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# Lifelong Guidance in Estonia 2021



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# Dear Member of the Guidance Community,

Welcome to the 2021 edition of Lifelong Guidance in Estonia. The world has changed dramatically in the last year for us all; it is important to adapt and be resilient but also to find new ways of learning, working and even travelling.

The aim of this publication is to give an introduction to how career development is ensured by a lifelong guidance system in Estonia. We are convinced that the meaningful exchange of practices and policies and learning from one another across borders in the field of LLG is the key to improving our community impact.

The Estonian guidance system can be characterised as flexible and open to change. During recent years, a number of decisions have significantly affected service provision across the country.

To cope with the difficult times, as we have lived most of the past year studying and working from a distance, digital services have played a crucial role. The positive side of this sudden enforced use of digital tools is that it has put a focus on keeping and developing the level of services. The downside is how our mental health has been impacted – coping with the unknown is becoming more difficult.

Estonia has a national long-term development strategy ‘Estonia 2035’, in which skills and the labour market is one of the five main priority areas covering lifelong guidance, showing that the development

of the area is a crucial part of any nation’s growth and prosperity.

For those who are already aware of the main aspects of lifelong guidance in Estonia, we are delighted to bring attention to recent developments and would like to highlight some of the latest initiatives in 2020:

- The first round of the mentorship programme at The Association of Estonian Career Counsellors;
- The very first eAcademia – virtual learning mobility in Estonia for practitioners from six countries;
- The ‘Get to work’ campaign (*Tööle kaasa*), where employers offer the opportunity for employees’ children to get to know their parents’ work and the world of work more broadly;
- The study ‘Occupational qualification framework in the field of lifelong guidance’;
- The Education and Youth Board (*Harno*) is a new governmental body under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research, which means that lifelong guidance developments in the education sector are brought under one roof as well. The joint institution was established on the basis of the services of Foundation Innove, Archimedes Foundation, the Information Technology Foundation for Education and the Estonian Youth Work Centre.
- The National Forum for career guidance has been re-established to ensure cooperation in the field across sectors.

In this publication, all texts in blue refer to valuable references. Just click and discover! You are also welcome to find useful references at [euroguidance.ee!](https://euroguidance.ee)



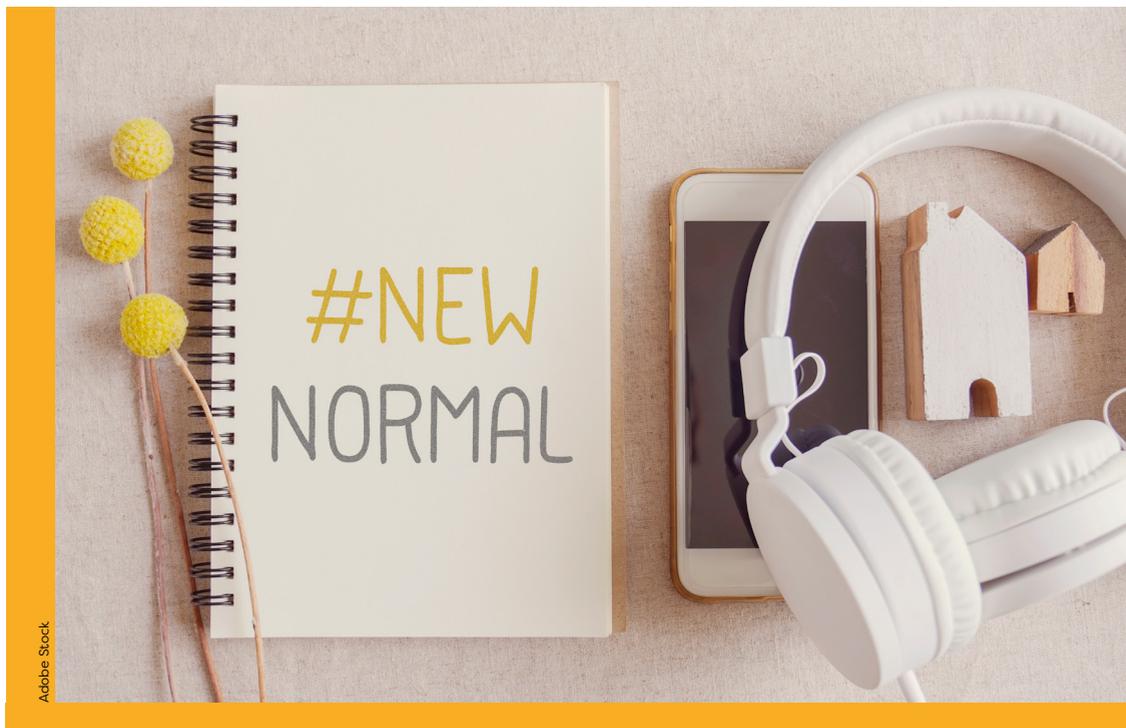
Furthermore, we are particularly proud to gain new momentum with the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, IAEVG. The memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Euroguidance network and the Estonian representative has officially been certified as the IAEVG national correspondent.

Are you interested in developing your skills and competencies in relation to global education and the labour market? Would you like to expand your professional network and

establish contact with colleagues from other countries? Do you think that new inspiration from other countries and cultures might be good for your professional development? If yes, the national Euroguidance centres are at your disposal.

Experts and practitioners within the field of lifelong guidance are welcome to contact us!

Anu Puulmann and Margit Rammo  
Euroguidance Estonia





# Strategic View

The national long-term **development strategy 'Estonia 2035'** focuses mainly on the health of our citizens, our preparedness for change and our relationship with the living environment.

The strategy sets out five long-term strategic goals:

- Estonia's people are smart, active and care about their health
- Estonia's society is caring, cooperative and open
- Estonia's economy is strong, innovative and responsible
- Estonia offers a safe and high-quality living environment that takes into consideration the needs of all its inhabitants

- Estonia is innovative, reliable and people-centred

The authorities responsible for the development of lifelong guidance are the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research, which have strategies for governance in the education and labour market areas.

## Education Policy

As the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 expired in 2020, Estonia started the long-term strategic planning of the fields of education in spring 2018. The **Education Strategy 2021-2035**, which sets out the key educational goals for the next 15 years, is the

follow-up to the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020. The strategy focuses on the key strengths and challenges that need to be addressed to be able to keep pace with changes both in Estonia and worldwide and to prepare the education system and its participants for the future in the best way possible. Planning for future development should take into consideration the ageing population, people's changing preferences, climate change, globalisation and technological progress. These developments change the nature of work and people's lives and imply changes in education. The process of Education Strategy 2021-2035 is still ongoing and the strategy will be approved in the first half of 2021. Please find the general objective and the three strategic goals identified in the drafted strategy below.

