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IMPLEMENTING THE 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010' WORK PROGRAMME

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National Contact Person:

Ms Helina Vallaste (helina.vallaste@hm.ee)

Commission Contact Persons:

Ms Luce Pépin (Luce.Pepin@cec.eu.int)

Mr Sebastian Volkers (Sebastian.Volkers@cec.eu.int)

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ESTONIA

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

In developing Estonia's education policy and strategic development plans, the principles, objectives and indicators of both the Lisbon Strategy, initiated by the European Union in 2000, and the Copenhagen and Bologna Processes have been taken into consideration, and are adapted in the light of the situation and development priorities of Estonia's education system.

In 2003, on the initiative of the Estonian Government, the first working version of the conceptual document „Estonia's Success 2014" (ES2014) was completed. Its objective was to create a strategy summarizing national objectives, to shape Estonia into a competitive knowledge-based society, and also to meet the challenges of the Lisbon Process. Launched national debate about developing a knowledge-based society, and the assessment to the Lisbon Process given in November 2004 in the report of the High Level group chaired by Wim Kok, motivated the Prime Minister to form an inter-ministerial working group for developing ES2014 and the following discussion in autumn, 2004. Estonia's Success 2014 helps to shape a vision of enhancing Estonia's competitiveness in the next decade, originating from the growth of economic welfare and employment and people's safety. The objective is to double the real gross domestic product (GDP) by 2014 and increase employment up to 70 % in work-aged population. The centre of the strategy is an Estonian citizen and the challenges he is facing.

The inter-ministerial working group has referred to Estonia's education system as one of the key areas in enhancing the country's competitiveness, and to the necessity for its reorganisation in a way that would support the development of creativity and preserving the ability to study and retrain during the entire active work age. In the document "Estonia's Success 2014", several indicators are specified, with the help of which Estonia's development should be measured while moving towards the long-term objectives, including:

- The achievements of Estonian students in international comparative studies¹ are among the first one-third of the ranking.
- The percentage of employees, who have participated in in-service training courses in companies that organised the courses, is at least 40 %.
- The ratio of people graduating from the fields of science and technology in higher education is of European Union's average level².
- 20 % of the students of lower and upper secondary level are included in hobby education of Science and Technology.
- All Estonian Doctoral candidates, 5 % of Master's candidates and 3 % first level students³ receive a grant for at least one semester to study at a foreign university.

¹ TIMSS (*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*) – students' achievements in Mathematics and Science are assessed in form 4 and 8, and information about study programme collected, associating the results with the content and processes of school Mathematics and Science. PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*) – the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students is assessed in the end of compulsory education and an evaluation is given to competence in everyday life, which is of vital importance after leaving school.

² according to ISCED-5

³ Grant from the European Union's mobility programme

- There are 4000 foreign students in Estonia's institutions of higher education (2000 of them as exchange students). In Doctoral study, the ratio of foreigners is 10 %, and 3 % of full faculty members are foreigners.
- The participation of 25-64-year-olds in adult education is at least 12.5 %.

“Estonia's Success 2014“ is an open document, which can be renewed in every few years. It is a basis for budget and sectoral strategies and the annual work schedules of the Government of the Republic, in which the specific activities and amounts of financing are specified. Estonia's contribution to the Lisbon Process is to create its own specific plan of action, which would obtain its viability in the course of a social debate.

In 2004, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), the preparation of several sectoral strategies began: Development plan of the general education system, Higher education strategy for the years 2005-2015, Research and development strategy for the years 2006-2010, Development plan of the vocational education system 2005-2008 (adopted by the Government on 14th July 2005), Lifelong learning strategy 2005-2008 (adopted by the Government on 3rd November 2005), Youth Policy and Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, Development plan for implementing information and communication technology in general education 2006-2010. In all these documents the principles, objectives and indicators of the Lisbon Strategy are taken into consideration, adapting them according to the situation and the development priorities of the respective field.

In shaping the development plan of the vocational education system, the compatibility with Copenhagen Declaration and Maastricht communiqué is taken into account: it is planned to develop and harmonise the professional qualifications system with the respective systems of the EU in 2005 to 2006; establish the national reference point for qualifications and the Europass Centre in 2005; develop and implement the quality assuring system of vocational education in 2006; establish the credit point system in 2006; implement the system that takes into consideration previous learning and professional experience in 2007.

The principles of the Bologna Declaration were implemented quickly in Estonia. The new system of higher education levels was adopted in the academic year of 2002/03 after amending the Universities Act and other acts related to it in Parliament in June, 2002. At the same time, the form of a common diploma supplement was implemented. Legal preparations have been made for the full functioning of the principle of mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications, which is the prerequisite for implementing the free movement of persons in the European Union. Estonia has adopted the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act, which entered into force on January 1, 2001.

In making education decisions, the dataset of international comparative studies (especially OECD studies) has become more important over the years. In 2004, Estonia joined PISA-comparative study, from 2005 it is planned to participate in OECD teacher study "Survey of Teachers, Teaching and Learning"

Estonia has not implemented a separate mechanism in the education field for implementing the objectives and measuring the results given in the Education and Training 2010 programme. It has been a great pleasure to see that the fields that are most important for Estonia have been given priority also in Europe, and that the objectives originating from our own needs coincide largely with the objectives of the Lisbon

Strategy. In large extent also the indicators agreed on in national development plans and in the European Union coincide.

2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFECTIVELY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS

2.1. National priorities for reform and investment

2.1.1. National priorities concerning the reforms

The common objectives of the reforms carried out and planned in every education level are higher quality of education, better accessibility and more effective use of resources. The stresses vary in fields, taking into account the changes already carried out and actual problems.

In planning all the reforms, in the next years we have to consider the inevitability caused for education system and labour market (eventually for the entire state) by the drastic decrease in the number of children. By the academic year of 2008/2009, the number of pupils in general education schools will decrease by 30 %, which will directly affect the school network, state order of teacher training, teachers' need for continuing education and retraining, all the higher education system and from there on, the labour market.

There are several reforms carried out in Estonia in 2004 and 2005, which will be closely reflected in following chapters. This chapter marks the relevant development priorities by education levels and concentrates mainly on changes related to financing and more effective use of resources.

The objective of developing the general education system is to create possibilities and conditions for all learners for acquiring education, which enables to continue studies and to live a dignified life. Therefore, the main development priorities are:

1. Implement organising measures that promote individual approach and the development of each student, including the development of the student with special needs.
2. Modernise teacher education.
3. In developing the national curriculum, focus more on the basic competencies and implementation of knowledge, decreasing the volume of subject syllabuses and increasing their mutual integration, increasing the schools' options.
4. De-centralise management, give the schools a bigger right in making decisions and responsibility.
5. Renew the state supervision system, which will be based on the harmony of school's self-evaluation and external evaluation.
6. Change the schools' financing system more transparent with the implementation of a new capitation fee model.

In vocational education, there are 3 main objectives set for the years of 2005 to 2008:

1. Vocational education (initial education as well as continuing education and retraining) corresponds to the needs of the development of Estonian economy and the labour market.
2. Increase in the quality of vocational education brings along the increase in vocational education's reputation, increase in the students' numbers and the successful implementation of graduates.
3. Vocational education system uses the resources effectively, functions in cooperation with other education types and levels, and guarantees the availability of the vocational education to all who are interested in it.

