

A photograph of a classroom with several students sitting at wooden desks, focused on their work. In the foreground, a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey and black striped sweater, is looking down at a book. Behind her, a student in a blue sweater and glasses is also working. Further back, another student in a green top is visible. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. A large blue curved shape overlays the bottom left of the image, containing the title and logo.

Key activities in the academic year 2024/2025

Ministry of Education and Research 2024



HARIDUS- JA
TEADUSMINISTEERIUM

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Key activities in the academic year 2024/2025

Reform for a transition to Estonian-language education

For the first time in the history of re-independent Estonia, all Estonian children going to the first grade begin their studies in the Estonian language. The aim of the long-prepared transition to Estonian-language education is to provide all children the opportunity to acquire high-quality education in Estonian, create equal opportunities in the labour market and increase social cohesion.

The transition to Estonian-language education will begin in kindergartens and grades 1 and 4 from September this year and, in accordance with the law, will last until 2030. A unified Estonian-language educational environment gives all children and young people better opportunities to continue their studies and find a job and occupation they like. Estonian-language education also supports the development of Estonian national identity.

For implementing the action plan for the transition to Estonian-language education, 221 million euros have been envisaged in the state budget strategy for 2024–2027, plus external funds in the amount of 28.6 million euros. In 2027–2030, the transition will be supported on a similar scale.

Numerous organisations are involved in activities contributing to the transition: the Institute of the Estonian Language, the Education and Youth Board, Rajaleidja, universities, the Estonian Parents' Union, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, the Integration Foundation, VeniVidiVici, Asendusõpetajate MTÜ (non-profit association providing substitute teachers), and many other partners.

For a smoother transition, the government specified the requirements for educators' Estonian language proficiency in July this year. Teachers working in schools for general education who teach in a language other than Estonian and who are required to have Estonian language skills at the B2 level have been given time until 1 August 2025 to bring their language proficiency to the required level. Teachers of international schools will be required to have Estonian language proficiency at the B1 level as of 1 September 2026. As a new requirement, the Estonian language skills of teaching assistants in kindergartens must correspond to the B2 level by 1 September 2026. Until then, the Estonian language proficiency of the employee assisting the teacher in a kindergarten may be at the A2 level. The language proficiency requirements for support staff were also specified – as of 1 August 2026, support staff working in the Estonian language must have Estonian language skills at the C1 level.

In the upcoming academic year, teachers teaching in the Estonian language in Ida-Viru County will continue to receive higher salaries. The salary supplement is 541 euros per month for a teacher in a preschool child care institution; 902 euros per month for a teacher in a school for general education or vocational school; 902 euros for support staff (special education teacher, speech therapist, school psychologist, social pedagogue) in a preschool child care institution, general education school or vocational school. In addition, monetary support is allocated to enhance the management of the educational institution. In the case of a preschool child care institution, the subsidy is 18 euros per child, and in the case of schools for general education school or vocational school, 30 euros per student. Schools that are transitioning to Estonian-language education also receive monetary support for purchasing study aids. This amounts to 100 euros per each child going to the first grade.

The Ministry has compiled a comprehensive [newsletter](#) containing detailed information and references on various aspects of the transition:

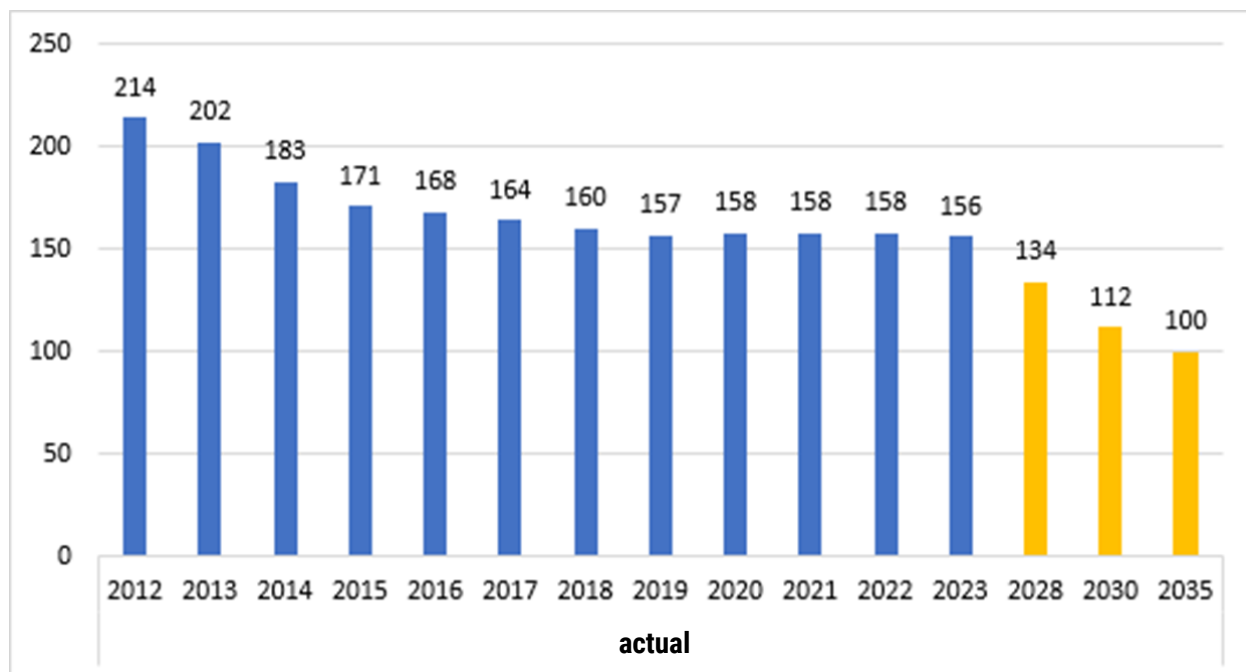
- I Important guides and laws
- II Estonian language learning for educators
- III Expanding the set of methodological tools for educators
- IV Instructions regarding learning materials
- V Additional support related to the transition to Estonian-language education
- VI Assessment of students' learning outcomes in national standard-determining tests
- VII Activities supporting parents
- VIII Useful references and contact information for heads of educational institutions

- [Online version of the newsletter](#)
- Additional information: hm.ee/ulementek

Rearranging the school network

The school network and organisation of secondary education will be streamlined at the level of the law. Activities will be continued in order to shift responsibility for secondary education to the state by 2035. The aim is to achieve an optimal school network that ensures equal access to high-quality education across Estonia, taking into account the declining population. Educational centres combining general and vocational education are also being created. These centres of post-basic education provide a professional qualification, vocational secondary school education, distance learning and academic upper secondary school education, as well as the opportunity to complete a year of preparatory studies. By 2035, there could be nearly 100 upper secondary schools and 30 educational centres across Estonia.

