

FACTSHEET

Vocational Education and Training

Estonia

Legal framework

Since the mid-1990s vocational education in Estonia has gone through extensive reforms. The framework of the desired developments and goals was determined in the Government regulations “The Conceptual Framework of Vocational Education” (*“Kutsehariduse kontseptuaalsed lähtekohad”*, 1998) and “Action Plan for Development of Vocational Education System 2001-2004” (*“Tegevuskava kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks Eestis aastatel 2001-2004”*, 2001). The main goal was to increase the attractiveness of vocational education among basic school graduates as well as to improve the quality of vocational education, also, to better respond to the labour market demands.

The main law stipulating the establishment, reorganisation, and termination of a vocational education institution, its organisation of study and principles of administration, the formation of the budget is “Vocational Education Institution Act” (*“Kutseõppeasutuse seadus”*, 1998) and “Standard for Vocational Education” (*“Kutseharidusstandard”*, 2006). The format and the conditions for issuing a vocational school leaving certificate are stipulated by the Government Regulation *Kutseõppeasutuse lõputunnistuse vorm, statuut ja väljaandmise kord* (1998).

Types of institutions

There are state, municipal and private vocational education institutions in Estonia. Depending on the field of study, state vocational education institutions are subject to the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In recent years, according to the development visions, many vocational education institutions have merged into regional vocational education centres that enable to unite resources as well as competence in a certain area to ensure the quality of vocational education.

Vocational education system

Study programmes of the vocational education institutions are based on the standard of vocational education, the state curriculum for a certain profession and the school curriculum. The state curriculum is based on the professional standard mutually agreed upon by the professional council of the national qualifications authority (*Kutsekoda*).

Vocational secondary education may be started either after graduation from a basic school (9 years of study) or after graduation from a general or vocational secondary school. The nominal length of vocational secondary education study programmes based on basic education is at least 3 years (120 study weeks), including general secondary education subjects in the amount of at least 40 study-weeks. The nominal length of vocational secondary education based on general or vocational secondary education is from 20 study weeks to 2.5 years, in the field of performing arts up to 3 years. Graduates who have successfully completed the curriculum receive a certificate confirming that they have obtained secondary vocational education (based on basic or secondary education).

When vocational education is obtained after basic education, but without taking general secondary education subjects, the nominal length of studies can vary from 1 to 2.5 years.

FACTSHEET

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Persons who have not completed basic education, but are older than compulsory education age (over seventeen years of age), are also given an opportunity to obtain vocational education. The nominal length of these programmes is from 20 study weeks to 2.5 years.

In all these study-programmes practical training (*praktiline töö*) constitutes at least 25% of curricular time and work placement (*praktika*) not less than 25%.

Vocational training can also be part of general basic education or general secondary education (*kutsealane eelkoolitus*) in co-operation with a vocational education institution and a general secondary school. The training period varies from 15 to 40 study weeks.

Holders of vocational secondary education qualifications (*kutsekeskharidus*) whose intention is to continue studies at a higher education institution can improve their knowledge of general secondary education subjects for additional 35 weeks. The study is organised in co-operation with vocational education institutions and general secondary schools.

In the previous system of vocational education there were two levels of vocational education: vocational secondary education (*kutsekeskharidus*) and vocational higher education (*kutsekõrgharidus*). Vocational secondary education was based on basic education (with a length of study of at least three years) and on secondary education (with a length of study of at least 40 study weeks). Vocational higher education (3 - 4 years) was based on secondary education and was a part of the higher education system. According to the University Act and other binding laws adopted in 2002, beginning with academic year 2002/2003 students are admitted only to reformed professional higher education programmes that replace the former vocational higher education programmes.

Vocational education qualifications

Lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education Based on Basic Education)

Lõputunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education Based on Secondary Education)

Qualifications in the former education system:

Lõputunnistus kutse- ja keskhariduse omandamise kohta (Certificate of Vocational and Secondary Education)

Diplom põhiharidusel põhineva keskerihariduse omandamise kohta (diploma of secondary specialized education based on basic education)

Diplom üldkeskharidusel põhineva keskerihariduse omandamise kohta (diploma of secondary specialized education based on general secondary education)

Lõputunnistus keskerihariduse omandamise kohta (Certificate of Secondary Specialized Education [based on basic or general secondary education])