

ESTONIA

Summary

**Country Report on the Vocational Education and
Training system, REFERNET Cedefop**

and

**Summary report on Vocational Education and
Training (VET) for learners with Special
Educational Needs (SEN)**



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| 1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM | 4 |
| 1.1 Definitions..... | 4 |
| 1.1.1 <i>Initial vocational education and training (IVET)</i> | 4 |
| 1.1.2 <i>Apprenticeship</i> | 4 |
| 1.1.3 <i>Pre-vocational or pre-technical education</i> | 4 |
| 1.1.4 <i>Vocational and technical education</i> | 4 |
| 1.1.5 <i>School-based programmes</i> | 4 |
| 1.1.6 <i>Alternance training</i> | 5 |
| 1.2 Diagram of the education and training system..... | 5 |
| 1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET..... | 5 |
| 1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET | 6 |
| 1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET | 7 |
| 1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs | 7 |
| 1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs..... | 7 |
| 1.8 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET..... | 7 |
| 1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training | 8 |
| 1.10 References | 8 |
| 2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) | 9 |
| 2.1 Population | 9 |
| 2.2 Organisation and Provision of Vet programmes | 9 |
| 2.2.1 <i>IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes</i> | 9 |
| Although apprenticeship studies were introduced in Estonia several years ago, only 2% of all VET learners have taken up apprenticeship training so far. In the case of learners with SEN this figure is even lower; there are only a few learners with SEN participating in apprenticeship training..... | 10 |
| 2.2.2 <i>Different types of educational/VET settings</i> | 10 |
| 2.2.3 <i>The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)</i> | 11 |
| 2.3 VET programmes and employment..... | 11 |
| 2.3.1 <i>Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of VET programmes</i> | 11 |
| 2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment) | 12 |



| | |
|---|----|
| 2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level. | 12 |
| 2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes. | 12 |
| 2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level..... | 12 |
| 2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out” . Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level. | 12 |
| 2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level | 13 |
| 2.5 Legislation and policy | 13 |
| 2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation | 13 |
| 2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment | 14 |
| 2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework..... | 14 |
| 2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market..... | 15 |
| 2.6 VET teachers, trainers and other professionals | 15 |
| 2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers, etc) | 15 |
| 2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes | 16 |
| A VET institution, with the cooperation of the employer or company where the learner conducts his/her practical training, has to provide transition plans to learners with SEN. The transition plan is aimed at supporting the learner in the transition from VET to employment. | 16 |
| 7. Funding | 16 |



1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1.1 Definitions

1.1.1 Initial vocational education and training (IVET)

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is defined as training undertaken typically after full-time compulsory education (although it may start before) to promote the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for entry to an occupation or group of occupations. It can be undertaken purely within a school-based and/or work-based environment. It includes apprenticeship training. *Source: Glossary of the EknowVET database*

1.1.2 Apprenticeship

Systematic, long-term training alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). *Source: Terminology of vocational training policy, Cedefop*. There is no age limit in the apprenticeship programme. Based on the school curriculum, the school works out an individualised curriculum for the apprentice. The study duration of at least 40 weeks and apprentices sign a study and work contract and have a 4-month probation period; 1/3 of the curriculum is delivered through theoretical instruction and 2/3 through practical training in an enterprise.

1.1.3 Pre-vocational or pre-technical education

Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour-market relevant vocational or technical qualification. For a programme to be considered as pre-vocational or pre-technical education, at least 25 per cent of its content has to be vocational or technical. *Source: ISCED 1997*