The number of upper secondary schools providing full-time education in 2012–2023 and the target until 2035 (yellow bars).



Rae Gymnasium and Kiviõli State School will start operating.

On 1 September, a new state gymnasium – Rae Gymnasium – will start teaching. In total, education is provided by 27 state gymnasiums. 85% of the funds for the design and construction of state gymnasiums comes from the European Regional Development Fund and 15% is co-financed by the state.

As of 1 September, Kiviõli I Secondary School, Lügänuuse School and Kiviõli Russian School will be reorganised to form a new school – Kiviõli State School. Then a total of 50 public schools for general education will be operating in Estonia starting from the academic year 2024/2025.

The state will take over the operation of adult schools in Narva and Kohtla-Järve.

As of 1 September, Narva Adult School and Kohtla-Järve Adult Gymnasium will be operated by the Ministry of Education and Research. The contract for the takeover of the schools was signed between the municipalities and the Ministry in spring. The takeover of the schools stems from the shift of the responsibility for secondary education to the state and supports the transition to Estonian-language education.

The design and construction of six modern school buildings in Ida-Viru County begins.

According to the investment plan for the basic school network approved in July this year, the rearranging of the school network in Ida-Viru County will be supported with 60.7 million euros. Six new school buildings will be built: two in Kohtla-Järve and one in Iisaku, Narva, Narva-Jõesuu and Toila. The projects have been selected in cooperation with local governments, who must submit action plans to the Ministry in autumn.

In the Kohtla-Järve Järve district, the plan is to merge two basic schools and erect a building for the Kohtla-Järve Järve School. In the Ahtme district, the plan is to merge three basic schools and erect a new school building. In Alutaguse parish, the plan is to transform Iisaku Gymnasium into a basic school and erect a school building for 135 students. In Narva, the plan is to merge at least two basic schools in the Soldino district and erect a new school building. A school building for 135

students is to be erected for Narva-Jõesuu School. Toila Gymnasium is to be transformed into a basic school and a school building for 180 students will be erected.

With the help of investments, the number of general education schools and student places in schools in the county will be aligned with the number of young people. For the construction of school buildings, 50 million euros of EU structural funds and 10.7 million euros of Estonian state co-financing will be used. Local governments will have to contribute 15% of the cost of the project.

When the projects are implemented, Ida-Viru County will become the first county where the entire school network has been rearranged and the school buildings are adapted to the needs of students and teachers, offering the best opportunities for providing diverse and high-quality education in Estonian.

Changes in the organisation of studies

The times of the final exams of basic school are changing.

In order for the graduation process and admission to a new level of education to be in a logical sequence, the final examinations of basic school will be held earlier so that they can also be taken into account when enrolling at a new school. In 2025, the final examinations of basic school will begin on 21 April, and the results will be announced by 16 May.

The updated specifications for the unified final examinations of basic school are available on the [Education and Youth Board's website](#).

EXAM CALENDAR 2025

APRIL							MAY						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
31.03 PISA begins	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3	4
	01.-03.04 Standard-determining test in social subjects, 9th grade										02.05 PISA ends		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	08.-11.04 DELTA			French DELF exam			07.05 Mathematics			05.-09.05 English language			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
14.04 Estonian language	15.-17.04 Estonian as a second language			14.04-20.04 Spring break			12.-14.05 English Elective exams		12.-15.05 Goethe Zertifikat exam		16.05 Results		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
21.-24.04 Estonian as a second language							19.-20.05 Standard-determining test in social subjects, 6th grade		21.05 Mathematics	22.-23.05 Standard-determining test in social subjects, 3rd grade			
28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31	
							26.-30.05 Additional state exams						

STATE EXAMS FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

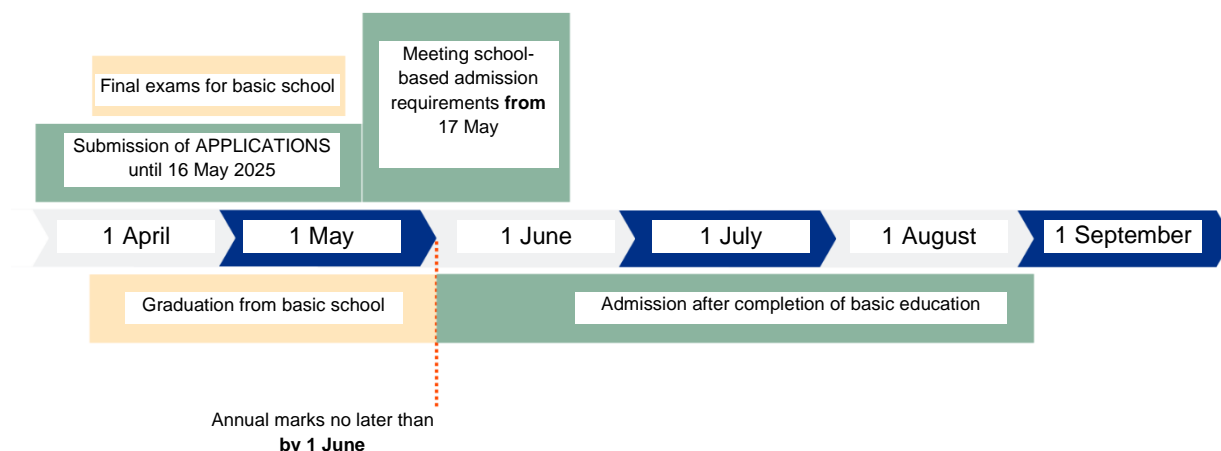
FINAL EXAMS FOR BASIC SCHOOL

STANDARD-DETERMINING TESTS IN SOCIAL SUBJECTS

Admission to secondary education will begin in 2025 after the results of the final examinations of basic school have been announced.

The start time of the process of admission to the next level of education has been harmonised, so that graduation from basic school and the process of admission to the next level of education would be smoother for students. Admission activities directly related to the student, such as interviews, can begin in the spring of 2025 only after the results of basic school final exams have

been made public. During the admission period (by 1 June), the students' annual marks will also be announced, which allows both the results of the unified final exams of basic school and the annual marks to be taken into account in the admission process. Re-assessment of competences is not justified, because the final examinations of basic school already measure, for example, the competences of mathematics and mother tongue, and the annual marks give an overview of the level of competences acquired during basic school. The change will also help to avoid situations where students receive an admission decision before they are sure that they meet the conditions for graduating from basic school.



