels is that, in addition to service provision, the level seven practitioner has more extensive experience and competencies at a national or international level, e.g., developing new tools and curricula, or being active as a researcher or trainer.

In practice, the standard is used as a basis for compiling curricula and training programmes that meet the requirements of the labour market; as a basis for competence assessment; to assist employers in describing and

introducing occupations, recruiting employees, compiling job descriptions, and defining professional requirements; to help professionals assess their own skills gaps, or for their own career development.

The study on the occupational qualification system in the field of career guidance revealed that the occupational qualification system is clearly an essential component of quality assurance, with a focus on the professional training of staff who deliver career guidance³.

In addition, the PES has developed its own competency framework for career practitioners and provides in-house training to support their professional development. The frame-

³ Psience (2020) Karjääriteenuste valdkonna kutsesüsteemi fookusgrupiuuring / Occupational qualification system in the field of career guidance: focus group study. Archimedes Foundation, Euroguidance Estonia.

work is also an essential part of performance discussion in the PES. When becoming a career specialist or applying for a corresponding position, the acquisition of the respective qualification is not required, but rather rec-

ommended. Acquired professional qualifications are also connected to the salary system in the PES and are a prerequisite for moving from one pay grade to another.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is not yet possible to acquire a career specialist qualification in Estonia in a concise manner. However, **higher education institutions offer a variety of subjects**. For example: Labour market needs analysis and prognosis, Career development and guidance, Basics of case analysis in career counselling, and Information management in career counselling, in the Psychology MA programme, or Youth entrepreneurship and career counselling, and Career information sources – relations between the education system and the labour market, and in the Youth Work Diploma programme. **Micro-credentials** offer universities an effective way to offer career guidance-related programmes.

Continuous professional training as well as **peer-coaching** are available by national agencies and private providers to ensure the development of the practitioners' professional competencies based on the requirements. The range of training topics is broad, for example, characteristic features of teenagers with special educational needs, psychological evaluation tools, personality and career testing, personal branding, motivational interviewing, ICT skills, and career education in schools.

To ensure international exposure, speakers and trainers from other countries are invited, and practitioners have **opportunities for learning mobility and exchanging practices with colleagues abroad** – international

learning mobility enables career professionals to improve their professional language skills, expand their professional network, and adopt new [guidance practices](#)⁴.

The [study about the training model of career specialists](#) provides an overview of the professionalisation of career services and offers solutions for the capacity building of career specialists in Estonia⁵. In conclusion, researchers characterise career guidance in Estonia as 'being at the crossroads'. There are several ways of developing the competencies of career specialists, the professionalism in the field in general, as well as training opportunities. The results of the study confirm the need to invest in a systematic approach to training professionals and supporting teachers in general and vocational education.

The study [Professional Development of Career Specialists: Needs and Opportunities](#) recommends strengthening the professionalism of career services in schools through a whole-school approach, including clear role allocation, a school-wide career services plan, and stronger integration of career development into teaching, guidance, and leadership practices⁶. It also highlights the need for dedicated career coordinators, systematic competence development, mentoring and supervision, and a structured professional development pathway that supports practitioners from beginner to expert level.

4 Tamm, A. & Vaade, V. (2019). Rahvusvaheline koostöö karjäärispetsialistide pilgu läbi / International cooperation through the eyes of career guidance professionals. Archimedes Foundation, Euroguidance Estonia.

5 Pata, K., Jõgi, L., Lepik, A., Dibou, T. (2022). Karjäärispetsialisti koolitusmudel: võimalused, vajadused ja lahendused elukestvaks karjääri kujundamiseks / The Training Model of Career Specialists: Opportunities, Needs and Solutions for Lifelong Career Development. Education and Youth Board, Euroguidance Estonia.

6 Aps, J., Lillemets, A. (2026). Karjäärispetsialistide professionaalne areng: vajadused ja võimalused / *The Professional Development of Career Specialists: Needs and Opportunities*. Haridus- ja Noorteamet, Euroguidance Eesti.



International Co-operation

Lifelong guidance is on the agenda of many international forums. The main aims and components of the Estonian guidance system are very much in line with EU and OECD recommendations on guidance policies and practices.

The importance of promoting an international dimension in Estonian guidance is a value, and, therefore, co-operation with partners outside Estonia is our priority – experience from other countries inspires us in meeting the challenges and opportunities at home.

