



# 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 both in education, employment but also in the private sector, with chapters that focus 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  
March 2023



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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 consideration the needs of all its inhabitants
- Estonia is innovative, reliable and people-centred

The authorities responsible for the development of lifelong guidance are the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), which have strategies for governance in the education and labour market areas.

## Education policy

The [Education Strategy 2021–2035](#) sets out the key educational goals for the next 15 years. The strategy focuses on the key strengths and challenges that need to be addressed to be able 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 into consideration the ageing population, people's changing preferences, climate change, globalisation and technological progress. These developments 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 per-

sonal, occupational and social life and contribute to promoting quality of life in Estonia as well as global sustainable development. To achieve general objective, the strategy sets out three strategic goals, see below.

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

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.

### 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. In Estonia, there are competent and motivated teachers and school heads, a diverse learning environment and learner-centred education.
3. Learning options are responsive to the development needs of society and the labour market.



Source: Ministry of Education and Research

## Employment policy

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

- Implementation of a sustainable employment policy that corresponds to the development and economic development taking place in society.
- Supporting structural changes in the economy and occupational mobility of employees.
- Prevention of the loss of working capacity of employees (i.e. when temporary incapacity for work turns into permanent loss of working capacity) and keeping them employed.
- Meeting environmental and climate goals and achieving balanced regional development.
- Improving the working environment and working relationships of employees, maintaining health in the working environment and preventing health damage.

## Stakeholder involvement across public sector

In 2018, the Estonian government acknowledged that there was room for improvement regarding both access to and the quality of the career services and **a reform of of the services** was launched. Accordingly, starting from 2019, the role of the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) (the public employment service, PES) is to ensure the provision of career information and counselling to all people regardless of their employment status or age.

In 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 concerning entrepreneurship and career management skills, we are heading towards the better integration of career management and entrepreneurial skills within the curriculum application process over the forthcoming years. Furthermore, as the [national Euroguid-](#)

[ance 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.

There is also cooperation with various counterparts, in order to have common ground for different interests. In 2019, the **National Career Guidance Forum** has been re-established by the PES. This overarching body consists of relevant partners, with whom the coordinated development and availability of career services across Estonia is jointly monitored and where development areas are discussed. 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 Social Affairs](#), [the Estonian School Student Councils' Union](#), [the Estonian School Heads Association](#), [the Estonian Qualifications Authority](#) and [the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#).