Ninth-grade annual marks must be disclosed no later than the beginning of June.

In the upcoming academic year, all final marks of basic school must be disclosed no later than 1 June, which is a unified date for all schools. A common approach creates a clear time frame for students, teachers and schools alike, allowing all parties involved to plan the learning process and preparations well in advance. If the student fails the final exams for one reason or another, they must have time to pass the re-exams, if necessary, and complete all outstanding tasks and get learning outcomes in all subjects before the annual marks are given.

Switching to e-exams.

In the upcoming academic year, the Ministry, in cooperation with the Education and Youth Board, will continue preparations for the transition to e-exams in the spring of 2026. The focus is on improving IT infrastructure readiness and developing the exam information system. Students can solve sample assignments and tasks in the examination environment, and the use of electronic exams will be introduced on a wider scale and integrated into studies. In cooperation with schools, pilot exams will be conducted, feedback will be collected for the development of e-exams, and sectoral seminars will be organised for teachers. More information about the pilot e-exams in spring 2025 will be published by the Education and Youth Board in November 2024.

The plan is to expand the possibility of learning a mother tongue and cultural history other than Estonian.

Basic school students whose mother tongue is not Estonian and who are required to learn a second (B) foreign language will have the opportunity to study their own language and culture instead of the second foreign language. Language and cultural studies may also be carried out outside the school in cooperation with hobby schools of national cultural associations or other language and cultural education institutions. When the change is implemented, the student's weekly workload may be increased by one hour in order to enable these studies. In other respects,

the current system should remain the same – the study of a mother tongue and cultural history other than Estonian is voluntary; at least ten students with the same mother tongue or the same home language of communication must wish to receive instruction; and these studies are classified under electives.

Reform of the obligation to learn.

The obligation to attend school will be replaced by the obligation to learn, and the compulsory education age is extended from the current age of 17 to the age of 18. This means that all basic school graduates have the right and obligation to continue their education until they reach at least the age of 18 or until they have completed secondary or vocational education.

Today, nearly 600 basic school graduates do not continue their education every year, and about the same number fall out in the first year of post-basic studies – one in ten young people in Estonia remains with basic education. This increases the problem of a lack of qualified labour, as basic education is clearly not sufficient to succeed in the labour market. In order to ensure long-term growth, we need more qualified workforce in the labour market. This requires raising the average level of education of residents in Estonia. The aim is to raise the level of education of young people, at least up to secondary or vocational education, and to prepare them for entering the labour market and becoming independent. As a result of the reform of the obligation to learn, an additional 1,300 qualified young people will enter the Estonian labour market every year. The reform aims to ensure that 90% of Estonians aged 20–24 complete upper secondary education and that the percentage of 18–24-year-olds with a low level of education who are not in education or training would be less than 5%.

The legislative amendment is currently [pending in the Riigikogu](#). When the amendment is adopted, all students will be subject to the obligation to learn. The obligation to continue their studies first applies to those students who will go to the 9th grade on 1 September 2025.

For general education schools and vocational schools, the obligation to learn means that flexible learning opportunities must be provided to ensure that all students continue their education after basic school. At the school level, a sharper focus must be placed on preventing dropout. This involves ensuring that the need for support is noticed early on and that individual solutions are implemented as quickly as possible. In addition, schools have the obligation to cooperate more efficiently with local governments, and local governments are responsible for monitoring and intervening more systematically with needs-based support.

Updated curricula apply.

In March 2023, updated curricula entered into force, which must be implemented in schools as of 1 September 2024. One of the most important changes is that the detailed teaching content has been moved from the regulation to guidance materials. This gives teachers more freedom, enabling them to be more creative in achieving learning outcomes, and increases the importance of cooperation between teachers in planning and organising teaching.

The updated curricula cover a variety of subject fields, prioritising the development of practical skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. A greater focus is also placed on a learner-centred approach, which involves paying more attention to the individual needs and interests of students. To help implement these changes, teachers have been provided training sessions and guidance materials to support new ways of teaching.

Innovations in the teaching and learning process mean that students and their parents also have to adapt. The new curricula place a greater focus on self-management and taking responsibility

for one's own learning outcomes. This also gives students the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in a way that better prepares them for their future life and career. Therefore, it is especially important that parents and the school work closely together to fully support children in the learning process.

Preschool education reform

The new Preschool Education Act will improve the accessibility and quality of preschool education. A unified system of preschool education is being created, linking childcare and kindergarten services. Childcare services, which have hitherto been regulated in the Social Welfare Act, will become part of the preschool education system. The draft legislation also states that kindergartens and childcare providers must deliver preschool education in Estonian. With the legislative amendment, qualification requirements will also be raised for directors of child care institutions, who must have completed higher education at least at the master's level. The current requirement for childminders to have secondary or vocational education will be raised so that at least level 4 of the professional qualification is required, and requirements will be established for teaching assistants who must have at least secondary education and a professional qualification, or pedagogical competences, and Estonian language proficiency.

The amendment is based on the needs of children and families and creates high-quality conditions for supporting children's development and equal access to preschool education. The long-term goal is to find a systemic solution to the problem of the lack of kindergarten places, which will enable children to receive high-quality preschool education and help families reconcile their professional and family life. The Act is pending before the Riigikogu and is scheduled to enter into force on 1 January 2025.

Vocational education reform

One of the important objectives of the proposed reform of vocational education is to make secondary vocational education a competitive and attractive choice for further education alongside upper secondary school education, which will allow graduates to successfully find an occupation in the labour market or continue their studies in higher education institutions. The reform aims to ensure that by 2035, 40–50% of young people will be enrolled in a vocational upper secondary school or vocational school.

Vocational education and training will become more flexible than before, learning choices after basic school will be broadened, and four-year curricula of vocational upper secondary schools will be created with a focus on engineering and IT. At least 18 new four-year secondary vocational education curricula will be opened for admission in September 2025. In vocational schools, in addition to distance learning, general education can also be provided in a full-time study format in the future. The volume of general education studies in secondary vocational education is also increasing, as well as the volume of elective studies, and the focus of elective studies and the principles of selection will be specified.