We are active partners in the following guidance and mobility initiatives:

Many of the international activities for guidance practitioners are initiated by the Estonian Euroguidance Centre, placed in the Education and Youth Board, the Estonian Agency for Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps. The [Euroguidance Network](#) is a system of national resource and informa-

tion centres for guidance. It is a co-operation of centres, which links the careers guidance systems in Europe. The network supports the competence development of the guidance community. Its main target group comprises guidance practitioners and policymakers in all European countries.

Estonia is part of the [Academia network](#) which aims to provide practitioners with an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in an international context, to study the changes that take place in Europe, and to learn from the experiences of their colleagues in other countries. Within the framework of Academia, hundreds of professionals from European countries have visited Estonia, and hundreds of our practitioners have participated in learning mobility across Europe.

The [Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling NICE](#) involves more than 40 countries, most of which represent more than 50 training programmes for career practitioners across Europe. The main mission

of the network is to promote excellence and innovation in the academic, research-based training of career practitioners in Europe. Participation in the NICE Academy has always been a resource for inspiring Estonian stakeholders.

The Nordplus-funded [VALA](#) is a network of higher education institutions in the Nordic and Baltic countries, and focuses on academic training in the field of lifelong guidance. Partner institutions have established the network in order to better prepare career counsellors and guidance workers for the diverse clients with whom they work. The broad aim of the network is to increase professionalisation and strengthen co-operation between higher education institutions and the labour market, and research, practice, and policy.

The [International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy](#) aims to facilitate and promote international policy sharing and learning on career development and public policy issues globally. The purpose of sharing is to help countries and policy developers improve national policies and systems for career guidance. Participation at the ICCDPP symposia has offered Estonian country teams the opportunity to share ideas, analyse contemporary challenges to career development systems, and develop new perspectives.

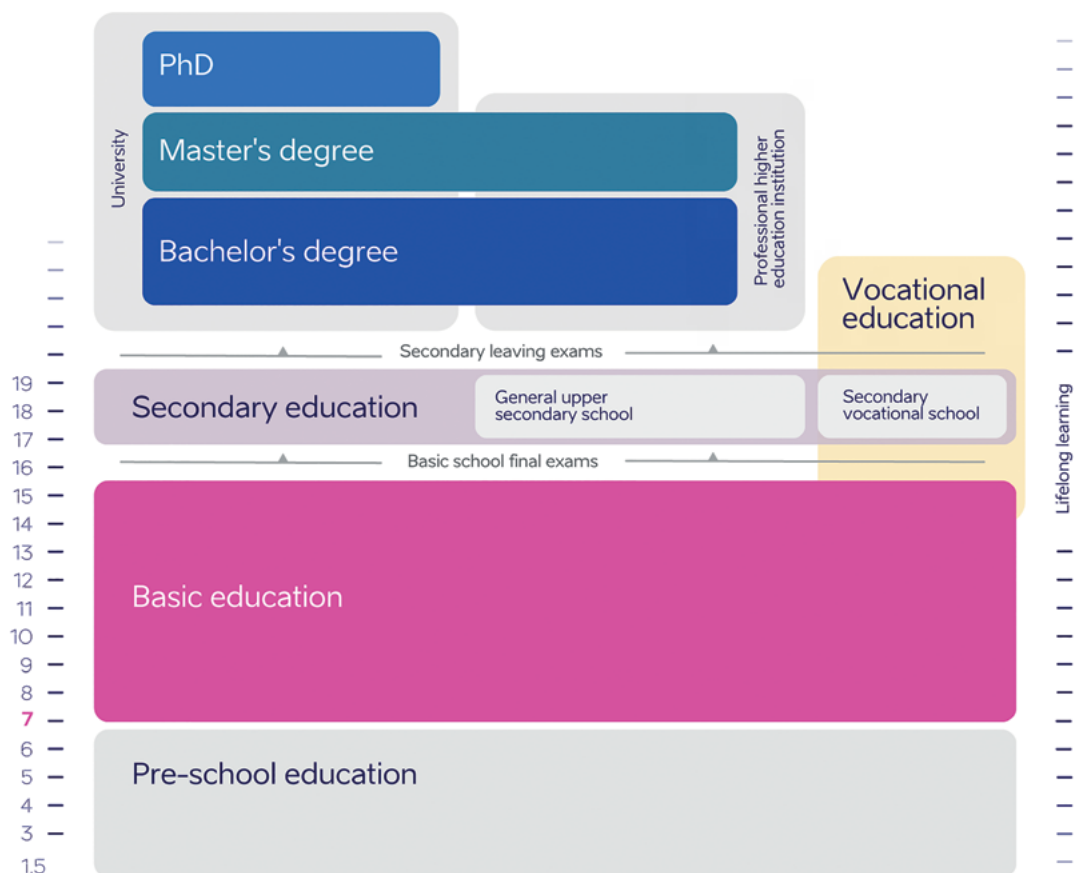
Estonia is also represented in the network for lifelong guidance and career development, [CareersNet](#). The Cedefop's network of independent experts was created to collect comparable and reliable information on a European scale in the field of lifelong guidance

and career development issues. The gathered information and analysis aim to identify gaps and solutions beyond a snapshot of national guidance systems.