In higher education, the following strategic objectives are being set until 2013:

1. Guarantee the volume of higher education which would correspond to state's demand for higher education, matching the students' preferences with the society's need.
2. Guarantee higher education's quality in a comparable level with the Nordic Countries and the European Union.
3. Participate as an equal partner in regional and trans-European academic cooperation.
4. Satisfy the need of Estonian society for highly qualified workforce, taking into consideration Estonian economy's integration with the economy of the Nordic countries, developing foremost the study of Natural and Exact Sciences and Technology.
5. Ensure the continuation and higher education in Estonian and development in Europe's open education space.
6. Guarantee the level of financing comparable to the OECD average per student, preserving the availability to higher education in a comparable volume with OECD countries.

2.1.2. An objective to invest more and more efficiently as a key factor in education reforms

Increase of financing education expenditure from the budget of public sector has continuously been a priority in Estonia. Financing in absolute figures has been increasing (Figure 1). As a weight from GDP, the financing has increased in the past 5 years from 5.6 % GDP to 5.8 % GDP in 2003 and forecast to 6,3 in 2004.

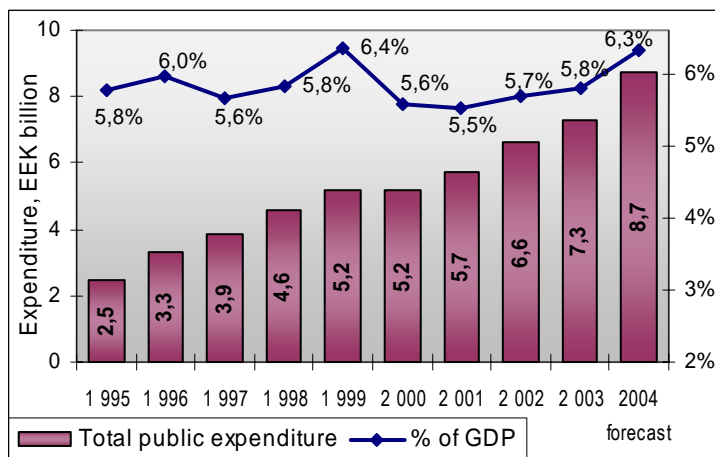


Figure 1. *Total public expenditure on education in billions of Estonian kroons and as % of GDP*

Estonia is a small country and thus the maintenance of the education system is relatively more expensive than in big countries. As a post-soviet inheritance, there are schoolhouses that are crumbling and ineffective by planning. Demographic situation means a continuing decrease in the number of students. All these factors have caused a relatively bigger resource requirement than made possible by the budget of Estonia's public sector and standard of living. Because of the significant limitation of resources, in most of the ongoing reforms the most important question is the more effective use of resources.

In vocational education, regulation of the school network has been carried out since 2001. From the 59 state's vocational education institutions in the administration area of Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) in 2000, there now remain only 44. Schools' mergers, state schools' transfer to municipal ownership and closing down schools (with students' transfer) have taken place. On the basis of a thorough survey⁴ carried out in the academic year of 2003/04, the Vocational Education Institutions' Network Development Plan 2005-2008 was drawn up, which the Government approved in February 2005. The main objective of reorganisation is to guarantee the optimal use of resources and an increase in study quality – vocational education will be concentrated into bigger regional centres (see Ch. 5). In carrying out the reforms, the problem has been an opposition to reorganisation of several schools that are important from the aspect of regional policy, although their study quality and development capacity has been lower than in other schools with similar study programmes.

Envisaged changes in financing the vocational education include better consideration of the expense of vocational education in different study programme groups, and efforts to ensure, compared to general education, 1.5 time difference in the cost of student places (currently, the costs of student places are practically equal and they don't take into consideration the higher capital intensity of vocational education and higher operating costs).

One important part of the ongoing general education reform is the changing of the financing system. The current coefficient system for local governments, used for distributing the funds of state budget, will be improved or replaced, in order to guarantee better accessibility and quality of education and clarity in decision-making power between the state and local governments. For students with special needs, much higher capitation fee factors will be set, which guarantee the schools' interest to integrate them to a regular school. A new financing model is under consideration.⁵

The trend of higher education spreading to wide masses follows Europe's general trends and expenses in higher education have increased faster than the growth in state's financing. Estonia is characterised by large percentage of private higher education (see

⁴ Organization of vocational education institution network according to the regional specialization. Praxis Centre for Policy Studies, 2003.

⁵ Financing consists of capitation fee and basic funding. Capitation fee has to guarantee managing and investment capacity of an effective model school. Capitation fee is calculated based on the school and allocated to the manager of the school, who decides the distribution of allocated means between schools. Both state and local government finance capitation fee. When necessary, basic funding is added to the capitation fee, which is designed for ensuring a regionally optimal school network.

also pt. 2.2.3). When planning the increase of financing, the objective is set to increasing the contribution of the private sector. When planning the expenses of higher education, the objective is set to achieve the average relative financing level of OECD countries by 2013 in public and private financing sum per one student, retaining also the availability to higher education in a volume comparable to OECD countries.

As a part of higher education strategy different types of financing models are analysed, including the possibilities of implementing a system based on study loan and education allowance in Estonia. The objective is to increase social mobility, enabling the availability of higher education to all capable young people.

In 2002, Estonia began to introduce the output-based financing model, where the state orders graduates from different higher education levels and finances higher education based on their number. Taking into consideration the declining trend of population and the objectives of lifelong learning, the roles and tasks of institutions of higher education will change in the near future. To ensure sustainable development, it is purposeful to change over to long-term and more flexible agreements.

EU financing has been a relevant factor in carrying out vocational education reforms. From the means of ERDF measure 4.3 it is planned to modernise and develop in the first programming period (2004 to 2006) study bases of 10 vocational education institutions, total of 377 million kroons. With the means of ESF measure 1.1 it is planned to develop the national study programmes of vocational education, e-study by the consortium of e-Vocational school, quality management in schools, quality assurance system, develop and open new study programmes, and much more.

In higher education sector, from the means of ERDF measure 4.3, the infrastructure and the development of material study base of higher education institutions providing professional higher education has been subsidised. With the means of ESF measure 1.1, first projects directed to increase of study and research quality and innovation are subsidised, including the implementation of top specialists in study and research.

2.2. Extent of correlation between Member States priority areas, and the common European objectives

2.2.1. Reforms in the structure of education institutions

In addition to relevant reforms described in point 2.1, other several relevant structural changes are carried out or are planned to take place in near future.

In 2005, state supervision system of educational institutions is planned to be reorganised, establishing educational institution's internal evaluation and external evaluation. The objective for the changes is to create a common, transparent evaluation system of educational institutions which is based on clear criteria and where the external evaluation based on internal evaluation and national and supervisory control support the quality and legitimate activity of educational institutions. Information related to the activity of educational institution will be made available to the public. Innovations bring along the growth of evaluation quality and saving of resources. Most of the evaluation can be carried out by the schools and thus the number of necessary inspectors will decrease.