**The general objective** of the strategy is to equip the population of Estonia with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare people to fulfil their potential in

To ensure supported learning, we need to continue the development of the career services system.

their personal, occupational and social life and contribute to promoting quality of life in Estonia as well as global sustainable development.

To ensure supported learning, we need to continue the development of the career services system and career education at school, including the development of a comprehensive system to discover and develop individuals' capabilities. We also need to improve continuing training and retraining opportunities to respond swiftly to labour market changes and ensure that people are equipped with the right knowledge and skills for employment.

To achieve general objective, the strategy sets out three **strategic goals**:

1

Learning opportunities are diverse and accessible and the education system enables smooth transitions between different levels and types of education.

2

In Estonia, there are competent and motivated teachers and school heads, a diverse learning environment and learner-centred education.

3

Learning options are responsive to the development needs of society and the labour market.

Figure 1. Education Strategy 2021-2035: general objective and strategic goals (draft as of March 2021). Source: Ministry of Education and Research

## Employment policy

The strategic goals of the employment policy are covered in the **Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023**. As the strategy covers a wide area of social issues, the new strategy has been under preparation since 2021.

The strategic goals of the plan include achieving an inclusive labour market, a high employment rate among the entire population and high compliance between the supply and demand of the workforce.

## Stakeholder involvement across public sector organisations

In 2018, the Estonian government acknowledged that there was room for improvement regarding both access to and the quality of the career services and a reform concerning the provision of the services was launched. Accordingly, starting from 2019, career counselling and career information have been provided by public employment offices under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Currently, the main challenge for both ministries is to achieve the aims which triggered the reform.

The role of general education, vocational education and higher education institutions is to ensure access to lifelong guidance for their students and support them in reaching the learning outcomes set in curricula.

The Education and Youth Board supports educational institutions in the implementation of national curricula. As a result of the curriculum development process concerning entrepreneurship and career management skills, we are heading towards the better integration of career management and entrepreneurial skills within the curriculum application process over the forthcoming years. Furthermore, as the national Euroguidance centre, the Board also provides support in the areas of international learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training and employment to Estonian guidance professionals and professionals abroad.

The role of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (the public employment service) is to ensure the provision of career information and counselling to all people regardless of their employment status.

# Institutions and Services

Lifelong guidance has been practiced in Estonia for years. Services have been provided for different target groups by different service providers and have also been known by a number of names – the latest version being *karjääriteenus* (in English: career services). Content-wise, both lifelong guidance and career guidance are used to mean “A range of activities that enable citizens of any age, at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competencies and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competencies are learned and/or used” **as agreed by the ELGPN members in 2013.**

Career guidance in Estonia is based on three pillars – career education, career counselling and career information provision – and is provided by both education and employment systems. Career education is integrated in curricula at various education levels and is a long-standing tradition.

## Education Sector

In the education sector, guidance is provided as both a part of youth work and a part of formal education. The development of general skills, including career management skills, begins in pre-school education. Children start to discover education, their parents’ workplaces and the concept of work

Career guidance in Estonia is based on three pillars – career education, career counselling and career information provision – and is provided by both education and employment systems.

and the labour market in general. Children are supported to develop general skills, such as cognitive and learning skills, social skills and self-management skills, which are all essential for coping in education, the labour market and society at large. The development of such skills and competencies is supported throughout the period of study – at all levels of education. The **Education Act** of the Republic of Estonia stipulates that career guidance of children and youth is the responsibility of local governments.

Development and implementation of the national curricula and career education is supported by **The Education and Youth Board**. In general education, this includes the implementation of compulsory central topic ‘Lifelong learning and career planning’ and career-related elective subjects so that development of career management skills is supported in schools. In vocational education (VET), the focal point is the new ‘Learning path and working in a changing environment’ module, which consists of career topics integrated with entrepreneurship competencies and is an obligatory part of every VET curriculum.

## General education

**The national curricula** establishes the **standard for basic and general secondary education**. The curricula are implemented in all basic (grades 1-9) and upper secondary schools (grades 10-12) of Estonia.

The national curricula does not dictate to schools the precise actions to be taken to achieve the set goals, but allows each school to select the best ways, methods and means based on the specifics and abilities of the school. The school is obliged to ensure the availability of career-related services. This includes career counselling and career information services provided by PES or other means for making career services accessible to students (e.g. employing a career counsellor in the staff). The national basic school and national upper secondary school curricula include eight compulsory central topics, one of which supports pupils' career planning – 'Lifelong learning and career planning'.

In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi of the elective subject and elective course in careers education, which enhances the use of this possibility in the school curriculum.

**Rajaleidja** centres organise the provision and development of **educational counselling** services for parents, teachers and other educators of young people with **special education needs** (ages 1.5-18). The centres employ speech therapists, psychologists, social pedagogues and special educational teachers. The centres have been part of The Education and Youth Board since August 2020.

As part of the youth guarantee, the Ministry of Education and Research also launched an initiative to support young people aged 7-26 when entering and coping in the labour market and to bring young people that are not in education or work (NEETs) back to education. **The Youth Prop Up**



and 'Hoog Sisse' (in the City of Tallinn) are support programmes for young persons aged 15-26 who are not involved in studies or employment. The main aim of these programmes is to support young people in need who may have been made redundant or have not completed their education and are not currently studying. The format of the programmes attempts to assist youth in realising their potential and returning to being a productive member of society as quickly as possible, raising their confidence and self-esteem.

According to the **Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act**, it is also possible to conduct studies in Estonia by following the curriculum formulated under the aegis of either the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) or the Statute of the European Schools. These curricula are designed foremost for the children of the foreign officials and specialists working in Estonia.

## Vocational education and training

The goal of the **Vocational Educational Institutions Act** is to set out the basics of the organisation of studies in vocational education institutions. The task of a vocational education institution is to create opportunities for students to obtain the knowledge, skills and ethical guidance necessary for life and work, including professional training and retraining, considering the needs of society, students and the labour market.

Until the end of the academic period 2019/2020, the development of career management skills takes place in vocational education both through vocational training and generic skills modules. In every vocational education curriculum, there is



Erlend Staabu

**a generic skill module** which deals with career-related topics and the principles of entrepreneurship. Since autumn 2020, a **new module 'Learning path and working in a changing environment'** has been implemented. According to national curricula, the module is compulsory at level 4 (vocational secondary education) and recommended at levels 2-5.