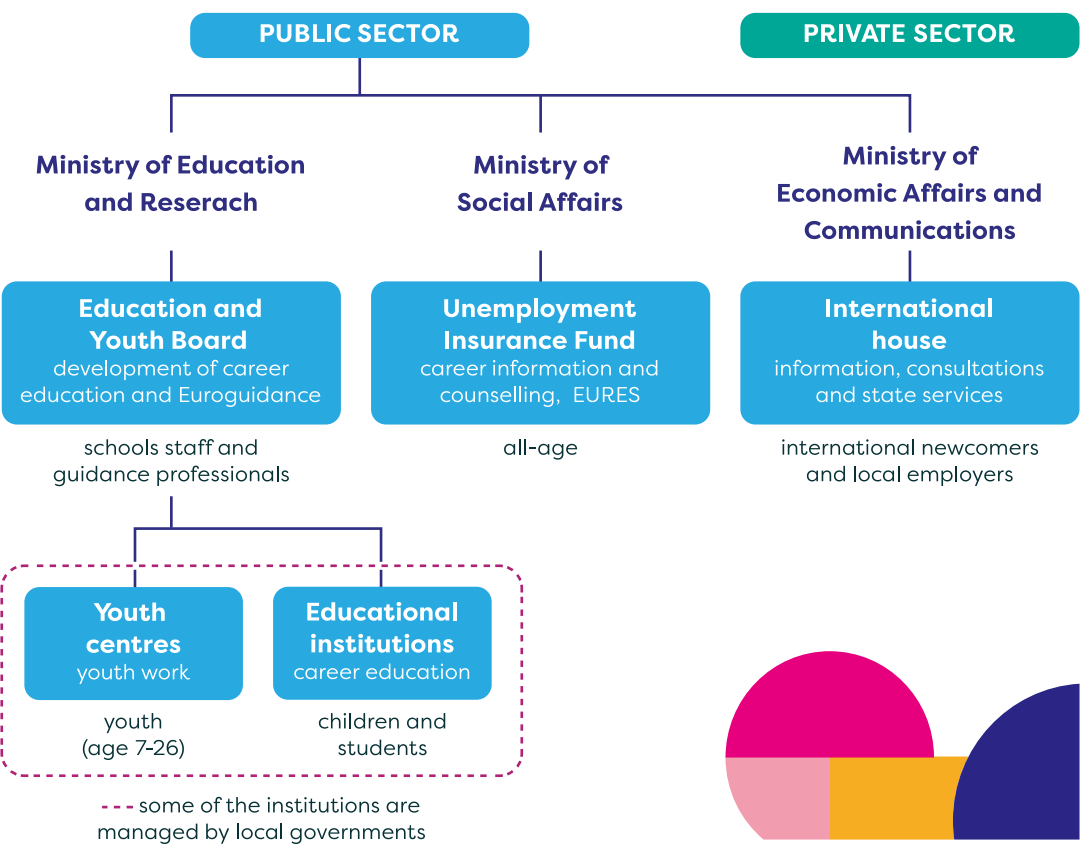


# Institutions and Services

Lifelong guidance has been practiced in Estonia for years. Services have been provided for different target groups by different 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



**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 in curricula at various education levels and is a long-standing tradition.

## Education Sector

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In the education sector, guidance is provided as both a part of youth work and a part of 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 to develop 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 career guidance of children and youth is the responsibility of local governments.

Development and implementation of the national curricula and career education is supported by [The Education and Youth Board](#). In general education, this includes the implementation of compulsory central topic 'Lifelong learning and career planning' and career-related elective subjects so that development of career management skills is supported in schools. In vocational education (VET), the focal point is the new '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 upper secondary level.

## General education

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**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) of Estonia. The national curricula do not dictate to schools the precise actions to be taken to achieve the set goals for career education, but allows each school to select the best ways, methods and means based on the specifics and abilities 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 PES or other means for making career services accessible to students** (e.g. employing a career counsellor in the staff). The national basic school and national upper secondary school curricula include eight **compulsory central topics, one of which supports pupils' career planning – 'Lifelong learning and career planning'**. In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi

of **the elective subject and elective course in careers education**, which enhances the use of this possibility in the school curriculum.

**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.

As part of the youth guarantee, **the City of Tallinn implements 'Hoog Sisse'**, where they support programmes for young persons aged 15-26 who were not involved in studies or employment. The main aim of these pro-

grammes was to support young people in need who may have been made redundant or have not completed their education and are not currently studying. The format of the programmes attempted to assist youth in realising their potential and returning to being a productive member of society as quickly as possible, raising their confidence and self-esteem.

According to the **Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act**, it is also possible to conduct studies in Estonia by following the curriculum formulated under the aegis of either the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) or the Statute of the European Schools. These curricula are designed foremost for the children of the foreign officials and specialists working in Estonia.

## 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 education institutions.

**The task of a vocational education 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.**

Until the end of the academic period 2019/2020, supporting the development of career management skills took place in vocational education both through vocational training and generic skills modules. In every vocational education curriculum, there is **a generic skill module** which deals with career-related topics and the principles of entrepreneurship. In autumn 2020 the **'Learning path and working in a changing environment'**

**module** was introduced. According to national curricula, the module is compulsory at level 4 (vocational secondary education) and recommended at levels 2-5.

**A new elective module 'Entrepreneurship training at workplace'** offers opportunity to develop career management and entrepreneurship competencies in enterprises. The aim of the studies is for students to be capable of developing their careers in a modern economic, entrepreneurial and working environment based on the principles of lifelong guidance. 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 implementation of the module is decided by the educational institutions themselves.

Career development competencies are also developed **throughout the course**. Great emphasis is placed on practice, the preparation for which and direct feedback from the

supervisor helps learners understand their studies, set goals and determine the need for development. From 2021, the new occupational qualification standard for VET teachers is bringing attention to the relevant activities to support students' personal and professional development.

Furthermore, vocational educational institutions also have the possibility to include career development **as an elective subject**. Some VET schools have their own career counsellor or educational counsellor, who supports learners throughout the learning process from admission, some invite external professionals from PES or private sector.

