



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND RESEARCH

Relevant actions during the academic year 2018/2019





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Preschool education

Drafting of the new Preschool Education Act will begin

The ministry together with partners will start developing a new and holistic preschool education act, the aim of which is to provide all children equally with high quality education. The new act will harmonise the requirements for preschools and childcare service, link the preschool curricula closer to that of schools and ensure further that all children have a place in a preschool childcare institution. Among possible solutions is to provide preschool education that is partially or completely free of charge or to provide a certain number of free preschool hours.

We are seeking flexible solutions to the issues concerning preschool education together with local municipalities. Our major goal is to offer a free place in a preschool for every child based on the demand. Preschool should be more thoroughly a part of the education system, everyone should have access to quality preschool education. Special attention must be paid to the children in need of support and to the necessary support services already at the preschool level.

In academic year 2017/2018, there were 628 preschools operating in Estonia and nearly 94% of children aged 4 up to school age participated in preschool education. There were 7,909 teachers working at preschools across 7,550 positions.

Estonian speaking teachers in Russian speaking preschool groups

This year, the state launches a programme called “Professional Estonian speaking teacher to every Russian speaking preschool group” so all children would have equal opportunities in preschool education.

By the end of August, preschools from Ida-Viru County and Tallinn, and in total 60 teachers with an excellent command of Estonian are selected, with whom in-service training and work is launched. In future, the plan is to implement a similar system everywhere pursuant to the new law on preschool education. Children whose mother tongue is not Estonian should be able to communicate in Estonian when they complete preschool on a level that enables them to start school in Estonian language.



Exams

Abolishing basic school final exams

The representatives of educational institutions and stakeholders agree that the current basic school final examinations system does not completely fulfil its purpose and it is time for a change. The current system does not support the student-focussed approach and does not support students according to their individual capabilities, because in order to finish basic school, all students must pass a similar exam. This forces schools to concentrate on preparing the students for exams, but it is more important to develop students' knowledge, skills, understanding and analytical skills.

The aim of the changes is to offer more varied and better-quality feedback on planning and implementing the teaching in basic school, to monitor the efficiency of schools, also to optimise the workload related with testing the students and schools.

The current basic school final exams and standard-determining tests will be abolished. The conditions for finishing basic schools will still be determined in the national curriculum, but the right and competency lies with the school to decide whether the student has passed the curriculum, acquired basic education and filled the graduation conditions.

An optional exam must also be passed to finish upper secondary school.

The current system of state exams is focussed on three subjects (Estonian, mathematics and a foreign language) and does not provide the student, the school or the state with feedback on the study results in other subject areas. Unfortunately, the information on the students' level of knowledge in other fields, such as social and natural sciences, is at the moment pushed aside. Different stakeholders have stressed that receiving wider feedback is important for all parties concerned in education: for students, their parents, teachers and for higher and vocational education institutions and the state.

We plan to expand the selection of final exams offering the upper secondary school graduates with selective exams from different subject areas. Extensive selection of national exams would also support the smoother transition of students to universities and it will help to ease the admission process to the next level of education.

Creating an option to take an international English exam for free at the end of upper secondary school.

In order to expand the options for students to carry out English language exam, the upper secondary school students can, in future, take the upper secondary school final exam in English language together with an internationally acknowledged English exam on level C1. We want to motivate the students to achieve higher language skill levels because good foreign language skills are crucial to continue successfully studies at higher education level and to access the labour market.



General education, school network, teachers

At the beginning of this academic year, there were 533 general education schools in Estonia.

From these schools:

- 57 are basic schools with grades 1–6;
- 302 are basic schools with grades 1–9;
- 159 are upper secondary schools with basic schools or only upper secondary schools (that is grades 1–12 and grades 10–12).

Among the upper secondary schools, there are 24 upper secondary schools with only grades 10–12. Out of these, 15 are state-owned upper secondary schools and 15 are adult upper secondary schools.

As of the last academic year, there were 74 small upper secondary schools with less than 100 students (grades 10–12) and 43 small upper secondary schools with less than 50 students.

There were 18 very small basic schools with less than 30 students. The number of schools with grades 1–6 with less than 30 students was 31.

The largest school during the last academic year was Keila school with 1,408 students, and the smallest was Misso school with 8 students.

The number of students will grow over the coming years. In September, an estimated 150,000 students will start full time studies in general education schools. However, changes are unequal in different regions and the number of students grows mainly in Tartu and Harju counties.

According to the forecast, the number of full time students will continue to grow until 2023 and then start to decline slowly. It is estimated that by 2030, the number of students in general education will be almost the same as now.

