



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Estonia

2020

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

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Estonia

OVERVIEW

Youth Policy in Estonia

General Information

The youth field (youth policy and youth work) in Estonia is defined by many legal acts. According to the Youth Work Act a young person is a natural person between the ages of 7 and 26. The Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 outlines the strategic goals in the field of youth. See more in Chapters [1.1.](#) and [1.3.](#)

Level of Policy-Making for Youth Policy

The institution in charge of youth is the Ministry of Education and Research and to be exact, the Department of Youth and Talent Policy. The main goals of the department are connected with developing legislation, ensuring purposefulness and consistency, planning of resources, ensuring cohesiveness and holding a public dialogue with partners regarding the implementation of youth policy. Since 1st of August, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#).

According to the Local Government Organisation Act, the local governments have a key role in organizing the topics related to local life, including youth work. Most of the financing of youth work comes also from the budget and own income of the local municipalities. [See more in Chapter 1.4.](#)

Status of youth policy in the general policy-making

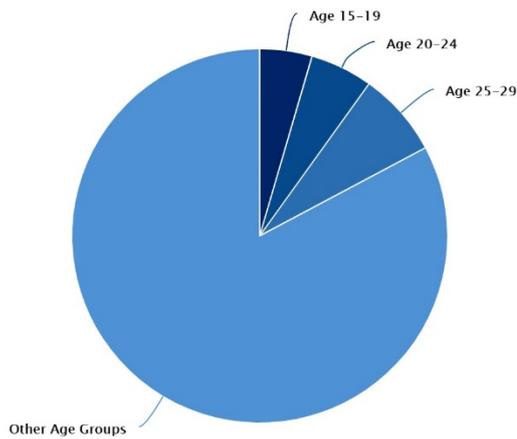
The youth policy in Estonia is well established and has been a special policy field almost since the adoption of the Youth Work Act in 1999. The term youth policy was first used in the Estonian Youth Work Concept, which was adopted in 2001..

Statistics of the target group (01.01.2020)

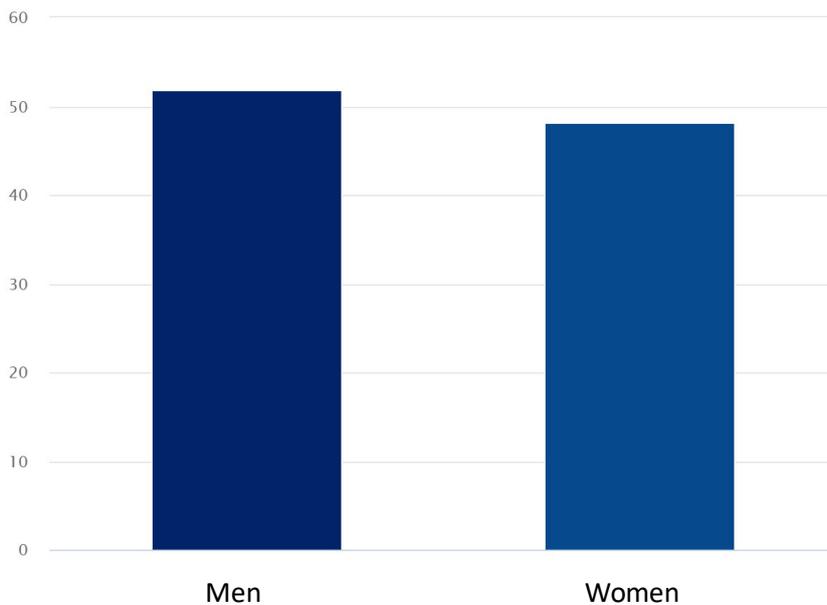
Age group of young people	Total	Young Men	Young Women
7-14 years	119,459	61,411	58,048
15-19 years	62,917	32,216	30,701
20-24 years	63,051	32,357	30,694
25-26 years	28,444	14,762	13,682
TOTAL	273,871	140,746	133,125

The total population of Estonia is 1 328 976 (data from 01.01.2020), the young people make up almost 21% of the whole population.

Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



Ratio of men and women in the youth population



Statistic references

References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth_demo_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

The [Youth Work Act](#) states that a young person is a natural person between 7 and 26 years of age. The Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 outlines the strategic goals set in the field of youth. The main goals in the development plan are (See more in [Chapter 1.1.](#) and [Chapter 1.3.](#)):

- the young people will have more choices in terms of discovering their creative and developmental potential;
- the young people will face a lower risk of exclusion;
- the participation of young people in the decision-making will be supported more;
- the youth field operates more efficiently.

Ministry in charge of youth is the [Estonian Ministry of Education and Research](#). Department responsible for youth is the Department of [Youth and Talent Policy](#). Since 1st of August, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#).

According to the [Local Government Organisation Act](#), the local governments have a key role in organizing the topics related to local life, including youth work. Most of the financing of youth work comes also from the budget and own income of the local municipalities. See more in [Chapter 1.4.](#) The whole budget of state funding to youth policy and youth work is more than 13 million euros. See more in [Chapter 1.7.](#)

1.1 Target population of youth policy

Defining the target population of different public policy measures targeted to youth is based on legislation of the Republic of Estonia. Legislative acts constitute a framework that determines and regulates the activities, programmes, services and benefits targeting young people. The youth field (youth policy and youth work) in Estonia is defined by many legal acts, but as a key legal act the [Youth Work Act](#) is considered. The act states that young person is a natural person between 7 and 26 years of age. The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020](#) also considers the same age group as young people and it has no specific age groups for different policy measures. The new [development plan for the period 2021-2035](#) is also considering the whole youth agegroup, but has some specific indicators concerning the age group 18-26. Other official documents define some more narrow age groups according to the particular field of youth policy (e.g. child welfare, labor market, etc.).

The list of different acts that mention young people gives an idea of what aspects of the young people's lives are regulated by. The number of laws is 28 and these are the following:

1. [Constitution of the Republic of Estonia](#)
2. [General Part of the Civil Code Act](#)
3. [Basic Schools and Upper Secondary School Act](#)
4. [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#)
5. [Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act](#)
6. [Universities Act](#)
7. [Private Schools Act](#)
8. [Hobby Schools Act](#)

9. [Study Allowances and Study Loans Act](#)
10. [Family Law Act](#)
11. [State Family Benefits Act](#)
12. [Commercial Code](#)
13. [Non-profit Associations Act](#)
14. [Child Protection Act](#)
15. [Military Service Act](#)
16. [Penal Code](#)
17. [Code of Criminal Procedure](#)
18. [Code of Civil Procedure](#)
19. [Imprisonment Act](#)
20. [Traffic Act](#)
21. [Employment Contracts Act](#)
22. [Labor Market Services and Benefits Act](#)
23. [Weapons Act](#)
24. [Alcohol Act](#)
25. [Tobacco Act](#)
26. [Health Insurance Act](#)
27. [Social Welfare Act](#)
28. [Local Government Organisation Act](#)

Based on the review of the acts, one can conclude that they make a difference between the following age groups:

- children from age 0 until approximately 10 years of age;
- children and young people from age 10 until mid-teens;
- children and young people from mid-teens until the age of 18;
- young adults / emerging adulthood, from age 18 until early and mid-twenties;
- young adults / emerging adulthood, onward from mid-twenties.

Majority of young people remain in the brackets from approximately 10 years of age to early and mid-twenties. Splitting the youth into different sub-ranges of age is highly relevant in the context of establishing the link between youth and public policy.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

There are two most important acts:

- the renewed [Child Protection Act](#), which defines the principles of ensuring the rights and well-being of children in the age group of 0-18;
- the [Youth Work Act](#), which defines the age range for young people from 7-26 and the obligations of different authorities in the youth field.

As described in the previous section of the chapter, there are many different laws, which carry more or less direct relevance for young people as they define the obligations and

rights of municipalities and central government towards the young people as well as entitlements, rights, duties and limitations of young people.

Therefore, in the following paragraph the main focus is on the [Youth Work Act](#) that was approved in 1999 by the Parliament and it was re-adopted in 2010.

Scope and contents

[Youth Work Act](#) provides the legal basis for the organization and financing of youth work. The Act defines the main terms used in the youth field, main institutions, organizations and forms of youth work, the principles of youth work, financing of youth work, etc. The Act provides the responsibilities regarding youth work of the Ministry of Education and Research, county governors, and local municipality. The Act defines municipal and local youth councils.

There is no description of the rights and obligations of young people in the act.

The key policy domains relevant for the youth field identified in the [Youth Work Act](#) are written in the 2nd and 3rd chapter of the act.

Revisions/updates

Youth Work Act has been adopted two times:

- Adoption in [01.04.1999](#)
- Adoption in [01.09.2010](#)

Since the last adoption the act has been revised 8 times:

- 01.01.2011 - revision on the paragraphs regarding youth camp injunctions, charges in violation of the limitation on working with youth and children (regarding the transition to new currency - euro);
- 23.12.2013 - revision on the paragraphs regarding limitation on working with youth and children;
- 01.07.2014 - revision on the paragraphs regarding youth camps' organization, tasks of the Ministry of Education and Science, tasks of the county governors, permits of youth camps and requirements to the keeper of a youth camp, qualifications of youth camp counsellors and directors, governmental supervision over youth camps;
- 01.01.2015 - revision on the paragraphs regarding the limitations on working with youth and children;
- 18.01.2016 - revision on the paragraphs regarding the permits of youth camps and project camps, recognition of the professional qualifications of a foreign country.
- 26.06.2016 - revision on the activity licences for youth project camps.
- 01.07.2017 - revision on the conditions for youth project camps and report requirement to give information regarding the number of young people in the camp through Estonian Education Information System. Also, information regarding additional financial support for hobby education and recreational education to rural municipalities and cities.
- 01.01.2018 - revision on the functions of county governments (regarding their liquidation), supervision of youth camps (done by the Ministry of Education and Research).
- 01.08.2020 - revision of the institution handling foreign qualifications (instead of Estonian Youth Work Centre there now is the [Education and Youth Board](#)).

Young people have been consulted. During the development of amendments in 2010 Estonian National Youth Council was active partner in designing the new regulations. There is a systematic approach to involving representatives of young people when amendments

of the Youth Work Act are planned and discussed by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

Estonia does have a National Youth Strategy. In 2013, "[Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)" (Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020) was adopted by the government of Estonia. The document outlines strategic goals in the field of youth. The main goal introduced in the development plan is to provide young people with opportunities of development and self-realization which support a socially coherent and creative society in general. The consultation of young people and their representatives was an important part of the development of the plan. There were online consultations, working groups, and written consultation opportunities during the whole process.

This development plan addresses causes of problems pertaining to young people (such as the growing emigration of youth, high unemployment rate of youth aged 15–19, the number of young people not studying or working, high relative poverty rate, problematic health behavior, including in particular the risk behavior of young men) as well as strengthens positive trends. In the development plan, youth work is seen as a policy measure helping to implement activities aimed to achieve policy goals in the field of youth.

As the current development plan ends in 2020, a new development plan for the strategic period of 2021-2035 is being created. See more in the section [Revision/Updates](#).

Scope and contents

The main elements of the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 are the following:

- the starting points of the development plan, the background and an overview of the present situation of young people, their needs and opportunities;
- main principles, goals, activities, and indicators for the years 2014-2020;
- the management and implementation of the development plan, monitoring and financing, connections to other national strategies and taking into account overarching topics.

The goals of the youth field for the years 2014-2020 are identified in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). Adoption of the development plan announces a shift toward consolidation of the youth field as a separate policy field both in terms of substantive goals as well as in terms of its position in the Estonian administrative political system.

The difference of the current development plan from the previous similar documents is in the approach to focus on goals and measures that are designed to achieve a positive change in the challenges that were identified as most significant. The plan does not describe concrete measures in all areas of youth work and youth policy. The main goal of the development plan maintains that young people will have a comprehensive range of opportunities for self-development and self-realization and that the youth field will support the development of social cohesion and creativity in society in general.

The plan contains four sub-goals:

- the young people will have more choices in terms of discovering their creative and developmental potential,
- the young people will face a lower risk of exclusion,
- the participation of young people in the decision-making will be supported more,
- the youth field operates more efficiently.

Principles of national youth policy are outlined in the Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020:

- to address the young people as a whole - it means that in order to implement really efficient activities to achieve any objective or solve any problem concerning young people, it is necessary to observe young people's living in its entity as well as factors affecting it and not to stay within the limits of an area of administration of the institutions or fields;
- to involve the young people - it means that the involvement is the tool to ensure the quality and impact of the planned measures;
- to achieve synergies - it means to pursue the greatest common impact through the use of different fields and knowledge.

Main principles of the measures of the development plan:

- The target group consisting of youth is not homogeneous. In developing and implementing any measures and activities, the actual conditions and needs of a specific group of young people must be followed and specialties arising from the gender, nationality, culture, state of health, place of residence, socio-economic situation, etc., must be taken into account.
- Youth work supports the health as well as values and attitudes promoting a healthy lifestyle of youth through all the measures. This presumes the continuous development of competencies and tools of people working in the field of youth and relies on a knowledge-based approach by target groups, training courses, tools, and interventions.
- Youth affairs also contribute to the integration of society, including the promotion of equality and prevention of discrimination as well as care for the surrounding environment.
- Upon developing and implementing measures of youth policy and youth work, it is important to assist youth in obtaining self-confidence and the ability to cope with crucial spheres of life, such as studies, labour market, family relations, etc. The difficulties of youth must be early noticed and, if necessary, assistance must be provided to find the required professional support.
- Youth affairs form a part of the functioning cooperation between different areas related to the life of youth. If necessary, systemic cooperation must be initiated and the operation thereof must be supported.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

Ministry in charge of youth is the [Estonian Ministry of Education and Research](#). Department responsible for youth is the Department of [Youth and Talent Policy](#). Main goals of the department:

- Developing legislation to ensure the appropriate legislative environment for implementing youth policy.
- Ensuring purposefulness and consistency in the implementation of youth policy.
- Planning of resources necessary for the implementation of youth policy.
- Ensuring cohesiveness of youth policy.
- Holding a public dialogue with partners to come to a social agreement on questions pertaining to youth policy.

To succeed in achieving the goals listed above, the department carries out a range of tasks. The main task of the department is to arrange activities pertaining to youth policy

and youth at the Ministry of Education and Research and to consult the Minister and other ministerial officials in youth policy and youth work-related themes.

Since 1st of August, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#). This means that the [Education and Youth Board](#) implements also the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 and performs other functions arising from the Youth Work Act and other relevant laws.

Evidence-based monitoring or assessment of the implementation of the national development plan is being conducted annually through the indicators set in the development plan. The indicators and the results of the Youth Field Development Plan are the following:

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Goal for 2020
The proportion of the young people aged 18-24 with basic education or lower, who do not continue their studies	12,0%	12,2%	10,9%	10,8%	11,3%	9,8%	<9,0%
Satisfaction of youth work of young people participating in youth work	-	87,0%	-	87%	-	Keep the level	Keep the level
The youth unemployment rate amongst young people aged 15-24	15,0%	13,1%	13,4%	12,1%	11,8%	11,1%	10,0%
The involvement of young people in youth work (% of all young people)	47,0%	49,1%	50,0%	54,0%	57,8%	59,5%	60,0%
Young people per hobby school*	492	456	475	428	369	353	400
Young people per youth center	1181	1154	1077	996	989	982	1000
The organized opportunities to participate (youth councils), since 2018 the percentage of opportunities to participate (% of all municipalities)	85	83	90	70	74,4%	89,9%	89,0%
The youth workers participating training programmes in a year	10,0%	12,0%	15,9%	20,0%	15,0%	17,0%	15,0%

* [A hobby school](#) is an educational establishment operating in the area of youth work which creates an opportunity for the acquisition of hobby education and for the diverse development of the personality, including cultivation of one's own language and culture, in different areas of hobby education.

Revisions/updates

No revisions and updates have been made to the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020.

In 2019, the official process of compiling the Youth Field Development Plan 2021- 2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021- 2035](#)) was started. The process is already so far that the draft documents have been sent to the Government Office for processing.

The new development plan is targeted to the whole youth age group (7-26), but has some indicators targeted to young people aged 18-26 as well. The vision for the year 2035 is that all young people in different areas of Estonia live a full and healthy life and are empowered to change the community and state so that Estonia has the best environment for growing, living and fulfilling. Similarly to the previous development plan up to 2020, there are 4 strategic goals:

1. the young people are a creative and powerful force in the society - they are the leaders in the fields of education, culture, economy, environment and all other fields;
2. the protection of young people's rights in the state is consistent and the active youth civic participation is supported;
3. the high-quality youth work (including hobby education) is available all over Estonia and creates all young people the possibilities for diverse development, success stories, enrichment of experience, and independence;
4. the loneliness and exclusion of young people are noticed and prevented through a safety network that increases confidence and security.

The new indicators for the next strategic period are:

Goal 1	Starting level 2021	Target in 2035
The share (%) of non-profit organizations run by young people aged 18-26 amongst active non-profit organizations	4,6	8,0
The share (%) of young people studying in a hobby schools amongst all young people aged 7-26	28,8	35,0
The number of own-initiative projects for young people aged 7-26	will be defined	will be defined
The share (%) of young entrepreneurs amongst young people aged 18-26	3,9	10,0
Goal 2	Starting level 2021	Target in 2035
The number of forms of participation	74	will be defined
The share (%) of candidates aged 18-26 amongst all candidates for the local elections	6,5	15,0
The share (%) of participation in voluntary activities	will be defined	will be defined
Goal 3	Starting level 2021	Target in 2035
The share (%) of local municipalities where youth work services are at least at the "advanced" level	will be defined	will be defined
The share (%) of young people satisfied with youth work services	87,0	will be defined

Goal 4	Starting level 2021	Target in 2035
The share (%) of young people aged 7-26 who rate the support available	will be defined	will be defined
The share (%) of young people participating in intervention and special youth work programs amongst the whole target group	will be defined	will be defined
The share (%) of young people who have left the NEET status amongst all young people participating in youth work services	will be defined	will be defined

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

Governmental Level

The ministry in charge of youth is the [Ministry of Education and Research](#). The department in the ministry responsible for youth is the Department of Youth and Talent Policy.

Main goals of the department are as following:

- Developing legislation to ensure the appropriate legislative environment for implementing youth policy.
- Ensuring purposefulness and consistency in the implementation of youth policy.
- Planning of resources necessary for the implementation of youth policy.
- Ensuring cohesiveness of youth policy.
- Holding a public dialogue with partners to come to a social agreement on questions pertaining to youth policy.

To succeed in achieving the goals listed above, the department carries out a range of tasks. The main task of the department is to arrange activities pertaining to youth policy and youth at the Ministry of Education and Research and to consult the Minister and other ministerial officials in youth policy and youth work-related themes.

Since 1st of August 2020, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#). Starting from 01.01.2021, the [Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency](#) was joint with the [Education and Youth Board](#), and it became the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (NA for the [Erasmus+ programme](#) - cooperation regarding the financial support to youth projects from Erasmus+ programme; increasing the possibilities of international cooperation and the usage of its results; increasing the professionalization of youth workers, including through the development of level education and trainings and monitoring the competences; supporting the activities and sustainable development of the NA).

Local level

According to the [Local Government Organisation Act](#), the local governments have a key role in organizing the topics related to local life, including youth work. Most of the financing of youth work comes also from the budget and own income of the local municipalities.

Cooperation with other organizations

The main partners in the overall implementation of the youth policy are as following:

- the [Ministry of Culture](#) and the [Ministry of Finance](#) - cooperation regarding the new support scheme to increase the participation of young people in youth work, including hobby education and activities;
- the [Association Estonian Open Youth Centres](#) - cooperation regarding the support to open youth work centres on local level and services for NEET-youth; cooperation regarding the creation of the opportunities for youth workers to get consulting and support; cooperation regarding the support for the development of the youth information system;
- the [Ministry of Interior](#) - cooperation regarding the prevention policy and the development of civil society;
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (labor market policy sector) and [Töötukassa](#) (Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund) - cooperation regarding labor market policy for young people, including information and early working experience, as well as work with hard-to-reach youth;
- the [Ministry of Justice](#) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) - cooperation regarding the development of methods to prevent, intervene and rehabilitate youth risk behaviour. See also the programme "[Children and Youth at Risk](#)";
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (child and family policy sector) - cooperation regarding child participation, ensuring the well-being of the children, and the juvenile committees;
- the [Eesti Noorsootöötajate Kogu](#) (Association of Estonian Youth Workers) - cooperation regarding the creation of the opportunity for youth workers to get consulting and support;
- the [Estonian National Youth Council](#) - cooperation regarding the support for the sustainable development of traditional forms of youth participation in decision-making, and the development of the funding system of annual support for youth organizations;
- the [Estonian National Youth Council](#) and the [Association Estonian Open Youth Centres](#) - cooperation regarding the development and support for new possibilities for the young people's participation;
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), the [Ministry of Interior](#), and the [Ministry of Justice](#) - cooperation regarding ensuring the compliance with the principles of the development plan in the implementation of measures in policy fields the ministries are responsible for;
- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#) - cooperation regarding the development of e-services for youth and youth entrepreneurial spirit.

Main themes

The main themes in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) are creativity development, entrepreneurship, social inclusion and the development of employability, active participation in the society and decision-making, quality youth policy and development of youth work. The choice of themes was based on the particular situation of the youth, youth field and the challenges in the society. All fields of the EU are covered by the National Youth Strategy on the level of principles, horizontal topics or particular measures. Many topics are also covered by other strategies, for example, the [Lifelong Learning Strategy](#), the [Integration Strategy](#), the [Health Strategy](#), etc.

The main target group for the Youth Field Development plan is according to the [Youth Work Act](#) young people aged 7-26. The plan does not narrow different measures for specific age groups.

As the current development plan ends in 2020, a new draft for the period 2021-2035 has been created and sent to the Government Office for approval. Read more in the [chapter 1.3. revisions/updates section](#).

The National Agency for Youth

The National Agency for Youth Policy and Work is a government agency.

Until 01.08.2020, [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) was an agency under the administration of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) (originally was established in 1999). Since 1st of August, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#).

The [Education and Youth Board](#) has a wide range of tasks for the implementation of education and youth policy. Other tasks of the authority are as following:

- participates in the legislation process, organizes the implementation and advice within its competence and gives instructions of the obligations and rights based on the legislation;
- provides and develops study counselling services;
- creates and develops national curricula for basic, general, and vocational education, advises educational institutions on the implementation of the national curriculum and updating the curricula of educational institutions;
- organizes the preparation and distribution of study materials;
- organizes the external evaluation of the studies quality and educational institutions;
- carries out external assessments of study results, organizes international foreign language examinations, and, within the limitations of authority, issues certificates and orders and distributes forms of graduation certificates and assessment sheets;
- prepares and organizes examinations of knowledge of the Estonian Constitution and the Citizenship Act, and proficiency tests in the Estonian language;
- organizes, develops, monitors, and analyzes the services of youth field and youth work;
- advises youth work organizers on planning and organizing youth work;
- performs tasks related to the fields of hobby education and hobby activities, including analyzes the usage of the financial support and achievement of goals;
- assesses foreign qualifications enabling access to higher education and certifying higher education;
- implements the European Union Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs;
- acts as an innovation and competence center in the fields of education and youth;
- promotes Estonian education and youth work;
- manages and develops the information systems and technological solutions of the authority's main acting fields, creates and tests educational technological developments, and supports their usage;
- provides international data communication services to educational and research institutions;
- provides and mediates scholarships, grants, awards, and recognitions in the fields of education and youth;
- performs the functions of the chief or authorized processor of the database in the case provided by law or on the basis thereof;

- participates in the preparation of national and European level education and youth programs;
- represents the authority in court within the limits of its competence;
- performs other functions arising from legislation.

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

Mechanisms

Cross-sectoral cooperation in youth policy is subject to the overall system of policy planning and delivery in Estonia.

At the structural level the drafting and adopting of sectoral development plans and strategies, as well as implementation of them, is framed by the [State Budget Act](#).

Paragraph 19 in the [State Budget Act](#) defines the **strategic development documents** and its aspects. The strategic development documents include the **general principles of policy** (a development document which determines the vision, national objective and priorities for one or several interrelated policy areas), **sectoral development plan** (a development document which comprehensively determines the general objective and sub-objectives for one or several policy areas and the indicators providing an opportunity to measure these, and the policy instruments through which it is planned to achieve the established objectives), **development plan of the area of government** (a development document which records the contributions by a ministry and the authorities in its area of government to the achievement of the general objectives of the performance areas) and **programme** (a development document which determines the measures, indicators, activities and financing scheme targeted at the achievement of a sub-objective of a policy area). It also states that the strategic development documents shall be mutually consistent and the constitutional institutions are not required to prepare the strategic development documents.

Paragraph 20 in the [State Budget Act](#) describes the preparation and implementation of strategic development documents and amendments thereto. All of the **general principles of policy-making** have to be approved by the Estonian parliament [Riigikogu](#) and that can happen either on its own initiative or on the proposal from the [Government](#) of the Republic. The **development plan** has to be prepared for the budget strategy period and approved by the minister. The **programme** has to be prepared in compliance with the budget strategy period and approved by the minister.

As development plans and policy programmes make claims to the state budget, all development plans are reviewed by the Ministry of Finance, which has the final word in deciding exact costs of a development plan or a programme.

The [State Budget Act](#) creates an organizational environment that implies collaboration between ministries and ministerial departments. The need to collaborate in the process of developing a sectoral development plan is stipulated also in the by-law [“Types of strategic development plans. The order of drafting, updating, implementing, evaluation and reporting on development plans”](#). The by-law clarifies the strategic documents which need to be taken into account when drafting a development plan - national development plans aimed at increasing competitiveness of Estonia and the action plan of the Government of the Republic. These documents must be taken into account in the development plans and policy programmes targeting young people.

Consistent with the [State Budget Act](#), the collaboration between ministries occurs in two contexts:

- drafting development plans and strategies;

- implementing the development plans, divided into two strands:
 - implementing policy programmes;
 - carrying out other activities.

For drafting a development plan or a strategy, the ministry responsible for a particular plan sets up a working group which has the task to lead the whole drafting process. In practical terms, this includes the exchange of information between departments and ministries using generally recognized practices of organizational work, including:

- exchange of official correspondence between ministries and offices;
- participation in working group meetings;
- expression of opinions and feedback on the draft of a development plan;
- informal exchanges of ideas.

In addition to inter-ministerial working groups, other working groups may be set up to involve other partners outside ministries.

All development plans and strategies contain a section, which explains the drafting process and gives the names and institutions that were involved in the process. Each development plan or strategy refers to a range of other strategic documents which influenced its goals and contents and to a number of representatives of other organizations participated in drafting the document.

Actors

Activities for achieving goals and objectives outlined in the development plans and strategies as well as responsible institutions are described in the implementation plans where concrete activities are linked to implementing agencies and budget.

The leading role in all implementation plans is carried by the ministry responsible for a concrete development plan, but a considerable number of activities are carried out by other ministries or by several ministries or organizations jointly. Implementation plans indicate a considerable amount of inter-ministerial collaboration.

Below is a list of some activities and programmes that are implemented in collaboration between two or more ministries.

- The programme “[Youth Guarantee](#)” is a programme tackling youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under 25 – whether registered with employment services or not – get a good-quality, concrete offer within 4 months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The programme was initiated by the [European Commission](#) and in Estonia, it is implemented in the collaboration of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#). (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2016)
- Development of cross-sectoral policymaking in the youth field, in cooperation of the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), the [Ministry of Interior](#), the [Ministry of Justice](#), and [Education and Youth Board](#) (governmental organization under the administration of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#)).
- Support to learning Estonian, cultural integration, and provision of opportunities for youth participation, social activism and also labor market services to young people in cooperation of the [Ministry of Culture](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).
- Prevention of school bullying is carried out in the collaboration of the [Ministry of Justice](#), the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#).
- Activities aimed to decrease close relationship violence are carried out in cooperation with the [Ministry of Justice](#) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#).

- Activities aimed to increase the internet security of children is carried out in the collaboration of the [Ministry of Justice](#), the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), and the [Ministry of Interior](#).
- Projects supporting the development of integration among young people with different background are carried out in cooperation with the [Ministry of Culture](#).
- The programme "[Children and Youth at Risk](#)" was implemented by Estonian Youth Work Centre in cooperation of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), and the [Ministry of Justice](#). The programme is aimed to improve the well-being of children and young people (aged up to 26 in Estonia) through prevention and cross-sectoral cooperation.

For carrying out sectoral programmes and activities, the ministries rely on organizations within their area of administrative power. For instance, inside and outside the youth field, the ministries are in close cooperation with (some examples):

- [Ministry of Interior](#):
 - [Police and Border Guard Board](#),
 - [Rescue Service Board](#).
- [Ministry of Social Affairs](#):
 - National Institute for Health Development,
 - National Social Insurance Board.
- [Ministry of Education and Research](#):
 - [Education and Youth Board](#).
- [Ministry of Culture](#):
 - [Integration Foundation](#).

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

In general, the entire Estonian public administration system uses the same framework of evidence-based policymaking. There is also a framework for evidence-based youth policy. Identification of needs for drafting and planning, implementation and evaluation of public policy measures targeting young people follows the same rules as other sectors. As an exception, youth policy planning relies on the youth monitoring system [Noorteseire](#). The youth monitor helps to map the situation of the young people in related policy areas to create a holistic picture of the youth. Starting from 2019, there is a new platform called [Juhtimislaud](#) that has a specific part committed to the youth field.

Assuring the quality of legislation in Estonia is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Justice](#). The ministry has developed regulations and recommendations to support evidence-based policymaking. The evaluation of the expected impact of a legislative act constitutes the backbone of evidence-based policy processes, though this is not the only aspect that needs to be taken into account. The following documents have been adopted to support evaluation and evidence-based policymaking in general:

- [Rules for Good Legislative Practice and Legislative Drafting](#),
- a form to initiate a discussion on drafting a legislative act,
- guidelines for impact evaluation.

In 2015, the [National Audit Office](#) published a report describing the utilization of research in policymaking during 2010-2013. According to the report, in general, the ministries

rarely live up to the good standards of utilizing the research and policy-relevant information in drafting legislative acts and policy programs.

A review of the sectorial development plans and strategies reveals that the plans were informed by the following type of information and research:

- general cross-sectional and longitudinal national statistics (e.g. demographic data);
- sectorial statistics (e.g. the rate of recidivism);
- European Union and EU member states' statistics obtained from Eurostat;
- earlier ministerial and sectoral policy documents containing analysis, analytical papers, and reports (e.g. Integration monitoring);
- policy papers and recommendations of international organizations (e.g. OECD reports),
- reviews and evaluations of policy programmes (e.g. Blueprints Programs);
- opinion polls, time-series of opinion polls;
- academic research papers published in peer-reviewed journals.

[Statistics Estonia](#) is a governmental agency under the administration of the Ministry of Finance. The main task of the Statistics Estonia is to provide public institutions, business and research circles, international organizations and individuals with reliable and objective information on the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation and trends in Estonia. In producing statistics, the Statistics Estonia is guided by the [Official Statistics Act](#). The Statistics Estonia has a contract with the [Education and Youth Board](#) since 2020 in order to develop the new monitoring platform [Juhtimislauad](#), raise the awareness of data amongst young people and youth field, etc.

In the process of drafting the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020, all available statistical information was used, also research and analyses. Same is done with the new development plan for the years 2021-2035.

The strategic planning in the youth field is considered to be on a very good level. As mentioned, there is the youth monitoring system, consultations with young people and social partners, cooperation with researchers.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

Each policy field in Estonia works in its own way for the connection between policy and research in general. (e.g. institutes, studies, analysis, department of the ministry). In the context of policymaking, every ministry is responsible for carrying out research in its area of responsibility to assure that policymaking is evidence-based. In the youth field, the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Education and Youth Board](#) manage the youth monitoring system [Noorteseire](#) and the research-practice-decision co-operation triangle.

[Education and Youth Board](#) has contracts with [Tartu University](#) and [Tallinn University](#) in order to develop new models for organizing better youth work, including the fields of participation and exclusion, and organizing youth work on the local level.

National Statistics and available data sources

National Statistics

[Education and Youth Board](#) runs a website [Noorteseire](#) (Youth Monitor, www.noorteseire.ee). This website gives an overview of studies related to youth, and some basic demographics, health, criminal behavior, education and labor market, youth work participation, social activism and leisure time spending preferences data on young people. Most of the data presented there come from Statistics Estonia and some from other sources. The data was collected mostly annually, except for some researches that are conducted every 2 or 4 years. Since 2019, there is a new initiative called

[Juhtimislaud](#), that gives an overview of the situation of young people and illustrates the data.

Besides data collected for the general population, there are some indicators specially used for describing the situation of the young people. These indicators are set in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). For example:

Indicator	Data collection body	Data collection time
The proportion of the young people aged 18-24 with basic education or lower, who do not continue their studies	Statistics Estonia	Annually in February
The youth unemployment rate amongst young people aged 15-24	Statistics Estonia	Annually in February
The involvement of young people in youth work (% of all young people)	Estonian Youth Work Centre (in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and Statistics Estonia)	Annually in January
Young people per hobby school	Estonian Youth Work Centre (in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and Statistics Estonia)	Annually in January
Young people per youth center	Estonian Youth Work Centre (in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and Statistics Estonia)	Annually in January
The organized opportunities to participate (youth councils)	Estonian Youth Work Centre (in cooperation with the National Youth Council)	Annually in January
The satisfaction of young people in youth work	Estonian Youth Work Centre (in cooperation with a research company or organization)	2015, 2017

As a part of the youth monitoring system [Noorteseire](#), a yearbook is annually published starting from 2009. The yearbook contains two sections:

- a statistical overview of the youth population in the country;
- an in-depth analysis or research of a specific theme.

Throughout the years the focal themes of the yearbook have been the following:

- 2009 – [Youth Monitor](#);
- 2010 – [Youth and labor market](#);
- 2011 – [Youth and youth work](#);
- 2012 – [Youth and social inclusion](#);
- 2013 – [Evaluation of the impact of youth work](#);

- 2014/2015 – [Young people with special needs and youth work](#);
- 2016 - [Non-formal and informal learning](#);
- 2018 - [Participation of young people in decision making](#);
- 2019/2020 - [The unrevealed parts of young people's lives](#).

Youth reports

There are regular EU youth reports submitted to the European Commission. The Statistics Estonia issues from time to time a general overview of the situation of children and young people at the national level. There are annual reports of the [Youth Monitor](#) and [Youth Field Programme](#) which are compiled by the [Ministry of Education](#) and Research in cooperation with the [Education and Youth Board](#). All reports are compiled in the first quarter of the year and published on the website of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

Other data regarding the youth population

In 2016, there was a wide range of registers and databases which contain information on young people. Between the period of 2011-2020, the importance of the registers increases significantly because in 2020/2021 the national population and housing census are planned to be conducted entirely register-based. The last survey-based census was conducted in 2010/2011.

Some examples from the registers and databases that contain information on young people that is relevant for assessing the situation of youth in society and for policymaking:

- Estonian Education Information System EEIS ([Eesti Hariduse Infosüsteem EHIS](#)) - a state database holding data about the education system. It covers preschool, general, vocational, higher, hobby, and adult education for students, pedagogical staff, institutions, curricula, school education certificates, and juvenile committees. The register is maintained by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#). There is another database [HaridusSilm](#) ("Eye of Education") which visualizes the information contained in EEIS.
- Social Services and Benefits Register STAR ([Sotsiaalteenuste ja -toetuste andmeregister STAR](#)) - a state database, which is used for carrying out case-based social work at the municipal level. The register is maintained by the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#).
- [Register of Employment](#) (Töötamise register) - a database of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund ([Eesti Töötukassa](#)) which contains personalized information on the employment status of every person.
- Population Register ([Rahvastikuregister](#)) - a database that unites the main personal data on Estonian citizens, citizens of the European Union who are registered residents in Estonia, and aliens who have been granted with a residence permit or right of residence in Estonia. The register is maintained and developed by the [Ministry of Interior](#).

An overview of academic research on young people can be obtained from the [Estonian Research Portal](#) and the [Youth Monitor Portal](#).

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

There are concrete budgetary allocations for research in the youth field each year (youth monitor, studies and research, development). In 2019, the amount of 145 217 euros was planned for youth monitoring and research from the youth field programme. The information regarding 2020 is not clear because of the administrative change of merging institutions in the fields of education and youth.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

There is a specific budget for youth policy and youth work development. Different policy areas and measures are funded from different sources and responsible ministries, which include:

- national budget;
- municipal budgets (municipalities are responsible for youth work, social work, formal education system, local transport, hobby education);
- different taxes and funds (e.g. the Council of the Gambling Tax);
- private initiatives (e.g. entrepreneurship development programme ENTRUM in 2014/2015);
- European funds (e.g. European Social Fund);
- other foreign funds (e.g. EEA Grants and Norway Grants);
- other funds.

What is funded?

Usually, all of the sources are for funding the capacity building of service providers in youth work, including training, implementing of concrete measures and provision of the youth work services, analysis, and monitoring. There is no all-included overview of the funds spent on policy measures targeting young people in all areas of youth policy.

For 2019, the whole amount in the budget for the Ministry of Education and Research, dedicated to the whole youth field program was 31.6 million euros. For the year 2021, the prognosis is that the whole program of education and youth will have more than 557 million euros. Specifically to the youth field development, there is an amount of 9.8 million euros dedicated.

Financial accountability

The financial accountability for public spending is the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for the policy area. Private legal entities like youth NGOs receive public funding based on contracts and the contract includes an obligation to report both spending and results. Generally, the contracts do not include policy level indicators, however, this trend is increasing. Evaluation of the reports is mostly done in comparison to the agreements in the contract and plans usually defined in the application.

Funding from specific sources can have specific demand in terms of reporting (e.g. EU structural assistance, EEA Grants, etc. have detailed schemes of reporting and accountability).

In general, all recipients of public funding have financial accountability. Not all reporting activities have formal regulations.

According to the [Youth Work Act](#), the general state or administrative supervision of the state funding in the field of youth is the task of the Ministry of Education and Research. As the main funding of organizing youth work comes from the local municipalities, the recipients of their funding (youth associations, youth programmes, and youth projects) have to report of the usage of the funds to the municipalities by the legislation set by the municipalities themselves.