In financing the investments of general education schools, from 2005 there functions a system where the school may take a loan from Riigi Kinnisvara AS to quickly tidy the

school buildings. For loan payments, an investment component is added to the capitation fee (see pt. 2.1.2.).

In Estonia, the problem is that small upper secondary schools are uneven in study quality and can not provide options for the students. For reorganising the school network, including finding possible options for separating the basic school and upper secondary school, county pilot projects are carried out.

For children from least privileged families and those with a difficult social background, a boarding school facilities programme was introduced in 2002, to guarantee good study and living conditions for them during the week. In 2004, boarding school facilities places financed by the state were distributed to 0.2% of basic school students. Free school lunch is guaranteed for all students in forms 1 to 4, and it is intended to expand to the entire basic school in autumn, 2005, and from 2006 to students of vocational education institutions.

In higher education, the organisation of educational institutions network is carried out, which had expanded over the optimal level in 1990's (in 1990 there were 6 institutions providing higher education, in 2004 it was possible to acquire higher education in 47 educational institutions, including 12 universities, 25 institutions of professional higher education and 10 vocational education institutions). Already in 2003, in Private Schools Act stricter requirements (incl. equity capital requirements) for opening and managing a university or an institution of professional higher education entered into force and because of that the merger processes have begun. Also, stricter quality requirements are implemented (see chapter 4).

2.2.2. Development of incentives to invest more in education and training. Enhancing the attractiveness of the education system.

In Estonia, the exemption from income tax covers the study and training costs and interests of study loans of a natural person. With the tax system, the employers are motivated to invest in employees' training – professional training financed by employer is not considered as fringe benefit. At the same time, employee's formal education acquired within the adult education system and informal education financed by the employer is considered as fringe benefit.

According to the Value Added Tax Act, value added tax is not charged on pre-school, basic school, secondary school or higher education training, teaching private lessons relate to general education and other training, except training provided by a company or a self-employed person.

In Estonia, the strategic objective is that motivated and competent teachers would work at schools. The means of wages of teachers in state budget have been increased in the past few years in average by 12% a year, but despite of that the average wages of teachers remains on the level of Estonia's average wages. Although the total financing of general education is proportionally higher when compared to other countries, the average wages are caused by the big number of small schools and small ratio of students/teachers. (Estonia's average is 13.7; OECD's average in 2002, 16.6 in primary school and 13.6 in basic school). Similar is the situation in vocational education, where the wages level is partly even lower than in general education, while the student/teacher ration is 16. The Ministry of Education and Research has begun with reforms in organising the school network and analysing the teachers' working time, work load and duties. It is suggested to give a bigger right of decision to the school managers to differentiate the duties and

wages. To support young teachers and increasing their professional security, as of April, 2004 a professional year is introduced, which is financed from state budget and which is carried out in the cooperation of mentors and universities. To stimulate good teachers, they are honoured with the title 'Teacher of the Year', every year on Independence Day, many teachers are nominated for national awards. For teachers' professional development, the state budget prescribes 3 % of salary funds for their in-service training. (On ensuring the quality of teacher education, see also pt. 3.2.)

2.2.3. Increasing private investment

There is no overview of the amount of private financing in the education system, because up to now the statistics of private education expenditure has not been collected. In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Research will start, in cooperation with the Statistical Office, the development of the methodology and foundations of private education expenditure, and by the end of the year the first data is intended to be collected.

In the case of higher education, a discussion about introducing the financing model based on tuition fee and education allowance has begun. Force to acquire higher education is so intense that the state cannot provide student places financed by state for all applicants, although the percentage of student places financed by the state by age group has increased by years. In the academic year of 2004/2005, 53 % of students in Estonia pay for their educational expenses by themselves in full, i.e. without state grant.

In adult training, private financing is predominant – for the training, the person usually pays for himself or it is done by his employer. In the next few years, it is intended to develop the financing scheme of adult education and determine the responsibility of state, local governments, employers and students in study financing.

2.3. Monitoring and evaluation of education policies

In planning Estonia's education policy demographic trends are constantly observed, as the decline in the number of children has a significant effect on education policy. The MoER is introducing a preventive analysis of the effects of policies to analyse for each legislative measure, its risks and the expected effects. Till now, little attention has been paid to the risks.

To achieve an adequate and consistent monitoring data, web-based Educational Data System was implemented in 2005, which comprises the register of educational institutions, students, education licences, study programmes and teachers.

MoER has started the development of the common system of education indicators, which also covers EU indicators. Objectives and indicators for measuring them are set 4 years in advance in state budget process, objective indicators are a natural part of all field development plans.

More and more attention is being paid to surveys ordered by the MoER, which have to become the basis of all relevant educational decisions. Latest important surveys are related to the development of vocational educational institutions and general educational schools, and teaching. The Ministry of Education and Research has decided to contribute more than before to international comparative investigations. A new department – Analysis Department – has been created in the Ministry to coordinate surveys and analyses.

3. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1. Inclusion of the principles of lifelong learning in strategic documents

3.1.1. Current situation in strategy development

In Estonia, there is developed the Lifelong learning strategy, which covers lifelong learning and its importance, but which stress is on learning after having acquired initial education in formal education system, adult learning. Strategy was approved by the Government of the Republic on 3rd November 2005. Additionally, the principle of lifelong learning is focused on in every pending and completed sectoral development plan (See Ch. 1), where different objectives and measures are planned to provide the availability of education to everyone, including people with educational special needs and people in socio-economic difficulties, support and counselling systems. Special attention is paid to preparing skilled workers in vocational education who would meet the demand of the enterprises, options for adult continuing education and retraining both in vocational education and higher education, as well as to adult non-formal education. In all levels of formal education, also outside formal education system, much attention is paid to the quality of education and training, quality assuring systems are being developed. To enable the adults to acquire formal education, educational institutions (upper secondary schools, vocational educational institutions, institutions of higher educations) introduced very flexible forms of study, including e-study.

The options of lifelong learning for everyone is being covered in several strategies and development plans created on the initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research (Strategy for providing child rights, Activity plan of social involvement from 2004 to 2006; Protection of the rights of disabled people, Strategy o involvement and participation from 2006 to 2010 and the Estonian activity plan for UNESCO programme *Education for All*).

Briefly and in picture, the message of lifelong learning is shown in the Estonian Education tree (See Annex I), which was drawn up on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research in 2004. The objective of creating the education tree was to give a visual picture of the options in moving in Estonian education system. At the same time, the education tree gives an overview of the field strategies and developments of the Ministry of Education and Research, their mutual links and options opening to students upon their implementation. The education tree stresses the principle – there are no dead ends in Estonia’s education system, people can move in different ways, head to the labour market and return again to the education system, people have a chance to continue their education in every aspect of their life – even when they have not completed acquiring formal education in different reasons.

As there are several options, the decision making has to be supported by counselling network. Systems in development supporting participation in lifelong learning and competing in the labour market: taking into consideration previous learning and professional experience (PLPE), professional qualifications system.