If the total number of students is growing, then the number of children starting first grade is reaching a record – nearly more than 2,000 children are starting school in comparison to the academic year 2011/2012. In the coming years the number of children starting first grade will decline slightly, taking the current estimated 15,000 down to 14,000 in four years. About 22,000 young people will start their studies in upper secondary school, that is grades 10–12.

Over the last academic year, in total 14,905 teachers were working in general education schools across 12,372 positions. This means that a considerable number of teachers are still working part-time. In comparison to the previous year, both the number of teachers and teaching positions have increased.



Three new state-owned upper secondary schools start their work

On 1 September, three new state-owned upper secondary schools start their work in Rapla, Paide and Viimsi with 1,152 places in total. Rapla upper secondary school will have 360 places and the school building is a combination of old and new. Rapla school is the first state-owned upper secondary school with study opportunities also for adult learners, both full- and part-time students have an equally excellent and modern learning environment.

Viimsi upper secondary school with 540 places is the largest of the state-owned upper secondary schools that starts its work this year. The school starts operating in a brand-new building and is modern and innovative both in terms of construction and study organisation. This is the first state-owned upper secondary school in Harju County.

Paide upper secondary school has 252 places. Until the school building is finished, the studies will continue in the same building with the Järvamaa Vocational Training Centre, which creates good collaboration opportunities for both schools and enriches the learning options of the students. Preparations for establishing the new school in the historic school buildings are in process.

In total, 15 state-owned upper secondary schools are operating in Estonia during the new academic year. Also, preparations are underway for establishing a state-owned upper secondary school in Kohtla-Järve on 1 September 2019. In 2020, a state-owned upper secondary school will open in Tabasalu, in 2021 in Rakvere and Kuressaare and in 2022 in Narva and Saue rural municipality. After 2022, state-owned upper secondary schools will be established also in Tallinn and Rae rural municipality.

In addition to planning the state-owned upper secondary schools, the state also continues preparations for establishing the School of Fine Arts. In combining the Tallinn Music High School, Georg Ots Tallinn Music College and Tallinn Ballet School, the School of Fine Arts will be launched as of 2022. The new school building will be constructed at Pärnu road in Tallinn. The new school building is planned to include top level learning, practice and performing conditions for all subjects taught at the schools currently.

The state supports local governments with more than 100 million euros in restructuring the school network

The Ministry of Education and Research submitted to the Government of the Republic the second-round investment plan of the basic schools network reorganisation measure to be confirmed, the scope of which is 45.5 million euros. This is added to the 55.3 million euros that is already distributed.

In the first round, the state supported 22 projects submitted by local governments in the total sum of 55.3 million euros, which was supplemented by local governments' co-financing at the rate of 15 percent. As a result of the first round, more than 61,000 square metres of basic schools' area will be renovated and the same amount of unnecessary room will be reduced.



The long-term aim of the state in restructuring the school network is to ensure that children could attend a school near their home for as long as possible. This means cooperation with local governments in strengthening the network of schools with six grades.

Learning opportunities and conditions for children with special educational needs are improving

With the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act amendment enforced at the beginning of 2018, the schools and school owners were provided with more possibilities to provide education tailored to individual needs of the student and put in place support systems.

The state supports local governments and private school owners to allow them to better support and teach the children with special educational needs.

There is still need for special education schools that will not disappear, and will continue to exist in the future. We have a special support measure for special education schools, which is used for modernising the learning environment to improve the learning conditions of those students who are studying according to the curricula for students with mild or moderate learning difficulties. The support can be applied for both construction, furnishing as well as for purchasing study materials and equipment.

The state values the teacher's profession by way of salary raise and education awards

Teachers' salaries continue to grow. We will raise the minimum salary to at least 1,250 euros which will take the average salary to at least 1,500 euros by 2019. We continue with the reputation campaign for teaching profession, we cooperate with the universities to prepare a teacher training curriculum that would be as modern as possible and attractive for young people.

On 14 October 2018, national educational awards will be presented for the first time at the Teacher of the Year Gala, nine annual awards and one lifetime achievement award will be given.

This is recognition of education personnel at the highest possible level. The aim of the awards is to value the important professions of teachers, lecturers, school heads and the specialists supporting them and their outstanding contribution in supporting the development of students and promoting education in general.

The state is focussing on preschool teachers – they too deserve a higher salary for their work. Our aim is to equalise the salaries of the preschool teachers to that of general education teachers with the same education level.

In general education schools, there is still a problem with the large number of teachers working part-time, however this should be mitigated by continued reorganisation of the



school network. The excellent international results of the Estonian education system are based on our teachers and providing successors for them must be handled seriously. For this purpose, the Ministry of Education and Research has launched a working group to review the measures related to teacher training, to assess their functionality and, if necessary, to develop new solutions to relieve the shortage of teachers. The working group covers representatives of different stakeholders and experts.

