

VET Study visit Tallinn, Estonia, 2 - 4 May 2012

Visit details

1st day morning

Study visit participants:

- Anastasios Asvestas (VET expert from Greece)
- Henrik Hedelund (VET expert from Denmark)
- Bernarda Kokalj (VET expert from Slovenia)
- Meeli Murasov (VET expert from Estonia and host)
- Aile Nõupuu (VET expert from Estonia and host)
- Harald Weber (European Agency staff)



Meeli, Henrik, Aile, Anastasios (Tasos), Bernarda, Harald (left to right)

1st day morning

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (www.astangu.ee)

Welcome by the Director of Astangu, **Mrs Mari Rull** (see file **1-Astangu.pdf**)

“Vocational and Adult Education

Vocational education provides specialist knowledge and skills and there are several options for acquiring such education on the basis of both basic and secondary education. There are 42 vocational educational institutions in Estonia, 30 of which are state, 3 municipal and 9 private vocational schools. The system of professional qualifications plays an important role in supporting the competitiveness of the Estonian labour force and the implementation of the principles of life-long learning. It also acts as a link between the labour market and the educational system.

The professional qualifications system consists of the development of professional standards and awarding professional qualifications. Estonia has joined the worldwide WorldSkills organisation, which holds skills competitions.

Adult education is divided into formal education, work-related training and popular adult education. Flexible study opportunities have been created for adult students to participate in formal education: distance learning and evening courses, learning as an external student or in part-time study. It is possible to acquire basic and secondary education, to study in a vocational educational institution or a higher education institution. Basic education and general secondary education can be acquired in adult upper secondary schools.

In addition to formal education, vocational education institutions and higher education institutions are increasingly providing retraining courses for adults. Popular adult education institutions and several other training institutions offer non-formal training.

The Association of Estonian Adult Educators ANDRAS [www.andras.ee] and the Ministry of Education and Research have been organising the Adult Learners Week every autumn for 14 years. The objectives of this week are to value education, learners and educators, and introduce learning opportunities.”

(From Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research)

Introduction to the Estonian VET system and students with SEN in VET by **Mrs. Meeli Murasov**, Department of Vocational and Adult Education, Ministry of Education and Research (see slides "Estonian VET system - Learners with SEN in VET", file **2-Estonian-VET-system.pdf**)

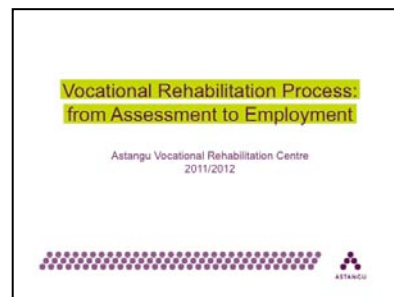
Some additions to the slides:

Slide 4: The age of children entering basic schools is 7.

They are obliged to participate in education until the age of 17. The simplified national curriculum is for people with SEN.

Slide 6: the separation between basic schools and gymnasiums is hoped to stimulate that more pupils will change to VET after basic school.

Slide 9: Estonia has 15 counties. Opportunities of VET studies are available in every



county of Estonia (During the VET reform in the beginning of 2000s when the school network was rearranged and the number of state owned VET institutions was reduced from 59 to 30 it was one of the main principles).

Slide 10: 4 types of VET programmes

Slide 11: 2nd type contains SEN students plus students older than 25. 4th type is gymnasium, adult learners, learners who successfully finished the 3rd programme. For 2nd type of VET (VET after basic school) only SEN learners and adult learners can directly apply, but if a learner has problems with general education subjects that are compulsory part of secondary vocational education (3rd type of VET) he/she can be transferred to the 2nd type of VET.

Slide 12: Companies get money for apprenticeships. Study places of apprenticeship training are financed under regular VET funding scheme. Up to 50% from the cost of the study place may be allocated from the VET institution to the company where apprentice conducts practical training.

Slide 13: The total figure is not the sum of the individual positions, due to the remark mentioned below the table

Slide 14: In Estonian VET system, a learner is considered to be a dropout when he/she was enrolled into the list of learners at Nov 10th, but has interrupted studies in the course of the academic year (has excluded from the list of learners). Those learners who changed their study field in the same group of curriculum (for example moved from cooking to hotel services or from carpenter to construction) and in the same VET institution are not counted as drop outs.