3.1.2 Objectives and priorities set in lifelong learning strategy

The general objective of *Lifelong learning strategy* from 2005 to 2008 is to increase the options and motivation of adult population to participate in formal, non-formal and

informal learning activity, with the purpose to improve their knowledge and skills according to the needs of themselves, citizenry, society and labour market, increasing the percentage of people participating in training among 25 to 64 year-olds to 10 % by 2008⁶.

The strategy covers relevant objectives, measures and resources for Estonia to increase the learning motivation of all target groups, especially of those whose accessibility to learning possibilities is hindered because of money, time, interest or another reason; increase Estonia's and its inhabitants' competitiveness in the world; achieve sustainable economic growth; increase each individual's ability to success and readiness for coping in life; strengthen the entire population's social integration and shaping of citizenry and increase the inhabitants' quality of life. At the same time, the strategy is directed at achieving the strategic objectives in education and training – guaranteeing quality, accessibility and openness – set by the European Union's Council of the Ministers of Education for 2010.

The strategy establishes 9 main objectives, all supplied with measures and specific plan of action:

1. Lifelong learning options have been provided to all adults according to aptitude and needs.
2. The financing system of adult education is transparent and enables all the adults to access the training.
3. Non-Estonian speaking adults know enough Estonian to cope in society and professional life, if they wish, they have an option to learn mother tongue and engage in national culture.
4. The system for providing adult training quality has been developed, and information about study quality is provided to student/person ordering the training.
5. The system of notifying of study and training options and options to receive career services has been provided to adults.
6. Employees' professional qualifications system is being developed, which is the prerequisite for providing lifelong learning system and free movement of workforce.
7. In developing adult education and shaping the policy, both public, private and third sector institutions are involved.
8. In the field of adult education, there exist adequate statistics, field surveys are carried out methodically and systematically, which enable to make generalisations and forecasts for developing the field.
9. The system of taking into consideration previous learning and professional experience (PLPE) is implemented in all fields and levels of study.

3.2. Priority reforms, which support the implementation of the idea of lifelong learning

In planning strategic documents and developments, in Estonia it is considered important to involve social partners and relying on broad consensus base. Therefore, the representatives of social partners from representing organisations of employers and employees, professional associations, local governments and Parliament, schools,

⁶ In 2004 - 6,7% (Eurostat)

Ministries and other concerned governmental authorities are involved in planning the development activities. A lot of attention is paid to notifying different audiences of planned innovations to in conferences, discussions and other numerous meetings. For solving problems related to adult education, an advisory body of the Government of the Republic has been established – the Council of Adult Education.

In developing the national study programme, in addition to knowledge, skills and values necessary for continuing the studies, acquiring basic skills and values is taken into consideration more than before, which is necessary for constant learning and dignified coping in life. Stress is on students' active participation, formation of learning skills and social competences, implementation of knowledge.

From 2003, the implementation of system for PLPE is regulated in Estonia nationally by the Universities Act and Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act. All educational institutions providing higher education had to develop the order of PLPE and implement it from September 1, 2004. These are mainly intra-educational institution regulations. With co-financing by the ESF, it is planned to develop the system, which has to be transparent, open, implemented in all forms and levels of study, enable to evaluate both informal learning and work experience, mutually recognised and be based on guaranteeing the quality. Due to this, it is possible to take into consideration the knowledge/skills acquired in informal education training centre, by self-learning, working or in another alternative way both in entering the formal educational system and competing on the labour market.

Lifelong learning is also promoted by professional qualifications system, where receiving the qualification level certificate is not so much related to possessing formal education but actual knowledge, skills and acquired experiences.

The financing system of adult education is being developed, where the responsibility of state, local government bodies, employers and employees and students is specified in financing the study. Financing system has to provide accessibility to training to all target groups.

Training quality system is being reviewed, this covers the reorganisation of current system of education licences, introducing de-centralised self-evaluation system and training adult training providers.

The creation of a generalised vocational and career counselling system, which would provide relevant and up-to-date information to both youngsters and adults facilitating the access to education and promoting motivation to study, is under discussion. The regional information and counselling centres, financed by the Ministry of Education and Research, are focused on the young, the employment agencies-on the unemployed. With co-financing of ESF, it is planned to create an integrated counselling system, which would cover the counselling in the case of learning difficulties, as well as psychological, vocational and career counselling.

Flexible possibilities for studying

Different and flexible possibilities for studying and acquisition of education offer very many educational institutions. Furthermore gains speed e-study that creates better study opportunity for the persons with special needs and at the same time contributes to studying irrespective of location of the student. In order to implement ICT in general education, is completed a development plan for years 2006-2008 that applies to all students and teachers access to ICT on necessary level to ensure successful study. There

are published e-study materials highly evaluated by the teachers and students, is given support for regulation of teaching and evaluation system for heads of schools and teachers and is implemented web-oriented study. The program is implemented under the leadership of private foundation involving in addition to state funding also human and financial resources of schools, local governments, private structures and international organizations.

E-study is an increasingly popular and widespread form of distance study also in vocational, adult and higher education. The respective initiative of universities is called e-university. Also vocational schools have started to create a similar network. In February 2005 was signed memorandum of e-VET. Funds for realization of e-VET have been applied from ESF.

In adult study very many private training providers offer computer training to adults for which usually pay the persons themselves or their employers. In 2002 was started a computer project „Look in the world” in co-operation between private and public sector. In 2002-2004 in the course of the project „Look in the world” were trained 102,697 people. In 2006 the national computer study programme should be started for people over the age of 45. According to the original plans ESF funds are used for offering the computer training, realistic amount of people who could be trained during the project is ca 15 thousand.

Teachers' training and professional qualification system

The competence of teachers and professors has become a key question of the quality of education. In Estonia, in 2004 was completed the project on Teachers' training development plan which firstly defines expectations of teachers in the changing society and describes competencies required for obtaining the teacher's licence according to which the present content of teacher education should be revised. The national system of teacher education must create opportunities for acquisition of these competencies. Development needs of today spring from the problems of teacher education and related areas.

Integrated teaching of children with different abilities and interests, of different nationality or cultural background and learners with special needs; creation of learning environments that support learners' individual development; management and analysis of learning processes; integration of different subjects and fields; becoming familiar with the means of modern information and communication technology; teamwork; communication with parents and representatives of community; skills of self-analysis and readiness for lifelong learning – all this must be provided by teachers' initial and in-service education and the induction year applied in 2004.

According to the project of the development plan, in Estonia will be established a single professional qualifications system for teachers by means of which teachers' training and evaluation of teachers' work will be brought to a uniform basis proceeding from the competence of the teacher. Vocational skills of the teachers will be specified in the professional standard which will form basis for renewing of study programmes as well as for award of teacher's qualification and for the professional development throughout the career. For supporting of a young teacher on the first working year and for better adaptation in the school organization a professional year is under implementation which will be carried out in co-operation with Mentors and Universities.

In order to guarantee quality in adult education, more attention is paid to develop the adult training providers' qualification system and the training of trainers. For that reason Professional Standard of Adult Training Providers was adopted in 2003. The profession of an adult training provider is a partial qualification (the main qualification is the profession or occupation of the training provider, which has been acquired in a higher educational institution or a vocational educational institution through full-time studies or in-service training). The qualification can be applied for by anyone who is engaged in training or teaching adults.