1.1.4 Vocational and technical education

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.). *Source: ISCED 1997*

1.1.5 School-based programmes

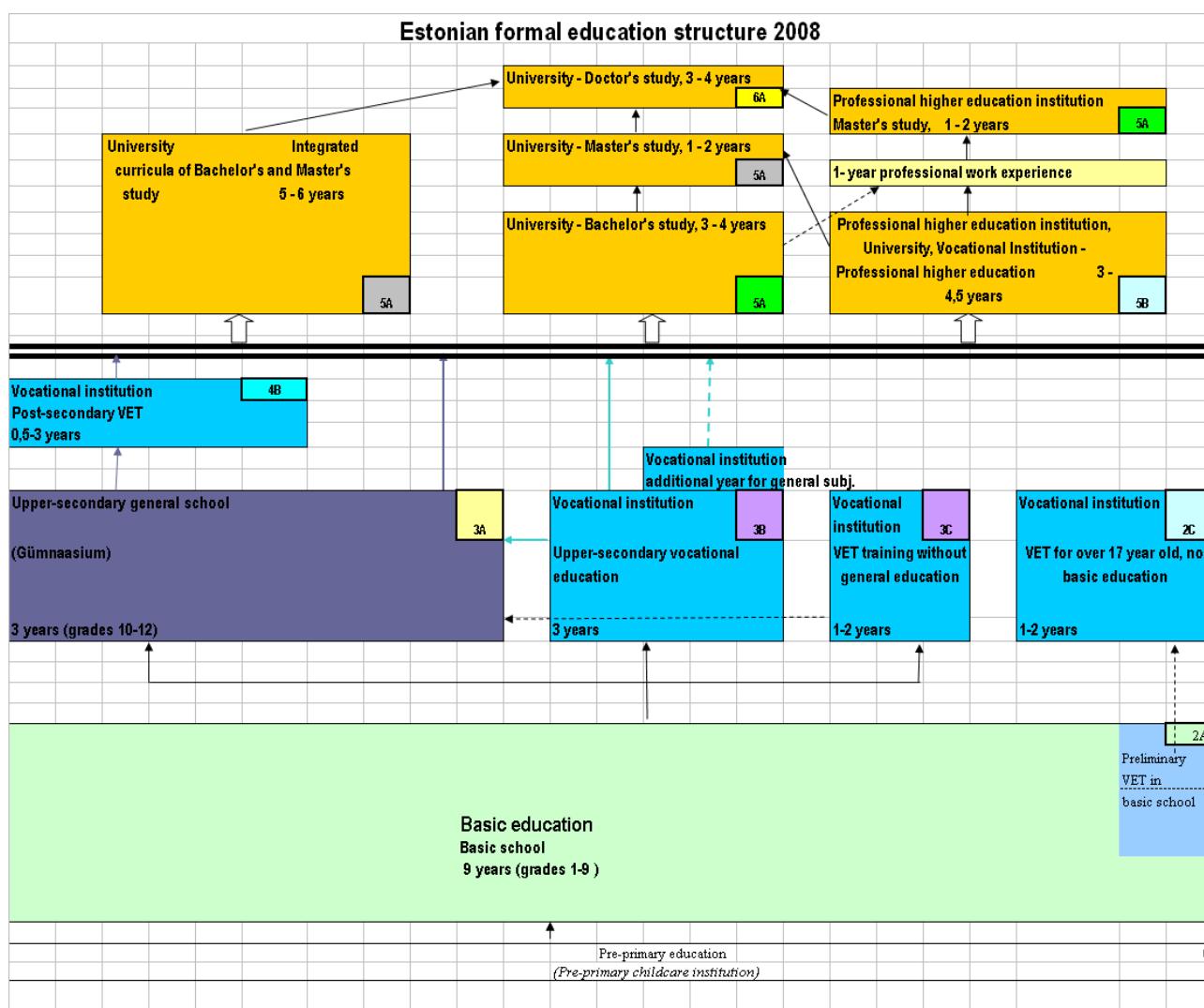
In school-based programmes instruction takes place (either partly or exclusively) in educational institutions. These include special training centres for vocational education run by public or private authorities or enterprise-based special training centres if these qualify as educational institutions. These programmes can have an on-the-job training component, i.e. a component of some practical experience at the workplace. *Source: UOE data collection on education systems, Volume 1, Manual, Concepts, definitions and classifications*