Possibilities for international education are expanding in Estonia

In academic year 2018/2019, the possibilities of foreign language education based on internationally acknowledged curricula will expand. In September, Tallinn European School moved to its new building with nearly 400 new places.

Availability of internationally acknowledged foreign language preschool and general education is a prerequisite for highly qualified specialists coming to Estonia and it contributes to implementing the action plans and strategies on competitiveness, export and foreign investments, research and internationalisation of higher education.

At the beginning of the school year, schools receive feedback from the satisfaction survey held on spring

This spring, all Estonian general education schools held a satisfaction survey with a record number of students participating. More than 10,000 fourth-graders, 8,500 eight-graders, 4,800 eleventh-graders, 19,000 parents of basic school students and 7,500 teachers used the option to contribute to the discussion and express their opinions on satisfaction with school life. Feedback reports are sent to the schools by the beginning of the new school year.

The aim of the survey is to measure the different aspects of satisfaction – does the school environment support inner motivation, what are relationships like and is there bullying, what is the assessment to the physical environment in school and how are the activities of the school owner and state assessed in terms of education organisation. The focus is also on changing the approach to learning – the aim of the lifelong learning strategy is to make learning more connected to real life and it must support the individual needs of the students. The state and school owners obtain valuable and comparable information from the surveys about the changes in school and they can observe how the educational political decisions affect the satisfaction of those participating directly in the education system.



Digital focus

Free digital learning materials are prepared

Over the academic year, free digital learning materials are prepared and in the new school year, several innovative study materials will reach schools, which make learning and teaching more diverse and the school bags lighter.

Digital learning materials for IT subjects meant for basic schools are already finished, digital learning materials for the national curricula of mathematics, science and social subjects and arts will be finished by the beginning of the school year. During the school year, the digital learning materials for basic swimming and different e-tests for daily studies and conducting national standard-determining tests will be prepared. The new Estonian-Russian-Estonian dictionary by the Institute of the Estonian Language launched in autumn will support Estonian language learning.

In addition to the aforementioned, the plan is to create an option for basic school students to use digital learning materials for free by gathering new learning materials into digital learning materials' portal e-Koolikott (e-School bag) (<https://e-koolikott.ee>).

Focus is on learning complex IT skills

This academic year, more attention will be paid to developing students' digital skills and integrating digital culture into studies, also to modernising the teaching. Special attention is on learning complex IT skills such as programming, robotics, 3D design and teaching cyber safety. To improve digital skills, the schools will be supported this year with nearly 8 million euros for buying computers and other digital equipment. In total, more than ten thousand computers and smart projectors will reach the schools, which the school holders confirm will contribute to developing the students' digital skills more systematically and with more awareness.

Additionally, the updating of digital plans and digital maturity assessments prepared earlier at schools will continue this academic year. To share the best practices, these will soon be published in the Digipeegel portal (www.digipeegel.ee).

In addition, training of IT-teachers in the University of Tartu and Tallinn University is supported separately in the framework of the IT Academy.

Students of more than 150 schools can use innovative laboratories

This academic year, laboratories will be installed in schools across Estonia with the purpose of modernising the studies and offering more practical learning experience for the students, for instance when learning subjects such as science and music, and also IT skills. Both stationary and mobile laboratories are created. By the end of 2018, the schools will have



received support in the sum of 7 million euros for this purpose and more than 150 schools will be involved.

Modernisation of studies and expansion of possibilities to acquire practical skills will also continue in vocational education institutions. For this end, different simulators are acquired, such as welding, combine harvester and gardening simulators, also simulators necessary for health care. In total, 2 million euros worth of simulators will be purchased.

Internet connection of general education schools will become better and faster

All general education schools will receive modern internet connection. Currently, the internet connection of about 100 schools is upgraded to the new level, that includes about half a million metres, or 500 kilometres of installed cables. Upgrading internet connections of schools will be finished together with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and the Information Technology Foundation for Education by 2023.

Vocational education

In this academic year, students can learn at formal studies in 32 vocational education institutions and six state-owned professional higher education institutions that also provide vocational education.

Admittance has been stable in vocational education over the past years and the average age of vocational education institution students has increased. Adult learners want to raise their competitiveness on the labour market and acquire new skills. Nearly 24,000 students are studying in vocational education. During the last academic year, 2,062 teachers worked on 1,322 positions in vocational schools.

Vocational education is aligned with the needs of the state and regions

Vocational education act amendments will reach the parliament. The amendments put more emphasis on the needs of local employers and the labour force. The law will make studying more flexible and in collaboration with local government, innovative study formats will be tested. Vocational schools also require an individual approach to all students, educational support services are necessary, we consider special needs and support the student's development in all ways.

