

## 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

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### **Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships**

The [Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) (EÕS) foresees the development of both apprenticeships and the placement system (traineeship). The strategy foresees also an analysis of the share of traineeships in curricula on both the higher and vocational education level, according to the needs of the labor market, and respective amendments will be proposed.

Currently, in Estonia, studies based largely on apprenticeship are less common than traditional programs. Workplace-based study-schemes are not used widely. Most relevant is the issue in vocational education, where every year, some 500-600 students study in vocational education institutions under workplace study arrangements. Expanding workplace-based study form in Estonia is one of the main goals for the vocational education training system until 2020.

There is a legal definition of workplace-based studies (used as a synonym for apprenticeships) in vocational education. According to the regulation by the Minister of Education and Research about the conditions and procedure for the organization of workplace-based studies, workplace-based studies constitute a specialized

form of vocational education where the ratio of practical assignments undertaken in companies or institutions encompasses at least two-thirds of the curriculum („[Töökohapõhise õppe rakendamise kord](#)“). There have been no legislative changes following the adoption of the Quality Framework for Traineeships in 2014. The student achieves the learning outcomes described in the curriculum by fulfilling working tasks at the company. The remainder of the studies will be undertaken at school. Workplace-based studies are conducted upon signing an intern contract between the school, student and employer, which stipulates the rights and obligations of parties as well as the exact details of the learning process. The employer has to recompense the student for tasks performed to the amount agreed upon in the intern contract. The agreed wages must not be less than the statutory minimum wage established by the government. In cases where the student and employee are already bound by a valid employment contract, no extra wages are paid.

Open market traineeships (practical experience offered by the companies), which are most often offered to students, but are outside the formal education curricula and therefore not controlled by the educational institution, are not regulated in Estonia. Since 1 July 2014, it is required to register any person working (or doing any activities, including as a trainee) in the premises of the employer at the [Tax and Customs Board](#). This also includes the case where there is no salary/wage provided – in this case, work has to be registered as volunteering. Conditions for active labour market policy (ALMP) measures are regulated by [Labour Market Services and Benefits Act](#). The regulations for ALMP type traineeships largely comply with the Quality Framework for Traineeships recommendations, with the exception of the proper recognition of the traineeship and transparency regarding hiring chances.

The activities to support traineeships and apprenticeships are independent of Youth Guarantee's scheme.

### **Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships**

The Ministry of Education and Research launched a program PRÕM for the years 2015-2020 to support the development and the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships in formal education (legal base of the initiative: Regulation by the Minister of Education and Research „[Tegevuste „Praktikasüsteemi arendamine kutse- ja kõrghariduses sh õpetajakoolituse koolituspraktika” ja „Kutsehariduse maine tõstmine, töökohapõhise õppe laiendamine” \(PRÕM\) toetuse andmise tingimused](#)”, 2015). It is planned that 8 000 apprenticeship study places will be created and 6 000 apprentices will acquire a qualification in the period 2015-2020. This measure will help in reducing the share of people without professional qualification or vocational training, and a workplace-based study form will also be more widely used in Estonia. Under the program, the following activities will be supported relevant to the issue:

- development of systems for traineeships and apprenticeships in vocational and higher education including, trainings, guidelines, best practice, etc.;
- raising awareness about the importance of practical studies incl. information dissemination materials, events, etc. in cooperation with the organization representing employers;
- monitoring and research for better traineeships and apprenticeships;
- support to cover transportation and accommodation costs for students;
- development of traineeships in teacher training;
- support to create apprenticeship study places;
- promotion of vocational education.

The implementation agency is the [Education and Youth Board](#).

There are also initiatives to highlight the importance of the traineeships and apprenticeships in education both for young people and for employers such as the special issue in a [national newspaper](#) in 2016. The Ministry of Education and Research is promoting the importance of [practical studies, especially in vocational education](#).

## **Recognition of learning outcomes**

In Estonia, the qualifications acquired in general, vocational and higher education are described on the basis of learning outcomes (competencies). The principles of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (recognition of prior learning and work experience; in Estonian: *varasema õpi- ja töökogemuse arvestamine* (VÕTA)) have been defined by legislation.

Qualification awarding bodies, including educational institutions and awarding bodies of vocational qualifications, prepare their procedures for the recognition of prior learning and work experience (VÕTA procedures) following these principles.