1.1.6 Alternance training

Education and training combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace. The alternance scheme can take place on weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Depending on the country and applicable status, participants may be contractually linked to the employer and/or receive the remuneration. *Source: Terminology of European education and training policy, Cedefop, 2008.*

1.2 Diagram of the education and training system



1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

Governance and Funding; A new strategy for 2009-2013 is being developed and will be passed this year. The main objectives of the new strategy are to provide a better access to both, formal and non-formal learning, to increase the level of education of the population and increase the rate of 25-64 year old participants in lifelong learning to 12,5% by 2013. The school network has been optimized, many **schools have been combined** into regional centres of excellence, yet, highly specialized schools have been preserved. **The**



new scheme of state funded study places (*riiklik koolitustellimus – RKT*) was first implemented in 2007/2008 study year. The 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.

Guidance and counselling: started from 2008, the ESF programme “Development of Career Services system in the Republic of Estonia” and the National Career Guidance Forum (NCGF)

Teacher and trainer training: ESF project (2005-2008) VET teachers were involved in revising the content of VET training through participation in curricula committees and creating the school curricula.

Curriculum reform and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment; 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.

Skills needs strategy; The anticipated skills needs have been studied by the Ministry of Economics and Communications since 2003. These forecasts have been used to plan formal education and training, both in VET and in higher education

1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET

The EU has had a monumental impact in guiding the planning and administration, as well as funding of IVET. The VET and Adult Learning Department of the Ministry of Education and Research (Haridus- ja Teadusministeeriumi Kutse- ja Täiskasvanuhariduse osakond) co-ordinates the preparation and implementation of education policies through local governments and other relevant Ministries (*The Ministry of Social Affairs (Sotsiaalministeerium)*, *The Ministry of Culture (Kultuuriministeerium)* and the *The Ministry of Defence (Kaitseministeerium)*). County governments and their education departments prepare and implement education development plans for their administrative county. Social partners' participation in VET is regulated by national legislation as well as by the partners' charters, action plans and agreements with other stakeholders. A VET school is managed by the head of the school whose function is to ensure the effective operation of the school.

The legislative framework for the education and training system originates from Parliament (Riigikogu). The government (Vabariigi Valitsus) decides national strategies by adopting and implementing state education development plans.

IVET Policies:

- Vocational Education Institutions Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*, 1998) regulates the provision of VET as well as the foundation and operation of VET institutions
- Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard*, 2006) is a set of uniform requirements for vocational and professional training at the level of basic and secondary education
- Policies of Implementing Workplace Based Training (*Töökohapõhise õppe rakendamise kord*, 2007) regulate the provision of apprenticeship training.

- Private Schools Act (*Erakooliseadus*, 1998)

1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

| TEACHER | INSTITUTION | QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS |
|---|--|---|
| VOCATIONAL TEACHER (KUTSEÕPETAJA) | Vocational educational institution (ISCED 3B, 4B) | 1) higher education in vocational pedagogy or other pedagogical higher education (5A, 5B) and at least 3 years experience in the respective profession or 2) higher (5A,5B) or post-secondary vocational education (non-tertiary) (4B) in the respective field, at least 3 years experience in the respective profession and completed 320-hours course in vocational pedagogy or 3) higher (5A,5B) or post-secondary vocational education (non-tertiary) (4B) in the respective field, at least 3 years experience in the respective profession and ongoing working in the respective profession |
| WORKPLACE SUPERVISOR (VOCATIONAL TRAINER-ETTEVÖTTE PRAKTIKA-JUHENDAJA) | Companies, enterprises | No requirements |

1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of 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).

1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs

The preparation of curricula is based on the Vocational Education Standard as well as on national curricula and school curricula. From 2004 several curricula had been prepared and in 2009 the ministry of education had approved 40 national vocational curricula. The qualifications according to the new format have to be output based, taking into account the learning outcomes and the actual competences of an applicant. The introduction of competence-based curricula created by schools has motivated providers to strengthen their contacts with employers and graduates as a way to gauge labour market skills needs.