The amendments will eliminate the state-commissioned education, so the schools could quickly react to the educational needs of the region and the needs of the labour market. This means more autonomy for the schools and greater responsibility in training specialists. Instead the state-commissioned education, the schools will be financed from the state budget with operational supports, which is divided into base financing and result-based financing. Base financing will ensure stability, because the school budget will no longer depend solely on the changing student numbers. Result-based financing will motivate the schools to perform their tasks properly.



The second important change is giving the schools a chance to open curricula, which are not directly linked with professional studies but which prepare for selecting a profession. This is mainly meant for students who do not want to select or are incapable of selecting an appropriate profession suited to their capabilities and needs immediately after basic school, who therefore have not started school or have dropped out of vocational school or upper secondary school. This is a practical study course introducing different specialities to which remedial general education is added, if necessary. Additionally, the vocational education institutions get the option to offer general education studies in part-time format for students who are past the minimum school-leaving age, to whom also elective courses are offered to motivate new and well considered career choices.

The future perspective sees creating an educational centre, where one building would house the options of vocational school, additional training and upper secondary school. Educational institutions and local governments should not compete with each other, but join their resources to offer the students an extensive selection of flexible options.

Higher education

In academic year 2018/2019, it is possible to obtain higher education in 20 educational institutions, which includes six public universities, one private university, eight state and five private professional higher education institutions.

The number of students continues in decline, which on the one hand is due to demographic changes (the number of people aged 18–24 and their share in the population is declining), and on the other due to changes in education paths. The trend of taking a gap year after finishing upper secondary education and continuing in higher or vocational education after a couple of years is on the rise. This is also confirmed by the increasing average age of the students (also people applying for higher education institutions) and the growing share of adults in vocational education. The number and share of foreign students have increased.

Final admittance numbers for this year will be revealed in November after the students are enrolled and the data is entered in the Estonian Education Information System.

[The amended Higher Education Code is submitted to the parliament](#)

In summer 2018, the draft Higher Education Act and draft legislation of the universities passed the approval round and will be submitted to the parliament in autumn. The updated Higher Education Code is planned to include the main tasks of the state and higher education institutions more clearly, as well as the rights and obligations of the students. The plan for the code is to focus more on the aims of higher education and less on detailed activity guides.

Current regulations are mainly from the 1990s, but the legal framework must keep up with the changing needs of the students. People study throughout their lives, they move between



different institutions, levels and countries and they expect higher education studies to be more practical.

Modernisation of the higher education code began in 2016, when proposals on what should be changed were gathered from the students, higher education institutions, employers and employees organisations, and the ministries. Amending the higher education code does not change the main bases of the higher education system, that is the extensive autonomy of the higher education institutions, three-level higher education, bases for quality assessment, etc.

[The Estonian Academy of Arts new building is finished, in total seven research and education buildings are constructed or renovated with state support](#)

By the beginning of the academic year, the new Estonian Academy of Arts main building and the Tallinn Health Care College extension are finished. In April, the corner stone for the hall complex of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre was set, the building itself will be finished by September next year.

In total, seven research and education buildings are constructed or renovated within the development programme for universities and research institutions (ASTRA). In addition to the Estonian Academy of Arts main building and Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre hall complex, the major works include the construction of the IT centre of the University of Tartu and the study complex of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences. With state support, the test hall of the Tallinn University of Technology's Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the building complex of Department of Chemistry and Biotechnology are renovated.

Construction and renovation of buildings is closely linked with substantial development of research and higher education, for instance supporting doctoral schools, internationalising study and research work, updating laboratories and equipment, expanding business cooperation and internship opportunities.

[The state will sign new contracts under public law with the universities for years 2019–2021.](#)

With the contract under public law, the main aims are agreed with the universities and the teaching areas are specified, also curricula where only part-time studies, that is paid studies are allowed, and curricula where the university is obliged to provide education for free also for part-time students are agreed.

Specifying negotiations regarding areas of responsibility have begun with the universities and the aim is to ensure quality Estonian language higher education teaching in as many areas as possible and to reduce doubling pursuant to the labour force needs identified in the OSKA reports.

Current contracts under public law were signed for years 2016-2018.



Student loan conditions are planned to be changed to become more favourable

The ministry has forwarded an intention of development of Study Allowances and Study Loans Act amendment to the partners for their opinion. The plan is to make the student loan conditions that have been valid for a long time more favourable for the students, to support the acquiring of education for the students with financial difficulties in higher education and vocational education institutions.

