



***A bridge to the future: European policy for
vocational education and training 2002-10
National Policy Report - Estonia***



"This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. ReferNet is a European network of national networks providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The report has been produced by ReferNet Estonia as a contribution to Cedefop's fourth policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop."

Author:

Kersti Raudsepp

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Preface

The "Copenhagen process" was launched as the contribution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to the challenges identified in the Lisbon-Agenda. In the Copenhagen Declaration, approved on 30 November 2002, the ministers responsible for VET in 31 European countries (EU Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries), the European social partners and the European Commission agreed on enhanced European cooperation in VET.

This **Policy Report** forms part of the Cedefop ReferNet 2010 work programme. It provides information on Germany's progress in VET towards EU policy goals within the framework of the Copenhagen process and according to the policy priorities defined in the Maastricht Communiqué (2004), the Helsinki Communiqué (2006) and Bordeaux Communiqué (2008). It considers measures taken in the context of the Education and Training 2010 programme since the Copenhagen Declaration.

The main section of the report is subdivided into the following seven policy areas identified by education ministers as priorities for national policy design in the VET sector:

- Economic crisis – VET policies as recovery measures
- Impact and implications of the joint work on European principles and tools
- Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market
- Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship
- Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET
- Enhancing creativity and innovation
- Financing VET

The introductory chapter of this report deals with socio-economic aspects and aspects of labour market relevance, the background of which aims to enhance understanding of national policy design. The final chapter provides an outlook of possible educational policy priorities after 2010, when the Lisbon process will be completed.

The national ReferNet policy reports were one of the sources Cedefop used to produce the 2010 review of the Copenhagen Process, in line with its mandate. They have fed into a policy progress report which Cedefop published for the informal meeting of Education Ministers, held during the Belgian Presidency at Brugges on 6, 7 December 2010.

Kersti Raudsepp

VET Observatory
Foundation for Lifelong learning Development Innove

THEME 1: SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE VET POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

It goes without saying, that globalisation has made our world smaller and closer together. That, in its turn, has brought along a more unified approach to training in general. Estonia, in order to be competitive, has to remain open and cannot afford to stick to its tradition lest we become irrelevant for the rest of the world.

Thus, globalisation has brought along the need to bring our VET system more in line with the rest of the world. That is partly the reason why Estonia has been eagerly adopting the pan-European instruments for VET and Lifelong learning. Our curricula are output based, the new qualifications framework EKR has 8 levels and is easily comparable to EQF. Such necessary changes are therefore crucial for the mobility of Estonian workforce in Europe and in the world.

In addition, the content of the study has become more unified as the technology is more unified (eg CNC technology). There seems to be more emphasis on managing the process, not just making a product. That, in its turn, means that there is more emphasis on softer subjects like project management and communications.

The governance of VET schools needs to be effective and efficient. That was the main cause for the extensive school network reorganization initiative which has been completed. (see theme 8 for details).

Teachers and trainers are able to take part in international work groups and study visits. That has broadened their horizon and the experience. The volume of independent study has increased as there is access to more information.

Globalisation will also bring more changes within sectors and inter-sectorally. The VET schools are ready to embrace the challenge because of the flexible funding system as well as the wide range of potential students in IVET and CVET. The New Labour Law, which is based on the principles of flexicurity, has been in effect since July 1st, 2009.

1. Title of policy/ measure (Competence Based Modular Curricula 2005-2009)

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

Measure 6.2 of the Development plan for the VET system (2005-2008) stated that “National and school curricula will be developed on the principle of modules and on the basis of professional standards. Curricula will ensure the acquisition of the general and basic skills required in the modern world, and will enable students to specialise within the curriculum. The system of credit points will be implemented. Measure 6.1 states that a consistent set of documents (VET standard, professional standards, national curricula) will be developed to support the content upgrading of the curricula.

(a) Rationale. The reason for upgrading the curricula was to make the study process more relevant for the world of work and ensure that the study process is more in line with pan-European developments.

(b) Objectives/measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives). To have all the national curricula approved by 2009.

(c) Target groups. All the educational levels and educational sectors, as well as the labour market actors will benefit from the change.

(d) Status of implementation. All the 45 national curricula have been approved and they are the basis for school curricula.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national

(b) It is part of a larger policy to make the education policies and employment policies more compatible. To ensure this, the professional standards (the requirements for the knowledge, skills, experience, values and personal characteristics arising from professional qualifications) are approved by professional councils, which consist of representatives of employees, employers and professional associations of the corresponding area of activity and the representatives of the state. The new professional standards, whose new format has been designed within the framework of the ESF project, are competence based and measure learning outcomes.

The national curricula are based on these professional standards, which are renewed once every four years. Consequently, the curricula are also output based and are also renewed once every four years

(c) Key actors involved. The main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure are the Ministry of Education and Research with National Examination and Qualifications Center (NEQC) in particular and the Qualifications Authority.

3. Evaluation:

(a) The first 5 national curricula were approved by the MoER in 2007, in the first months of 2008 already 10 national curricula had been approved, by the end of 2009 all 45 national curricula had been approved.

- (b) Indicators of success (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).
- (c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

4. Conclusions:

This measure ensures that the quality of the labour force corresponds to the actual needs of the labour market. The system of credit points, which will be implemented, will be output based and will make it easier to relate skills and competences of the graduates of those curricula to the EQF qualification system. There are no theoretical issues remaining to be addressed, all the national curricula needs to be implemented.

5. Source, legend

National Examinations and Qualifications Center

1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

Since national curricula in Estonia are based on professional standards and thus closely linked to them, any major technological change in work processes on the labour market will find their way into curricula at least by the fourth year.

The most significant change regarding the impact of the technological progress has been the development of e-learning and ICT in VET institutions. All the VET Institutions have high-tech computer classes and teachers and trainers have an access to a wide range of electronic study materials.

There is a repository of teaching aids at <http://www.e-ope.ee/repositoorium> , which at present (09.02.2010) includes study materials for 553 courses from diverse fields. Electronic study facilities are mostly used by part time learners who spend most of the time studying at long distance, but also have classes at the school.

Web based environments are also used for assessment. Students can take tests online, etc. Online supervision is also common.

Several e-learning opportunities enable people to participate in training and allow them to plan their career and their training needs more easily. In Estonia e-learning is coordinated by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre which administrates two consortia: Estonian e- University and Estonian e-VET. Estonian e-VET consortium consists of 27 VET schools and 7 applied higher education institutions. The objective of the consortium is to achieve a high quality and sustainable e-learning development and implementation system for e-VET schools and applied higher education institutions. There is a national program for developing VET e-learning, established for 2008-2013. The program is co-financed by EU Social Funds and led by Estonian e-Learning Development Centre. Please see 7.3 for an example.

1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

Like in most of Europe, the demographic trends in Estonia are falling, the population is ageing. In 2000-2007, the number of students in VET has fallen by 11% (from 30 872 to 27 381). The looming drastic decrease of potential students (about 50% in the coming 10 years), is related to the low birth rate in 1990s. The decreasing number will require a concentration of vocational training both in regions and sectors as well as a specialisation of institutions. Preparing for this demographic situation started already a couple of years ago.

Since the number of young entrants is decreasing, special attention needs to be paid to CVET and providing lifelong learning opportunities for working adults. The Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter MoER) has already responded to this challenge by providing state funded study places for working adults since 2007. Until then, only the unemployed contingent of the population had access to state funded retraining courses through Labour Market Boards (Estonian Insurance Benefits Fund as of July 1st 2009).

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure (State funded study places for short term CVET, 2007)</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason). This measure was taken so that VET institutions could respond flexibly to the labour market. In the situation of an ageing population, it is also important to provide access to education for all age groups.</p> <p>(b) Objectives/measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives). The aim of the measure is to help raise the number of applicants by providing free occupational training in all counties of Estonia. It is important in coming years to bring many more adults to study in order to raise the competitiveness and well-being of workers and to improve the quality of work.</p> <p>(c) Target groups. The emphasis is on training the people with primary and secondary level of education, who, based on studies, take less part in continuing education than people with tertiary level of training. With targeted free courses it is possible to involve those who are unable to pay for their own training.</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation. In 2007 the MoER applied the state funded study places scheme for the first time to train working adult learners in all counties of Estonia.</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>(a) Level of operation is national.</p> <p>(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger (education/ training/ employment/ social) policy approach? It is a measure designed to respond to the changes on the labour market and tackle the falling demographics and the otherwise decreasing number of students by bringing adult learners (back) to study.</p> <p>(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).</p>

The training is offered by vocational institutions and institutions of professional higher education. In 2007 a pilot project with the means from ESF was launched by which a free of charge work based continuing education opportunity was created also for the adult population. The legal framework was completed in Autumn 2007 by the MoER with the adoption of “the policies for arranging professional training for working adults in VET institutions.”

3. Evaluation:

It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the measure in the context of increasing unemployment. Thus, only statistical data can be used for evaluation. The participation rates have increased, though there was a slight fall in 2009.

Semester	Students	Schools	Financing
2007 fall	7052	26	15 307 770
2008 spring	2390	26	5 451 810
2008 fall	9210	37	23 864 270
2009 spring	6470	36	21 138 864
2009 fall	5109	37	17 558 586
2010 spring	5899	38	19 919 090

Terje Haidak, Pärnu 2010

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered. The greatest challenge is to decide which skills will be needed on the labour market in the short term perspective to allocate the resources most effectively.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed? Enhancing the methodology for the prognosis system remains to be addressed better. Another challenge is to make the VET institutions more open for the adult learner as The adult learner expects the school to provide a flexible high-quality training, which is a challenge for the staff used to working with a younger target group and also it presupposes higher expectations for the content of the study.

5. Source, legend

Kalle Toom, MoER.
Terje Haidak, MoER

1.4 Impact of greening of economy on VET

In Estonia, greening of the economy has been mostly promoted by the “Committee for Sustainable Development”, which is lead by the State Chancellery. The ideals of sustainable development and greener economy have been incorporated into major development plans and strategies. There is no one strategic document which guides such developments in Estonia.

Environment, sustainable development and waste management are recurring themes in professional standards, vocational education standard and national curricula of VET. There are some national VET curricula where the proportion of environmental subjects is considerable. In addition, within the VET system, it is possible to study to become environmental protection specialists. VET system also prepares support services for environmental causes (technicians, etc).

There are also some innovative curricula being developed, like environmentally friendly construction work, energy efficient construction, and biogas production specialities. These projects are at very initial stages, but are coming along nevertheless. (Not possible to elaborate on them as examples yet).

1.5 Other challenges for VET

The Vision “VET 2020” sets out that VET should be relevant, flexible and innovative. The major challenge is to find out how to reorganize the economy and production so as to be competitive in the new knowledge based economy. It is of vital importance to go along with the changes or better yet, anticipate the emerging needs and respond to them by preparing secondary level workforce including service personnel in the new service industry.

THEME 2: Economic crisis – VET policies as recovery measures

2.1 Initiatives for recovery

The foreseen consequences of the crisis on VET

The present economic crisis gives many opportunities to raise the prominence of VET in the society. Retraining and continuous training are especially important. The Ministry of Education and Research has designated state commissioned study places for VET for working adults.

The state commissioned study places have been allotted to those working adults who are contemplating career change or want to raise their qualification level. It is especially important in the present situation where they may be only partially employed, thus the time off work could be dedicated to studies. The use of resources has already been optimized as VET colleges work both, as centres of IVET and CVET. There is a lot of discussion how to use the same system to train the unemployed. So far for such training, the Ministry of Social Affairs has only used public procurement procedures which take too much time in the present time of need.

The school curricula are being restructured. Students can study a speciality as part of their initial training and later come back for advanced training or opt for an additional speciality. The system will be more flexible and correspond better to the labour market needs.

The number of young students is falling due to demographic reasons, the number of older students (24+) has been increasing every year. VET colleges would previously face the challenge of losing their students to companies, as often they would not return from practical training, but stay in the company and work. This situation has changed and drop out rates have decreased.

It is difficult for schools to find places for practical training in the companies. The situation varies sector by sector. Generally, the student can no longer expect any stipend from the employer, which used to be the case previously.

The measures already taken or envisaged to be taken as response to the crisis

The school curricula are being restructured. Students can study a speciality as part of their initial training and later come back for advanced training or opt for an additional speciality. The system will be more flexible and correspond better to the labour market needs.