1.8 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET

Career counsellors have a university degree, preferably in psychology, pedagogy or social work. There are 3 professional standards for career practitioners: career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools (including VET institutions and higher education institutions). Currently, Estonian universities do not provide higher education in the field of career services. Guidance is provided within formal education and as part of youth work (extra-curricular activities).

In 2008-2011 the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre runs the ESF programme "Developing an educational counselling system" to promote career advice to certain focus groups as students with special needs.



1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training

Public funding is the main source of funding VET on all levels and types of VET. **In lower secondary education**, the funding comes from the budget of the general school. The state allocates the funds to the municipality who is then responsible for funding the school.

In upper secondary and post secondary non tertiary education, the VET study places are funded according to the state funded study places scheme, which is provided to the VET institutions directly by the state. The study places within the curriculum group are approved for the next 3 years. The school has the right to decide the specific curriculum within the funded curriculum group, types of training and forms of study, as well as the number and time of admission of the new applicants. At the same time the school is obligated to fill all the state funded study places during the whole calendar year.

1.10 References

Raudsepp, K., Pung, A., Toom, K., Piiskop, K., All, K., Rammo, M. and Nestor, M., (2009) *Estonia VET in Europe. Country Report* Report within the Framework of ReferNet Estonia.Cedefop.



2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

2.1 Population

A Regulation from the Ministry of Education and Research entitled “Conditions and organisation of vocational education studies for students with special needs” is the main piece of legislation that regulates the field of VET studies for learners with SEN in Estonia. The definition of a learner with SEN in this legislation matches word for word the definition of a learner with SEN in the annex of this questionnaire.

The definition relates generally to the target group of the project, except for pupils with outstanding talent.

2.2 Organisation and Provision of Vet programmes

2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.

Every student has the right to choose between schools and fields of study according to his/her preferences and capabilities. Generally speaking, there are no specific restrictions for SEN learners.

According to the legislation, a VET institution is obliged to provide VET studies for learners with SEN in cooperation with national authorities and local government. A learner’s own preference of study field must be taken into account as much as possible, as well as their type of SEN and the employment opportunities available to them.

There are SEN learners participating in every type of VET, however most study within vocational secondary education (see Table 1).

Table 1. Learners with SEN in VET by type of VET, study year 2010/2011

| | VET for over 17-year-olds without basic education (ISCED 2C) | VET without upper secondary general education (ISCED 3C) | Upper-secondary vocational education (ISCED 3B) | Post-secondary non tertiary VET (ISCED 4B) | Total ¹ |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--------------------|
| Pupils with a hearing impairment | 2 | 7 | 31 | 1 | 41 |
| Physically disabled | | 2 | 31 | 4 | 37 |

¹ Please note that according to the Estonian educational information system, a learner with SEN might have more than one special education need.



| | | | | | |
|--|----|----|-----|----|-----|
| pupils | | | | | |
| Pupils who have completed the simplified national curriculum for basic schools | 13 | 12 | 534 | | 559 |
| Pupils who have completed the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe disabilities | 2 | 12 | 77 | 8 | 99 |
| Pupils with a visual impairment | | 1 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| Pupils with psychiatric difficulties | | 15 | 52 | 2 | 69 |
| Pupils with learning difficulties | 1 | 18 | 315 | 9 | 343 |
| Total | 18 | 36 | 896 | 16 | 966 |

Source: EHS
10.11.2010

Although apprenticeship studies were introduced in Estonia several years ago, only 2% of all VET learners have taken up apprenticeship training so far. In the case of learners with SEN this figure is even lower; there are only a few learners with SEN participating in apprenticeship training.

2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings

Most VET institutions in Estonia are publicly funded. The role of private VET institutions in providing training for SEN learners is very minor. According to the main principle of study organisation, learners with SEN should study within the mainstream study group. However, special study groups may be organised if there are enough learners who are interested in the same field of study and if better results can be obtained where studies are conducted in a special study group.