Slide 20: Development conversations are not obligatory for non-SEN students

Introduction to the Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, and presentation of the Vocational Rehabilitation process from assessment to employment, by **Mrs. Liina Teesalu**, head of the department of studies (see file **3-Key-elements.pdf**).

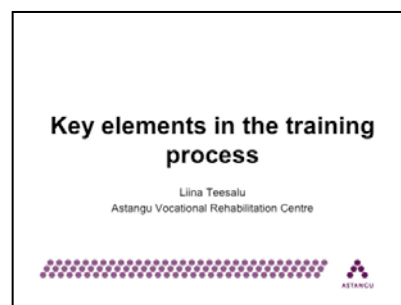
The Centre is under the Ministry of Social Affairs, not Education. It currently has 128 trainees in total (aged 15-65), with 6 - 12 trainees in a total of 19 group. It has 120 employees. Their aim is to support the transfer to working life, thus focusing on social and vocational rehabilitation.

Target groups are:

- mild to moderate intellectual disabilities
- congenital and / or chronic health impairments
- hearing loss or deafness
- acquired physical disability or traumatic brain injury
- mental health problems including autism
- learning difficulties

There is no age limit, even a 51 year old student is in the centre.

The centre's approach is a continuous and coordinated process to achieve employment by adding the areas of rehabilitation, training and employment counselling.



The vocational rehabilitation process

1 Pre-vocational courses: 5 groups

2 Vocational training: 8 groups

Based upon an own curriculum of the school; certificates are not registered with the Ministry of Education

3 Vocational Education: 5 groups

In cooperation with Haapsalu (see second day). Vocational school, approved by Haapsalu and the Ministry of Education

4 Other courses: 2 groups

ECDL and other offers

Post employment support: after graduation up to 6 month of intensive support is given. Later, there is still support available, but after 2 years a graduate is considered as a new client (Astangu policy).

The centre has established support groups for certain types of disabilities, also for those who got a job or who have never studied at the centre.

The process to decide where a student should go (here: mainstream VET or Astangu) is mainly performed by the teachers in compulsory education who know the students well and recommend the type of VET. But also the centre decides after the assessment for whom the centre is the right type of setting. 68% of applicants are taken, the rest gets other suggestions. The drop-out rate of Astangu is 10 - 13%.

Most teachers do not have a University degree in special education. A lot of in-service training takes place instead.

Tour in the Centre settings and classroom visits

The field of database management is a fast-changing area where teachers need to be always up-to-date so that they can teach students the state-of-the-art in the field. The centre makes this possible by hiring 4 of the 5 teachers from companies, each giving 6 lessons per week.



The centre has a dormitory for 70 students.

The kitchen assistant 1 year course did not achieve good enough results (with regard to transition aspects), so the school is considering a 1 year training plus 1 year education course. Currently, of the 40 weeks of the academic year, 30 take place inside the centre and 10 outside.



1st day afternoon

Discussions with professionals (teachers, specialists etc) and learners. Focus is on the principles and organization of study process, training methods, supporting systems (conversations, development plans, rehabilitation etc.) career development and employment.

Example of the study programme of Wood Processing: from work plans to the description of knowledge and skills of learner, presented by **Mr. Tarmo Kalmann** – vocational teacher, head of the unit of wood processing.

The wood processing provides 3 different kinds of courses:

KP: Pre-vocational focus; mainly 1 year; looking at social skills, work habits, specific skills. It has practical phases of 140 hours / year in companies

PT: Aim is to learn specific skills for the open labour market; it takes 1 - 3 years depending on the needs of the student, the curriculum covers 2 years. The main goal is to achieve employment. It has 320 hours / year of practical phases in companies.

PPT: Vocational Education; 1 year programme; can be combined with the training; state-recognised curriculum, same as in all schools. It has quite some theoretical modules, so it is generally difficult for students with SEN. Practical phases in companies are 600 hrs / year, i.e. 15 weeks.

