

## FACTSHEET

### Higher Education

#### Estonia

### Legal framework

Higher education is primarily regulated by the University Act (*Ülikooliseadus* – 1995; 2003), the Institution of Professional Higher Education Act (*Rakenduskõrgkooli seadus* – 1998), and the Private School Act (*Erakooliseadus* – 1998).

The framework document The Standard of Higher Education (*Kõrgharidusstandard* – 1996; 2002, 2008) specifies requirements for higher education in Estonia and is a fundamental legal act concerning the granting of education licences and accreditation of study programmes or higher education institutions. The Standard of Higher Education is based on other acts related to higher education and is valid for all cycles and forms of higher education, irrespective of the ownership or the legal status of the higher education institution. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the implementation of The Standard of Higher Education.

The Estonian higher education system is binary and consists of universities (*ülikool*) and professional higher education institutions (*rakenduskõrgkool*). Higher education is provided by universities, institutions of professional higher education, and some vocational education institutions. Universities can also offer professional higher education. Professional higher education institutions provide professional higher education that is the first cycle of higher education and corresponds to bachelor-level studies of universities. This type of institutions may offer master's level programmes in the field of theology and defence, and, in other fields of study, in cooperation with universities.

Based on the form of ownership, institutions of higher education can be divided into state, public and private.

### Higher education and research governing bodies

The administration of higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*). The Ministry defines the principles of higher education policy. The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Research include:

- regulating the establishment, merger, partition or closure of universities on the basis of decisions made by the *Riigikogu* (Parliament), and in case of professional higher education institutions on the basis of decisions made by the Government;
- keeping the registry of state diplomas issued by universities, professional higher education institutions and vocational education institutions;
- developing the rules for state financing of education, approving the budgets of universities, and distributing budgeted funds to higher education institutions;
- approving the development plans of universities and professional higher education institutions;
- organising the preparation and implementation of national education and research development programmes;
- adopting the procedures for opening and closing study programmes;
- carrying out the State supervisory activities.

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In its role the Ministry of Education and Research is assisted by a number of management and consultative bodies with an administrative or teaching function.

<http://www.hm.ee>

#### *Rektorite Nõukogu* (Rectors' Conference)

There is a Rectors' Council for public universities, one for private universities, and one for professional higher education institutions. The Rectors' Councils and the Ministry of Education and Research exchange information in all areas of higher education and research policy. All the normative documents prepared by the Ministry are discussed by the Rectors' Councils and the strategies for financing higher education are prepared in co-operation.

<http://www.ern.ee/>

#### *Eesti Teadus- ja Arendusnõukogu* (Estonian Research and Development Council)

A consultative body to the Government chaired by the Prime Minister.

<http://www.riigikantselei.ee/tan/>

#### *Eesti Teadusfond* (Estonian Science Foundation)

A consultative body of experts, representatives of universities and of the Ministry of Education and Research deciding the financing of research projects.

<http://www.etf.ee/>

#### *Eesti Kõrghariduse Kvalitediagentuur* (Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency)

The Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EHEQA) is a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation, which continues the work of the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre and the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council that operated from 1997 to 2008. One of the EHEQA's main functions is the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions in Estonia and quality assessment of their study programme groups.

<http://www.ekak.archimedes.ee/en>