To solve the problem of the lack of places for practical training, the schools have opened their own workshops or model companies and sell their services to the general public, so that the students can practice their skills.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure: Individual training vouchers, 2009</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>(a) The purpose of the training voucher is to enable the unemployed and the people who have received a redundancy notice to participate in continuous training. The voucher is worth 15,000 EEK (960 EUR).</p> <p>(b) The objective is to help the unemployed people to find employment quickly through offering flexible and tailor-made training based on the needs of the person.</p> <p>(c) Target groups are the unemployed and the people who have received a redundancy notice</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation- the measure has been implemented all over Estonia and is available through Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, including statistical data, if available</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>(a) The level of operation is national.</p> <p>(b) It is part of a larger employment and social policy approach, being funded from the ESF program “A long and high-quality working life” to provide a safety net for recently laid off people and help them return to the labour market quicker by upgrading their skills.</p> <p>(c) Key actors involved are the Ministry of Social Affairs, the local offices of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund</p>
<p>3. Evaluation:</p> <p>(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact. The measure has been effective, since October 2009 till Feb 5, 2010 1663 have been able to receive the training in the amount of 12 039320 kroons (769 453EUR), the average cost being 6300 kroons (403EUR) per person</p> <p>4. Conclusions:</p> <p>It is too early to speak about conclusions.</p> <p>5. Source, legend</p> <p>Berit Vogt, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund</p>

THEME 3: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE JOINT WORK ON EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS

3.1 Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments

European tools and principles on transparency have had a huge impact on the policies of VET and Lifelong Learning. Europass Center was founded in May 2004. The services of the Europass centre, the CV and the supplements have been fairly popular. Please refer to the table below.

Year	Total visits from Estonia	Documents downloaded in Estonian	Europass CVs and Language Passports completed online in Estonian
2005	6341	1035	127
2006	11807	4771	1210
2007	14388	9403	1818
2008	19961	11586	3261
2009	29347	15044	4821

Source: EUROPASS (<http://www.europassikeskus.ee>)

The development of a holistic qualifications system was explicitly set in the political agenda by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2007, supported by the corresponding master plan and legislation. The revised Professions Act (PA) was adopted in May 2008. The goal is to develop a holistic, flexible and sustainable competence based qualifications system, which supports lifelong learning and mobility of the people, and enhances the competitiveness of the society. The system will integrate two major processes:

- Translation of society's and labour market expectations for competences and learning outcomes into educational or professional (vocational) standards and curricula;
- Assessment, valuation and certification of persons' actual competences and learning outcomes.

This system is envisaged as part of quality assurance system in lifelong learning, functioning as a flexible interface between the society and lifelong learning system, or in case of professional qualifications system, an interface between the labour market and lifelong learning system. As a result, the academic recognition and professional

recognition of competences will be integrated into a single qualifications system compatible with EQF.

The following major conceptual and cultural changes are underway:

- Systematic shift towards learning outcomes based curriculum development in all sectors of formal education (general, vocational, higher and adult education);
- Development of competence (learning outcomes) based professional standards, which can serve as an input for curriculum development, and as standard for assessment, valuation and certification of persons competences;
- Modularized approach to professional standards and curriculum development, complemented with rules and procedures for modularized assessment, valuation and certification of qualifications and partial qualifications;
- Unit based credit system will be implemented and ECVET will be incorporated into the modules, in parallel with renewing the qualification standards, where different skills and competences will be expressed through ECVET.
- Gradually widening valuation of prior learning. The development has been faster in higher education sector as part of Bologna process, also supported by ESF sponsored projects like VÕTA (*Varasema Õppe ja Töökogemuse Arvestamine*) or RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience) and underpinned by the corresponding amendments in Higher Education Standard (2008). The VET standard incorporated these changes in 2009.

3.1.1. Estonian qualifications framework

According to the Professions Act the Estonian qualifications framework (EKR) has **8 levels**, whereas level one is the lowest and level eight is the highest. Descriptions of the qualifications levels in the EKR are **identical to the EQF level descriptions**. The aim of establishing the EKR is to develop a framework encompassing all qualifications in formal education (general, vocational, higher and adult education) as well as vocational and professional qualifications.

Only **state recognised qualifications** are included into the EKR. The EKR level can be assigned to the qualifications, which have not received state recognition yet or the qualifications having undefined conditions of recognition, e.g. partial qualifications or individual competences.

The state recognised qualifications have to either be defined in a **learning outcomes based qualification standard** (curriculum or professional standard), meeting the requirements of the national framework standard(s) (if applicable), or have **state recognised awarding institution** (educational institution, professional association etc.).

Since the EKR level descriptions are identical to the EQF level descriptions, the centre of gravity of the referencing process is shifting to **referencing qualifications to the EKR levels**. Therefore the quality criteria and procedures for referencing to the EQF have to be reformulated in terms of including the qualifications into the EKR or assigning the EKR levels to the types of qualifications.

The referencing of qualifications to the EKR proceeds in two steps. First, the EKR levels are assigned to the types of qualifications in general education, IVET, higher

education, adult education, and professional qualifications. Second, a qualification is included into the appropriate EKR level or assigned an appropriate EKR level.

At the moment no educational or professional qualifications have been included into the EKR. Four types of qualifications in higher education and three types of qualifications in IVET have been assigned the EKR level. Assignment of the EKR levels to professional qualifications framework levels has not been formalised yet.

Types of qualifications

Qualifications to be incorporated into the EKR belong to the following types:

- Higher education qualifications,
- IVET qualifications,
- General education qualifications,
- Professional qualifications.

The higher education standard (HES) serves as a framework standard for **higher education qualifications**. This standard describes the credit system based on ECTS, the principles of recognizing prior experience and learning (RPEL), formulates generalised learning outcomes and assigns the EKR levels to the higher education qualifications. The qualifications framework for higher education has three levels. The first level contains two qualifications assigned to the sixth level of the EKR: Bachelor's degree and applied higher education diploma. The second level contains Master's degree assigned to the seventh level of the EKR and the third level contains doctorate degree assigned to the eighth level of the EKR. Descriptions of generalised learning outcomes follow the logic of the Dublin descriptors but are not identical.

Estonian higher education institutions have prepared new learning outcomes based curricula for the academic year 2009/2010. These curricula have to comply with the corresponding generalised learning outcomes of HES and the corresponding professional standard if applicable. The HES describes generalised learning outcomes on the basic (minimum) level, whereas the attainment above that level is graded on the appropriate scale. The principles and procedures of assessment are defined in the corresponding ministerial decree.

Universities and applied higher education institutions are the qualification awarding institutions. Conditions and procedures for the accreditation of qualifications and qualification awarding institutions are settled in the University Act and the Applied Higher Education Institution Act. Universities and applied higher education institutions are entitled to award state recognised academic degrees and diplomas corresponding to the accredited study programmes.

The vocational education standard (VES) serves as a framework standard for **vocational education qualifications**. This standard describes the principles of RPEL, formulates generalised learning outcomes and assigns the EKR levels to the vocational education qualifications. Generalised learning outcomes descriptions have been developed based on the Recommendation and the EKR level descriptions. Like in the HES generalised learning outcomes are described on the basic level, whereas

the attainment above that level is graded on the appropriate scale. No assessment standard exists yet.

The VES references the IVET qualifications types to the EKR levels as follows:

- IVET qualifications without lower secondary education requirement correspond to the EKR level two,
- IVET qualifications based on lower or upper secondary education requirement correspond to the EKR level three,
- IVET qualifications based on upper secondary education and additionally requiring previous vocational training correspond to the EKR level four.

National curricula for the IVET serve as the framework qualification standards and are based on the corresponding professional standards. VET institutions use national curricula for developing their study programmes in IVET and adult education. The number of national curricula is 45 and they cover most of the IVET study fields. IVET study programmes will be entirely learning outcomes based by the year 2014.

The IVET qualifications are awarded by VET institutions. Based on the VET Institutions Act all licensed institutions are entitled to award state recognised qualifications in the corresponding study programme group (in the sense of the ISCED).

The national curriculum for lower and upper secondary education serves as the framework qualification standard for **general education qualifications**. This standard describes learning outcomes for four 3-year levels of studies. There are two general education qualifications: lower secondary education (9 years) certificate and upper secondary education (12 years) certificate.

National curricula for lower and upper secondary education have been based on learning outcomes approach starting from the year 1996 version. A new national curriculum for lower secondary education and national curriculum for upper secondary education are under development and have to be implemented starting from the academic year 2010/2011. These new national curricula mean a substantial step towards entirely learning outcomes based qualifications in general education. The principles and procedures of assessment are defined in the corresponding ministerial decree.

Professional qualifications are significantly different from educational qualifications. Professional qualifications system is an interface between the labour market and the lifelong learning system. The system is developed and administered by the Estonian Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*). During the period 2008-2013 the development is accomplished in the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF) sponsored programme “Development of the professional qualifications system”.

Professional qualifications are divided between 16 professional areas. The Professions Act defines a common 5-level professional qualifications framework. The professional qualifications register contains more than 700 qualifications. These are based on the corresponding professional standards, which in their turn are learning outcomes (competence) based. Professional qualifications council decides about the

necessity for a new qualification and approves the corresponding standard. There is no framework professional standard. Guidelines for developing a professional standard are set in the ministerial decree. All the new professional standards will be learning outcomes based.

Awarding institutions, mostly professional associations, are nominated by the professional councils. An awarding institution may have one or more awarding committees. At the moment there are 86 awarding institutions and 152 awarding committees.

The Professions Act envisages a possibility to combine graduation from an educational institution and awarding of the primary professional qualification starting from the year 2011 provided that the study programme corresponds to the professional standard and is accredited. This means that in certain occasions educational institution can be the awarding institution for professional qualifications.

EKR and quality assurance

The EKR is also a backbone of the Estonian qualifications system. Quality assurance in the qualifications system is a subsystem of the quality assurance system for lifelong learning. The qualifications system encompasses three important processes:

- Development of qualifications standards (framework standards for the types of qualifications, national curricula, professional standards and curricula),
- Assessment and validation of persons' competence,
- Referencing qualifications to the EKR.

Some challenges and discrepancies in applying EKR in Higher Education and VET

If we compare descriptors provided in the Higher Education Standard (HES) and the Professions Act (PA) and their linkage to the European Higher Education Area (EQF-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), some conclusions can be drawn:

Learning outcomes are described at the minimum level in HES, and at an intermediate level in EQF-EHEA, the qualifications framework of the Professions Act does not establish one particular level.

The framework in the PA is most ambitious and states that e.g. level I of higher education (level 6) involves advanced knowledge and skills in the specialised field of study (HES distinguishes between the field of study and a specialism and mostly focuses on the latter); resolving complex and unpredictable problems, management and leadership. HES and EQF are at a similar level.

1. Title of policy/ measure

ESF Program “Development of professional qualifications system” 2008-2013

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

(b) General objective: A supporting and sustainable professional qualifications system, regarding labour market needs, has been implemented on lifelong learning and on the free movement of workers.

Sub-objectives

A new concept and quality assurance principles have been developed for the professional qualifications system. A qualification framework linking educational qualifications and professions has been implemented on the description of professional levels and learning outcomes. The implementation of the professional qualifications system follows the principles of quality assurance.

Classification principles of professional activities have been modernised, a catalogue of Estonian professions has been prepared.

The methodology for the preparation of professional standards has been modernised, professional standards renewed.

A renewed system of crediting professions is now in operation.

For the assurance of the quality of key activities related to the professional acknowledgement of qualifications, the parties related to the implementation of this professional qualifications system and related groups are trained in their field of activity and competency.

The public has been informed of the development of professional qualifications system, implementation thereof and of the program activities.

(c) Program target groups are writers of professional standards; Members of professional committees; Members of professional council; Vocational teachers, teaching staff and the trainers of adults; Experts related to crediting professions, developing professional qualification system, directing educational politics, planning of human resources and employment.

(d) Status of implementation: the program has started and is being piloted. It is a sequel program for the ESF Project “Developing of Qualification System” (2005-2008). The total cost of the program is 51,999,988 Estonian kroons; (3,96m EUR).

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation. The new Estonian Qualifications Framework (EKR) will be implemented nationally.

- (b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger (education/ training/ employment/ social) policy approach? It is part of a larger policy to make the qualifications transparent and compatible.
- (c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure). Qualifications Authority, Sectoral bodies, MoER, NEQC.

3. Evaluation:

It is too early to talk about evaluation

4. Conclusions:

It is too early to talk about conclusions.