Flexible forms of study for the persons with special needs

For establishment of opportunities to study for the persons with special needs was planned to extend the use of flexible forms of study, as a general principle, to create them a suitable teaching environment, and create and finance necessary support service (see also above). There is a tendency to involve more students with special needs in so called ordinary schools. According to the Lifelong learning strategy social guarantees are ensured to the persons acquiring basic education and secondary education irrespective of the form of study or age and will be extended training of unemployed in the formal educational system. As an active measure of labour market, the proportion of training of unemployed will be increased, involving in the process educational institutions and employers co-operatively working together. In informal educational training, special attention is paid to risk groups and will be strived for ensuring gender equality with regard to the participants in training (more male students will be involved). In addition to state funding, resources of thrust funds will be included in order to ensure wider availability of informal education and to enable free or cheap vocational training for the least privileged groups (including employed low-paid persons). Special attention shall be paid to people over middle age exposed to a possible exclusion from the labour market, and young parents who need refreshment of both basic skills (languages, ICT) as well as professional knowledge and skills. With support from ESF resources as well as the other programmes wider access to lifelong learning is ensured both to less competitive employed and unemployed persons as well as older persons.

3.3 Strategy in the light of objectives and trends of the EU

Several EU documents that set trends of the system of lifelong learning for the recent years have been taken into account in planning for developments in Estonia. In planning for its developments Estonia has reckoned with trans-European context and taken into consideration content of the programmes and declarations agreed on the level of the European Union. The main interfaces with the program Education and training 2010 and Copenhagen declaration: enhancement of partnership relations between different parties; more active involvement of the parties of labour market in planning of education and training processes; the need for assessment of earlier learning and working experiences; establishment of a more flexible access to the risk groups; development of qualification system; implementation of EUROPASS; quality assurance; primary and in-service training of teachers and training providers; more efficient financing; creating opportunities for the return to education system to those who have broken off the road to education; development of counselling system; paying attention to learning of foreign languages; contributing to the use of ICT.

As referred to earlier, indicators of Lisbon process have been taken into consideration and adapted in the domains' strategies. One of the measures of the strategy of lifelong learning is linked to the goal set in Lisbon strategy – increase of proportion of adult

education to 12.5 % by 2010. In Estonia, according to Eurostat labour market research data 6.7 % participated in adult education in 2004, the aim is to increase the indicator to 10 % by 2008.

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1. The main political perspectives in reforming higher education

The main legislative changes regarding the implementation of the Bologna process (transfer to the two-cycle system, issuing the Diploma Supplement, adopting the accreditation system, ratifying the Lisbon Convention, using a cumulative calculation of credit points) are already implemented in Estonia. Estonia adopted *the bachelor-master* degree system in 2002.

Implementation of the reform of curricula and changes promoting mobility of students and professors contributes to achievement of the goal to create in Estonia, as a part of Europe's higher education area, an attractive and internationally competitive training and research environment.

Both at institutional and national level, measures for promoting internationalization of higher education are under development. Until mid-2005 Estonia is preparing higher education strategy for years 2005-2015 and the strategy of the internationalization of higher education. Resources are directed and activities are planned for promotion of mobility of professors and top-specialists, as well as curricula in English language and modules of curricula are prepared in order to increase access to higher education in Estonia.

By the end of 2005, in the interests of concentration of resources and international co-operation, shall be designed a legal environment that will enable to open common curricula and common diploma. Such issues as whether and how to support foreign students from national funds to complete studies in Estonia in Master's and Doctor's study, are also under discussion.

As a result of the actions taken by universities themselves, the number of foreign students has increased, including the interest of young people from non-European Union countries to study in Estonia. Since 2004 the state, by means of Structural Funds of the EU, supports activities that assist in creating high-quality study and research environment.

MoER is currently at the stage of preparing a new initiative – the launch of doctoral schools that function as a consortium to concentrate resources between different higher education and research institutions within Estonia, linking foreign institutions and industry. The aim is to increase the efficiency of PhD training and lower the age of PhD graduates. At the same time doctoral schools would supplement Doctor's study with human and financial resources and would provide the researches with practical involvement in the needs of economy.

Similarly to the common goal of the EU, Estonia has set an objective to grow the number of the students studying in the areas of science and technology. Since 2002 creation of student places in the areas of nature and exact sciences and technology has been promoted through national funding. From the student places funded from the state

budget, in the 2004/05 admission, two areas of studies, producing new generation of engineers and scientists, form 42 % in total.

In order to solve the problem of the lack of specialists in the areas of science and technology, first and foremost, the measures for increasing the popularity of these professions has to be taken, including among the young people, already learning in the primary school.

The objective of developing general study preferences is to contribute primarily to influencing attitudes in the society, improving access to informal education supporting technology and creativity, analysis of developments of labour markets and informing and consulting persons and institutions of higher education on the basis of this information.

It is widely acknowledged that the key to internationalization processes is quality in all its different aspects. Activities after 2003 have mostly been directed towards strengthening the quality assurance system. For the coming years, the action plan connected with the Bologna Process includes enforcing quality management principles on an institutional level along with further work on the better comparability of standards, criteria and procedures for quality assurance. The system of assessment of quality of Estonian higher education constitutes a continuous process consisting of four parts – self-analysis of the higher education institution (faculties or departments), a foreign expert appraisal, an autonomous body called the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (HEQAC) that makes decisions regarding study programmes and the institutional accreditation of educational institutions, and self-improvement of higher education institutions.

In 2004 the analysis of the current accreditation system was commissioned from the international expert team lead by the President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and financed by the Ministry of Education and Research. As a result of the analysis, the proposals for improvement of the present system that comprise, for example, transition from accreditation of curricula, in a narrow sense, to institutional accreditation and improvement of the process of opening new curricula and issuing education licences.

In Estonia more has to be contributed and attention paid to dissemination of information to the students, employers and other interest groups as regards to the quality of the higher education.

Taking into consideration the relatively high autonomy of Estonian universities, the initiatives of the universities themselves besides the national measures, have an important place in observing the quality requirements.

As an example, Estonian Rectors' Conference (for public universities) is developing a handbook on the quality of university education, supported by the MER. The working group has identified 15 quality criteria that cover various aspects of an university management, e.g. using curricula based on learning outcomes, the number of graduates in PhD and Master Programmes, investment rate and the number of computers per student, collecting feedback from employers and alumni; mobility of students and teaching personnel, etc. Information regarding all this data will be published and distributed to the general public in Estonia and internationally. The Handbook introduces the basic principles of quality management for a university management, including practical suggestions and examples of regulating curricula, administrative processes, study

environment and study processes, as well as specifying the role of the administrative and support structure. The handbook should be ready in 2005.

Valuing a quality culture has become a major driving force for the Estonian universities and as an example of bottom-up initiative universities have worked on the Quality Assurance Pact. The Pact establishes requirements for curricula, academic posts and academic degrees and was adopted by all public universities in 2003 (two private universities joined the agreement in 2004). In accordance with the Pact, the universities harmonize quality requirements in the three indicated subsections and applied the requirements in line with the provisions of the Pact in all the internal quality assurance documents as of the start of the academic year 2004/05. The Pact includes an obligation to assess every year the performance of the agreement in the previous academic year, and as such it is done first time on 2005 by the special task force nominated by the rectors. In 2005, rectors of the institutions of professional higher education started working out the similar quality agreement.