All three opportunities mentioned in question Q3 are available for learners with SEN in Estonia. Learners with SEN may study at mainstream VET institutions with ordinary study groups or in special groups or in a special VET institution (Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre). The choice between the various options is predominantly made by the student and his/her family according to the type of special education need they have and the support required during their studies.



2.2.3 The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)

VET institutions offer special VET programmes for learners who have previously completed the simplified national curriculum for basic schools or the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe disabilities. Learners with other types of special educational needs mainly study according to the ordinary VET curricula.

According to the Regulation produced by the Ministry of Education and Research, entitled “Conditions and organisation of vocational education studies for students with special needs”, a VET institution is obliged to offer the necessary support systems and services (for example guidance, sign language interpreter, e-training etc) to learners with SEN.

Depending on the learner’s special educational need the VET institution may make changes or adjustments to the duration of study, learning content, educational process, learning environment or required learning outcomes. If the changes or adjustments would entail a significant increase or decrease in the weekly study load or intensity of study compared to the school curriculum, an individual curriculum must be prepared in order to implement the changes.

Learners with SEN obtain an ordinary diploma after completing the curriculum.

2.3 VET programmes and employment

2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of VET programmes

The anticipation of skills and human resources needed on the labour market is organised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications in Estonia. Annual forecasts have been available since 2003 (the latest projections are for 2018). As some additional background, 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 anticipated skills needs forecast is one of the factors considered in putting together the scheme of state funded study places in VET. It ensures that the quantitative side of VET provision corresponds to labour market needs.

The national VET curricula are based on professional standards, which describe the requirements in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, values and personal characteristics for professional qualifications. The curricula are approved by professional councils, which consist of representatives of employees, employers and professional associations in the corresponding area of activity and representatives of the state. The professional standards are competence based and measure learning outcomes.

A VET institution prepares a school 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.

VET institutions work in close cooperation with local enterprises to ensure that training, especially in the area of work-related training courses for adult learners, but also initial VET training, corresponds to labour market needs.



2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)

2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.

There were 966 SEN learners in VET institutions in the academic year 2010/11 (3.4% of all VET learners).

90% of all SEN learners obtain upper secondary vocational education (ISCED 3 B).

Learners with SEN studied at 25 VET institutions from a total of 42 VET institutions and the number of learners with SEN varied from 1 to 123 at different VET institutions.

2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.

Unfortunately the Estonian educational information system does not provide this kind of information.

2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level

The Estonian educational information system does not provide exactly this kind of information but we can provide data about the continuation of studies after graduation from basic school (see table 2).

VET programmes are more popular among learners with SEN than among youth population generally.

Table 2. Continuation of studies after graduation from basic school, academic year 2010/2011.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Proportion of graduates from the national basic school curriculum who continue their studies in VET | 26% |
| Proportion of graduates from the basic school curriculum for students with moderate or severe learning disabilities or a simplified curriculum who continue their studies in VET | 53% |

2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out” . Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.

In the Estonian VET system, a learner is considered to be a dropout when he/she was enrolled in the list of learners on the date Nov 10th, but has interrupted studies in the course of the academic year (and therefore excluded from the list of learners).

Table 3. Drop out rates in VET programmes, academic year 2010/2011.



| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| General drop out rate | 19,5% |
| Drop out rate of learners with SEN | 19,7% |

2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level

Unfortunately the Estonian educational information system does not provide this kind of information.

2.5 Legislation and policy

2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation

- Vocational Educational Institutions Act provides the legal framework for all VET institutions in Estonia.
- Regulation produced by the Ministry of Education and Research, entitled “Conditions and organisation of vocational education studies for students with special needs” describes the main principles of organisation of studies for learners with SEN
- Regulation of the Government “Coefficients of funding for the groups of curricula and forms of study for students with special needs, and for the teaching of detainees” stipulates the principles of funding the studies of SEN learners at VET institutions.
- Labour Market Services and Benefits Act describes services designed for unemployed people with disabilities (adaptation of work premises and equipment; working with a support person; communication support at job interviews).
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act states that the work, working equipment and workplace of a person with a disability must be customised according to their physical and mental capabilities. This means that the employer’s premises, working area and equipment are rendered accessible to the disabled person so that they are able to use them in their work. This requirement is also applicable to common areas (corridors, recreation rooms etc) that disabled employees use.