Amendments to the [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#), adopted in December 2018, opened up the possibility for vocational educational institutions to carry out **Choice of profession training**. The curriculum (30 or 60 ECTS) mainly focuses on career management skills and their development, with the aim of supporting young people in making decisions about their future education pathway or transition to the labour market. The main target group consists of dropouts of primary school, upper secondary school or vocational school, young NEET, students with special needs, those lacking Estonian language skills or need extra help to adapt in the cultural or educational space, e.g. war refugees.

## 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 as far 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 life. 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, making

exams and tests, providing study materials as well as creating a suitable social and physical environment.

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.

## Employment sector

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

The strategy in the employment sector foresees the

**provision of career information and counselling to all people regardless of their 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 special approach designed for young people without professional education or work experience was introduced (My First Job). The measure aims to decrease youth unemployment due to little or no work experience and to help youth without specialised education find a job. Wage subsidies combined with training compensation can be granted to employers who hire these young people.

The PES is providing unemployment prevention measures. These services are targeted towards employees who need support in changing jobs or remaining employed due to lack of skills, outdated skills or not being able to continue in their current position due to health problems as well as towards employers to support them in finding and training 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; and
- support for obtaining qualifications for employed persons who have undergone labour market or other training with the support of the training benefit and a training grant for employers for improving the skills and knowledge of their employees upon their recruitment and helping them adapt to changes in the employer's economic activities.

If employed people want to receive support from PES for obtaining 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 obtained to continue working. 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 PES can provide.

As one of the targets is to support smooth transitions between education and work, students and young people hold special importance. The biggest client group receiving career services is in fact students from general education. PES provides group counselling, workshops and individual career guidance for students in grades 7-12, students in vocational education or youth in general.

To provide a more creative, open and self-exploratory space for career development, [the interactive Career Centre](#) was opened in Tallinn. The Centre has a variety of interactive tools that help a person discover and analyse skills, strengths and preferences and learn about study and employment opportunities in a fun, engaging way. There are exciting expos, including job interview simulator, virtual reality devices to introduce different jobs, hands-on tools to test skills, animations, tests, etc. The Centre is unique to the region, where through the use of interactive solutions and gamification, it is possible to find the most suitable career opportunity.

## Private sector

We can see the change in career management discourse in the media and the private sector. The sector has become more active and open. This creates opportunities for career coaches, career counsellors and other professionals to design and provide services for a variety of target groups (from CEOs to teachers, youth workers and entrepreneurs).

Based on the main services, companies providing career guidance for a fee 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 or 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.

A new initiative, [Education Technology Estonia](#), refers to an area of technology devoted to the development and application of tools (including software, hardware, and processes) intended for education. Their focus and activities are ensuring future generations in the field of educational innovation, increasing cooperation with teachers, students, parents, educational institutions, and the state, and increasing the sector's exports.



# 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 99% 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** 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](#), [Study Admission Information System](#), [Study Information System](#), [Research Information System](#), [Register of Professions](#).

Online learning is something that everybody has experienced in the last few years. Schools have had different access to technical solutions, the main means of online teaching has been via Google Classroom, MS Teams, Zoom or similar and learning platform Moo-

dle. The Education and Youth Board is offering a variety of digital materials and courses to schools to support the learning and adapting of new online tools and methods.

## Different tools and solutions for schools

1. **Education Technology Compass** helps educators to discover and apply technologies in teaching.
2. **eKool** and **Stuudium** e-school solutions for schools to organize teaching and learning.
3. **e-Schoolbag** digital learning materials for professionals.
4. **Teacher's digital competence model and learner's digital competence model** provides learners and teachers a common basis for analysing digital competence in education.
5. **Digital Mirror** helps schools to evaluate their level of 'digital maturity'.



## 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

1. **edu.ee** – overview of education system, information about institutions, curricula, certificates, but also occupations, qualifications, and the needs for labour and skills.
2. **Minukarjäär.ee** – information about career possibilities, tools for self-analysis and career design; toolbox for career practitioners and teachers
3. **Statistics Estonia** – the economic, demographic, social data, including about salaries and employment.
4. **Occupational barometer** – an overview of the short-term demand for the labour force.
5. **OSKA** – long-term prognosis for the need of labour and skills.