Legal bases for the provision of paid vocational education will also be created, ie hobby education for adults will become paid in vocational schools. The entire network of vocational schools will also be reviewed. At the same time, the learning opportunities in vocational education will be

aligned with the requirements of employers and the forecasts of labour needs in OSKA reports. In addition, the procedure for supporting students in vocational schools will be updated.

Preparations are being made for reforming the professional qualification system and for the introduction of a new Professions Act. The aim of these changes is to make the fields of education and work more coherent, so as to further support the skills and career development of different target groups, as well as lifelong learning. The changes will significantly reduce the number of professional standards and expand the possibilities for skills assessment and recognition of professional qualifications.

Succession of teachers

Compared to last year, a thousand more applications were submitted to enrol in teacher training curricula.

Data from the Admission Information System (SAIS) show that interest in teacher training specialties continues to grow. This year, a total of nearly 6,000 applications were submitted to teacher training specialties at the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, which is about a thousand more applications than last year. The competition for teacher training specialties has grown – this year, an average of 3.5 applications per student place were submitted at the University of Tartu and 3.1 applications at Tallinn University, compared to 3.1 and 2.5 respectively a year ago.

At the University of Tartu, there continued to be major competition primarily for first-level curricula in module studies: special education and speech therapy (5.3), teacher in a preschool child care institution (7.1), teacher in a preschool child care institution with a multilingual teaching environment (6.3), vocational teacher (4.1).

At Tallinn University, too, the biggest competition was for first-level curricula in module studies: 13 applications per student place for special education and nearly 11 applications per one place for the preschool teacher specialty. As for master's studies, the preschool teacher (3.4) and vocational teacher (2.8) curricula were the most popular. Of the subject teacher curricula, the biggest competition was for the foreign language teacher curriculum. Compared to the previous year, there was more interest in, for example, the vocational teacher, sciences teacher and technology subjects teacher curricula.

Regrettably, the competition at the University of Tartu was modest for the teacher of natural and exact sciences (less than 1.5) and the teacher of Estonian language and literature (1.2) curricula. Tallinn University lacked candidates for the curricula of teachers of history and civics and citizenship education, computer science, art, music, mathematics, and Russian language and literature.

Teacher training is conducted in Estonia by three universities – the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, and a couple of teacher training curricula are jointly provided in cooperation with Tallinn University of Technology or the Estonian Academy of Arts.

The state gave additional funds to universities to admit an additional 445 teacher training students.

The Ministry allocated a total of 7.7 million euros to the University of Tartu and Tallinn University, so that the universities would open an additional 445 student places in the curricula of teacher training and support staff in the academic year 2024/2025 (ie in addition to the student places created with the operating subsidy). The aim of increasing the number of student places is to alleviate the shortage of teachers and support the transition to Estonian-language education. In total, universities have created just over 1,500 student places for teacher training this year with the support of state funding, which is in the same order of magnitude as in 2023. In addition, this year the Ministry allocated a total of 4.28 million euros to three universities (University of Tartu, Tallinn University and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre) for the payment of a scholarship to students studying in the curricula of teacher training and support staff. Students who have enrolled starting from the previous academic year are entitled to a scholarship of 400 euros. The aim is to make teacher training specialties more popular and fill additional student places created by the state with capable candidates.

The plan is to create a system of attestation of school leaders and make employment contracts fixed-term.

The Ministry has prepared the legislative intent for an Act amending the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, which sets out the development of an attestation system based on the competence model of school leaders for assessing of and feedback on the school leaders' work, as well as the introduction of fixed-term employment contracts. A fixed-term employment relationship with performance evaluation interviews and an attestation system will create a pool of talents with good management skills in the field of education. The first version of the draft legislation is expected to be finalised by the end of 2024, with the amendments scheduled to take effect by 2026.

New continuing education courses and development programmes will be made available for educators.

In autumn 2024, teachers already working at a school who wish to become teachers of physics, mathematics or biology within the framework of the Teachers' Academy programme, created in cooperation between the University of Tartu and Tallinn University, will have the opportunity to enrol in microdegree programmes. The Teachers' Academy programme will also include lectures by guest lecturers selected from among active teachers through an open competition. These guest lecturers are interested in contributing to the focus areas of the Academy – mathematics, natural and exact sciences, inclusive education and teaching Estonian (as well as other subjects in the Estonian language) to children with a home language other than Estonian.

This autumn, both the University of Tartu and Tallinn University will start offering continuing education programmes to educators with support from the European Social Fund. The target group includes teachers in preschool child care institutions, schools for general education, hobby schools and vocational schools, as well as support staff, heads of educational institutions and youth workers. The development programme for new school leaders will also continue – the 10th group will start this autumn. For the first time, a development programme will be available for new heads of preschool child care institutions. To support beginning leaders, groups will also be opened for the basic training of mentors.

Negotiations for a long-term Education Pact for 2025–2027 are ongoing.

The Education Pact is an agreement reached as a result of negotiations between teachers, representatives of their employers and the Ministry in order to value the work of teachers and to

ensure their succession in Estonia. The aim of concluding the Education Pact is to give teachers of schools for general education confidence in terms of career opportunities, remuneration and workload, while avoiding state over-regulation and preserving the flexibility underlining the success of Estonian education as much as possible, as well as the autonomy of school owners and leaders.

This is a goodwill agreement between different parties in the education sector – the state, municipalities, representative organisations of teachers and school leaders, owners of private schools. Since the beginning of the year, the parties have met and thematic working groups have held sessions.

The plan is to agree on a 4-step career model based on competencies, as well as salary coefficients: level 1 – beginning teacher; level 2 – teacher; level 3 – senior teacher; level 4 – master teacher. Not all levels are mandatory for each school, and it is up to the school leader to establish the organisation of work and remuneration of school staff, which includes the teachers' career model.

The Pact also regulates the working time and working conditions of teachers. It is proposed that a teacher's workload should be 21 contact lessons and all tasks should fit into 35 hours per week for a full-time teacher. The Education Pact suggests that the school owner must ensure a sufficient number of teacher positions based on the curriculum and organisation of studies and the number of students.

The aim is to reach an agreement on the career model, working hours and working conditions of teachers by the end of this year and to sign a long-term Education Pact for 2025–2027.

Higher education funding and legislative amendments

Legislative amendments concerning the covering of study costs in higher education will enter into force.

As of the academic year 2024/2025, amendments to the Higher Education Act will enter into force, which will restrict studying free of charge at the same level of higher education for more than once. The amendments will create better opportunities for first-time applicants to obtain free higher education.