In order to implement the principle of lifelong learning a number of institutions of higher education have formed structures of “open universities” in which the persons not having studies as their main activities can pass both formal education and in-service training programs. The organisation of studies in the open structures is flexible, the speed of study is not limited and this makes studies possible along with family life and work duties. Quite a substantial number of Estonian students are actually implementing the LLL paths – in the 2003/04 academic year nearly 20% of students were of the age of 30 or over. These people generally took advantage of higher education via the open university structures.

It has to be acknowledged that governmental support favours students in the age group who continue studying immediately after obtaining the secondary education diploma. Estonia lacks a uniform system of registering previous studies and work experience but the matter has become topical and essential on both the level of legislation and the activities of institutions of higher education. The amendments made to the Universities Act and the Professional Higher Education Act in 2003 bound higher education institutions to develop rules and procedures for registering previous studies and work experience by 1 September 2004. In the case of representatives of some selected specialties, such as teachers, universities already had this obligation for the academic year 2003/04.

It is likely, that the principle which takes into account the earlier experiences will find gradual introduction, depending on the readiness of an area to go over to more flexible qualification assessment and recognition system. Thereat, more important issues are maintenance of quality standards and existence of necessary information systems and registers.

In 2005 the measures that will create better access conditions and possibilities for the persons working and planning to learn in the area of technology and production, shall be reviewed with the objective of partially bringing the persons who have suspended the studies back to the study environment.

Co-operation between institutions of higher education and enterprises goes smoothly in the field of professional higher education where there are mainly specialised educational institutions.

It is under discussion to direct co-operation between universities and undertakings in the recent years through more clear performance agreements that could describe the mission of each university and objective of activities as well as tasks upon development of broad group of studies.

4.2. Future trends of the higher education reform

There are two key factors Estonia ultimately needs to face in the very near future – the downward demographic trend (during 2003-2016 the number of potential students in Estonia will be reduced by almost 60 %) and the necessity to actively take part in the processes of designing the European Research Area and European Higher Education Area. Ultimately, the processes for the common European areas require an increase in the funding level for R&D as well as for higher education.

Developments of the single European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area as well as evaluation of the potential of Estonia refer to the need to concentrate resources and to increase specialization among institutions of higher education that would enable to develop them into competitive research and higher education units at least in specific areas.

These targets will not be easy to meet as the current rate of investment into the higher education sector in Estonia is already relatively high (3 % out of the public sector budget was devoted to higher education expenses in 2004). At the same time it has to be considered that the funding level in PPP⁷ per student is not competitive internationally and seriously hinders further developments. The government strategy for R&D development aims to increase the costs from GDP from 0.83 % (data from 2004) to 1.5 % by 2006. The challenging issue under these processes is to increase the funding role of the private sector, making it financially responsible on equal grounds with the public sector. The key area in both higher education and R&D funding is the improvement of infrastructure for making it attractive for high level foreign specialists, and participating on equal grounds in international mobility schemes.

Among the other processes, which will dominate the higher education agenda for the coming years, is the enforcement of stricter rules and criteria for private institutions. It is predictable that many of the current higher education institutions will cease their activities, and it will be highly important to manage these inevitable processes favourably for students. For MER it means, above all, intensifying efforts to make the general public aware of the students' rights and risks. On a more positive side, transfer to the 3-year contracts with universities and professional higher education institutions in regards to the state funding will bring more stability to the higher education system. The idea has been discussed in the Governmental Special Task Force and has been widely supported.

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

⁷ Purchasing power parity

5.1. The main political trends in reforming vocational education

The main trends in reforming vocational education are connected with access and flexibility as well as quality of study. With respect to flexibility and access, the existing types of vocational training (secondary vocational education on the basis of basic education and secondary vocational education on the basis of secondary education) do not involve all target groups. Opportunities to acquire vocational education for the persons without basic education (older than compulsory school attendance age, e.g. 17 years and older) and opportunity to acquire vocational education on the basis of basic education without secondary education will therefore be provided. In order to enhance opportunities of the young people who after basic education had chosen vocational education to continue his/her studies at the level of higher education, an opportunity will be provided for those who acquired vocational education to improve his/her knowledge in general subjects during one additional year and to pass state final examinations (it is possible to pass state final examinations and to continue with higher education even now but the graduates of the institutions of vocational education are not enough competitive on student places in institutions of higher education due to different scope of general subjects compared to upper secondary schools). The opportunity concerning vocational training in basic school and upper secondary school within the framework of elective subjects prescribed by the national curriculum of general education that was started two years ago will be further developed.

Special emphasis will be laid on development of curricula and teacher training with regard to quality of vocational training. By 2008, national curricula, where compulsory content of specialist studies is specified for all educational institutions providing vocational education, will be prepared by group of curricula. Training and in-service training opportunities for vocational teachers are developed, a specific system will be established. Funds of ESF will be used for this purpose. Training bases in ten institutions of vocational education are renovated with the help of funds of ERDF. During the second period of ERDF (2007-2013) this direction will be continued.

Quality assurance system of vocational education will be developed. Many components of this system exist already or are under development, but an integral outlet at the moment is lacking. Accreditation of the institutions of vocational education should become the named outlet that would comprise both the system of internal evaluation, audit as well as education licences (national follow-up orientation will be changed into self-estimation of educational institution). A quality prize model for institutions of vocational education has been worked out and implemented, quality prize competition was first carried out in 2004.

Co-operation with social partners, particularly employers, is continuously developed. Social partners are more actively involved in development of vocational education both at the system level and at the school level. The curricula are developed in co-operation with employers, practice is carried out as a compulsory part of curricula in the work environment and enhancement of percentage of employers in the school boards is foreseen.

5.1.1. Implementation of the tools developed under the Copenhagen process at the national level

Attestation and award of professional qualifications

According to the Professions Act, the award of professional qualifications is a process in the course of which a person displays the level of his or her professional competence. The methods of attestation of professional qualifications are a written or oral examination, test assignment, attestation on the basis of documents or a combination of methods specified above. The awarding body sets the concrete method and form of attestation for the certain professional qualification. Professional qualifications are attested on the basis of an application submitted by the person on a voluntary basis. Generally, for professions on the lower levels (levels I-II) of professional standards, the qualification attestation does not demand a formal education certificate as a prerequisite. The awarding body, setting out the rules for attestation, should take into account (validate and recognise) the results of non-formal and/or informal learning. The professional standard in higher levels (levels IV-V) is setting up the demands of a higher education diploma. In the process of re-attestation of qualification, the awarding body takes into account the results of non-formal and/or informal learning.

Europass National Centre

The increased transparency of qualifications is one of the main components in an approach to a better provision of education and training systems. Estonia approves the concept of linking separate documents aimed at the transparency of qualifications and competence into a single, coordinated framework, known as “Europass”. Estonia will start implementing the Europass framework in 2005. An Estonian Qualification Authority was designated to be a National Europass Centre (NEC). NEC will act as an implementation body of Europass and carry out the tasks set by European Commission to the year 2005.