Although learning full-time in the Estonian language curricula is free of charge in Estonia and a need-based study support system is established, there are still students who need student loans to finance their studies. The plan is to lower the student loan interest, make loan repayment more flexible and alleviate the surety conditions.

Adult education

Participation of adults in lifelong learning has been constantly rising in Estonia. From 2009, the adult participation in lifelong learning has exceeded 10%. Last year (2017), 17.2% of adults aged 25–64 participated in lifelong learning.

The number of adult learners in general education was 5,428 in 2017/18, which is slightly less than a year before. Share of adult learners (25+) starting learning in vocational education was 36.7% in 2017/18, which is more than in the previous academic year.

Free of charge trainings for adults

During the second half of 2018, free professional training courses are offered to at least 10,500 adults – vocational education institutions and professional higher education institutions offer more than 800 free courses. In total, at least 17,750 adult learners can participate in free additional training courses in 2018.

As of the end 2018, free trainings will also be available from universities. By offering trainings, a prerequisite is created for the participation of target groups that have been less actively involved, in addition, the recommendations of OSKA reports are considered when creating the training options.

Free trainings are mainly meant for workers with lower education levels, no professional education or whose qualification has expired. More information on the courses is available from the ministry website (www.hm.ee/tasuta-kursused). In total, 53,500 adults can supplement their professional skills for free between 2016 and 2020 in training courses according to the order of the Ministry of Education and Research and with support from the European Social Fund.



OSKA helps to learn and teach the right skills

In order for the knowledge, skills and training offers to meet the changes of the labour market and needs of the society, a labour force needs monitoring and forecasting, and skills development coordination system called OSKA has been developed in Estonia. With OSKA, we can learn how many workers and with which skills are needed on our labour market today and tomorrow, and what should be changed in the current education system and lifelong learning to meet the future needs.

OSKA provides information about the skills and labour force needs necessary for economic development for the next ten years and helps to design curricula, develop career counselling systems and support the activities of the institutions financing the education and training system. The reports are used as basis for commissioning of training courses for labour market based on activities or professions on different education levels and school types, and also in retraining and additional training.

This autumn, reports in three areas will be finished: education and research, commerce and leasing, and accommodation, catering and tourism. Currently, 13 OSKA reports have been prepared, all 24 sectors of economy will be analysed by the end of 2020.

Language

New chapters of the Estonian language e-course Keeletee are open

In September, the advanced or B1 level chapters for Estonian language learners in the Keeletee e-course were opened (www.keeletee.ee). Keeletee allows both English and Russian speakers to independently study Estonian, offering exercises for reading, writing and understanding texts. The e-course is free and learners can ask for help from Estonian teachers by e-mail.

The first three chapters of Keeletee were opened in May this year. Keeletee is the follow-up to the popular Estonian language e-course Keeleklikk (www.keeleklikk.ee).

Estonian Language Year is announced to celebrate the centenary of Estonian as the state language

The Ministry of Education and Research will declare 2019 the year of Estonian language to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Estonian as the official state language. The celebrations include various events for children, youth and the general public with the aim of drawing attention to the fact that the Estonian language should not be taken for granted – it should be actively used with careful skill and its condition and development should be researched and supported. The event calendar will be published on the Institute of the Estonian Language website (www.eki.ee).

The first time Estonian was mentioned as the state language was in the pre-constitutional act “The temporary order of rule of the Republic of Estonia” adopted 4 June 1919.



The Global School of Estonian children living abroad starts its sixth school year on 15 September

The Global School (www.yleilmakool.ee) strengthens the ties between Estonia and Estonian children living abroad by giving them an opportunity to learn subjects in their mother tongue. The number of children of Estonian origin living abroad is growing, so we need to contribute to the learning of and in Estonian abroad. Preserving and developing Estonian language skills is crucial to make it easier for people to return to Estonia at any point in their lives.

The Global School helps to develop and preserve Estonian language skills, but it also helps to prepare children for going to school in Estonia. For this purpose, the school offers simplified e-courses and e-courses based on the Estonian curricula. In 2018/2019, students in grades 3–9 can learn Estonian language and literature, Estonian history, Estonian geography and mathematics through 20 different e-courses. Students can also participate in Skype classes. In 2017/2018, the school had 170 students from 21 countries.

The Global School was launched with the support of the Ministry and the studies are partially based on the Estonian national curriculum. The studies are offered through the Moodle environment of the Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA).

The state continues to support learning Estonian as a second language and learning foreign languages

During the new school year, 150 preschool and general education school teachers from Ida-Viru County can participate in B2 and C1 level Estonian language courses for free to attain the required language level.