5. Source, legend

<http://www.kutsekoda.ee/> (11.02.2010)

3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET

There are no other mobility programs apart from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, where the Leonardo Da Vinci programme is specifically targeted to VET students and teachers.

In 1998, Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) programme was launched under the Foundation of Lifelong Learning Development INNOVE. In January 2007, the Estonian Leonardo Centre was joined with the foundation ARCHIMEDES and renamed.

The aim of the programme is to improve the skills and competences of people in initial vocational training through existing work-linked training programmes; to promote innovation through training, to improve competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and to foster co-operation and partnership.

The programme helps to increase the amount of the students who have the possibility for the study mobility; it facilitates also the teacher mobility, helps to develop participants' ability to act in multicultural contexts and provides trainers and human resource managers with new concepts and methodology.

Within the LdV programme, 41 applications for the mobility projects were accepted in 2007; accordingly, 548 individuals were able to improve their skills abroad.

Overview of LdV beneficiaries in 2002 - 2006	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Young people in IVET	91	82	162	178	212	277	166	294
Young workers and recent graduates	31	23	52	34	33	61	32	53
People in charge of human resources,	85	41	94	22	23	218	197	157

planners, managers, vocational guidance specialists								
Instructors and tutors in the field of language skills	22	28	28	115	59	Counted together with staff		
TOTAL	252	198	385	394	358	556	395	504

Source: *Foundation Archimedes, 2007*

The range of countries chosen as destination countries by Leonardo beneficiaries is rather wide; altogether 24 different European countries are represented. The most popular destinations have been Germany and Finland where almost 60% of all participants have carried out their exchanges or placements. Other countries are considerably less represented, according to the data available. The popularity of Germany and Finland is not surprising as Germany is well-known in Europe for its highly-developed vocational education and training system. Finland, an example probably in almost every aspect in Estonia, is culturally and geographically very close to Estonia and is also highly recognized for its success in the education sector.

One of the drawbacks in international exchange projects is the lack of confidence and language skills of the Estonian students. They need more support and encouragement; the students of VET institutions must become more confident. In the conditions of higher education boom of re-independent Estonia, the students who have decided to study in the vocational schools have been considered inferior to those acquiring higher education. Accordingly, the reputation of vocational education has been low for years.

Gradually, Estonian students have become more involved in international training programmes; the number of incoming students, however, has been quite small. Estonian VET institutions are in need of teachers and trainers who could teach in foreign languages. Developing the support programmes and subjects taught in foreign languages for the incoming students is necessary in enabling the proper mobility between all EU countries.

So far, no specific support programmes have been developed and no subjects are taught in English or in German. Though, it is possible to study according to the special programmes for Russian speaking students. The most advanced study programmes based on the Russian language are used in the north-eastern parts of Estonia. In South-Estonia, there is a plan to start recruiting VET teachers who could teach in Latvian. So it would be possible to educate people in the border town Valga, which has a twin city Valka in Latvia.

LdV development projects have taken advantage of different sources of dissemination. It is common that dissemination is carried out through project websites, various events (e.g. Leonardo conferences, international conferences, meetings), publications (e.g. marketing report, professional journals, organization newspapers, local newspapers), personal contacts with partner organizations, local government and central government officials. One project also received TV broadcast time in the national channel.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure Publication <i>Placement Stories – With Leonardo to Europe and back</i>. 2010 5th edition.</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The publication is a collection of students' impressions and experience acquired during international training periods supported by the LdV programme. The book is compiled of the stories written for the competition organised by The Centre for Educational Programmes (former Leonardo Centre) – a department of Archimedes Foundation.</p> <p>The stories give information about the study opportunities abroad; how should one prepare for the training, what is the importance of professional guidance, emphasises the need for language skills. Besides describing practical training, the readers are provided with interesting details about the local life. Each story is a good example of the strong linkage between life and job experience.</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>The level of operation is national. The key actors involved are the students, teachers and trainers of vocational education institutions; the Centre for Educational Programmes in the Archimedes Foundation, the MoER.</p>
<p>3. Evaluation:</p> <p>The collection of such stories is an interesting source of feedback from the people related to the international training projects. People who have not heard about the possibilities of cross border training can get interesting information through the expressive stories of young people. Consequently, the essence of LdV programme is vividly presented to the broader audience. According to the writings, Leonardo training gives an opportunity to lead your life in unfamiliar surroundings, to develop your communicative and professional skills and to set new goals.</p> <p>4. Conclusions:</p> <p>Participation in the mobility programmes could be increased if people had more information about corresponding projects. Besides the publication of success stories there could also be special subjects in curricula that are based on sharing experience acquired through international training programmes. It would make young people aware of various ways for self-development on individual as well as on professional level.</p> <p>At the same time, the teachers/ trainers in VET institutions need more guidance. The low mobility can be caused by their lack of enthusiasm and specific knowledge about study opportunities.</p> <p>5. Source, legend Ramia Allev, Foundation Archimedes</p>

THEME 4: STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

The anticipation of skills and human resources needed on the labour market is organised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. Annual forecasts have been available since 2003. In Estonian skill needs forecasting model 'skills' are defined as 'occupational skills' (based on ISCO broad groups) by business activity (based on NACE). As additional background, the information on the existing structure of employment by graduates' field of education is also included. The forecasting method includes both expansion demand (new jobs creation) and replacement demand (due to mortality and retirement). The supply side is only considered at very general level in the macro model (through wage formation due to unemployment).

Estonian skill needs forecasting is carried out in several stages. First, macro modelling, which is based on Hermin model adapted to the Estonian context, is carried out which produces overall macroeconomic trends, including employment expansion by nine broad economic sectors. These general forecasts are then used as a basis for more disaggregated forecasts which finally give results for 35 business activities. More detailed analysis is done by sector analysts who take a closer look at key business activities. Methods used vary depending on the sector, but in general they consider demand side and productivity developments. Currently, 24 activities are properly covered from a total of 35 for which the forecast is produced by five sector analysts. Very small and public sector activities are not covered by the analysis.

Detailed analysis includes forecasting occupational structure in each economic activity covered. The forecast of occupational structure mainly grounds on recent trends and on feedback and expert opinions of different business associations. This way the forecast of employment (expansion) by business activity and occupation is achieved. In addition to expansion demand, replacement demand is analysed. This is based on employed persons' distribution by age groups across each business activity. At this point of time the same retirement age and mortality rates are assumed for all business activities. As a third major component, possible inter-sectoral movements are analysed. Again it is a new component and currently it is a simple scenario on how employees might change their field of activity based on recent trends and on relative demand for new employment in different sectors. All these three components – new jobs creation, natural wastage and inter-sectoral movement – form the labour demand for 35 business activities.

4.2 Integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision

The Ministry of Economics and Communications and its partners prepare forecasts on sectoral basis (ISCO 88 – International Standard Classification of Occupations). The Ministry of Education and Research uses this document as a basis for allocating state funded study places in vocational and higher education.

Another approach is to link professional standards with National Curricula. In 2004 the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre initiated the preparation of national curricula for vocational education (supported by the state budget and EU Structural Funds). By early 2007 the Minister of Education and Research had approved the first 5 national vocational curricula. By Jan 2009 the Ministry had approved 40 national vocational curricula. The preparation is co-ordinated by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre and the work is organised in working groups of vocational education experts. The new national curricula are based on professional standards which now have a new format as a result of an ESF project in 2005-2008.

The qualifications according to the new format have to be output based, taking into account the learning outcomes and the actual competences of the applicant. Thus the new national curricula, which are based on the new qualifications, are also output based. Having been taken into consideration that during 2008 – 2013 the professional standards will be renewed according to the new 8-levels NQF, all the national VET curricula will be modernized also.

A VET school prepares a curriculum for each area of specialisation taught. The curriculum is a basic document for studies in a specific area of specialisation which takes into account the requirements of professional standards and the relevant national curriculum. It also defines the list of elective courses with their volume and short descriptions as well as the possibility and conditions for choosing courses. The introduction of competence-based curricula has motivated providers to strengthen their contacts with employers and graduates as a way to gauge labour market skills needs.

Modernizing national VET curricula according to the renewed professional standards, implementing NQF, implementing principles of validation of non-formal and informal learning and implementing ECVET, working out and publishing study materials and teachers' continuing education are the main areas of attention of the national program „Developing VET Content.“ The program is led by National Examination and Qualification Centre and lasts 2008 – 2013. The program uses European Social Funds for co-financing.

Several e-learning opportunities enable the employed people to participate in training and allow them to plan their career and their training needs more easily. In Estonia e-learning is coordinated by the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre which administrates two consortia: Estonian e- University and Estonian e-VET. Estonian e-VET consortium consists of 27 VET schools and 7 applied higher education

institutions. The objective of the consortium is to achieve a high quality and sustainable e-learning development and implementation system for e-VET schools and applied higher education institutions. There is a national program for developing VET e-learning, established for 2008 -2013. The program is co-financed by EU Social Funds and led by Estonian e-Learning Development Centre.

1. Title of policy/ measure The implementation of the results of anticipating and early identification of skill and competence needs (2003).

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

- (a) Rationale. The anticipated skills needs have been studied by the MoEAC for the past 7 years. The first official mid-term employment forecast was prepared in 2003. These forecasts have been used to plan formal education and training, both in VET and in higher education.
- (b) Objectives/measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives). To be as accurate as possible in predicting the need for workforce.
- (c) Target groups--education and labour market policy makers.
- (d) Status of implementation, the measure has been implemented. The new mid term prognosis comes out every year covering the next 11 years.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- (a) Level of operation is national. Information on the needed skills is disseminated in various ways – through workshops, seminars, printed media, etc. The studies, including the past and current ones are available on the MoEAC web page and accessible for everyone.

The anticipated skills needs forecast is one of the factors considered in putting together the scheme of state funded study places in VET. That will ensure that the quantitative side of VET provision corresponds to the labour market needs.

In addition, the skills forecast is used by social partners in analysing the future developments on the labour market. The same study was also used in Cedefop’s Medium Term forecast of Occupational Skills in Europe.
- (b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger (education/ training/ employment/ social) policy approach? It is part of the policy approach to make the economy more competitive.
- (c) Key actors involved. Ministry of Economics and Communications, Ministry of Education and Research

3. Evaluation:

- (a) It is too early to make any final conclusions. Hopefully, there will be a better correspondence of VET provision to the labour market needs.

4. Conclusions:

The present system is working well for IVET. However, there is a great need for a short term skills need forecast for CVET which makes it harder to plan such training. We need more analysis and studies to improve the situation.

Source, legend

www.mkm.ee (11.02.2010)

4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

The links between VET and the labour market in general and the employers in particular, have been greatly strengthened in recent years. One objective of the Development Plan of VET for 2005-2008 was that cooperation with social partners and enterprises in the development and delivery of VET is clearly defined. The measures to achieve this objective were that social partners should be involved in VET processes. That, in its turn, has led to increased satisfaction of the partners regarding the cooperation in the field of VET. Secondly, enterprises are engaged in the study process through the delivery of company based training and the professional continuing training of vocational teachers.

Social partners and stakeholders are involved in planning developments and strategies of VET. Through their involvement on VET School Boards, they have been asked to be involved in developing the Development plan, planning the state-funded study places, planning the use of EU structural funds, etc.

The partners are also involved in the leadership of VET system and institutions. According to the amendments to VET Institutions Act 2006, the boards of VET institutions need to have over 50% of participants from among their social partners.

The social partners are also involved in working out the vocational standards and curricula. All the professional councils are instrumental in working out the professional standards, which in its turn will be incorporated in the school curricula.

Evaluation of results of VET studies has been partly given over to the employers. Replacing the final exam with the professional examination comes under objective 4 in the development plan of VET (2005-2008). The professional examination is carried out by a professional committee which consists of representatives of sectoral organizations.

The cooperation of VET teachers and entrepreneurs is also working well. Within the project to develop continuing education system of VET teachers, financed by ESF, there were courses for supervisors of practical training both from schools and enterprises. As an outcome of the project, instruction materials for the enterprise supervisor were created. The training was carried out by the Estonian Employers' Confederation, an organization uniting employers in Estonia. The preparation of practical training supervisors will be continued in the next programming period 2007-2013.

Cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises has considerably improved regarding carrying out the practical training. It used to be difficult to find places for VET students to do practical training. During the boom, enterprises would seek out opportunities to have VET students doing practical training at their enterprise. In the context of the economic crisis, their enthusiasm has somewhat mellowed. In cooperation with enterprises a new form of study – apprenticeship training – has been launched. The contribution of the enterprise is much greater than traditionally common.