5.1.2. Low-skilled and disadvantaged groups

In 2004, 840 students with special needs were acquiring vocational education. In 2005, 347 students with special needs have been planned to admit. Admission shows clear increase. All people, irrespective of their age and earlier education, have right to acquire vocational education. Draft Acts that enable persons without basic education to start vocational training have been prepared (no requirements have been laid down as to the earlier education level). Institutions of vocational education are active in offering in-service training and retraining. The Labour Market Board arranges the in-service training and retraining finances by the state.

5.1.3. Attractiveness of vocational education

In 2003, approximately 29.5 % of the graduates from the basic school and 15 % of the graduates from the secondary school continued studies in institutions of vocational education. The percentage of the graduates from the secondary school continuing their studies in institutions of vocational education is dropping. Young people who have acquired general secondary education try to continue studies at the level of higher education and not at secondary vocational education.

The current structure of offices on the labour market requires considerably more specialists with background of vocational education.

By 2010 the percentage of the graduates from the secondary school continuing their studies in institutions of vocational education should rise, according to the set goal, to 40 %. In order to make the vocational education more popular as a choice, the following actions are foreseen:

- modernization of the content and training methods of vocational training (development of curricula, training of vocational teachers, development of e-learning);
- modernization of the training bases and rest conditions;
- active provision of information about the opportunities concerning vocational training and the opportunities for making career;
- enhancement of flexibility through new opportunities concerning vocational training and introduction of new study forms;
- intensification of co-operation between employers, local governments/ region and other interested parties;
- intensification of co-operation with general education school (vocational training in the basic school and upper secondary school – pre-vocational training).

5.1.4. The links between vocational education and labour market

National strategic development plans and a long-term forecast of labour market requirements drafted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications as well as strategic research of this area constitute inputs in planning primary vocational education on the basis of state-commissioned education. The positions of the representatives of employers and branch associations will be taken into account when forming state-commissioned education directive, the draft of state-commissioned education directive shall be approved by them.

A short-term forecast of labour market requirements drafted on the basis of information concerning movement of workers received from the Ministry of Social Affairs (coordinator of the process), the Labour Market Board, professional associations, county governments and local government associations constitutes an input in designing in-service training and retraining.

Employers are involved in management of schools via school boards, where they have to form majority of the members.

More widely is used the practice where opening and development of new curricula takes place in co-operation between the school and employers. Practical training that will be performed in an enterprise is a compulsory part of the curricula. Entrepreneurs are involved in grading of final exams of professional competence.

5.1.5. Reduction of barriers between vocational education and general education

There has been created opportunities to acquire professional skills and knowledge in basic school as well as in upper secondary school, in order to decrease variances between vocational education and general education. The covered topics will be taken into account when continuing with the same profession in institutions of vocational education. Training is offered to those who have dropped out in the basic school and to basic school pupils with special needs or behavioural problems in co-operation between basic schools and institutions of vocational education. When graduating from institution of vocational education, the persons who have acquired secondary vocational education will be provided with opportunity to study subjects of general education in order to supplement their general educational basis and, optionally, to compete successfully to be admitted to student places in institutions of higher education.

5.1.6. Training of vocational teachers and trainers

Draft Development Plan of Estonian Vocational Educational System sets as an objective to find out the specific learning needs of teachers for vocational training and to enhance their profession and to make it more attractive. For that purpose, a research concerning learning needs of teachers for vocational training will be carried out as well as a professional standard for teachers for vocational training will be worked out. According to the plan, enterprises will be involved in the study process through in-company work-practice and professional in-service training of teachers for vocational training. Flexible and alternative training and in-service training opportunities will be provided for teachers for vocational training with the aim to rejuvenate the teacher body and to improve the level of qualification of teachers.

5.1.7. Planning of student places in vocational education

Draft of state-commissioned education is based on forecast of the training needs. The analysis of demand for qualified labour (analysis of labour market requirements) of one part, and the needs of young people and preferences as to student places (analysis of social requirements), of the other part, will be carried out. Potentiality of schools and their readiness (including the existing curricula, teaching staff, training bases, opportunities of practice etc.) as well as the needs of the region will be taken into account when forming state-commissioned education directive, in order to ensure the quality of education.

Stages of the forecast of the training needs:

1. On the basis of the analysis of social requirements (from the MoER) and economic requirements (from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications), the Ministry of Education and Research prepares the primary forecast for the levels of vocational education, training trends and areas of professions (study groups).
2. The package of the results of analysis will be forwarded to social partners (organizations of employers and employees, professional associations, the other ministries, other interest groups).
3. Proposals of schools concerning establishment of student places will be taken into account (considered the capacity of schools when arranging studies). The applications have to be approved by the professional association and the county government, in order to ensure compatibility of student places to the needs of the region and general labour market (economic).
4. The applications of schools will be estimated from the position of potentiality of the schools and occupancy of student places in the previous years.
5. The Ministry of Education and Research prepares for approval final directives for student admissions. The MoER approves the student places for the school in case the school is able to ensure the quality of training. The curriculum has to be entered in the register of curricula and education licences.

Private schools may apply for state-commissioned education for student places on the same basis with state schools and municipal schools. The school shall have curricula, qualified teachers and education environment that conform to the curriculum. Approval of admission/ submission of an application for state-commissioned education for student places to private schools will be discussed in case certain areas are not provided in state or municipality schools or provided to a lesser extent. Application for state-commissioned education for student places to private schools will be fixed in the agreement concluded between the educational institution and the Ministry.

5.2 Obstacles in the introduction of reforms in vocational education and training

Limited funding opportunities, historically developed unfavourable attitudes and prevailing of academic ambitions in the society, giving short-term and local objectives priority over long-term and wider targets and strong fragmentation of education system constitute obstacles, taking into account long-term objectives, to the formulation of vocational education policy and to the development of vocational education.

6. EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1. Enhancement of mobility through removing obstacles and active promotion

Steps towards internalization in Estonia are connected with a desire to improve competitiveness of higher education and to ensure academic sustainability as one of the main components of which is seen international co-operation in study and research, participation in international co-operation networks and enhancement of mobility of Estonian teachers and students.

6.1.1 Administrative and legal aspects in development of mobility

Mutual recognition and comparability of the content and quality of studies, international co-operation and particularly mobility of students and teachers has become more important factor, year by year, for every type of educational institution. Participation in Bologna and Copenhagen Processes has become the guiding line in Estonia's education policy – the development of regulations for the mutual recognition of qualifications and the ever wider introduction of quality assurance principles create the foundation for increasing the mobility of students in vocational and higher education. The corresponding amendments to legislation in higher education have been already completed due to the earlier starting position. They are still in preparatory stage in vocational education, but a wide support to the principles of Copenhagen process do exist in the society – this is evidenced by the support of the employers who participated in preparation of the development plan of vocational education and who consider implementation of these principles as an instrument in improvement of the system of vocational education of Estonia, encouraging its competitiveness.