People learning to become or working as foreign language teachers can take internationally recognised language examinations on B2, C1 and C2 levels via the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers. Increasing the number of teachers who have passed an international language proficiency test strengthens the quality of foreign language teaching.

Support is offered to vocational schools and universities to improve students' Estonian and foreign language skills thereby increasing their career opportunities and mobility on the labour market. To help people with insufficient Estonian language skills be more successful on the labour market, language practice and study opportunities are offered in areas with the greatest need.

Estonian language and foreign language cooperation projects between educational institutions are also supported with the aim of improving students' language skills, supporting integration and introducing different learning options. Foundation Innove accepts applications for such projects continuously. So far, 12 language projects between educational institutions have been supported (amounting to over 100,000 euros).



This year, the state launches the programme “Professional Estonian speaking teacher to every Russian speaking preschool group” in order to offer all children equal opportunities in preschool education.

Compatriots’ Programme has improved the availability of Estonian language learning abroad

An interim report of the Compatriots’ Programme has shown that the activities over the past four years have greatly influenced the availability and organisation of Estonian language learning and the preservation of Estonian culture abroad.

In 2017, the programme supported 63 study locations, which included general education schools, Sunday schools and preschools and where 3,700 children studied in total. In 2013, the programme supported 50 learning locations with a total of 3,200 children. Last year, more than one hundred Estonian language teachers working abroad participated in additional training, a two-fold increase compared to four years ago.

The first chapters of the new online language course Keeletee (www.keeletee.ee) are open and the next ones will be ready in September. A new initiative is the youth exchange targeted to Estonian youth aged 18–26 living abroad. Estonian language teachers’ training days are held annually.

In the coming years, the Global School and other e-study options will be developed further.

The aim of the Compatriots’ Programme is to strengthen the ties of Estonians living abroad to Estonian culture and to Estonia.

Youth field

Hobby education and activities are offered to nearly 92 thousand young people with additional support from the state

The state supports the local governments in organising the hobby education and activities of young people with an additional 15 million euros per year. The support funds have already motivated the local governments to collaborate and the effect from the additional state support will grant activities for nearly 92 thousand young people.

To use the additional state support, the municipality or town must submit to the Estonian Youth Work Centre, alone or together with other municipalities or towns, a plan that maps the current situation of hobby education and activities, bottlenecks and plans for further activities to solve these.

The calculation of the additional funds granted to the municipalities and towns is based on the number of young people, number of young people with disabilities and number of young people aged 7–19 living in families with difficulties in coping, the financial capability of the local government unit and regional availability of hobby education and activities. Local



governments must offer hobby education and hobby activities in at least three fields: culture, sports and STEM. The state aid is meant as a supplement to the local governments' contributions, the responsibility for organising and supporting hobby education will remain with local governments.

Support for local governments makes up 95% of the additional state funds for hobby education and activities. Second section of the state additional support is meant for promoting cooperation of local governments, counselling the preparation and further monitoring of plans, which is done by the Estonian Youth Work Centre. The third section is made up from the support meant for associations representing the hobby areas to improve the quality of the hobbies and this appropriation was first made in 2018.

Virtual reality helps to value the profession of youth workers

Soon, young people can acquaint themselves with the profession of youth worker by interactive solutions, which help to improve career awareness in the field of youth work and introduce the diversity of the youth worker's job. The youth worker's profession is introduced both by virtual reality and augmented reality technologies and by practical role playing. To find the best interactive solutions, the Estonian Youth Work Centre announced a public procurement, which the Estonian Association of Youth Workers won.

Since the youth work services are becoming more available, the demand for qualified youth workers is also growing. Professional higher education is provided in Tallinn University, and Narva College and Viljandi Culture Academy of the University of Tartu. A youth work master's programme is available in Tallinn University and Narva College plans to transfer to bachelor's programme. The Youth Agency of Archimedes Foundation offers additional training in youth work.

In 2018, the Estonian Youth Work Centre will continue giving the profession of youth workers according to the new youth worker professional standard confirmed by the Professional Council of Education and publication of guide materials supporting self-development of youth workers is planned for autumn. Annual election and rewarding of best youth workers also helps to value the profession of youth worker.

Participation options for the young people are expanding

The state supports financially every local government that applies new and flexible participation options for the youth. The conclusions of the University of Tartu Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) survey "[Youth Participation in Decision Making](#)" conducted in 2018 comply with the perspective of the development plan of the youth field that more different participation forms need to be promoted to increase the involvement of youth. The new approaches stress that it is important to consider the needs and capabilities of different interest groups.



In collaboration with the Government Office, the youth are involved in the preparation of strategy “Estonia 2035”.