[The funding of state programmes, youth research, and youth work organizations](#) is set by the Minister of Education and Research. Each recipient of the funding will have a contract and will have to present a report (including a financial report) by the date set in the contract.

The Ministry of Education and Research has [annual grants for youth associations](#). The associations will have to report back to the ministry for both activities and funding.

Use of EU Funds

In order to support the implementation of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#), EU and EEA funds are being used. The measures funded are the following:

Increasing the availability of youth work services and involving young people at risk – the support for the regional cooperation in providing youth work services (primarily open youth work, hobby education, and activities, youth camps, different forms of joint activities, including the activities of youth organizations). The priority areas are the ones with a higher risk of youth exclusion.

- Increasing the exposure of young people to the working life, including youth initiative support, creation of occupational laboratories ("*kutselaborid*"), organizing working brigades and community work practice, and ensuring the availability of youth information - continued support to the actions, that help young people (including youth at risk) to enter the labor market, get working experience, and acknowledge and use the things learnt in youth work. There is support for undertakings that offer young people working opportunities, voluntary activities in the community, and raising awareness of the world of work. The opportunities to experiment with different professions and jobs in the occupational laboratories will be created. Raising the awareness of young people will be implemented through the youth information service.
- Services for NEETs (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training) - the creation of services that offer additional support for young people, who do not study nor work (NEETs), that would support their return to studies or labor market. The NEETs are searched for, motivated and involved in active activities, they will be offered individual support. Long-term individual support activities are offered for young people in the most difficult conditions.
- Information regarding the situation of the young people will be collected and assembled, and the status of the youth at risk of exclusion will be analyzed.
- Assessment of the quality and impact of the activities - different evaluation and analyzing forms will be developed in order to assess the effectiveness of the work of youth workers.
- Trainings targeted to the people working in the youth field - in cooperation with different stakeholders of youth field and with the support of the European Social fund it is planned and initiated comprehensive training plans in four main groups:
 1. long-term development programmes to obtain the impact in a certain work field;
 2. thematic trainings, which are based on the priorities of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) and the changes in the status of young people;
 3. regional trainings for supporting the cooperation and increasing the capabilities of different stakeholders in the municipalities;
 4. training that support international cooperation.
- Supporting the development and quality of the training system - with the support of the European Social Fund the training needs are assessed, the impact and results of the trainings are analyzed. New youth work methods are brought to use. The availability of the information connected to trainings will be increased and the information regarding the training results will be distributed.
- Improvement of the well-being of the children and young people through prevention and cross-sectorial cooperation.

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) has [cooperation agreements](#) in the youth field with the [Flemish Community in Belgium](#) (including multilateral cooperation with Latvia and Lithuania), Finland, and Ukraine. All agreements are primarily targeted at the exchange of experience between youth policymakers, youth workers, youth work organizations, and youth.

In addition, bilateral agreements in the areas of education and culture include notions that support cooperation in the youth field.

Estonia is a member of different networks, for example, the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency - [ERYICA](#).

Estonia takes part in several youth field activities of the [Council of Europe](#). Estonia is participating in the "No Hate Speech" campaign, and the youth centres' quality management and quality sign programme. Estonia also participates in other [Council of Europe](#) activities which the [European Steering Committee for Youth \(CDEJ\)](#) foresees to be carried out. Estonia annually contributes its share to the [European Youth Foundation](#).

Starting from 01.01.2021, the [Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency](#) was joint with the [Education and Youth Board](#), and it became the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (NA for the [Erasmus+ programme](#) - cooperation regarding the financial support to youth projects from Erasmus+ programme; increasing the possibilities of international cooperation and the usage of its results; increasing the professionalization of youth workers, including through the development of level education and trainings and monitoring the competences; supporting the activities and sustainable development of the NA). Estonia has also a [SALTO Resource Center for Youth Participation and Information](#).

International cooperation

At the stage of implementation, an important mechanism of cross-border cooperation is the implementation of the policy programmes which have proved successful in other countries and have passed the test of being evidence-based. The implementation of the programmes in Estonia means frequent contacts and close cooperation with experienced implementers of the programmes, which is required by the funders of the policy measure. At the present time, the list of such programmes includes:

- programme "[Children and Youth at Risk](#)" (Norway);
- programme "[Veel parem mina](#)" (*VEPA - short version in Estonian*) / "Even better me" (North-America);
- programme "[Kiusamisest vaba](#)" (*KIVA - short version in Estonian*) / "KiVa Anti-Bullying Program" (Finland);
- programme [Multidimensional Family Therapy](#) (US);
- programme [SPIN](#) (UK);
- programme [EXPECT-RESPECT](#) (US);
- programme [STEP / "High:Five"](#) (Denmark);
- programme [MARAC](#) (UK).

In addition, there are some cooperation agreements with Japan and other countries.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

The Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 ends in 2020, therefore, there are debates around a new strategic framework for youth work and policy for 2021-2035. In October 2018, the 6th Youth Work Forum NOORUM was organized in order to get input to the planning of a new strategic period. In October 2019, the official process of a new "Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035" has been started. By September 2020, the draft document has been submitted to the Government Office for approval and the consultation has been completed.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned [a study](#) on the administrative agencies under the ministry, services offered and finding solutions to reorganize the services and functions. As there are numerous institutions implementing the same or similar policies, it was proposed that the institutions would be merged into one large joint agency. The reform was supposed to enter into force by 01.09.2020 at the latest, but actually happened sooner. Since 1st of August, the national agency responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy, is the [Education and Youth Board](#). The institution was established on the basis of the services of [Innove Foundation](#), [Archimedes Foundation](#), [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#).

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Volunteering as an activity has a long history in Estonia. However, only since the turn of the millennium, has volunteering been approached in an organized way. The first national strategy on volunteering – Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010 – was adopted in 2006. Since the very beginning, the [Ministry of Interior](#) has played an important role in the process of institutionalization of volunteering and civil society, as a partner to voluntary organizations and civil society. In Estonia, there is no legal definition of volunteering in general. See more in [Chapter 2.1](#).

In Estonia, no distinct governance system exists for youth volunteering. There is no legislation on youth volunteering as such, but the volunteering has been described in the fields of rescue services. The [European Solidarity Corps](#) (previous [European Voluntary Service](#)) is organized by the [Education and Youth Board](#) Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. See more in [Chapter 2.2](#).

In 2018, a research was conducted that showed that 19% of all volunteers are young people aged 15-24 and 69% of all young people are volunteers. See more in [Chapter 2.4](#).

2.1 General context

Historical developments

Volunteering as an activity has a long history in Estonia. However, only since the turn of the millennium, has volunteering been approached in an organized way.

In Estonia, the first steps towards obtaining an evidence-based overview of volunteering were based on studies of individuals volunteering in the context of NGOs and civil society. The First National Forum of Volunteers gathered on April 25, 2003, to discuss the problems of communication between individual volunteers and organizations. It was organized by the [Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation](#), an NGO established in 1993, Tartu Volunteering Center, an NGO established in 2000 and [Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations](#), NENO, established in 1991.

The first national strategy on volunteering – Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010 ([Eesti vabatahtliku tegevuse arengukava aastateks 2007-2010](#)) – was adopted in 2006. It followed the [Concept of Development of Civil Society in Estonia](#) which was adopted in 2002 by Estonian Parliament [Riigikogu](#).

Since the very beginning, the [Ministry of Interior](#) has played an important role in the process of institutionalization of volunteering and civil society, as a partner to voluntary organizations and civil society.

Main concepts

In Estonia, there is no legal definition of volunteering in general.

At the moment, the highest administrative level definition appears to be the one which is used in the [National Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#). The volunteering has been described on the level of laws also, for example in the rescue services. A new program for the years 2021-2024 was also approved in summer 2020, but volunteering is being addressed there in general, not specifically towards youth (although youth volunteering is also mentioned).

Volunteering is defined as the commitment of time, energy or skills, out of one's free will and without getting paid. Volunteers help others or undertake activities mainly for the public benefit and the benefit of society. Helping one's family members is not considered to be a voluntary activity.

A similar definition of voluntary activity in Estonia is provided in [ILO report](#): "activity voluntarily is undertaken without pay to help someone other than members of your household or relatives". It can be any kind of help to individuals directly or through organizations or associations, also self-initiative joint action for improving the environment of your neighborhood or community or activity for the benefit of society. The same definition, used at the end of the 1990s, is also valid today and is used in the [National Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#).

The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#), which is the national strategic document in the field of youth, does not contain a definition of youth volunteering. However, volunteering is mentioned in three contexts:

- Youth volunteering as a way of taking part in youth work activities, which have the potential to contribute to the development of skills and personal features (p.5, 6);
- Youth volunteering as preparation for work-life, as an opportunity to obtain work experience which is especially relevant for specific youth groups (p.9);
- Youth volunteering as a way of participation in local community life and strengthening local democracy (p.9).

The draft document for the new development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#), pages 14-15) brings out volunteering much more:

- youth volunteering is a way to encourage youth entrepreneurship, creativity and ideas;
- youth volunteering is a way to empower young people to be active citizens, to participate and contribute meaningfully to the community;
- the share of young people participating in voluntary activities is one indicator for the development plan's strategic goal no 2 (the starting and goal levels are to be defined yet);
- creating youth volunteering possibilities is a way to ensure quality youth work that is available equally in different regions.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

In Estonia, no distinct governance system exists for youth volunteering. There is no legislation on youth volunteering as such, but the volunteering has been described in the fields of rescue services. The [European Solidarity Corps](#) (previous [European Voluntary Service](#)) is organized by the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (until 31.12.2020 the Youth in Action National Agency [Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency](#)).

Instead, two other structures are being used for this purpose. On the one hand, youth volunteering takes place within the legislative and administrative framework for volunteering in general. This aspect of youth volunteering is structured by general civil society regulations and organizational practices. On the other hand, youth volunteering takes place within youth work settings (e.g. youth organizations, youth centers, youth projects, etc.). This aspect of youth volunteering is regulated by youth work regulations and organizational practices.

Supporting and organizing youth work is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), more concretely the Department of Youth and Talent Policy.

Supporting and organizing the development of volunteering, in general, is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Interior](#). At the ministerial level, themes and issues related to volunteering are addressed in the [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#). In the development plan, volunteering is seen to be an integral part of civil society and the NGO movement in the country. The new Civil Society program 2021-2024 ([Kodanikuühiskonna programm 2021-2024](#)) was approved on 10.07.2020 and it is the follow-up for the currently valid [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#). Youth volunteering is mentioned in that document, but is not set as a specific goal, volunteering is being addressed in general.

For the period 2014-2018, the Ministry of Interior set up a collaboration agreement in the field of volunteering development with [Kodukant](#), the Estonian Village Movement. Neither this collaboration agreement nor action plan for 2016 mention anything on youth volunteering specifically. However, the list of organizations in Volunteering Network, which is comprised of 30 organizations, includes also youth or youth work organizations ([Youth in Action National Agency](#), [The Foundation Domus Dorpatensis](#), [Association of Open Youth Centres in Estonia](#), [Estonian National Youth Council](#)). Young people volunteer through these organizations as well as through other organizations, for example, [Estonian Food Bank](#), [Estonian Fund for Nature](#), [Estonian Society for the Protection of Animals](#), village movement [Kodukant](#) and others.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

As no distinct governance system for specifically youth volunteering exists, volunteering is a topic in the civil society strategic planning that is being coordinated by the [Ministry of Interior](#). The main cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of youth volunteering is being done between the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Ministry of Interior](#).

The draft document of a new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) brings the attention to youth volunteering with different activities and one youth specific indicator regarding youth volunteering.

The Civil Society Development Plan addresses mainly the cooperation between the public sector and citizens' associations. The new Civil Society programme for 2021-2024 ([Kodanikuühiskonna programm 2021-2024](#)) that is a follow-up for the currently valid development plan that ends in 2020, brings out important results that also contain youth field as an important partner. There are 3 results that are concretely connected to the

Youth field program 2020- 2023 (not specifically to youth volunteering, but connecting to that) are as following:

- the activities of youth work, NGOs, schools and universities are connected with civic society;
- the Community Practice program is distributed in schools all over Estonia;
- the youth participation is being developed on local level.

One more result that mentions young people:

- there are development programs for social entrepreneurship targeted to young people.

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no single strategy in Estonia on youth volunteering. Youth volunteering is addressed in the [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#), important policy in relation to the volunteering is also defined in the area of youth work in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) and in the new draft youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)).

Scope and contents

In the [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#), volunteering is seen as a method that supports the development of youth social-political activism and participation in society. According to the development plan, a challenge that needs to be addressed is that though young people have a good understanding of the principles of participation, it does not always translate into actual behavior. This situation has been identified as a call for ministerial action to support the development of civic activism among young people. Youth volunteering is also supported by the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). In the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#), volunteering is mentioned in three contexts: as a way to acquire skills that might be useful in life, as a way to acquire first work experiences and as a way to develop civic activism. The draft document of a new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) brings the attention to youth volunteering with different activities and one youth specific indicator regarding youth volunteering.

Responsible authority

There is no one and only responsible authority for youth volunteering. In the field of youth, the responsibility of general development is on the [Ministry of Education and Research](#). The support for the development of civil society is the responsibility of the [Ministry of Interior](#).

Revisions/ Updates

The draft document of the youth field development plan for 2021-2035 has been sent to the Government Office for approval. The new Civil Society program 2021-2024 ([Kodanikuühiskonna programm 2021-2024](#)) was approved on 10.07.2020 and it is the follow-up for the currently valid [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#). Youth volunteering is mentioned in that document, but is not set as a specific goal, volunteering is being addressed in general.

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no national programme for Youth Volunteering. The topic is mentioned the most in the draft document of a new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035

([noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)). The draft brings out youth volunteering in four contexts:

- youth volunteering is a way to encourage youth entrepreneurship, creativity and ideas;
- youth volunteering is a way to empower young people to be active citizens, to participate and contribute meaningfully to the community;
- the share of young people participating in voluntary activities is one indicator for the development plan's strategic goal no 2 (the starting and goal levels are to be defined yet);
- creating youth volunteering possibilities is a way to ensure quality youth work that is available equally in different regions.

Funding

As there is no national programme for Youth Volunteering, there is also no funding description available.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

A statistical overview of volunteering in general and youth volunteering, in particular, is poor as young people constitute only a part of all volunteers. As the new development plan for youth field will dedicate one indicator to the youth volunteering, there is hope that the data will be more accurate in the future. In September 2020, it is still unclear how and when the data will be collected.

Compared to the previous [nationwide representative survey](#) conducted in October 2013, the share of young volunteers aged 15-24 has decreased from 22% to 19% of all volunteers in the country ([based on the survey conducted in 2018](#)). In 2018, 69% of the young people were volunteers. Young people are motivated to volunteer in order to get new knowledge, experience, and skills, and to spend their time pleasantly with friends and family. The reasons of not participating in voluntary activities are connected to the missing information regarding existing possibilities. This means that the full potential of youth volunteering is currently not being used.

Age group/year	Volunteer, aware of volunteering		Volunteer, but not aware of volunteering		Not a volunteer	
	2013	2018	2013	2018	2013	2018
15-24 years old	32%	38%	10%	32%	58%	31%
25-34 years old	22%	32%	5%	21%	73%	47%
35-49 years old	28%	29%	7%	21%	65%	50%
50-64 years old	19%	26%	4%	18%	77%	56%
65-74 years old	20%	15%	8%	16%	72%	68%

The overall awareness level of volunteering is the highest amongst young people aged 15-24. Unfortunately, the same can be said about people who volunteer, but are not aware of them being volunteers. The amount of young people aged 15-24 not being volunteers has decreased from 58% in 2013 to 31% in 2018, which is the lowest percentage compared to other age groups.

Volunteering in youth work and volunteering with/for children ranking in the overall list of popularity of volunteering areas has decreased over years. In 2009, the percentage was 29%, in 2013 it was 23%, and in 2018 it was 19%. From the most recent volunteering experience fields, youth work has become more popular increasing from 9% in 2013 to 12% in 2018.

Support to young volunteers

The Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations in cooperation with Estonian Youth Work Centre and the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) launched a programme “[Kogukonnapraktika](#)” (Eng. *Community practice*) in 2015. Supported by ESF and state budget the programme aims to introduce a practical community work as part of the curricula of civic education for upper secondary level. The cooperation programme provides students with the opportunity to experience a short-term practical voluntary work period. The programme will end in 2020.

Quality Assurance (QA)

There is no single system of quality assurance/quality guidelines specific to youth volunteering. There is support for youth work quality initiated by Estonian Youth Work Centre (current [Education and Youth Board](#)) and there is a mechanism to monitor policy implementation, however, the quality of voluntary activities of young people in youth work are not specifically covered.

Target groups

As there are no regulations on youth volunteering, the target group for it is also not regulated or set. In the youth field, the target group is young people aged 7-26.

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

Several organizations are involved in cross-border volunteering networks and provide Estonian young people opportunities to volunteer abroad and foreign young people to volunteer in Estonia.

[Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps](#) implements the [European Solidarity Corps](#) (previous [European Voluntary Service](#) or EVS). Different Erasmus+ voluntary activities are also implemented by NGOs, for example:

- [Continuous Action](#) (voluntary work, international youth exchanges and training activities, etc.);
- [EstYES](#) (youth exchanges, training activities, European Solidarity Corps, and other voluntary activities, including volunteering in Estonia).

Other Programmes

Global Education Network of Young Europeans ([GLEN](#)) sends young volunteers to some African, Asian or Eastern-European countries for a three-month-long period. The programme has been running since 2003 and during this time, more than 50 volunteers have been supported. The programme is financed by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).

NGO [Mondo](#) has been involved in sending Estonian volunteers to different countries (most actions are supported by the Estonian state, European Commission and/or private donors), for example:

- Kenya - starting from 2018 the volunteers are being sent through the EU AID Volunteers programme;
- Ghana;

- Uganda - starting from 2018 the volunteers are being sent through the EU AID Volunteers programme;
- Afganistan;
- Burma;
- Ukraine.

According to [their report](#), in 2018, 19, and [in 2019](#), 35 humanitarian aid volunteers were on different missions in these countries.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

There is a specific regulation covering conditions to enter Estonia and apply for the temporary residence permit in Estonia for youth volunteering. In general, volunteering is recognized as studies and therefore conditions that allow temporary residence permits for studying also apply in case of youth volunteering.

The [Aliens Act](#) defines specific regulations to volunteers coming to Estonia. There is an opportunity to get a residence permit on conditions similar to studies when a person is applying for the permit and has come to Estonia as a volunteer. The Act defines that a temporary residence permit for study or volunteering may be issued to an alien "for voluntary service within the framework of a youth project or program recognised by the Ministry of Education and Research". Specific requirements in the Act for voluntary service define, that a temporary residence permit for study may be granted for voluntary service under the following conditions:

- the activity of an alien in the framework of a youth project or program shall not be employed for the purposes of this Act, including that an alien shall not get remuneration for the activity;
- an institution or organisation within the framework of whose youth project or program an alien is applying for residence permit for voluntary service activities shall bear the subsistence costs of an alien during his or her residence in Estonia;
- an institution or organisation within the framework of whose youth project or program an alien is applying for residence permit for voluntary service activities has entered into an insurance contract which would cover all medical costs caused by illness or injuries of an alien and;
- a contract of voluntary service has been concluded between an alien and the institution or organisation within the framework of whose youth project or program an alien is applying for residence permit for voluntary service activities.

The contract of voluntary service entered into between an alien and the youth association for voluntary service in the framework of whose youth project or program an alien is applying for a residence permit, has to describe:

- the duties of an alien;
- the tutoring conditions related to the performance of the duties;
- working time of an alien;
- means for covering travelling, subsistence and accommodation costs and for allowances during the whole stay in Estonia and;
- the training provided to an alien for better performance of voluntary service if necessary.

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

[Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps \(until 31.12.2020 the Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency\)](#) has been the most prominent promoter of voluntarism among young people through promoting European Voluntary Service (since 2017 the [Solidarity Corps](#)) for years covering different information channels and forms.

Information about youth volunteering opportunities is distributed via specific information channels accessed by young people interested in volunteering or other similar activities.

There is a specific portal to advertise voluntary work opportunities www.vabatahtlikud.ee. The portal is supported by the European Social Fund and is coordinated by Village Movement Kodukant.

Youth information website [Teeviit](#) also mediates some voluntary work opportunities and creates some itself - Teeviit has a team of volunteers, who create content for Teeviit's social media, webpage, etc. Teeviit is coordinated by the [Education and Youth Board](#).

Voluntary placements are also a part of a private portal providing information about available jobs (for example, www.cv.ee and www.cvkeskus.ee).

Key initiatives

- National volunteer recognition event "[Notice the volunteer](#)" since 2005 and takes place usually on the International Volunteering Day and is organized by Village Movement Kodukant. The aim of the event is to recognize the people who have voluntarily contributed to the development of Estonian society and supported voluntary activities. The patron of recognition is the president of Estonia.
- [Good practices for volunteering](#) compiled by Village Movement Kodukant and it gives guidelines for good volunteering.
- The [Volunteer Friend Label](#) is a badge of quality that shows good calibre and professionalism of volunteer recruitment in organisations operating in Estonia. The labels are awarded by the Village Movement Kodukant in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

There is no existing policy framework for skills recognition specially for volunteering activities. However, the recognition and validation of the learning and work experience, including in non-formal and informal learning environments, is been long actual in education and youth policies. There is a legal framework allowing prior learning and work experience to be recognized and validated in the formal education system. Also, for example, youth workers can obtain a qualification through a procedure of validating prior learning and work experience, including voluntary work.

[The Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020](#) highlights the continuous importance of developing awareness about the learning that takes place in a non-formal environment. Starting from 2021, there will be a new Youth Field Development Plan up to 2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) that brings out ensuring that the competencies acquired in youth work are interpreted, valued, awarded, and recognised in formal education.

Existing arrangements

There are different tools for skills recognition in youth volunteering. Below are listed a few of the existing arrangements:

The Volunteer Pass is a document that presents skills acquired through volunteering activities. The Pass has been developed after the examples of Youthpass and Europass. It uses the lifelong learning 8 key competences framework for presenting and analyzing competences acquired in voluntary activities. In general, the list of skills is written up by the volunteer him- or herself; it is a self-assessment exercise. The Pass is primarily used as a tool, which aids the volunteer to analyze and understand what competences he or she has acquired during a volunteering activity. Also, educational institutions, firms, and NGOs may take the information presented in a person's pass into account when selecting students or recruiting employees. However, taking the information presented in the pass is up to the organizations. There is no official system of recognition of the pass which would define the status and value of the information presented there.

The youth information site Teeviit (previously called Launchpad or Stardiplats) is a tool for young people to describe their experiences obtained from formal, non-formal and informal learning. It helps the young people to compile a CV containing all relevant experiences for applying for a job.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Through the European Structural Funds an action "Testing of voluntary cooperation model in the welfare system and compiling cooperation model applicable all over Estonia" ("Vabatahtlike rakendamise koostöömudeli testimine hoolekandesüsteemis ja üle-eestiliselt rakendatava koostöömudeli väljatöötamine") was being developed during 2018-2020. The project supported altogether 678 people and 273 volunteers contributed 21 600 hours of their time during that project. The project was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs, funded by the European Social Fund, and implemented by the Village Movement Kodukant. The [final report](#) published in 2020 brings out suggestions of continuing this project as well in the future as it showed to be effective in many ways. The report proposed that 560 000 euros per year would be sufficient to continue the project in the future. In October 2020, it is unclear whether the project will be continued or not.

The new Civil Society program 2021-2024 ([Kodanikuühiskonna programm 2021-2024](#)) was approved on 10.07.2020 and it is the follow-up for the currently valid [Civil Society Development Plan 2015-2020](#). Youth volunteering is mentioned in that document, but is not set as a specific goal, volunteering is being addressed in general.

The draft document of a new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) brings the attention to youth volunteering with different activities and one youth specific indicator regarding youth volunteering. The development plan has been sent to the Government Office for approval, but by October 2020, it has not been approved yet.

Ongoing debates

The debate of recognizing the voluntary work done by young people in the context of youth work as a valuable experience by employers and also formal education is continuously going on in Estonia.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is no single body responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship as the domain covers several policy areas – most importantly education, youth, labour market, economic affairs - which have established a different division of tasks between different ministries responsible for policy areas and between local and central level. The main Governmental authorities relevant to youth employment and entrepreneurship:

- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#): responsible for developing entrepreneurship and economic affairs;
- the [Ministry of Education and Research](#): responsible for youth policy and education policy;
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for labour market policy, but also for social protection and services including child and family policy.

See more in [Chapter 3.2](#).

The guidance services are currently financed with the support of EU structural assistance, specifically ESF. The services in the education sector (which are more directly targeted to youth and which also include pedagogical counselling and other support for learning) have a dedicated budget 34 927 542 euros for the years 2014-2020. The services provided as the active labour market measures (where young people are one of the target groups among other population) have a dedicated budget 5 200 004 euros for the years 2015-2020. See more in [Chapter 3.4](#). Currently, in Estonia, apprenticeship studies are less common than traditional school-based programmes. Workplace-based study-schemes are not used widely. See more in [Chapter 3.5](#).

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

The National Reform Programme "Estonia 2020" ([Konkurentsivõime kava „Eesti 2020“](#)) provides the following analyses of the main trends over the years.

Since regaining of independence in 1992, the Estonian economy has grown nearly tenfold. Estonia saw extraordinary economic growth from 2001-2007. A correction began already in 2007 when the growth rate began gradually decreasing. After the 2008-2009 crisis, the economy has grown slowly. In 2015, the real growth was slower than its potential and reached 1.1% by the first estimation. According to the evaluation of different institutions, the growth potential in Estonia is 2-3% per year. Estonia's GDP growth up to 2007 was impacted above all by changes in the number of employed people and the productivity of the workforce. According to the [Statistics Estonia](#), the GDP dropped 5.6% in the second quarter of 2020. This is probably connected to the Covid-19 pandemic and will impact the economy in the future as well.

Estonia's future demographic trends are similar to the general trends in Europe. The population decrease in the 1990s has not yet impacted the percentage of the working-age population but a noteworthy impact will become evident in the coming years. The decrease in population will take place primarily in the working-age population (15-64-year-olds); and in 20 years, according to Eurostat estimates, Estonia will have more than 100,000 fewer working-age people. To maintain the economy at the current volume, there will be an increasing need for employees each year. Current rising employment and, in the long term, the readiness of those 65 years of age and older to work should help soften the decrease in the working-age population.

Labour market policy in Estonia is formulated by the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) and delivered by the [National Unemployment Insurance Fund](#). These institutions are also responsible for evaluating labour market policies and programs. Estonia introduced the

active labour market measures in 1993. A significant change in labour market protection took place in July 2009 when the new [Employment Contracts Act](#) came into force. One of the principal goals of the employment law reform was to increase labour market flexibility and improve labour mobility, most important change was the reduction in the cost of terminating an employment relationship i.e. a reduction of the notice period and the amount paid in severance payments. After the reform in labour market protection induced by the economic recession in 2008, it can be said that labour in Estonia does not enjoy a high level of protection. On the contrary, traditional institutions of protection against labour market risks (trade unions, employment contracts law, social security transfers) are weak.

In the Welfare Development Plan ([Heaolu arengukava 2016-2023](#)) lists the following challenges in achieving and maintaining a high level of employment the compliance between the supply and demand of the workforce, and the quality of working life, which ensures sustainability and growth of competitiveness:

- insufficient qualifications, as well as limited occupational and geographical mobility;
- lack of awareness about the different aspects of working life and unequal treatment in hiring and in an employment relationship;
- wage poverty and traps of unemployment and inactivity;
- working conditions that do not consider the changes in the labour market, as well as economic changes, do not support the establishment of smart jobs and the safe movement between various forms of employment;
- changed employment relationships and the formal involvement of employees does not motivate participating in the collective shaping of working conditions.

Target groups defined in the document as groups obstacles of which are participating in the labour market need special attention are young people 15-24, elderly, residents whose native language is not Estonian (mostly Russian-speaking population), new immigrants (including beneficiaries of international protection), people, who have been looking for a job for a long time or who have been away from the labour market for a long time, people with decreased workability.

Youth employment

In Estonia, after reaching one of the highest levels of youth unemployment rate in Europe during the financial crisis (32.9% in Estonia vs 21.5% in EU-28 in 2010), the situation stabilized fast and the share of youth searching for a job is lower in comparison with most other European countries (11.1% in Estonia and 15.0% in EU in 2019) The level of youth unemployment in Estonia still remains higher compared to the prime-age population, indicating the presence of barriers for youth in entry to the labour market.

Similarly, to other European Union countries, there is a high risk of unemployment in Estonia among young people who have a lower level of education and do not have professional education. The proportion of young people who are neither in employment nor in education (the so-called NEET youngsters) has dropped almost by half in five years (in 2014, it was 11.7% of all young people, in 2019, it was 6.9%). NEET youth have less experience in employment or practical work and they are not as competitive in the labour market, but different measures have improved the situation. The obstacles for young people entering the labour market include the restrictions of labour and tax regulation and the fact that young people are at a higher risk of suffering from work accidents.

Also, youth tend to turn less to the local employment office for support in case of unemployment, for example, in 2015 only 34% of the unemployed youth (age 15-24) turned to the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, while out of the prime-age group 47% turned to the Fund.

During the economic recession 2008-2010 young people, compared older age groups, experienced a higher increase in unemployment, a decrease in working hours and

decrease in wages. National Reform Programme “Estonian 2020” ([Konkurentsivõime kava „Eesti 2020”](#)) defines young people, in the transition from education to the labour market and NEET-youth as risk groups at the labour market.

Main concepts

The Welfare Development Plan ([Heaolu arengukava 2016-2023](#)) states, that employment gives people an opportunity for self-realisation and financial security and is, therefore, one of the main prerequisites for socio-economic development, and a basis for a high-quality life. The approaches and recurrent principles of the plan arise from the principles of a social and welfare state, the framework of fundamental and social rights, and social protection principles. On the one hand, the principle of a social state is ensuring that the strengthening of the state’s economic development and competitive ability takes into account the needs of different social groups. On the other hand, the adherence to the principle of a social state is a premise for the state's economic development and competitive ability, as it prevents and reduces the exclusion of parts of the population from the social and economic life. The document points out, that it is necessary to find solutions in accordance with the general shift of welfare state policies: transferring from the policy that compensates social risks and repairs their consequences, to the policy that empowers and prepares people to cope with the risks. In addition to traditional social protection, increasing people's self-sufficiency and their social and professional activity has become more and more important.

In economic affairs and entrepreneurship, the Government considers important to focus both on raising the ambition of entrepreneurs as well as on enhancing research and development activities, innovation and investments and export. In terms of employment, the focus is on bringing about the structural changes in the labour market by increasing the share of jobs creating higher added value.

Definitions in use

- Economically active population/labour force – persons who wish and are able to work (total of employed and unemployed persons).
- Economically passive/inactive population – persons who do not wish or are not able to work.
- Employed – a person who during the reference period worked and was paid as a wage earner, entrepreneur or a free-lancer; worked without direct payment in a family enterprise or on his / her own farm; was temporarily absent from work.
- Unemployed – a person who fulfils the following three conditions: he or she is without work (does not work anywhere at the moment and is not temporarily absent from work); he or she is currently (in the course of two weeks) available for work if there should be work; he or she is actively seeking work.
- Entrepreneurship – attitude based on personality, characterised by creative and innovative thinking, need for accomplishment and capability to implement thoughts and ideas
- Entrepreneurship education – education developing entrepreneurship and preparing to be an entrepreneur, that deals with the complexity of creating and developing an enterprise.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The legislation is liberal and offers a lot of flexibility in agreeing on terms and conditions of employment. Regulations regarding employment and labour contracts are regulated by the [Employment Contracts Act](#). According to [Human Capital Report](#) Estonia is a success

story with regard to successful human capital potential maximization, ranking 15th globally. The Estonian labour market can be described by:

- highly skilled workforce
- 86% of adults speaking at least one foreign language
- low unionisation
- simple and straightforward labour legislation
- easy hiring and job contract termination processes

The employment market policy is developed in tripartite social dialogue representing employees, employers and the Government.

There is no single body responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship as the domain covers several policy areas – most importantly education, youth, labour market, economic affairs - which have established a different division of tasks between different ministries responsible for policy areas and between local and central level.

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonised policy-making and implementation. There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation that also covers youth social inclusion. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports and also monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

The main Governmental authorities relevant to youth employment and entrepreneurship:

- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#): responsible for developing entrepreneurship and economic affairs
- the [Ministry of Education and Research](#): responsible for youth policy and education policy
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for labour market policy, but also for social protection and services including child and family policy

Main public actors and foundations of policy fields relevant to youth employment and entrepreneurship:

- [Social Insurance Board](#), an agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for social insurance benefits and child protection services.
- [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#), a public legal entity acting in the area of the Ministry of Social Affairs and responsible for provision of labour market services, governed by the tripartite Supervisory Board composed of the representatives of the Government, employees (the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions, the Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation) and employers (the Estonian Employers' Confederation).
- The [Education and Youth Board](#) (Harno), a government agency of the Ministry of Education and Research that deals with the implementation of Estonian education and youth policy. The joint institution was established on the basis of the services of [Foundation Innove](#), [Foundation Archimedes](#), Information Technology Foundation for Education and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#). Harno was set up on 01.08.2020.
- [Foundation Enterprise Estonia](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, which helps to carry out innovation and enterprise policy through different support schemes, counselling and training.

The main non-public actors:

- [Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), representative of the Estonian business community, which mission is to develop entrepreneurship in Estonia;
- [Estonian Employers' Confederation](#), includes all the main industry associations and many large businesses in Estonia;
- [Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions](#), an umbrella organisation for trade unions;
- [Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation](#), an organisation uniting different professional unions;
- [Estonian Association of Youth Centres](#), implementing youth work including activities for NEET;
- [National Youth Council](#), the umbrella organization of youth associations and youth organizations.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There is no single body responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship as the domain covers several policy areas – most importantly education, youth, labour market, economic affairs - which have established a different division of tasks between different ministries responsible for policy areas and between local and central level.

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonised policy-making and implementation. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports and also monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays coordinating role planning, monitoring and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

System of labour market monitoring and future skills forecasting OSKA

There is an ongoing initiative by the Government to develop OSKA - a system of labour market monitoring and future skills forecasting. The initiative is under the responsibility of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and the implementing agency is the [Estonian Qualifications Authority](#).

OSKA provides accurate and clear information on society's labour market opportunities and needs as well as on the existing skills at the level of individuals for developing educational choices and policies in the key sectors of Estonian society. OSKA analyses the needs for labour and skills necessary for Estonia's economic development over the next 10 years. The aim of the action is to build platforms of cooperation between employers and education providers; to analyse the development opportunities and needs of different sectors of the Estonian economy; to prepare labour market training requirements based on various activities or professions to facilitate the planning of education provision at different levels of education and by types of school as well as in the fields of retraining and in-service training.

The implementation of OSKA is overseen by the OSKA Coordination Council, which consists of the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Finance, the Estonian Employers' Confederation, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Estonian Service Unions' Confederation, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation and the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. The implementation of OSKA is funded by

the European Social Fund. The web-page of the initiative is <http://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/>.

Occupational barometer

In addition, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund launched in 16.12.2016 an initiative "[Occupational barometer](#)". The occupational barometer is a qualitative method of forecasting short-term labour demand by occupation. The estimates are compiled by the regional departments of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, which involve external experts wherever possible. Labour demand forecasts look at two indicators. Firstly, an evaluation is made of how employers' demand for labour force will change in the next 12 months, and especially how employers' demand for specific occupations will change. Secondly, the balance between labour supply and demand after the next 12 months is evaluated.

There is a web map available that shows either changes in labour force demand within or balance between labour supply and demand after the next 12 months amongst different occupations. The results are shown on a map showing the changes or balance in different counties of Estonia.

Skills development

Bringing labour qualification into conformity with the needs of the contemporary labour market and increasing the share of people with professional education at the vocational or higher educational level, is one of the aims of the National Reform Programme "Estonia 2020" (Konkurentsivõime kava „[Eesti 2020](#)”).

In order to cater to this need and to ensure that the education system has relevant input to develop the offer and content of the formal and adult education, the coordination system OSKA was created. The implementation of the coordination system of monitoring labour needs and developing skills will facilitate the planning of the structure, volume and content of formal education, adult education system and in-service training, the development of curricula and career planning and will help employers in their efforts to develop the skills of their employees.

In addition, the described barometer launched in December 2016 by the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) helps to raise awareness about the real links of the labour market demand and skills.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

A young person in Estonia can use the offer of guidance and counselling services as part of the education system and as part of active labour market services.

Education system service

Lifelong guidance has been practised in Estonia for years. The service has been called in different ways – the latest version being "*career services and counselling services for special educational needs*".

The national basic school (the basic compulsory education is the nine-year comprehensive school) curriculum and national upper secondary school curriculum include eight compulsory central topics (cross-curricular topic), one of them is the topic which supports pupils' career planning: "Lifelong learning and career planning". In addition, the curricula are accompanied by the syllabi of the elective subject and an elective course in careers education, which enhance the use of this possibility in the school curriculum.

In addition to the guidance opportunities provided in the framework of the curriculum, there are centres to provide the service outside the school for young people. There are

16 centralised public centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), provide free educational counselling services, where different problems regarding a young people studying or behaviour are being addressed (that prevent their successful educational path). They also support adults, who are around that concrete young person in order to guide how to support the youngster, what kind of services the young person needs, etc. There are different specialists that work in Pathfinder centres - social pedagogue, special pedagogue, speech therapist, and a psychologist. The Pathfinder services are provided by the [Education and Youth Board](#).

The career services are provided by the Estonian [Unemployment Insurance Fund \(Töötukassa\)](#) starting from 2017. The main tasks are intermediating career information and career counselling. The main goal of the career services is to support people in thinking through their choices in education and work life. The services are targeted to all people, including young people, job seekers, employees, parents, and retired people. There are career counsellors and career information specialists, who provide the full career service.

Labour market service

The provision of national labour market services including career information service and career counselling and the payment of labour market benefits in Estonia is organised by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund through its regional departments, which are located in every county. The legal basis of the activities of Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund is the [Unemployment Insurance Act](#), which describes the unemployment insurance system and the organization of Unemployment Insurance Fund, and the [Labour Market Services and Benefits Act](#), which contains the provisions concerning job mediation and related services. Career information is accessible through Unemployment Insurance Fund web portal and public career information rooms in the offices of Unemployment Insurance Fund are open to all, including the opportunity to take part in the workshops and receive help finding career information. Starting from 2015, career counselling in Unemployment Insurance Fund is open to all people (being previously limited to groups of the population already having problems at the labour market ie unemployed).

Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES) at www.tootukassa.ee has a self-service portal for job-seekers and employers. Job Seekers can do following: draw up a CV, look/apply for a job, receive automatic job offers, fill in job-search diary, follow-up decisions regarding registration and benefits, follow up the activities in the individual action plan, search and register for a training course, notify of getting a job, submit registration application, submit unemployment benefits applications, apply for a business start-up subsidy and follow up services and upload business reports.

In addition, there are several job search portals available for job-seekers by private providers.

There are services available through helpline by phone – one central service in labour sector is available for all introducing services and disseminating contact information; regional services within the education sector – every regional centre has publicly announced the phone. Pathfinder (rajaleidja.ee) has a central e-mail service. When a client identifies the region of origin, the relevant regional centre is responsible for the response.

Guidance services in the education system are independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

Main actors

Lifelong guidance services are provided both in the public and private sector. At the national policy level, the responsibility is divided by two authorities – [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (labour affairs). The two main public service providers in the field of lifelong guidance are [Education and Youth Board](#) in the education sector and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES) in the employment sector. Foundation Innove provides services in and its' guidance centres in

counties (16 centres) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund has labour offices in all counties. Educational institutions are there for learners in formal education.

Lifelong guidance forums.

Co-operation, co-ordination and exchange of information within the institutional network in the fields of education, guidance, youth work and employment is essential to efficient and coherent guidance systems. Lifelong guidance forums are an important feature to bring together actors and stakeholders in partnerships. Estonian career guidance forum was established in 2008 when involved stakeholders agreed that there is a need for a common understanding and leadership, strategic thinking at the national level. The membership includes representatives from the ministries of education, labour and economy, public employment service, training institutions, employer, client and practitioner organizations. Since 2012, the scope of the forum enlarged – special focus is on children and youth with special educational needs.

Guidance services are independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

Funding

The guidance services are currently financed with the support of EU structural assistance, specifically ESF. The services in the education sector (which are more directly targeted to youth and which also include pedagogical counselling and other support for learning) have a dedicated budget 34.9 million euros for the years 2014-2020. The services provided as the active labour market measures (where young people are one of the target groups among other population) have a dedicated budget of 5.2 million euros for the years 2015- 2020.

Quality assurance

The quality of guidance services is supported for both sectors (i.e. education and labour market) through activities of the [Education and Youth Board](#), which one department coordinates the guidance service for the education sector. The department coordinates cooperation, networking, research and methodological support for guidance services.

Guidance research in Estonia is procurement based i.e. there is no dedicated funding allocated for any national research units and there are several organizations including universities and private companies, which have experience in the field.

In 2006 and 2011, two major national studies were undertaken by Foundation Innove (starting from 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)) to build the evidence-base for career guidance. The aim of the study was to evaluate the citizens' awareness of career services and their career planning skills, analyse the availability of career services and cooperation between different stakeholders at providing career services in Estonia. In 2014, several other studies were undertaken in order to assess the field. One study was targeted to assess the long-term usefulness of the training and methodical materials and the needs of career specialists. The [results](#) showed that the training activities were generally useful, but the specialists need more methodical materials and training regarding that. Another [study](#) regarding the impact of career education in general showed that the career education was considered as a normal part of formal education, the career lessons were useful, but lots of critics were targeted to different tests that were too superficial and students need more practical approaches and methods.

There are specific indicators set to measure the results of the activities in the period 2014- 2020:

- Share of students who have newly benefitted from individual career information and/or individual counselling in the third level of basic education and who are pursuing studies at the next educational level on 10 November of the calendar year following the completion n of lower secondary education
- Share of small (less than 150 students) general educational schools which use ESF supported counselling services provided by regional guidance centres

- Number of children, learners and young people who have received individual educational guidance and career services
- Number of students who have received individual career information and/or counselling in the third level of basic education

The outcomes of the quality assurance activities implemented in Estonia support further development of the services and design of policy measures. As the services are currently financed by ESF, the conditions apply set for EU structural assistance.

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

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 curricula 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 57% secondary school	-	70% 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

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

Estonia does not currently have comprehensive labour market policy targeted only at youth; rather young people can apply for all available benefits and services.

Young people (starting from the age of 16) can benefit from all other public employment services provided to the registered unemployed by the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#). The specific needs of each unemployed person are identified by the Unemployment

Insurance Fund as part of an Individual Action Plan. Unemployed young people are offered personalized labour market services to support their job search.

As part of the Youth Guarantee scheme several initiatives were created, specifically targeting youth: career workshops, "[My First Job](#)" and the [Tugila](#) (Youth Prop Up) programme.

[My First Job](#) is designed to encourage the recruitment of young people, and thereby reducing youth unemployment. The service supports employers who employ young people aged 16-29,

- who have been registered as unemployed for at least four months and have not found a job, and
- who have no professional qualification (they have either primary or secondary education), and
- who do not have work experience, or is it a short-term (in the last three years worked for less than a year, or have worked in a total of fewer than two years).

The employer can receive up to 50% of the salary of the young person for 12 months. In addition, the training costs for the employer can be reimbursed for up to 2,500 euros (per young person of the YG program) during the first two years from the commencement of employment, to promote the development of the skills of the young person and increase his/her competitiveness in the labour market. An employment contract with a young person must be signed for a minimum of two years. The target outcome is that 70% of the participants are employed 6 months after having participated in the measure. The responsible body for the provision is the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#).

[Youth Tugila](#) (Youth Prop Up) programme started at the end of 2015 under the Youth Guarantee. The aim is to support young people through youth work in order to facilitate the transition to work or back to school. The target group is 15-26-year-old NEET youth. Youth centres participating in the programme are responsible for finding NEET youth and carrying out different activities, which may last up to 6 months – during this period young people are helped to decide whether to continue studying or work. Centres help to create contacts with schools, the Unemployment Insurance Fund, career centres and employers. After participating in the programme, the contact with the young person is preserved for another 6 months to give extra help if needed. The responsible party for the provision of the programme is the [Estonian Association of Youth Centres](#).

Since 2012, the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) has signed 14 partnership agreements with large companies in different economic sectors. These companies in line with other cooperation activities are also willing to give young people a chance to learn skills on the job and gain (first) work experience by providing on-the-job training and organizing work-trials. In 2020, there were 5 companies that offer first work experience through the programme "My first job".

Starting in 2018, employers have the possibility to ask funding from the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) in order to hire minors aged 13-16. The financial support is 30% of the gross salary of the underaged person. Altogether, the total amount of funding is planned to be 3.87 million euros. The measure is financed by the European Social Fund action "Provision of labour market services to ensure better access to employment".

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

There are currently no specific policies for young people to improve their flexibility of working arrangements and their social security net.

The only specific active labour market measure addressing the issue of flexicurity of young people is the initiative "[My First Job](#)" – a service is to reduce youth unemployment by helping young people with little or no experience and without specialized education to find work. The measure includes paying wage support to the employer (50% of the

employee's wage, but not more than twice the national minimum wage, for 12 months) and remunerating the costs of training (up to 2,500 euros during two years).

Since 2017, the [Employment Contracts Act](#) was changed with the specific aim to support employment opportunities for young people under 18.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

There are no youth-specific policy measures to support flexibility in working time arrangements. Also, there are no youth-specific policy measures to promote gender equality in the labour market.

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

Young people (starting from the age of 16) can benefit from all public employment services provided to the registered unemployed by the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#), which mostly are financed by the state budget.

There are active labour market measures provided as part of different ESF programmes (including for young people), where most of the budget consists of 85% of ESF funds and 15% of the state budget. A youth-specific example - "[My First Job](#)" - service is funded 85% by ESF and 15% by the state budget. "[My First Job](#)" includes paying wage support directly to the employer (50% of the employee's wage, but not more than twice the national minimum wage, for 12 months) and remunerating the costs of training (up to 2,500 euros during two years).

- The dedicated budget for the "[My First Job](#)" for the years 2015-2020 is 18.9 million euros, the yearly budgets depend on the demand.
- [Youth Tugila](#) (Youth Prop Up) programme budget for the year 2016: 818,771 euros.

Quality assurance

There is no single system for evaluating all policy measures and initiatives to support youth employment. All the services initiated, developed and supported by the Government are part of the strategic planning of the relevant policy area i.e. the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the policies described in [chapter 3.2](#).

All the programmes and activities implemented with the support of ESF are part of the monitoring and evaluation framework: a system of evaluation (ex-ante, mid-term and final evaluation). No evaluations relating to the activities specifically supporting young people and described above have been conducted by the end of 2016.

There was an evaluation commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2015-2016 concerning the active employment policy measure "My First Job" to find out main reasons, why it is not so actively used by youth and what are the main obstacles for youth to enter the programme. The [evaluation](#) showed that one of the main reasons for not using this measure is the low knowledge of the possibilities of this activity, fear amongst employers and young people in having a long-term working contract, but also the fear of employers in hiring young people with no special education and little working experience. The report brings out that in order to help the young people most in need of help gaining working experience the criteria for the activity have to be lowered and better support for employers and youth both during entering the activity and afterwards as well. This would raise the experience gained and lower the amount of terminated contracts.

The indicators used to assess the quality of employment measures under the Youth Guarantee scheme:

- Service "[My First Job](#)" - 70% of participants are in employment 6 months after the service.
- Beginning supportive measures for the NEET youth, supporting the return of these young people to education and/or successful entry to the labour market - 55% of

NEET youth (aged 15-26) who participated at the supportive measures are, in 6 months following the activities, no longer in the NEET youth status.

- Workshops introducing the labour market for young people offered by EUIF - 70% of participants (aged 15-26) in services have acquired knowledge and skills raising their employment-readiness.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

The activities to support young people work, training and entrepreneurial experience abroad is offered by the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) as part of [Your first EURES job](#), which is a European Union job mobility scheme to help young people find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship opportunity in another EU country, Norway or Iceland and to help employers find qualified workforce. It aims to match hard to fill vacancies with young jobseekers and people looking for job-based trainings across Europe. Through Your first EURES job young people can get financial support for an interview trip abroad, as well as for training (e.g. language courses), recognition of qualifications and relocation expenses. Your first EURES job is opened to candidates with different levels of education and/or work experience. The budget of the Estonian input to the EU Your first EURES scheme is not available.

The [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) is also a contact point for the EU EURES project [Drop'pin](#), which aims to help young people boost their employability and skills by connecting them with a range of opportunities across Europe. Drop'pin opportunities range from onsite, on-the-job learning to online training courses. The budget of the Estonian input to this EU Project is not available.

Legal framework

The [Employment Contracts Act](#) regulates the working conditions of young people under 18, but no specific legal framework exists for cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees/apprentices, and young professionals/entrepreneurs.

International students in Estonia do not need additional work permits to work while studying. Students who are third-country nationals (non-EU citizens) have to apply for a temporary residence permit for study at the Estonian Embassy or Consul in their home country or country of residence. Non-EU students who have been issued a residence permit for studies are also allowed to work without work permits when it does not interfere with their studies. All non-EU students can also stay in Estonia for an additional 6 months after their graduation to look for a job in Estonia and to apply for the temporary residence permit for work.

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

There are several policy documents combining the policy framework for entrepreneurship competence and its development:

- The "[Estonian Entrepreneurship Growth Strategy 2014-2020](#)" ([Eesti Ettevõtluse kasvustrateegia 2014-2020](#)) for developing entrepreneurship and achieving growth. The general goal of the Estonian Entrepreneurship Growth Strategy 2014–2020 is to facilitate the achievement of the umbrella objectives within the competitiveness plan "Estonia 2020" to enhance productivity and employment. The plan seeks to reach the goal where Estonian entrepreneurs earn greater income through products and services with a higher value added. To that end, entrepreneurial and innovation policy should

be dealt within a single strategic framework that ensures the coherence between the policies that have, so far, stood apart at the strategic planning level, and by that ensure better performance. The strategy is being implemented by the [Ministry of Economics and Communication](#) and [Enterprise Estonia](#) and partner institutions ([Ministry of Education and Research](#), etc.), the process of implementation includes the establishment of the implementation plan and annual reporting. The target groups are potential entrepreneurs, beginning entrepreneurs and existing entrepreneurs (who are already active on the market and are searching for growth). The strategy will have a new version for the years 2021-2035 called "Estonian Science and Developmental Activities, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Plan 2021-2035" ([Eesti teadus- ja arendustegevuse, innovatsiooni ning ettevõtluse arengukava 2021–2035](#)).

- The [Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) ([Eesti elukestva õppe strateegia](#)) includes five strategic goals, of which two are related to entrepreneurship education: change in the approach to learning (the goal is to implement an approach towards learning that supports each learner's individual and social development, learning skills, creativity and entrepreneurship in the work at all levels and in all types of education); consistency between lifelong learning opportunities and the needs of labour market. The authority responsible for the implementation is the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), the process of implementation includes the establishment of the implementation plan and annual reporting. The target group of the strategy includes the whole population as potential students, educational institutions and organisers of education provision.
- The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)), which states the need to support young people's employability by providing opportunities to obtain work experience (including voluntary work) and better understand the world of work, paying particular attention to risk groups. Also, the ability of young people to act as a creator of the labour market needs support including support for youth initiative and implementation a variety of youth work provision for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit. The authority responsible for the implementation is the Ministry of Education and Research, the process of implementation includes the establishment of the implementation plan and annual reporting. The target group of the plan is young people in the age group 7-26, youth workers and organisers of youth work provision. The development plan will have a follow-up for the years 2021-2035 (see more in [Chapter 1.3.](#)), where one measure is specifically targeted to encouraging youth entrepreneurship, creativity and ideas.
- The 'Entrepreneurship Education Development Plan: Be Enterprising!' ([Ettevõtlusõppe Edendamise Kava](#), a cooperation agreement signed by multiple parties 7.10.2010); is a specific strategy for entrepreneurship education signed at the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2010, which addressed ISCED 1-3 including school-based IVET. Its main objectives include awareness-raising of entrepreneurship education, teacher training, teaching materials, and allocation of resources. It includes a map of entrepreneurial learning outcomes across the educational levels, with a strong focus on integrating these into curricula. The target group of the plan includes educational institutions and students.

Formal learning

Entrepreneurship education is explicitly referred to in the [curricula](#) as follows:

- In ISCED 1-3, new national curricula explicitly recognise EE as a general competence and a cross-curricular objective. It is also included as the cross-curricular topic 'Civic Initiative and Entrepreneurship'
- In ISCED 2-3, it is taught in the optional separate subjects 'Entrepreneurial Studies' (ISCED 2) and 'Economic and Entrepreneurship Studies' (ISCED 3), and in the compulsory subject 'Civics and Citizenship Education' (ISCED 2-3).

Central level recommendations for teaching methods are available through the new curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools.

Learning outcomes for EE are defined in the general part of the National Curricula for Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools as well in subject syllabi. Some examples are:

- in ISCED 1, students are expected, for example, to understand that money pays for things and is earned by working and to know how to cooperate with others;
- in ISCED 2, students are expected, for example, to have an understanding of labour market opportunities for those with different educational levels, as well as know what it means to be an owner, entrepreneur, employer, employee or unemployed person;
- in ISCED 3, students are expected, for example, to understand entrepreneurship as a career choice and understand that it is possible for them to become entrepreneurs.

There is an ongoing initiative by the Government to develop [OSKA](#) - a system of labour market monitoring and future skills forecasting (OSS). The measure is designed also to include tight networking of education and labour market stakeholders. For example, the implementation of OSKA is overseen by the [OSKA Coordination Council](#), which consists of the representatives of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), [Ministry of Finance](#), the [Estonian Employers' Confederation](#), the [Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), the Estonian Service Unions' Confederation, the [Estonian Trade Union Confederation](#) and the [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund](#).

"[Enterprising School](#)" is an education programme, which was launched in Ida-Viru County in 2006 and focuses on the integration of business studies into the school system in order to enhance the quality of education and hence the success of young people in life. The network of "Enterprising School" has expanded into ten counties, where the programme is coordinated by the county development centres (CDCs). Application of the model "Enterprising School" helps the educational institutions:

- to integrate the learned things with real life, with no games but real things and activities;
- to do successful co-operation with parents and partners;
- to make studies more interesting;
- to make both the students and the teachers enthusiastic;
- to contribute to the local community, when completing something in reality.

The network of "Enterprising School" includes the educational establishments, who in their establishments have set the aim of education to form enterprising attitude through study assignment counting on the national curriculum.

Non-formal and informal learning

The aims and objectives of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)) include the need to support young people's employability, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. The activities envisaged in the plan include:

- the opportunities for youth to obtain work experience (including voluntary work)
- support for young people to better understand the world of work, paying particular attention to risk groups;
- support for youth self-initiative
- implementation of a variety of youth work services to support entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit of young people.

The new development plan for the years 2021-2035 brings also out the need to support young people's entrepreneurship and employment.

In order to implement the aims, the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 01.08.2020 [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#)) is coordinating the activities to create work-shops (occupational labs), which give young people more opportunities to acquaint themselves for future occupations, supporting the provision of youth work camps, to give young people practical work experience etc.

The mini-company programme carried out by [Junior Achievement Estonia](#) is a non-formal education activity supporting the development of entrepreneurship competences.

The recognition and validation of the learning, including entrepreneurial learning, in non-formal and informal learning environments, is been an important topic in education and youth policies for a long time. There is a legal framework allowing prior learning and work experience to be recognised and validated in the formal education system (see also [chapter 3.6.](#)) The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) highlights the non-formal environment, including awareness about the possibilities to support entrepreneurial mind-set through youth work. There are several projects and initiatives implemented in the youth field to support awareness. One of the initiatives implemented by the [Education and Youth Board](#) to support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by providing an instrument for young people is the project [Teeviit](#) (formerly known as Stardiplats). Teeviit is a web-based instrument for young people and youth workers to develop skills of describing learning in a non-formal and informal environment.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) launched [a programme for the years 2016-2018](#) to support the development of tools for entrepreneurship education across all the levels of formal education.

The main activities of the programme are:

- Development of the methodologies and study-instruments for entrepreneurship education including mapping the need for support, development of methods for teacher training and modules to use in schools under several subjects;
- Development of training opportunities for providers of entrepreneurship education;
- Support for entrepreneurship education in general education and vocational schools and higher education institutions and for the increased cooperation with the partners outside of schools.
- Development of competencies with regard to the entrepreneurship education, including support for research and development activities on the subject and support for self-assessment models to include the assessment of the entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education is included in all initial teacher education curricula in Estonia. The universities and other providers – [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 01.08.2020 [Foundation Innove](#)), NGO [Junior Achievement](#) (JA) Estonia and Association of Teachers of Economics – have provided programmes for all teachers in primary education, but only for teachers of social studies, economics and mathematics in general secondary education. JA Estonia and Association of Teachers of Economics have also organised Job Shadow Days for teachers.

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) has financially supported the development of the assessment tool for the cross-curricular topic 'Civic Initiative and Entrepreneurship' at lower secondary education level, as well as workshops, summer and winter schools organised by the Association of Teachers of Social Studies and Association of Teachers of Economics. The Chamber of Commerce organises twice yearly entrepreneurial think tank meetings to support the collaboration between schools and stakeholders. The networking

initiative, 'Dreams Become Reality,' encompassed organizations that contribute to the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset, supporting different school level activities. A network of teachers from primary and secondary education has been organised by JA Estonia. They meet once a year to discuss problems and improve their skills and knowledge. In addition, Association of Teachers of Economics, which involves mainly upper secondary teachers, as well as some lower secondary teachers, works closely with JA Estonia on issues linked to entrepreneurship education.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

The county development centres are public development organizations which are located in all the counties and offer free advisory services to starting and operating enterprises, local governments, starting and operating non-profit associations and foundations. Young people have been specific target-group for these [services](#).

The information and counselling on entrepreneurship, including funding opportunities, programmes, and services devoted to the funding of start-ups is part of the guidance and counselling system for youth. Please see [chapter 3.4](#) for more detailed information.

Access to capital

Young people have access to the following capital as entrepreneurs:

- Loans meant for entrepreneurs whose business plan is not financed by a bank or who lack the self-financing required by banks in order to get a bank loan.
- State guarantee that helps, in the eyes of the bank, compensate for insufficient securities of the entrepreneur and improve the creditworthiness of the entrepreneur.
- Credit insurance that helps Estonian exporters offer long-term financing solutions to foreign purchasers. This helps entrepreneurs reduce the risks associated with foreign purchasers and their potential insolvency, as well as the political risks associated with the place of stay of purchasers.
- Venture capital (or equity investment) that is meant for entrepreneurs with high growth potential who have a novel but risky business idea that requires also experience and a network of contacts in addition to capital in order to implement it.
- **Start-up grant** – The purpose of the support is to help people with little experience in entrepreneurship to establish an enterprise that has high growth potential and capacity to internationalize.
- **Baltic Innovation fund** - Baltic Innovation Fund (BIF) is a fund of funds established by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the European Investment Fund (EIF) with the aim of providing entrepreneurs of Baltic States with other financing options besides bank loans thus improving access to capital.
- **Innovation voucher** - The current support measure for vouchers allows entrepreneurs in cooperation with a partner providing innovation or development services to:
 - Seek solutions to development problems enterprises are facing
 - Develop and test innovative solutions
 - Build knowledge of new technologies
 - Study issues concerning intellectual property

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

The main government-level programs to raise awareness about entrepreneurship are Entrepreneurship Awareness program and Start-up Estonia.

[Entrepreneurship Awareness program](#)

The purpose of the support scheme is to raise awareness on entrepreneurship in society, among specific target groups and support the development of established entrepreneurs. The following activities are carried out within the framework of the program:

- Advice and information is given in regional development centers
- Training in various sectors essential to entrepreneurship, e.g. management, marketing, etc.
- Events to raise awareness on entrepreneurship, e.g. entrepreneurship week and entrepreneurship days, an entrepreneurship competition
- Activities aimed at increasing the export capacity of entrepreneurs, e.g. fair visits, export consultants and creation of a contact network in foreign markets
- Activities aimed at building Estonia's reputation

Funding for this program - European Regional Development Fund.

The target group of the program:

- People who might be interested in entrepreneurship today or in the distant future and who wish to start a business
- Entrepreneurs (incl. managers of enterprises, employees and owners).
- Organizations related to entrepreneurship.
- Present and future investors.
- Other legal or natural persons who promote entrepreneurship and contribute to the development of entrepreneurship.

[Start-up Estonia program](#)

Start-up Estonia is a program for developing an ecosystem of start-ups aimed at increasing the potential for entrepreneurship in people. The program contributes to developing a financing model for start-ups that would help them become successful. The initial Start-up Estonia program was launched by the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#) in 2011. The aim of the program is to improve the business environment for start-ups and increase the development of innovative products and services. Two types of activities are supported within the framework of the program:

- Training and development programs introduced in pre-start-up stages:
 - Programs for developing start-up skills and knowledge
 - Programs for establishing start-ups and achieving investor readiness
- Support of accelerators in start-up stages

The program took effect in July 2015 and has been implemented since autumn 2015.

Annually the entrepreneurship week is organized all over Estonia by the initiative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. During the week different conferences, work-groups and trades are organized in Estonian counties. Every spring national "Entrepreneur of the year" gala is held, where entrepreneurs are awarded in various categories.

In addition, there are TV-shows created supported by public funding such as [Kapital](#), [Ajujaht](#), [Kapist Välja](#), etc. to raise awareness about entrepreneurship by showing different steps and phases of entrepreneurship.

Networks and partnerships

There is a long tradition of cooperation between major governmental and non-governmental (especially organizations representing employers) stakeholders to support entrepreneurship in Estonia. However, few of them are specifically targeting entrepreneurship of young people and those have been named in [chapter 3.9](#).

One of the most prominent promoters of entrepreneurship culture among young people has been the Foundation [Junior Achievement Estonia](#), established in 1994, which aims to develop the entrepreneurial spirit in young people by giving them the ability to think economically, but also ethically. JA Estonia main activities include:

- Preparation of training materials
- Training of economics and business teachers.
- Organizing student activities.
- Sending students and teachers to competitions, conferences and other educational events.
- Raising public awareness of the need for entrepreneurship education.

There are currently no specific initiatives to support partnerships focusing on young people.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

There are no current debates or reform on the topic in 2020.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

The approaches and principles concerned with social inclusion and welfare in 2016 defined at the Government level in the document [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) ([Heaolu arengukava 2016-2023](#)) arise from the principles of a social and welfare state, the framework of fundamental and social rights, and social protection principles. There is no single body responsible for the social inclusion of young people as the domain covers several policy areas, which have established a different division of tasks between different ministries and between local and central level. Most notably the responsibilities in the youth field and in the field of child protection use similar division of tasks between the local level and central level, where the provision of services is generally the responsibility of local governments. See more in [Chapter 4.2](#).

There is no single document targeted to deal with social exclusion, but a set of official documents integrating major directions to be followed in the organization of policymaking and implementation in relation to the social inclusion of young people at the national level. There is a set of documents that support the development of social inclusion targeting specifically or generally also young people. There are two strategies that consider children and young people as the most relevant target group:

- the [Strategy of Children and Families 2012-2020](#) ([Laste ja perede arengukava 2012-2020](#));
- the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)).

See more in [Chapter 4.3](#). There are/were special inclusive programs for young people, e.g. „Children and youth at risk“, which is the most wide-reaching initiative in Estonia. See more in [Chapter 4.4](#).

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

In 2016, the Government of Estonia approved the document [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) containing analyzes of the situation and challenges in the social inclusion area. The document was prepared by the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#). The following description presents the challenges that are brought to attention as the most important areas that need development and support, and that have defined the situation of young people needing special attention divided by the field of policy objectives in the document. The statistics used are refreshed and based on most recently published sources.

Participation in working life

Target groups that require separate attention for the achievement of a higher employment rate include the young, the elderly, residents with other native languages, people who have been away from the labor market for a long time, and people with reduced work capacity. In Estonia, after reaching one of the highest levels of youth unemployment rates in Europe during the financial crisis (32.9% in Estonia vs 21% in EU-28 in 2010), the situation stabilized fast, and the share of youth searching for a job is lower in comparison with most other European countries (11.1% in Estonia and 15.0% in EU in 2019).

The unemployment risk is increased for young people with a low level of education. The share of people aged 25+ with basic or lower education is decreasing a little year by year - in 2015, 14.1% of the population had a low level of education, which is 2.5 percentage points less than in 2010. In 2019, 11.3% of young people aged 18-24 are not in education and have basic or lower education. This has not changed in the last 5-6 years significantly. The obstacles for young people entering the labor market include the restrictions of labor and tax regulation and the fact that young people are at a higher risk of suffering from work accidents. There were 3,616 accidents at work (incl. 12 fatal accidents) registered in 2019 – 30% less than in 2018.

One of the challenges is the activation of young people who do not study or work. Special attention is on the smooth movement of young people with special needs from the general education system to the next level of education (vocational training and/or higher education) and to the labor market.

Economic coping of people

In Estonia, economic coping difficulties and poverty threatens the most women, the elderly, the disabled people, and the unemployed. In 2018, 21.7% of Estonia's population lived in relative poverty and 2.4% in absolute poverty. 3.8% of the population lived in severe material deprivation in 2018. In 2017, the relative poverty of families with many children and single-parent families decreased, and in 2018, it increased a little but has remained stable. Children who live with one parent or in families with many children are at a much higher risk of poverty than children who have two parents and/or not many siblings. The at-risk-of-poverty rate of couples with at least three dependent children has decreased from 26.2% in 2014 to 14.8% in 2018. The absolute poverty rate of families with many children also decreased from 15.0% in 2014 to 1.6% in 2018. The at-risk-of-poverty rate of single-parent families rose from 37.2% in 2000 to 38.8% in 2014 but has decreased to 35.4% in 2018.

Social services and protection

The financial sustainability of the social security scheme is significantly affected by the population's structure and the growth of the economy. The population of Estonia in 2020

is 1,328,976. The number has dropped by 15% since 1991. During these years, the age group of 75 years old or older has increased and the size of younger age groups has decreased. In 2016, there were 1.64 workers for one person of retirement age, but the sustainable version would be 2 workers for one person of retirement age. Children without parental care or in need of assistance numbered 7,623 at the beginning of 2015. In 2006, there were 822 such children. However, the number of children in need of assistance has grown fast mostly because the registration of such children at local governments has improved.

Equality

The efficiency of legal protection depends significantly on the awareness of people about their rights and possibilities for their protection. The options of minorities for self-representation are limited. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified in Estonia in 2012, requires establishing an independent supervision mechanism for the implementation of the convention. This, however, has not yet been established in Estonia.

Health

According to the [Performance Report for 2009–2020](#) of the „[National Health Plan 2009–2020](#)“, the percentage of children reporting very good self-perceived health is growing (in 2012 the share was 29.3%, and in 2016 it was 33.8%, in 2020, it is expected to be over 34%). According to a health behavior study of school students, the percentage of students reporting very good self-perceived health did decrease in 2009/2010; however, in 2013/2014 the number of students reporting very good self-perceived health was higher than ever. Based on home language, children from families with other home language compared to Estonian home language reported a very good self-perceived health more often (the respective indicators were 34.8% and 32.7%). However, there is a link to a positive assessment of health by children and the economic situation of families. In 2014, children from families with a good economic situation reported their health as very good 1.3 times as often as children from families on average and 1.1 times as often as the children from families in a bad economic situation.

Main concepts

The approaches and principles concerned with social inclusion and welfare are defined in 2016 at the Government level in the document the [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) arise from the principles of a social and welfare state, the framework of fundamental and social rights, and social protection principles. On the one hand, the principle of a social state is ensuring that the strengthening of the state's economic development and competitive ability takes into account the needs of different social groups. For that purpose, equal opportunities must be supported and created for the population groups that would not be able to secure their livelihood and welfare in the conditions of the competition of the market economy. On the other hand, the adherence to the principle of a social state is a premise for the state's economic development and competitive ability, as it prevents and reduces the exclusion of parts of the population from the social and economic life. The broader view of the welfare of people and society is understood as affected by all aspects of life and the policies that concern them. The solutions are visioned in accordance with the general shift of welfare state policies: transferring from the policy that compensates social risks and repairs their consequences to the policy that empowers and prepares people to cope with the risks. In addition to traditional social protection, increasing people's self-sufficiency and their social and professional activity has become more and more important. Therefore, the social and labor market policies are treated in the welfare policy as investments that support people's participation in society and economy, and thus, provide an important contribution to the development of society and economy.

Some of the most important concepts are defined as the following:

- **Prevention** refers to the need to primarily focus on the prevention of social risks and the realization of their consequences, which will prevent the progression and accumulation of the problems, and overall, make solving them more time- and resource-efficient.
- **Shared responsibility** means that the person themselves and their family bear primary responsibility for securing their welfare, coping, and a decent life. State and local authorities provide support in situations where a person or a family is not able to secure their livelihood on their own. The provision of help is also based on the shared responsibility principle, as it encourages people's self-responsibility and prevents learned helplessness and dependency on help.
- **Ensuring human dignity** is the central objective for the protection of social rights. Thereby, human dignity means both a decent treatment and a decent life.
- **A comprehensive approach to human needs** means that a person's needs are assessed as comprehensively as possible and the assessment is used in designing and implementing the measures by combining and connecting, if necessary, benefits, grants, and services.
- **Equal treatment** is based on the idea of equality among people and the prohibition of discrimination as the central principle of a social state, which must be taken into account in granting rights, their implementation, and the creation of equal opportunities. The principle of equal treatment means considering the needs of all people, not the uniform treatment of all people.

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The approaches and principles concerned with social inclusion and welfare are defined at the Government level in the document [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) (Heaolu arengukava 2016-2023) arises from the principles of a social and welfare state, the framework of fundamental and social rights, and social protection principles. ([See more detailed description in chapter 4.1.](#)).

There is no single body responsible for the social inclusion of young people as the domain covers several policy areas, which have established a different division of tasks between different Ministries and between the local and central levels.

Two most relevant policy areas – youth field and social protection are under the responsibility of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) (youth field), the Youth Affairs Department (starting from 01.01.2021 the Youth and Talent Department) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (child protection), Department of Children and Families.

The main other Governmental authorities and their responsibility according to the [Government of the Republic Act](#) relevant to social inclusion:

- the [Ministry of Education and Research](#): responsible for youth policy and education policy;
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for child and family policy, labor market, social protection, gender equality, and equal treatment policies;
- the [Ministry of Culture](#): responsible for integration policy;
- the [Ministry of Interior](#): responsible for crime prevention;
- the [Ministry of Justice](#) responsible for the justice system;
- the [Ministry of Finance](#): responsible development of local governments, planning, and coordination of regional development;

- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#): responsible for developing E-governance and e-services.

Main public actors and foundations of policy fields relevant to social inclusion:

1. [Chancellor of Justice](#), an independent official institution responsible for ensuring the rights of children would be protected;
2. [Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner](#), an independent office responsible for the protection of equal rights;
3. [Social Insurance Board](#), an agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for social insurance benefits and child protection services;
4. [Töötukassa](#) (Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund), a public legal entity acting in the are of the Ministry of Social Affairs and responsible for the provision of labor market services;
5. [Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental institution responsible for implementing education and youth policy;
6. [Integration Foundation](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for supporting the integration of national minorities in Estonia.
7. [The National Institute for Health Development](#), a governmental institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs responsible for health promotion.

The main non-public actors:

- the [Eesti Noorsootöötajate Kogu](#) (Association of Estonian Youth Workers)
- the [Estonian National Youth Council](#)

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is no single body responsible for the social inclusion of young people as the domain covers several policy areas, which have established a different division of tasks between different ministries and between local and central levels.

Two most relevant policy areas – youth field and social protection are under the responsibility of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) (youth field) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) (child protection). The responsibilities in the youth field and in the field of child protection use similar division of tasks between the local level and central level, where the provision of services is generally the responsibility of local governments and the central level are responsible for policy, legislation and state budgeting.

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation that also covers youth social inclusion. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports and also monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

There is no single document targeted to deal with social exclusion of young people, but a set of official documents integrating major directions to be followed in the organization of policymaking and implementation in relation to the social inclusion of young people at the national level.

There is a set of documents that support the development of social inclusion targeting specifically or generally also young people. Two main strategies that consider the social exclusion of children and young people are:

- the [Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012–2020](#), approved by the Government in 2011, renewed 24 October 2013;
- the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) (approved by the Government 19. December 2013).

The youth field development plan will have a follow-up for the years 2021- 2035.

Scope and contents

Most importantly two documents set young people and their social inclusion as main objectives:

[The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 \(Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020\)](#) The general objective of the plan is to establish a coherent and creative society through the development and self-realization possibilities provided for young people. The sub-objectives of the Development Plan are:

1. Young people have more choices to discover their own creative and developmental potential. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to increase opportunities for young people to develop their creativity, show initiative and act together.
2. Young people are at lower risk to be excluded. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to increase the inclusion of young people and improve their employability.
3. There is more support for the participation of young people in decision-making. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to support the active participation of young people in community life and in decision-making.
4. The youth field operates more efficiently. The policy measures aim to ensure the development of high-quality youth policy and youth work.

The plan is aimed at all young people from 7 to 26 years old. The follow-up development plan will be confirmed by the end of 2020. Social inclusion is also brought out in the new development plan draft document ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021- 2035 eelnõu](#)).

[The Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012–2020](#). The development plan sets strategic objectives aimed at guaranteeing an improvement in the well-being of children and families and in their quality of living. This plan is the basis for improving the lives of children and families and achieving an increase in population. There are 5 strategic objectives in the plan:

1. The Estonian child and family policy is knowledge-based and uniform and supports the sustainability of society. Under this objective 1 policy measure is planned:
 1. Uniform, sustainable and need-based development of the area of children and families.
2. Estonia is a country that supports positive parenting and offers the necessary support to raising children and being a parent in order to improve the quality of living and the future of children. Under this objective 2 policy measures are planned:
 1. Promotion of attitudes that support parenting and improvement of knowledge;
 2. Development and offer of efficient services to improve parenting skills.
3. The rights of children are guaranteed and a functional child protection system is created in order to value each child and the kind of safe environment that supports the development and welfare of children. Under this objective 3 policy measures are planned:
 1. Promotion of the rights of the child.
 2. Increasing the efficiency of early intervention and the child protection system.

3. Provision and development of efficient interventions proceeding from the needs of people.
4. Estonia has a system of combined benefits and services that supports the adequate economic coping of families and offers them permanent security. Under this objective 2 policy measures are planned:
 1. Development of a functional social protection system.
 2. Development of services to promote the independent economic coping of families.
5. Men and women have equal opportunities for reconciliation of work, family and private life in order to promote a quality everyday life that meets the needs of each family member. Under this objective 2 policy measures are planned:
 1. Creation of more equal opportunities for women and men for work, family and private life.
 2. Development of child daycare.

The Development Plan for Children and Families defines the target group as children (i.e. persons up to 18 years old) in general, paying specific attention to disabled children, children in foster care and children as victims.

The development plan ends in 2020, no data is available whether it will have a follow-up or not.

There is a set of other policy plans that are concerned with and vital for social inclusion of young people in particular, but also with the issue of social inclusion and welfare, the needs, obstacles and opportunities for it in Estonia in general: the [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023 \(Heaolu arengukava 2016-2023\)](#); the [National Health Plan 2009-2020 \(Rahvatervise arengukava 2009-2020\)](#)/ Population Health Plan 2020-2030 ([Rahvastiku tervise arengukava 2020-2030](#)); the development plan "[Integrating Estonia 2020](#)" ("[Lõimuv Eesti 2020](#)").

Responsible authority

The responsibility for the policy documents is defined as the following:

- [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) / Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035 - [Ministry of Education and Research](#)
- [Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012-2020](#) - [Ministry of Social Affairs](#)
- [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) - [Ministry of Social Affairs](#)
- [National Health Plan 2009-2020](#) / Population Health Plan 2020-2030 - [Ministry of Social Affairs](#)
- [Integrating Estonia 2020](#) - [Ministry of Culture](#)

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation. The central position in this mechanism approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports and also monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation is put on the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The mechanism established to monitor the implementation and the results in different policy areas (see the description in [chapter 4.3.](#)) includes yearly reports of every policy document approved by the [Government](#). The following provides the most recently published information on the results of the implementation of the main policy documents relevant to the social inclusion of young people.

Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020

The [Ministry of Education and Research](#) has analyzed the objectives set in the development plan in December 2019 and has concluded, that the trend of indicators established to measure the results is positive. Young people are more actively participating in the opportunities offered in youth work. The availability of youth work

services in regions has risen significantly. In 2018, the satisfaction of young people with youth work services was studied the first time and on average 85% of young people participating in different youth work services are very satisfied or satisfied with youth work services. The challenge is to achieve the results set in the youth field development plan as the increase of different opportunities for participation has not been fast enough.

Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012–2020

In the most recent report covering the year 2014, the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) has reported that one of the most important achievements has been the adoption of the new [Child Protection Act](#) in 2014 that was enforced in 1.01.2016. The report states that in 2014, in addition, several important documents were developed to support future policy measures and their implementation (such as for example "[The Concept for Improving the Support System for Children and Youth at Risk](#)"). Important results have been in introducing and launching of the positive parenting program "Incredible Years". The report states that the implementation of all actions is in the process as planned.

Revisions/Updates

As there is no single document in Estonia addressing the issue of social inclusion of young people but a set of documents covering different areas, scope, and timeframes, the information about revisions and updates is provided about two most relevant documents to social inclusion of young people:

Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020

At the state level, the development of the youth field is being planned for the third time. The "Estonian Youth Work Concept" and the "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001-2004" were drafted in 2001, these were followed by the 'Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013' which was approved in 2006. What differentiates the current development plan from the previous documents is its approach to focus on goals and measures that will help to achieve positive change in the most significant challenges – the plan does not describe measures in all areas of youth work and youth policy. Also, the aims and objectives based on and formulated in accordance with youth perspective as opposed to a perspective of the sector or services used in earlier documents – the analyses and the policy objectives were about young people not about the system and services of youth work or youth policy. The development plan will have a follow-up for the years 2021-2035 that will be confirmed by the end of 2020.

Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012–2020

The first strategic plan in the area of children's rights and the protection of these rights was introduced for the period 2004-2008: "The strategy to ensure children's rights". The area of family policy did not have a specific policy document. The Government initiated the development of a strategic document that targets policy measures directed at supporting families. However, in 2009 the decision was made to merge two policy areas into one holistic approach to children and family policy. Also, the changes were made in the structure of the Ministry of Social Affairs, where a specific Department of Child and Family Policy was created. The need to unite two policy areas was also highlighted in the final report of the "Strategy to ensure children's rights". Besides the merge of two policy areas the current development plan is more instrumental because of the actual planning of financing the activities (the previous strategy did not have specific linkages to budgeting), more focused on the formulation of implementation activities and more directed to integrating policy measures. There is no information available whether the development plan will have a follow-up or not.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

There are several programmes initiated by the ministries responsible for the areas of work in the youth social inclusion domain.

Programme "Children and youth at risk"

The most wide-reaching initiative in Estonia developed to support specifically young people at risk in the recent years was the programme "Children and Youth at Risk" ([Riskilapsed- ja noored](#)), that was developed in 2009 covering the period 2009-2014, extended until April 2017. Official legal bases for the programme is the programme agreement between the Financial Mechanism Committee established by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and the Estonian [Ministry of Finance](#). Programme operator i.e. the main responsible body for the programme is the Estonian [Ministry of Education and Research](#) in cooperation with the [Ministry of Justice](#) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), the implementation agency of the programme was the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (since 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)). Main activities of the programme include:

- Developing an integrated system for supporting children and youth;
- Assessing the capability and readiness to support the children and youth at risk on the local level; Implementing the parenting programme;
- Implementing a family-based programme for juvenile offenders;
- Support for the increased capability of youth organizations and youth work organizations to involve children and youth at risk;
- Social inclusion of excluded young people and prevention of re-offending behaviour;
- Development and application of inclusive educational organization model and appropriate intervention strategies in the formal education system to improve the welfare of vulnerable groups of children and Youth;
- Community-based crime prevention measures;
- Aftercare for incarcerated youth.

The range of target groups of the programme varies depending on the activity, mostly covering 7-18 years old in education, 7-26 years old in youth work, 0-18 in child protection, 7-18 in crime prevention and justice system.

The targets set in the programme compile a list of output indicators: number of regional-level coordination mechanisms created, number of regional support units established, number of local governments using community-based crime prevention measures, drop-out rate of students of forms 7-9 in basic school, number of youth work organizations and youth associations which apply measures for involving the children and youth belonging to vulnerable groups, number of youth work institutions which apply measures to involve the young people having committed offences and to prevent the repeated offences, number of young people that receive aftercare. Under the framework, the body responsible for implementation is also responsible for the collection of the data on indicators. There is a specific collection of data about the local governments involved in the implementation, but there is no specific additional system of gathering information and data about national organisations involved in the activities.

The levels of participation in the programme are described in the yearly reports of the programme and the following states most important numbers indicating the results in 2016:

- Under the Incredible Years 48 training groups for Russian (22) and Estonian (26) speaking parents were carried out.

- 5 teams under the multi-dimensional family therapy (MDFT) programme are currently working with young people and their families across Estonia. Close to 100 families and youngsters were engaged in MDFT in 2016.
- The regional level coordination mechanism has been created together with the Social Insurance Board (SIB) to provide support and services for children and families at the local level. 8 local governments with different size and capacity participating in the pilot project were selected.
- The number of local governments using community-based crime prevention measures is 12 and was expected to increase to 62 during the implementation of the programme. Altogether 66 LG-s have used community-based crime prevention measures during the implementation period.
- The number of youth work organizations and youth associations that apply measures to involve children and youths belonging to vulnerable groups is expected to increase from 36 to 90. During the reporting period, 120 youth work organizations and youth associations have applied measures to involve children and youth at risk.
- A number of youth work institutions that apply measures to involve young people who have committed offences and to prevent repeat offences is expected to increase from 0 to 18. During the reporting period, 20 youth work institutions have applied special youth-work-based programmes, which help young people.
- 8 youth associations improved their capacity do offer activities to young people at risk.
- The number of young people that receive aftercare during the projects implementation period is 329.

Estonian Operational Programme

In the framework of the Estonian Operational Programme for EU Cohesion Policy Funds 2014-2020 a special investment priority "Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability" and under this priority a specific objective "Inclusion and improvement of the employability of young people, incl. those at risk of exclusion" was defined in December 2014. 4 specific sets of activities have been launched by the Government to achieve the objective:

1. Activities to support the decrease of the influence of unequal conditions, the prevention of exclusion and the employability of young people, including special support for NEET-young people: "Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine", reviewed legal base from July 2016; the responsible authority is the Ministry of Education and Research, responsible for the implementation is the [Education and Youth Board](#).
2. Inclusion of young people with an offending background into the labour-market: "Toetuse andmise tingimused õigusrikkumise taustaga noorte tööturule kaasamiseks", the legal base from January 2016; the responsible authority for the implementation and coordination is the [Ministry of the Interior](#).
3. Providing opportunities for youth at risk via the programme SPIN: "Toetuse andmise tingimused noortele arenguvõimaluste pakkumiseks programme SPIN abil", the legal base from July 2015; the responsible authority for the implementation and coordination is the [Ministry of the Interior](#).
4. Activities to prevent risk behaviour and to develop better understanding of and suitable interventions for the problems of families at risk through networking and a secure living environment at the local level: „Toetuse andmise tingimused riskikäitumise ennetamiseks, riskis olevate perede toetamiseks ning turvalise elukeskkonna arendamiseks”, legal base from September 2015; the responsible authority for the implementation and coordination is the [Ministry of the Interior](#).

The interventions include youth work services made available to young people at risk of poverty and exclusion and support for participation in programmes that help to acquire

the knowledge and skills needed for life and personal development; support measures for reintegration of NEETs in education and/or their successful entry to the labour market, outreach youth work and other interventions of local networks so as to encourage such young people to acquire knowledge and skills or enter the labour market. In order to better understand the problems of young people and design systematic interventions, it is intended to identify and resolve, through networking, the problems of the target group, including minors and families, and to promote healthy lifestyles and a secure living environment at the local level. To support the activities described above, the competence of youth workers, youth leaders and hobby school workers for working with young people is supported. Support is provided for consistent evaluation of methodologies and monitoring of the situation of young people. The interventions have been designed taking into account the combined effect of the activities to be carried out in the spheres of education, youth and employment.

There are specific indicators set to measure the output of the activities by 2023 such as the total number of participants in youth work services, number of NEETs (aged 15–26) who have received services, number of young people at risk who have received services and number of people benefitting from networking services. Under the framework the body responsible for implementation (see above) is also responsible for the collection of the data on indicators. There is no specific additional system of gathering information and data about national organizations involved in the activities established under the framework of the Operational Programme.

The levels of participation in the programme are described in the yearly reports of the programme and the following states most important numbers indicating the results in 2015:

Activities under the Operational Programme (described above)		The reported number of youth participating in 2015
Activity 1 (see above)	Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine	751 young people, including 333 NEET young people
Activity 2	"Toetuse andmise tingimused õigusrikkumise taustaga noorte tööturule kaasamiseks	0
Activity 3	Toetuse andmise tingimused noortele arenguvõimaluste pakkumiseks programme SPIN abil	365 of which 84 finished the activities
Activity 4	Toetuse andmise tingimused riskikäitumise ennetamiseks, riskis olevate perede toetamiseks ning turvalise elukeskkonna arendamiseks	935

Source: monitoring reports of the relevant activities 2015.

Funding

There is a dedicated funding allocated by the [Government](#) for the programmes supporting the inclusion of young people. The programmes are in line with prioritised goals in strategies related to fighting social exclusion of youth.

The funding of the programmes in euros:

Programme and activity	2015	2016	Connection with EU funds
Programme Children And Youth at Risk	703,783 €	871,449 €	No
Activities under the Operational Programme (described above)			
Activity 1 (see above)	Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine 2,352,941 €	2,470,588 €	ESF (85%)
Activity 2	“Toetuse andmise tingimused õigusrikkumise taustaga noorte tööturule kaasamiseks 37,154.50 €	164,458.50 €	ESF (85%)
Activity 3	Toetuse andmise tingimused noortele arenguvõimaluste pakkumiseks programme SPIN abil 188,520 €	199,362.50 €	ESF (85%)
Activity 4	Toetuse andmise tingimused riskikäitumise ennetamiseks, riskis olevate perede toetamiseks ning turvalise elukeskkonna arendamiseks 99,767.00 €	451,923.80 €	ESF (85%)

The variations in the budgets of programmes are planned i.e. are based on annual activity plans that are approved by the responsible ministry and amended yearly.

Quality assurance

All the programmes described are subject to the detailed multi-layered quality assurance mechanism established by the financial instrument these programmes are financed by i.e.

1. Programme “Children and youth at risk”
 1. The Ministry of Education and Research as the Programme Operator provides financial reports, annual programme reports and a final programme report. There was a set of Expected Outcomes & Indicators for Outputs established in the Addendum to the Programme Agreement for the financing of the Programme “Children and Youth at Risk” monitored on yearly bases. Please consult the description of the programmes above for an overview of the indicators and outputs.
2. Activities under the Operational Programme
 1. There is a Performance framework of the Operational Programme established in the programme, which involves a set of indicators to be monitored, EU structural assistance is also subject to the [2014-2020 Structural Assistance Act](#),

which specifies conditions for monitoring and appraisal of the Operational Programme. There is a system of evaluation planned (ex-ante, mid-term and final evaluation); no evaluations specifically relating to the activities supporting inclusion of young people and described above have been conducted by the end of 2016. Please consult the description of the programmes above for an overview of the indicators and outputs.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

The [Ministry of Culture](#), particularly the Department of Cultural Diversity, is responsible for the integration process within Estonian society and for the support of the cultural life and societies of the Estonian minorities to preserve their cultures and languages in Estonia. The ministry is in charge of the coordination of the strategy of integration and social cohesion in Estonia "[Integrating Estonia 2020](#)".

The youth-specific objective of the strategy is "Students with a native language different from Estonian actively participate in youth work and have close contacts with Estonian-speaking peers." The objective is achieved through increasing opportunities for initiatives, joint activities and increasing the involvement of young people in youth work: such as youth meetings, summer camps, local youth initiatives etc. The measure is based on the activities under the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). The aim is to increase the capability of the youth work field to create and develop a socialising environment suitable for young people and support young people's own initiatives and the organizing of youth projects. It supports the self-initiative of young people and common activities through youth work; various forms of participation are created and developed and youth workers are trained for work with different youth groups. Particular attention is paid to including young people at risk of social exclusion. As a result of the measure, young people have wider opportunities for development and self-fulfilment and young people with a native language different from Estonian have the opportunity of participating in youth work, which supports the creation of a cohesive and creative society. The main target groups of these activities are young people from 7-26 living in Estonia. The outcomes under this objective are measured by the indicator "Inclusion of young people in youth work in local governments, the population of which mainly consists of individuals with a native language different from Estonian, compared to the Estonian average". The base level of the indicator is 30.9% compared to the 49.1% Estonian average; the goal for 2017 is accordingly 35% and 53% and by 2020 45% and 60% accordingly.

Young people's rights

The general framework for the government-level initiatives in the area of youth rights is regulated mainly by the [Child Protection Act](#). The Act also defines (§5) principles of ensuring rights and well-being of children, such as every child has the inherent right to life, survival and development; every child has the right to equal treatment without any discrimination; every child has the right to independent opinion in all matters affecting the child and the right to express his or her views.

The Government has approved [the Development Plan for Children and Families](#) for 2012–2020, the responsibility for the implementation lies with the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#). Under the strategic objective 3 aimed at guaranteeing the child rights, the following measures are currently being implemented:

1. Increasing public awareness of the rights of the child
 1. Preparation and carrying out a training programme about the rights of the child for trainers in the area of human rights, teachers of preschool childcare

- institutions and general education schools, members of juvenile committees, representatives of law enforcement authorities, parents, etc.
2. Development of a programme about the rights of the child in the study programmes of general education schools
 3. Giving information about the rights of the child in cooperation with non-profit organizations.
 2. Increasing the participation of children at the level of individuals and society
 1. Mapping the participation opportunities of children against the background of national and international experience
 2. Sharing best practice and positive experience in child participation and inclusion
 3. Improving the opportunities of children to participate in social life, incl. media
 4. Preparation of guidelines and organization of training to increase the participation and inclusion of children
 3. Raising the media awareness of children and the development of a safer media environment
 1. Explaining the role and image of children, both girls and boys, and monitoring trends in media analysis and streamlining of the legislation that regulates the safety of children in media
 2. Analysis and implementation of age-specific warning systems regarding audiovisual media and computer and video games
 3. Promotion of media education and development of methodological material
 4. Raising awareness of internet safety via training, media campaigns and distribution of information
 5. Development of a tip hotline for internet security counselling and combating illicit content and activities
 4. Supervision for guaranteeing the rights of the child
 1. Monitoring and regular analysis of the rights stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 2. Increasing the efficiency of the cooperation between the various institutions (local authorities, county government, ministry, Chancellor of Justice) that exercise supervision in guaranteeing the rights of the child.

There is a set of indicators defined to measure the achievement of this specific objective (nr 3): the number of children aged 0-17 per child protection specialist, the number of children separated from families and % of children aged 0-17, changes in the attitude that a child may be given the chance to express their views, but they must not be taken into consideration, percentage of children placed in non-institutional substitute care among all children placed in substitute care. According to [the report about the implementation in 2014](#), the levels of all four indicators have changed in the expected direction in order to achieve the objectives set in the strategy. There is no newer report available in 2019.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

There is no specific programme or activity initiated on the governmental level to address specifically the issue of prevention of radicalization and violent extremism of young people, however, the violent extremism and radicalisation in Estonia is at policy level dealt with under the internal security policy, which is the area of responsibility of [the Ministry of the Interior](#). In the framework of combating terrorism, it is stated, that activities in Estonia and international cooperation should aim to stop radicalisation, the financing of terrorism and the smuggling of strategic goods. The government sets the policies for combating terrorism in the framework document on combat against terrorism approved in November 2013. In this Document, the prevention of terrorism and radicalization, and prevention of recruitment to terrorist organizations is highlighted as an issue of importance. It is drawn out, that Estonia is paying particular attention in order to prevent the activities of movements and people who spread racial, cultural, religious or affiliation hate in Estonia. The earliest signs of radicalism must be prevented,

because – as shown by international experience – the growth of radicalism into extremism and then into terrorism is probable and therefore also an undisputed threat to the security of the state ([Fundamentals of Counter-Terrorism in Estonia](#)).

4.6 Access to quality services

Housing

The main initiatives by the [Government](#) to support issues concerning the housing of young people are:

1. housing loan guarantees,
2. home grants for families with many children,
3. state-funded housing during the studies
4. substitute home service

There is also a provision of dwelling available as a social service. [Social Welfare Act](#) (§41) defines the provision of dwelling as a social service organized by a local authority with the objective to ensure the possibility to use a dwelling to a person who due to socio-economic situation is unable to provide a dwelling which corresponds to the needs of the person and his or her family. The provision of dwelling is however not specifically targeted for young people.

Housing loan guarantees under the housing policy The long-term objectives of Estonian housing policy defined by the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#) are the availability of housing to the Estonian population, quality and sustainability of the housing stock, diversity and balanced sustainable development of residential areas. The initiative of the [Government](#) in the framework of the housing policy directed at access to housing and identifying young people as a specific target group is a housing loan guarantee executed by [the Foundation KredEx](#) (founded by the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#)). The housing loan guarantee is designed for people wishing to take a loan for the purchase of new living premises or renovation of the existing ones, and decrease the downpayment obligation. Under the housing loan guarantee scheme there are two specific youth target groups defined:

- **The target group of the young family** i.e. a parent or parents raising a child of up to 15 years (included);
- **The target group of a young specialist**, i.e. an up to 35-year-old (included) person, who has acquired secondary or vocational secondary education (based on basic or secondary education) or vocational education based on basic or secondary education, and meets one of the following conditions below:
 1. an employment contract, service contract or board member contract has been concluded with the person, whereas the probation period (if applicable) shall be over;
 2. who is assigned to a post according to the Public Service Act, whereas the probation period (if applicable) shall be over;
 3. the person is registered in the business register or tax board as a self-employed entrepreneur, whereas he/she shall have operated as an entrepreneur for at least a year.

The amount of housing loan guarantees issued in 2015 was 17.5 million euros, in 2019 it was already increased by half raising to 35 million euros. A total of 2,191 households purchased or renovated their homes in 2015, including 971 young families in the amount of 7.9 million euros; and 1,212 young specialists in the amount of 9.5 million euros. In 2019, 3,470 households purchased or renovated their homes, including 1,257 families in

the amount of 12 million euros, and 1,822 young specialists in the amount of 17 million euros.

Home grants for families with many children Within the “Strategy of Children and Families 2012–2020” KredEx is implementing a measure to improve the living conditions of families with many children. The target group of the grant scheme is households with low income, with at least four children under 19 years of age. Eligible activities include decreasing the repayment of the principal part of the current housing loan, purchasing, building, reconstructing, renovating, or expanding housing, the construction, replacement, or updating of technical systems or networks. In 2015 the applications of 242 families were funded, in 2019, the number was 337. The average grant amount per family was in 2015 7,413 euros, and in 2019 it was 9,198 euros. In 2015, there were 1,178 children growing in the families that received funding; an average of 5 children per family. In 2019, the amount was similar, a total of 1,192 children in the families that received funding and had 3 or more children in the family.

Substitute Home Service According to the [Social Welfare Act](#), home service means ensuring family-like living conditions to a child for meeting his or her basic needs, the creation of a secure physical and social environment promoting his or her development and preparation of the child for coping in accordance with his or her abilities as an adult. The target group for the substitute home service are young people under 18 years who have been left without a parent with right of custody. The substitute home service can also be provided to unaccompanied minor aliens, minor victims of human trafficking and sexually abused minors. The substitute home service is financed from the state budget.

Social services

Social services in Estonia as part of the social welfare system are regulated in the [Social Welfare Act](#). The social services in Estonia are generally directed to target groups based on needs and the type of challenges a person has (for example disabled people, people with economic difficulties etc).

The [Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023](#) defines improving the accessibility and quality of social services, the development of services that include people in society as an important focus area of welfare setting it as one of the four areas of development. The document also states that the introduction of social innovations and the emergence of social enterprises in the social system will be encouraged. Specific policies aimed at social services for children and their families are set in the [Development Plan for Children and Families for 2012–2020](#).

Both development plans have established specific implementation plans that list all the activities, responsible bodies and budgets for these activities.

In addition to social services defined through the welfare system, there are initiatives in other policy areas developed in order to support young people.

In education policy there are several policy measures that support acquisition of education: student loan, state education allowance, various scholarships; support for commuting and transportation allowance; support for provision of lunches in general education schools and vocational schools; municipal support (not universal in all municipalities) for lunches in kindergarten, grants for pupils starting in the first grade, yearly grants for the start of the school year). There is also a system of pedagogical counselling and career guidance (see [chapter 3.5](#)) established for young people in the education policy area.

In youth policy there are support schemes established for supporting for participation in summer camps for children from families with fewer opportunities, several municipalities provide financial support for participating in hobby education (see [chapter 4.8](#))

Health care

Health care is provided and general health care provision is available for youth. According to the [Health Insurance Act](#) state considered insured permanent residents of Estonia under 19 and persons acquiring basic, general secondary, formal vocational or higher education i.e. their costs of health insurance are covered by [Estonian Health Insurance Fund](#).

Most important health service available in addition to young people is a system of health care services provided in general education schools. The students are provided with health services at school, including activities carried out by nurses financed by the school owner.

The priorities of health policy and health care in relation to youth are defined in the [National Health Plan 2009–2020](#). Safe and healthy development of children and adolescents is defined as one of the four main fields of development in the plan. The main objective of this field is to decrease mortality and primary mental and behaviour disorders of children and youth and to increase young people's positive evaluation of their health. The measures under this objective are targeted at the promotion of reproductive and infant health, health promotion of pre-school children and school-aged children.

To support the implementation of the objectives of the National Health Plan 2009- 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs has, among other activities, supported with the financing from the Norway Grants 2009- 2014:

- the establishment of 4 children's and youth mental health centres covering all of the countries with [Children's Mental Health Centre](#) of Tallinn Children's Hospital acting as a coordinating, training and supervising body for the network of mental health centres;
- Estonian National Social Insurance Board in Developing and providing/piloting the rehabilitation services for children and youth with severe mental health problems in community residential setting in order to design innovative services for children with mental health and behavioural problems, what will provide integrated social, educational and health services to support children and youth suitable life and education environment;
- Web-based information sources and counselling services on mental and reproductive health such as project "[Peaasi.ee - mental health e-counselling, web platform and online solutions for young people in Estonia](#)";
- Estonian Sexual Health Association Project „Reorganization of web-based sexual health counselling service and developing the quality framework of web-based services in the field of mental- and sexual and reproductive health“ with an aim to ensure the access to good quality sexual health internet-counselling service for young people (14-24 years) living in Estonia, to ensure the good quality sexual health information and counselling web environments ([www.amor.ee](#) and [www.estl.ee](#)) and to develop the quality framework of web-based counselling services in the field of mental- and sexual and reproductive health in cooperation with public sector and specialists in the field.

The Government has established a [National Institute for Health Development](#) with a task (among others) to support health promotion i.e. the development of a way of life and behaviour which promotes and values people's health, as well as a systematic improvement of a health-supporting physical and social environment. One of the areas of activities to support health promotion implemented by the Institute is targeted at children and youth health. The Institute provides research and analyses related to the health of children and youth, supports local level networking, develops methodical materials and publications, provides training for specialists working with children and youth. The Institute also supports people active in health promotion providing the database of best practices and other relevant information in the dedicated web-portal [www.terviseinfo.ee](#).

Training Centre of [the National Institute for Health Development](#) offers professional development courses to specialists working to support health, such as kindergarten and school employees, youth workers, child adopters, foster care families, employees of social welfare services and rehabilitation centres, county and local municipality employees, counsellors, psychologists, health care workers and health promoters, social workers, NGOs, etc. Main areas of training include HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, health promotion and health counselling. In addition, the centre also carries out an analysis of training needs and provides support to trainers in training methodology.

Financial services

The two main measures to support access to financial services for young people specifically are

1. study loan scheme;
2. housing loan guarantee scheme (described under housing services in this chapter).

Study loan is a state-guaranteed long-term loan for funding studies. The right to receive a study loan is held by a full-time student who is an Estonian citizen or resides in Estonia on the basis of a long-term residence permit or permanent residency. Study loans are provided by banks.

There is a debt counselling service available as a social service and organized by a local authority in order to assist a person through enhancing the ability to cope and resolve other problems related to debt. However, the service is not targeted specifically for young people.

There is no top-level scheme to provide

Quality assurance

There is no single system of evaluating all services to support the social inclusion of young people. The services listed above are under the quality assurance mechanism defined by the area such as health, social and financial affairs.

All the services initiated, developed and supported by the Government are part of the strategic planning of the relevant policy area i.e. the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the policies described in this [chapter 4.2](#), apply, including the indicators set in the documents. However, different policy areas apply different measures to evaluate and support the quality of services. These measures and the outcomes of these measures largely depend on the service, the level of regulation of the service (i.e. how detailed the regulation of the services is) and on the type of the bodies responsible for service provision. The measures can include studies (incl studies of user satisfaction), guidelines, support for self-evaluation, training etc.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Policy/legal framework

[Youth Work Act](#) provides the legal basis for the organization and financing of youth work, including the youth work with a view to foster social inclusion. The Act defines the main terms used in the youth field, main institutions, organizations and forms of youth work, the principles of youth work, financing of youth work, etc. The Act describes the division of tasks regarding youth work of the Ministry of Education and Research and local municipality. The Act defines municipal and local youth councils.

The policy goals of youth work are described in [the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). The document outlines strategic goals in the field of youth. The main goal introduced in the development plan is to provide young people with opportunities for

development and self-realization which support a socially coherent and creative society in general.

See [chapter 1.3](#) for a description of the scope, content and implementation mechanism of the development plan. By the end of 2020, a new follow-up development plan for the years 2021-2035 will be confirmed by the Parliament.

Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

The programmes described in [chapter 4.4](#) include the most prominent initiatives in youth work targeting specifically vulnerable young people. Chapter [4.4](#) provides information on the content, target groups and funding of these programmes. Youth organizations have been consulted in designing the programmes.

HUKK-AP project

The HUKK-AP project was part of the Children and Youth at Risk programme described in [chapter 4.5](#). The project was carried out from 1 January 2014–30 April 2016 by the Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency (starting from 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps). The HUKK-AP project offered the organizers of hobby activities a chance to develop solutions that support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in hobby activities more than the current methods. In cooperation with the Archimedes Foundation's Youth Agency, the city governments of Pärnu and Tartu, VitaTiim and Urban Style non-governmental organizations, 59 of their local partners and 16 hobby activity teams that participated in the development programme, created new forms of activities and approaches for including young people as part of the project. Hobby activity instructors and youth work organizers were also trained. An important part of the project's activities was aimed at young people aged 7-17, who, for many reasons (health, disability, special educational needs, geographical or socio-economic restrictions) had not participated in hobby activities thus far. A tool for measuring the impact of the project and hobby activities was also created. See the publication about results "[Anything is possible! The Summary of the HUKK-AP Project – the Programme of Involving and Developing Hobby Schools. Experiences, activities and results](#)" published by the Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency (starting from 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps).

Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

Youth work, in general, is provided in Estonia by the local governments. The most important organizations and institutions involved in the actual offer of youth work services are:

- Youth and youth work NGOs;
- Youth centres;
- Hobby schools;
- Youth camps;

The conducting, managing and evaluating youth work contains the following main parts in Estonia:

- Policy goals are set at the level of Government of the Republic together with the budget allocation to the youth work, including resources from financial instruments, which the Government has the right to decide the allocation of.
- [The Ministry of Education and Research](#) together with the Estonian Youth Work Centre (starting from 01.08.2020, the [Education and Youth Board](#)) as a national youth work agency is responsible for the proposal of changes, monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the policy in cooperation with other ministries and public institutions. The Ministry and/or [Education and Youth Board](#) can contract local

governments and other youth work providers or their umbrella organizations, universities etc to finance the services that are defined in the policy plans. Starting from 01.01.2021, the [Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency](#) was joint with the [Education and Youth Board](#), and it became the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (NA for the [Erasmus+ programme](#) - cooperation regarding the financial support to youth projects from Erasmus+ programme; increasing the possibilities of international cooperation and the usage of its results; increasing the professionalization of youth workers, including through the development of level education and trainings and monitoring the competences; supporting the activities and sustainable development of the NA).

- Local governments are responsible for provision, planning and implementation of youth work. Local Governments can establish municipal institutions for the provision of services or contract private institutions, including non-profit organisations such as youth organizations etc.
- Universities provide professional formal education for youth workers based on national occupational standards for youth workers.
- The evaluation is done at the national level based on [the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and reported to the [Government](#) yearly. The local governments are responsible for the evaluation of the provision of youth work services; there are supporting mechanisms created by the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) to support the evaluation. Youth organizations, youth clubs etc that are private NGOs are responsible for their internal evaluation mechanisms.

The public funding is available, however, it is difficult to show the number allocated to youth work providers to support their capacity in the field of social inclusion of young people as it can be considered as a general aim of all youth work in Estonia.

Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

Professional formal education (BA or equivalent and MA level) is available for youth workers at two universities: Tallinn University and Tartu University, which is providing opportunities to study in Narva College and in Viljandi Cultural Academy.

To support capacities of youth work sector to work towards social inclusion of young people, there was a programme "Development of youth worker training" established by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) with the funding from ESF and state budget for the years 2014-2020. [Youth Agency in the Foundation Archimedes](#) (starting from 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) was responsible for implementing the programme. The programme provides training for youth workers, training for trainers, supports the development of training materials and development of training quality.

[Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental institution under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research, has a wide range of tasks for the implementation of youth policy and the development of youth work, including the implementation different programmes supporting the capacity building of youth work providers, development of youth work quality and int's instruments etc.

Financial support

The public funding in addition to the programmes initiated by the [Government](#) and described in this chapter is available, however, it is difficult to show the number allocated to youth work providers to support their capacity in the field of social inclusion of young people as it can be considered as a general aim of all youth work in Estonia.

The funding of youth policy including youth work is described in [chapter 1.8](#). The main sources of funding include the state budget, local budgets, EU support.

Quality assurance

The mechanisms to monitor and ensure the quality of measures in youth work are subject to the overall mechanism of policy monitoring and evaluation, and the outcomes of it, described in [chapter 4.2](#), the programmes described are in addition subject to the mechanisms derived from the financial instrument they are financed from (see [chapter 4.5](#)).

There are following indicators defined in the [Youth Field Development plan 2014-2020](#) and these indicators are relevant to all activities aimed at and financed for achieving the objectives of the plan:

- the proportion of young people (aged 18-24) with a basic or lower level of education who do not continue in education
- the youth unemployment rate for the age group 15-24
- involvement of young people in youth work (% of the total number of young people)
- regional availability of youth work provision
- number of opportunities for organized participation (youth councils and other participation structures)
- the satisfaction of young people with youth work
- the proportion of youth workers taking part in training per year

4.8 Current debates and reforms

Main discussions and developments in the area of social exclusion are:

- decentralization and de-institutionalization of social services, including the aim to see more services provided at the local level by the NGO sector;
- development of e-services;
- effectiveness and impact of services including youth work services;
- sustainability of the social protection system and social services provision in the light of the aging population.

5. PARTICIPATION

Youth participation has been a starting principle in the youth sector in Estonia. [The Youth Work Act](#) outlines the principles of youth work in Estonia, whereby one of the main principles says: “youth work is done for youth and with youth, involving them in the decision-making process”. See more in [Chapter 5.1](#). Most political parties in Estonia have a dedicated form for young people to participate – whether it is a substructure under the organization or a separate organization. See more in [Chapter 5.2](#). In Estonia, the term “youth parliament” is not defined legally.

There are local and county level youth participation councils in Estonia. The Estonian National Youth Council coordinates and supports the development and activities of youth councils in Estonia. There are also higher education student unions, school student unions, which represent young people. See more in [Chapter 5.3](#). The participation of young people in decision making is defined as one of four strategic objectives in the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020. See more in [Chapter 5.5](#).

5.1 General context

Definitions and concepts

Youth participation has been one of the most important principles and goals in youth work in Estonia. [The Youth Work Act](#) outlines the principles of youth work in Estonia, whereby one of the main principles says that youth work is done for youth and with youth, involving them in the decision-making process.

The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)) describes the underlying concept as following:

"Becoming involved in arranging one's own life and the life of the community is what the life-changes of young people and the development of a strong civil society at large are based on. Young people's sense of belonging and perception of being involved are determined by whether they have their say at home, at school, and in the community, whether there is a feeling of togetherness among peers and whether by doing things together they accomplish something meaningful within the community. This helps prevent young people from becoming socially apathetic and excluded and from having the need or desire to express themselves in a radical way or leave the country."

The concept of youth participation in Estonia is/was heavily shaped by the youth sector (i.e. youth work). The fact that youth should be a part of the decision-making process is already widely recognized, youth participation is guaranteed by the main documents in the youth field. The society's attitude towards the involvement of children and young people has become more supportive.

Institutions of representative democracy

Estonia is a centralized state governed by parliamentary democracy. The Constitution of Estonia came into force in 1992 and has continued the democratic spirit of the 1920 Constitution, with some added mechanisms to maintain the balance of power of the state.

Head of the State is the President, who is elected by the parliament or an electoral body. For 5 years. The President has mainly representative functions. The national legislature is the [Riigikogu](#): a unicameral parliament of 101 members. Parliament is elected for the term 4 years. The [Government](#) headed by the Prime Minister exercises the executive power. The Constitution provides a large degree of autonomy to local governments (towns and rural municipalities) elected for 4 years term.

The electoral system in Estonia is proportional representation. Voting is not compulsory. Available options for voting are voting with a ballot paper in the polling place, advanced voting, electronic voting, home voting and voting by post (in a foreign state).

The legal acts regulating the elections in Estonia are:

- [Riigikogu Election Act](#) (2002);
- [Local Government Council Election Act](#) (2002);
- [European Parliament Election Act](#) (2002);
- [Referendum Act](#) (2002);
- [President of the Republic Election Act](#) (1996).

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

The official statistics of the Estonian [National Electoral Committee](#) about turnout and results of the voting in Estonia are not available by age-group, except for the statistics on e-voting.

The turnout of young people is described based on surveys.

- According to the study by Deželan in 2015 [„Young people and democratic life in Europe: what next after the 2014 European elections?“](#), voter absenteeism (i.e. those who did not vote) in EU 2014 parliamentary elections for Estonia among 18- 24 years old was 87,5% compared to average 60% in Estonia and 56,9% in EU. Voter absenteeism in national parliamentary elections among 18-24 years old was 62,5% compared to an average of 32.8% in Estonia and 33,6% in the EU. Deželan argues, also concerning Estonia, that several studies show corroborative results that validate the widely accepted argument that the gap between young and older voters has widened considerably across the democratic world.
- Flash Eurobarometer 375 “European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life” published in 2015 studied young EU citizens’ participation in society. Young people (15-30) were asked whether or not they have voted in a political election in the last three years. In Estonia, 44% of respondents voted, which was lower than the EU average 56%. When comparing the findings with those from 2011, Estonia showed a decrease of 18 percentage points to 44%.
- According to Toomla (2011), who compared survey data from three consecutive parliament elections in Estonia: 2003, 2007, and 2011, from all the age-groups young people between 18- 30 years old, were the most passive group to participate in the voting. Even though the passive position of young people has decreased by approximately 10 percentage points over the years observed, nearly one-third of young people did not go to vote in 2011. Among the older groups under observation (31-45 and 46-60) the level is approximately two times lower. Toomla also argued that the passive position of young people is not related to the fact of how many young candidates there are.

e-voting and young people

Since the restoration of independence in August 1991, Estonia has held 19 elections at either local, national or European level. As of 2019, Estonia has held 11 elections over ten years, where people could cast legally binding votes over the internet i.e. e-vote. The share of people using e-voting has increased over the elections: the share of e-voters in the first e-enabled elections in 2005 was 1.9%, in European Parliament elections in 2019 46.7% of votes were cast online. During the last two elections in 2019, the percentage of e-voters has increased significantly.

The amount of young voters of all e-voter has been as follows:

	2005 Local	2007 Parl.	2009 EP	2009 Local	2011 Parl.	2013 Local	2014 EP	2015 Parl.	2017 Local	2019 Parl.	2019 EP
% of e-voters from all voters	1.9	5.5	14.7	15.8	24.3	21.2	31.3	30.5	31.7	43.8	46.7
% of 16-17-year-olds among e-voters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.9	-	-
% of 18-24-year-olds among e-voters	10	11	9	11	9	9	6	7	6.5	7.4	5.5
% of 25-34-year-olds among e-voters	33	33	28	28	27	26	23	25	21.8	21.8	18.3

Source: Estonian National Electoral Committee

For the last four consecutive elections, 2015 national, 2017 local, 2019 national and, 2019 European Parliament elections, e-voting is mostly used by middle-aged people, between 35–45 years old. The share of the youngest voting-eligible age segment, people between 16 to 24 years old is very small i.e. e-voters comprise a clearly smaller share out of voters within the 16–24 age group than they do among the 35–45 age group. The distribution of age among active e-voters mirrors the finding that voting online in Estonia is not the most popular option among the youngest and presumably most tech-savvy citizens.

The voting age limit for the national parliament, the European parliament and for the referendum is 18.

In 2015, the decision was made by two consecutive compositions of the Parliament to change the Constitution in order to lower the voting age for the local government election to 16 years old. The 16 and 17-years-old young people had the first possibility to vote at local elections that took place in October 2017. The percentage of e-voters from all voters at the age-group was 0.9%. There were 1,794 young people who gave their vote via e-voting, which is 7.4% of all the young people aged 16-17 and 0.6% of all young people in Estonia aged 7-26.

Persons, who have been convicted by a court and are imprisoned, cannot vote.