COVID-19 crisis in the world has disrupted the traditional face-to-face career guidance and intensified the need for e-guidance. As the crisis progressed several changes were made in the provision of career services by PES. There were time periods when the only way to provide career services was virtually, i.e. via Skype, MS Teams, telephone and e-mail. From the perspective of individual ser-

vices these means were already in use but never on such a large scale. New challenge was to provide workshops and group counselling via MS Teams which required open mind, quick readiness to learn new skills and experimenting with methods. Since then, e-guidance has become a regular way of providing career services for 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 few private companies and in some cases by universities.

There have also been some new and exciting digital tools for career development, including **virtual reality applications of occu-**

**pations**, e.g. medical workers, youth workers, metal industry, [virtual tours of vocational education institutions](#) and [virtual guided tour for guidance professionals to learn digital tools](#) available at the newly opened career centre. 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, Coggle, Menti-meter and Actionbound.

# Capacity building of professionals

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

**At the national level, the role of 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<sup>1</sup>. There is **no academic qualification** obtainable for the career professionals – most have a higher education degree in social or educational sciences (e.g. psychology, economics and business administration, pedagogy, teacher training). However, the occupational qualification system, including **occupational qualification standard, the system of awarding occupational qualifications and 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.

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 21). 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; information provision concerning education, the labour market and professions for groups and individuals. In addition, the main tasks and elective areas of work are

<sup>1</sup> 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.

identified. The **competence requirements** presented in Part B of the standard serve as a basis for the assessment of the applicant for the occupational qualification. When applying for a career specialist qualification, there is a need to demonstrate five 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 use of technology. In addition, at least one of the competence

options must be demonstrated in the process, either career information provision or career counselling.

The current **standard for career specialists** is established at two levels: six and seven, equivalent to a Bachelor's degree and 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 competences at a national or international level, e.g. developing new tools and, curricula or being active as researcher or trainer.

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

Part A: Description of work	Part B: Competence requirements
<b>TASKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Promotion of services</li><li>2. Networking</li><li>3. Service development</li><li>4. Mentoring of colleagues</li><li>5. Training</li></ul> <b>ELECTIVE AREAS OF WORK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Career counselling</li><li>6. Career information provision</li><li>7. Career education</li><li>8. Career management in organizations</li></ul>	<b>MANDATORY COMPETENCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Promotion of services</li><li>2. Networking</li><li>3. Service development</li><li>4. Mentoring of colleagues</li><li>5. Training</li></ul> <b>COMPETENCE OPTIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Career counselling</li><li>6. Career information provision</li><li>7. Career education</li><li>8. Career management in organizations</li></ul> <b>RECURRING COMPETENCES</b>



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, defining professional requirements; to help professionals assess their own skills gaps, or for their own career development.

**A recent study 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 guidance<sup>3</sup>.**

In addition to this, the PES has developed its own competency framework for career practitioners and provides further training for career practitioners. The framework is also an essential part of performance discussion in the PES. When becoming a career specialist or applying for a corresponding position, acquisition of the respective qualification is not required but rather recommended.

## Professional development

It is not yet possible in Estonia to acquire a career specialist qualification 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, Career information sources – relations between the education system and the labour market, in the Youth Work Diploma programme. **Micro-credentials** are the new initiatives. In 2022/2023 there are three career guidance-related programmes opened by two universities.

**Continuous professional training** as well as **peer-coaching** are available by national agencies and private providers to ensure



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

the development of the practitioners' professional competencies on the basis of 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, 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<sup>4</sup>.

A recent study provides an overview of the professionalisation of career services and offers solutions for the capacity building of career specialists in Estonia<sup>5</sup>. 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 the training of professionals and support teachers in general and vocational education.

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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 Specialist: Opportunities, Needs and Solutions for Lifelong Career Development. Education and Youth Board, Euroguidance Estonia.





# 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 networks:

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 European Solidarity Corps. The [Euroguidance Network](#) is a network

of national resource and information centres for guidance. It is a co-operation of centres which links together the Careers Guidance systems in Europe. The network supports the competence development of the guidance community. Its main target group consists of guidance practitioners and policy-makers in all European countries.

Estonia is part of [the Academia network](#) which aims at providing 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. In 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 whom represent more than 50 training programs for career practi-

tioners across Europe. The main mission of the network to promote excellence and innovation in academic, research-based training of career practitioners in Europe. Participation in NICE Academy has always been a resource for inspiration for 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 to be able to better prepare career counsellors and guidance workers for the diverse clients they work with. The broad aim of the network is to increase professionalization and strengthen co-operation between higher education institutions and the labour market, and between research, practice and policy.