All those positive changes, especially the involvement of social partners and employers have lead to unified efforts of the VET schools and the labour market to promote VET. If the employers speak up for VET today, they are most likely to do it in a positive light, asking for more attention and for more resources for VET. Thus, there has definitely been a positive change, compared to the beginning of the period under discussion.

1. Title of policy/ measure: Involving stakeholders on School Boards, 2006

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

This measure was introduced to broaden the circle of people involved in crucial decisions about VET. According to VEIA (VET Institutions Act) over 50% of the people on the VET school boards have to be social partners.

The school board shall be formed for a term of three years and shall comprise representatives of the corresponding rural municipality or city government or the local government association, representatives of the registered organisations and trade associations of employers and workers (employees) connected with the corresponding vocations and professions and representatives of the Labour Market Board. The representatives of the registered organisations and trade associations of employers and workers (employees) connected with the vocations and professions shall be appointed through the corresponding organisations and trade associations and they shall constitute more than one half of the membership of the board (VEIA § 27; 2).

According to VEIA § 27; 6, the School board shall:

- 1) participate in the preparation of the school development plan, approve it and forward it to the manager of the school or the person authorised by him or her for approval;
- 2) supervise the fulfilment of the school development plan;
- 3) approve the annual activity plan of the school and supervise the fulfilment thereof;
- 4) approve, for the formation of state commissioned education, the information concerning training opportunities to be submitted to the manager of the school or the person authorised by him or her;
- 5) approve a draft school budget and the investment plan and forward it to the manager of the school or the person authorised by him or her for approval;

6) assess the organisation of schooling and education in the school, the management of the school, the legality and purposefulness of the use of funds, the condition of the assets granted for the organisation of learning and living environment and make corresponding proposals to the head;

7) make proposals to the manager of the school or a person authorised by him or her concerning issues relating to the activities, development, assets, budget, management and the amendment of the statutes of the school.

3. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The measure has been implemented all over the country. The policy is part of the overall strategy to make VET open and acceptable for as many stakeholders as possible.

4. Evaluation:

Despite the successful implementation *de jure*, the proposed measure does not quite tackle the issues it was meant to solve. The main reason is that school boards are not uniform; the quality of work depends highly on the individuals appointed to the board. Also, very often, the representatives of employers see their own short term needs as most important and do not think broadly enough for the whole sector. Partly, this is due also to the fact that they do not have good analysis to resort to about the sectoral or regional needs of the labour market in mid term perspective.

Another nuance to be brought out is that the budget of a VET school is given by the state, thus any decisions the boards make (e.g. regarding the development plan), should be within the parameters of that budget, thus curbing their initiative.

The board members are also pressed for time since most often serving on a VET Board is a voluntary exercise, carried out as an extra duty on top of all other activities.

5. Conclusions:

The measure has been implemented, and it has greatly enhanced the relationships between the employers and VET institutions. However, to make it really effective the board members should be equipped with appropriate tools like sectoral and regional analyses.

6. Source, legend

VET Institutions Act, 2006

4.4 Promoting workplace learning

VET students have always had practical training at enterprises, though it has not always been easy for schools to find training opportunities for students. We can say that this has changed by now, the enterprises are eager to have trainees from VET schools in the hope that they will return to work there after graduation.

Apprenticeship training is something new in the Estonian VET system. It started with Phare 2002 pilot project “Development of work-linked training programmes and network in the North-East, South and islands regions in Estonia.”

An ESF pilot project concerning implementing the apprenticeship training in enterprises is being carried out till the end of June 2008. It has revolutionized the concept of learning at the workplace and has given the employers a better perspective.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure Apprenticeship training, 2007</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>Apprenticeship programme is a work-linked training programme in Estonian VET system. The programme started with the Phare 2002 pilot project. The present programme has been implemented as an ESF pilot project since October 2005.</p> <p>The overall objective of the project is to make Estonian VET system more flexible by creating new alternatives for vocational training through implementing work-based training programmes. The apprenticeship programme provides a company with skilled employees who have been trained exactly according to the practical needs.</p> <p>The project is directed to the students who are more interested in practical aspects than in academic studies. In addition, work-linked training programme enables present employees to improve their qualification or change profession.</p> <p>The partners of the pilot project were 16 vocational institutions from different parts of Estonia and approximately 180 enterprises. By now, stakeholders and social partners are aware and ready for the implementation of work-linked training programmes and they support the activity; apprenticeship training is implemented in schools and enterprises; the curricula correspond to the needs of employers who actively participate in designing the content of the training. In November 2007 the number of students in the apprenticeship programme was 400; it is two times more than the previous year.</p>
<p>3. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>The level of operation is national. The key actors involved are enterprises (companies) and vocational schools. The ESF project is coordinated by a structural unit of Foundation Innove. The MoER has prepared and implemented the legal framework — Apprenticeship training is one of the amendments to VEIA and another legal act was passed in March 2007 to legalize Apprenticeship Training. Also, it is possible for schools to teach apprentices within the scheme of state funded study places, which are allotted to schools by the Ministry. The Estonian Employer’s Confederation (Tööandjate Keskliit) led the ESF project, training the supervisors in enterprises of apprentices.</p>
<p>3. Evaluation:</p> <p>The impact of the apprenticeship programme was studied by TNS Emor, the largest full service marketing research and consulting company in Estonia. The study comprised vocational schools as well as companies connected with the above mentioned programme.</p>

The results were presented in March 2008. The evaluation study covers the following topics: The impact of the project according to the participating parties, assessment of the implementation of the project and of the cooperation, as well as further plans. According to the study, the apprenticeship training solves the problems of many counterparts in the context of today's labour market, especially small enterprises value the opportunity to (re)train workers: 83% enterprises with up to 4 employees and 67% of enterprises with 5-10 employees consider the project extremely necessary, as opposed to 41-44% for all the other enterprises. As to the impact, the project has led to increased cooperation with VET schools according to 75% of the enterprises; 66% have started to pay more attention to training and motivating their own staff as a result of the project.

The apprenticeship programme adds flexibility to the forms of vocational training as well as efficiency in responding to the needs of the labour market. By giving the employees an opportunity to upgrade their qualification or to acquire new skills the programme is a significant part of lifelong learning.

4. Conclusions:

The biggest obstacle encountered throughout this programme was the lack of students who would be interested in vocational education. Incompetence and scepticism encountered at schools in the beginning of the project has been replaced by general acceptance of the principles of work based training. This change is most noticeable in the institutions that participated in the pilot project. It would be interesting to study how the implementation of the apprenticeship training will take place in other schools and companies.

The key to the successful apprenticeship training is the role of the enterprises; the student has to study and acquire new skills in their setting. Companies should be involved already in the first stages of compiling the curricula. The lack of professional trainers in companies was an obstacle at first. Conducting special training for company based supervisors has helped the situation. The specialists who have acquired knowledge about pedagogical approaches and learning processes are able to pass their skills on to others more effectively.

5. Source, legend

Maret Tammerand, Foundation Innove, Apprenticeship Training project manager

THEME 5: ADDRESSING EQUITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

5.1 Addressing equity in VET

One priority of the Development Plan for the Estonian VET system 2005-2008 was to provide appropriate opportunities for everyone interested. VET Institutions Act from 2006 expanded the possibilities to study for everyone interested.

In 2002 VET in Estonia was very inflexible. The old Soviet VET system which was accessible to a lot wider group had been done away with, and it was only possible to study VET together with secondary education or as part of a post-secondary program. Today, virtually anybody (youngsters and adults alike) can study at a VET institution, one does not need to acquire secondary education with it. Moreover, one can enter a VET program without basic education. That is especially useful for bringing young dropouts from general education into VET training and introducing them back to the society and economy. One can only point out the positive in expanding the possibilities to study for everyone interested.

State Vocational Education Institutions Network Development Plan 2005-2008 provided for a more even distribution of VET providers across the country to ensure that location is based on local needs, resources are used more efficiently and accessibility has improved. Access to vocational training is provided in all regions and counties of Estonia, even though the number of schools has decreased dramatically since the reorganization plan of the school network was implemented. The countywide “centres of excellence” do make it more economical to offer VET at a better quality level. However, sometimes these centres are like smorgasbords, where many different specialities are taught together.

1. Title of policy/ measure: Appropriate Opportunities in VET to Everyone Interested, 2006

1. Outline of the policy/measure:
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This measure was taken to provide appropriate opportunities in VET to everyone interested, since the previous system had been very inflexible with extremely limited access. The measure was implemented in 2006, when amendments to the VET Institutions Act (VEIA) (<i>Kutseõppeasutuse seadus</i>) came into force by which new and more appropriate types of vocational training were established.
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The policy was introduced to provide ways to enter VET for potential students without basic education. Such students need to be at least 17 years old. Those who enter with basic education, but are not able to fulfil the 3-year secondary VET education requirements, can now graduate with a profession, but without secondary education. The need is there for such training because there are a number of students who cannot keep up with the expectations of the society that demands academic excellence first and foremost.

Thanks to this measure, one can study VET also without the otherwise compulsory component of secondary education.

This measure targets young people with learning difficulties, older workers, people with low skill levels, the long-term unemployed. It is concerned with IVET and CVET.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

This measure has been implemented all over the country, since amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act came into force in 2006. It operates on the national level as well as the local school level. The key actors are the local schools who admit students.

This measure is part of the Development Plan for the Estonian VET system (2005-2008) as Objective 9 foresees that “Appropriate opportunities in VET are provided to everyone interested”.

3. Evaluation:

As to the impact, access has been guaranteed for a wide range of students and appropriate study modes and pathways have been provided. Likewise, continuing training and retraining opportunities are provided in all VET institutions.

In theory the measure has been successful. VET opportunities for persons over compulsory school attendance age (17 years) and without basic education are provided in all regions. Continuing training and retraining opportunities are provided in all VET institutions. Drop-out rate has fallen to 10% by 2008 (drop-out rate at the level of vocational secondary education on the basis of basic education was ca 18%, and at the level of vocational secondary education on the basis of secondary education, ca 21%, in school year 2002/03).

4. Conclusions:

The implemented changes have not, however, increased the number of applicants to VET schools significantly. One reason might be that the general public is not aware of all the possibilities that are offered. The proportion of young people acquiring vocational education without general secondary education does not exceed admission rate to vocational secondary education on the basis of basic education by 15%. It might be good to decrease the age limit for entrants without basic education from 17 to 14 to provide a place for early drop outs and an opportunity to study a profession as opposed to spending the 3 years on the streets. There is a pilot project going on to admit students who are at least 15 years old, but the measure is not mainstreamed yet.

5. Source, legend

VET Institutions Act, 2006

Development Plan for the Estonian VET system 2005-2008

Legal act “Conditions of and procedure for study in VET institutions for persons with special needs”, 2006.

Equity for groups at risk

The measure described above also addresses early school leavers. As to the other specific target groups, equity for them has also improved considerably since 2002. In August 2006 a legal act was passed which regulates the conditions and policies for VET students with special needs.

Young people at a social disadvantage are helped within the framework of providing social guarantees to VET students in general. Since Autumn 2006 vocational students (except for post-secondary students) have been provided with free lunch, which has been on Minister's Regulations. The subsidized school lunch provides at least 1 portion of food during the day for each student. In January 2007 the education allowance system became more flexible. The right to receive education allowance was extended to students studying following the basic school (incl. those with and without basic education). Post-secondary students can apply for education allowance as well as study loans. The rest of the students can get the education and transportation allowance. There are plans to support students from disadvantaged families even more, but the scheme is not yet fully operational today. In addition, local governments can and some do support their students with everyday expenses. Some schools give out free uniforms for their students.

Traditionally, people with disabilities have been away in separate schools. Yet, in the past 10-15 years the society has come to realize that these people have to be with us, together with everyone else. The situation is good regarding study opportunities for students with disabilities. Advisers in the MoER organize national developments. VET teachers have received training in special education to cope with students with disabilities. All the new building projects and renovations take accessibility into account; there are new access ramps, elevators, etc. Within the state funded study places scheme it is possible for the schools to request to teach students with disabilities.

Apprenticeship training has also been extensively used with people who do not feel comfortable studying in the classroom setting. This

As to the people with migrant background, a fairly large group of ethnic Russians might be considered. There are ample opportunities provided for them to study. Many schools, especially in North East Estonia and Tallinn offer the whole curriculum in Russian.