At local level, the county and local governments have an administrative role to play in VET. County governments and their education departments prepare and implement educational development plans for their administrative county. They also organise vocational guidance and counselling for young people. Local governments plan and implement the educational programmes at local level and coordinate and organise the activities at municipal educational institutions.

Social partner participation in VET is regulated by national legislation as well as by the partners’ charters, action plans and agreements with other stakeholders. In particular, employers play a active and influential role through their participation in professional councils, by creating professional standards for each profession

At local level, social partners participate in School Boards, which consist of at least 7 people, out of which more than one half must be social partners (representatives of local



municipalities, registered organisations and trade associations of employers and workers and labour market boards.

2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment

The Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2009-2013 states as a general objective that the VET system has to be flexible and available and correspond to the needs of learners. It is aimed at offering broader learning opportunities and more suitable forms of education to learners with special educational needs. The expected result of this activity is ensuring that people with special educational needs have better chances of entering the labour market.

Some specific activities that are in preparation at the moment to obtain the aforementioned objective:

- Implementation of a new funding system for learners with SEN in VET that is based on supporting measures provided by the VET institution;
- Compilation of study and methodical materials for learners with SEN and their teachers in the framework of the ESF programme “

2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework

Parliament – legal role (laws, national budget)

Government – adopts legal acts (basic cost of study place in VET, cost of coefficients of study place incl. coefficient of study place for learners with SEN), approves development plans for Vocational Education and Training System

Ministry of Education and Science – prepares drafts of laws and legal acts for parliament and government, gives ministerial regulations, prepares development plans and activities, provides state funded study places to VET institutions (incl. study places for learners with SEN)

Ministry of Social Affairs - prepares drafts of laws and legal acts for parliament and government, gives ministerial regulations, prepares development plans and activities

Foundation Innove – development of national curricula of VET and holds the Council of Special Education Needs in VET which consists of representatives of VET institutions, the Ministry of Education and Research and social partners. The Council is a body which mainly has an advisory role but also makes proposals to the Ministry of Education and Research for development activities.

VET institutions – responsible for the practical organisation of study (incl. practical training), provides support measures to learners with SEN

Local government – is responsible for providing necessary support measures (e.g. special transport, sign language translator etc) to disabled learners that allow them to participate in VET training.

Third sector (for example The Estonian Chamber of Disabled People) – mainly advisory role, their representative participates in the Council of Special Education Needs in VET



2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market

The general curriculum development process is the same at all VET levels and programmes and there are no exceptions for learners with SEN. Where necessary, a school may prepare an individual curriculum for a learner with SEN on the basis of the school curriculum.

The national curriculum is a document that determines the purposes and functions of vocational training, the requirements for starting and graduating from studies, the modules of curricula and the volumes thereof together short descriptions, the possibilities and conditions for electing modules and the possibilities for specialisation. National curricula for all study areas of VET are prepared by the Foundation Innove and have to be approved by the Minister of Education and Research.

The national curricula are reviewed and if necessary, a new version is approved if the professional standard which constitutes the basis for the national curriculum is repealed, a new professional standard is established, or the name of the professional standard or the requirements for professional skills provided in the standard are amended. **The Estonian Qualification Authority** (Foundation Kutsekoda) is responsible for developing professional standards.

The school curriculum is the source document of vocational training. VET institutions prepare a curriculum for each profession or speciality being taught and for every type of vocational training. The school curriculum is based on the Vocational Education Standard and the national curriculum and takes into account the different forms of study. The school curriculum is registered in the Estonian Information System for Education.

