



INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR INCLUSION

Estonia

1. Policy Frameworks

This information was provided by Siiri Lepasaar (Chief Expert, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research).

1.1 Policies that impact on ICT for inclusion in the compulsory school sector

General Education System Development Plan 2007–2013: strategic policy for Estonia's general education system, which also includes the issue of students with special educational needs (SEN) and using ICT in learning in schools.

Tiger Leap Foundation strategy 2010–2013: a strategy by the Estonian national Tiger Leap Foundation for developing ICT and eLearning in the general education system.

Learning Tiger 2008–2013: national European Social Fund (ESF) programme involving developing and carrying out new in-service training courses for school principals and teachers. It focuses on eLearning technologies, eLearning materials, innovative international projects and in-service training.

Estonian Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act: responsibility for creating a learning environment; support funds for local municipalities.

National curriculum for basic schools: creating a learning environment; ICT studies; pedagogical issues.

1.2 Current policy on ICT for inclusion in relation to the main project themes

1.2 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities.

Estonia does not have a separate policy for ICT and the inclusion of students with SEN. Strategies involve all students.

1.2 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

The national curriculum for basic schools and the Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act both describe the necessary conditions for a learning environment.

1.2 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICTs

The Learning Tiger 2008-2013 national ESF programme sets goals to create new in-service training courses, train 12,000 teachers and multipliers in basic ICT skills and offer different thematic courses on the use of ICT in the learning and teaching process (including the use of ICT with students with SEN). This goal will be accomplished in 2013.

1.2 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

No information is available on this issue.

1.2 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT in inclusion

No information is available on this issue.



1.3 Strategic plans for implementing policy on ICT for inclusion

In Estonia, the school owner is responsible for creating a learning environment. In most schools, the local municipality is the owner, while for most special needs education (SNE) schools it is the state. This responsibility is stated in the Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act. The state also gives support to local municipalities for the purchase of learning and teaching facilities. Moreover, through the Tiger Leap Foundation, the state directly supports schools in buying ICT.

Each school develops its own curriculum, which is different from the national curriculum and has its own special features. Schools have quite a lot of autonomy in making policy decisions on ICT for inclusion; however, they lack the resources and skills to carry them out effectively.

1.4 Monitoring and evaluation of policies or strategic plans relating to ICT for inclusion

No information is available on this issue.

1.5 Main policy developments in ICT for Inclusion that have taken place since 2000

General Education System Development Plan 2007-2013: strategic policy for Estonia's general education system, which also contemplates the issue of students with SEN and using ICT in learning in schools.

Tiger Leap Foundation strategy 2010-2013: a strategy by the Estonian national Tiger Leap Foundation for developing ICT and eLearning in the general education system.

Learning Tiger 2008-2013: national ESF programme involving developing and carrying out new in-service training courses for school principals and teachers. It focuses on eLearning technologies, eLearning materials, innovative international projects and in-service training.

Estonian Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2010): responsibility for creating a learning environment; support funds for local municipalities.

National curriculum for basic schools (2010): creating a learning environment; ICT studies; pedagogical issues.

1.6 Current issues in relation to ICT for Inclusion

- Creating eLearning materials and planning eLearning strategy for the next 8-10 years;
- Determining a strategy for developing schools' learning environments where ICT is concerned (either one-to-one computing or some other strategy);
- Developing new learning materials that will always be available in digital format also.

1.7 Important short and long-term developments in ICT for Inclusion

The most important long-term development is to emphasise and integrate inclusion as a goal in strategic planning of all topics and allocate resources. A new national strategy is currently being developed for all educational levels. Good strategic planning of in-service training for the coming years is crucial.



2. Country Practice

This information was provided by Karel Zova (Head of eLearning Materials, Tiger Leap Foundation).

2.1 Main developments in practice in ICT for Inclusion since 2000 in relation to the main project themes

2.1 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities

During the last decade, much attention has been paid to equipping schools with ICT facilities, to teacher training and to eLearning materials.