[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 to 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 thinking.

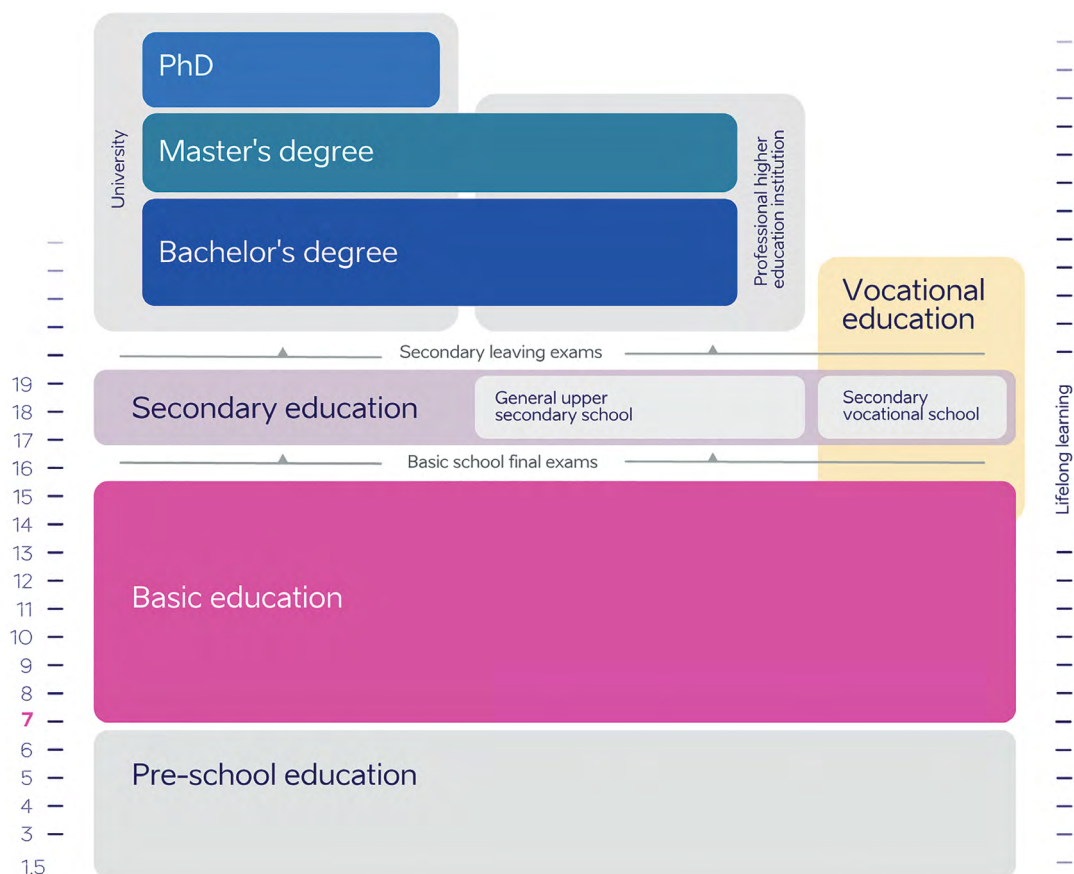
Estonia is also represented in the network for lifelong guidance and career development [CareersNet](#). The Cedefop's network of independent experts was created to collect comparable and reliable information on a European scale in the field of lifelong guidance

and career development issues. The gathered information and analysis aims at identification of gaps and solutions, beyond a snapshot of national guidance systems. Recently published [CareersNet](#) expert collection by Cedefop on digital transitions in lifelong guidance and career practitioners' professionalism offers new knowledge and inspiration for further development.

[International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance](#), [IAEVG](#) provides global leadership in and advocates for guidance by promoting ethical, socially just, and best practices throughout the world so that career, educational and vocational guidance and counselling is available to all citizens from competent and qualified practitioners. The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Euroguidance network and the Estonian representative from the Estonian Euroguidance centres has officially been certified as the [IAEVG](#) national correspondent to enable systematic exchange of inspiring professional information. [IAEVG](#) annual conferences enrich opportunities for capacity building for Estonian professionals.