1. Title of policy/ measure Better Access to the Labour Market for VET Students in Prisons, 2006
2. Outline of the policy/measure: This measure was introduced with the amendments of the Vocational Education Institutions Act in 2006. This measure was taken to enhance the quality of VET studies in prisons and to provide better access to labour market for the prisoners. Up until then, the graduate got a diploma of a prison VET school. By this amendment, VET in prisons is offered by a regular VET school.

This means that the quality of teaching is comparable to the other curricula of the school and it is impossible to discriminate the person according to the diploma. The measure is fully implemented.

3. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

The level of operation is national. It is part of a larger education policy approach to provide equal opportunities for lifelong learning for everybody. The key actors involved are the VET schools who are providing the education. Key actors involved are VET institutions who were given over the rights to provide training in one of the prisons.

4. Evaluation:

The measure is fully implemented. The prison schools have been closed and VET schools have taken over the responsibility to train prisoners. The quality of education is guaranteed and later, there will be no discrimination on the workplace based on the school attended.

5. Conclusions:

There were no obstacles since it was an administrative decision. Since the number of students is limited, the overhead cost for a study place can be higher in certain fields, which require special equipment.

6. Source, legend

VET Institutions Act, 2006.

5.2 Support services for groups at risk

The policies have always focused on providing the services for groups at risk in the ordinary school setting. As can be seen from the example above, even prison schools have been incorporated into the mainstream school system. Legally, the term “a student with special educational needs” designates anybody who might need a tailor made approach to his/her studies, including especially talented, mothers with young children, people with disabilities, etc.

Guidance and counselling has become a priority area in VET Institutions according to the new development plan for 2009-2013. Guidance and counselling includes social counselling, career counselling as well as specialized counselling for example, for students with disabilities.

The strength of the approach where the students with disabilities study in a mainstream school setting is the fact that these students are thereby better integrated into the society and there is less segregation. The downside could be that a school which only has a few students with special needs, might not be able to provide all the support services needed. It would be easier to offer such services in a concentrated setting.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure Providing conditions for people with special needs, 2006</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>The title of the policy measure is to provide conditions for people with special needs. It is regulated by a legal act from August 2006.</p> <p>This measure was taken in order to regulate the possibilities of study for students with special needs. The term is all inclusive and considers the following target groups as having special needs: high achievers (“people with special talents”), people with learning or behavioural difficulties, health issues, disabilities or those who have been away from studies for an extended period of time. The last category can be applied to anyone, from teenage mothers and women returners in general to older workers with low skill levels.</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>The level of operation is national; it is part of a larger education and social policy approach to provide access to VET to a largest contingent possible. Key actors involved are the schools providing the education. VET teachers have taken special training courses to be able to deal with the new situation. The policy has been fully implemented.</p> <p>The measure is national and it is part of a larger VET and lifelong learning policy to provide facilitate learning for groups at risk.</p>
<p>3. Evaluation:</p> <p>VET opportunities for students with special needs are provided in all regions. The number of students with physical disability amounts to 800 at the moment (i.e. ca 3% of all VET students).</p>
<p>4. Conclusions:</p> <p>On the one hand, the obstacles are concerned with the unwillingness of the people in groups at risk to become involved in the ordinary VET school because of their lower self-esteem.</p> <p>On the other hand, the obstacles concern the physical conditions for people with disabilities. Many schools have been renovated and access has been created for wheelchairs, there are special ramps, elevators, etc. There have been some cases of bullying against the students who are mentally retarded. Such behaviour has been dealt with very decisively.</p> <p>However, not all schools and staff are ready to accept students with disabilities. So there is definitely a lot of room for improvement.</p>
<p>5. Source, legend</p> <p>Legal act “Conditions of and procedure for study in VET institutions for persons with special needs”, 2006.</p>

5.3 Active citizenship

There are student councils in every VET schools. Student representatives are involved in certain bodies which decide their business, with the right to speak, not to vote. Student councils have a unified Student Council which includes representatives

from all the districts. VET schools are represented on the same basis as the general schools. For example, a VET student participated actively in developing the most recent VET strategy (Development Plan for the Estonian VET system 2009-2013).

The new national curricula pay special attention to developing social skills and also entrepreneurship and innovation. The Basic entrepreneurship module has been included in all the curricula.

Russian students have a half a year Estonian language option they can take, i.e. the Estonian language courses taken over the course of the studies amount to an extra half a year in the whole curriculum. This option helps the graduates to better integrate into the society and be better equipped for the labour market.

THEME 6: QUALITY, EXCELLENCE AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

6.1 Improving the quality of VET

The quality assurance system in VET has three subsystems:

- Internal quality assurance at VET institutions,
- Periodical external evaluation of VET institutions,
- Occasional state inspection.

It is stated in the "Development Plan for Estonian VET System 2005-2008" (VET strategy) that quality is crucial and the main aspect in developing VET. The increased quality of VET will lead to an improved image of VET, the increased number of learners and their successful entry to the labour market.

In the new Development Plan for the VET system (2009-2013), there are four measures foreseen to help raise the quality of VET

- a) developing the content of VET and bringing it up to date
- b) developing of quality assurance mechanisms
- c) developing the personnel of the VET institutions
- d) Bringing the infrastructure of VET institutions up to date.

In 2005-2008 there was an ESF project "VET curricula development" by which 45 new national curricula, which are a basis for school curricula, were developed. The new curricula are based on qualification standards and thus correspond to the needs of the labour market. The unified content of the new curricula assures equity and comparability of all VET programmes across the country. The process will be followed up in the new ESF programme "Modernizing the content of VET" in 2007-2013. Curriculum development continues in 2008-2013, when ECVET will be implemented.

Quality assurance as a principle and several instruments to assure quality in VET were acknowledged even prior to 2006. It was agreed in 1995 to develop national curricula for VET and VET teachers further training system to assure the quality of training. The first 5 national curricula were approved by the MoER in 2007; by the end of 2009 all national curricula were approved.

In 2003 Quality Award model and competition, based on the European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM) was developed for Estonian VET schools. Also relevant training programmes were developed. Since then, the schools have been taking an active part in competing for the Quality Award. More and more VET schools implement it as a tool for internal evaluation and improvement. A set of indicators, a bit different from the ones presented in CQAF/EQARF, for better describing the performance of VET schools, is also being developed. The indicators'

set is connected to the online Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) and made public online.

Vocational Education Standard (Kutseharidusstandard) 2009 regulates the common requirements for VET at the level of basic and secondary education. It defines the concepts used in VET and outlines the requirements for curricula, modes of study and for teachers. It also gives a list of fields of study and study programmes and contains the principles of RPL and defines the learning outcomes in VET.

With the funds of ERDF 2004-2007 programming period there are renovated and modernised facilities in 10 VET schools. Almost 700 million EEK was spent on that together with co-financing from the state. 3,63 billion EEK (232 m EUR) will be spent on upgrading VET facilities in 2008-2013.

The Educational Institution Internal Evaluation Counselling Department was established under the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre in 2006. Its main activities are to analyze the internal evaluations performed by educational institutions and to provide counselling for educational institutions in matters of internal evaluation and the analysis and development of internal evaluation systems.

Since Sept 1st, 2006 internal evaluation has been obligatory for VET schools, it is a continuous process, whose objective is to ensure there are conditions at the school for the development of students and the sustainability of the school. The strengths and weaknesses of the school will be brought out and an operation plan of the development plan will be drawn up. The evaluation report will be submitted at least once every 3 years. By 2010 the schools will have to have prepared and presented their first internal evaluation report.

One sign of quality for a VET institution is that the graduates are competitive on the labour market. To that end, it is possible for a VET graduate to choose a Professional Exam instead of the Final Exam of the School.

1. Title of policy/ measure Implementing Compulsory Internal Evaluation (Sisehindamine) 2006

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

(a) Rationale. In 2006 conditions and policies for the compulsory Internal Evaluation and Internal Evaluation Counselling were approved in the Amendments to Vocational Education Institutions Act to produce a quality assurance mechanism for VET Institutions.

(b) Objectives/ Internal evaluation is a continuous process; its objective is to ensure there are conditions at the school for the development of students and the sustainability of the school. The strengths and weaknesses of the school will be brought out and an operation plan of the development plan will be drawn up. The internal evaluation report will be submitted at least once every 3 years.

(c) The target group is VET Institutions,

(d) Status of implementation. The measure has been implemented all over the country,

however, the schools still have time to submit their first report

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- (a) Level of operation is national.
- (b) It is a part of a larger policy to make VET institutions more competitive and raise the quality of teaching and the efficiency of administration.
- (c) Key actors involved VET Institutions, NEQC, MoER

3. Evaluation:

The measure has not been fully implemented so it is too early to talk about any definitive results. 8 VET schools participated in internal evaluation through an ESF pilot project "School Checkup 2006" (Koolikatsuja)

4. Conclusions:

It is certainly good to have all the processes described and evaluated. However, there is some resistance from some school directors. Internal evaluation takes a lot of effort and time and VET teachers are overburdened as it is. At the same time, internal evaluation can be seen by the schools as an opportunity for PR, where some potential problems might be overlooked, thus the objectivity of the report might be questionable.

5. Source, legend

Policy Report, 2008

6.2 Promoting excellence in VET

In 2002, there were 58 state owned VET institutions. The number has been reduced to 32 through very decisive actions and the changes will continue. At present, such activities are regulated by the "Reorganization Plan for State-owned VET institutions for 2005-2008." The objective of this plan was to increase the quality, accessibility and efficiency by reducing the number of VET institutions. Many smaller institutions have been merged into regional VET centres, the so called "centres of excellence" with a wide variety of subjects taught in one building. In addition, there will always be some highly specialized schools (e.g. arts, music, forestry etc). Please see the example for details.

The implemented changes took into account

- a) The demographic processes
- b) The economic need – the regional need for specific professionals
- c) Meeting the social need – opportunities for everybody who wants to study VET
- d) The increasing need for adult continuing and retraining
- e) The regionality – Estonia is divided into 11 regions which often coincide with the borders of a county (*maakond*), except in 4 cases for demographic and other reasons
- f) Regional attraction centres – there is no point having a school outside those centres (decreasing number of students) unless it is a highly specialized school

- (e.g. agriculture) or there is some other good reason to have such a school at that location
- g) The quality of education as a priority – ensuring the sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum
 - h) Retaining the variety so that the students can find a suitable place for their studies
 - i) The traditional distribution of institutions and other traditions
 - j) The reorganization as a development process not as a one time campaign

NUMBER OF VET INSTITUTIONS IN 2004/05-2008/09				
Year	State VET institutions (in the area of government of MER)	State VET institutions (in the area of government of other ministries)	Municipal VET institutions	Private VET institutions
2004/05	44	3	3	18
2005/06	38	3	3	14
2006/07	33	1	3	11
2007/08	31	1	3	12
2008/09	30	1	3	11

Source: Estonian Education Information System (hereinafter EEIS), 10 November 2008

1. Title of policy/ measure **Reorganizing the School Network (2005-2008)**

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

(a) Rationale. The change was undertaken to increase the quality and efficiency of VET provision to optimize the scarce financial and human resources. For example, in 2003, the state owned VET schools which had less than 500 students made up 43,5% of all the schools (i.e. 23 schools). By 2007/2008 school year, the number of such schools had fallen to 14 (i.e. 40% of all the VET institutions)

(b) Objectives. The vision in the Reorganizing the School Network development plan was that by 2008, VET institutions network corresponds to the needs of the society and the learner and operates on optimal and effective use of resources.

The objective was to reorganize the school network in such a way that the high quality training needed by the society is accessible to everyone who wants to study.

(c) Target groups. VET Institutions. VET system in general

(d) Status of implementation. The reorganization plan has been carried out, and the school network has been optimized.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national and regional

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger (education/ training/ employment/ social) policy approach?

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact. The initiative has been very successful. The VET system is the best organized and the most optimal school network.

(b) Indicators of success. There is a significant drop in overhead costs. In 2004-2008- 200 000 square meters were given up, the costs for the upkeep decreased by 2,2 billion EEK annually and the costs for the need to renovate decreased by 1,8 billion EEK.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies. The network of VET schools is much more optimal than that of the general schools. It is effective and efficient. The government is trying to reorganize the general school network the same way but there is a lot of resistance from the municipal governments who are the owners of the schools.

4. Conclusions:

(a) **Obstacles encountered.** The reorganization was definitely needed and it has worked well, although at first there was a lot of resistance to change. The measure has contributed to the quality and accessibility of VET provision.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed? Now, the remaining schools will have to be

renovated and turned into prime examples. This has already been considered and will be done with the help of ERDF funds in 2007-2013 programming period where 3,63 billion EEK (232 m EUR) will be used for renovations.