A person can have his or her prior learning and work experience (including apprenticeship and traineeship) evaluated and recognized by the designated body (VÕTA commission) of the educational institution. Educational institutions may recognize prior learning and work experience both on the completion of the curriculum and when awarding qualifications recognizing the prior learning and work experience as an ECTS and ECVET ie it is possible to obtain credits on the bases of prior learning, traineeships, and apprenticeships. Educational institutions must inform students about the conditions of and procedure for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, including the terms and cost of assessment as well as the conditions of contesting the results, and ensure that all applicants have access to the necessary information, guidance, and counseling.

The learning gained through a work-related, hobby or other daily life activities is proved by reference to or presentation of completed works, a portfolio of samples, a copy of a professional certificate, employment contract, certificate of appointment or any other documentary evidence. A similar approach is used both in vocational and higher education. In the period 2009-2013, different universities fully accepted more than 35,000 applications for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, non-formal learning (including continuous education and training), informal learning (including work experience), multi-component recognition (a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning recognition). Students have the right to apply for prior learning and work experience to be recognized as the completion of the entire study program, except for the final thesis. The recognition of prior learning and work experience is not used on university enrolment.

In general, VÕTA in Estonia is widely used. VÕTA has made (re)entering education more flexible, enabling to take into account the knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education and providing adult learners the opportunity to combine work and studies. VÕTA enables learners to complete their studies within a shorter timeframe.

The [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#), which entered into force in 2013, provided that persons aged 22 and above who have not completed basic education may enroll in a vocational educational institution to commence studies on the basis of a curriculum enabling the acquisition of vocational secondary education, provided that the school finds that their knowledge and skills are adequate for further studies.

In general education, the recognition of prior learning and work experience is a new phenomenon and there is no established practice.

Young people can also describe their knowledge, skills and practical experience acquired through youth work

using a designated online tool [Teeviit](#) (previously known as Stardiplats). There is a growing number of registered users of the website, which was launched in 2010 by the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (starting from 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)) in order to facilitate the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through youth work. The tool is based on self-assessment and provides young people opportunity to generate a CV based on the descriptions. The tool enables young people to send the CV to potential employers as well.

## Funding

The provision of education in Estonia is generally funded by public funding (though there are private education institutions as well).

Public funding specifically targeted to support traineeships and apprenticeships is available since the launch of the program PRÕM (described above) financed with the support from ESF. The budget of the program for the years 2015-2020 is 18,500,355 euros, of which the support for placements is 12,132,900 euros.

## Quality assurance

All the services initiated, developed and supported by the Government are part of the strategic planning of the relevant policy area.

The quality of traineeships and apprenticeships is supported through activities of the [Education and Youth Board](#), which coordinates the implementation of the program PRÕM (described above). The indicators set in the PRÕM program are as following:

- A number of apprenticeship placements.
- Percentage of successful graduation of those participating in workplace-based studies.
- Percentage of vocational and higher education institutions participating in the activities to develop traineeships and apprenticeships.
- A number of enterprises accepting placements.
- A number of employers recognized for achievement in the development of traineeships and apprenticeships.

Under the program also activities supporting monitoring and research are planned.

The outcomes of the quality assurance activities implemented in Estonia support further development of the services and design of policy measures.

The Ministry of Education and Research has a program to link labour market and learning more closely ([Tööturu ja õppe tihedama seostamise programm](#)) that was funded up to 2020 with 51 million euros. There are several indicators to measure the results of the program:

Activity	Indicator	2014	2015	2020
Creating OSKA system	Number of acting field councils	0	5+1	20+1
Developing of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial studies on all education levels	% of institutions using the entrepreneurial module	0	5	90
Improving the quality of vocational education	Number of accreditation of curriculars of vocational and applied higher science schools	0	-	270

Improving the reputation of vocational education	The students' awareness of possibilities of vocational education - % of respondents who are well aware of studying possibilities in vocational schools	61% basic school	-	70%
		57% secondary school		65%
Developing the practise system in vocational and higher education	% of educational institutions participating in the program amongst all educational institutions	0	50	80
Expanding apprenticeships	Number of people participating in apprenticeships	583	700	8000
Number of companies participating in apprenticeships programs	-	100	350	
Language studies	Number of people participated in activities	0	700	3000