The aim of the studies is for students to be capable of developing their careers in a modern economic, entrepreneurial and working environment based on the principles of lifelong guidance. Passing the module will help learners acknowledge professional studies as one step in their career path and take responsibility for their learning and development. The curriculum describes the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the module. The implementation of the module is decided by the educational institutions themselves.

Career development competencies are also developed **throughout the course**. Great emphasis is placed on practice, the preparation for which and direct feedback from the supervisor helps learners understand their studies, set goals and determine the need for development. From 2021, the new occupational qualification standard for VET teachers is bringing attention to the relevant activities to support students' personal and professional development.

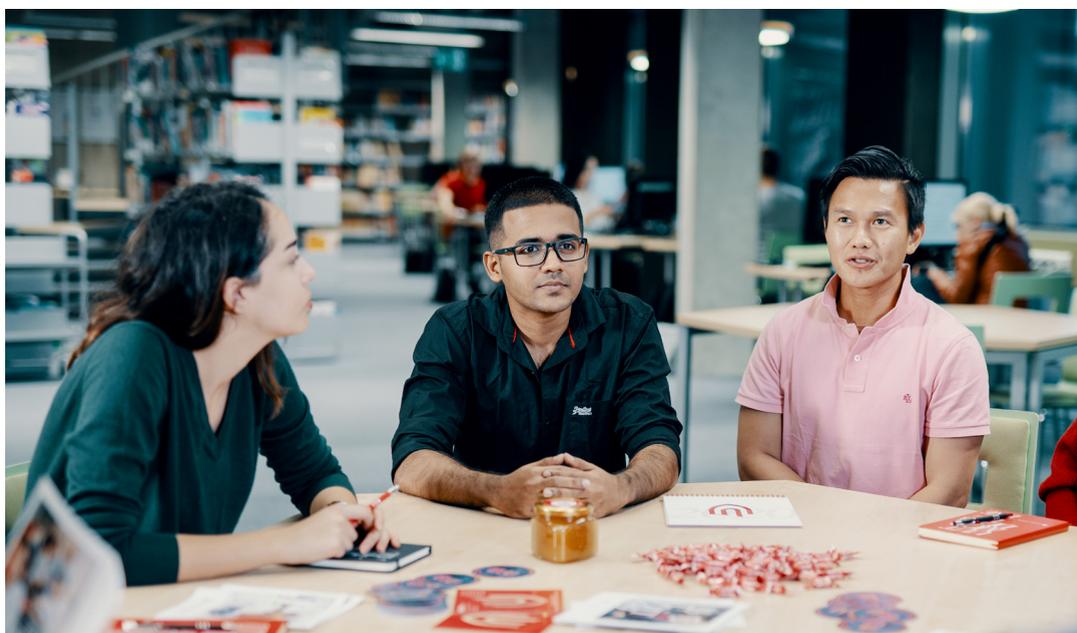
In addition to the aforementioned, vocational educational institutions also have the possibility to include career development **as an elective subject** in the curriculum. Some vocational educational institutions have their own career counsellor or educational counsellor who supports learners throughout the learning process from admission.

Amendments to the **Vocational Educational Institutions Act**, adopted in December 2018, opened up the possibility for vocational

educational institutions to carry out **Choice of profession training**. The curriculum (30-60 ECTS) mainly focuses on career management skills and their development, with the aim of supporting young people in making decisions about their future education pathway or transition to the labour market. The main target group consists of dropouts of primary school, upper secondary school or vocational school, NEET young people, students with special needs, etc. who need additional support in their choice of profession and when entering studies or employment.

## Higher education

The goal of the **Higher Education Act** is to set the procedure for the organisation of studies in universities and graduation from universities as well as the forms and conditions of obtaining higher education. The act applies to private universities as far as the **Private Schools Act** does not provide otherwise.



Guidance is available for student candidates and students at six public universities. The overall aim is to support student candidates in their career choices and students in their studies and to offer a number of services that help students develop personal life skills and achieve success in the labour market.

**Career counselling** provides students with support in career planning, making study- and job-related decisions and developing their job-seeking skills. Career counsellors support students in making career choices and career plans, self-analysis, searching and applying for a job, writing a CV and cover letter and preparing for a job interview. Both individual counselling and group services are provided, involving university staff and external experts.

**Tutoring by student volunteers** is also available, e.g. for first-year students and international students who are starting their studies. Tutors are senior students who are ready to provide additional guidance and information on several matters, ranging from the study system and student life to living conditions in Estonia.

In addition, students are also supported with **psychological counselling** in the event that problems arise during studies or in their personal life. Students with **special needs** get help if they need to change or adapt the content of studies arising from the curriculum, the organisation of work or the study environment in order to guarantee the opportunity for maximum participation in the study process and individual development. Universities help students with special needs upon entering the university, participating in studies, making exams and tests, providing study materials as well as creating a suitable social and physical environment.

Regarding **international mobility**, Estonian students are advised on numerous student

exchange options and incoming exchange students are supported throughout their application process and during studies.

## Employment Sector

The provision of active and passive labour market measures, including the career information service and career counselling and the payment of labour market benefits, is available through the **Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund** (*Eesti Töötukassa*, the PES) free of charge all over Estonia. The legal basis of the activities of PES is defined by two laws: **The Unemployment Insurance Act**, which describes the unemployment insurance system and the organisation of PES, and **the Labour Market Services and Benefits Act**, which contains the provisions concerning job mediation and the related services.

The strategy in the employment sector foresees the **provision of career information and counselling to all people regardless of their employment status**. This includes working adults having the opportunity to participate in career guidance, either at the employment office or in the workplace. In addition to existing labour market measures, a special approach designed for young people without professional education or work experience was introduced (*My First Job*). The measure aims to decrease youth unemployment due to little or no work experience and to help youth without specialised education find a job. Wage subsidies combined with training compensation can be granted to employers who hire these young people.

The PES is providing unemployment prevention measures. These services are targeted towards employees who need support in changing jobs or remaining employed due to lack of skills, outdated skills

or not being able to continue in their current position due to health problems as well as towards employers to support them in finding and training suitably skilled workforce and restructuring their companies. The new services include:

- a degree study allowance for an employed person or a person registered as unemployed for obtaining vocational education, professional higher education or Bachelor's studies;
- labour market training with a training card for employed persons at risk of unemployment; and
- support for obtaining qualifications for employed persons who have undergone labour market or other training with the support of the training benefit and a training grant for employers for improving the skills and knowledge of their employees upon their recruitment and helping them adapt to changes in the employer's economic activities.