2.6 VET teachers, trainers and other professionals

2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers, etc)

- A) the qualifications required
- B) initial training
- C) in-service training possibilities

Teaching and training qualifications and occupations are described in The Teacher Training Framework Requirements and The Qualification Requirements for Teachers. There are no special prerequisites for the training of teachers who teach learners with SEN in the VET system.

There are two types of teachers at VET institutions:

- teachers of general education subjects;
- vocational teachers for both theory and practice.

Initial teacher education is provided by universities and professional higher education Institutions.

A vocational teacher teaches speciality subjects in a vocational school and the requirements for his or her training and qualifications are different from the requirements for teachers of general education subjects. Vocational teachers are trained at the first level of higher education (3 years of bachelor study or professional higher education). All vocational teachers must have specialised work experience.



Teachers of general education subjects in vocational schools and special education teachers are trained at the second level of higher education, the total volume of teachers' training being 200 credit points. A vocational school general education teacher should be able to link general education subjects to subjects related to vocations.

Vocational teachers often acquire their pedagogical qualification while they are working.

The Qualification Requirements for Teachers requires that vocational teachers who have professional higher education or postsecondary vocational education (non-tertiary) complete a 320 hour vocational pedagogy course.

Other types of in-service training are to some extent governed by the Teacher Training Framework Requirements. A vocational teacher is required to participate in in-service training for at least two months during each three years of service. Participation is taken into account in their evaluation.

2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes

According to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act, a VET institution has to provide career counselling to applicants for admission. There are no special prerequisites or conditions for guidance and counselling to learners with SEN in the process of admission.

It is obligatory to conduct a development conversation with a learner with SEN at least once in each academic year. The purpose of the development conversation is to engage the learner in planning his/her studies, as well as supporting the learner's development according to his/ her specific needs.

A VET institution, with the cooperation of the employer or company where the learner conducts his/her practical training, has to provide transition plans to learners with SEN. The transition plan is aimed at supporting the learner in the transition from VET to employment.

7. Funding

- a) Financial support and/or incentives for learners with SEN and families
- b) Financial support and/or incentives for companies to employ young people with SEN

VET institutions receive additional funding from the state budget for learners with SEN.

Generally, the VET study places are funded according to the state funded study places scheme, which is provided to VET institutions directly from the Ministry of Education and Research. The funding of initial VET takes place per capita for one calendar year, to which the Government of Estonia ascribes a base cost. Different coefficients for different curriculum groups are applied to the base cost, since the resources needed for each specialty are different. In addition, a special coefficient is applied to the base cost for learners with SEN. The cost of a VET study place of learner with SEN is 2.5 times higher than the cost of ordinary study place.

- a) Financial support for learners with SEN and families

An education allowance of between 6.39 – 25.57 Euros per month is available to young disabled people enrolled in secondary school (grades 10 to 12) or an institution of vocational or higher education in accordance with the additional costs they incur due to



their disability. This allowance is not paid in the months of July and August (Social Benefits for Disabled People Act §10).

In the event of work-based training, disabled people can apply for an in-service training allowance of up to 613.68 Euros over a period of three calendar years (Social Benefits for Disabled People Act §12).

A work allowance of up to 255.70 Euros over a period of three calendar years is paid to people with disabilities who are employed, in the event that they have incurred costs related to their disability and their work (Social Benefits for Disabled People Act §10¹).

According to the Holidays Act (§ 9 and 26) persons who are granted a pension for incapacity to work or the national pension on the basis of incapacity for work pursuant to the State Pension Insurance Act will have the right to extended annual holiday, that is thirty-five calendar days (instead of the ordinary twenty-eight calendar days). The extended part will be paid from the state budget.

b) Financial support and incentives for companies to employ young people with SEN

The state pays social tax for the employees of a company whose loss of capacity for work is 40 per cent or more. Social tax on remuneration that does not exceed the monthly rate (approx 278 EUR) will be paid from state budget. Social tax that exceeds the monthly rate will be paid by the employer. (Social benefits tax act § 6).