Praktika (practical phases in companies) are good for employers to check the skills of the student for some time. The aim is generally to get employment for the students at those places where they went for Praktika. The centre tries to find places close to the city the students live in. But it is also difficult to find companies where colleagues accept students with SEN. Staff reports that it is easier to deal with companies with long-term experiences with the centre than with new companies. If employers have a choice between SEN and non-SEN applicants, they would decide for non-SEN. But for long-term links the centre works on understanding the needs of the employer. Vocational trainers go to the companies and identify the tasks, needs etc. of the employer. When a contract has been concluded, an employment unit specialist takes over.

Asked for the success factors the staff answered:

- creating good working habits, i.e. motivation (e.g. show types of products they can make after they have learned something new), teamwork etc
- ensure independency (in work), but also make sure that students ask for help and guidance when needed
- not too easy, not too ambitious aims for the students, good fit; allow real satisfaction based on own skills; the right balance is practically explored in the pre-vocational course
- train for flexibility

Students meet once per week to plan their studies of the next week, to keep them engaged.

The system of developmental conversations and development plans, inclusion of parents, supporting of transition was presented by **Mrs. Ebe Värk**, studies specialist.

The developmental conversations were mainly managed by the group advisor (each group has an own group advisor). The advisor coordinates the whole process, sets up group folders with all necessary information on students and assessments, and calls together the

team of relevant staff, but also sometimes parents and / or employers) at least twice per year.

The 1st meeting September/October brings together the student, parents, group advisor, support specialist and employment specialist, to speak about expectations and goals. A log-sheet of the conversation is taken. All goals included there need to be measurable. The student is for most of the issues the responsible person. After the meeting an individualised plan is made, to be agreed by all parties.

The 2nd meeting takes place in spring, and it is about achievements and plans for the future. Recommendations are given by the group advisor, after consulting all relevant actors, with regard to rehabilitation and work. The report is written in a positive way, including help and support needs and a kind of transition plan. The student needs to agree on all.

Challenges in this process is the time it uses and the paperwork it involves.

Students' satisfaction is measured each year, with high participation rates.

Assessment and supporting rehabilitation was presented by **Mrs. Merit Rossner**, head of department of rehabilitation. Assessments take place when a student applies for a course. It lasts 1 day at least, based upon interviews and tests, with trials in the specific application area. It also takes documents from other sources, e.g. a rehabilitation plan made in schools, into consideration. The assessment is performed by the trainers, the students' needs and potentials are explored. An assessment can also take up to 5 days if needed. The "clear goals" programme also includes a dormitory stay to see how this works out; it can be done in a group (e.g. by course or by disability) or individually.

After an assessment, every specialist writes a report with recommendations. Then a meeting of all specialists and trainers takes place to come to a decision. Applications are possible throughout the year, one day per week is reserved for the 1-day assessments, others are spread. In May/June all applicants should be assessed to be ready for the new academic year. If the answer of the centre is negative, then always alternatives are proposed. In September the courses are starting. If not enough places are available, a waiting list is used.

The teacher's profession is not particularly recognised in the society, and it is a low paid job. Teachers have to work 35 hours a week, with 18 hours of lessons at the school. Due to the low payment, some teachers have two full-time jobs at different schools (2.5 days + 2.5 days). There are not many young teachers available, so the institution tries to keep staff.

Assessment also identifies supportive rehabilitation needs; also here goals are set. Every expert looks into depth after a student is accepted. Experts include all types of therapists, music therapist, psychiatrics, care givers, instructors etc. Networking with external services is established so they can take over after the time of studying, but only with a budget of about 500 € / year, i.e. work with reduced intensity is available only.

Finally, career development, study visits, practical training, programme "Toega tööle", cooperation with employers was presented by **Mrs. Ulvi Mölder**, employment specialist, and by **Mrs. Triin Juss** – head of employment unit. The unit was founded after the centre noticed that students did not get a job although they had good skills. 5 specialists are working in that unit meanwhile. They perform group and individual consultancy. In autumn, each specialist sets up 4 to 5 groups for career guidance lessons. There are two types of groups:

- *Adjustment groups*: helps to find the right and suitable courses, or to go to another vocational school. It is also important that students learn to analyse themselves, in a kind of simplified SWOT-analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). There are at least 4 company visits each year, with 2 - 3 hours each
- *Vocational training groups*: talking about courses, but also about health aspects, working place conditions (e.g. temperature, working hours), manual tasks versus automatised work, work opportunities outside their specific profession, how to find a job, how to write a CV and a motivation letter, how to act in a job interview, contracts, services of the employment offices, holiday regulations, law, salary. It includes company visits in companies in their specific field of training 4 times per year.