Additional support measures are applied to involve the young people at risk of exclusion and to improve the preparedness of young people for working

New procurement for offering support measures to young people in complicated situations who do not study, work or partake in training (NEET youth) will be announced in autumn 2018. Additionally, the activities continue by which the availability of youth work services in local governments is improved, as well as activities which allow the young people to obtain initial work experience, learn about different professions via practical and virtual workshops, intern in local non-governmental organisations and execute projects developed by the young people themselves. The aim of the support measure is to reduce the risk of exclusion and its influence and improve the competitive features of young people on the labour market. Activities last until 2023.

Support for youth and work camps has increased

There are several options created for the young people to acquire knowledge and skills, expand their perception and obtain initial work experience. State support to summertime youth and work camps has increased significantly.

If last year the state support to youth work camps was doubled, then this year the support increased by almost another 20 percent. In total, the Ministry of Education and Research funded nearly 570 thousand euros via the Estonian Youth Work Centre to 55 youth work camp organisers. Thanks to increased state support, nearly 4,500 young people got to partake in the work camps held across Estonia. This year it is possible for the first time to attend innovation camps, which support entrepreneurial thinking, offer knowledge on financial behaviour and programming skills.

Nearly 30,000 young people visited the camps this year, nearly 2,600 of them were from a large family or have modest means. The camps were funded by 1.13 million euros, compared to last year, the support increased by nearly 200 thousand euros.

Youth associations receive support for longer periods

The activities of youth associations contribute into achieving long-term national goals of the youth field and the associations can apply for support also for two years. The state supports the youth associations with nearly half a million euros every year.

According to the Youth Work Act, the youth associations with at least 500 members, which operate in at least a third of the counties and which are active in youth work can apply for the annual grant.



The ministry and the young people wish to establish a participation council in every local government after the voting age is reduced

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian National Youth Council would like to see a youth participation council in every local government, which would provide the young people with the opportunity to have a say in local decisions also in the period between elections. This way, every local government would help the young people to bring their opinion to the decision makers and the decision makers could consider the great ideas of young people when making plans for the future.

During last autumn's local government elections, the young people aged 16–17 got to vote for the first time. According to a survey ordered by the Estonian National Youth Council, 59% of the young people with the voting right used this chance, which shows that the majority of people in this age group have a clear wish to express their opinion.

Research

Research base financing is increasing

According to the state budget strategy for 2019–2021 adopted in 2018, the state's support for the main instruments of research and development activities, including base financing of research institutions, will grow. As a result, the options of Estonian research and development institutions to make top level R&D, develop academic career models and pay more attention to business collaborations will improve. The plan is to reorganise the bases for base financing distribution to increase the influence the R&D activities supported by the state have on the development of Estonian society and economy.

The state supports ICT research with an additional three million euros per year

The state will additionally support information and communication technology (ICT) R&D in Tallinn University of Technology and University of Tartu with three million euros per year to expand the creation and implementation of innovative and knowledge-based solutions in collaboration with the entrepreneurs in areas important for Estonian society and economy. The new ICT higher education and research support measure is a good example of how the state directs additional resources to develop research areas that are strategically necessary for the state.

The measure planned for five years is a part of the IT Academy programme, which was created six years ago in collaboration with the state, universities and ICT companies.



Negotiations for the new research funding framework programme Horizon Europe started

In July this year, the negotiations for the new programme for financing EU research and development activities – Horizon Europe – started under the Commission's lead. The aim of the programme is to support research studies and innovation in the European Union, to increase the effectivity and competitive edge of the EU, to help solve global issues and support reaching the aims of sustainable development. The planned financial scope of the programme is 94.1 billion euros.

So far, Estonia has been very successful in framework programmes. During the negotiations, Estonia will primarily stand for openness, transparency, equal treatment and a high level of science. Estonian positions for participating in the Horizon Europe programme will be designed in collaboration with universities, research and development institutes, other ministries and R&D entrepreneurs.

Baltic Research Cooperation Programme begins

In autumn 2018, the open applications round of the Baltic Research Cooperation Programme, financed by European Economic Area's financial mechanisms, will be opened for cooperation programmes from Norway, Lichtenstein, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The total volume of the programme is 8.35 million euros, from which nearly 6 million euros is meant for research cooperation. As a result of the projects, cooperation with the national R&D institutions of other Baltic states will become more active. Higher education institutions can apply for support from the same programme for their employees' study migration, curricula development and higher education collaboration projects. The higher education institutions application round will be opened in the first half of 2019. The programme also supports hiring a Norwegian language and literature lecturer for the University of Tartu and developing an inclusive education curriculum by the University of Tartu and Tallinn University.