5. Source, legend

Reorganizing the School Network Plan

6.3 Higher level qualifications in VET

There are no specific programmes that introduce vocational qualifications/programmes in higher education/tertiary education (for example ISCED 5B programmes such as apprenticeship in higher education).

Higher education (HE) system consists of an academic branch (ISCED 5A) and a professional branch or applied higher education (ISCED 5A). Higher education is available for all graduates of upper-secondary general (ISCED 3A) education or upper-secondary vocational (ISCED 3B) education, as well as post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education (ISCED 4B).

Professional HE may be provided by:

- applied HE institution (*rakenduskõrgkool*);
- university college (*ülikooli kolledž*);
- VET institution (*kutseõppeasutus*) that offers post-secondary (non tertiary) vocational education curricula.

Applied higher education is the first level of tertiary education and it was established in 2002-03 academic year. Studies last for 3 to 4 years and practical training forms at least 30% of the total volume of the curriculum. Graduates who have completed their studies are awarded a diploma (*rakenduskõrgharidusõppe diplom*). According to the Standard of Higher Education, applied HE provides students with the competences necessary for employment in a particular profession or to continue his/her studies at Masters' level.

6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems

In 2002 VET in Estonia was very inflexible. The old Soviet VET system which was accessible to a lot wider group had been done away with, and it was only possible to study VET together with secondary education or as part of a post-secondary program. Today, virtually anybody (youngsters and adults alike) can study at a VET institution, one does not need to acquire secondary education with it. Moreover, one can enter a VET program without basic education. That is especially useful for bringing young dropouts from general education into VET training and introducing them back to the society and economy.

Thus, there are equal opportunities for everybody today to enter VET. Despite the extensive reorganization of the network of schools and merging of many schools, there are possibilities to study a wide range of professions in every county. Special conditions have been provided for people with special needs. VET schools are also institutions for lifelong learning, providing ample opportunities for working adults.

VET system has undergone a major change in the period under discussion; the inflexible system for secondary studies only, has been replaced. The staff, curricula as well as facilities have improved considerably, thus improving the quality of VET provision, which, in turn will lead to increased attractiveness.

For a young person, entering VET no longer means taking a dead end educationally, it is a viable option to get a profession first and then, continue the studies at a higher education institution if the student so wishes. There are a number of laws passed to facilitate the transfer of VET students to the tertiary level of education. For example, a VET graduate with secondary education can spend up to 35 study weeks at a general school, preparing for the state administered national graduation exams (“state exams”) the graduate needs to enter a university.

Despite those many positive changes that have taken place, VET still seems to carry some negative undertones in a society which values academic learning. Due to the lack of adequate career counselling basic school graduates are pushed to opt for an upper secondary school and university even though they may have other interests, capabilities and possibilities. A national target programme has been launched to promote VET. The aim of this programme is to change attitudes to VET, guide learning choices and inform the public about VET opportunities.

It is an ongoing challenge to promote VET institutions and proclaim to the society that VET is a viable option, with good career choices and sufficient skills for the labour market upon graduation, and entrance to the higher education.

The mobility of trainees within VET and between different study levels has improved in the period described thanks to several changes that have taken place.

The mobility of trainees inside VET is facilitated by Vocational Education Institutions Act by which a student, having started the studies in one institution, can continue them in another institution, provided there are vacancies in the same curriculum group. The student has to pass the exams that the curriculum of the previous school did not have.

In 2006, the graduates of the upper secondary VET were provided with an optional one year, which enables them to continue studies of general subjects within 35 study weeks in upper secondary school for adults or the evening or distance learning courses at a general school. The purpose of the additional year is to enable the VET graduates to prepare better for the state exams to be competitive in entering higher education institutions.

The opportunities for the students of general schools to acquire preliminary VET knowledge and skills have widened. Students in basic and secondary education have been given two options:

- a) Vocational preliminary training – VET orientation course which lasts up to 15 study weeks.
- b) VET in basic school and upper secondary school – courses that enable the students to acquire realistic VET skills in a VET institution studying a VET curriculum whose volume is 15-40 study weeks. If the student continues his studies in a VET school, the courses taken will be credited to his account.

The cooperation between VET institutions and institutions of professional higher education regarding curriculum development in post-secondary studies is encouraged. Thus, many institutions of professional higher education take into account courses taken in a VET school in meeting the requirements of their curriculum.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure Horizontal transfer within IVET, facilitated by VET Institutions Act 2006 and VET standard 2009</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Rationale. The legal framework has been provided in order to give more opportunities for students to continue their studies in the same institution after some period or transfer to another institution. Amendments to VEIA in 2006 provided that a student, having started the studies in one institution, can continue them in another institution, provided there are vacancies in the same curriculum group. The student has to pass the exams that the curriculum of the previous school did not have. Previously such transfers were not possible. (b) The objective is to widen opportunities to continue studies. (c) Target groups (high achievers, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, people with migrant background and ethnic minorities, older workers, people with low skill levels, the long-term unemployed); More generally, the target group is the students who need or want to change schools. The student can now avoid repeating courses already taken, can reduce the time spent on a curriculum. (d) Status of implementation. The policies are at work. In 2006, amendments to VEIA provided for horizontal transfer between schools. In 2009, VET standard incorporated the RPL principles, thereby completing the process.
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Level of operation is national. (b) It is part of a larger policy approach to include RPL principles in facilitating horizontal and vertical transfer of VET students. It is a part of a larger policy approach to enable dropouts and people on the labour market to continue their studies and have their prior learning accredited. (c) Key actors involved. VET Institutions

3. Evaluation:

The law has been passed, so the policy is operational nationally. Opportunities are there for students to change schools. The statistics is not readily available how many students are using this opportunity.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered. In 2006, RPL principles had only been incorporated into the Higher Education Standard and RPL in VET institutions happened case by case and depended on the school. In 2009, RPL principles were incorporated into the VET standard as well.

5. Source, legend

VET Institutions Act, 2006

VET Standard, 2009

6.5 Teachers and trainers

The work at today's school is challenging and the students are not always motivated. It is not easy to bring teachers to VET schools, especially those, who would be good specialists in their field and qualified teaching specialists also. A good specialist, an aspiring VET teacher has to study 160 additional credit hours to complete the pedagogical training which sometimes proves to be too heavy a burden.

An ESF project (2005-2008) for developing VET teachers' further training possibilities and system as a whole has been successful.

- a. A study was conducted which gave a picture of a career model of today's VET trainer and comparison to the relevant practise in Europe (June 2006)
- b. VET teacher's subject-specific competencies were described in 15 curriculum groups and proposals were made to enhance the frame requirements for teacher preparation (September 2006)
- c. Approved centres for continuing education were created on the basis of the existing vocational institutions (December 2006)
- d. Curricula for continuing education for vocational teachers and practical training supervisors were compiled (April 2007).
- e. Curricula for continuing education were tested and amended (January 2008)
- f. Models for the vocational teacher's training and continuing education will be compiled in 15 curriculum groups (June 2008)

Through the 2005-2008 project "The Development of VET Curricula" VET teachers were involved in revising the content of VET training through participation in curricula committees and creating the school curricula.

Because of project *E-Võti* (E-key) (2006-2008), the teachers were involved in creating a modern study environment. 2,310 teachers, IT specialists and education specialists have taken part in the training of how to compile electronic study materials (mainly web-based). As a result of the training, the teachers have created 615 weeks of

electronic study courses and over 600 study aids, which are all gathered in one data mart, available for everybody.

VET STUDENTS					
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Number of students	29 915	29 013	28 651	27 381	27 239

Source: EEIS, 10 November 2004 – 10 November 2008

VET TEACHERS				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Teachers	1078	1000	1089	1027
Vocational teachers	1425	1262	1319	1290
Total	2503	2262	2408	2317

Source: Statistics Estonia, February 2010

The conditions have been created for VET Teachers to participate in continuous training. However, professional development of VET teachers is highly dependent on individuals, their motivation and eagerness to obtain new and progressive study methods. VET teachers lag behind in participation rates in comparison with general school teachers and Estonian teachers altogether lag behind in comparison with other countries. According to Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, OECD 2007/2008) almost 89% of teachers out of 23 countries have participated in some continuous study course in the past 18 months. Among Estonian general school teachers, the same number is 69,2%, and among vocational teachers only 53,3% of teachers participated in some course of continuous study. The limiting factor which was brought out was that they could not find a suitable course.

VET teachers have been able and will be able to take part in courses conducted for trainers of adults, preparing them for work with adult population. They also have an opportunity to apply for the profession of a trainer of adults.

The target participation level by 2013 is 95% according to the new Development Plan for the VET System 2009-2013. The ESF program “Developing VET content” is expected to contribute significantly to this end.

1. Title of policy/ measure Professional Standard for VET teachers, 2006
2. Outline of the policy/measure: The Vocational Standard enables the VET teacher to acquire qualification on three different qualification levels (teacher III, IV, and V). The necessary knowledge, skills, proficiency, values and other competencies have been mapped in the standard.
2. Policy/measure operation and delivery: The VET teachers’ vocational standard is the basis for the VET teachers’ formal

education – two Estonian universities preparing VET teachers have based their output-based curricula on them.

3. Evaluation:

Although the system is somewhat flexible for the schools (they can employ 25% of their teachers without pedagogical training), a person who wants to make a career out of being a VET teacher, has to study 160 additional credit hours to complete the pedagogical training. It sometimes proves to be too heavy a burden. In some fields, esp. manual ones, it is hard to find specialists with higher education. That means the aspiring teacher has to complete higher education requirements as well. Before 1998 there was a dual system of teachers and masters (craftsmen), where the theory could be taught by a qualified teacher, but the practical aspects were taught by the “master”.

4. Conclusions:

The requirements, which might be too high for formal education, could be more flexible. The universities together with the MoER could make more efforts to work out a good system for preparing VET teachers and bringing them to schools.

5. Source, legend

Policy report, 2008

THEME 7: ENHANCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

The main innovations in the pedagogical content/curricula generally have been the curriculum development from input based to output based, although in practice there is room for improvement. The new national curricula are based on learning outcomes and modular, whereas the modules build on each other and that allows for a more specialized and individual approach.

Entrepreneurship programmes and activities are provided in all vocational education and training institutions in Estonia. Since 2006 entrepreneurship programmes have been included in all national curricula for vocational education. The minimum is 40 academic hours (1 study week) in every programme. The average is twice as long — 80 academic hours (2 study weeks). A number of curricula offer entrepreneurship programmes of 120 academic hours (3 study weeks) or more. These include agriculture and horticulture, tourism, catering and other services, trade, applied art and handicrafts.

Quite a few strengths can be brought out in connection with entrepreneurial studies. The interest of students in entrepreneurship and their motivation to study remain high. Business plans which work and are connected to their specialities, encourage young specialists to opt for becoming an entrepreneur. There is also a strong link with other disciplines taught (mathematics, IT management, languages, etc.). Up to date, age-specific and good study materials certainly encourage students to go further. Practical choices, assignments related to real life and their speciality encourage students to think by themselves and take responsibility for their decisions. In many specialities there is a good material-technical basis for making products and teaching product development. It is possible for schools to involve entrepreneurial teachers who have experience in business, but might lack other formal qualifications for teachers.

There are also a number of weaknesses or drawbacks in teaching entrepreneurship. First of all, the overall context in Estonia could be considered a weakness. Entrepreneurship and private property have been in Estonia for a very short time—there is no continuity, traditions are weak. Students' background very seldom includes entrepreneurs in the closer social circle of friends and family. The image of the entrepreneur can sometimes have some negative connotations (they are thought of taking part in shadow economy, tax evasion, etc.) Having come from general education, young people do not have a clear idea of entrepreneurship as the engine for the society. Thus, they are only mildly interested in entrepreneurship.

Also, in the study process as a whole the importance and meaning of entrepreneurship and developing entrepreneurial attitudes has been underestimated. The purpose of the VET studies is generally perceived as to prepare a skilled worker, not an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship training and vocational training are not in cohesion, entrepreneurship studies are treated with some reservation, as is the case

with all the other general subjects. Sometimes there are problems with teaching methods. There should be a wider range of techniques to supplement lectures as the most basic teaching tool.

1. Title of policy/ measure (ESF Project „Developing Entrepreneurship Studies“ 2005-2008)

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

The project was implemented by the Foundation Innove and partners (6 vocational schools and Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) during the period 09/2005 – 08/2008.