Those who already have a higher education can re-acquire free higher education ten years after completing their studies at the same level.

Educational institutions may make exceptions in the implementation of restrictions on enrolling again free of charge. For example, universities might not charge a tuition fee from students of teacher training curricula who wish to enrol in a teacher training master's programme after having recently completed master's studies. [Additional information and FAQs](#).

Long-term plan for the financing of higher education.

The aim is to ensure sustainable higher education in Estonian that also meets the expectations of the labour market. According to the coalition agreement, in addition to free higher education, universities will be allowed to charge tuition fees in certain cases also for Estonian-language curricula. In order to discuss the financing of higher education, the Ministry convenes a Higher Education Policy Advisory Board, which consists of representatives of higher education institutions, employers and students. The task of the working group is to develop a long-term plan

for the financing of higher education, agreeing on the financing of higher education in a way that meets the needs of the state and the labour market, as well as on the extent of students' own contribution in the future.

In addition, the aim is to increase learning opportunities in professional higher education in order to meet the expectations of companies in sectors with high workforce needs – especially in the fields of engineering, ICT and healthcare. This will also create additional learning opportunities for those who complete vocational education after the vocational education reform.

A reform of the student loan system is being planned.

In the academic year 2024/2025, Swedbank and LHV will provide student loans, and the maximum amount of the student loan is 3,000 euros per year. The Ministry is preparing a reform of the student loan system to make student loan taking more flexible and attractive for students and thereby enable more equal access to education. The changes also aim to reduce the workload of students during their studies.

The government's action programme provides for the updating of the student loan system by raising the maximum loan amount to 6,000 euros and extending the repayment period in order to reduce the financial burden on students after completing their studies. It is also proposed to waive the requirement for a guarantor or real estate guarantee in order to improve access to student loans and thus to education for socio-economically disadvantaged students. The interest rate cap for students is also to be lowered in order to make student loans more affordable and accessible. In addition, changes to the interest payments system are under consideration in order to reduce the financial burden on students and allow them to focus more on their studies.

The legislative intent for amending the Study Allowances and Study Loans Act should be finalised by the Ministry by the end of 2024. The earliest possible time for the entry into force of the amendments is autumn 2026.

The procedure for the provision of microcredentials is being specified.

The draft Adult Education Act, which establishes the bases for conducting microcredential programmes, is pending in the Riigikogu. Microcredentials are designed for adults who want to acquire a complete skill, learning in smaller modules. They facilitate movement between different educational paths and increase the flexibility of learning. The draft legislation defines the concepts of microcredentials and microdegrees, explains the volume of study, characteristics and requirements for microcredential providers and certificates to be issued. The volume of microcredential studies is 5–30 credits and the graduate is awarded a microcredential certificate, which is entered in the EHIS. Requirements for conducting microcredential programmes are scheduled to enter into force as of 1 September 2025.

The same draft legislation also specifies the requirements for continuing education for adults in order to ensure the quality of the training provided.

PIAAC 2022 results will be announced on 10 December

PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) is an international survey of adult skills that aims to measure adults' functional reading skills, mathematical literacy and problem-solving skills in a technology-rich environment, as well as basic reading and numeracy skills. Between 2021 and 2023, 31 mainly OECD countries (including Estonia)

participated in the study and the results will be disclosed globally at the same time on 10 December.

Artificial intelligence in education

Artificial intelligence has come to stay. This involves completely new challenges, as well as opportunities. The biggest challenge is the need to essentially rethink the process of learning and teaching and, as a result, to rearrange activities at the class, school and educational management level. We can focus on the implementation of the principles and learning strategies of a modern approach to learning. This means that the student's and teacher's time together is filled with activities that help students become effective self-directed learners. The advent of artificial intelligence acts as a catalyst here. It is necessary to completely rethink what should be done in class and what should be done at home.

This is a long and time-consuming process, but we already have many methodologies in place. Here are a couple of examples.

- ▶ Globally, the so-called inverted classroom is already in use – it is worth using homework to avoid lecturing in class. Homework is preparation for the lesson, which should attract interest and give students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the topics in advance. The point of homework is to raise questions, so that students can ask them at school the next day. In this case, a discussion of what was read and studied at home could begin right away in class, along with reflecting on the questions, working on problems and cases, etc. Homework should be set in such a way that artificial intelligence could not do the thinking for the student.
- ▶ The new situation requires both students and teachers to have better skills and proficiency in metacognition. We need to be able to reflect on thinking and to master learning the essence of things, not to drill. These approaches and methodologies are already in place in universities. It is necessary for this knowledge and skill to reach schools more broadly through teacher training and continuing education.

Here are some practical tips that can be applied immediately.

- ▶ Schools are encouraged to support teachers in acquiring competences in the field of artificial intelligence. To facilitate this, Harno has created a series of webinars [Distantsilt targemaks](#), which can be viewed at any time.
- ▶ It is not appropriate to use software that allows detecting the use of artificial intelligence in schoolwork with the aim of detecting plagiarism. This is a deceptive and unreliable method, as experts hold that it is not possible to ensure the correctness of the detection results of such software.
- ▶ Copyrighted materials must also be handled with caution – legally, they must not be inserted into text robots that use this material to train their models.
- ▶ We recommend taking a look at the instructions for the use of artificial intelligence in schools and practical advice for teachers: <https://hm.ee/tehisaru-koolis>.

In summary, we continue to encourage the exploring and use of artificial intelligence in a way that is consistent with the achievement of learning outcomes and complies with existing legal regulations.

Academic year 2024/2025 in figures

Introduction

In September, around 165,000 students start their full-time studies in schools for general education, which is about a thousand students more than last year. The number of students will continue to grow in the coming years. About 15,000 students will start school for the first time this academic year.

The total number of students in vocational training has slightly increased. The increase is primarily due to the addition of students of secondary vocational education, while the number and percentage of adult learners has decreased in recent years.

The number of higher education students has fallen slightly in the last two academic years.

The school network of general education is undergoing a number of rearrangements, mostly related to the merging of schools or the closure of school stages.

The wages of teachers continue to grow and the state also considers it important to raise the wages of kindergarten teachers to the same level as the wages of school teachers, while many teachers in schools for general education continue to work part-time.

The exact number of students for the 2024/2025 academic year will be revealed in mid-November, when schools and local governments have submitted data to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS).