If employed people want to receive support from PES for obtaining a degree or attending training, as a first step, they need to meet with a PES career counsellor to discuss the skills or knowledge that need to be obtained to continue working. The counsellor discusses with the person whether the training supports the acquisition of these skills and whether the person is in the target group for the training PES can provide.

As one of the targets is to support smooth transitions between education and work, students and young people hold special importance. The biggest client group receiving career services is in fact students from general education. PES provides group counselling, workshops and individual career guidance for students in grades 7-12, students in vocational education or youth in general.

To provide a more creative, open and self-exploratory space for career development,

the new interactive **Career Centre** was opened in 2020 in Tallinn. The Centre has a variety of interactive tools that help a person discover and analyse skills, strengths and preferences and learn about study and employment opportunities in a fun, engaging way. There are exciting expos, including job interview simulator, virtual reality devices to introduce different jobs, hands-on tools to test skills, animations, tests, etc. The Centre is unique to the region, where through the use of interactive solutions and gamification, it is possible to find the most suitable career opportunity. Most expos are available in three languages - Estonian, Russian and English.

## Private sector

We can see the change in career management discourse in the media and the private sector. The sector has become more active and open. This creates opportunities for career coaches, career counsellors and other professionals to design and provide services for a variety of target groups (from CEOs to teachers, youth workers and entrepreneurs).

Based on the main services, companies providing career guidance for a fee can be divided into two categories:

**Consulting companies** mainly provide career counselling (for both outplacement and career development purposes), coaching and competency assessment. Their main target groups are:

- companies interested in using their human resources as efficiently as possible, assessing teamwork within the company, for outplacement reasons or as a tool for employer branding and talent retention. In addition, career development services for managerial staff, specialists and spokespersons; and

- individuals looking for a career change or a new challenge or considering entrepreneurship. This target group has grown in recent years as lifestyle design has become more available. This has influenced the rise of individual career counsellors as entrepreneurs, coaches as work-life designers and marketers as self-marketing (video CV, social media design, blogging) advisors. As entrepreneurship is popularised, self-employment requires a new type of consulting for the individual. Currently, there are several small consulting businesses covering a variety of topics from finding a career path to work interview preparation and personal branding.

**Recruitment companies** – services for job seekers (tools for inserting CVs, CV revisions, consultations) and recruitment services for companies. As a marketing tool, they usually also offer online information about careers and training opportunities, tests,

counselling or coaching, etc. This sector has seen the transition from employer-centred to candidate-centred services. It has resulted in seminars, blogs and consultations for individuals looking for new challenges. This is partly due to the need to retain good relationships with high-quality candidates, knowing that the lifespan of an engagement with one company is lower than before.

A new initiative is **Education Technology Estonia**, (also known as EdTech) refers to an area of technology devoted to the development and application of tools (including software, hardware, and processes) intended for education. Their focus and activities are ensuring future generations in the field of educational innovation, increasing cooperation with teachers, students, parents, educational institutions and the state, and increasing the sector's exports. EdTech Estonia brings together and represents EdTech companies.





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# Digital Solutions

E-Governance is a strategic choice for Estonia to improve the competitiveness of the state and increase the well-being of its people while implementing hassle-free governance. The modern infrastructure has made it possible to build a safe e-services ecosystem. An important part of this ecosystem is flexibility and the ability to integrate its different parts while improving e-services and allowing government systems to grow. X-Road has become the backbone of e-Estonia, allowing the nation's public and private sector information systems to link up and operate in harmony. Citizens can select e-solutions from among a range of public services at any time and place convenient to them, as 99% of public services are now available to citizens as e-services. Every

resident has an **electronic ID** and, in most cases, there is no need to physically visit an agency providing the service.

## Data Sources and Tools

The data on the educational system is gathered into the web-based national register, **the Education Information System** stores information about educational institutions, teachers, and graduation documents. It allows teachers to get an overview of their students, for the government to gain insights into educational trends, and is useful for students, as well. The visual educational statistics database **Haridussilm** ('educational eye') allows a

comparison of schools based on a series of indicators. For the integration of various education and labour market services, numerous information systems have been developed which are compatible with the EHIS and facilitate the integration of services. For example, there is the **Examination Information System, Study Admission Information System, Study Information System, Research Information System, Register of Professions**. Furthermore, **Study in Estonia** is the official guide to higher education providing the possibilities for studying for international students.

A new tool is the **Education Technology Compass** maps the technology trends that most affect the educational landscape in the coming years and helps the educators stay informed about the development of technology and related teaching methods in the world. A review is completed each year and focuses on selected topics and identifies the current state of the Estonian schools and new opportunities emerged with the aim to

discover what we should teach students to prepare them for the future labour market and what opportunities the application of different technologies in teaching offers.

## Digital solutions and lifelong guidance

The daily work of the career guidance practitioners is intertwined with the use of various ICT solutions. The use of ICT here is multi-faceted: practitioners are both ICT users and the creators of new values through their use of ICT solutions.

The ICT solutions can be broadly divided into the following two groups:

- For service provision, including web pages, databases, educational software, games, social media channels, and e-tests;
- For internal processes, including documentation management, customer management, feedback solutions,

## Different **solutions and tools** for schools

### **Education Technology Compass**

helps educators to discover and apply technologies in teaching.

### **eKool and Stuudium**

e-school solutions for schools to organize teaching and learning.

**e-Schoolbag**  
digital learning materials.

### **Teacher's digital competence**

model and learner's digital competence model provides learners and teachers a common basis for analysing digital competence in education.

### **Digital Mirror**

helps schools to evaluate their level of 'digital maturity'.

Figure 2. Digital solutions for schools

information exchange in cloud-based solutions, and e-learning environments.

OSKA ('Future Trends of Work') analyses the needs for labour and skills necessary for economic development over the next 10 years. **Guidance practitioners consider OSKA as an important resource to support both adults and young on their career development**<sup>1</sup>. OSKA reports are helpful for professionals and client-centred data is made available in educational portal mentioned above.

COVID-19 crisis in the world in 2020 disrupted the traditional face-to-face career guidance and intensified the need for e-guidance. As the crisis progressed several changes were made in the provision of career services by PES. There were time periods when the only way to provide career services was virtually, i.e. via Skype, MS Teams, telephone and e-mail. From the perspective of individual services these means were already in use but never on such a large scale. New challenge was to provide workshops and group counselling via MS Teams which required

open mind, quick readiness to learn new skills and experimenting with methods.