The [International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance](#), IAEVG, provides global leadership and advocates for high-quality guidance by promoting ethical, socially just, and evidence-based practices worldwide. Its mission is to ensure that career guidance is accessible to all citizens and delivered by competent and qualified practitioners. Participation in the IAEVG national correspondents network allows for the systematic exchange of inspiring professional insights. In addition, the IAEVG conferences, Journal and Magazine, offer valuable opportunities for Estonian professionals to build their skills and capacity.

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#), OECD, undertakes research in relation to both youth and adult career guidance, publishing advice for policymakers and practitioners. The research, drawn on international practice and highlighting the characteristics of efficiency, is of great value for national delivery. We are delighted to disseminate the results to relevant national stakeholders and share our own expertise.

Education System



Source: Education Estonia

In Estonia, the structure of the education system gives opportunities for everyone to move from one level of education to the next. The levels of education are preschool education (ISCED level 0), basic education (ISCED levels 1 and 2), upper secondary education (ISCED level 3), and higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8). The organisation and principles of

the education system are established in the [Education Act](#) and specified in lower-level acts structured by the type of educational institution. Since September 2025, the education system has operated under the [learning obligation reform](#), which extends compulsory education beyond basic education.

Studies in preschools and basic and upper secondary schools are conducted under uniform national curricula, based on which the educational institutions compile their own curricula. The language of instruction is mainly Estonian, but another language may be used if the government decides.

General requirements for the organisation of vocational education studies have been established in the [Standard of Vocational Education](#). Vocational upper secondary studies are regulated by 32 national curricula within various fields. The general requirements for higher education studies, curricula, and teaching staff are established in the [Standard of Higher Education](#).

The vast majority of preschool childcare institutions and general education schools are municipal schools. Vocational schools are mostly state-owned, and universities are institutions in public law. More than half of professional higher education institutions are state-owned, with the others being private institutions.

Management of the education system is based on the principle of reasonable decentralisation. The division of responsibility between the state, local government, and schools is clearly defined. Quality assurance in education includes an external evaluation based on a set of indicators, results of low-stakes tests and national examinations, and schools' internal assessment. Learning outcomes are determined in national curricula. Teachers have the right to choose their own teaching methodology and materials. The continuous professional development of teachers and school heads is supported by centrally provided CPD.

Preschool education is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months and 7 years old in dedicated educational institutions. The main aim of the early stages of education is to support children's individuality, creativity, and

learning through play. In Estonia, pre-primary education is not only childcare, but a part of education that combines several child-centred active learning methods based on the national curriculum. 88% of 3–6-year-olds participate in preschool education. .

Basic education can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9), or upper secondary schools that include the basic school level. Compulsory education applies to children who have reached 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year. Since September 2025, compulsory schooling has been replaced by the obligation to learn. Compulsory education now continues beyond basic education and lasts until the learner reaches 18 years of age or until the completion of upper secondary or vocational education. The acquisition of basic education grants the right to continue studies in upper secondary education, vocational education or preparatory programmes. In order to graduate from basic schools, students must have at least 'satisfactory' or 'passed' annual grades in all subjects and achieve at least 50% of the maximum score in the Estonian language examination, mathematics examination, and one elective final examination. However, learners who do not reach the 50% threshold in the examinations or who have annual 'unsatisfactory' grades in one or two subjects are also able to graduate and will receive more time and targeted support to develop their knowledge and skills at the next educational level or in a preparatory studies programme.

The preparatory studies programme is designed for basic school graduates who need additional time and support to make informed decisions about their next educational or career pathway before entering upper secondary general or vocational education. The programme provides career guidance, including individual learning plans and targeted support to help young people reflect on their interests and abilities, strengthen self-

confidence, and develop key competencies for further learning and work. Support may include subject reinforcement and Estonian language development when needed.

For students receiving enhanced and special support, an additional studies programme is provided. Additional education is a natural continuation and part of the general education system (usually provided at the student's home school), enabling students who need it due to special educational needs to continue their studies and fulfil their compulsory education requirement. The programme focuses on strengthening general competencies, supporting social coping skills, and providing career guidance.