- ▶ More detailed indicators in the fields of education, research, youth and language can be found on the education statistics portal haridussilm.ee, and studies and analyses are available on the [Ministry's website](#).

Indicators for general education, vocational education and higher education students

General education

In total, an estimated 165,000 students will start full-time studies in schools for general education in the academic year 2024/2025, which is about a thousand students more than in the previous academic year and almost 12,000 students more than five years ago. However, the change in the number of students varies greatly by region – Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu regions have seen the greatest increase, while in Ida-Viru, Valga, Põlva and Järva counties, for example, the number of students has decreased during the same period. It is expected that the total number of students will continue to grow in the next two academic years and then begin to decline.

About 15,000 students start first grade this year. About 89,000 students will enrol in grades 1–6 of basic school. About 48,000 students will enrol in grades 7–9 of basic school. About 28,000 young people will start studies in upper secondary schools, ie grades 10–12.

Number of students in full-time studies in grades 1, 10 and 12 (source: EHIS)

Grade	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of students in grade 1	14,898	14,094	13,892	14,058	14,727	14,997
Number of students in grade 10	7,988	8,156	8,633	8,834	9,180	9539
Number of students in grade 12	7,015	7,052	7,134	7,411	7,622	7815
Total number of students	151,164	153,155	155,104	156,786	162,919	163,649

Forecasted number of students (source: EHIS)

	2024	2025	2026	2027
Basic education	136,800	135,400	134,500	133,800
Upper secondary school	28,200	30,100	31,600	31,400
Total number of students	165,000	165,500	166,100	165,200

Vocational education

A total of more than 26,000 students are enrolled in vocational training. In recent academic years, the percentage of students up to the age of 19 in vocational education has increased again. In the academic year 2023/2024, 11,600 students studied in secondary vocational education; the last time when there were as many students enrolled in secondary vocational education was eight years ago. The increase in the number of students is primarily due to the increase in the number of basic school graduates. In 2007–2010, more than 15,000 children were born in Estonia every year, and now this generation has reached the final years of basic school.

The number of adult learners has declined in the last four academic years. While in the academic year 2020/2021, as many as 42% of students in vocational training were 25 years of age and older, then in the academic year 2023/2024, the percentage of adult learners had decreased to 37%.

Number of students in vocational training by type of study (source: EHIS)

Type of study ¹	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total second- and third-level vocational training	1,183	1,431	1,534	1,649	1,522	1,739
Fourth-level vocational training	8,269	8,668	9,382	9,145	8,752	8,594
Secondary vocational education	10,027	9,897	10,300	10,645	10,966	11,616

¹

In second- and third-level vocational training, studies can be commenced without completing basic education.

In fourth-level vocational training, the condition for commencing studies is the completion of basic education.

In secondary vocational education, both secondary education and professional skills are acquired (at the fourth level of qualification).

In fifth-level vocational training, the condition for commencing studies is the completion of secondary education.

Fifth-level vocational training	3,908	4,021	4,332	4,423	4,229	4,362
Total	23,387	24,017	25,548	25,862	25,469	26,311
Share of students aged 25 and over	39.6%	41.7%	42.4%	41.1%	38.5%	37.2%

Higher education

In the academic year 2023/2024, the number of students entering the first level of higher education increased slightly, while the number of students entering master's and doctoral studies decreased.

The number of international students arriving in Estonia has decreased in recent academic years due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the war in Ukraine. In the academic year 2023/2024, international students made up 9.7% of all students in Estonian higher education institutions. At the same time, the number of students with an external background in doctoral studies has increased, accounting for 34.7% of all doctoral students.

As at other levels of education, the final admission numbers for the new academic year will be revealed in mid-November, when all students have been enrolled and the data has been entered into the Estonian education information system.

Number of students per level of higher education (source: EHIS)

<i>Academic year/studies</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Professional higher education studies	12,601	11,967	11,721	11,462	11,246	11,262
Bachelor's studies	15,830	15,707	15,953	15,786	15,929	16,503
Integrated bachelor's and master's studies	3,189	3,222	3,306	3,324	3,287	3,413
Master's studies	11,783	11,966	11,962	11,686	11,377	11,167
Doctoral studies	2,412	2,316	2,317	2,353	2,292	2,283
Total	45,815	45,178	45,259	44,611	44,131	44,628

Number of international students per level of higher education (source: EHIS)

<i>Academic year/studies</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Professional higher education studies	340	387	418	390	396	315
Bachelor's studies	1,740	1,777	1,616	1,456	1,324	1,179
Integrated bachelor's and master's studies	322	328	346	347	347	354
Master's studies	2,129	2,445	2,184	2,122	2,043	1,700
Doctoral studies	516	591	671	757	763	792
Total	5,047	5,528	5,235	5,072	4,873	4,340
Share of international students, %	11.0%	12.2%	11.6%	11.4%	11.0%	9.7%

Number of admissions to higher education in a year, by level of studies (source: EHIS)

<i>Academic year/studies</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Professional higher education studies	3,590	3,297	3,319	3,191	3,222	3,355
Bachelor's studies	5,149	5,012	5,006	4,967	5,193	5,440
Integrated bachelor's and master's studies	696	652	680	677	637	746
Master's studies	4,349	4,392	4,203	4,246	3,868	4,060
Doctoral studies	397	343	387	400	362	393
Total	14,181	13,696	13,595	13,481	13,282	13,994

Adult education

In 2022, the participation rate in lifelong learning increased and even exceeded the pre-crisis level, reaching 21.1% (or about 149,300 25–64-year-olds). In 2023, the pre-COVID-19 record was significantly surpassed: the rate of participants in lifelong learning was 23.2%, or about 167,900 people in the age group 25–64.

In general education, the number of distance learners has been increasing. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were a total of 5,959 distance learners, which is 473 more students than in the academic year 2022/2023.

The share of adult students entering vocational training (students aged 25 and over) has been steadily increasing since the academic year 2012/2013, but in the last three years the percentage has decreased. In 2023/2024, the share of students aged 25 and over in vocational education was 37.2%, which is 3.9 percentage points lower than two years earlier.

The number of adult learners (25+) in general education in the academic year 2022/2023 was 1,900. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 2,837 adult learners, of whom 1,272 studied only certain subjects, and 1,202 of them in turn were enrolled in Narva Adult School.