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#), [OECD](#) undertakes research in relation to both youth and adult career guidance, publishing advice for policy makers and practitioners. The research drawn on international practice and highlighting the characteristics of efficiency is very valuable 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 type of educational institution.

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 by the decision of the government.

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 21 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 – institutions in public law. More than half of professional higher education institutions are state-owned, and the others are 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 school is clearly defined. Quality assurance in education includes 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. Teachers' and school heads' continuous professional development is supported by centrally provided CPD.

**Preschool education** is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months to 7 years 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. 92% of 3–7-year-olds participate in preschool education.

**Basic education** serves as the mandatory minimum of general education requirement, which can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that include basic school level. Compulsory education applies to children who have reached 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year. Compulsory school lasts until basic education is acquired or until a student reaches 17 years of age. Acquisition of basic education grants the right to continue studies in upper secondary education. In order to graduate, students must have at least 'satisfactory' annual grades in all subjects and pass final examinations with at least a satisfactory result.

Estonian basic education is among the best in the world. According to [PISA 2018](#), Estonia's 15-year-olds rank 1st in reading, science and mathematics in Europe.

**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.

**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 the 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 is free of charge, regardless of age, educational background, and individual needs. Nearly half of all vocational students are adults. 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.

Estonian **research** is world class: 10% of our scientific articles are among the most cited articles in the world. The University of Tartu belongs in the top 1.2% of the world's best universities (THE World University Rankings 2021, QS World University Rankings 2021). The EstCube satellite, electric formula car and self-driving car are examples of extraordinary student projects.

**Life-long learning** enables the acquisition of formal education at all levels of education and participation in professional education and training as well as in non-formal education. The forms of adult education are diverse, and adult education is very popular.

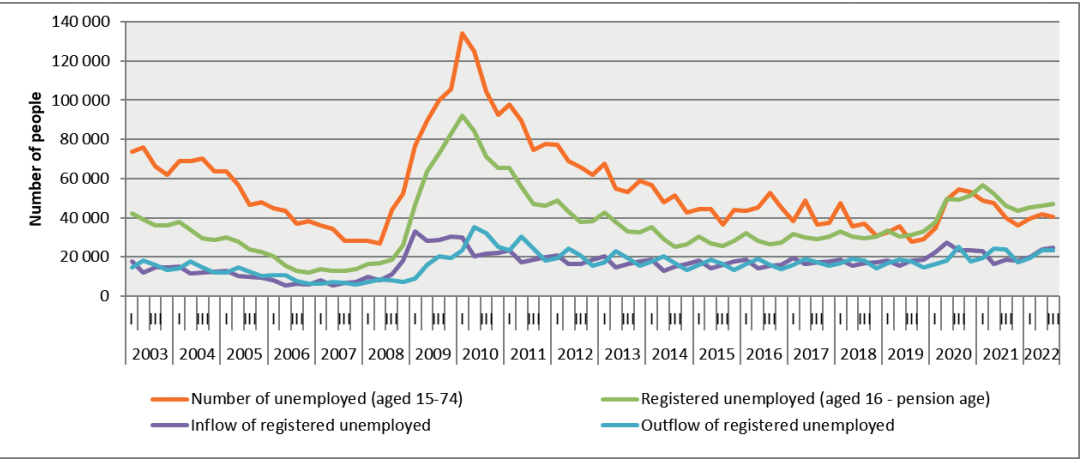


# Labour Market Data

Estonia’s population of working age is almost 700 000, with the labour force participation rate around 71.1% (Statistics Estonia, 2021). About one third of the workforce have higher education and 86% of adults speak at least one foreign language. For the older generation the main foreign language is Russian and for younger adults English.

In the graph below, it is shown the number of unemployed people out of people in the working age, and the number of registered unemployed. Since the peak of the economic crisis in 2010, the overall and the registered unemployment was declining. The Covid-19 crisis in 2020 changed the picture and the number of unemployed increased. From the beginning of 2022 Estonia’s unemployment rate has been increasing again.