The national curriculum for basic schools describes creation of a learning environment, ICT studies and pedagogical issues.

The Tiger Leap Foundation strategy 2010-2013 is a strategy by the Estonian national Tiger Leap Foundation for developing ICT and eLearning in the general education system.

2.1 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

The Tiger Leap Foundation provides financial support to Estonian schools for the purchase of ICT equipment, currently on a 50:50 basis (the Foundation meets half of the cost for a development project on the condition that the school/local government covers the other half). There is an annual call for proposals and ICT equipment intended for pupils with SEN is eligible for support, although we have no specific policy for prioritising SNE-related projects.

The Tiger Leap Foundation arranges an annual Innovative Schools contest and SNE-related projects have received awards there on several occasions.

2.1 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICT

The Tiger Leap Foundation offers schools a variety of possibilities that combine ICT equipment, teacher training, web-based learning materials and competitions for teachers and pupils. At present, the Tiger Leap Foundation is running a teacher training programme entitled 'Special needs and ICT', the goal of which is to introduce different educational needs, prepare teaching materials for students with SEN and demonstrate how to use ICT to support teaching for children with SEN, ([Hariduslike erivajadustega õpilaste õpe ja IKT](#), 2012). Since January, the Tiger Leap Foundation has been running a web-based course for teachers who teach students with SEN. The course was developed during the European Schoolnet's project [SENnet](#) (The Special Educational Needs Network), in which the Tiger Leap Foundation is a partner. The course, '[Pupils with SEN in mainstream schools](#)', runs on the education portal Koolielu (www.koolielu.ee) and its aim is to introduce opportunities which help each student to receive education according to their abilities. Universal design will be introduced for learning and the preparation of teaching materials, etc.

2.1 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

No information is available on this issue.

2.1 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT for inclusion

No information is available on this issue.



2.2 ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

2.2 (i) Country-based networks to support teachers in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

The Tiger Leap Foundation's education portal www.koolielu.ee contains files or links with thousands of study materials (including materials for students with SEN), structured on the basis of the national curriculum.

The website www.hev.edu.ee was created by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre as part of the ESF programme 'Preparation of Study Materials for Students with Special Educational Needs' (2008-2013). Key information on special educational needs, electronic supplementary material and teachers' materials are available on this website.

2.2 (ii) Initial teacher education in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

There are no special courses in initial teacher education involving the use of ICT to promote inclusive learning.

2.2 (iii) Practical support in classrooms to help teachers' use of ICT to promote inclusive learning

No information is available on this issue.

2.2 (iv) Important information sources about new developments, hardware and software products and ideas for using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

Digital learning resources.

The Tiger Leap Foundation has supported the development of the website *Lihtsustatud viiped* (simplified sign language). The site consists of illustrations and videos of sign language, comprising 248 keywords, 216 illustrations and 216 videos of simplified signs based on Estonian sign language. See: <http://lihtsustatudviiped.edu.ee>

In addition, we have supported a few smaller resources that can be found on the Koolielu education portal <http://koolielu.ee/waramu/search/sort/created/curriculumSubject/73978588/%3Athsupport/1>

One of the main functions of the Koolielu portal is to facilitate the sharing of learning resources. It currently contains 225 SEN digital learning resources listings <http://koolielu.ee/waramu/search/sort/created/curriculumSubject/73978588>

2.3 Current obstacles to using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

There is no state strategy for promoting the use of ICT for learners with SEN.

Lack of individual ICT equipment for learners.

Lack of specific software.

Lack of teacher competencies.

2.4 Factors that support using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

Please see previous answer.



2.5 Perceived short and long-term developments that will have an impact on ICT for Inclusion practice

There is a move towards increasing the importance of ICT in the study process of children with SEN. ICT is being used more than before in teaching, learning, communicating, therapy and diagnostics. There is also a move towards developing a national subsidy system for study materials and technical aids for children with SEN.