Young people as political representatives

Most political parties in Estonia have a dedicated form for young people to participate – whether it is a substructure under the organization or a separate organization – a youth wing of the party. Youth wings have limited autonomy as budgetary and policy issues are largely relying on the party. Political parties in Estonia are registered as not-for-profit organizations. The [Non-profit Associations Act](#) defines that „if a minor of at least 15 years of age becomes a member of such youth association which complies with the provisions of the Youth Work Act, the consent of the guardian need not be submitted to the non-profit association unless otherwise provided by the articles of association.

The age limit of standing as a candidate is regulated as follows:

- National parliament: 21
- Local Government Council: 18
- European parliament: 21

To a candidate for the position of the President, the age limit is 40 ([President of the Republic Election Act](#)). There is no age limit to serve in civil service in Estonia.

There is no quota concerning the seats reserved for young people, nor are there special provisions aiming at facilitating young people standing as political candidates.

In the legal acts regulating the elections in Estonia, there is a special regulation concerning the regular member of the Defence Force, but the regulation only concerns standing as a candidate (he or she cannot stand as a candidate). There is also a regulation concerning the persons, who have been convicted by a court and is imprisoned, cannot vote and stand as a candidate.

In the last elections in 2017 of the current Riigikogu ([Parliament](#)), the youngest elected member of parliament was 25, the average age of elected members of the parliament was 49.1. Toomla has analyzed the candidate lists for parliamentary elections of major parties in Estonia and has concluded that in 2003 there were 19% of candidates under 30 in top 20 positions of the lists, in 2007 and in 2011, 7 % both years. The average age of candidates in the last European Parliament elections was 48.6.

There are no specific functions within the parliament reserved for young members.

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

In Estonia, the term “youth parliament” is not defined legally. Therefore, the term has been used as a project name (for example a cooperation project to support youth participation in Estonia, e.g. see www.noorteparlament.lastekaitseliit.ee; or session of European youth parliament in Estonia see www.ten.ee) and also as a name for some local youth councils (for example Narva Noorteparlament, see www.parlament.noortek.ee).

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Estonian National Youth Council (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit - ENL)

Structure and composition

[Estonian National Youth Council](#) is an umbrella organization established in 2002. It unites 52 youth organizations and 42 youth councils throughout Estonia ([data from 2019](#)).

ENL is governed by the general assembly – representative body for all the member organisations, which elects the council (5-9 members) and the board (3-5 members).

Roles and responsibilities

ENL promotes cooperation between youth associations and active participation of young people in society. ENL is working for recognition and participation of young people. ENL represents, includes and supports youth organizations through creating opportunities for cooperation and development. ENL mission is to be an organization with a large, active and strong membership, an opinion leader on youth matters and a reliable partner in a society, where the ideas and activities of the Youth are valued and decisions are made in cooperation with the Youth.

ENL is also coordinating and supporting the development and activities of youth councils. In order to support the youth council, ENL provides training and guidelines for new and already active youth council (for example [a manual to support youth councils](#)) and financial support for youth councils. Public funding is available for youth councils via ENL in order to start a new youth council and in order to support projects of youth councils.

Funding

ENL itself is also receiving yearly public funding as a union of youth associations from the grant scheme dedicated for youth associations administered by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Education and Youth Board](#).

Local and regional youth councils

There are local-level [youth participation councils](#) (*osaluskogu*) in Estonia. Estonia National Youth Council, who is coordinating and supporting the development and activities of youth councils defines the terms as follows:

- By “[youth participation council](#)” we mean different institutions where young persons can take part in decision-making.
- County youth councils communicate the opinions of young persons from the respective county to the county’s decision-makers, i.e. enable young persons to take part in decision-making processes and protect their interests in the fields concerning them at the county level - note that starting from 2017, the county municipals were demolished, so there are not that many county-level youth councils left.
- Local youth councils are youth participation councils attached to local government councils. The objective of local youth councils is to take part in local governments’ decision-making.

The legal framework exists for the youth councils at a municipal level only. The [Youth Work Act](#) amendments in 2010 established the regulations for the youth councils as follows:

- A youth council is an advisory participation council consisting of young people which operates in rural municipality or city council;
- Youth council can be established at a rural municipality or city council.
- The objective of youth council shall be the discussion of issues concerning young people which are in the competence of the rural municipality or city and the making of proposals to the rural municipality or city council and rural municipality or city government in connection therewith proceeding from the needs and interests of young people.
- Youth council shall be elected democratically by the young people of the rural municipality or city pursuant to the procedure established by the rural municipality or city council.
- The bases for the activities of the youth council shall be established by the rural municipality or city council.
- The rural municipality or city shall support the sustainable activities of the youth council in their administrative territory pursuant to the procedure established by the rural municipality or city council.
- Upon the request of the youth council, the rural municipality or city council shall forward the drafts of their hearing agendas and draft legislation regarding young people to the youth council and before the taking place of the rural municipality or city council hearings.

The Act does not imply an obligation to establish a youth council, but an obligation to support the proceedings, activities and consult the existing council.

There is no parliamentary legislation in Estonia concerning the number of the council or board members, the age range (apart from the general definition of youth in Estonia i.e. persons between 7-26 years old), the election process, the duration of the mandate, the frequency of the council/board.

Starting from 2019, ENL has a new financial scheme for 40 local municipalities in the amount of 1,000 euros, in order for them to develop the participation of young people, support the active participation and inclusion into decision-making processes. For that support, a municipality can create new participation forms, eg. youth councils, youth actives, regular meetings with young people and deciders, new e-participation solutions, etc.

There were 42 youth councils in 2019.

Higher education student union(s)

Structure

Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit ([EÜL](#)) - Federation of Estonian student unions - was founded on 23. November 1991, shortly after Estonia regained independence. EÜL had 27,964 members in 2017. In 2020, there were 12 universities under EÜL.

EÜL's main decision body is the EÜL council where all of our member student bodies are represented. The council decides main future plans and policies, is in charge of the budget and elects the board and different committees. The council is elected by the local unions, all students of all members are eligible to be elected as a member of the council or the board. The board currently consists of 3 persons – the chairperson and two vice-chairs. They are responsible for the following fields: social policy, educational policy, democracy and financing of higher education. The current board has a mandate of 24 months. The board is helped by a staff of about 15 employees who work in the office every day and 2 committees who gather a couple of times a year.

There is no overseeing body of the students union in Estonia.

Composition

In 2020, EÜL had 12 members. Membership to EÜL is voluntary for a student body but all Estonian students are automatically members of their HEI student body. There are no membership fees or special obligations for the students.

The age range of students is mostly 19-30 years old.

Role and responsibilities

In Estonia, the Acts concerning higher and vocational education, define the legal framework for student bodies and student councils in the education institutions, e.g. the [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#) (2013).

Generally, the definition of a Student Body defines the body as an institution which exercises the right of the students to self-government – to decide on and manage independently, be active on the issues of student life based on the interests, needs, rights and obligations of students, also to establish a student council.

EÜL's main goal is to represent students' interests on the national level. The main issues are student rights, educational and social issues. EÜL works closely together with the parliament, the government, different ministries, higher education institutions and other partners. EÜL is also a leading NGO in Estonia and sometimes also represents students in schools, youth in general or just NGOs in different committees. EÜL is recognised as a partner for policy-making by the Ministry of Education and Research and the government.

EÜL also distributes the ISIC card which is an identity card for students, teachers and youth in general (www.isic.ee). The ISIC card is the main source of revenue for EÜL.

EÜL also finances and publishes the national student newspaper Üliõpilasleht (www.yliopilasleht.ee) and organises student days in Tallinn (www.tudengipaevad.ee).

EÜL is a member of NOM (<http://www.syl.fi/english/nom/>), European Students' Union (www.esu-online.org) and Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations (www.ngo.ee).

Funding

EÜL is receiving yearly public funding as a union of youth associations from the grant scheme dedicated to youth associations administered by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

School student union(s)

Structure

The main union for school student councils is Estonian School Student Council Union ([Eesti Õpilasesinduste Liit](#) – EÕEL). EÕEL, founded in 1998, is a non-governmental politically independent organization, which represents through the member councils approximately 90 000 school students in Estonia. 186 general education schools are members of the union in November 2020.

The Union is governed by the board that is selected on yearly bases at the general assembly of the union. There are voluntary and paid workers supporting the activities of the EÕEL.

There is no overseeing body of the students union in Estonia.

Composition

The school student council union members are school councils.

The age range of school students is 7-18 in Estonia.

Role and responsibilities

In Estonia, the [Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act](#) (2010) defines the legal framework for student bodies and student councils in basic and upper secondary schools. The Act defines, that the student body of a school has the right to decide and independently organise the matters of student life in accordance with acts and legislation adopted based on acts. A student body has the right to:

- form unions and organizations with other student bodies
- become a member of Estonian and international organizations or pursue cooperation with them through a student council
- decide and organise all the other matters of student life, which fall within the competence of student bodies.
- elect a student council who represents the student body within the competence of the student council

The main aims of the EÕEL are to:

- represent school students and their council's interest
- support the work of councils in the schools;
- protect the rights of school students and their councils;
- support the quality of education and the school environment, raise the motivation to study
- support the leisure time of school students and their cooperation
- inform school students
- increase youth participation and support the development of civil society.

EÕEL is a recognised partner for policy-making for the parliament, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs etc.

Funding

EÕEL is receiving yearly public funding as a union of youth associations from the grant scheme dedicated to youth associations administered by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

Other bodies

There are no other important top-level or lower-level bodies for youth representation that are particularly prominent or important for youth participation.

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

The participation of young people in decision making is defined as one of four strategic objectives in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)). Same is in the draft document of the new development plan for the years 2021-2035.

Legal provisions

There are regulations on youth involvement. The involvement of young people in general and of youth councils is defined in the [Youth Work Act](#). The involvement of pupils and students is defined in education institutions acts, and the participation of the children in the [Child Protection Act](#).

Forms and levels of consultations

There are plenty of mechanisms for the involvement of young people in public policy processes. In general, youth participation in public policy takes place within the general framework and practice of participatory governance in Estonia. In the consultation processes, the young people are addressed as a group of stakeholders, which means that generally young people are invited to the consultation as one of the consulted parties.

The collective consultation remains an important principle underlying the interaction between the young people and the state or municipality. This means that youth consultation and involvement occurs predominantly between a youth council, organization or association on the one hand and a state, municipal, third sector or business organization on the other hand. The consultation of unorganized young people is organized through opinion markets and other forms of participation.

At the municipal level, local youth councils are consulted on topics that are relevant for youth. In 2019, the municipal youth councils were active in 42 local governments. In addition, 15 county youth councils were active, one in each county of Estonia. Most of them are now demolished as the county level municipalities were also demolished. Most often the consultation is arranged with:

- local and regional youth councils – consulted at the local or regional level
- youth organizations – consulted at local and/or national level
- student and pupils councils – consulted partner at local and national level
- participation café – a form of consultation at the local level
- umbrella organizations of youth councils and youth organizations – consulted at the national level.

Consultation methods

The youth consultation in the public policy processes occurs mainly in 3 contexts:

- drafting sectorial strategies and development plans;
- implementing sectoral strategies and development plans;
- design of the youth work services.

The main method of involving young people in drafting strategies is the participation of the representatives of youth organizations or umbrella organizations in different working groups. In these settings, the young people are informed of the developments and they can express their opinion on particular themes and partake in discussions leading to final formulations. Technically speaking, this involves the formulation of positions regarding concrete questions, participation in meetings, involvement in communication, reacting to other participants' opinions and proposals, input to official document drafts and other activities to be carried out during the process.

Regularity of consultations

The consultations take place regularly at national-level policy. As the responsible ministries for policy areas are obliged to report annually on the implementation of the policy measures, the youth representatives are also mostly consulted annually on these policy document implementation reports.

Consultations take also place case-by-case depending on the emergence of new legislation or policy proposals.

Actors

Youth actors

In general, the main umbrella organizations are involved in drafting policy programs and legislative acts as representatives of young people in Estonia:

- [National Youth Council](#) (the umbrella organization of youth associations and youth organizations);
- [Estonian School Student Councils Union](#) (the umbrella organization of school student councils);
- [Federation of Estonian Student Unions](#) (the umbrella organization of college student councils).

In the implementation phase, local youth organizations, youth councils, and youth work organizations are involved in carrying out activities of a concrete policy program.

There are no specific target groups in general consultation mechanisms defined.

Main public authorities

- the [Ministry of Education and Research](#): responsible for youth policy and education policy
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for labor market policy, but also for social protection and services including child and family policy
- [Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental institution responsible for implementation of education and youth policy.

Additional stakeholders

- [Estonian Association of Youth Centres](#), implementing youth work in youth centers;
- [Youth Agency of the Foundation Archimedes](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Education and Research, responsible for implementing youth policy, National Agency for Erasmus+ (note: starting from 01.01.2021 is also a part of the Education and Youth Board amongst other youth and education organizations).

Information on the extent of youth participation

There are some specific mechanisms of data collection and monitoring of youth consultation, e.g. Structural Dialogue, Ombudsman for Children reviews the youth rights, youth monitor, etc. However, there is no specific data collection system on the level of youth participation.

Outcomes

Participation of young people in decision-making has two main outcomes:

1. quality of the decision;
2. development of active citizenship.

Generally, based on the consultation, a draft law or policy document is revised. There is an obligation for the government authorities to provide information on every proposal whether it has been accepted and also the reasons, if not. Policy documents progress report is generally required from the ministry appointed as a responsible body for the policy document. Usually, it is necessary to report to the Government every year the implemented activities, achieved outcomes and results. The yearly reports are bases for the Government to renew or to terminate the implementation of the policy document. The inclusion of interested parties to the reporting procedure is advised.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

The most important government initiative to promote youth participation has been the introduction of the annual funding scheme for youth councils and youth organizations.

Estonian National Youth Council initiated a project "[Osaluskohvikud](#)" (Eng. *youth participation cafes*) to provide platform for local politicians, civil servants, professionals

working with young people, parents, etc. to meet and discuss different relevant issues with local young people from schools, youth organizations, non-organized youth interested to take part at the event, etc. The cafes have been taking place in November every year in different communities all over the country and have involved more than 1,500 participants yearly.

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

A specific National Strategy on Youth participation doesn't exist but Youth participation is a pillar of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)).

One of the planned policy measures is targeted to "Support for the active participation of young people in the community life and decision-making" The key activities that will be implemented as part of the measure are as follows:

- sustainable development of traditional forms of participation (primarily such as youth councils and associations) is supported;
- a system that ensures annual budgetary support for youth associations and councils is further developed;
- increase in the membership of youth associations is supported by improving youth leaders' competence for inclusion;
- new forms of youth participation are developed and supported so as to devise a great many methods used in youth work institutions and organizations that support participation and the ones for learning to participate, focusing, among other things, on developing youth leaders', youth workers' and civil servants' competence;
- awareness of young people as a basis for quality participation is raised by supporting the national youth information system and enabling it to operate effectively in cooperation with various parties.

There is an indicator set to monitor the results: a number of opportunities for organized participation (youth councils and other participation structures).

In the draft document of the new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) has a strategic goal dedicated to youth participation called "The protection of youth rights is consistent and the active youth citizenship is supported". The strategic goal has 3 measures:

1. Prerequisites are created for the growth of young people's trust in the state and the strengthening of ties with their country.
2. All young people will have the opportunity to have their say and be heard at all levels.
3. Young people will be empowered to be active citizens.

There are 3 indicators that will measure the results:

- a number of opportunities to participate in;
- the share of young candidates in the local elections from all candidates;
- the share of participation in voluntary activities.

Scope and contents

The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) addresses the youth participation at all levels, however particular attention is paid to participate at the local level. The

Development Plan states "Aspirations and opportunities of young people to participate in decision-making processes on matters that concern them and society as a whole are the basis for the development of a cohesive society in Estonia. Participation in arranging your own life and the life of the surrounding community as well as in voluntary activities forms a basis for the development of a strong civil society – one in which young people are the active actors driving social change. Such participation largely determines people's sense of belonging and perception of being involved, which helps prevent them from falling into social apathy and from seeking to express themselves in a radical way or leave the country." In order to increase participation, there is an increasing need in the youth field for finding new forms of participation, develop the habit of having a say and recognize learning experience gained through participation. The opinions of non-participants must also be found out and taken into account.

The development plan has a strategic goal (one of four goals) defined as "Greater support for the participation of young people in decision-making". Under the goal, a policy measure "Support for the active participation of young people in the community life and decision-making" is planned. The key activities that will be implemented as part of the measure are:

- sustainable development of traditional forms of participation (primarily such as youth councils and associations) is supported;
- a system that ensures annual budgetary support for youth associations and councils is further developed;
- increase in the membership of youth associations is supported by improving youth leaders' competence for inclusion;
- new forms of youth participation are developed and supported so as to devise a great many methods used in youth work institutions and organizations that support participation and the ones for learning to participate, focusing, among other things, on developing youth leaders', youth workers' and civil servants' competence;
- awareness of young people as a basis for quality participation is raised by supporting the national youth information system and enabling it to operate effectively in cooperation with various parties.

The overall target group of the development plan is young people (i.e. 7-26 years old), there are no specific target groups identified in relation to the participation goal.

The draft document of the new youth field development plan has also several measures targeted to youth participation.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Estonian [Ministry of Education and Research](#) is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the development plan. In 2020, the ministry published a [report](#) of the results of different development plans under their administrative field for the year 2019 that also monitored youth participation.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) is part of the general mechanism established for all policy fields in Estonia. In general, it is required from the ministry appointed as a responsible body for the policy document, to report to the [Government](#) every year the implemented activities, achieved outcomes and results. The yearly reports are bases for the [Government](#) to renew or to terminate the implementation of the policy document. 6 months after the end of the defined period of the policy document, it is required to present the final report which has been consulted with relevant ministries and other interested parties. The [Government](#) may also request an additional evaluation by experts to evaluate the results. The consultation of interested parties is required to be reported in the drafting process and reporting process.

In 2020, the ministry published a [report](#) of the results of different development plans under their administrative field for the year 2019 that also monitored youth participation. The number of organized participation forms was monitored, and by the end of 2019, there were 71 participation forms in 89.9% of the municipalities. The ministry foresees that the level must be kept the same in the future and new forms of participation must be created.

Revisions/Updates

The Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 has not been revised. The draft document of a new development plan for the years 2021- 2035 has been sent to the Parliament to be confirmed by the end of 2020.

At the state level, the development of the youth field is being planned for the third time. The "Estonian Youth Work Concept" and the "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001-2004" were drafted in 2001, these were followed by the 'Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013' which was approved in 2006. What differentiates the current development plan from the previous documents is its approach to focus on goals and measures that will help to achieve positive change in the most significant challenges – the plan does not describe measures in all areas of youth work and youth policy. Also, the aims and objectives based on and formulated in accordance with youth perspective as opposed to a perspective of the sector or services used in earlier documents – the analyses and the policy objectives were about young people not about the system and services of youth work or youth policy.

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

Youth organizations in Estonia are registered as not-for-profit organizations and defined in the [Youth Work Act](#) as follows: "a non-profit association at least two-thirds of the members of which are young people and the objective of which is the organization and performance of youth work". The Act also defines the umbrella youth organizations as "a union of youth associations is a non-profit association the members of which are youth associations".

The policy to support youth organizations is part of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#), where 3 specific activities are planned:

1. sustainable development of traditional forms of participation (primarily such as youth councils and associations) is supported;
2. a system that ensures annual budgetary support for youth associations and councils is further developed;
3. increase in the membership of youth associations is supported by improving youth leaders' competence for inclusion.

Public financial support

There is public funding available for youth organizations in Estonia. The [Youth Work Act](#) already in 1999, when it was first adopted, established an annual grant scheme from the state budget to support youth organizations. The Act defines, that the objective of an annual grant scheme for youth associations is „the increase of the capability of youth associations and the achievement of national objectives of youth policy.“ Eligible to apply are:

- the youth associations the membership of which includes at least 500 young persons and the local units of which operate in the territory of at least one-third of the counties;

- union of youth associations the members of which include at least 30 youth associations;
- school student councils' union if it aggregates at least one-third of Estonian basic school, upper secondary school or vocational educational institution students through its members;
- federation of student unions the members of which include at least one-half of all student unions of educational institutions implementing higher education level studies.

The allocation of annual grants to youth associations is decided by the minister of Education and Research, taking into account:

- the national priorities of youth work and youth policy;
- the youth association development plan, activities and former achievements in the field;
- the scope of activities of youth association, target group, membership and capability including the performance of former duties;
- the compliance of the applicant and application with the established requirements.

The annual grant scheme does not specify the types of expenditures that are eligible for funding.

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

In 2015, Estonian National Youth Council started with a collaboration project „Common Youth” (["Ühised noored"](#)), which aimed to involve young people at risk in the network of youth associations, as well as to prevent social exclusion and offences committed by young people. The project was implemented by April 2016.

Project activities involved different parties: eight youth associations, children and youth who live at-risk conditions and institutions and organizations who deal with youth at risk. Within the project, the members of youth associations were trained to involve the target group in their activities. There were also different opportunities introduced that help youth associations and organizations who deal with youth at risk to collaborate with each other. As a result of the project guidance materials were prepared in collaboration with partners and experts. Youth associations all over Estonia will be able to use the materials in the future with the aim of involving and helping youth at risk better. Project „Common Youth” was funded through the EEA grants program „Children and Youth at Risk”.

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

There are two most relevant policy documents in relation to social and civic competencies and participation of youth in Estonia:

In 2002 the Parliament adopted [The Estonian Civil Society Development Concept](#), that forms a basis for the strategic development of civil society in Estonia. The document defines principles and values that are important both for the public and non-profit sector. Under this document, the [Government](#) adopted the [Civil Society Development Plan 2015–2020](#) ([Kodanikuühiskonna arengukava](#)) prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior, which aims at the promotion of civil society in 2015–2020. The plan focuses on two priorities: socially active residents and acting capabilities of citizens’ associations, i.e. ensuring that citizens’ associations have sufficient possibilities for achievement of their goals. The development plan establishes the goal of participation of citizens’ associations in the formation of policy as natural and valued cooperation. It is also important to increase the influence of citizens’ associations in the process of dealing with

social problems and improvement of the well-being of people through social innovation, social entrepreneurship and provision of public services.

The Document is implemented under the responsibility of the [Ministry of the Interior](#), who allocates the funds and contracts partners in order to ensure the implementation.

The framework of reference for the civic and social competences used in the development plan is not defined.

There are no specific youth target groups defined in the Document.

The national strategy to increase youth participation is part of the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#); see [chapter 5.5](#)). Please see [chapter 5.5](#) for information on the implementation and target groups of the plan. The framework of reference for the civic and social competences used in the development plan is not defined.

Formal learning

Citizenship education “Civics and citizenship education” exists as a compulsory separate subject both in basic and secondary general education. In basic school, the obligatory time taught in 2nd stage of study is 1 lesson per week and 3rd stage of study 2 lessons per week. The National curriculum for upper secondary schools defines that two courses are obligatory to be taught in Civics and citizenship education. The national curricula introduced in 2011 established several competencies related to citizenship education (values, social skills, communication skills and entrepreneurship skills) for which the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes to be mastered by the end of each ISCED level are defined.

According to the national curriculums, the following learning objectives are defined for a basic and upper secondary school in the area of social studies and in particular Civics and citizenship education.

[National curriculum for upper secondary schools](#): the objective of teaching social subjects in upper secondary school is to develop students’ social competence; it refers to the ability to understand the causes and effects of the social changes taking place in the history of humankind and in modern-day society; recognize basic social scientific research methods and use some of them in studying and in everyday life; create future scenarios and visions in an area that is important socially or personally; know about and respect human rights and democracy, be informed about civil rights and duties, and be familiar with the skills and behaviour that are in accordance with them; recognize cultural specificities and follow generally accepted etiquette; and continuously show an interest in the development of one’s nation, community and the world, shape one’s own opinions and be an active and responsible citizen. In Civics and citizenship education students acquire social writing skills: knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for functioning in society and making responsible decisions. The aim of the subject is to create the preconditions for the strengthening of the identity of a citizen and social cohesion, shaping active citizens, supporting the formation of readiness for dialogue and respect towards people who understand the world differently, as well as the self-awareness of students in questions regarding worldviews.

Non-formal and informal learning

Participative structures within formal education settings (e.g. pupils’ participation in school councils)

In Estonia, the [Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act](#) defines the legal framework for student bodies and student councils in basic and upper secondary schools. The Act defines, that the student body of a school has the right to decide and independently organise the matters of student life in accordance with acts and legislation adopted based on acts. A student body has the right to:

- form unions and organisations with other student bodies

- become a member of Estonian and international organisations or pursue cooperation with them through a student council
- decide and organise all the other matters of student life, which fall within the competence of student bodies.
- elect a student council who represents the student body within the competence of the student council

The Acts concerning higher and vocational education, define the legal framework for student bodies and student councils in the education institutions, e.g. the [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#) (2013).

Generally, the definition of a Student Body defines the body as an institution, which exercises the right of the students to self-government – to decide on and manage independently, be active on the issues of student life based on the interests, needs, rights and obligations of students, also to establish a student council.

Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society

The Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations in cooperation with Estonian Youth Work Centre and the Ministry of education and research launched a programme [Community practice](#) (*kogukonnapraktika*) in 2015. Supported by European Social Fund and state budget the programme aims to introduce a practical community work as part of the curricula of civic education for upper secondary level. The cooperation programme provides students with the opportunity to experience a short-term practical work period.

Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers

The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) defines the following policy goals in relation to partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers:

- measures are devised and implemented for systematic cross-sectoral and inter-agency communication and collaboration;
- youth work in schools is enhanced;
- the use of youth work tools and training resources are supported in formal education.

The financial support for these policy measures is not specified but is part of larger programmes supporting youth work and the implementation of the Development plan in general.

Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences

In Estonia, the youth participation and initiatives to support the capability to participate through non-formal learning are generally supported via youth work provision as the participation is defined in Estonia both as a goal and as a method in youth work. There are specific policy goals defined in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) and there is systematic public financing available. In general, the youth work programmes supporting the participation include support scheme for youth organisations and youth councils, there are training programmes available for youth workers both as higher education and as training (see [chapter 1](#) for additional information). In the plan, the specific attention is given to the target group of youth at risk of exclusion due to several reasons. Please see [chapter 5.5](#) for further information.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There is no single system of quality assurance/quality guidelines specific to non-formal learning activities/projects in general. There is support for youth work quality initiated by Estonian Youth Work Centre (starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) and

there is a mechanism to monitor policy implementation ([see chapter 5.5.](#)), however, the participation of young people is considered as a part of youth work and youth policy goals.

Educators' support

There is no specific certification in the area of civic educators established in Estonia. There is a possibility to gain professional education as a teacher and youth worker, both professions include competencies in relation to civic education and participation as part of the occupational standard.

Until 2019, there was a [regular offer of training and materials](#) available for people working in formal and non-formal settings with young people systematically provided [by Youth Agency of the Archimedes Foundation](#) (starting from 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps).

There is an [initiative to create a network of stakeholders](#) active in the civic education field in order to support the development of cooperation inside and between formal and non-formal education.

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

Public authorities

Youth information belongs to the area of responsibility of the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), a central organisation responsible for the system of Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) centres is [Education and Youth Board](#), which is also implementing youth policy, including the development of the provision of youth information.

Contact points for youth and youth information and counselling structures

Youth information has been recognized as a specific field in youth work since 2001. There was a separate system of youth information centres, which in 2014 were merged with career guidance centres (career guidance was transferred to the Unemployment Insurance Fund in 2018). In 2020, there were 16 centralised publicly financed centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called [Pathfinder centres](#) (Rajaleidja), provide information and counselling for young people up to 26 years.

There are also dedicated websites available for the provision of youth information:

- National portal www.eesti.ee
- Web-sites providing information for youth www.rajaleidja.ee; www.teeviit.ee
- Regional youth information portals such as www.polvanoored.ee; www.noorteinfo.ee

The centres and youth information activities are receiving annual public funding.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

There was [an initiative in 2016](#) supported by public funding from the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) of the [Estonian National Youth Council](#) connected with the change in the voting system, that allowed 16 and 17 years old to vote first time in the 2017 local elections. The initiative offered schools the opportunity to invite young people from the National Youth Council to give a lesson or a simulation exercise for pupils.

The National Youth Council also promotes the visibility of youth participation through photo-project [#noorednähtaval](#).

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

In Estonia, the issue of cultural diversity is among the most important policy areas considering there are representatives of around 190 nationalities living in Estonia. The area of integration responsibility area of the [Ministry of Culture](#), where there is also the position of the Undersecretary of Cultural diversity. The ministry is in charge of the coordination of the strategy of integration and social cohesion in Estonia "[Integrating Estonia 2020](#)" ([Lõimuv Eesti 2020](#)). The general objective of the strategy is that Estonian society is integrated and socially cohesive; people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds actively participate in society and share democratic values. In the framework of the strategy, several objectives are defined relevant to social inclusion of young people and intercultural awareness:

- Supporting the awareness of common information space and of cultural diversity
- Supporting everyday contacts, communication and involvement in society
- Supporting the native language and culture of ethnic minorities
- Creating opportunities for less integrated Estonian permanent residents with a foreign background for increasing their social activity and supporting their integration.
- Promotion of equal treatment on the labour market
- Offering adaptation training programmes and developing support services and adaptation training targeted at new arrivals
- Ensuring competitive education opportunities for individuals and improving the knowledge of the official language of individuals with a native language different from Estonian

The youth-specific objective of the strategy is "Students with a native language different from Estonian actively participate in youth work and have close contacts with Estonian-speaking peers." The objective shall be achieved through increasing opportunities for initiatives, joint activities and increasing the involvement of young people in youth work. The measure is based on the activities under the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#). The aim is to increase the capability of the youth work field to create and develop a socialising environment suitable for young people and support young people's own initiatives and the organising of youth projects. It supports the self-initiative of young people and common activities through youth work; various forms of participation are created and developed and youth workers are trained for work with different youth groups.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

Currently, in Estonia there is no policy frameworks, guidelines or initiatives on transparent public communication targeting specifically young people.

See more about the national distribution and development of youth information from [Chapter 10.7](#).

5.9 E-participation

The most important e-participation tool in Estonia is e-voting. As of 2019, Estonia has held 11 elections over ten years, where people could cast legally binding votes over the internet i.e. e-vote. The share of people using e-voting has increased over the elections: the share of e-voters in the first e-enabled elections in 2005 was 1.9%, in European Parliament elections in 2019 46.7% of votes were cast online. During the last two elections in 2019, the percentage of e-voters has increased significantly.

For the last four consecutive elections, 2015 national, 2017 local, 2019 national and, 2019 European Parliament elections, e-voting is mostly used by middle-aged people, between 35–45 years old. The share of the youngest voting-eligible age segment, people

between 16 to 24 years old is very small i.e. e-voters comprise a clearly smaller share out of voters within the 16–24 age group than they do among the 35–45 age group. The distribution of age among active e-voters mirrors the finding that voting online in Estonia is not the most popular option among the youngest and presumably most tech-savvy citizens.

The 16 and 17-years-old young people had the first possibility to vote at local elections that took place in October 2017. The percentage of e-voters from all voters at the age-group was 0.9%. There were 1,794 young people who gave their vote via e-voting, which is 7.4% of all the young people aged 16-17 and 0.6% of all young people in Estonia aged 7-26.

There are several e-services and online opportunities created to express opinions, however, these are open to the general public, not only to young people. On the local level, there have been initiatives of online participation such as inclusive budgeting, however, these are not youth-specific.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

In Estonia currently, innovative forms of youth participation are sought including supported by e-services and technologies.

Smart youth work including youth work using the developments of the technology is a subject of high-priority in youth policy throughout the youth field development plan period until 2020 and now with the new period up to 2035 as well. See more about smart youth work in [Chapter 10.4](#).

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Estonia's demographic trends are having a deep impact on education. The number of children in pre-school education was on the rise until 2015 and is falling in the following years as children born in the years with the highest birth rates are reaching school age. In the academic year 2019/20, just over 153,000 children and young people were studying in general education schools. Tertiary educational attainment is one of the highest in the EU. The employment rate of recent graduates has recovered after the economic crisis. The number of adult learners is increasing. For example, 20.1% of the Estonian population aged between 25 and 64 participated in formal education or in non-formal training in 2019 (17.6% in 2016). See more in [chapter 6.1](#).

The main governmental authority responsible for education and training is [the Ministry of Education and Research](#). The main function of the Ministry of Education and Research is to ensure targeted and effective development of education, research, youth and language policy, and a high level and competitiveness of research and development. See more in [chapter 6.2](#).

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

Participation in formal education

Estonia's demographic trends are having a deep impact on education. The number of children in pre-school education was on the rise until 2015 and is falling in the following years as children born in the years with the highest birth rates are reaching school age.

The last time the number of first-grade students exceeded 15,000 was in 2000. At the same time, the number of gymnasium students (general upper secondary) fell and that of basic school students (lower secondary) grew.

In the academic year 2019/20, just over 153,000 children and young people were studying in general education schools. Initial estimates suggest that this is about two thousand more than the last academic year. The increase in the number of students concerns primarily larger towns and the suburbs of Tallinn. In most of the remaining local government units, the number of children continues to decrease or is stabilizing.

The decreasing number of schoolchildren in the past 15 years has also affected higher education institutions – the number of university students continues to fall. While the number of vocational students remains stable, the average age of learners is increasing, i.e. vocational schools attract an increasing number of people who have completed their education and wish to improve their professional skills or retrain. Tertiary educational attainment is one of the highest in the EU. The employment rate of recent graduates has recovered after the economic crisis. The number of adult learners is increasing. For example, 20.1% of the Estonian population aged between 25 and 64 participated in formal education or in non-formal training in 2019 (17.6% in 2016).

Achievers and underachievers in formal education

Estonia continues to have a well-performing education system combining a low proportion of underachievers with a low impact of socioeconomic status on education outcomes. Estonia ranks very high among the EU countries participating in [PISA](#). The proportion of low achievers in reading, maths, and science is small and the impact of socioeconomic background on results is low. However, there are performance differences between Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking students, and between rural and urban schools. The average performance of Russian-speaking students is lower, although the skills gap has decreased.

Early in 2016 [OECD published a report on low-performing students](#) and the reasons for poor performance, based on PISA 2012. In Estonia, the share of low-performing students (below the baseline level) aged 15 is the smallest in both Europe and the world. The proof of the uniform strength of Estonian schools lies in the fact that the difference in the shares of low-performing lower secondary students in rural and city schools is the smallest compared with other PISA countries

Early school leaving and drop-out rates

Reducing early school leaving remains a challenge in the context of the increasing demand for high-skilled workers. In 2015, the share of early school leavers was 11.2% and around the EU average, but above the strategy "[Estonia 2020](#)" ([Konkurentsivõime kava "Eesti 2020"](#)) target, which is 9.5%. According to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), about 20% of young people fail to complete secondary education within 7 years of finishing basic school and Estonia is the only OECD country where the share of secondary education graduates is decreasing in younger age groups.

The drop-out rates from mainstream basic schools are brought out in the [Lifelong Learning Strategy \(Elukestva õppe strateegia\)](#) and the rates have stabilized (in 2008–2012 the dropout rates were 0.9%–0.6%–0.5%–0.5%–0.6% respectively). This indicates that support measures (establishment of counseling centers, implementation of the principles of inclusive education, including support measures implemented under the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, teacher training, etc.) have served their purpose. Drop-out rates from the 1st years of upper secondary schools have stabilized at around 1%: in 2008–2012, the drop-out rates were 0.9%–1%–1.1%–1.4%–1.1% respectively).

Students' dropout rates from VET and higher education are still very high. Drop-outs are particularly a problem in the first year of upper secondary vocational educational training (VET) (22.4 % in 2016), but it is on a decreasing trend. In secondary VET, the dropout

rate (during the first year of studies) has decreased from 26.2 in 2012 to 24.7 in 2015. However, it is far below the 2020 target (less than 20%).

Mobility

According to the Eurydice report „[Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background report](#)“ 8% of Estonian students took in 2012/13 a degree in a different education system. The share of tertiary students enrolled abroad in 2012/13 was 5.3%. The share of students participating in the Erasmus program based on total enrolments in 2013/14 was 1.7%. According to the [2019 report](#) of the Ministry of Education and Research, in 2017 almost 4,000 students were studying abroad.

The attractiveness of Estonia as a target country has increased among foreign students. The number of foreign students has more than doubled over the past five years (from 1,573 in the academic year 2011/12 to 3,476 in 2015/16). In 2019, the ratio of foreign students in Estonia was around 12.2%.

Organisation of the education and training system

In Estonia, the obligation to attend school applies to children who have attained 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year. Children up to 7 years may attend preschool childcare institutions. The obligation to attend schools lasts until basic education is acquired or until a student attains 17 years of age.

The Estonian education system is decentralized. The division of responsibility between the state, local government and school is clearly defined. The organization of education:

- preschool education (ISCED level 0) is for children aged from 1.5 to 7 years of
- basic education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) is the minimum compulsory general education. The basic school includes grades 1–9
- upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) is based on basic education and is divided into general secondary education, which is acquired in upper-secondary schools and vocational upper-secondary education, which is acquired in vocational schools. The length of general upper-secondary education is 3 years (grades 10–12).
- vocational education is
 - vocational upper-secondary education (ISCED level 3), which can be entered after basic school and where the study volume is 180 credit points (the volume of vocational education curricula is calculated in VET credit points- EKAP);
 - post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4), which may be acquired after graduation from upper secondary school. The study volume of VET after secondary education is 120–150 credit points.
 - vocational education for people with unfinished basic education, who can enter VET studies, the study volume is 15–120 credit points (ISCED 2).
- higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8) may be acquired as professional higher education in a vocational school, institution of professional higher education or in academic higher education. The general structure of academic study has three levels or cycles: Bachelor's study, Master's study, Doctoral study.
- adult education is divided into formal education and continuing education. Formal education acquired within the adult education system allows adults to acquire general lower and upper secondary education at adult upper secondary schools. In addition to formal education, VET and higher education institutions provide continuing education and retraining courses.

For further information, please consult the [Overview of the Estonian education system in Eurydice](#).

Main concepts

The main concepts of education and training are defined in the [Strategy of Lifelong Learning](#).