The preceding survey (in 2004) at 30 VET schools emphasized the relevance to consider much more practical approach and to develop common entrepreneurship module for VET schools (including workbooks, teacher’s manuals with relevant methods to expose students to real-world situations).

As a result of the project 3 new entrepreneurship modules adaptable in different VET curricula were developed:

- 1-st level is a 40 hour **Basic module**, target group is students at vocational schools after basic school
- 2-nd level is a 40 hour **Entrepreneurship module** for students on post-secondary level of vocational secondary education
- 3-rd level is a 80 hour **Evaluation of Business Performance and Managing Entrepreneurial Challenges - Optional module**, for students on the level of vocational secondary education.

Basic module is designed to develop students’ understanding of the market economy and of the world of work, to introduce career research, the logic of how businesses operate and the basics of founding and operating a business.

The entrepreneurship module focuses on business environment in Estonia, business start-up and enterprise activity. Enterprise activity provides students with the opportunity to put the knowledge and skills they have learned into practice - students have to plan, set up and run their own enterprise activity and present an enterprise report based on this activity.

The optional module focuses on Evaluation of Business Performance and Managing Entrepreneurial Challenges. The optional module includes also enterprise activities. Suggested teaching methods: brainstorming, teamwork, case-method, project-based learning, individual tasks.

Relevant study materials, teacher’s manuals and guides to use project-based learning of new modules have been developed, issued and delivered to pilot schools during the project period. The use of simulations and videos are also important components of the entrepreneurship study. As a result of the project the simulation Pizzeria (www.pizzeria.ee) – management of pizza restaurant and video (consisting of interviews with entrepreneurs) was developed.

The project has ended, but the materials live on. They are in active use in VET schools.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- (a) The level of operation is national.
- (b) The project was part of a larger measure to introduce entrepreneurship studies to the VET students.
- (c) Key actors involved are VET Institutions, Foundation Innove and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry

3. Evaluation:

The Basic module has been approved by the National Examination and Qualifications centre and has been recommended for all the VET curricula.

The simulation game pizzeria is very popular with the students and in 2010 it will be used as one of the assignments in the Youth Skills competition in Entrepreneurship.

The study materials have now been distributed to all the VET schools and are being used in teaching the modules.

4. Conclusions:

There were no major obstacles in preparing the study materials. Continuous training for the teaching staff remains a concern and has been taken up by the National Examinations and Qualifications centre

5. Source, legend

Aili Kõiv. Project leader for ESF Project „Developing Entrepreneurship Studies“ 2005-2008

7.2 Improving quality of teaching

Thanks to the ESF programme E-Võti (E-Key) in 2006-2008, 11 professional networks have emerged, which have been conducive to promoting the new learning and methodology. E-VET thematic networks work together with E-University networks in Estonia, and cooperate with specialists in the fields and national VET curricula development work groups of National Exam and Qualification Centre. E-Võti is followed by VANKER, another ESF program for the same purposes in 2007-2013.

1. Title of policy/ measure ESF Program VANKER 2007-2013

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

- (a) Rationale. This ESF program is a sequel to a successful e-learning program E-Võti (E-key).
- (b) Objectives/measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives). The objective of the program is to develop further the e-study aids and teacher training in order to raise the quality of the study process in VET and the mobility of learners.
- (c) Target groups are all students in VET and the teachers and trainers.
- (d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available. The program has been launched. The total budget is 35,34 Million kroons (2,26 m EUR). The budget for 2008-2010 is 14,71 m EEK (940 th EUR).

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- (a) Level of operation is national, helping the creation of study aids in all subjects and curricula.
- (b) It is not an isolated measure, but rather a part of a larger policy approach to raise the quality of VET and thereby increase its attractiveness and the mobility of learners.
- (c) Key actors involved are the Estonian IT Foundation and the NEQC and the teachers of VET institutions

3. Evaluation:

- (a) It is too early to speak about evaluation. The present state of the study aids in all the subjects will be mapped and then the creation of new study aids will begin.
- (b) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies. The results will be integrated into the curricula.

4. Conclusions:

It is too early to speak about conclusions as the program has just started.

5. Source, legend

<http://portaal.e-uni.ee/vanker>

7.3 Innovation-friendly institutions

In a way, all VET institutions are innovation friendly in Estonia. All the schools have at least one computer classroom, if not several. These classrooms are also open for students to do research and use the computer for any other study purposes. All the computer classes have Internet connection. Many schools have Wifi facilities all over the school. Many schools have videoconference facilities. Several schools have hi-tech labs for modern media.

The Ministry sees VET Institutions technological renovation as a priority. In the first order, study labs, technologies and equipment will be upgraded. All the VET institutions will get investments to this end.

E-VET consortium assures the possibilities of the e-environment and many platforms. Virtual study environment MOODLE (www.e-ope.ee) is used at many schools. In this environment it is possible to create various study materials and work sheets. The students get their handouts there, also hyperlinks to find more material. Assignments, self study tests, etc and an option to upload the assignments they have solved. There is a forum in the same environment to communicate with the teacher and other students. Yet, the assignments that have been done are visible only to the teacher and everybody can see only his/her own grades and results.

In entrepreneurship studies, business plans are also created in an e-environment, where the students have been given a structure and tools to support the work. All accounting (cash flow and profits and loss accounts) is done in Excel. In cooperation with the IT-teacher of the school special formulae (automatic tables) have been created to simplify the calculations, but one can also work without these formulae. The creation of the business plan can be closely followed by the teacher as it is created step by step and the different stages are created separately, so it is not possible to present a business plan download from the Web.

Web based user interfaces are innovative and timesaving. In order to access the study materials one does not need to commute, it is enough to have a computer with Internet access.

7.4 Encouraging partnership

On the policy level, there are no specific initiatives regarding such creative partnerships. On the other hand, the partnership of VET institutions with social partners in general is strongly encouraged. according to the VEIA 2006, at least 50% of school boards have to be social partners (including local municipalities).

Enterprise Estonia has launched an initiative by which competence centres are supported from ESF funds. These competence centres include creative consortia between VET Institutions, Higher Education Institutions and enterprises.

There are no high level initiatives per se, but schools are interested in cooperating with other schools who teach creative subjects and other stakeholders, eg. museums, venues for fares, tertiary level education institutions. For example, Haapsalu VET

centre teaches handicraft. The school has many unofficial partnership agreements. The partnership contracts are forthcoming though it is not easy to prescribe the needs of the other party for the needs can change. For example, in partnerships with museums, students organize workshops to clients as part of their practical training. They can also sell the products made at the school. Haapsalu VET centre is the only handicraft training provider at present in its region. Thus they provide training for the whole county. There are two types of courses, shorter hobby education type courses in the evenings complement the new trend in formal education. In recent years they have opened adult training courses.

THEME 8: FINANCING VET

8.1 Improving efficiency, equity, levels of VET funding

The initiatives and latest policy developments in VET funding to improve efficiency, equity and levels of VET funding are as follows:

The school network has been optimized, many schools have been combined into regional centres of excellence, yet, highly specialized schools have been preserved. The number of state-owned VET institutions has decreased from 58 in 2002 to 32 in 2009. This has enabled to pool the resources and improve training provision. The remaining school buildings will all be renovated by 2013, 10 VET institutions were already modernised by 2008.

The new scheme of state funded study places (*riiklik koolitustellimus – RKT*) was first implemented in 2007/2008 study year. The previous funding scheme was based on approving the number of new applicants to a VET institution for the coming school year by curricula groups, giving the school the right to decide the distribution of students between the different curricula in the same curriculum group and types of training, as well as forms of study. Based on the new scheme, study places within the curriculum group are approved for the next 3 years. The school retains the right to decide the specific curriculum, types of training and forms of study, there is an additional right to decide the number and time of admission of the new applicants. At the same time the schools are obligated to fill all the state funded study places during the whole calendar year. Thus, if the school sees it cannot admit enough students in some curricula, it can go to a local basic or secondary school and offer to teach VET courses for their students in the same curriculum group. The measure has increased the flexibility of funding and autonomy of the school.

In 2007, the scheme of state funded study places scheme was used to provide for continuous and retraining of working adults, who can themselves choose what and where to study. This measure was taken to prevent unemployment.

In Estonia, there is one infrastructure for both, IVET and CVET. As the school network has been optimized, the study environment will be upgraded. In 2004-2008 10 VET colleges got major investments, in 2007–2013 3,6 billion kroons (231 million €) will be invested in the remaining schools.

According to the Amendments to Vocational Education Institutions Act (2006) at least fifty per cent of the people on VET school boards have to be social partners, representatives of employers, employees and local governments. Thus, the the circle of people involved in crucial decisions about VET on the local level has been broadened.

The responsibility for the education of the adult population is divided between three ministries. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for training working adults, those who need continuous training or retraining, contemplating career change. For all

these training needs the Ministry has ordered training from VET colleges based on the state funded study places scheme.

The continuous and retraining of the unemployed is under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The training is administered through the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. So far, in the training of the unemployed the trainers and the courses have been selected by public procurement. Since May 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs began applying the scheme of state funded study places for the unemployed. Each recipient can get a training course in the amount of 15 000 kroons per year.

The training needs of the companies are the responsibility of the Ministry of Economics and Communication. The companies can apply to Foundation Enterprise Estonia for the support, whereby 50% of the cost of the training is reimbursed.

In addition, enterprises and individuals invest heavily in continuous training. The relative share between public and private funding is not known, because no data is gathered on training expenditure in the companies and by individuals.

AVERAGE COST OF A STUDENT PLACE IN ESTONIA 2004-2008 (EUR, study costs and school lunch, not including study allowances and investments)					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of students	1,236.6	1,373.9	1,697.1	2,105.4	2,498.1

Source: Planning Division of MER, 2009 (The expenditure of VET institutions includes educational costs plus school lunch costs (the latter was added in September 2006.)

1. Title of policy/ measure Reorganizing the state commissioned education (*riiklik koolitustellimus – RKT*), implemented in 2007/2008 study year.

2. Outline of the policy/measure:

(a) Rationale. The previous funding scheme was based on approving the number of new applicants to a VET institution for the coming school year by curricula groups, giving the school the right to decide the distribution of students between the different curricula and types of training, as well as forms of study. Based on the new scheme, study places within the curriculum group are approved for the next 3 years. The school retains the right to decide the specific curriculum, types of training and forms of study, there is an additional right to decide the number and time of new applicants. At the same time the schools are obligated to fill all the state funded study places during the whole calendar year. Thus, if the school sees it cannot admit enough students in some curricula, it can go to a local basic or secondary school and offer to teach VET courses for their students.

(b) Objectives are to make the funding more flexible, and delegate the responsibility to the school by giving the school more security in planning for the next 3 years.

(c) Target groups – VET institutions.

(d) Status of implementation- implemented and mainstreamed

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

- (a) Level of operation is national.
- (b) Key actors involved are VET institutions and MoER.

The change has been implemented and all the funding to VET happens via these study places. The volume of state commissioned study places for one year was ca 54 million EUR (835 million EEK) in IVET in 2007. The state funded study places for adults and in initial training are written up in one document.

In 2007, the new policies for state funding for training adults were introduced. Based on that, the MoER can finance courses for the working adults in VET schools on the secondary and tertiary levels. State funded study places provide the prerequisite for retraining the working adults and it has had a great impact on the numbers of adults participating in VET courses – it has increased by 6,284 trainees from 2006 to 2007; half of those are trainees on state funded study places. Together there were over 20,000 trainees in continuous training in VET institutions

3. Evaluation:

- (a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available). The described change has been implemented quite recently, so it is too early to speak about evaluating the impact.
- (b) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies. In addition, to IVET, the same system has successfully been used for CVET.

4. Conclusions:

The implemented change makes the funding of VET more flexible and shifts the responsibility to the school management and board to teach the right curricula within the prescribed curricula groups. The school also has the responsibility to keep the allotted study places filled with students.

Something could be done about the bureaucracy. The school, if training the unemployed, should give account to the MoSA; if training IVET, to the MoER; if retraining working adults, to the MoEAC or MoER depending on type of courses. All the ministries require the feedback in different formats. That is an extra and unnecessary burden for the schools.

5. Source, legend

Kalle Toom, MoER

8.2 Use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds

The only project from Lifelong Learning program to support VET is Leonardo da Vinci subprogram, administered by Foundation Archimedes. Please see Theme 3.2 for details.