Number of unemployed 2003 – 2022

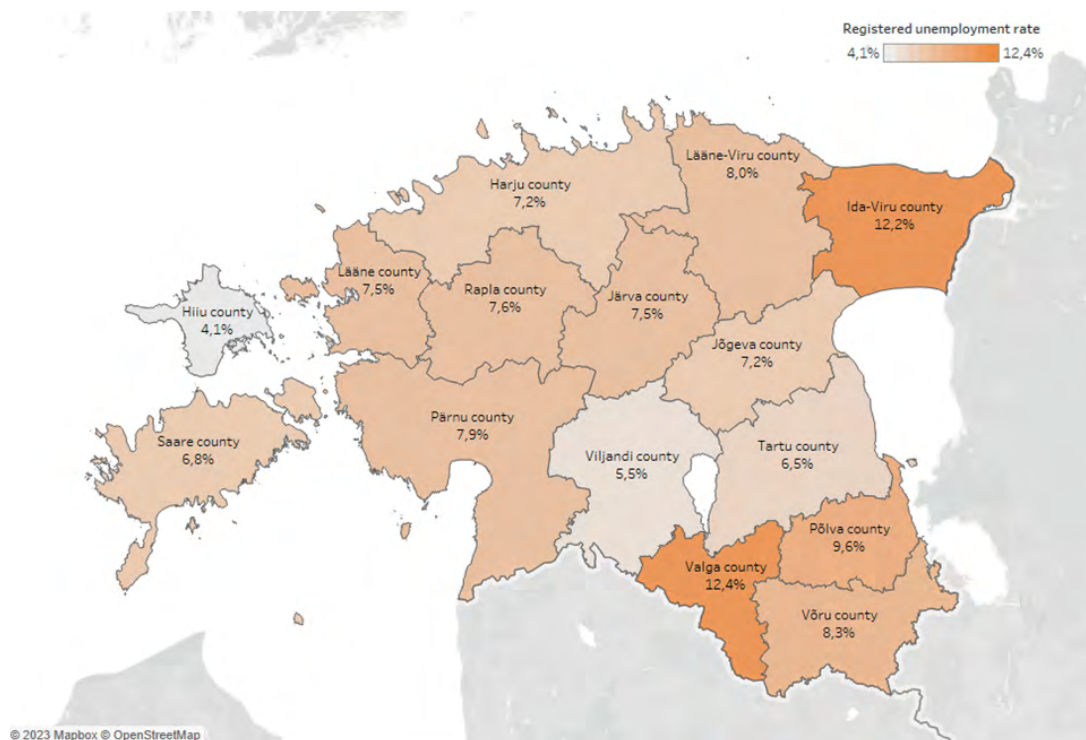


Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

The highest registered unemployment rate has been for several years in Ida-Viru and Valga counties. The lowest unemployment rate is in Viljandi and Hiiu counties. The average unemployment rate was 7,7% in the end of December 2022. In most of the regions the unemployment rate was close to the average unemployment rate. The highest number of unemployed people are in Harju and Ida-Viru counties where the overall population is highest. There are 10 percent points more registered unemployed women than men, before

COVID-19 the share was equal between men and women. In Estonia COVID-19 crisis has mostly affected those working in the tourism and hospitality sector. In 2022, the labor market situation in Estonia was strongly affected by the flow of Ukrainian war refugees who fled to Estonia. In the end of the year approximately 9000 Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection were working in Estonia and 6 285 were registered as unemployed (12,5% of all registered unemployed).

### Registered unemployment in counties in December 2022



Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

# Additional Information

## ESTONIA IN BRIEF

*Capital:* Tallinn

*Language:* Estonian

*Head of state:* President Alar Karis

*System of government:*

Parliamentary republic

*Area:* 45,227 km<sup>2</sup>

*Population:* 1,3 million

*Administrative divisions:* 15 counties

*Currency:* EUR

*Calling code:* 372

*Highest point:* 318 m

*Number of islands:* 1521

*Member of:* NATO, EU, UN, OSCE,  
OECD & WTO, Schengen zone

## OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Association of Estonian  
Career Counsellors

[www.kny.ee](http://www.kny.ee)

Ministry of Education and Research

[www.hm.ee](http://www.hm.ee)

Ministry of Social Affairs

[www.sm.ee](http://www.sm.ee)

Qualification Authority

[www.kutsekoda.ee](http://www.kutsekoda.ee)

Unemployment Insurance Fund  
(Estonian PES)

[www.tootukassa.ee](http://www.tootukassa.ee)



**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.



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REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
EDUCATION AND YOUTH AUTHORITY



**erasmus+ and  
european solidarity  
corps agency**

## 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

Tõnismägi 11, Tallinn, ESTONIA

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