Career practitioners use a variety of **electronically administered tests and evaluation tools**, including personality tests, career choice tests and aptitude tests etc. The online tests have been standardized on norm groups consisting of school children and adults and are developed by few private companies and in some cases by universities.

There have also been some new and exciting digital tools for career development, including **virtual reality applications of occupations**, e.g. medical workers, youth workers, metal industry, **virtual tours of vocational education institutions** and **virtual guided tour for guidance professionals to learn digital tools** available at the newly opened career centre. In addition, versatile **technical environments for information exchange and group counselling** are in use. The most popular tools for the involvement of young learners are Webquest, Zunal, Kahoot, Padlet, Coggle, Mentimeter and Actionbound.

<sup>1</sup> Cedefop (2020). Strengthening skills anticipation and matching in Estonia: capitalising on OSKA's potential to realise national ambitions. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

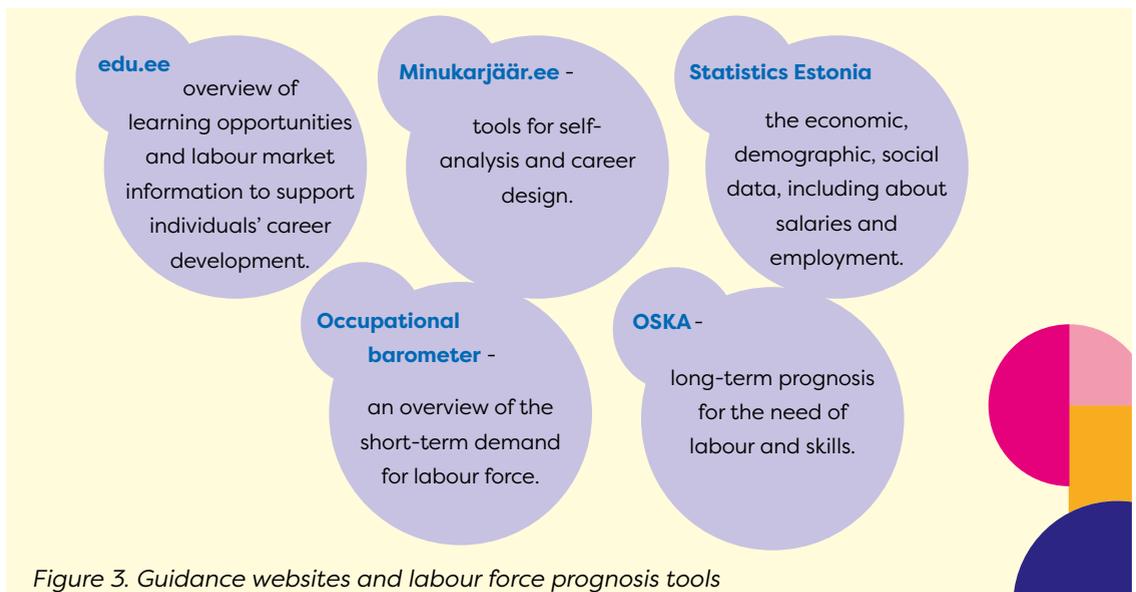


Figure 3. Guidance websites and labour force prognosis tools



Adobe Stock

# Professional development of practitioners

The majority of Estonian career guidance practitioners work in the public employment service (the PES) as career counsellors or career information specialists or in educational institutions as teachers or career counsellors. No full academic qualification is obtainable for the practitioners – most have a higher education degree in social or educational sciences (e.g. psychology, teacher training, youth work and personnel management).

However, the occupational qualification system is established to ensure the professional development of practitioners in the field of career guidance. Occupational activities and competency requirements for occupational qualifications are identified in

the national standard, which is the central framework for both the training system and the awarding of qualifications.

**Recent research** reveals that the occupational qualification system is clearly an essential component of quality assurance with a focus on the professional training of staff who deliver lifelong guidance services.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Psience (2020) Karjääriteenuste valdkonna kutsesüsteemi fookusgrüüüuring / Occupational qualification system in the field of career guidance: focus group study. Archimedes Foundation, Euroguidance Estonia.

## Career specialist as a profession

The occupational qualification system plays a significant role in ensuring the professional development of practitioners in career guidance. The system was launched in 2006 when the **Estonian Qualification Authority** certified the **Association of Estonian Career Counsellors** for awarding and recertifying occupational qualifications.

The **occupational qualification standard**<sup>3</sup> describes occupational activities and provides the competence requirements for occupational qualifications and their levels (see Table 1). Part A of the standard provides an **overview of the nature of work, major parts of work and tasks, necessary tools and work environment**, including the specificities of work, and

describes the personal characteristics and skills that enhance occupational activities. The description of work includes several activities, such as individual and group career counselling and information provision of education, labour market and professions for groups and individuals. In addition, the main tasks and elective areas of work are identified. The **competence requirements** presented in part B of the standard serve as a basis for the assessment of the applicant for the occupational qualification. When applying for a career specialist qualification, there is a need to demonstrate four mandatory competencies and the recurring competence. All competence descriptions include performance indicators. The recurring competence has been identified with performance indicators, such as engagement in self-reflection and continuous capacity building, customer focus, adherence to professional ethics, goal-setting, outcome analysis, language proficiency, team-building and use of technology. In addition, at least one of the elective competencies

<sup>3</sup> Register of occupational qualifications. Occupational Qualification Standards: Career Specialist, EstQF Level 7

Table 1. Career Specialist: description of work and competence requirements

Part A: Description of work	Part B: Competency requirements
<b>TASKS</b>	<b>MANDATORY COMPETENCES</b>
1. Promoting services	1. Promotion of services
2. Networking to provide services	2. Networking to provide services
3. Service development	3. Service development
4. Instruction and training	4. Provision of instruction and training
<b>ELECTIVE AREAS OF WORK</b>	<b>OPTIONAL COMPETENCES</b>
5. Career counselling	5. Career counselling
6. Career information provision	6. Career information provision
	<b>RECURRING COMPETENCES</b>

must be demonstrated in the process, either career information provision or career counselling.

The current standard for career specialists is established at two professional qualification levels: 6 and 7. The levels are comparable to levels of education – accordingly Bachelor’s degree and Professional higher education certificate (level 6) and Master’s degree (level 7). The main difference between the levels is that in addition to service provision, the level 7 practitioner has more extensive experience in developing the field at the national or international level, e.g. new tools, curricula, research or training.