Adult learners in formal education (source: EHIS)

	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Distance learners in general education*	5,486	5,579	5,129	5,215	5,486	5,959
Adult learners in general education (25+)	1,744	1,783	1,890	1,893	1,900	2,837
Adult learners in vocational education (25+)	9,259	10,007	10,830	10,639	9,795	9,783
Adult learners in higher education (30+)	13,067	13,362	13,905	13,972	14,433	13,975

* 20% of distance learners are 17 years old or younger.

Share of people aged 25–64 (%) who participated in formal education or training in the last 4 weeks (source: Eurostat)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Estonia	19.7	20.1	17.1	18.4	21.1	23.2
EU27	10.6	10.8	9.2	10.8	11.9	12.8

Teacher indicators

Number of teachers by educational institutions

The number of teachers continues to be significantly higher than the number of positions, which indicates that a notable proportion of teachers works part-time.

Number of teaching positions and teachers² in the previous academic year 2023/24 (source: EHIS)

<i>Number of teachers in schools for general education</i>	17,483 people	<i>Number of teaching positions in schools for general education</i>	14,439 positions
<i>Number of teachers in vocational schools</i>	2,150 people	<i>Number of teaching positions in vocational schools</i>	1,348 positions
<i>Number of teachers in preschool child care institutions</i>	7,866 people	<i>Number of teaching positions in preschool child care institutions</i>	7,555 positions

Indicators of teachers in schools for general education

Both the minimum rate of pay and the average gross monthly wages of teachers in municipal schools have more than doubled since 2011. In the last year (2022 vs 2023), the minimum rate of pay and the average gross monthly wages of teachers in municipal schools have increased by almost a quarter.

² Number of teaching positions – this is the number of full-time equivalent positions.

Teachers' average gross monthly wages and minimum rate of pay compared to the average wage in Estonia (source: Saldoandmik, EHIS)

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average gross monthly wages of municipal school teachers	EUR 1,478	EUR 1,579	EUR 1,621	EUR 1,632	EUR 1,773	EUR 2,191
Minimum rate of pay for teachers	EUR 1,150	EUR 1,250	EUR 1,315	EUR 1,315	EUR 1,412	EUR 1,749
Average gross monthly wages in Estonia (ESA)	EUR 1,310	EUR 1,407	EUR 1,448	EUR 1,548	EUR 1,645	EUR 1,832
Average gross monthly wages of municipal school teachers as a percentage of the average gross monthly wages in Estonia	113%	112%	112%	105%	108%	120%

The ratio of teacher positions to students is very low – in recent academic years, it has been around 12 students per teacher position. 20 or more years ago, it reached 19 students per teacher position. In the academic year 2023/2024, the ratio of students to teacher positions is 11.9 students per teacher position, the same as in the academic year 2020/2021.

In the last academic year (2023/2024), both the number of teachers and teaching positions increased compared to the year before. Fluctuations in the number of teachers and the number of teaching positions have had virtually no impact on the average workload, since for the past 14 academic years teachers have worked with an average workload of 0.82–0.84. This indicates that many teachers in schools for general education work part-time. The TALIS³ study (focusing on teachers of grades 7–9) reveals that many part-time teachers would like to work full-time. The organisation of work in a school depends on the staff policy of the head of each school and the school network policy of the school owner.

Change in the number of teachers and students in schools for general education. The change in the number of students can be found in the general education section (source: EHIS)

Academic year	Number of teachers	Number of teaching positions	Number of students in full-time studies	Number of students in full-time studies and distance learning ⁴	Number of students ⁵ per teaching position
2018/2019	15,465	12,852	151,164	156,650	12.2
2019/2020	15,483	13,216	153,155	158,734	12.0
2020/2021	16,357	13,525	155,104	160,829	11.9
2021/2022	16,569	13,755	156,786	162,576	11.8
2022/2023	16,942	14,107	162,919	169,111	12.0
2023/2024	17,483	14,439	163,649	171,217	11.9

³ TALIS (the Teaching and Learning International Survey) is an international teaching and learning survey carried out by the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) that collects data on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers

⁴ External students are also included in the number of students

⁵ Students in full-time studies and distance learning and external students

	Percentage of teachers						
Workload (EHIS)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<0.5	16.7%	16.8%	16.5%	16.7%	16.3%	16.2%	16.8%
0.5–0.99	25.6%	25.4%	25.2%	25.4%	25.2%	25.0%	25.3%
1	49.0%	48.1%	48.8%	50.5%	50.3%	50.7%	51.3%
>1.0	8.7%	9.7%	9.5%	7.5%	8.2%	8.1%	6.7%

Number and size of schools

Kindergartens

In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 563 kindergartens and 3,903 kindergarten groups in Estonia. The vast majority (90%) of kindergartens are municipally owned, and 10% are private kindergartens. Compared to last year, the number of children and child care institutions has decreased, but the number of groups has increased.

Schools for general education

- There were 510 schools for general education in 2023/24, ie four fewer than the year before and 46 fewer than a decade ago.
- 45 basic schools with grades 1–6;
- 300 basic schools with grades 1–9;
- 156 gymnasiums (incl gymnasiums with a basic school section, ie grades 1–12, and schools with only an upper secondary school section, ie grades 10–12);
- 9 adult gymnasiums.

Compared to the previous year, the number of schools decreased mainly due to the merging of schools.

The number of students in schools for general education varies greatly. There are 25 schools with more than 1,000 students (a change of –1 compared to the previous academic year), and 71 (–17) schools with less than 50 students. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 65 (+1) small schools with an upper secondary school section (grades 10–12) with less than 100 students, of which 17 are private schools, 3 are state-maintained schools and the rest are municipal schools. There were 12 (–1) very small schools with up to 30 upper secondary school students. There were 38 schools with fewer than 30 basic school students (–6).

Institutions providing vocational training

In the academic year 2024/2025, it is possible to study in 30 vocational schools and five state-owned institutions of professional higher education.

The 30 vocational schools include:

- 25 state vocational schools;
- 3 private vocational schools;
- 2 municipal vocational schools.

Higher education institutions

In the academic year 2023/2024, higher education could be obtained in a total of 18 educational institutions which included:

- 6 public universities;
- 1 private university;
- 7 state and 4 private colleges.

Hobby schools and youth centres

The number of hobby schools has increased significantly over the years and has continued to grow in recent years. Compared to the 2023/24 academic year, 33 hobby schools were added. However, the number of youth centres decreased, but while the number of hobby schools has constantly increased, the number of youth centres has fluctuated in both directions in recent years.

The statistics in the table reflect only hobby schools that confirmed their data in the EHIS for the relevant academic year in a timely manner.