Enhancement of mobility in vocational and higher education requires first and foremost amendments to legislation, but international co-operation in general education is already very successful. Approximately 10 % of Estonian general education schools participated successfully in the EU Comenius Programme in 2004. For improvement of international co-operation with respect to initiatives based on projects and enhancement of mobility of teachers/ students, actions, both in vocational and general education, will be continued. There is a strategic document developed for internationalising the higher education and research, improve the planning and ensure greater efficiency in this field.

6.1.2. Measures taken to develop the organizational framework to improve the quality mobility and to develop virtual mobility (particularly in general education)

Management of EU programmes is divided between two state established foundations – general and higher education programmes are managed through Archimedes Foundation and the vocational training programme Leonardo through the Foundation *Innovate*. In order to allocate state funds for higher education, there was established a unit within the

[Archimedes](#) Foundation that manages government initiative “Kristjan Jaak” (directed to short-term mobility schemes) and scholarships schemes for PhD students in the areas of a national importance in foreign universities. State mobility benefit schemes are relatively new – they were launched from the 2002-2003 school year. This academic year the number of students who receive Kristjan Jaak host fellowships amounts to 223, in the 2004-2005 academic year 6 % of PhD students intake in state-commissioned education, started their studies in foreign universities. State benefit to mobility of higher education in total is approximately EUR 2 million in 2005.

Participation of general education schools in the Comenius Programme has increased since 1998: from 4 schools in 1998 to 66 schools in 2004. Consequently 10 % of Estonian schools participate in the projects in the 2004-2005 school year. For the 2005-2006 school year 140 projects were delivered under the Comenius Programme of which 92 are the first year projects, including 9 language-learning projects. Therefore one might assert that the interest towards projects has increased.

In the 2005-2006 school year a diary, free of charge, will be published in Estonian schools in co-operation with the European Commission, Generation Europe Foundation and Estonian European Movement/ Eurodesk Estonia. „The Europa Diary: a practical diary to inform and protect young consumers” together with teacher's kits is an information resource and time-keeping tool for students on being a consumer in today's world. Both general educational schools and vocational schools ordered the diaries, and more actively than was expected.

Virtual mobility in general education is supported primarily by up-dated curriculum, as a result of the development of curricula, in which use of ICT in studies is one of the priorities. Much emphasis is placed on ICT skills included in the competence list of the framework requirements of teacher training or professional standard.

6.1.3. Increasing the mobility of teachers

Teachers are encouraged to participate in the EU Comenius Programme. In co-operation with universities will be ensured that practice in foreign universities is considered a part of the studies. For schooling a new generation of university teachers who provide instruction in the teacher training, state scholarships for degree studies at foreign universities have been established.

6.1.4. Promoting mobility in vocational education and training

Participation in Leonardo trans-national mobility projects for students has significantly increased in 2004 due to enlarged financial opportunities, but the number of students participating in the projects of exchanges is still below 1 %. Enhancement of mobility in the future depends on the improvement of reputation of vocational schools in the course of vocational education reform and on the fact whether more talented young people will choose secondary vocational education as more practically oriented education. Abrupt enhancement of mobility of students of vocational schools is not possible because of relatively high language barrier of the students. At the same time, several initiatives have been launched which promote vocational school as a competitive choice through the international co-operation.

6.2 European dimension in education

The topic of European dimension was included in the national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary schools already in 2002 and this trend is going to be continued. To general competences, pursued in the secondary upper school, belongs a civic position that is developed at the end of secondary upper school, as a result of which student cognizes himself/herself as a member of society capable to develop dialogue in the context of Estonia, Europe and the world. European dimension is integrated in the development of curriculum also through the subjects: it is written in the targets of the basic school in the subject area of history that the pupil knows the history of Europe and the world both comprehensively as well as through the events and processes most typical to a certain era; in the upper secondary school the pupil learns to connect himself/herself with Europe. In the new curriculum it is represented the culture of minorities living in Europe, including in Estonia; Estonian school promotes mutual understanding and co-operation of people living in Estonia, and takes into account the trend of Estonia in integration into Europe.

In the professional standard for teachers, as under discussion, according to which the curricula concerning teacher training are also reformed, have been emphasized, amongst others, such important knowledge and skills: teacher, as a critical thinker, has to contribute to adaptation of changing outer conditions for the learners, their formation into citizens of Estonia and Europe competent to take decisions and to bear responsibility; to appraise national culture and to respect the other cultures. Teacher knows the history and the culture of Estonia, Europe and the world and takes into account special features of multicultural study environment and anticipates possible problems; adjusts study and study environment to learners with different language proficiency and cultural background; involves members of community and parents with different cultural background to share their experience and knowledge with the learners and colleagues.

Annex I

EESTI HARIDUSPUU – ESTONIAN EDUCATION TREE

ROOTS

The foundation of Estonian society is a strong Estonian family. Family is a child's primary educator and teacher. Strong family creates opportunities for the child's successful coping in life.

STEM

The stem grows and develops from pre-school education (up to 7 years of age) and basic education (up to 17 years of age), where the main keywords are:

- involving all 6-year-old children in preparatory training;
- taking into account the individual abilities and needs of the learner, so that the organisation and substance of studies would be more flexible;
- taking into account the abilities of learners with learning difficulties and learners with special needs in implementing different forms of study and funding according to greater coefficients; as necessary, provision of up to three extra years for acquiring basic education;
- establishing integrated consultation networks for learners, teachers and parents;
- supporting children from families who have difficulties in coping;
- high quality learning due to competent teachers, study programme according to the abilities and interests, modern learning environment, managing and relevant system of quality evaluation;

Planned changes give the learner the possibility, in addition to acquiring basic education (forms 7 to 9), to take part in pre-vocational training in the group of studies of their own choice. Those who have passed the minimum school-leaving age (17) without basic education have a chance to study in a vocational educational institution and acquire professional skills.

OPTIONS AFTER ACQUIRING BASIC EDUCATION

At the forking of the education tree, the learner has the following options:

- acquiring general secondary education at upper secondary school (3 years)
- acquiring general secondary education at upper secondary school along with completing pre-vocational training in institution of vocational education (3 years)
- acquiring vocational education in institution of vocational education (without acquiring secondary education, 2 years)
- acquiring secondary vocational education in institution of vocational education (3-3,5 years)
- possibility to study, after having acquired secondary vocational education, general subjects for a year in order to prepare for state examinations and entering an institution of higher education (extra year)

OPTIONS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Planned innovations in the development plan of Vocational Education System and development plan of General Education System make the education system more flexible than it has been up to now:

- with the help of additional modules, possibilities are created for so-called horizontal movement from upper secondary school to vocational education, and vice versa.
- in general education schools, the possibilities of vocational education will be expanded (incl. vocational education classes will be created) to diversify the learners' options.
- the cooperation between institutions of vocational education and institutions of professional higher education will be intensified, and that would improve the chances of able people who have completed the study programmes of secondary vocational education of continuing their studies in professional higher education without impediment;
- for those who have graduated from vocational educational institutions and wish to continue their education on the level of higher education, including academic study at universities, the possibilities for additional general education will be created.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The whole education tree is surrounded by lifelong learning, which covers all learning activities undertaken by people in their lifetime, and allows everyone, regardless of their age, to improve their knowledge and skills, and develop themselves in every way.