When becoming a career specialist or applying for a corresponding position, acquisition of the respective qualification is not required but rather recommended. In addition to this, the PES has developed its own competency framework for career practitioners and provides further training for career practitioners. Framework is also an essential part of performance discussion in the PES.

## Professional development

It is not yet possible in Estonia to acquire a career specialist qualification in a concise manner. However, **higher education institutions offer a variety of subjects** (e.g. introduction to career counselling, career counselling and coordination, career counselling methods, a career counselling module as an elective subject in human resource management and development, organisational behaviour, a career information module in the Master’s curriculum of information management). The most comprehensive programme for career counsellors is offered by the Institute of Psychology of the University of Tartu (Master’s level; 60 ECTS). Furthermore, career

guidance competencies can be obtained in **various courses offered by public agencies and private training providers.**

One of the prerequisites for acquiring the career specialist qualification is completing the corresponding **basic training** which was initially designed in cooperation with public agencies and several universities. The trainings do not take place regularly and are rather internal (organised upon request by the main providers of career services).

The development of the practitioners’ professional competencies on the basis of the requirements of the occupational qualification standard is important;

continuous professional training as well as **peer-coaching** are available for this purpose. The range of training topics is broad, for example, characteristic features of teenagers with special educational needs, psychological evaluation tools, personality and career testing, personal branding, motivational interviewing, ICT skills, etc.

To ensure international exposure, speakers and trainers from other countries are invited and practitioners have **opportunities for learning mobility and exchanging practices with colleagues abroad.** A recent **study** published by **Euroguidance Estonia** confirms that international learning mobility enables career professionals to improve their professional language skills, expand their professional network and adopt **new guidance practices**<sup>4</sup>.

4 Tamm, A. & Vaade, V. (2019) Rahvusvaheline koostöö karjäärispetsialistide pilgu läbi /International co-operation through the eyes of career guidance professionals. Archimedes Foundation, Euroguidance Estonia

## Future qualifications

**OSKA** analyses the need for the labour and skills necessary for Estonia's economic development over the next 10 years. OSKA's **applied research** surveys on sectoral needs for labour and skills are unique because they use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods and analyse professional qualifications across all levels of education. Five economic sectors are examined each year.

In 2018, the study of **labour force and skills anticipation in the field of human resources, including career services**, administrative work and business consultation, was completed. The key findings show that over ten years:

- The **demand for career services is increasing** due to the need to bring more people to the labour market and keep

them employed as well as the changing expectations of employees for their career paths;

- There are no career guidance degree studies available. **Continuing education opportunities need to be developed** further to ensure the best solutions for their training;
- In the field of human resource management and career services, **the ability to deal with employees of different cultural backgrounds, persons with reduced work ability and senior citizens becomes increasingly important**;
- **Human resource managers are expected to be more employee-centred and have career development competencies** as well as knowledge of business fundamentals and finances; and
- There is **increasing demand for ICT and marketing competencies**.



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# International Co-operation

Lifelong guidance is on the agenda of many international forums. The main aims and components of the Estonian guidance system are very much in line with EU and OECD recommendations on guidance policies and practices. The importance of promoting an international dimension in Estonian guidance is a value and therefore co-operation with partners outside Estonia is our priority – experience from other countries inspires us in meeting the challenges and opportunities at home.

We are active partners in the following guidance and mobility networks:

Many of the international activities for guidance practitioners are initiated by

the Estonian Euroguidance Centre, placed in the newly established governmental agency - the Education and Youth Board. The European network of **Euroguidance Centres** includes centres in 34 European countries and supports the competence development of the guidance community on the European dimension of lifelong guidance. Its main target group consists of guidance practitioners and policy-makers in all European countries.

Since the year 2000 Estonia has been part of the **Academia network** which aims at providing practitioners with an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in an international context, to study the changes that take place in Europe, and to learn from

the experiences of their colleagues in other countries. In the framework of Academia, hundreds of professionals from European countries have visited Estonia and hundreds of our practitioners have participated in learning mobility across Europe.

The **NICE Foundation** represents 47 founders from 23 European countries, including higher education institutions, organisations and individuals, who are dedicated to academic training in career guidance and counselling. The main mission of the network is to promote excellence and innovation in academic, research-based training of career practitioners in Europe.

The Nordplus funded **VALA** is a network of higher education institutions, in the Nordic and Baltic countries and focuses on academic training in the field of lifelong guidance. Partner institutions have established the network to be able to better prepare career counsellors and guidance workers for the diverse clients they work with. The broad aim of the network is to increase professionalization and strengthen co-operation between higher education institutions and the labour market, and between research, practice and policy.

**International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy** aims to facilitate and promote international policy sharing and learning on career development and public policy issues globally. The purpose of sharing is to help countries and policy developers to improve national policies and

systems for career guidance. Participation at the ICCDPP symposia has offered Estonian country teams the opportunity to share ideas, analyse contemporary challenges to career development systems, and develop new thinking.

Estonia is also represented in the network for lifelong guidance and career development **CareersNet**. The Cedefop's network of independent experts was created to collect comparable and reliable information on a European scale in the field of lifelong guidance and career development issues. The gathered information and analysis aims at identification of gaps and solutions, beyond a snapshot of national guidance systems.

Furthermore, since 2015 Estonian guidance professionals meet on a regular basis with colleagues from Nordic countries at the **e-Guidance and e-Governance events** to share experiences on how the countries have been progressing in integrating career guidance within the overall e-Governance structures in their country.

A new momentum was gained with the **International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, IAEVG**. The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Euroguidance network and the Estonian representative has officially been certified as the IAEVG national correspondent to enable systematic exchange of inspiring professional information.



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# Education System

In Estonia, the structure of the education system gives opportunities for everyone to move from one level of education to the next. The levels of education are pre-school education (ISCED level 0), basic education (ISCED levels 1 and 2), upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) and higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8). The organisation and principles of the education system are established in the **Education Act** and specified in lower level acts structured by type of educational institution.

Studies in preschools and basic and upper secondary schools are conducted under three uniform national curricula, based on which the educational institutions compile their own curricula. The language of

instruction is mainly Estonian but another language may be used by the decision of the local authority.

General requirements for the organisation of vocational education studies have been established in the **Standard of Vocational Education**. Vocational upper secondary studies are regulated by 21 national curricula within various fields. The general requirements for higher education studies, curricula and teaching staff are established in the **Standard of Higher Education**.