Hobby schools and open youth centres by year (source: EHIS, HARNO)

Academic year	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Hobby schools	572	621	709	731	774	787	807	840
Open youth centres	263	281	280	281	304	299	307	288
Hobby schools per 1,000 young people	2.1	2.23	2.56	2.67	2.83	2.88	2.87	2.91
Open youth centres per 1,000 young people	0.93	1.01	1.01	1.02	1.11	1.09	1.09	1.0

Changes in the school network of general education between the academic years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025

Harju County

- Rae Gymnasium will start operating as a new state gymnasium.

Ida-Viru County

- Kiviõli I Secondary School, Kiviõli Russian School and Lügänuuse School are merged into Kiviõli State School.
- Narva Adult School and Kohtla-Järve Adult Gymnasium will be operated by the state.
- Narva Soldino School will close.

Jõgeva County

- The basic school section of Peipsi Gymnasium will be merged with Mustvee School, the upper secondary school section will be merged with Avinurme Gymnasium. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.

Järva County

- Peetri School will cease activities in school stage III.
- Retla-Kabala School will cease activities in school stage III.

- The kindergarten section of Tarbja Kindergarten-School will be merged with Paide Sookure Kindergarten and the school section will close.

Lääne County

- Martna Basic School will be merged with Palivere Basic School, forming the new Martna-Palivere Basic School. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- The kindergarten section of Noarootsi School will be separated and merged with Lääne-Nigula Kindertartens. The school continues to operate as a basic school.
- The school section of Nõva School will be merged with Noarootsi School and the kindergarten section will be merged with Lääne-Nigula Kindertartens. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.

Lääne-Viru County

- School stage III of Jäneda School will be merged with Tapa Municipality Gymnasium, and stages I and II will be merged with Tapa Municipality School. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- The school section of Lasila Basic School will be merged with Sõmeru Basic School and the kindergarten section will be merged with Sõmeru kindergarten Pääsusilm. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- School stage III of Lehtse School will be merged with Tapa Municipality Gymnasium, stages I and II and the kindergarten section will continue to operate as Tapa Municipality School.
- The upper secondary school section of Tamsalu Gymnasium will be merged with Tapa Municipality Gymnasium, while the basic school section will continue to operate as Tamsalu School.
- School stages I and II of Tapa Gymnasium will be separated and merged with Tapa Municipality School, while stage III and the upper secondary school section will continue to operate as Tapa Municipality Gymnasium.
- The school section of Veltsi Kindergarten-Primary School will be closed, the kindergarten section will be merged with Sõmeru kindergarten Pääsusilm. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.

Põlva County

- Ahja School named after Friedebert Tuglas will be merged with Põlva School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Krootuse Kindergarten Pesapuu will be merged with Krootuse Basic School, forming the new Krootuse School.
- Mehikoorma Basic School will cease activities in school stage III.
- Mooste Manor School will be merged with Põlva School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Ruusa Basic School will close.
- Saverna Kindergarten Sipsik will be merged with Saverna Basic School, forming the new Saverna School.
- Tilsa Basic School will be merged with Põlva School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Vastse-Kuuste School will be merged with Põlva School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.

- Veriora Kindergarten Õnneseen will be merged with Viluste Basic School, forming the new Viluste School.

Pärnu County

- The school section of Koonga School will be merged with Lääneranna Gymnasium and the kindergarten section will be merged with Lääneranna Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- The school section of Kõmsi Kindergarten-Primary School will be merged with Lääneranna Gymnasium and the kindergarten section will be merged with Lääneranna Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Lihula Gymnasium will become Lääneranna Gymnasium.
- Metsküla Basic School will close.
- The school section of Varbla School will be merged with Lääneranna Gymnasium and the kindergarten section will be merged with Lääneranna Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- The school section of Virtsu School will be merged with Lääneranna Gymnasium and the kindergarten section will be merged with Lääneranna Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Tammiste Kindergarten-Primary School has received an indefinite-term education licence for providing education in school stage I, and a fixed-term education licence for providing education in school stage II.

Rapla County

- School stages I and II of Eidapere School will be merged with Järvakandi School, stage III will be closed and the kindergarten section will be merged with Järvakandi Kindergarten Pesamuna. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.

Tartu County

- Palupera Basic School will be merged with Rõngu Secondary School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Valguta Kindergarten-Primary School will be merged with Rannu School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Melliste School has received an indefinite-term education licence for providing education in school stage III.

Valga County

- Õru Kindergarten-Primary School will be merged with Tsirguliina School and will cease to exist as an independent institution.

Viljandi County

- The school section of Mõisaküla School-Kindergarten will close and the kindergarten section will continue to operate as Mõisaküla Kindergarten.

Võru County

- The school section of Haanja School will be merged with Rõuge Basic School and the kindergarten section will be merged with Rõuge Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.

- School stage III of Meremäe School will be merged with Setomaa Gymnasium, stages I and II will be merged with Setomaa School, and the kindergarten section will be merged with Setomaa Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- School stage III of Mikitamäe School will be merged with Setomaa Gymnasium, stages I and II will continue as Setomaa School, and the kindergarten section will be merged with Setomaa Kindergarten.
- The school section of Mõniste School will be merged with Rõuge Basic School and the kindergarten section will be merged with Rõuge Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- Orava School will be merged with Kääpa Basic School, which will continue to operate as a kindergarten-basic school called Kääpa School.
- The school section of Varstu School will be merged with Rõuge Basic School and the kindergarten section will be merged with Rõuge Kindergarten. It will cease to exist as an independent institution.
- School stages I and II of Värska Gymnasium will be separated and merged with Setomaa School, while stage III and the upper secondary school section will continue to operate as Setomaa Gymnasium.

Private schools

- St. John of Shanghai and San-Francisco School in Tallinn has received an indefinite-term activity license to provide education in school stage I and a fixed-term license to provide education in school stage II.
- Loova tuleviku kool in Tallinn has received an indefinite-term activity license to provide education in school stages II–III.
- Rakvere Waldorfkool has received an indefinite-term activity license to provide education at the upper secondary school level.
- Põlva Jakobi School has received a fixed-term activity licence to provide education in school stage III.
- Pärnu Christian Private School has received an indefinite-term activity licence for providing education in school stage I and a fixed-term activity licence for providing education in school stage II.
- Hiiumaa Vabakool closes completely.
- The new name of Edu Valem Private School is Eduson Private School.
- The new private school Metsküla School has been granted a fixed-term activity licence for providing education in school stages I and II.