Practice phases & places: Some students get them themselves (2), others need support. It took e.g. 76 company contacts to find places for 11 students. About 35% get a job at the same place where they did the practical phase.

Table: Employment of graduates from vocational training and education (open labour market) 6 months after graduation in Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre

Areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Cook assistant Average 29%								29%
Bakery Average 48%	75%	43%	63%	50%	56%	25%	25%	50%
Wood processing Average 70%	100%	83%	100%	75%	36%	67%	0 % (1 person)	67%
Handicraft Average 41%		67%	33%	100 % (1 person)	29%	50%	20%	20%
Home maintenance Average 45%	-	100%	-	65%	36%	20%	0	50%
Computer services Average 35% (closed)	-	60%	45%	-	-	33%	11%	-
Secretary work Average 14,3% (closed)	-	0	25	-	-	-	-	-

Work with employers: the centre has a cooperative approach. Twice per year there is an information day, with 2 main presentations: one by a former student, one by a current employer / company. About 10 % of the contacted companies participate in these events.

Two students presented their views at the end of the first day. The first student is a young software and database management student aged 20 in her first year of studying. She appreciated the centre because of the offer of physiotherapy, not easily available anywhere else, and especially not in the town she lives in. She finished the 9th grade at school and wasn't really doing anything before she signed in at the centre. The second student is aged 33 and will be graduating in a few weeks in bakery. Before that, she was an actor and also active in the management of an organisation for the blind. She had applied some years ago already at Astangu, but at that time the offers did not suit her needs (here: no dormitory available). Becoming a baker was however always her dream, so now after offering dormitory service she joined the program. There might be an option to get a job in her hometown, unfortunately her preferred bakery has no open vacancies, while the working conditions in the other opportunity are not very favourable (poor heating system that make it quite cold during winter times). Both students seemed to be very

satisfied with the programmes and setting, only a wish for providing better kitchen facilities in one of the dormitory levels was mentioned.

2nd day morning

Visits to the enterprises and meetings with employers who have experiences learners / workers with SEN

Visit to the Neiseri Grupp in Laagri (<http://www.neisergroup.com>)



The company produces sofas and has about 100 employees. A deaf young man without ability for reading and writing Estonian made a practical phase in the company. Despite his handicap he showed extraordinary technical skills and learned quickly what is needed. The company hired him afterwards, since August 2011 he is now fully employed. An elderly mechanics who has a lot of spare time and who is good in instructing people is the main contact person for trainees. They work and try out things in a separate room, and for the last 1 or 2 weeks of their practical phase they work in the assembly hall. After that the skills are evaluated. However, so far only one person was hired via this way, most trainees have not good enough motivation according to the mechanics. None of the young man colleagues' knows sign language, so communication is restricted. Time pressure seems to be high in the company, but within a short time the young man seems to have become a fully accepted colleague.

Visit to the Klavis Vineerimaailm in Tännassilma Tehnopark (<http://www.vineerimaailm.ee>)



A small plywood and furniture manufacturer, with 16 employees, had started 8 years ago with just 4 employees. At that time it produced just plywood for other companies but decided last year to make own furniture as well and to sell it. Although the market for plywood furniture is growing, the company has problems to find motivated, loyal and skilled workers. The young man we visited has a behavioural problem, but no official diagnosis. He is still going to Astangu, following a vocational education course, but already has a work contract with the company. Before he was hired, he made a practical phase in that company. Although he didn't speak a word to anybody in the first days, it just took a few weeks and he communicated with everybody. Many of his tasks in the company were rehearsed and trained at Astangu as long as needed, as the company not always has time for that. This year he will make his examination, receiving a generally accepted certificate. His wish for the future is to stay in that company. He commutes by train and bus to the company and to Astangu, 25 minutes for one way. Of the three before-mentioned key characteristics wished from applicants, motivation is ranked highest by the company. The young man showed several times his motivation and even worked Saturdays or Sundays when needed.