The vast majority of preschool childcare institutions and general education schools are municipal schools, but the number of private schools is increasing. Vocational

schools are mostly state-owned and universities – institutions in public law. More than half of professional higher education institutions are state-owned and the others are private institutions.

Management of the education system is based on the principle of reasonable decentralisation. The division of responsibility between the state, local government and school is clearly defined. In recent years, the state supervision system has been replaced with an internal assessment system in general education schools. In vocational education, too, the replacement of the accreditation system by quality assessment has shifted the emphasis from control to the provision of advice and guidance to schools. Learning outcomes are determined in national curricula. Teachers have the right to choose their own teaching methodology and materials. Teachers' continuous professional development is supported by a central system.

**Preschool education** is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months to 7 years in specially dedicated educational institutions. The main aim of the early stages of education is to support children's individuality, creativity and learning through play. In Estonia, pre-primary education is not only childcare, but a part of education that combines several child-centred active learning methods based on the national curriculum. 94% of 4-7-year-olds participate in the activities of pre-school institutions.

**Basic education** serves as the mandatory minimum of general education requirement, which can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that include basic school level. Compulsory education applies to children who have reached 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year. Compulsory school lasts until

basic education is acquired or until a student reaches 17 years of age. Acquisition of basic education grants the right to continue studies in upper secondary education. In order to graduate, students must have at least 'satisfactory' annual grades in all subjects and pass final examinations with at least a satisfactory result.

As a special measure to react to the pandemic effects on the education system, the government decided for this year that graduating does not depend on the results of final exams.

**Upper secondary** schools are designed to help students become creative, multi-talented, socially mature and reliable citizens. The study programme at upper secondary school is arranged into mandatory and voluntary courses and the studies last for three years. To graduate, students must complete a curriculum consisting of 96 individual courses as a minimum. At the end of their studies, students must pass three state exams and school examinations. Attaining general upper secondary education entitles students to continue studies at a higher education level or obtain vocational education.

**Vocational education** serves the purpose of fostering the knowledge, skills and attitudes, occupational know-how and social readiness required for working, participating in social life and lifelong learning. Vocational education is divided into initial and continuing VET. Initial vocational education is part of formal education that gives learners access to the next qualification level. Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning. Vocational programmes take place at the levels of the Estonian Qualification Framework, with level 2 being vocational education without the requirement of basic education, level 3 being based on basic education, level 4 being vocational

secondary education (or based on secondary education) and level 5 being specialised vocational training.

Vocational education is free of charge, regardless of age, educational background and individual needs. Nearly half of all vocational students are adults. Companies collaborate closely with VET institutions in curriculum development and creating apprenticeship opportunities.

**Higher education** studies have three levels: Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral studies. Professional higher education is, similarly to Bachelor's, the first level of higher education, which ensures access to Master's studies. Higher education is flexible and accessible. It is supported by a wide range of study forms, considers learning and work experience in studying and provides the opportunity to work during studies.

Curricula, including many in English, are characterised by innovation and a particular focus on information technology and entrepreneurship.

Estonian **research** is world class: 10% of our scientific articles are among the most cited articles in the world. The University of Tartu belongs in the top 1.2% of the world's best universities (THE World University Rankings 2020, QS World University Rankings 2020). The EstCube satellite, electric formula car and self-driving car are examples of extraordinary student projects.

**Life-long learning** enables the acquisition of formal education at all levels of education and participation in professional education and training as well as in non-formal education. The forms of adult education are diverse, and adult education is very popular.

### Life-long learning

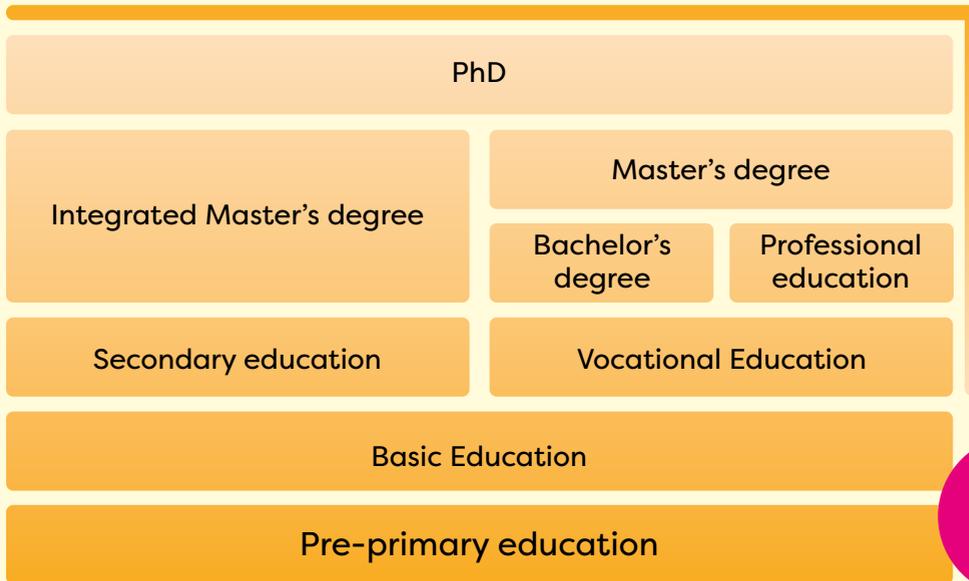


Figure 4: Education System In Estonia  
Source: [Education Estonia](#)

# Labour Market Data

Estonia's population of working age is almost 700 000, with the labour force participation rate around 71.6% (Statistics Estonia, 2020). About one third of the workforce have higher education and 86% of adults speak at least one foreign language. For the older generation the main foreign language is Russian and for younger adults English. In the graph below, it is shown the number of unemployed people out of people in the working age, and the number of registered unemployed. Since the peak of the economic crisis in 2010, the overall and the registered unemployment was declining. The Covid-19 crisis has changed the picture and the number of unemployed has been increasing.

The highest registered unemployment rate is in Ida-Viru, Valga and Pärnu counties. The lowest unemployment rate is in Jõgeva and Hiiu county. The average unemployment rate was 8,8 % at the end of February 2021. In the majority of the regions the unemployment rate was close to the average unemployment rate. The highest number of unemployed people are in Harju and Ida-Viru counties where the overall population is highest. There are 4% more registered unemployed women than men, before COVID-19 the share was equal between men and women. COVID-19 crisis has mostly affected those working in tourism and hospitality sector.