Estonian basic education is among the best in the world. According to [PISA 2022](#), Estonia's 15-year-olds were among the top performers in Europe in science, reading, and mathematics, sharing first place in some subjects.

Upper secondary education is one of the main pathways for fulfilling the learning obligation. Upper secondary schools are designed to help students become creative, multi-talented, socially mature, and reliable citizens. The study programme at upper secondary school is arranged into mandatory and voluntary courses, and the studies last for three years. To graduate, students must complete a curriculum consisting of 96 individual courses as a minimum. At the end of their studies, students must pass three state exams and a school examination. Attaining general upper secondary education entitles students to continue studies at a higher education level or obtain vocational education. It is also possible to study in Estonia by following curricula developed by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), or under the Statute of the European Schools. These curricula are primarily intended for the children of foreign officials and specialists working in Estonia, while remaining part of the national education system.

Vocational education is an equally valid pathway for fulfilling the learning obligation. Vocational education serves the purpose of fostering the knowledge, skills and attitudes, occupational know-how and social readiness required for working, participating in social life and lifelong learning. Vocational education is divided into initial and continuing VET. Initial vocational education is part of formal education that gives learners access to the next qualification level. Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning. Vocational programmes correspond to levels 2–5 of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, with level 2 being vocational education without the requirement of basic education, level 3 being based on basic education, level 4 being vocational secondary education (or based on secondary education), and level 5 being specialised vocational training.

Vocational education for young people at the age of obligation to study is free of charge. A fee is applied to repeat learners and to those wishing to study in other languages (until 1 September 2030, vocational education is also free for students up to the age of 26 enrolling for the second time at the same level or who have completed a higher education programme free of charge). Employers collaborate closely with VET institutions in curriculum development and creating apprenticeship opportunities.

Higher education can be acquired at three levels: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies. Professional higher education is, similarly to bachelor's, the first level of higher education, which ensures access to master's studies. Higher education is flexible and accessible. It is supported by a wide range of study forms, considers learning and work experience in studying, and provides opportunities to combine work and studies. Curricula, including many in English, are characterised by innovation and a particular focus on information technology and entrepreneurship.

Estonia's **research** is world-class: 15.4% of our scientific articles are among the most cited articles in the world. The country is also highly successful in international research cooperation, exceeding the EU average in Horizon 2020 funding relative to GDP and ranking among the top performers in Europe. Estonia's research environment is highly international, with a growing share of foreign researchers and PhD students contributing to a dynamic and globally connected scientific community. The University of Tartu belongs in the top 1% of the world's best universities ([World University Rankings 2026](#)). Estonia's universities are known for ambitious and innovative student-led engineering projects, including satellite development, electric formula car and self-driving car technologies.

Adult education is divided into formal education, informal work-related training and re-training, and popular adult education. Flexible study opportunities have been created for adult learners: distance learning and evening courses, external study and part-time study, as well as participation in various courses.

Lifelong learning allows adults to pursue formal qualifications at all educational levels, take part in professional education and training, and engage in non-formal learning, highlighting the wide range and growing appeal of adult education across Europe. Against this backdrop, the European Union has set a target that by 2030, at least **60% of adults aged 25–64** should participate each year in formal or non-formal learning. Participation has been increasing across the EU, reaching a 12-month average of 39.5% in 2022. In the same year, Estonia achieved a participation rate of 41.8%, exceeding the EU average but remaining below the 60% objective. Although a few Member States are close to or have surpassed the benchmark, the majority – including Estonia – have yet to reach it. Estonia's comparatively strong results are underpinned by sustained investment in accessible education, a highly developed digital learning environment, and well-coordinated national adult education policies, reinforcing its role as an active contributor to Europe's lifelong learning goals.