Two new programmes are launched for developing a research intensive economy, current support measures continue

The aim of the new ICT programme and resource valuing programme is to make the collaboration between the universities and companies more efficient. The programmes help to increase the universities' capability to offer the companies necessary high-level R&D work in the field of the specific entrepreneur, ensure sustainability of R&D and train a highly qualified work force with the competence that meets the requirements of the companies.

Within the on-going NUTIKAS measure, the companies can apply for support to conduct applied research and product development in collaboration with research institutions in the growth areas of smart specialisation. The aim of the support is to provide a stronger link between research and economy and increase the influence of research in the society.



The field-based R&D activity programme RITA supports R&D with strategic importance to increase the capability of Estonian universities and research institutions to conduct surveys necessary for the state and to obtain scientifically reasoned recommendations and solutions for issues important for the society.

Research internationalisation programme Mobilitas+ and higher education internationalisation programme Dora+ activities improve the international visibility of Estonian doctoral students, scientists and research institutions. The competitive advantage of the state depends on how attractive the place of study and research Estonia can be and how many options abroad can we offer for our own people.

Miscellaneous

[The Ministry of Education and Research has initiated the preparation of Estonian Education and Research Strategy for 2020–2035](#)

The aim is to develop a realistic long-term vision on how to develop the education system and research in Estonia so it would help the country to be a society of healthy and happy people, and which manages itself based on agreed values, responsible citizens and a successful economy that can compete at an international level. The strategy involves the entire domain of Ministry of Education and Research and its areas of policy.

Education, and indirectly research are areas that concern absolutely every person from cradle to grave. Therefore, we have opted for an inclusive approach in preparing the strategy. This means that the best experts in Estonia from different fields help to prepare the strategy – academics, scientists of different fields, teachers, education leaders, representatives of students and parents, entrepreneurs and representatives of other stakeholders and many others.

Three expert groups have been prepared for developing the long-term vision and proposals:

- 1) Expert group for values and responsibility, led by Margit Sutrop
- 2) Expert group for competitiveness, led by Raul Eamets
- 3) Expert group for cohesion in society and wellbeing, led by Marju Lauristin and Krista Loogma

The task of the expert groups is to analyse, based on its topic, the current situation in Estonia and, considering developments in the world, to propose a realistic vision about how should the Estonian education system and research organisation be developed, so that Estonia would continue to be in 2035 a state of mostly happy citizens, relying on a strong, internationally capable economy and the society of which is coherent and mutually supportive towards its members.



The visionary document of the Estonian education and research strategy will be finished by 4 March 2019. The representatives of the expert groups will present the initial ideas at the Estonian culture and education congress held in November 2018.

Business education has reached a third of all Estonian schools

The entrepreneurship education programme Edu ja Tegu (Edu and Act) has raised the schools' interest in business studies making it reach more and more students. In this academic year, entrepreneurship will be taught with the aid of the programme already in a third of general education schools, a third of vocational schools and half of higher education institutions. All six public universities offer entrepreneurship studies.

The programme launched in 2016 helps the student to obtain an entrepreneurial attitude, develop business knowledge and skills and thus helps the graduates to increase their competitive advantage on the labour market – either as an entrepreneur or an active employee, who understands their contribution to the value created by the company. Entrepreneurship studies are promoted on all levels of education and entrepreneurship study models and methods are developed for this purpose. Implementation is supported by additional trainings and study materials.

General education schools and vocational education institutions are invited to participate in the student company programme of Junior Achievement and the Enterprising school programme, which comply with the general and vocational education entrepreneurship study modules and the national curricula, also support implementation of the latter two. There is also an application round open for general and vocational education schools that provide support for projects that make entrepreneurship studies more life-like. Foundation Innove coordinates the network of career and entrepreneurship teachers of vocational education, which welcomes teachers all over Estonia.

Business idea development programme STARTER events welcome students from all higher education institutions, vocational and general education schools. The activities are conducted by centres located in the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology and Tallinn University, additionally there are regional programmes in Pärnu and Ida-Viru counties.

Career services move to the Career Centre of the Unemployment Insurance Fund

During this starting school year, the changes to the career service reform are enforced, which means that as of 1 January 2019, the provision of career services will continue at the Career Centre of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. As a result of the change, as of 1 January 2019, the career counselling and career information mediation services meant for the youth will transfer from the Innove Rajaleidja centres to the Unemployment Insurance Fund.



Provision of study counselling services will continue in its current volume at the Rajaleidja centres.

Until 31 December 2018, the career counselling and career information mediation directed at youth, and signing the necessary related contracts will still take place via the Rajaleidja centres. The schools can sign all the agreements concerning provision of career services for the entire school year with the [Rajaleidja centre](#) of their region. The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund will take over and perform all contracts signed for the second half of the academic year 2018/2019.