2nd day afternoon

Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre (<http://www.hkhk.edu.ee/uus/index.php/info-in-english>)



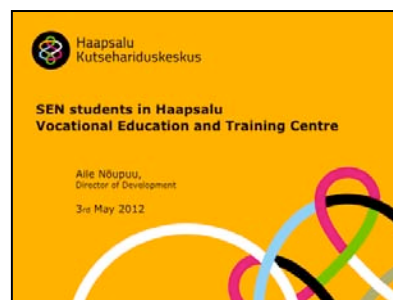
Welcome by Aile Nõupuu, Director of Development (see file [4-Haapsalu.pdf](#))

“The main activity of Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre is to arrange initial vocational training. In addition to that it also offers services based on different areas: catering-, accommodation- and conference service.

In autumn 2011 we started with 800 students and we offer work for 100 employees. The School has 13 approved curriculums including the simplified curriculum for students with special needs.

Most of the specialities are based on the basic education (cook, hospitality service, finishing work in construction, mason, joiner, computers and networks). In 3 - 4 years students get the occupational-secondary education from our school. Seven specialities (nature tourism management, textile work, accounting, restorer of wood and stone buildings, furniture restorer, catering, computers and networks) are for adult learners and the studies take place periodically -one week in a month during the studying period of two years -which is the best for the working people. The adult training courses in our further education department take place all through the year.

The students of Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre have successfully taken part in different professional contests of Estonian Republic. Cooks, waiters, waitresses and accountants, masons and joiners have won several prizes from different contests. In 2006 we won the second prize at AEHT Annual Conference Waiter's Contest which took place in Ireland and in 2008 the third place in room-service contest in AEHT Kuressaare Conference. Our students of servicing have represented Estonia at Euroskills 2010 and the students of catering at Worldskills 2011.



Our schoolhouse is renovated in 2005 and is situated in outskirts of Haapsalu, which is a small summer resort in West Estonia. Besides the schoolhouse we have got two cosy students' homes, tutorial building lab and modern wood workshop.

We are the member of AEHT - European Association of Hotel and Tourism Schools (<http://www.aeht.eu/>) and EHRL - Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association (<http://www2.ehrl.ee>). We also participate in all of the professional unions of Estonia related to the areas which are taught at our school.

Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre has several partner schools in Finland, Germany Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Italy, Norway, Sweden etc.”

(from Haapsalu flyer)

Presentation of **Mrs Heli Heimo**, coordinator of external relations of Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre. The first group based upon a simplified curriculum started 1997 for students with learning difficulties. In 2009, students of Astangu in the vocational education courses formally belonged to Haapsalu so that their education certificates are acknowledged. In Haapsalu there are currently 770 students plus 36 in Astangu. 65% (500) are young students aged 16 - 22, i.e. after basic school. 35% (270) are aged 23 - 68, involved in distance learning parallel to work and family. In total a number of 18 % has SEN, 25 % are living in the dormitories.

A counselling centre has been set up (as a project) for drop-out prevention (currently 22%, before it was lower) and to support teachers and learners. The reason for a high drop-out quote was seen in the dropping number of students so that competition to get a place in VET is not existing any more, and that in consequence students are not as motivated as years ago. As career teaching is not widely available in basic schools and gymnasiums, the drop-out quote is high. The new counselling centre will develop individualised plans, will provide employment counselling and coordinate practice phases and finding employment. The school plans to continue the centre when project funding will end. The Ministry plans currently to make career counselling obligatory, but the act is not accepted yet.

Tour in the Centre settings and classroom visits



- network management class
- cooking and house holding (3rd year)

- cleaning practice (house holding 1st year)
- washing & ironing
- construction
- textile work (see pictures Praktika Mapp below)



The connection between Astangu and Haapsalu extends to different levels: teachers from Haapsalu joined school classes to learn from Astangu teachers. Also, Astangu students join competitions and some leisure events, and vice versa.

Finally, the study visit team had a meeting with a **learner with SEN** at her practical work training place Taksi Pubi. The young woman works in a pub as a practical training and performs various tasks including cleaning, serving etc. The family running the pub started the company just 5 months ago, but they are very open to offer a training opportunity and support the young woman in her efforts. She performs very well, e.g. because the dishwasher is the same brand she was used from the centre, so she could operate it easily. But she also is very motivated and works longer than necessary. However, although she likes the working place, she would prefer to work as a cook, which she was able to experience before at a practical training in the centre.