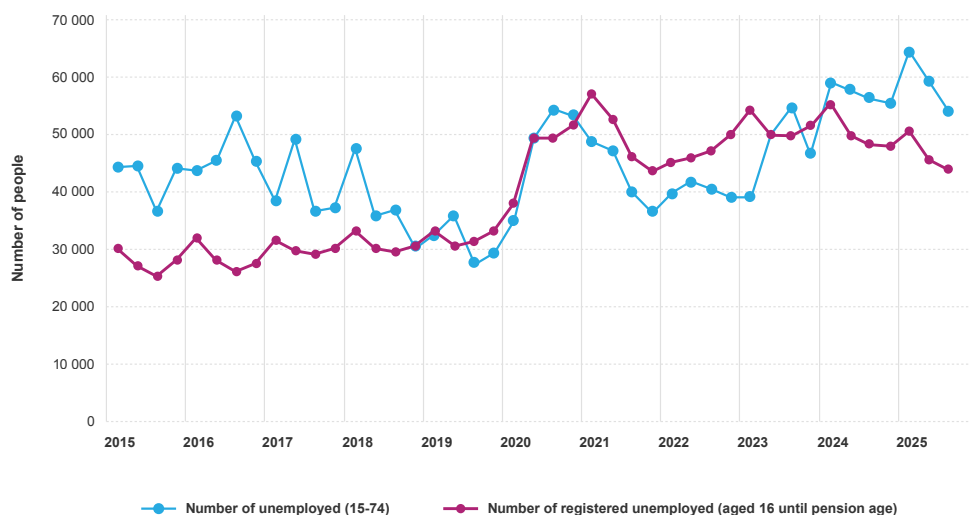
Labour Market Data

Estonia's labour force averaged around 754 000 during the first three quarters of 2025, with a labour force participation rate of around 75%, one of the highest in Europe. About 42% of the labour force has a tertiary education degree, and most adults speak at least one foreign language. For the older generation, the main foreign language is Russian, while for younger adults it is English.

In 2025, Estonia's economy remained strongly service-oriented, with the services sector accounting for 75–76% of GDP and employing on average 71% of the workforce, according to data from the first three quarters. The sectors with the highest share of value-added include wholesale and retail trade, real estate activities, and information technology. The industrial sector (including manufacturing, energy, and construction) contributes 22–23% of GDP and employs on average 26% of workers, with the largest value added in manufacturing coming from the food industry, wood processing, metal industry, and machinery and equipment production. Agriculture plays a minor role – accounting quarterly for around 1–3% of GDP and the labour force.

Labour market dynamics in recent years have been influenced by several shocks (see the graph below for details of unemployment among the working-age population and registered unemployed). The COVID-19 crisis in 2020 led to a sharp increase in unemployment. Subsequently, the war in Ukraine, which began in 2022, further affected Estonia's economic environment and labour market. Estonia has experienced an influx of war refugees, which has also contributed to an increase in registered unemployment. The peak occurred in the first quarter of 2023, when approximately 6 250 refugees were registered as unemployed. Since the second quarter of 2024, registered unemployment has been on a downward trend. In 2025, the average unemployment rate was at 7.8%, while the registered unemployment rate was 6.6%, according to data from the first three quarters. By the third quarter of 2025, around 2 800 Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection were registered as unemployed, accounting for about 6% of all registered unemployed.

Number of unemployed 2015 – 2025



Additional Information

ESTONIA IN BRIEF

Capital: **Tallinn**

Language: **Estonian**

System of government:

Parliamentary republic

Area: **45,339 km²**

Forest: **51,5%**

Number of islands: **2317**

Highest point: **318 m**

Administrative divisions: **15 counties**

Local governments:

78 local government units

Population: **1,3 million**

Nationalities: **216**

Currency: **EUR**

Calling code: **372**

Member of: **NATO, EU, UN, OSCE,**

OECD, WTO, Schengen area

OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Association of Estonian
Career Counsellors

www.kny.ee

Ministry of Education and Research

www.hm.ee/en

Ministry of Economic Affairs
and Communications

www.mkm.ee/en

Qualification Authority

www.kutsekoda.ee/en

Unemployment Insurance Fund
(Estonian PES)

www.tootukassa.ee/en



ESTONIA

Contact Us

ABOUT THE AGENCY FOR ERASMUS+ AND EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

Estonian Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps is the national agency of the European Union's education, youth and sports program. In addition, Euroguidance, Eurodesk, Nordplus, the European Language Label and the SALTO Participation and Information Resource Center, are part of the Agency, which operates as part of the Education and Youth Board of Estonia.

EUROGUIDANCE IN ESTONIA

Euroguidance Estonia is the Estonian National Resource Centre for Guidance, which focuses on competence development of career guidance professionals, and provides a range of services to Estonian and professionals abroad. As a member of the Euroguidance Network we provide support in the areas of learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training, and employment. Euroguidance Estonia is part of the Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps.

- Are you interested in developing your own skills and competencies in relation to a global education and labour market?
- Would you like to expand your professional network and establish contacts with colleagues from other countries?
- Do you think that new inspiration from other countries and cultures might be good for your professional development?
- If yes, then the national Euroguidance centres are at your disposal.

Experts and practitioners within the field of lifelong guidance are welcome to contact us for further information:

Euroguidance Estonia

The Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, The Education and Youth Board of Estonia

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