Lifelong learning combines formal education (kindergarten, basic education, secondary education, vocational education, higher education) and education offered outside that - re- and further training, non-formal and informal learning. The new knowledge and skills can be obtained from work, free education, hobby education, youth work, participation in civil society activities, or even virtual spaces.

Non-formal learning is defined as learning that takes place outside the school lessons, is undertaken consciously, has a purpose to develop yourself. Non-formal education can happen in different environments, where learning and teaching might not be the only nor main function. Non-formal education is targeted like formal education but is voluntary.

Informal learning is non-targeted learning from the learners' point of view that happens in daily life situations (e.g. family, work, free time, etc.). The results of informal learning might not be seen straight away.

Formal education takes place in the school environment and is organized based on curriculums. Formal education is targeted and it is carried out by teachers with special preparation and qualification.

6.2 Administration and governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation, which also covers the area of education and training of youth. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports, monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

Governance

The main governmental authority responsible for education and training is [the Ministry of Education and Research](#). The main function of the Ministry of Education and Research is to ensure targeted and effective development of education, research, youth and language policy, and a high level and competitiveness of research and development. For detailed information on the tasks of the Ministry, please consult the section "[Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level of the Estonian education system](#)" in [Eurydice](#).

The main other Governmental authorities relevant to Education and Training:

- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#): responsible for developing entrepreneurship and economic affairs;
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for labour market policy, but also for social protection and services including child and family policy.

The main public actor starting from 01.08.2020 is the [Education and Youth Board](#), which is responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy.

The main non-public actors:

- Estonian School Students Union ([Eesti Õpilasesinduste Liit](#)), uniting student councils in general education schools;

- Estonian Students Union ([Eesti Üliõpilasesinduste Liit](#)), uniting student councils in higher education;
- Estonian Teachers Union ([Eesti Õpetajate Liit](#)), representing pedagogical professionals;
- Estonian Association of School Heads ([Eesti Koolijuhtide Ühendus](#)), unites and represents headmasters of general education schools;
- [The Estonian Association for Advancement of Vocational Education \(Eesti Kutseõppe Edendamise Ühing\)](#), a voluntary organisation that has as its goal the development of higher quality Vocational Education;
- [Universities Estonia \(Rektorite Nõukogu\)](#), non-profit organisation uniting universities represented by rectors;
- [Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences \(Rakenduskõrgkoolide Rektorite Nõukogu\)](#) is the cooperation body for Estonian universities of applied sciences;
- Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras (Eesti Täiskasvanute Koolitajate Assotsiatsioon);
- National Youth Council (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit), the umbrella organization of youth associations and youth organisations;
- The Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (Eesti Linnade ja Valdade Liit), representing cities and rural municipalities.

The general distribution of responsibilities

The responsibility for education and training is divided between the central government and local government. The regional (county) governments are abolished since 1.01.2018.

Local governments are vested with the primary responsibility for the accessibility of general education (from preschool to upper secondary education), the fulfilment of compulsory school attendance, maintenance of preschool childcare institutions and schools. For detailed information on the tasks of the local government, please consult the section [Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level](#) in Eurydice.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy for early leaving.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020

The [Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) sets among key indicators the need to reduce the % of early leavers from education and training (% of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training) to the level below 9% by 2020. At the end of 2020, the level is around 10%. In order to reach this goal among other key indicators, five policy aims have been set:

1. Change in the approach to learning.
2. Competent and motivated teachers and school leadership.
3. Concordance of lifelong learning opportunities with the needs of the labour market.
4. A digital focus in lifelong learning.
5. Equal opportunities and increased participation in lifelong learning.

In a thematic report [„Young people with low level of education“ \(2016\)](#) Ministry of Education and Research underlines, that all the measures were taken under the strategy in all the areas of education – especially general and vocational education, but also measures related to teacher training and guidance provision play crucial part in addressing the issue of ELET in Estonia.

Policy measures in general education

Guidance and counselling

In order to support education acquisition and to prevent early leaving from education and training, the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act guarantees educational support services to all students, enabling them to get psychological counselling, speech therapy and study counselling.

In addition to the guidance opportunities provided in the framework of the curriculum, there are centres to provide the service outside the school for young people. There are 16 centralised public centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), provide career information, career counselling, psychological, socio-pedagogical, special education counselling and speech therapy. Career guidance is provided for young people up to 26 years. The other 4 services are focused on the need for children and youth (aged 1.5 – 18) with special educational needs and practitioners main direct target group is school personnel and parents.

Starting from 2017, the career services are under the administration of the [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#). They have career information rooms and job search workshops for people of all ages.

Data gathering

Estonian Education Information System analyses ELET data once a year for aggregating education statistics, but schools approve the data on a monthly basis which allows for ad hoc extractions of data. The Estonian Educational Information System (EEIS) is a national register that consolidates information on the education system, including information on educational institutions, pupils, teachers, graduation documents and curricula. Local governments can use EEIS to access information on the pupils living in their territory, and on those who have moved to a school located in the territory of another local government. Educational institutions are obliged to enter information into the EEIS and to check and amend the entered information for accuracy. Pupils and teachers can view the education-related information held on them. The register tracks each student's educational career. It is also visible if the student has dropped out of school and if he/she has continued in an evening school, vocational school etc. The register does not provide data about entry into the labour market.

Policy measures in vocational education

In secondary VET, the dropout rate (during the first year of studies) has decreased from 26.2 in 2012 to 24.7 in 2015. However, in 2019, the rate was 21.2, which is more than the 2020 target (less than 20%).

ELVET rate has been set as one of the performance indicators for VET institutions related also to the level of financing, which has increased the attention in schools to the problem and has prompted schools to redesign support systems for students in VET, also to develop new initiatives and measures to reduce the ELVET rate. Each VET school has been assigned with specific ELVET level to be reached in the school's development plan. Best practice seminars are held between the schools.

The improved cooperation with regional youth guidance centre (Pathfinder centres) has supported better organisation of entrance and beginning of studies in VET, also the individual support for students.

Guidance and training for students with special educational needs have been developed and delivered for VET teachers so as to reduce high rates of ELVET.

Specific target groups identified in the youth population

According to thematic report „[Young people with low level of education](#)“ (2016), 66% of dropouts during the last five academic years (2010/2011 – 2014/2015) in basic schools are men, 86% of them have studied in Estonian as a language of instruction and 14% in Russian (compared to 89% and 11% in total). After the graduation of basic school, 4.5-5% will not continue their studies. 71% of those have low study results in their final exams. In vocational secondary education, 18.2% of men drop out the school compared to 15.3 of women. The lower the study result in final exams in the basic school was for a student, the more probable is leaving the vocational education studies early.

According to the data from PISA ([OECD 2016](#)), social-economical indicators most correlated to predicted low performance in school is the parents' foreign origin (both parents are born in a foreign country) and the language spoken at home. Inequality in length of studies is most related to family background, home language and gender: a boy from a family with other home language than Estonian, with two parents with basic education and few books at home studies 5 years less than a girl with highly educated parents, Estonian as a language and good learning environment at home (report „[Young people with low level of education](#)“ (2016)).

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) brings out as one of the indicators the decrease in the proportion of young people (aged 18-24) with a basic or lower level of education who do not continue in education. All the measures taken in the framework of this development plan support young people's self-determination, motivation for and positive experiences of learning, inclusion and active participation in society hence supporting prevention of ELET, returning to and coping with formal studies. The plan is aimed at all young people from 7 to 26 years old. The activities in the framework of the Youth Field Development plan are financed mostly from state budget via the Ministry of Education and Research.

The [Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) brings out activities to prevent dropouts, but none of the activities is connected with youth work.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

There is no mechanism established that can be considered a systematic partnership amongst the public and non-public actors who play a significant role in preventing ELET and compensating for its consequences. At the local level the networking mechanisms exist between the specialist from the different field working with youth, however, they are not specifically targeting ELET as the main task.

[Results of YG monitoring for 2015](#) show that the YG scheme in Estonia reached less than a quarter (23.3%) of NEETs aged under 25, though this represents a small improvement compared to 2014 (19.7%). Over half (55.3%) of those leaving the scheme in 2015 took up an offer within 4 months of registration, slightly less than in 2014 (58.3%). Follow-up data to look at subsequent outcomes are not yet available.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

For the recognition of non-formal and informal education, VÕTA system, which takes into account earlier studies and work experience, has been developed in Estonia. Its objective is to make visible and value any knowledge and skills regardless of where these were acquired.

VÕTA allows recognising:

1. earlier formal education acquired within the adult education system;
2. knowledge obtained during further training or individually;
3. knowledge and skills obtained from working experience.

Recognising the learning and working experience requires that the educational institutions opened up to a new approach, agreed on procedures and rules and were ready to address every person individually. Please see [chapter 3.5](#) for a more detailed description of VÕTA system in Estonia.

Procedures for the validation

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.

Young people can also describe their knowledge, skills and practical experience acquired through youth work using a designated online tool [Teeviit](#) (formerly known as Stardiplats). There is a growing number of registered users of the portal, which was launched in 2010 by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (since 01.08.2020 [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 the opportunity to generate CV based on the descriptions.

Procedures for obtaining formal education qualifications

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 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.

Currently, 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 counselling.

For further information please consult section [Validation of Non-Formal and Informal learning](#) in Eurydice.

There is no specific target group(s) within the youth population defined in Estonia for which the validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning is specifically supported.

There is no specific program for the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process, but different educational institutions train their staff themselves.

Information and guidance

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 counselling

Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 31.12.2020 the Youth Agency of Foundation Archimedes) manages and develops the portal mitteformaalne.ee aimed at promoting non-formal and informal learning of youth, raising awareness of its value and opportunities for recognition, including [Youthpass](#). The portal is widely known among youth workers in Estonia.

Quality assurance

No system of quality assurance of the procedures and/or the criteria/indicators/standards used to assess for the validation of non-formal and informal competences exists in Estonia.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

The more important directions and choices in Estonian education have been set out in the [Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#), which emphasises, inter alia, the importance of openness, tolerance and international cooperation in the development of the lifelong learning system. Additionally, the strategy highlights the relevance of internationalisation in the preparation of employees in the areas of economic growth. It is also necessary to support the introduction of international experience and competence in the institutions of higher education with a view to improving the quality and attractiveness of education. It is of importance to make an effort to participate in the global labour market, which requires an increasingly stronger focus on professional knowledge and skills, foreign language skills, cultural awareness and tolerance. Similarly, the benefits to society from the internationalisation of education need to be explained. For more detailed information by the level of education, please consult the section "[Mobility and internationalisation](#)" in [Eurydice](#).

Higher Education

The implementation programme of the [Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) in the area of higher education – the [Higher education programme 2020-2023](#) - highlights the role of the internationalisation of education in supporting the development of Estonian areas of economic growth and the quality of higher education. Providing academic and professional foreign language training in Estonia, paying attention to work practice opportunities and creating employment opportunities for graduates in the Estonian labour market are also integral to the internationalisation. The same principles are supported by the Estonia's competitiveness strategy 'Estonia 2020', which also recognises the relevance of internationalising at home – attracting talents to the areas important for Estonia and becoming more active in hiring foreign teaching staff in Estonian institutions of higher education to give the local students unable to study in a foreign institution of higher education an opportunity to have a contact with an international environment.

Vocational Education

According to [the European Commission's Mobility Scoreboard](#) on IVET, Estonia has a policy intention to integrate international learning mobility experiences in the curricula of IVET programmes. This can be seen from some paragraphs from the Act for Vocational Education Institutions, in particular:

1. Paragraph 26, which establishes that in the application of Estonian vocational education credit points, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, ECVET, shall be used; and
2. Paragraph 22, which stipulates that the Vocational Education Standard sets out the principles for recognition of prior learning and professional experience that is closely connected with learning mobility.

The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy's Vocational Education Programme sets an overall goal for improving international cooperation in general. The goal of the programme is to support participation in the Erasmus+ Programme to increase the student and teacher mobility and school participation in international networks. The Vocational Education Programme is updated every year with regard to the upcoming four years and confirmed by the Minister of Education and Research. In addition, most of the vocational institutions in Estonia have set qualitative and quantitative targets in its development plan to improve international cooperation between vocational institutions and increase the IVET learner's mobility. Some schools have compiled even its own internationalisation strategy with specific IVET mobility indicators (e.g. "the share of students participating in mobility" or "the number of implemented mobility projects").

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The following national mobility programmes are available:

- Youth for Understanding ([YFU](#)) exchange programmes in general secondary education, in-and outgoing exchanges for several periods (year, semester and summer programmes). The programme is financed largely by private budgets of participants.
- [Erasmus+](#) short and long term study mobility: under the cooperation projects of general education school; student mobility in higher education and vocational education, work practice of vocational educational institutions under Erasmus+ study mobility; duration varies from the 19 days to year depending from the specific action line. The Erasmus+ is financed by the EU budget and in general, the allocation covers travel and living costs for young people.
- [Kristjan Jaak scholarship programme](#): a national scholarship programme initiated in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Research and Archimedes Foundation with a view to supporting the studies abroad of Master's and Doctoral students enrolled at Estonian institutions of higher education and academic and research related secondments abroad of the Master's and Doctoral students (and teaching staff). Duration of the mobility period varies from 30 days to the whole period of the degree studies (Master's and Doctoral studies). The allocation supports travel and living costs. The programme is financed by the public budget.
- [Young scholar grant programme](#): a scholarship programme founded in cooperation between private companies, the Ministry of Education and Research and Archimedes Foundation, aimed at supporting talented upper secondary school graduates towards acquiring a Bachelor's degree in acknowledged foreign universities. The programme provides general grant of 4 000 euros. The budget is combined from public and private sources.
- [DoRa Plus](#). The programme supports 1- 10 month outward and inward study mobility of young researchers and Master's students. Dora Plus' total budget from 1.08.2015- 31.05.2023 is 22.5 million euros. The programme covers generally travel and living costs.
- [Compatriots programme 2014-2020](#). Supporting the studies of expatriate Estonian youth at Estonian public universities, state institutions of professional higher education and vocational educational institutions. The budget covers the starting sum and travel and living costs for students.
- [Kindred peoples programme IV](#). A programme launched to support the languages and cultures of the indigenous Uralic peoples (Finno-Ugric and Samoyed) under which Doctoral or Master's studies in Estonian state universities of people of Finno-Ugric origin living in Russia are funded. The grant covers travel and living costs.
- [National Scholarship Programme for International Students, Researchers and Teaching Staff](#). A scholarship schema, which is partially based on the foreign agreements of the

Ministry of Education and Research and offers students scholarships for formal education, exchange programmes and participation in summer schools.

- Scholarships for the academic study of the Estonian language and culture by foreign students. The programme awards the scholarship [Estophilus](#), under which funding is provided for Estonia-related studies and research carried out in Estonia by Masters and Doctoral students or researchers holding a Doctoral degree who are enrolled in foreign institutions of higher education. In addition, the participation in intermediate and advanced summer or winter courses of the Estonian language and culture is supported.
- [Ministry of Foreign Affairs scholarships](#). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers Masters and Doctoral scholarships under the instruments of development cooperation to the citizens of the development cooperation states of relevance for Estonia. Scholarship applications must be submitted by universities on a project basis, i.e., students cannot apply for the scholarship directly. After that, the students have the possibility to apply directly from the university.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

The cross-border mobility in non-formal learning and youth work in Estonia is in large part based on the opportunities offered through Erasmus+ programme i.e. opportunities for learning mobility for youth groups (youth exchanges) and individuals (European Voluntary Service).

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research also has established cooperation with Japan to provide a mutual learning opportunity for young people under which a regular exchange of youth groups takes place. The programme is financed by public budgets of Japan and Estonia.

Quality assurance

In general, the quality assurance system for cross-border mobility programmes listed above is based on the legal framework of the programme (such as the legal base for the Erasmus+ programme) and consists of the following elements:

1. programme steering group/committee in charge of allocating the grant in accordance with the legal base;
2. annual reporting.

The reporting is in general considered as an input for the national policy programme annual reporting. The annual reporting on the policy level is connected to set the targets for the next years together with planning future allocation.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

The target groups identified in official documents

The term "student with special educational needs" refers in Estonia to a student whose talent, learning difficulties, health status, disability, behavioural and emotional disorders, longer-term absence from schooling or insufficient proficiency in language of instruction of a school bring about the need to make changes or adjustments in the subject matter, process, duration, workload or environment of study (e.g., teaching materials, school rooms, language of communication, including a sign language or other alternative means of communication, support staff, teachers who have received special training), in the expected learning outcomes or in the work plan drawn up by a teacher for working with a class.

The term “higher education student with a special need” is applied for a student who has a hearing, vision or movement disability or a special psychological need or any other disability with functional impairment due to which he or she requires support services for participation in the study and successful studying.

Students in threat of being excluded from education include students with socio-economic difficulties, behavioural disorders and problems, students whose mother language is other than the language of instruction, new immigrants, health-related problems.

Policies in the context of formal education

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, everyone has the right to education. According to the Education Act and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, Estonia has an inclusive education policy and every child has the right to attend a preschool child care institution of his or her residence area or study, according to a curriculum of an appropriate level (the national curriculum for basic schools, the national curriculum for upper secondary schools, the simplified national curriculum for basic schools), in an ordinary class of a school close to home and to receive different kinds of support to study.

The general objectives of education of students with special needs are not different from the general objectives of the corresponding educational level and do not depend on whether it is conducted in mainstream or in special schools. According to the general concept of disability policy of the Republic of Estonia, equal rights to preschool, basic, secondary and higher education must be guaranteed for people with special needs. Please consult the section [“Educational Support and Guidance” in Eurydice](#) for further information.

Programmes/projects/initiatives in non-formal learning, informal learning, and youth work

[“Inclusion of youth at risk of exclusion and improvement of youth employability”](#) is a governmental programme supported through European Social Fund and implemented until 2023. During this period, many different sub-programmes are implemented (the Youth Prop-Up Programme, the Youth Summer Work Programme, Community Practice, Mobile Workshops, Youth Initiatives) aimed at supporting youth participation in youth work, education and/or employment, paying special attention to youth at risk of exclusion. Most of the activities have ended, but some still continue until the end of the programme. In addition to these programmes, support is also provided to local governments to develop and improve their youth work services in order to reach youth currently not taking part in youth work and provide young people with more opportunities to participate in youth work. For this, local governments must co-operate with each other. Together they map the situation of youth work (i.e., available youth work services, available youth workers, the number of young people, etc.) and plan activities that best meet the needs of young people and the local communities. In addition, we have planned activities to increase knowledge about young people and the effectiveness of youth work measures created for them (this includes among other things various analysis and studies). Furthermore, through the programme, youth workers are provided various training opportunities (several long-term and thematic training activities are focused on inclusion, e.g., how to involve more young people in NEET status, how to develop an awareness of intercultural learning and diversity in youth work, etc.).

[EEA grants programme “Children and Youth at Risk”](#) – a programme implemented in 2012-2017. The aim of the programme was to improve the well-being of children and young people at risk. For this, many different projects were implemented. For example, the HUKK-AP project (involving and developing hobby schools) was aimed to create more opportunities for young people to take part in youth work and to increase their competences for continuing education or for being successful in the labour market. As a result of the project, 3 231 young people with fewer opportunities participated in hobby activities, 69 new regional hobby groups were established and 1647 specialists working

participated in training and mentoring. All of this has helped to make hobby schools more inclusive. [The HUKK- AP Project](#) - Involvement of Organisations Working in Area of Hobby Education for Young People – was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research and implemented by Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)). The aim of the programme was to support the variety of hobby activities, their efficiency and suitability for youngsters` needs. The objective is to create prerequisites and working solutions in order to involve disadvantaged youngsters in hobby education. It is important to support opportunities for participating, introduce new methods and increase competencies of educators that enable to increase access of disadvantaged young people to hobby education, mostly in the are of culture and art education.

The main directions of activities:

1. increasing the capability of hobby schools to involve young people with fewer opportunities systematically;
2. promoting hobby activities in new priority target groups;
3. involving young people with fewer opportunities into hobby activities;
4. monitoring and assessing the impact of the project and hobby education.

„[Developing youth workers training](#)“ is a governmental programme supported through European Social Fund and implemented in 2015-2019, which aimed to provide youth workers with training opportunities and developed the methodology in youth work and quality of training. The total budget of the programme was **1.89 million euros**.

[Youth Meetings](#) is a programme established to increase interactions between young people from a different ethnic background and thus increase their mutual understanding and development but also to enhance their cultural awareness, openness and tolerance. Through the programme, organisers promote positive contacts between young people (11 to 16 years-of-age) living in Estonia but speaking different mother tongues (mainly Estonian and Russian) by giving them an opportunity to carry out projects together. These projects detail the goals and targets they expect to achieve. “Youth Meetings” has been very popular since its creation in 2015 with 1,551 Estonian and Russian speaking young people participating yearly in the project. Altogether, “Youth Meetings” has brought together around 1,700 young people annually. The “Youth Meetings” programme is financed through the Ministry of Education and Research. The budget for the programme in 2020 was 234,022 euros.

Estonian Youth Agency (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)) together with 14 other agencies for Erasmus+ youth activities, initiated and was involved in a strategic co-operation “[Strategic Partnership on inclusion](#)” – SPI - to involve more inclusion organisations and increase the participation of young people with fewer opportunities by capacity building and their involvement in the E+ programme. The consortium of agencies has developed a strategic approach to reach out and involve three target groups: young people with disability/health problems, young people with low education attainment and young people from disadvantaged rural areas – i.e., young people that are underrepresented in Erasmus+ in different countries. In 2017, a new strand was initiated together with Latvian and Lithuanian agencies and other partners to work more strategically with young people in NEET situations. Long-term results are yet to be seen since the partnership is halfway on its first cycle.

In addition, Estonian Youth Work magazine MIHUS has focused on issues such as inclusion and solidarity among young people:

1. [Youth work with young people with fewer opportunities](#) (2010),
2. [Youth work and sensitivity towards different cultures](#) (2016).

In addition, a manual for inclusive youth work has been created and published in Estonian and Russian languages: "[Inclusive youth work](#)" (2012).

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Policies in formal education

Citizenship education exists as a compulsory separate subject both in primary and secondary education in Estonia. The length of time it is taught as a compulsory subject 5 years. Please consult [Citizenship Education in Europe. Eurydice Report](#) for detail information.

The activities in education to support social cohesion are based on the "Integrating Estonia 2020". [Integrating Estonia 2020](#) is a strategy of the Government to ensure integration and social cohesion in Estonia in the period 2014-2020. The general objective of the "Integrating Estonia 2020" is a socially cohesive society where individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds actively participate in society and share democratic values. The plan serves as the basis for integration policy that is carried out during 2014-2020, and it aims at:

- increasing the cohesion of society;
- increasing the competitiveness of the Republic of Estonia;
- ensuring security;
- preserving the Estonian language and culture;
- preserving the culture and language of the ethnic minorities;
- ensuring increasing tolerance towards different groups of society;
- ensuring a stronger civic identity.

The estimated total cost of the development plan from 2014-2020 is 73.52 million euros.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Research developed a "[Concept for education path without bullying](#)" – a document stating the main understanding of bullying, its prevention and interventions in Estonia. It lists main programmes available to address bullying through all levels of education. The concept does not ensure public funding for the programmes.

Programmes/projects/initiatives in the context of non-formal and informal learning, and youth work,

In Estonia, the main aim of activities in the youth field for the years 2014-2020 is to support establishing a coherent and creative society through development and self-realisation possibilities provided for young people. Please see [chapter 4.7. Youth work to foster social inclusion](#) and [chapter 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture](#) for the overview of main programmes, projects and initiatives of youth work and non-formal learning.

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

The [national curriculum for upper secondary schools](#) includes subjects and topics supporting the innovation skills of students. Entrepreneurship education is explicitly referred to in the national curricula and is described in detail in [chapter 3.8](#).

In addition, the curriculum also defines „Technology and innovation“ as a cross-curricular topic. The cross-curricular topic "Technology and innovation" strives to shape the pupils into people who are open to innovation and who can expediently use modern technology and cope in rapidly changing technological living, learning and working environments. The pupils are guided to:

1. acquire knowledge about how technology functions and what its development trends are in different spheres of life;
2. comprehend the influence of technological innovation on how people work and live, on their quality of life and the environment today and in the past;
3. understand the mutual influences and connections of technological, economic, social and cultural innovation;
4. comprehend and critically assess the positive and negative effects of technological development and develop balanced opinions on ethical issues of technological development and the corresponding applications;
5. use information and communication technology (ICT) to solve vital problems and make learning and working more efficient; and
6. develop creativity, cooperation and initiative skills when implementing innovative ideas in various projects.

Covering the cross-curricular topic on this level of study focuses on the group works and research projects in the school. The goal is to develop positive attitudes towards technological innovation and related career possibilities, to ensure preparedness for all pupils to use ICT in everyday life, studies and work.

In vocational training [the Vocational Education Standard](#), which defines uniform requirements for vocational training, there is competence “Initiative and entrepreneurship” defined as a result, that should be achieved in the vocational training. Students are guided to:

1. think systematically and creatively, to evaluate the ideas critically and to find opportunities to implement them;
2. initiate, develop and implement ideas;
3. have an initial knowledge about entrepreneurship
4. be able to draft a personal short and long-term career plan with guidance;
5. find independently opportunities for further studies and employment;
6. connect training with labour market demands.

Teachers capability of developing skills for innovation is generally supported through tools and training concerned with entrepreneurship education support. Please see [chapter 3.8](#) for more information.

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

Youth work in Estonia by its guiding principles defined in [the Youth Work Act](#) aims to “support the initiative of young people” which includes supporting new ideas and endeavours young people are developing and also supporting competencies to develop and implement ideas. The whole youth work sector therefore in all its forms has to find ways to fulfil this aim including youth work in youth centres, hobby schools, youth organisations, summer camps, etc. To support the development of innovation in youth work a “Smart Youth Work concept” was approved. Please see [chapter 6.8](#) for more information.

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 sets “A digital focus in lifelong learning” as one of five key policy aims. The vision of the strategy is that by 2020 modern digital technology is used for learning and teaching effectively and efficiently, an improvement

in the digital skills of the total population has been achieved and access to the new generation of digital infrastructure is ensured. Successful implementation of the modern approach to learning and an increase in the quality of learning requires students and teachers, teaching staffs and heads of schools to be equipped with digital competence. Use of digital learning resources helps to make learning more engaging, supports the teacher in the process of learning and broadens the opportunities in lifelong learning.

In order to implement the goal of the strategy, a [Digital Focus Programme](#) was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2014. The digital focus programme concentrates on an improvement in the digital competences of learners, teachers, teaching staffs and Heads of schools and on purposeful use of digital learning resources with a view to supporting the implementation of a modern approach to learning and an increase in the quality of the study.

Authority responsible: Ministry of Education and Research. Period: 2015-2020. Budget: about 47 million euros.

Main activities and measures:

- the curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools as well as the curricula for vocational education will be updated in view of the acquisition of digital competences;
- the exploitation of ICT in all subject areas of general education will be supported, the requirements for ICT competencies in professional standards will be updated; digital competences of learners will be assessed on a regular basis;
- general digital skills of teachers and the teaching staffs will be developed; a digital skills self-assessment environment for teachers will be developed;
- programmes targeted at the development of the digital skills of learners will be developed (e.g., ProgeTiiger, Robootika, Teadustiiger, Wolfram) which also attracts learners into the areas of exact and natural sciences, engineering, design and technology and ICT;
- in general education and vocational education, the e-assessment methodology will be implemented; an information technology application will be developed for e-assessment (Eksamite Infosüsteem EIS (Examinations Information System)) which will be applied at all levels of education;
- from 2015, new textbooks are digitally available; quality requirements for digital learning resources will be established; an information system for digital learning resources will be developed and implemented;
- development of digital learning resources for general and vocational education will be supported through competitions, tenders and contracted specialist work;
- Schools and managers of schools will be supported in ensuring a suitable network connection in general education schools;
- a needs-based support system will be created for providing students with personal digital devices.

Expected impact and changes:

- digital competence as one of the key competences is developed in all subjects and hobby activities; it is a natural part of the process of study;
- digital competences of learners, teachers, teaching staffs and Heads of schools have improved;
- digital learning resources are of high quality and easily accessible to everyone;
- public access to the new generation of digital infrastructure has improved;
- schools have a modern digital infrastructure; personal digital devices, e.g., smartphones, are also used for learning on a daily basis.

No evidence-based monitoring/assessment/evaluation of the implementation of the programme has been conducted as of yet.

No major revisions/updates of the programme have gone through since its introduction.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

The [National curriculum for upper secondary schools](#) defines digital competence as a general competence, that should be shaped through learning outcomes expected in all subjects, but also through discussing cross-curricular subjects at lessons, extracurricular and out-of-school activities. The „digital competence“ is defined as the ability to use developing digital technology for coping in a quickly changing society for learning, acting as a citizen as well as communicating in communities; to use digital means for finding and preserving information and to evaluate the relevance and trustworthiness of the information; to participate in creating digital content; including creation and use of texts, images, multimedia; to use suitable digital tools and methods for solving problems, to communicate and cooperate in different digital environments; to be aware of the dangers of the digital environment and know how to protect one’s privacy, personal information and digital identity; to follow the same moral and value principles as in everyday life.

The curriculum also defines „information environment“ and „technology and innovation“ as cross-curricular topics:

1. information environment – the aim is for the student to develop into an information-conscious person who senses and is aware of the surrounding information environment, is able to analyse it critically and acts according to his or her aims and society’s communications ethics;
2. technology and innovation – the aim is for the student to develop into a person who is well-disposed toward innovation and who knows how to use contemporary technologies in a goal-oriented manner, who copes with the rapidly changing technological living, learning and work environment.

In vocational training [the Vocational Education Standard](#), which defines uniform requirements for vocational training, there is an informational technology competence defined as a result, that should be achieved in the vocational training after the Basic school. The IT competence defined in the Standard states for the 3rd level students in vocational education, that student „should know main opportunities and potential risks of IT“ and „is able to use the internet both for personal and professional goals“. For the 4th level students in vocational education, the outcome of the studies should, in addition, ensure, that a student should be able to use main applications; to assess the trustworthiness of the information available; to create, present, search and understand information.

Previously known as [the Information Technology Foundation for Education \(HITSA\)](#) (since 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) was established with a goal to ensure that the graduates at all levels of education obtain digital skills necessary for the development of economy and society and the possibilities offered by ICT are skilfully used in teaching and learning, which helps improve the quality of learning and teaching at all levels of education. HITSA was a non-profit association established by the Republic of Estonia, the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, Eesti Telekom and the Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications. The activities of the educational programmes are targeted at advancing and intensifying the cooperation between ICT industry, universities, other educational institutions and the state. HITSA also offers [a training portal](#) for educators, youth workers etc in the area of digital technologies,

In 2016, [the Information Technology Foundation for Education \(HITSA\)](#) (since 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) developed a guiding material to understand and develop digital competencies among students in all the level of education. The material includes a [model of digital competencies for learners](#).

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

Smart Youth Work

One of the measures planned Under the Youth Field Development Plan for 2014-2020 was to develop a concept for smart youth work in order to 1) to make greater use of information technology in working with youth, including raising youth digital literacy in offering ICT-related hobby activities; 2) developing youth work using new means and 3) raising the competencies of youth and youth workers.

The Smart Youth Work concept was approved in 2017 with an aim to describe the basic principles for smart youth work and to create preconditions for development and adoption of smart solutions in youth work. 3 main directions for activities have been set:

1. smart youth work solutions for youth;
2. digital solutions related to youth workers' competencies and work methods;
3. quality, organisation and efficiency of youth work provision and better knowledge of youth.

Under these directions, 22 activities on the national level are implemented in the years 2017-2018.

Training on smart youth work has been offered to youth workers by the [Foundation Archimedes youth agency](#) until 2019. Since 01.01.2021, the [Foundation Archimedes Youth Agency](#) was joint with the [Education and Youth Board](#), and it became the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (NA for the [Erasmus+ programme](#)). See more about smart youth work from [Chapter 10.4](#).

Please also see [chapter 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies](#) for examples of initiatives to promote media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The central initiative to raise awareness about the risks on the internet is [Safer Internet Centre in Estonia – Targalt Internetis](#). The project's mission is a smarter Internet use by children and their parents and the prevention of the online distribution of child sexual abuse material. The project is co-financed 50% by the European Commission Connecting European Facility Programme. The project includes:

- training sessions and seminars for children, parents, teachers and social workers, and awareness-raising events for the general public;
- the drafting of training and awareness-raising materials for children, teachers and parents;
- creative competitions for students;
- assistance and counselling from the Children's Helpline 116111 (www.lasteabi.ee) children and parents on the safe Internet and digital mobile devices use by telephone, MSN (user info@lasteabi.ee) and other IM solutions;
- the web-based hotline www.vihjeliin.ee, which allows Internet users to provide information about web environments which contain material that violates children's right to sexual self-determination; notices about other materials that are inappropriate for children may also be sent to Vihjeliin;
- cooperation among different stakeholders in Estonia and Europe and participation in the INHOPE and INSAFE cooperation networks.

The activities of the follow-up project are being implemented by four organisations:

1. the Estonian Union for Child Welfare is a coordinator of the project and contributes to awareness-raising activities, coordinates youth participation and operates Estonian Hotline www.vihjeliin.ee;
2. the Information Technology Foundation for Education coordinates and carries out awareness-raising activities;
3. the Estonian Advice Centre (which manages the Children's Helpline 116111) provides help and counselling for children and parents if problems emerge in the use of the Internet and digital media devices, and participates in awareness-raising activities;
4. the Police and Border Guard Board is contributing its competence to all activities.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

Youth information is defined as one area of youth work in Estonia and The Youth Agency of the Archimedes Foundation (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)) is supporting access and promotion of [European youth portal](#) in Estonia.

There are 16 centralised public centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), provide career information, career counselling, psychological, socio-pedagogical, special education counselling and speech therapy. Please see [chapter 3.4](#). for more information on guidance and counselling in Rajaleidja Centres.

[Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (since 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) organised yearly an information fair for youth [Teeviit](#) attended by thousands of young people in Estonia. The event ended in 2017, and, in 2018, Teeviit became the national youth information channel for young people.

In addition, local and regional information for youth is available through local youth information portals such as

- www.polvanoored.ee
- www.noorteinfo.ee
- www.tallinn.ee/est/noorteinfo/

Awareness raising initiatives

Throughout the years, different awareness-raising campaigns have been implemented, especially supporting awareness about learning that takes place in a youth work setting. As a result, the importance of nonformal and informal learning is currently acknowledged in several policy documents such as the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 and the Youth Field development plan 2014-2020.

There are 3 dedicated resource portals to support the development of understanding about the value of non-formal and informal education, especially in youth work:

1. www.mitteformaalne.ee is a resource and information portal targeting mainly youth worker, young leaders, teachers and trainers with an aim to promote the value of non-formal learning and to support its development by providing access to training materials, publications, methods and training opportunities.
2. www.teeviit.ee (formerly known as Stardiplats) is a resource and information portal targeting young people in the age group 7-26 as a main target group, but

also youth workers. The aim is to provide opportunities and support to acknowledge and document the learning that takes place in youth work.

3. <http://noored.ee/noortepass/> is a portal to support young people to use European Youth Pass as a tool to document and recognise non-formal and informal learning.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

There are continuing debates on the formal education system's cooperation with non-formal and informal education, which has also been brought out in the draft document of the new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The concept of health and well-being are used together as the need of the two sectors cooperating is increasing constantly. The concept of well-being is more prevalent. The main governmental authority responsible for youth health and well-being is the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#). Their role is to plan the health care policy and organize its implementation. See more in [chapter 7.2](#).

Two cross-national studies provide information about young people's well-being, health behaviors, and social context:

1. [Health Behavior in School-aged Children](#) (HBSC) is conducted once every four years among 11, 13 and 15-year-old students.
2. [The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs \(ESPAD\)](#) collects data on substance use among 15-16-year-old students once every four years.

According to those studies, 88% of young people rate their health as good or very good and are satisfied with their life. See more in [chapter 7.1](#).

The [Child Protection Act](#) defines early detection and prevention of risks as important areas. Prevention is specifically addressed in the act. See more in [chapter 7.6](#).

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Two cross-national studies provide information about young people's well-being, health behaviours and their social context:

1. [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children](#) (HBSC) is conducted once every four years among 11, 13 and 15-year-old students.
2. [The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs \(ESPAD\)](#) collects data on substance use among 15-16-year-old students once every four years.

According to the latest HBSC study, most Estonian young people rate their health (an indicator of general health) as fair (88% rated their health as good or very good) and are satisfied with their life (88% rated life satisfaction high). During recent years mental health problems have increased in frequency among Estonian youth – students have reported more episodes of depression and difficulties in sleeping. Increased screen time (TV, computer, tablet) also affects students' well-being. About half of the students aged 11-15 spend five or more hours using electronic devices. Excessive internet use and internet addiction are growing problems in Estonia.

According to the HBSC and ESPAD surveys, young people are using less tobacco and alcohol compared to previous years. At the same time, Estonian young people are among the first three countries in Europe where tobacco and alcohol initiation and binge drinking

are highest (young people were asked at what age they first smoked a cigarette, drank alcohol or got drunk). A positive trend is that compared to previous studies, the usage of illegal substances, including cannabis, has decreased remarkably over the years, however, the usage of cannabis during the previous 30 days has not decreased. According to the study published in [2019](#), the usage of drugs and alcohol is connected with risk behaviour and bullying, satisfaction with school, etc.

Another serious problem in Estonia is obesity caused by inactive lifestyles and poor nutrition. Only one in every six children takes part in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity that lasts 60 minutes per day. Less than half of all children consume fruit and vegetables daily. Strategies and interventions are needed that focus on increasing physical activity and shaping children's eating habits.

Sexual behaviour among Estonian youth has consistently improved: the number of teenage pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted infections has decreased. At the same time, the last HBSC study demonstrated a decrease in the use of condoms at the time of last intercourse.

Main concepts

In general, both "health" and "well-being" are in use in Estonia but as the understanding of factors that influence health and well-being and cooperation need has increased, the use of the well-being concept is more prevalent.

According to the [Child Protection Act](#), a child's well-being means "the condition supporting the development of the child in which the physical, medical, psychological, emotional, social, cognitive, educational and economic needs of the child are satisfied".