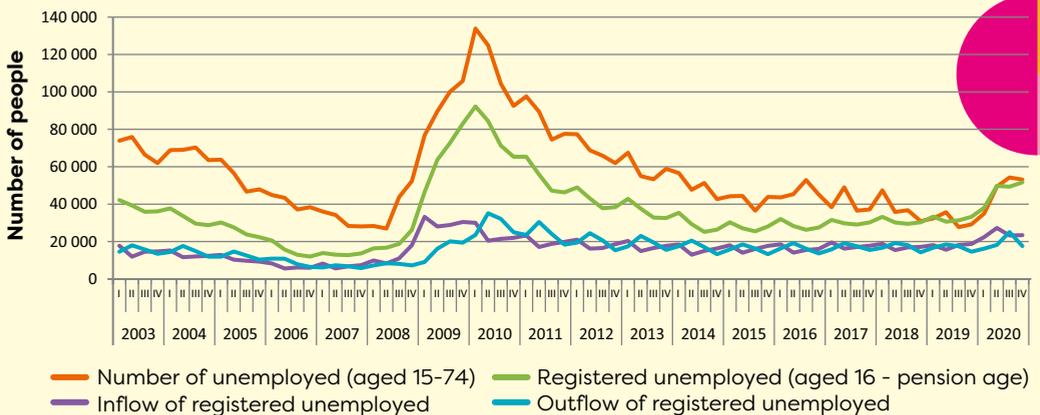


Figure 5. Number of unemployed 2003 – 2020. Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund

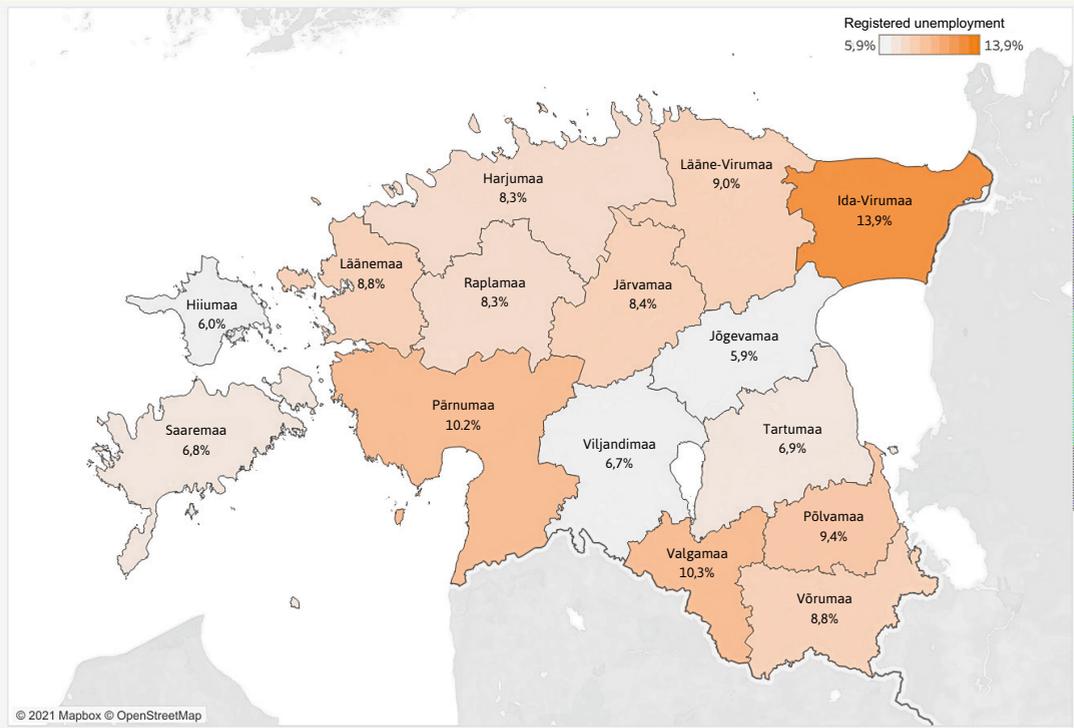


Figure 6: Registered unemployment in counties by 31.01.2021.

Source: Unemployment Insurance Fund



# Additional Information

## REFERENCES

References at  
[euroguidance.ee](http://euroguidance.ee)

## ESTONIA IN BRIEF

Capital: Tallinn  
Language: Estonian  
Head of state: President Kersti Kaljulaid  
System of government: Parliamentary republic  
Area: 45,228 km<sup>2</sup>  
Population: 1,3 million  
Administrative divisions: 15 counties  
Currency: EUR  
Calling code: 372  
Highest point: 318 m  
Number of islands: 1521  
Member of: NATO, EU, UN, OSCE, OECD & WTO, Schengen zone

## OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Association of Estonian Career Counsellors  
[www.kny.ee](http://www.kny.ee)  
Ministry of Education and Research  
[www.hm.ee](http://www.hm.ee)  
Ministry of Social Affairs  
[www.sm.ee](http://www.sm.ee)  
Qualification Authority  
[www.kutsekoda.ee](http://www.kutsekoda.ee)  
The Education and Youth Board of Estonia  
[www.harno.ee](http://www.harno.ee)  
Unemployment Insurance Fund  
(Estonian PES)  
[www.tootukassa.ee](http://www.tootukassa.ee)



# Contact Us

## ABOUT THE ERASMUS+ AND EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS AGENCY

Erasmus + and the European Solidarity Corps Agency is the national agency of the European Union's education, youth and sports program. In addition, Euroguidance, Eurodesk, Nordplus, the European Language Label and the SALTO Participation and Information Resource Center, are part of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps Agency.

As a recognized leader of internationalization, we represent Estonia in international networks and co-operate with several partner organizations around the world.



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REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
EDUCATION AND YOUTH AUTHORITY



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corps agency

## EUROGUIDANCE IN ESTONIA

Euroguidance Estonia is the Estonian National Resource Centre for Guidance and provides a range of services to Estonian guidance professionals and to professionals abroad. As a member of the Euroguidance Network we provide support in the areas of learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training, and employment.

Euroguidance Estonia is part of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency.

- Are you interested in developing your own skills and competencies in relation to a global education and labour market?
- Would you like to expand your professional network and establish contacts with colleagues from other countries?
- Do you think that new inspiration from other countries and cultures might be good for your professional development?

If yes, then the national Euroguidance centres are at your disposal.

Experts and practitioners within the field of lifelong guidance are welcome to contact us for further information:

### Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency

The Education and Youth Board of Estonia

Euroguidance Estonia

Tõnismägi 11, Tallinn, ESTONIA

[www.euroguidance.ee](http://www.euroguidance.ee)