The budget for Estonian Lifelong Learning Leonardo da Vinci Study visits program

	2007	2008	2009
Budget (mln EEK)	15,6	12,6	16,7

1 EUR=15,6466EEK

Source: Ramia Allev, Archimedes Foundation

Study Visits Projects funded from Lifelong Learning Leonardo subprogram 1998-2009

	2007	2008	2009
VET students	18	14	23
Employees	4	5	10
VET teachers, specialists	22	19	18
Total	44	38	51

Source: Ramia Allev, Archimedes Foundation

8.3 Use of other EU funds

Pre-accession funds to support VET came from Phare. Apprenticeship training was introduced as a pilot project in certain regions through this project in 2002-2006 (2008). The contribution from Phare was 2 million EUR. Other Phare projects concentrated on carrying out VET reform in peripheral regions and developed the regional VET centres in these districts. 4 million EUR was spent in 1995-2001 on two projects, and 4 million EUR in 2001-2004 on two other projects. Thus 10 million EUR was spent in 1995-2004.

In 2004-2006 programming period the ESF accounted for 38,35 million EUR (as of May 2009), for measure 1.1 (An accessible education system which ensures the flexibility, livelihood and lifelong learning of the work force). This does not only include money for VET, but also for other related areas.

As part of the ESF project “Continuous training for working adults”, administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, 37 VET institutions in 15 counties have trained over 24,000 adults in 2007-2009 (I half year). In 2007-2008 39.3 million kroons was spent to train 17792 (16660 finished the course, drop out rate 2.7%). In the first half of 2009, 6513 adults were trained for 21 million kroons. The total cost of the project is over 60 million EEK and over 24,000 adults have been trained. In addition, 1132 adults were trained with the resources from the state budget.

With co-financing from ESF Enterprise Estonia supported training in companies in 2004-2006 programming period till 2007 through 2126 projects and 93.6 million kroons (EEK). In the next programming period (2008-2013) 461 projects have been financed with 50,5 million kroons (as of May 2009).

The volume of resources to be spent from ESF in Estonia during the 2007-2013 programming period on VET is 12,3 million EUR and 3,26 million EUR on adult education which is also mostly carried out in Vet institutions. In addition, VET will

benefit from other ESF programs like “Developing the career counselling system”, “Developing study aids for special needs students”, etc.

167 million EUR (232mil EUR together with state financing) will be spent on ERDF in the next programming period to upgrade the study environment in VET schools. In the previous period 27,32 million EUR of ERDF money was spent for the same purpose.

8.4 Improving VET governance

The greatest improvement in the period under discussion has been the reorganisation of the school network. In 2002, there were 58 state owned VET institutions. The number has been reduced to 32 through very decisive actions and the changes will continue. The activities were regulated by the “Reorganization Plan for State-owned VET institutions for 2005-2008.” The objective of this plan was to increase the quality, accessibility and efficiency by reducing the number of VET institutions. Many smaller institutions will be (and have been) merged into regional VET centres, the so called “centres of excellence” with a wide variety of subjects taught in one building. In addition, there will always be some highly specialized schools (e.g. arts, music, forestry etc). Please see theme 6.2 for details.

As to the involvement of social partners, according to the Amendments to Vocational Education Institutions Act (2006) at least fifty per cent of the people on VET school boards have to be social partners, representatives of employers, employees and local governments. Thus, the circle of people involved in crucial decisions about VET on the local level has been broadened. (see theme 4 for details).

THEME 9: PROGRESS IN MODERNISING EUROPEAN VET SYSTEMS IN THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on development of national VET policies

The priority that VET has enjoyed on EU level has had a great impact on VET policy development in Estonia. Pan-European initiatives and EC recommendations have been taken into consideration in rather large extent in the process of drawing up national strategic documents. For example, in the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System for years 2005-2008, a considerable number of objectives, measures and activities had been initiated from the VET developments at the level of EU. Here are some of the initiatives that have been implemented:

- In May 2005, the Estonian Europass centre was opened at the Estonian Qualification Authority.
- Principles of the system of recognition of prior learning and work experience were developed and added to the Vocational Education Standard in 2009.
- In 2008, a new Professions Act was adopted that established a new 8-level professional qualifications system in Estonia instead of the former 5-level system. The levels of the Estonian Qualifications Framework now correspond to those of the European Qualifications Framework and are linked to them.
- The quality assurance model is described as a part of the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2009-2013 and will be implemented step by step during the period of the Development Plan.
- In the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2009-2013 certain activities are planned to elaborate prognoses of labour needs, to update curricula, to implement recognition of prior learning, to popularise VET. All these activities support development and implementation of European principles.

1. Title of policy/ measure New Professions Act , adopted in May 2008
2. Outline of the policy/measure: (a) Rationale. The new Professions Act came into being to regulate the transition from the 5-level qualification system to the 8-level qualification system, recommended by the EQF, (b) Objectives/measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives). The goal is to develop a holistic, flexible and sustainable competence based qualifications system, which supports lifelong learning and mobility of the people, and enhances the competitiveness of the society. The qualification system will provide a link between the qualifications of the education world and those of the labour market.

(c) Target groups are all educational levels and all educational sectors

(d) Status of implementation. The new Professions act was adopted in 2008. In 2008-2013 the development is accomplished within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF) sponsored programme “Development of the professional qualifications system”.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national.

(b) It is not an isolated policy, but a part of a larger education and employment policy to bring the world of education and the world of work closer together,

(c) Key actors involved in preparing the new professions act were The main institutions involved in preparing the new draft bill are the MoER, the MoSA, the MoEAC, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre, the QA, the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions, Estonian Employers’ Confederation, and Estonian Employees’ Unions’ Confederation.

3. Evaluation:

Estonia is well under way in transition to the 8-level qualification framework. During the transformation period also the 5-level framework stays in use. The requirements of competence, proposed under each qualification level, must adequately correspond to the actual needs of the labour market. When the 8-level qualification framework is accepted across all the sectors, it will improve the comparability between the sectors remarkably.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered (what did not work and why?); measures (planned) to overcome them.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

5. Source, legend

Qualifications Authority, web page

The implementation of the Copenhagen process in Estonia has required adopting quite a few new laws and regulations. The VET Institutions Act has been constantly amended to make the system more flexible and open and attractive to students.

The New Professions Act lays the basis for the Estonian Qualification Framework (EKR) which is highly compatible with EQF.

The principles of prior learning have been incorporated into the Vocational Education Standard.

9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

Experts from MoER have taken an active part in ENQA-VET network as well as in other clusters like VET teachers' sub-cluster within the teachers cluster. From March 2007 till May 2009 there were four peer learning activity groups in four different groups to work out the policy guidelines for VET teachers' continuous training and professionalization. 16 EU countries participated, results of the joint activities and conclusions were drawn up in a document, based on participation in the work groups and overviews of different VET systems.

Experts from the MoER have also participated in the technical expert group for ECVET and working out the principles of ECVET implementation. Experts have also participated in working out the recommendations for EQF, implementing EQF and at present, in EQF Advisory Group.

9.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research and Tartu VET Centre started a partnership project with Georgia to support the VET policy development (including EQF) and reorganization of the VET in the country. Numerous study visits were organized with Georgian experts visiting Estonia and getting acquainted with the Estonian system and Estonian experts visiting Georgia to assess the situation and be involved more directly.

Other former Soviet countries in the Middle-Asia and South Caucasus are also in the focus of cooperation (especially in the field of EQF) but for much more smaller extent compared to Georgia.

As a result, Georgia got a good overview of the Estonian VET system and has been able to put this experience into practise. Since several schools participated in both countries, there are partnerships with schools in both countries. On numerous occasions, teachers went to Georgia to teach.

As part of the cooperation with ETF (European Training Foundation) several experts have gone to candidate countries and other countries to introduce the Estonian VET system and the Copenhagen process in EU countries.

In 2009, Foundation Innove became a partner in the consortium of VETLAM, a project by the Commission to support VET development in Northern Cyprus. Triin Laasi, Director of Haapsalu VET Centre spent 3 weeks there as an expert and helped launch the apprenticeship program.

<p>1. Title of policy/ measure Technical Assistance to support the development and promotion of VET systems, lifelong learning and active labour market measures in the northern part of Cyprus (VETLAM), 2009-2012</p>
<p>2. Outline of the policy/measure:</p> <p>(a) Rationale. The project was started to give technical Assistance to support the development and promotion of VET systems, lifelong learning and active labour market measures in the northern part of Cyprus. The focus is on</p> <p>(b) Objectives. The project is a part of the overall “Human Resources Sector Programme”, which aims at: 1) assisting the Turkish Cypriots in improving the quality and effectiveness of its VET system</p> <p>2) supporting the Turkish Cypriots in building up and implementing a VET reform strategy in partnership with relevant stakeholders and with an aim to improve educational standards among the Turkish Cypriots</p> <p>3) supporting the economic and human resource development among the TCs, including enhancing the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>Besides the above mentioned overall objectives, the purpose of the project is: to establish a system for upgrading skills of employed and unemployed labour force; to improve functioning of employment services; to improve social inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the labour market; to raise public awareness about the importance of the VET education reform process and secure the support and involvement of the population and the business community</p> <p>(c) Target groups: the whole population on the one hand, VET system and the policy makers on the other</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation. The project has started and will continue till 2012.</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</p> <p>(a) Level of operation is international.</p> <p>(b) Key actors involved. The project is implemented by GET (German Education and training GmbH in consortium with Foundation Innove and Project Management Group from Ireland.</p>
<p>3. Evaluation:</p> <p>As a result, the following is expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An operational system for the improvement of qualifications of employed and unemployed people implemented, trainings delivered and system handed over to relevant Turkish Cypriot bodies; • An assessment of the present strengths and weaknesses of the VET system, an accepted policy to redress weaknesses, a head start for the improvement of VET with maximum commitment from all stakeholders, compliant with the ongoing project on quality assurance and curriculum development (Scottish Qualification Authority/MEYAP); • An apprenticeship system

is established and operational, teachers and pupils are trained, respective curricula updated, pilot projects have been finalised and the system handed over to relevant Turkish Cypriot bodies;

- Improved practices at the Employment Service (ES) on supporting job search and innovation in the labour market. The establishment of a state of the art Information and Communications Technology (ICT) system for information and job search at front and head offices of the ES would support job counselling, career counselling and job search/matching for people and provision of actual information to public bodies and other stakeholders. The project should further contribute to the introduction of new labour market policies for more flexibility and innovation in the labour market;
- An operational system of Career Counselling (e.g.: by the ES) and a related system of LLL is at disposal for Turkish Cypriots. This implies a system describing job contents, necessary job qualifications, qualification pathways, curricula and availability of institutions or (re)qualification. Trainings are delivered and the system handed over to relevant Turkish Cypriot bodies;
- A research on the present situation of a number of disadvantaged people (people with distance to the labour market, e.g. long term unemployed people, disadvantaged people) regarding their possibilities on the labour market, a policy proposal on how to redress their disadvantages, experience with concrete measures in pilots and implementation of necessary measures;
- An established platform consisting of all relevant stakeholders to discuss all problems related to labour market and VET, measures to redress problems and implementation policies. This platform could temporarily function as Project Steering Committee for this project and needs a tripartite composure. The activities of the project should lead to a higher prestige of VET in general and better relation with the business community. Bridging the gap between VET education and business community is a key item in this sub-project

4. Source, legend

Inception Report

EUROPEAID/125925/C/SER/CY

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10.3 List of acronyms

AES –	Adult Education Survey
RPL (=VÕTA) –	Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience
CQAF –	Common Quality Assurance Framework
CVET –	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
ECVET –	European Credit Transfer System for VET
EHIS –	<i>Eesti hariduse infosüsteem</i> = Estonian Education Information System

EKEÜ –	Eesti Kutseõppe Edendamise Ühing Association for Advancement of Vocational Education
EKÜ –	VET teachers union
ERDF –	EU Structural Funds
ES –	Statistics Estonia
ESF –	European Social Fund
EQF –	European Qualification Framework
HTM (=MoER)	<i>Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium</i>
IVET –	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LdV –	Leonardo da Vinci programme
MoEAC –	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
MoER –	Ministry of Education and Research
MoSA –	Ministry of Social Affairs
QA –	Estonian Qualification Authority
REKK –	The National Examinations and Qualifications Centre
RT –	<i>Riigi teataja</i> = State Gazette
VEIA –	VET Institutions Act
VET –	Vocational Education and Training
VÕTA (=RPL) –	<i>Varasema õpi- ja töökogemuse arvestamine</i>