In the renewed [Public Health Act](#), the use of the term "health profile" will be changed to "health and well-being profile". The reason for this change is that all partners at local, regional and state levels feel more connected to making the communities healthier.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The main governmental authority responsible for youth health and well-being is the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#), where the responsibility lies with the Minister of Social Protection and in two departments:

1. the Health System Development and Medicine Department,
2. the Department of Children and Families.

The role of the Ministry of Social Affairs is to plan health care policy and organize its implementation and to ensure people's social coping and development and support the well-being of children and families.

The main Governmental authorities and their responsibilities according to the [Government of the Republic Act](#) relevant to the health and well-being of youth are:

1. the [Ministry of Education and Research](#): responsible for youth policy and education policy,
2. the [Ministry of Culture](#): responsible for sport and social cohesion and integration policy,
3. the [Ministry of Interior](#): responsible for crime prevention,
4. the [Ministry of Justice](#) responsible for the justice system.

Main public actors and foundations of policy fields relevant to social inclusion are:

- [Chancellor of Justice](#), an independent official institution responsible for ensuring the rights of children would be protected,

- [Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner](#), an independent office responsible for the protection of equal rights,
- [Social Insurance Board](#), an agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for the social insurance benefits and child protection services,
- [Health Board](#), an agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for regulating issues with medical professions, devices, etc., and also for monitoring, prevention, and control of communicable diseases and risk analysis in epidemiology,
- [National Institute for Health Development](#), a governmental institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs responsible for health research and promotion,
- [Health and Welfare Information Systems Centre](#), a governmental institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs responsible for data and IT systems in areas of the Ministry,
- [State Agency of Medicines](#), a governmental body under the Ministry of Social Affairs; main responsibility is the protection and promotion of public and animal health, through the supervision of medicines for human and veterinary use,
- [Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental institution implementing education and youth policy,
- [Foundation of Sports Training and Information](#), a semi-governmental body Under the Ministry of Education and Research responsible for sports information and professionalization in sports.

The main non-public actors:

1. Estonian National Olympic Committee
2. Sports For All, an umbrella organization for sports and healthy lifestyle promoters;
3. Estonian Union of School Sport, an umbrella organization for local and regional school sports associations;
4. Estonian National Youth Council
5. Estonian Sports Association Jõud is the national umbrella organization for sports associations of all the 15 counties of Estonia directing its efforts at sports movement and providing better conditions for sports activities.

The general distribution of responsibilities

In general, health and well-being responsibilities are divided between the central government and local government according to the different laws in different areas of the health and well-being domain. Most importantly:

1. local governments are responsible for ensuring the maintenance of health and wellbeing institutions, sports infrastructure if it is under their ownership,
2. child protection services provided is the responsibility of local governments,
3. local governments are obliged to analyze public health and security situation and prepare health and well-being profile, that will be a base for the strategic plan,
4. health services are regulated and financed in general from the central government level,
5. the services in the area of sports are mostly provided via private and non-governmental institutions and supported via state budget.

Planning of the policy, financing and developing laws and regulations is the responsibility of the central government and its agencies.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policymaking and implementation, which also covers the issues of health and wellbeing of youth. The

central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring implementation through action plans and their reports, monitoring cooperation and, in cases of need, initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, in all the policy fields.

In addition, there are several permanent cooperation bodies established:

[Child Protection Council](#)

The Council was formed in 2017. The tasks of the Council are to:

1. establish the objectives of the state child protection policy and to coordinate the activities necessary for the implementation,
2. submit proposals concerning the protection of children's rights and ensuring the well-being of children to the Government of the Republic and other relevant institutions,
3. give relevant recommendations for cross-sectoral preventive measures of child protection.

The Council includes representatives of the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, the Association of Estonian Cities, the Association of Municipalities of Estonia, the Union of Estonian Student Councils and the Estonian National Youth Council, as well as the Minister of Education and Research, Minister of Culture, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Finance and the Directors of the Social Insurance Board and the National Institute for Health Development. The chairman of the Council is the Minister of Social Protection.

[Drug Prevention Committee](#)

The Minister of the Interior leads the permanent committee, the goal of which is to coordinate prevention work and reduce the availability of narcotics. Members of the committee decided by the government and committee is supported by experts working group.

[Crime Prevention Committee](#)

The Minister of Justice leads the permanent committee, which co-ordinates the fight against crime, including crime prevention. Committee members are Minister of the Interior Affairs, Minister of the Education and Research, Minister of Finance, Minister of Social Affairs, Director General of the Police and Border Guard Board, Prosecutor General. The committee is supported by an expert working group.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

On 18.02.2015, the Riigikogu (parliament) approved „[The general Principles of Estonian sports policy until 2030](#)“ (Eesti spordipoliitika põhialused aastani 2030. Decision by the Parliament 18. February 2015).

The vision of Estonian sports policy is that:

1. in 2030, the mental and physical balance and welfare of the Estonian people correspond to the level of Nordic countries and Estonia has a living environment contributing physical activity together with accompanying services that support people's healthy life expectancy and self-fulfilment, as well as economic growth,

2. exercise and sport have a significant and growing role in increasing the vitality of the Estonian people, creating a diverse living environment and creating a good reputation for the Republic of Estonia.

There are four priority goals:

1. a majority of the population exercise and are engaged in sport,
2. exercise and sport is a significant economic branch and employer with strong organisation,
3. exercise and sport are the carriers of spirit, coherence and positive values,
4. Estonia is represented in an effective and dignified way at the international level.

The measures specifically targeting children and young people:

1. to boost exercise and sporting activities, a support system for recreational activities is developed and introduced for children and young people,
2. safe and age-appropriate sporting conditions are ensured for children and young people,
3. the priority of the development of achievement sport is regular, diverse and planned training of children and young people in sports clubs and sports schools,
4. the Government values targeted sports activities of children and young people and support this field in a systematic way; regional and nationwide study and training centres are to be created and developed.

In the preamble of the document, it is noted that „sports and exercise are healthy, educational, entertaining and social activities of all demographics and social target groups, diversifying cultural and youth work“.

No specific target groups within the youth population are identified.

The connection to EU Physical Activity Guidelines is not specified in the document.

The government authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the strategy is the Ministry of Culture.

No evidence-based monitoring/assessment/evaluation of the implementation of the strategy has been conducted yet.

The document has not been revised or updated since its introduction.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

Support for coaches and instructors of children and youth sports

Since 2015, the government has supported the salary of coaches and instructors working with children and youth with a fixed additional support sum in order to increase the variability and accessibility of sports for young people.

Quarterly, around 1000-1300 coaches and 30 000-40 000 young athletes are supported in the amount of 0.8 - 1.7 million euros. The [maximum support](#) per coach in one month in 2020 was 630 euros with taxes from the state. The employer has to add at least 734,76 euros with taxes additionally in order to be eligible for the support.

Support for hobby education

In 2017, the government proposed and the parliament [decided](#) to [finance additionally hobby education and hobby activities](#) including sport from state budget with an aim to increase access to and the variety and quality of hobby education and activities for young people between 7-19 years old. The annual budget is 15 million euros. It is divided into local government budgets based on the number of young people, taking into account the problems young people are facing in the municipality (the formula includes the number of

young people with special needs, the financial capability of local government and the ratio of the number hobby opportunities and the number of young people). In order to use the support, a local government (or a group of local governments together) has to draw up a plan on how to increase access to and the variety of hobby education and activities provided. The first deadline to submit the plans was 1.09.2017. A vast majority of the municipalities (a total number of 199 from 213 in Estonia during that time, in 2018, there are 79 local municipalities in total in Estonia as a result of the administrative reform) submitted the plan, of which were 53 in a cooperation group.

The first results of the additional financing to hobby education and activities are brought out on a website Noorte Huvi Heaks <https://noortehuviheaks.entk.ee/>.

Learning to swim

The programme is designed to support primary school students in swimming lessons. Main objectives are connected with healthy lifestyle promotion and prevention of accidents and death connected with poor swimming skills. In 2017, the programme was reformed and since 2018 the amount of state funding is 1.230.082 euros.

School Olympic Games

School Olympic Games is an educational activity, encouraging useful sports that unite students, teachers and parents, and follows the principles of the Olympic Charter in its mentality, essence and rituals.

According to the School Olympic Games idea proposed by the Estonian Olympic Academy, it is not simply sports competitions that are held under the Olympic flag. A very important aspect of School Olympic Games is the relevance of the Olympic education period that precedes the competitions and during which, in different subject classes, children are given different knowledge about the idea and history of the Olympic movement and have a chance to use this knowledge in different contests. The aim of the School Olympic Games is to introduce the Olympic idea and popularize sports by making sports life in schools more colourful. At the same time, the School Olympic Games is not a national event in which only the best that have been selected in previous competitions can participate.

The amount of public funding is not available.

TV 10 Olümpiastarti

The Estonian Athletic Association has organised for more than 45 years a competition for general education students, TV 10 Olümpiastarti, wherein around 10 000 children and young people participate. As the event is connected with the Estonian National Broadcaster, the programme supports the promotion of youth sports.

There are no specific mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation established for the programmes listed.

The connection to EU Physical Activity Guidelines is not specified in the programmes listed.

Physical education in schools

The national curriculum for upper secondary schools defines „physical education“ as compulsory. The purpose of teaching physical education in upper secondary school is to develop students' physical education competence, i.e., the ability to recognise the value of physical activity and healthy living as a part of one's lifestyle; the ability to assess one's physical fitness level in an objective manner and to use suitable means and methods for developing physical abilities; to practice suitable sports or form exercise; to recognise the value of cooperation in sports/exercise and of knowledge about Estonian and world sports events.

Teaching physical education is aimed at the upper secondary school graduate having developed the capability to:

- value life, understand the importance of the physical activity to people's health and enjoy exercising/practising sports,
- master knowledge, skills and experience to practice recreational sports/exercise independently both indoors and outdoors,
- follow regulations and personal safety and hygiene requirements while exercising/practising sports and know how to act in emergency situations that may occur while practising sports,
- be able to objectively assess their level of physical ability and to use proper means and methods for improving it,
- exercise/practise sports respecting fellow students and preserving the environment,
- be cooperative and able to guide fellow students to perform simple physical exercises,
- know about the sports and dance events held in Estonia and around the world,
- master knowledge about the development of physical culture in Estonia and in the world and understand the role of physical culture in modern society,
- know the necessary physical fitness regime for service in the Defence Forces.

Physical education is taught in five compulsory courses and two elective courses. Compulsory courses include gymnastics, athletics, games (basketball, volleyball and football) of which the school has to select at least two, dance movement, navigation and winter sports (skiing and skating) of which the school has to select at least one.

The elective courses are "Physical abilities and exercise skills" and "Exercising outdoors". The passing of compulsory and elective courses helps to develop the competences of the subject field, while also preparing students for the physical readiness test of the Defence Forces (this applies in particular to male students, supporting their individual development, while female students can opt for this on a voluntary basis). The volume of presentation of different sports in the courses and the number of lessons dedicated to particular sports are specified in the school curriculum.

In 2015, a manual for teachers of physical education was published and is distributed free of charge to all the schools.

The initiative [Movement Laboratory](#) is a research group of physical activity for health at the Institute of Sport Sciences and Physiotherapy in the University of Tartu, which designs school-based interventions, and their aim is to promote physical activity in the whole community, as sufficient physical activity supports mental, physical and social well-being.

The research group is a permanent research unit in the structure of the University of Tartu.

The unit develops several tools and ideas to be used in schools both in and outside of classrooms.

Collaboration and partnerships

There is no obligatory or policy framework for partnerships between formal education providers, youth workers and health professionals in order to promote youth fitness and physical activity among young people. Cooperation between different stakeholders may occur at the local, regional or national level; however, it is not guided centrally.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

[National Health Plan 2009–2020](#) (Rahvatervise arengukava 2009-2020) was approved by the Government in 2008 and renewed in 20.12.2012. As the strategy ends in 2020, a [new development plan](#) has been compiled and sent to the Parliament to be confirmed by the end of 2020.

The general objectives of the new (yet unconfirmed) National Health Plan 2020-2030 are as following:

1. The average life expectancy increases amongst both men and women.
2. The years while living healthy will increase faster than the life expectancy and people live most of their lives without health-related limitations.
3. Health inequality decreases (within genders, areas, and education levels).

The sub-goals in order to achieve the general objectives are divided into three main areas:

1. Options supporting health.
2. Environment supporting health.
3. Human-centred healthcare.

Concerning young people, there are also several aspects and goals brought out. For example, mental health and drug use of young people are big concerns and some prevention activities will be taken in order to solve the issues.

The youth-specific target groups identified in the plan are children and young people in general (i.e. from 0 to 26 years old), children up to 18 years old, students in general education, young people with special needs and young people with behaviour that puts their health at risk.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is the main responsible authority for the implementation of the Plan.

The document will be confirmed by the Parliament by the end of 2020.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

The Network of Health Promoting Kindergartens and Schools

Estonia is a member of the [Schools for Health in Europe network](#) since 1993. In Estonia, the health-promoting schools' movement started in 1993, when 16 schools became members of the [European Network of Health Promoting Schools](#). Since 2000, the movement was broadened to kindergartens. By the end of 2020, more than 500 educational institutions are members of the Health Promoting Kindergartens and Schools network in Estonia. The network is coordinated by the National Institute for Health Development.

Health-promoting educational institutions are defined as institutions that implement a structured and systematic plan for the health and well-being of all children and of teaching and non-teaching staff. This is characterised as a whole school approach and contains - healthy policies, physical and social environment, individual health skills and action competencies, links within the community and health and well-being services.

At the county level, there is a network of coordinators, who usually work in school or kindergarten and the coordination is additional work for them. There are coordinators in all 15 counties and also the 4 largest cities.

The coordination in state and county level was financed by the state through the National Health Plan 2009-2020 and Estonian Health Insurance Fund. Kindergartens and schools finance their activities itself and/or through different projects. In the new national health plan for the years 2020-2030 the programme is not mentioned, but as the available document is still not confirmed and the implementation programme as well, then this might be one action to be funded through the new development plan as well.

The PAX Good Behaviour Game (GBG) (in Estonian *VEPA Käitumisoskuste mäng*)

VEPA is an environmental intervention used in the classroom to create a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. The intervention is designed to reduce off-task behaviour; increase attentiveness; decrease aggressive and disruptive behaviour, as well as shy and withdrawn behaviour. PAX GBG has also shown improvements with academic success, and mental health well-being and reduces substance abuse later in life.

Since 2014, more than 11.000 students and 600 teachers have participated from more than 160 schools all over Estonia.

PAX game is implemented by the National Institute for Health Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and funded by the European Social Fund.

During the years 2016-2018, a [2-year-research](#) was conducted in Estonian schools in order to assess the impact of VEPA methodology. 42 schools and 708 first grade students participated in the research. The data was collected three times - before intervention in the beginning of a school year and at the end of first and second school years from teachers, parents, and children. The study showed that in the classes where VEPA was used, there was a decrease of difficulties with children's behaviour, attention, and attention. Also, there was a trend in improving emotional difficulties (such as feeling worried or scared) and communication with peers. The VEPA methodology was most useful for children who had more mental health issues in the beginning of the first grade.

KiVa

KiVa is a research-based anti-bullying program that has been developed in the University of Turku, Finland. The effectiveness of KiVa has been shown in a large randomized controlled trial. Since 2014, 77 schools have been implemented KIVA in Estonia. The programme in Estonia is supported by the Ministry of Education and Research. In Spring 2020, [a report](#) was published, which shows that the methodology is more effective in schools that use it regularly than in the schools that just begun participating in the program. In the schools that use KiVa during a longer period, there is much less long-time bullying.

The school invites to move

The research group of physical activity for health in Institute of Sport Sciences and Physiotherapy in the University of Tartu is designing school-based interventions and their aim is to promote physical activity in the whole community, as sufficient physical activity supports mental, physical and social well-being.

Current shortcomings in promoting active lifestyle lie in the lack of focus on environmental factors and the over-concentration on sports. The objective measurements show that children involved in organised sports activities do not necessarily have higher physical activity. The pilot project by Tartu University showed that it is far too frequent in Estonian schools to discourage the physical activity of children during the school day.

The research group is a permanent research unit in the structure of the University of Tartu.

Good School and Good Preschool

The "Good school, good preschool" is an ongoing project by [Centre for Ethics, University of Tartu](#), which is supported by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

The aim of the good school model is to describe different aspects of a good school and to find the criteria that indicate that a school actually deals with these aspects.

The focus of the model is on evaluation. The ultimate aim of the project is to achieve a situation where all schools are evaluated fairly and feel motivated to improve.

Free of Bullying

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare has been leading a project called "Kiusamisest vaba lasteaed ja kool" (Kindergartens and schools free of bullying) since 2010, currently ongoing.

The mission of Free of Bullying is:

To reduce the number of children subjected to bullying in preschools and primary schools

To create a safe, positive and healthy environment for children attending preschool or primary school

The mission is to be achieved by:

- Teaching children how to be a good friend
- Giving children the courage to say no if they experience bullying
- Supporting the children to act based on the values of tolerance, respect, care and courage
- Strengthening group spirit among children and thus preventing bullying

Programme is supported by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Education and Youth Board (until 31.07.2020 Estonian Youth Work Centre) supports annually the participation of young people in summer camps. In 2020, more than 27.000 young people participated.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Health education

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools is part of national curricula subject Human Study in Basic school and in addition, the subject Personal, Social and Health Education in upper secondary school. Human studies were included in all levels of the school curriculum as a compulsory subject in 1996. The main topics are physical activity, nutrition, social and life skills training (preventing risky behaviour and substance (e.g. drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse), injury prevention and safety skills, mental health, etc.

One of eight cross-curricular topics is *health and safety* – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a mentally, emotionally, socially and physically healthy member of society who is capable of following healthful lifestyles, act in a safe manner and take part in developing a health-promoting environment.

There is a different kind of supporting materials and training for teachers both in Estonian and Russian languages (teacher or trainer guidelines; web resources such as www.toitumine.ee, www.tubakainfo.ee; www.noored.alkoinfo.ee; www.narko.ee etc.; films: <http://www.terviseinfo.ee/et/valdkonnad/narkomaania/narkomaania-enetamine/oppefilm-motteaine> etc.).

Sex education and personal relationships education

In Estonia, human studies were included in all levels of the school curriculum as a compulsory subject in 1996 and sex education and personal relationships education is part of it.

Sexual education and personal relationships education are based on „Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. A framework for policymakers, educational and health

authorities and specialists". These standards are translated to Estonian language and are [freely available](#).

Apart from the standards, there are different kind of tools and training in sexual health field created and available for teachers both in Estonian and Russian language (teacher or trainer guidelines; web resources: www.amor.ee, www.hiv.ee; films: <http://raagiasjast.hiv.ee/et/raagi-asjast.html> etc.)

Peer-to-peer education approaches

There is no central framework policy or guidelines established to develop peer-to-peer educational approaches aiming to enhance young people's knowledge and understanding of factors related to their health and well-being.

[TORE](#) is a youth organisation that promotes movement of support students in general education schools and vocational education schools. The organisation developing the programme in Estonia started in 1996 and is ongoing.

The main goal of the organisation is to increase the number of schools and people in schools, who support and develop a friendly learning atmosphere, social skills and the anti-bullying standpoint. The network is based on training students to be support-students for peers and training adults in schools to be able to cooperate better with youth. TORE is also a member of the anti-bullying coalition (see below). TORE targets general education and vocational education school students and adults in schools. The organisation is supported by the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Research. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the activities in the organisation are not available.

Collaboration and partnerships

There is no obligatory or policy framework for partnerships between formal education providers, youth workers and health professionals. Cooperation between different stakeholders may occur at the local, regional or national level, however, it is not guided centrally.

Local governments are obliged to analyse the public health and security situation and prepare health and well-being profile, and the format of the profile analyses foresees cooperation between the specialists in different areas. This cooperation is however not formed as a permanent cooperation body in general.

In 2014, a Bullying Free Education Coalition was created. This coalition has been recognised and supported by the Ministry of Education and Research. The number of partners has been increased and in 2016 the coalition under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research developed a "[Concept for education path without bullying](#)" – a document stating the main understanding of bullying, its prevention and interventions in Estonia. It lists the main programmes available to address bullying through all levels of education. The concept does not ensure public funding for the programmes.

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Youth information

In general, well-being and healthy lifestyle issues are considered to be part of youth information, youth information is defined as one area of youth work in Estonia. The Ministry of Education and Research is the responsible governmental authority in charge of youth information.

There are 16 centralised public regional youth guidance and information centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), which provide studying counselling, psychological, socio-pedagogical, special education counselling and speech therapy. Please see [chapter 3.4.](#) for more information on guidance and counselling in Rajaleidja Centres.

Estonian Youth Work Centre (starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) organised yearly for 24 years an information fair for youth called [Teeviit](#), which was attended by thousands of young people in Estonia. Teeviit 2017 was the last youth information fair. Now the brand "Teeviit" is being used only web-based as a youth information platform that gives young people different kind of information, including health-related, created by young people targeted to young people.

In addition, local and regional information for youth is available through local youth information portals such as:

- www.polvanoored.ee
- www.noorteinfo.ee
- www.tallinn.ee/est/noorteinfo/

Health counselling

[Estonian Union for Sexual Health](#) coordinates the work of centres for youth counselling on sexual health, relationships and violence issues. The target group for the centres is young people up to 24 years of age. There is also a web-portal www.amor.ee to provide online information and counselling on sexual health issues. There are 17 centres in the network and most of them are based in clinics or medical centres.

The service is financed by the Health Board and National Institute for Health Development

Youth information campaigns

There are different kind of web and social media-based materials in campaigns for youth:

- Tobacco prevention - <http://www.tubakainfo.ee/tubakas/>
- Alcohol prevention - <http://noored.alkoinfo.ee/>
- Sexual health – www.amor.ee
- Mental health - <http://peaasi.ee/>
- Drug prevention - <http://www.narko.ee/>
- HIV prevention – www.hiv.ee
- Nutrition - <http://fiidikaru.toitumine.ee/>, www.toitumine.ee
- *Traffic Safety Education* - <http://www.liikluskasvatus.ee/>

Regular national campaigns have been held in the areas of safe sex, nutrition, tobacco and alcohol prevention, oral health etc. In general, the target group of the youth campaign is general youth age 7-26.

The programme "Protect yourself and help the other" for 6-8 class year students and 15 youth camps (one in each county). The aim of the camp is to develop a way of thinking that would support and promote the health of children. In the camps, specialists in their fields teach how to foresee risks and cope with emergency situations. The programme is organised by cooperation of the Estonian Road Administration, Rescue Board, Estonian Health Insurance Fund, Police and Border Guard Board, county governments, local governments etc.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

The main policy document in relation to health, including mental health, is the [National Health Plan 2009–2020](#) (Rahvatervise arengukava 2009-2020). A new National Health Plan for the years 2020-2030 is sent by the Government to the Parliament to be confirmed.

Please see [chapter 7.4](#). for detailed information on the plan.

Improving the mental health of young people

In the framework of the [Public Health Initiatives](#) coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, several projects on children and youth mental health were initiated during the period 2011- 2016 supported by Norway Grants.

Most notably:

- **Establishing the Children’s Mental Health Centre**_ Tallinn Children ´s Hospital Total Grant Amount (EUR): 4 165 000. This project provides North-Estonia with the children’s mental health centres par excellence and by coordinating, training and supervising the network of mental health centres it will also improve mental health services in other regions of Estonia.
- Developing and providing/piloting the rehabilitation services for children with severe mental health problems in the community residential setting Estonian National Social Insurance Board. Total Grant Amount (EUR): 1 045 462. The objective of the project was to design innovative service(s) for children with mental health and behavioural problems, which will provide integrated social, educational and health services to support children and youth suitable life and education environment.
- **Developing a concept for integrated services to improve children ´s mental health** Ministry of Social Affairs, The Department of Children and Families. Total Grant Amount (EUR): 200 000. The objective of the project was to develop [a concept paper](#) to build up a system of children ´s mental health services and interventions with reduced fragmentation in service provision and improved regional coverage with integrated health and social care services for children and families.
- Support for a service network for the provision of integrated social education and health services for children with mental problems in Tartu University Hospital „[South-Estonian Mental Health Centre for children and youngsters](#)“, Pärnu Hospital „[Mental Health Centre for Children and Youth of Pärnu region](#)“ and Tartu University Hospital „[Ida-Viru county Mental Health Centre for Children and youngsters](#)“. The grant was 425 000 euros per institution.
- Web-based information sources and counselling services on mental health Peaasjad "[Peaasi.ee - mental health e-counselling, web platform and online solutions for young people in Estonia](#)". Grant: 218 159 EUR and Estonian- Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute "[AppsTerv - web-based applications for mental health](#)". Grant: 204 860, 73 EUR

In total under the Public Health Initiative 2011-2016, the following results were achieved:

- Integrated services concept for children ´s mental health
- 4 mental health centres
- 4 mental health counselling offices
- 3 web portals - [peaasi.ee](#), [enesetunne.ee](#), [amor.ee](#)
- 4 smartphone apps were developed for preventing [self-harm](#) and [suicidal behaviour, depression](#) and [sleeping problems](#).
- 958 people received training on public health topics
- 1 015 youth attended mental health lectures
- 6 535 e-counselling
- 2 social campaigns were carried out about alcohol harms and tolerance about heavy alcohol drinking - [Uncle Alco](#) and [Passive drinking](#)

- 2 rehabilitation programs for providing long-term rehabilitation service for children with severe mental health problems

Another project "[Improving the Support System for Children and Youth at Risk](#)" developed a cross-sectoral support system to alleviate risks affecting children and youth and improved the well-being of children and youth. Two evidence-based programs - positive parenting program „Incredible Years“ and family-based intervention program MDFT were adapted and are now implemented in Estonia. The Concept for Improving the Support System for Children and Youth at Risk was compiled by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The document describes the main challenges in establishing the cross-sectoral (healthcare, legal protection, education, welfare system, etc.) support system for children and youth at risk, and recommends the most vital courses of action to the state for the purposes of ensuring the more streamlined operation and smoother co-operation.

Two evidence-based programmes supporting the mental health of young people are also implemented in Estonian schools:

- [KiVa](#) programme is a bullying prevention programme developed in Finland that uses a whole-school approach. Its components aim to affect skills, behaviour and classroom and school climate and have a positive impact on children's social and emotional well-being.
- [The PAX Good Behaviour Game](#) (PAX GBG) is a universal classroom-based programme that reduces behavioural and emotional problems, prevents the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs and improves educational attainment. In addition, several initiatives and science-based programmes are used at schools and curricula-based activities carried out to support students mental health.

Another important initiative to highlight is [Estonian Mental Health and Well-Being Coalition \(VATEK\)](#), which was established in 2012 by the initiative of the Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute (ERSI) and the support of the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs. It is an independent public interest foundation, which brings together mental health organisations across Estonia. VATEK has grown to a network of 38 organizations related to mental health (non-governmental organisations, public sector organisations, professional organisations and trade companies). The main objectives of VATEK are to promote the Estonian population's mental health and well-being and enhance the development of mental health policy and legislation.

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

The [Child Protection Act](#) defines early detection and prevention of risks as important areas. Prevention is specifically addressed in the act, which stipulates that:

1. In order to ensure the rights and well-being of the child, the risks threatening the well-being and development of the child must be prevented. Prevention includes the detection of situations and events which threaten the child as early as possible and the reaction thereto, including the identification of the child's development and behaviour problems, problems occurring in the family environment, identification of abuse and the increase of protective measures promoting the child's well-being and development.
2. State and local government agencies shall, according to their possibilities, develop measures in order to prevent the child's need for assistance and to decrease existing problems. The measures must be based on the child's needs, support the relationships between the child and the persons raising the child, support the social performance skills and they must be accessible, timely, effective and have a long-term positive effect.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for developing a legal and policy framework in the area of child protection, however, the implementation is ensured at the local level by local governments.

The [Development Plan for Children and Families 2012–2020](#), approved by the Government in 2011 and renewed 24 October 2013, sets strategic objectives aimed at guaranteeing an improvement in the well-being of children and families and in their quality of life. This plan is the basis for improving the lives of children and families and achieving an increase in population. One of the five strategic objectives is "The rights of children are guaranteed and a functional child protection system is created in order to value each child and the kind of safe environment that supports the development and welfare of children". Under this objective 3 policy measures were planned:

1. Promotion of the rights of the child.
2. Increasing the efficiency of early intervention and the child protection system.
3. Provision and development of efficient interventions proceeding from the needs of people.

In the document, a line of action „Early intervention system for noticing the developmental needs of a child“ is planned including the following measures:

1. Development of a system for evaluation of the developmental needs of a child and early intervention
2. Analysis and development of a system of home visits by family nurses
3. Development of guidelines and the provision of training for specialists who work with small children
4. Organising the provision of information to a broader target group that helps identify the developmental needs of a child early
5. Community-based development of a system for early noting of and intervention in the risk behaviour of children.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the plan, which ends in 2020. There is no information available whether there will be a new plan or not.

In 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs also developed [a Concept for Improving the Support System for Children and Youth at Risk](#), which states grounding principles and a need for improving the support system in Estonia. The document defines as the main goal of improving the support system achievement of a situation in which help for ensuring the well-being of children, youth and families are timely, appropriate, high-quality and sufficient, all over Estonia. In order to achieve this, the support system must be improved so that it guarantees (among other aims) „emphasis on prevention and effective intervention“.

The [Social Insurance Board](#) is responsible for providing support and training for local governments responsible for the implementation of the early detection and prevention work.

Stakeholders

The [Child Protection Act](#) defines the functions of local governments and among them the obligation to "develop programmes and projects ensuring the rights and well-being of children and the application thereof in its administrative territory to prevent and decrease the risks that endanger children". The local government can also establish a committee of children and families at local governments as an advisory body, if necessary.

However, in Estonia, local governments are autonomous by the constitution and may develop their own approach to providing services, networking and ensuring that their

functions are fulfilled. Therefore, there is no standard model for early detection and prevention network, its members and stakeholders.

Guidance to stakeholders

Please see chapters [7.4.](#) and [7.5.](#) for information on awareness-raising campaigns, specific websites, guidelines, handbooks and other material and tools supporting local stakeholders and raise their awareness about health risks faced by young people.

The training centre of [the National Institute for Health Development](#) offers professional development courses to specialists working to support health, such as kindergarten and school employees, youth workers, child adopters, foster care families, employees of social welfare services and rehabilitation centres, county and local municipality employees, counsellors, psychologists, health care workers and health promoters, social workers and NGOs. Main areas of training are:

- HIV/AIDS and substance abuse
- Health promotion and health counselling
- The network of Healthy Workplaces
- Health promotion for school and kindergarten staff
- Social work and pedagogics for residential home employees
- PRIDE-training courses for child adopters and foster families
- Courses for employees of social welfare services and rehabilitation centres

In addition, the centre also carries out an analysis of training needs and provides support to trainers in training methodology.

Target groups

The [Development Plan for Children and Families](#) underlines the need to pay attention to “noticing and helping maltreated children” as a specific target group under the policy goal „Increasing the efficiency of early intervention and the child protection system”.

Funding

In Estonia, there is in force a solidary [health insurance system](#). Solidarity in health insurance means that someone's health insurance payments or contribution to the system or access to the necessary assistance do not depend on age, income or health risks. All medically insured people in Estonia are entitled to the same quality of health care, regardless of whether or not they pay the health insurance tax. According to the Health Insurance Act, persons for whom no social tax is paid are considered as having equal status to the insured person and all persons under 19 years of age have had equal status.

Local government is responsible for financing its functions from the local budget.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (YFSRH) services for young people

The first YFSRH services clinic in Estonia was started in 1991. The youth clinics network was created simultaneously with Estonian school-based sexuality education programme, web-based counselling and national campaigns.

The youth clinics (YC) are departments of larger healthcare institutions, private gynaecological practices, or private healthcare companies. All the clinics offer free services to young people up to the age of 25 years of age in Estonian and Russian. Most of the clinics are open daily and serve exclusively young people. All the clinics must

comply with the quality requirements and operational principles of the youth clinics network, which define: 1) objectives of YCs, 2) operational principles, 3) sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services provided, 4) target groups, 5) quality requirements, and 6) monitoring and evaluation indicators. YCs' service package included the following SRH services:

1. STI consultations; STI testing, treatment and follow-up consultations, HIV services; voluntary confidential counselling and testing and in case of an HIV positive result referral for specialist consultation.
2. Contraceptive consultations; information and counselling about contraceptives, prescription and renewal of contraceptive prescriptions, and insertion of contraceptive devices.
3. SRH counselling; counselling, pregnancy diagnostics and referral for antenatal care or safe abortion, psychological counselling, human papillomavirus vaccination and counselling, and a range of other SRH services.
4. Sexuality education lessons at schools or YCs.

Youth clinics services have been financed by Estonian Health Insurance Fund and educational lessons by projects or local governments. The Estonian Sexual Health Association is a non-governmental organisation, which coordinates and represents the YCN.

Children's mental health centres

Four regional children's mental health centres have been founded with the support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism in 2014 (see [chapter 7.5](#) for further information). From April 2016, the centres' services are partly financed by Estonian Health Insurance Fund.

The main task of centres is the organisation of diagnostics and treatment of mental health disorders by complying with modern principles of treatment and evidence-based practice. Inpatient and outpatient treatment is provided in Tallinn, Tartu and Viljandi, outpatient treatment is provided in Pärnu and Ida-Viru County.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

Estonia has undergone a major administrative reform, which changed the number of municipalities in Estonia drastically starting from 01.01.2018. It is both a risk and an opportunity for public health. While many municipalities have adopted health promotion as part of their core activities, some have not. During the reform, it was important to support current health-friendly local governments to maintain their positions in the merging municipalities, as well as to encourage others to review their agenda and adopt health and well-being as one of the core issues. The final impacts of the reform are still unknown for all services.

Priority areas in youth health are obesity prevention, tobacco, alcohol and drug prevention, mental health, injury prevention, and a safe environment.

A new National Health Plan for the years 2020-2030 has been sent by the Government to the Parliament to be confirmed by the end of 2020. See more in [Chapter 7.4](#).

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

In general, the situation with cultural consumption is excellent in Estonia, when we look at event participation. The overall level of cultural consumption is remarkably high. [The Eurobarometer](#) cultural consumption index reveals that 30% of Estonians belonged to the group with a very high or high level of cultural consumption in 2013. No new data from

the Eurobarometer is available, but based on the [data](#) of Statistics Estonia, the percentage of people (from age 15) participating in cultural life was 78.7% in 2017. Read more about the main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation from [Chapter 8.1](#).

There is no single body responsible for the creativity and culture of young people as the domain covers several policy areas, which have established different divisions of tasks between different Ministries and between the local and central levels. The main Governmental authority responsible for the creativity and culture of young people in Estonia according to the [Government of the Republic Act](#) is the [Ministry of Culture](#), where there are two departments relevant to the culture and creativity of youth: the Arts Department and the Cultural Diversity Department. Read more about the main actors and cooperation in the field from [Chapter 8.2](#).

There is no single document that could be considered a national strategy on creativity and culture for young people, but a set of official documents integrating major directions to be followed in the organization of policymaking and implementation in relation to creativity and culture for young people. You can read more about the national strategies that are connected to creativity and culture from [Chapter 8.3](#).

The main policy connected with ensuring young people access to culture is formulated in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) described in more detail in [Chapter 8.3](#). Under this policy document, the most important governmental initiative concerned with the culture and creativity of young people has been supporting hobby education and hobby activities, including removing obstacles of their access. This initiative is described in detail under [Chapter 8.5](#). The promotion of culture and cultural participation is addressed more in [Chapter 8.4](#) and the development of entrepreneurial skills through culture in [Chapter 8.6](#).

The fostering of the creative use of new technologies is addressed in [Chapter 8.7](#). You can read more regarding cooperation on the topic between different parties from [Chapter 8.8](#). The main new initiative to foster equality and involvement through participation in cultural activities is the Additional financing for hobby education and activities since 2017. The program is described in [chapter 8.5](#). However, many of the initiatives described in [Chapter 8.9](#) directly support this aim as well.

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Cultural consumption of young people in Estonia

In general, the situation with cultural consumption is excellent in Estonia, when we look at event participation. The overall level of cultural consumption is remarkably high. [The Eurobarometer](#) cultural consumption index reveals that 30% of Estonians belonged to the group with a very high or high level of cultural consumption in 2013. No new data from the Eurobarometer is available, but based on the [data](#) of Statistics Estonia, the percentage of people (from age 15) participating in cultural life was 78.7% in 2017. In 2016, Triinu Lukas of the Statistics Estonia compiled an [analysis](#) that showed that Estonian residents are active culture consumers. In 2015, 84.4% of Estonian residents of at least 15 years of age were active cultural consumers, i.e. they attended at least one cultural event in the past year.

In 2017, within the youngest age group of 15-24, the most popular ways of consuming culture were visiting the cinemas (86.5%), libraries (67.6%), and concerts (59.2%). The overall preferences have remained the same compared to the data of 2015. There is a visible trend of cinemas getting more popular amongst young people (in 2015, the percentage of consumption was 82.8%). Within the age group of 25-44, the most popular cultural activities were visiting the cinemas (73.8%), concerts (58.3%), and cultural heritage (46.8). Similar to the youngest age group, the overall preferences have

remained the same, and visiting the cinemas is getting more popular. Within the age group of 45-64, the most popular cultural activities were visiting the concerts (49.9%), theatres (44.0%), and cinemas (39.8%). Compared to the data of 2015, visiting cultural heritage was more popular in 2015 (58.8%), than in 2017 (38.4%). Amongst the oldest age group (65+), the most popular ways of consuming culture were visiting the concerts (32.1%), theatres (26.2%), and libraries (24.7%). Visiting cultural heritage was also more popular in 2015 (30.9%) like with the previous age group than it was in 2017 (21.1%).

The most popular ways of cultural consumption are visiting the cinemas and concerts (excluding the 65+ age group). Visiting the theatres is more popular starting from age 45. Libraries are popular amongst the age groups of 15-24 and 65+, and cultural heritage amongst age group 25-44. Also, there is a tendency that the younger the person is the more they participate in cultural activities. Compared to the data of 2015, the tendency remains the same. Within the age group of 15-24, the cultural consumption was 95.9% in 2015 and 94.5% in 2017. Within the age group of 25-44, the cultural consumption was 94.4% in 2015 and 90.9% in 2017. Within the age group of 45-64, the cultural consumption was 87.5% in 2015 and 78.5% in 2017. Within the age group of 65+, the cultural consumption was 58.6% in 2015 and 53.7% in 2017. The same tendency is brought out in the next paragraph and figures.

While the oldest age group (60+) had the largest percentage of people who had attended events in only one cultural area (14%), the youngest age group (15-19) only included 4% of people who had attended events in only one cultural area. The share of the most active persons was greatest in the youngest age group (2%) and smallest in the oldest age group (0.1%). Consequently, when younger people consume culture, they are likely to attend events in many cultural areas ([see Figure 1](#)) or more than in other age groups.

Lukas argues that the great impact of age can be explained by the Estonian context. As great social changes (such as restoration of Estonia's independence) shake existing social values and the level of cultural consumption is linked with different values, Estonian older and younger generations have different cultural consumption habits. The younger age groups often partake in a wider scope of culture, because they tend to participate in popular culture in addition to classical high culture genres. [Figure 1](#) provides a broad division between the generation of the period after the restoration of independence (20-29-year-olds), the generation immediately preceding it (30-49-year-olds) and the generation following it (15-19-year-olds) as well as those who have lived at least half of their lives in the closed society of the Soviet Union (at least 50-year-olds).

According to [the analysis of young people time usage and cultural consumption](#) by Kutt Kommel of Statistics Estonia (called "Noore inimese päev") in 2017, the most actively used cultural institution used by young people (15-24) is the cinema (83% of young people visit at least once a year), 72% visit libraries, 64% concerts, and 62% visited cultural heritage site. Approximately half of the young people visit the museum and theatre at least once a year. 10-14 years old spend on average 4 minutes per day on entertainment and culture, which increases to 13 minutes per day in the age group 15-24 years old. 20 minutes per day is spent on reading by younger youth (10-14) and 11 minutes by those aged 15-24. Time spent on reading has decreased compared to the year 2000, especially in the older group (decreased by 18 minutes).

Challenges to young people's cultural consumption

Based on the [data of Statistics Estonia](#) from 2013 (no newer data available), according to those young people (15-24) who have not visited a cultural institution, the most significant reason is the lack of free time. Lack of interest in both the type of offer also plays a role, especially concerning the area of museums, art exhibitions, or cultural heritage sites ([See Table 1](#)).

Table 1. The obstacles to participating in culture, 2013. Data by Statistics Estonia, compiled by the author.

(% of 15-24 years old persons, who have not visited cultural institutions by reason and type of cultural event*)

	Theatre, opera, ballet or dance event	Concert	Cinema	Museum, art exhibition or cultural heritage site	Other cultural events
No free time	52,2	58,1	44,3	49,6	53,3
Culture events are not interesting	18,8	9,4	12,1	20	19,2
No cultural institutions nearby	9,1	10,5	21,5	11,5	7,9
The offer is not interesting	17,4	18,7	18,1	20,9	16
Need to take care of family	3,9	3,9	..	..	..
Tickets are too expensive	12,1	9,9	..	..	..
No or bad transportation opportunities	2,8	..	..	2,5	..
No company to go with	4,7	4,4	..	..	..
There is too little information about the cultural events	..	..	..	..	4,9

*multiple reasons possible per respondent.

Young people, especially at a younger age, are dependent on their parents. The parent-related impact factors of cultural consumption among 5–14-year-old children have been analysed by Triinu Lukas of the Statistics Estonia in 2016 ([7. Sotsiaaltrendid. Social Trends](#)). The analysis revealed that, even though children are more active participants in culture compared to adults (probably owing to school), in current Estonian society, the parents' social background has a significant impact on the cultural consumption activity of their children. Thus, the children of parents with more cultural capital have a greater potential to attain a good life through a high level of cultural consumption activity. The strongest impact factors for children's cultural consumption include the cultural activity of the parents, the number of children in the parent's household, the age of the parent, and the parents' employment status. The settlement type had no impact on the level of children's cultural consumption, which means that there is no evidence that children living in a city or a town are more active participants in culture than children living in a small town or a village. See [Table 2](#), which summarises the results of the regression

analysis of children's cultural consumption and the respective impact factors, showing the relative significance of different characteristics of the parents' socioeconomic background.

Regression coefficients are significant at the 0.005 level, except in the case of the tertiary education level of a parent ($p = .014$), the income of household member ($p = .016$), and parent's settlement type ($p = .248$).

Table 2 shows that the most significant is the impact of the parent's cultural activity, next is the number of children in the family, and age of the parent. In conclusion, it shows that children are much impacted by their parents' cultural behavior and if parents are active and young, there is a higher likelihood that the children also participate in culture.

The analysis shows that children's cultural consumption was also influenced by the parent's ethnic origin (see [Figure 2](#)). Like in the case of adults, Estonian children were more likely to be active participants in culture compared to the children of parents who identified themselves as Russians, partially because Estonians are often financially in a better position ([Statistics Estonia, poverty data, 2018](#)). As household income divided by the number of household members, or monthly income per household member, only had a limited impact on cultural consumption in children – the impact was much weaker than in the analysis concerning parents – Lukas ([7. Sotsiaaltrendid. Social Trends](#)) concludes that culture is more available to children than to their parents and the financially inferior position of Russians should not play such a great role. In addition, children have a considerably higher level of participation in culture, irrespective of ethnic origin, and there is greater equality between the observed ethnic groups in children compared to their parents.

Figure 2. Cultural consumption among children by ethnic origin, 2015

Main concepts

Culture plays a huge role in Estonia's life. According to the [Constitution of the Republic of Estonia](#), the state of Estonia shall "guarantee the preservation of the Estonian people, language, and culture through the ages". The viability of the Estonian cultural space is the first goal set in the [Sustainable Estonia 21](#) strategy, which guides all policy areas until the year 2030. As the main task of this strategy is to show what should be done to ensure the successful functioning of the Estonian society in the long term, it is clear that culture has a major role in the whole society, and the sustainability of the Estonian nation and culture is defined as the cornerstone of sustainable development of the state.

The cultural policy in Estonia is set in the document "[The General Principles of the Cultural Policy up to 2020](#)" ([Kultuuripoliitika põhialused aastani 2020](#)). The aim of cultural policy is to develop a society that values creativity, preserving and promoting the national identity, studying, preserving, and carrying forward the cultural memory and creating favorable conditions for developing a viable, open, and diverse cultural space and participating in culture. According to the fundamentals document of cultural policy, all residents of Estonia must be ensured with the possibility to create the culture and participate in it, regardless of their religious, social, cultural, ethnic, age, sex, or other individual special features and needs. Each cultural field (architecture, audiovisual area, digital cultural heritage, design, performance arts, literature, arts, creative industries, music, heritage protection, museums, libraries, folk culture, cultural diversity, sports) has its own legislation and concepts.

The term "digital cultural heritage" is being used in Estonia. The state administrates over 900 million culturally important heritage objects and only 1/10 is digitalized. Digitalization is seen as one of the best and in some cases the only way to ensure that the legacy is preserved in the most suitable way and made available for as many people as possible. The action plan for digitalizing cultural heritage ([Kultuuripärandi digiteerimise tegevuskava](#)) is created by the [Ministry of Culture](#) and by the year 2023, they intend to digitalize 30% of the heritage. In 2020, the project includes heritage from

the Estonian National Museum, National Archives of Estonia, and Estonian Literary Museum.

The year 2020 is called as "[Year of Digital Culture](#)" ([Digikultuuriaasta](#)). The activities of the theme year consist of 4 topics:

1. Conceptualization - understanding, what is going on in the digital culture and creating a report on that, several activities connected to events or writing articles.
2. Development - creating programs, digital residency, future libraries, virtual contests, and festivals, etc.
3. Implementation - digitalization of the cultural heritage, including digitalization of books into audio versions, TV shows and movies into a free online platform, online radios, etc.
4. Communication - calendar for digital culture events, other means of communication of the theme year.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

There is no single body responsible for the creativity and culture of young people as the domain covers several policy areas, which have established different division of tasks between different ministries, and between local and central levels.

The main Governmental authority responsible for the creativity and culture of young people in Estonia according to the [Government of the Republic Act](#) (passed 13.12.1995) is the [Ministry of Culture](#), where there are two departments relevant to the culture and creativity of youth: the Arts Department and the Cultural Diversity Department.

Other main public actors and foundations of policy fields relevant to creativity and culture:

- [Ministry of Education and Research](#), responsible for youth policy and education policy, where the creativity of young people is one of the goals of the [Youth Field Development Plan](#) 2014-2020.
- the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications](#), responsible for supporting creative industries and technological development.
- [Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental organization responsible for the implementation of education and youth policy.
- [Integration Foundation](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for supporting the integration of national minorities in Estonia and cultural diversity.
- [Estonian Song and Dance Celebration Foundation](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for the development and organization of national song and dance celebrations, which is a great part of the culture in Estonia.
- [Estonian Folk Culture Centre](#), an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for the survival and evolution of Estonian folk culture and intangible heritage.
- [The Cultural Endowment of Estonia](#), a legal person in public law the objective of which is to finance the arts, folk culture, physical fitness and sport, and the construction and renovation of cultural buildings.

The main non-public actors, who represent different interest fields that are tightly connected with culture and creativity:

- [Estonian Arts School Union](#), an umbrella organization for art schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Music Schools Union](#), an umbrella organization for music schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Dance Hobby Education Union](#), an umbrella organization for dance schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Science Hobby Education Union](#), an umbrella organization for science hobby schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Hobby Schools Union](#), an umbrella organization uniting hobby schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Private Hobby Schools Union](#), an umbrella organization uniting private hobby schools in Estonia;
- [Estonian Amateur Theatre Association](#), an umbrella organization uniting amateur theaters.

In the means of governance, the listed representative non-public actors represent the voice of their members in the development of each of these fields separately that are connected to culture and creativity. They are all included in the youth policy development process through the Hobby Education Representative Body called [HUVE](#), which mainly cooperates with the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and gives input to different youth policy related topics and documents.

Other NGOs that are connected to the field of culture and creativity and develop their concrete field:

- [Union of Dance Education and Arts](#), an organization uniting educators and artists in the area of dance;
- [Estonian Choral Association](#), an umbrella organization for all choirs and wind orchestras in Estonia;
- [Estonian Music Council](#), a non-governmental organization that serves as a representative body of Estonian musicians.

The distribution of responsibilities between the national and local level

In general, the [Ministry of Culture](#) is responsible for the development of policy in the area of culture (including culture and creativity of youth) and for forming the principles of financing culture. Local authorities are responsible for municipal cultural and educational institutions (including hobby schools) and are also financing local activities, initiatives, and non-governmental organizations.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation, which also covers the area of culture and creativity of youth. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports, monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#) based on the [State Budget Act](#) (see a more detailed description of the mechanisms in [Chapter 1.5](#)). The [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring, and ensuring the division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

There is no single document that could be considered a national strategy on creativity and culture for young people, but a set of official documents integrating major directions to be followed in the organization of policymaking and implementation in relation to creativity and culture for young people.

The following strategies are most relevant forming a national policy of creativity and culture for young people:

- [The general principles of the cultural policy up to 2020](#) ([Kultuuripoliitika põhialused aastani 2020](#), approved by Parliament 12. February 2014).
- The [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#), approved by the Government 19. December 2013).
- The Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)), which by November 2020 was not confirmed by the Parliament yet, but will be by the end of the year.

As the general principles of the cultural policy will end with 2020, the implementation will be continued under the culture programme up to 2023 ([Kultuuriprogramm 2020-2023](#)).

Scope and contents

The general principles of the cultural policy up to 2020

The general principles of the cultural policy adopted by the Riigikogu (the parliament) are the basis for the state's decisions in the field of culture up until 2020.

The document defines the main objective, the principles of shaping and realizing the cultural policy and the priorities in specific areas such as architecture, design, performing arts, filmmaking, music, literature, and publishing, visual arts, cultural journalism and media, cultural diversity, heritage conservation, museums, libraries, folk culture.

The main objective of the cultural policy is to form a society that values creativity by maintaining and improving the national identity of Estonia, researching, storing, and transferring cultural memory, and creating favorable conditions for the development of a vital, open, and versatile cultural space and for participating in culture.

The target group of the policy document is the whole population; children and young people are only highlighted under some of the priorities in specific areas. Within the youth population, no specific target groups are identified.

The Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020

The general objective of the plan is to establish a coherent and creative society through the development and self-realization possibilities provided for young people.

The sub-objectives of the Development Plan are:

1. Young people have more choices to discover their own creative and developmental potential. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to increase opportunities for young people to develop their creativity, show initiative and act together.
2. Young people are at lower risk to be excluded. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to increase the inclusion of young people and improve their employability.

3. There is more support for the participation of young people in decision-making. The planned policy measures under this objective are aimed to support the active participation of young people in community life and in decision-making.
4. The youth field operates more efficiently. The policy measures aim to ensure the development of high-quality youth policy and youth work.

The plan is aimed at all young people from 7 to 26 years old.

The new youth field development plan for the years 2021-2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)) has 4 strategic goals:

1. Young people are the creative and constructive power of the society - they are the leaders of education, culture, economy, environment, and other fields.
2. The protection of the rights of young people is consistent and the young people's active citizenship is supported.
3. Quality youth work (including Hobby Education) is available all over Estonia and creates the possibilities to all young people to develop, success experiences, enrichment of experience baggage and being independent.
4. Young people's loneliness and withdrawal are noticed and prevented through a support network that increases confidence.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The responsible authority for the coordination of the implementation of the general principles of the cultural policy up to 2020 is the Government of Estonia, specifically the [Ministry of Culture](#).

The responsible authority for the coordination of the implementation of the [Youth Field Development Plan](#) is the [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

No evidence-based assessment or evaluation of the implementation of both policy documents has been conducted.

Revisions/updates

[The general principles of the cultural policy up to 2020](#) were not preceded by other policy documents since 2000 as the earlier version of the general principles of the cultural policy was adopted in 1998. There have been no revisions or updates to this document.

[The Youth Field Development Plan](#) was preceded by other policy documents since 2000. At the state level, the development of the youth field is being planned for the third time. The "Estonian Youth Work Concept" and the "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001-2004" were drafted in 2001, these were followed by the "[Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013](#)" which was approved in 2006. What differentiates the current development plan from the previous documents is its approach to focus on goals and measures that will help to achieve positive change in the most significant challenges – the plan does not describe measures in all areas of youth work and youth policy. Also, the aims and objectives based on and formulated in accordance with youth perspective as opposed to a perspective of the sector or services used in earlier documents – the analysis and the policy objectives were about young people not about the system and services of youth work or youth policy.

[The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) will have a follow-up as the development plan ends in 2020. The process of a new development plan started in 2018 with the VI Youth Work Forum [NOORUM](#) and the consultation process with stakeholders continued during several events. By May 2020, the consultation for the new Youth Field Development Plan 2035 was ended. The new development plan is a part of the [Education and Research Strategy for the years 2021-2035](#) managed by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#). In November 2020, the Government sent the development plan to the Parliament to be confirmed, which will happen by the end of the year.

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

The main policy connected with ensuring young people access to culture is formulated in the [Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020](#) described in more detail in [chapter 8.3](#). Under this policy document, the most important governmental initiative concerned with culture and creativity of young people has been supporting hobby education and hobby activities, including removing obstacles of their access. This initiative is described in detail under [chapter 8.5](#).

Two most prominent top-level projects that aimed to increase access to culture specifically young people are:

- “An Instrument for Every Child”;
- „The HUKK- AP project”.

An Instrument for Every Child

Under the framework of celebrating [a hundred years of the Republic of Estonia](#), coordinated by the Government Office, an initiative [„An Instrument for Every Child”](#) was created in 2015. The programme ended at 1. October 2018, on the international music day with concerts all over Estonia.

The idea of the initiative is to encourage youth involvement in music by increasing access of young people to music instruments so that the fact of owning a music instrument would not limit access to be involved in music education.

The aim of the initiative “An Instrument for Every Child” is to upgrade, in cooperation with the private sector, the instrument collections of the institutions that offer musical education to children and young people. The mapping of the instrument collections of musical education institutions revealed a great need for new instruments.

The target group of the initiative includes any institutions offering musical education, such as traditional music schools and youth orchestras, as well as youth centres, culture centres and music groups in general education schools. There are no limitations in terms of musical styles. The initiative enables musical and hobby education institutions to apply for funding of the purchase of musical instruments. All acquired instruments will remain in shared use in the particular group.

There were 4 annual application rounds (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018):

1. In 2015, support was given to 121 institutions to purchase 268 music instruments. A total sum of the support: 196,869 €
2. In 2016, support was given to 208 institutions to purchase 726 music instruments. A total sum of the support: 232,990 €
3. In 2017, support was given to 220 institutions to purchase 688 music instruments. A total sum of the support: 332,290 €
4. In 2018, support was given to 254 institutions to purchase 1,031 music instruments. A total sum of the support: 312,617 €.

The HUKK-AP project

[The HUKK-AP Project](#) - Involvement of Organisations Working in Area of Hobby Education for Young People – was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research and implemented by Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)). The aim of the programme was to support the variety of hobby activities, their efficiency and suitability for youngsters` needs. The objective is to create prerequisites and working solutions in order to involve disadvantaged youngsters in hobby education. It is important to support opportunities for participating, introduce

new methods and increase competencies of educators that enable to increase access of disadvantaged young people to hobby education, mostly in the area of culture and art education.

The main directions of activities:

1. increasing the capability of hobby schools to involve young people with fewer opportunities systematically;
2. promoting hobby activities in new priority target groups;
3. involving young people with fewer opportunities into hobby activities;
4. monitoring and assessing the impact of the project and hobby education.

The following most important results were achieved through the project ([Summary of the HUKK-AP Project. Anything is Possible, 2016](#)):

- 3,231 young people with fewer opportunities participated in hobby activities, 1,806 of them doing so regularly. The participants showed a change in their attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviour. They became more confident, took initiative more likely, and learned to concentrate, communicate and cooperate more successfully. The skills related to their hobby improved and they became academically more successful.
- 69 new regional hobby groups were established that focused especially on the needs of this particular target group: football training, a painting group, a theatre studio, a nature group, car modelling group, dance lessons, a photography group, guitar lessons, motorcycle training, a poetry group, a pool club, a sailors' club, a handbell group, et al.
- New hobby activity models were established and approaches were tested that had not been previously implemented in the project areas at all or to such an extent. For example, young people with special educational needs were included in regular hobby groups and they were able to participate in smaller groups or individual lessons created especially for them. Young people living in areas that are more secluded were reached via a mobile hobby school.
- 442 parents were involved and advised, which turned out to be of great importance in youth work. Parents play an important role in whether a young person finds a hobby activity and whether they start participating regularly.
- 1,647 specialists working with young people participated in training and mentoring, which has helped to change the way of thinking in the hobby activity system and including young people with fewer opportunities has become a more natural part of everyday work.

The budget of the project was 453,412.57 euros, which was mostly covered by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA Grants. The duration of the project was 01.02.2014-30.04.2016.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

Starting from the year 2000, the [Ministry of Culture announces a theme for the year](#), which is different each year. The year 2017 was [Children and Youth Year of Culture](#), which was one of the most prominent youth-specific initiatives to raise awareness of young people about the culture and the participation in culture by the top-level authority.

The theme year is organised at the initiative of the Estonian [Ministry of Culture](#), and its implementation is coordinated by the [Estonian Children's Literature Centre](#).

The goals of Children and Youth Year of Culture 2017 were:

- to inspire children and youngsters to become the creators of culture
- to value children and youngsters as an audience for culture

The motto of Children and Youth Year of Culture, “Me too!” and keywords independence and collaboration invited children and youngsters to participate in culture as well as to create experiences themselves. Supporting and encouraging the young as creators as well as an audience helps us ensure a continuous and abundant cultural life for the coming generations. Public funding in 2017 for that initiative was 40,000 €.

The information on cultural opportunities is available on many levels, depending on the scale of the event or opportunity - either with big activities nationwide media coverage or with smaller ones, the dissemination is done on the local level. On the local level, hobby education and activities that are connected with both culture and creativity, the information is disseminated by either youth workers or schools themselves, and the information is targeted to youth specifically.

[The general principles of the cultural policy up to 2020](#) show that disseminating information on cultural opportunities is one of the recurring topics throughout the strategy and each field has to provide the dissemination of their specific information. The programme for culture for the years 2020-2023 ([Kultuuriprogramm 2020-2023](#)) states that the budget for the whole programme for 2020 is more than 201 million euros, from which more than 65 million euros go to preserving the cultural heritage and making it available, and more than 116 million euros go to supporting and developing versatile and available cultural life.

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

The most important nation-wide top-level programme to support young people's discovery and appreciation of the cultural and artistic heritage of Estonia is [The Youth Song and Dance Celebrations](#).

The Youth Song and Dance celebrations are targeted to youth (7-26, mostly young people in school-age 7-17) and take place every five years in a dedicated area (Song Festival Ground) in Tallinn. Even though the event itself only lasts for few days in, the actual programme is covering also the period between the events as it includes the regular meetings (weekly in general) of dance groups, choirs, folk groups and orchestras in schools, cultural centres etc. throughout the years.

The celebrations focal point is Estonian folk culture with traditional songs and dances, however, also new work is commissioned for every event. Participants mostly wear national costumes.

In addition to youth celebration, also a general song and dance celebration is held, where young people take part. According to the established tradition, every 2nd and 7th year of the decade a youth song and dance celebration and every 4th and 9th year of the decade a general song and dance celebration takes place. The tradition of Estonian Song and Dance Celebrations tradition began with the first Song Celebration in 1869. The celebrations have taken place regardless of the political situation and have been part of building Estonian identity that has united the nation in its struggle for national independence before 1918 and during the period of the Soviet occupation (1941-1991). The [“Singing Revolution”](#) began in 1988, based on the Song Celebration tradition, when hundreds of thousands of people gathered in the Song Festival Grounds to demand Estonia's independence and sing patriotic songs. Estonia regained its independence in 1991. In November 2003, [UNESCO declared Estonia's Song and Dance Celebration](#) tradition a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

According to the research by Lauristin & Vihalemm ([Minu laulu- ja tantsupidu. Sotsioloogilise uuringu aruanne](#). Eesti Laulu- ja Tantsupeo Sihtasutus, 2013), the tradition to hold celebrations is very viable, also among young people. The number of participants has not dropped in spite of the general decrease of the youth population and the number of groups taking part in the selection process before the event is increasingly larger than the number selected to participate. The Register of Estonian Song and Dance Celebration Foundation has in 2016 a record of 50,196 members of groups (dance, groups, choirs, orchestras, folk music groups), aged 7 to 26; the number of individuals of

the same age group is 37,722, which means that the Register has a record of 13% of Estonian young people. In the age group from 7 to 19, the Register has a record of 21% of all Estonian young people ([“Hobby education, hobby activity, and youth workers in local municipalities”](#), the Centre for Applied Social Sciences of the University of Tartu, 2016).

In 2017, the [12th Youth Song and Dance Celebrations](#) were held, in which 797 collectives took part in Song Celebrations, that makes about 24,000 singers. Dance Celebrations had 585 collectives, with about 9,000 dancers. In 2019, the [27th General Song and Dance Celebrations](#) were held. The year 2019 was also the anniversary year of 150 years of song celebrations. During the previous general song and dance celebrations, 1,020 singing collectives (more than 32,000 singers) and 713 dancing collectives (11,500 dancers) participated. The [next](#) Youth Song and Dance Celebrations will take place in the year 2022 and General Song and Dance Celebrations in the year 2024.

The event is funded from the state budget and ticket revenue. In 2019, the [Ministry of Culture designated](#) more than 2,4 million euros for the [Estonian Song and Dance Celebration Foundation](#) who is the responsible body for organisation of the celebrations. Additional 200,000 euros was given in order to organize the theme year of 2019, which was designated to the 150 anniversary described in the previous paragraph. The [Ministry of Culture](#) also supported the collectives participating in the celebrations with 1 million euros that were distributed by the [Estonian Song and Dance Celebration Foundation](#).

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Formal learning

The standard for basic education is established by the [national curriculum for basic schools](#). General secondary education is a set of requirements established with the [national curriculum for upper secondary schools](#). At the core of the national curriculum are general competencies, the development of which must be supported by the entire learning process. In addition to teaching and learning objectives of subject areas, the development of general competencies is supported also by the integration of subjects and study of cross-curricular topics.

Basic school: 1st-9th grades

The national curriculum for basic schools defines among the 8 general competencies a cultural and value competence. This is described as an ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms; to sense and value one's ties with other people, the society, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value creation and shape the sense of aesthetics; to value general human and societal values, to value human, cultural and natural diversity; to acknowledge one's values.

Among the compulsory subject fields is a subject field „Art“. The objective of teaching subjects of the art field in basic school is to develop in students age-appropriate art competence: the ability to understand the diversity of arts, to reflect on issues of art and music; to value the artistic heritage of the local region, Estonia and the world; to see the relationship between the culture of different eras and modern culture; to use means of artistic and musical expression in personal and collective creative efforts, to appreciate their own artistic creations and those of their peers.

It is expected that, through art education, basic school graduates will:

1. have acquired experience of creative activities and self-expression, recognize their creative abilities and value individual and environmentally-friendly approaches;

2. use various visual and musical means of expression in creative work, discuss age-appropriate cultural messages and value judgments and are able to shape their opinions and express emotions through art;
3. value culture and human creativity, participate in individual and collaborative art projects and appreciate solution-seeking and creative thinking;
4. notice cultural traditions and global cultural diversity, understand the relative importance of music and art in present-day society, accept different cultural phenomena;
5. value and maintain Estonian culture and the culture of ethnic minorities living here, feel responsible for the preservation of cultural traditions, see connections between the development of art and culture and science and technology in the past and present-day; and
6. have an overview of the professions, occupations and further education opportunities associated with the art field.

The subject field of art subjects comprises art and music, compulsory at all stages of basic education. Art and music are taught from the 1st-9th grades. The design of required learning outcomes and contents in the subjects of the art field is based on the following division of weekly lessons between study stages and subjects:

- 1st Stage of Study Art: – 4.5 lessons Music: – 6 lessons
- 2nd Stage of Study Art: – 3 lessons Music: – 4 lessons
- 3rd Stage of Study Art: – 3 lessons Music: – 3 lessons

The compulsory subject „Music“ aims that by the end of the basic school, the student would:

1. derive joy from music and discern, realise and develop their abilities through making music;
2. become interested in music as an art form and shape their personal aesthetic tastes;
3. think and act creatively and also express themselves creatively through musical activities;
4. apply the acquired basics of musical literacy skill in musical activities;
5. value music and musical activities as they enrich people, culture and daily life;
6. know and maintain the traditions of national culture, participate in the process of transmitting the tradition of song festivals and understand and respect different national cultures;
7. comprehend and value the creation of pieces of music and take a critical attitude to the information technology and media-based environment;
8. know prominent Estonian and local composers and musicians and value cultural traditions; and
9. understand how interest in the field, musical abilities and knowledge can lead to the formation of a hobby or choice of a profitable profession.

The compulsory subject „Art“ aims that by the end of the basic school, the student would:

1. be able to use the skills of creative and critical thinking and problem-solving in creative activities, assignments, research and reflection;
2. perceive and develop their creative potential, appreciate originality and different solutions;

3. learn about the means of expression in visual arts and be able to create different works of art, using acquired knowledge and skills;
4. experiment with ideas, concepts, tools, materials and techniques;
5. work independently and in cooperation with peers;
6. apply acquired skills in other school subjects and in daily life;
7. learn about and value both art heritage and contemporary art;
8. make connections between the development of art, culture, science and technology;
9. regard art as a language of intercultural communication and comprehend cultural diversity and the role of art in society;
10. express their opinions and knowledge in oral and written forms using specific (art) vocabulary;
11. act in an ethical and safe manner in actual and virtual cultural environments;
12. comprehend aesthetic, ethical, functional and ecological aspects of examples material and spatial environments and design;
13. have an overview of the professions and occupations associated with the field of arts, design and architecture.

In addition, eight cross-curricular topics are defined in the curriculum, including cultural identity. The aim of the learning under this topic is for the pupil to develop into a person who is culturally aware, who understands the role of culture in shaping people's thought and behaviour and who knows how cultures have changed over history, who has acquired an idea of the versatility of cultures and particularities of lifestyles determined by culture and who values native culture and cultural diversity and is culturally tolerant and prepared for cooperation.

Upper secondary school: 10th to 12th grade

The national curriculum for upper secondary schools defines among the eight general competences, cultural and value competence. This is described as an ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms and ethics; to sense and value one's ties with other people, the society, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value art and creation, and shape the sense of aesthetics; to value general human and societal values, to value human, cultural and natural diversity; to acknowledge one's values and take them into consideration when making decisions; be tolerant and cooperative and to contribute for achieving joint objectives.

Among the compulsory subject fields is a subject field „Art“. The objective of teaching art subjects in upper secondary school is to develop students' art competence, i.e., cultural awareness, understanding of the variety of arts and cultural diversity of the world; basic knowledge of Estonian, European and global cultural heritage; appreciation of creative achievements in visual arts and music; the ability of critical and creative thinking; high regard for versatile self-expression skills, originality and readiness to find fresh solutions in changing circumstances; ability to use the means of art and music for individual and collective creative activities.

Upper secondary school graduates:

1. see art and music as natural parts of life and understand the significance of aesthetic factors of these art forms in modern society and everyday life;
2. explore and value the diversity of arts and their changes over time and in different places and cultures, see the connections between the development of art, culture, science and technology in the past and today;

3. think and act in an informed and critical manner in the cultural landscape and express their opinions and emotions;
4. are aware of their creative potential, realise their creative ideas confidently and competently and value their peers' different ideas and solutions;
5. know the diversity of cultural traditions, compare and value similarities and differences between cultural phenomena;
6. value and maintain Estonian culture and the culture of ethnic minorities living here, perceive themselves as bearers of cultural tradition and;
7. have an overview of the occupations, professions and continuing education opportunities in the fields of music and arts.

The compulsory subjects in the field of art subjects include music and art. The compulsory courses by subject are the following:

- Art – 2 courses: "Art and art history" and "Art and visual culture in the 20th and 21st centuries";
- Music – 3 courses: "Development of modern musical expression", "Patriotism in music", "Music of the 20th and 21st centuries". All courses include modules of "Musical self-expression: singing, instrument playing, original creation".

The compulsory subject „Music“ in upper secondary school seeks to ensure that students:

1. realise the possibilities of music and see its potential applications as a means to elaborate on, to influence and shape personal life and actions, as well as communication and the surrounding world;
2. value music as an important part of human culture and perceive themselves as bearers of native culture; understand and value the social and political nature and educational meaning of the choir singing movement and song festivals;
3. participate in musical life and have acquired readiness for musical performance and lifelong music activities;
4. can critically listen to, analyse and interpret music and discuss it, use creativity in musical self-expression;
5. are aware of and follow the rights and obligations associated with intellectual property and use modern information technology.
6. take their peers into account and value cooperation; and
7. have an overview of the professions and further education opportunities related to composition, interpretation, musical education, etc.

The compulsory subject „Art“ in upper secondary school seeks to ensure that students:

1. perceive the potential of art and see its applications as a means of interpreting, influencing and designing their personal lives and actions as well as the world around them;
2. are familiar with the basic concepts and stages in the history of art;
3. describe and compare diverse ideas and means of expression used in modern art;
4. understand that art and visual culture are connected to social processes and other spheres of life;
5. apply different artistic means of expression and techniques in creative self-expression, interpret and solve various problem assignments;
6. value the surrounding living environment and visual cultural heritage, understand the innovative, human-friendly and ecological way of thinking; and

7. have an overview of the professions and further education opportunities associated with the fields of art, architecture, design, etc.

In addition, eight cross-curricular topics are defined in the curriculum, including cultural identity. The aim of the learning under this topic is for the student to develop into a person who is culturally aware, who understands the role of culture in shaping people's thought and behaviour and who knows how cultures have changed over history, who has acquired an idea of the versatility of cultures and particularities of lifestyles determined by culture and who values native culture and cultural diversity and is culturally tolerant and prepared for cooperation.

Non-formal learning

A large number of young people in Estonia develop their cultural and creative competencies taking part in hobby education and hobby activities.

Youth [hobby education](#) and [hobby activities](#) are long-term and curricula-based (hobby education) or short-term with no demand for curriculum (hobby activities) systematic and supervised engagements with one's hobbies at one's will outside formal education or job for acquiring intensive knowledge and skills in the selected hobby.

Both hobby education and hobby activity play an important role in the Estonian social and cultural context by promoting the cultural development and socialisation process of children and young people.

Hobby education is non-formal learning based on clear learning aims taking place in hobby schools. Each hobby school has its own curricula. According to the [Standard for Hobby Education](#) (passed 21.03.2007), the purpose of hobby education is to provide opportunities for the comprehensive development of personality and to support young persons in their development into members of society with good coping skills. A hobby school, as defined in the [Hobby Schools Act \(passed 21.12.2006, amended 01.09.2017\)](#), is an educational establishment operating in the area of youth work which creates an opportunity for the acquisition of hobby education and for the diverse development of the personality, including cultivation of one's own language and culture, in different areas of hobby education.

Hobby activities can take place in various locations (mostly general education schools, youth centres, culture institutions).

Hobby education and hobby activity can take place in the following fields:

1. sports;
2. technology;
3. nature;
4. general culture;
5. music and arts.

According to the most recent research on hobby education and hobby activity ("[Hobby education, hobby activity, and youth workers in local municipalities](#)", the Centre for Applied Social Sciences of the University of Tartu, 2016), an estimated 40% of all the Estonian young people from age 7 to 26 (total number of 106 658 people) were involved in the hobby activity and hobby education in 2016.

It is estimated that the number of institutions providing hobby education and hobby activity to young people is approximately 3500 including altogether 711 institutions that are providing hobby education. According to the research, every Estonian school has some kind of hobby activity opportunities for young people. Young people can also participate in hobby education or hobby activity in 571 culture centres and 924 civil or youth associations. The number of young people connected to some kind of hobby education and hobby activity is the biggest in the case of general education schools, namely 33.7%. 25% practises hobby activity in a youth centre, 15% practises hobby

education or hobby activity in a hobby school, and 11% practises hobby activity in another cultural or social institution. Less than 10% of the young people practise hobby education or hobby activity in an association, culture centre and club. In terms of field of hobbies, 42% of the institutions are active in the field of culture and arts education: 15% music, 15% arts, 12% dance.

In Estonia, there are no guidelines for the recognition of specific cultural and creative competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Additional financing for hobby education and activities since 2017

In general, the hobby education and hobby activities are financed by local governments and parents' contribution, the state budget supported until 2017 only priority-based projects.

In 2017, the Government proposed and the Parliament [decided](#) to [finance additionally hobby education and hobby activities](#) (amendment in the [Youth Work Act](#), in force from 01.01.2018) from state budget with an aim to increase access to, variety and quality of hobby education and activities for young people between 7-19 years old. The annual support is 15 million euros. It is divided to local government budgets based on the number of young people taking into account the problems young people are facing in the municipality (the formula includes the number of young people with special needs, the financial capability of local government and the ratio of the number hobby opportunities and a number of young people). In order to use the support, a local government (or a group of local governments together) has to draw up a plan on how to increase the access to and variety of hobby education and activities provided. The first deadline to submit the plans was 1.09.2017. A vast majority of all the municipalities (a total number of 199 from 213 in Estonia) submitted the plan, of which 53 in a group. Now the deadline for submitting results and new plans is 15.01 annually and all municipalities have to present their plan. A web-based environment called [Digilahendus](#) was launched in 2019. [During the years 2017-2018](#), almost 20 million euros was distributed to the municipalities. See more in [Chapter 10.4](#).

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Specialised training organised or funded by top-level authorities is available for fostering the acquisition of cultural and creative skills amongst young people to relevant professionals in Estonia.

There is a vast amount of formal education and additional training opportunities concerned with culture and creativity.

Most important higher education institutions, that provide formal education connected with culture and arts, but also additional training for professionals already working in the area (including teachers in formal education, educators and youth workers, professionals in the cultural sector) are the following:

- [Estonian Academy of Arts](#) – public university providing opportunities for higher education in fine arts, design, architecture, media, visual studies, art culture, and conservation.
- [Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre](#) - a public university of music and drama, offering higher education in all major fields of music and theatre through bachelor, master and doctoral programmes.
- The [University of Tartu](#) – a public university offering a large number of study programmes under the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and has a collage [Viljandi Culture Academy](#) specialising on education in different areas of culture.
- [Tallinn University](#)- a public university that offers studies in different areas of culture such as cultural theory, Estonian language and culture, cross-media in film and television, audio-visual media, film arts etc.

- [Tartu Higher Art College](#) Pallas (University of Applied Sciences) - applied higher education institution that educates professional applied artists and artists-restorers who value and preserve cultural heritage

There is also a vocational education provider such as the [Tallinn Music School of Georg Ots](#) and [Tartu Music School of Heino Eller](#).

In 2015, the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) initiated a specific programme "Development of youth workers training" with an aim to raise the competencies of youth workers working in different areas. The programme reached its end in 2019 and it was supported by the European Social Fund. At the end of 2019, the [Foundation Archimedes Youth agency](#) (since 01.01.2021 the the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)) commissioned a study that was conducted by [Civitta Estonia](#) on the impact of the programme ([ESF koolitusprogrammi "Noorsootöötajate koolituste arendamine" koolituste mõju-uuring](#)). During the period 2015-2019, 249 different training activities were held and 5,157 youth workers participated (unique participants). Based on the research results, approximately 55% of the people working in the youth field have participated in the training activities.

The whole [programme during the period of 2015-2019](#) cost 2,004,750 euros, from which 1,704,037.50 euros was financed by the European Social Fund and 300,712.50 euros by the state budget.

Providing quality access to creative environments

There are no very recent large initiatives with the aim of widening the access of young people specifically to the creative environment. The significant theme-year of [Children and Youth Year of Culture](#) was held in 2017, organised at the initiative of the [Ministry of Culture](#) and coordinated by the [Estonian Children's Literature Centre](#).

The year 2020 is called theme-year of [Digital Culture](#) and some activities are also directed to youth specifically. There is an initiative called Creative Tiger ([Loometiiger](#)), a digital creativity programme for children, which will be worked out in cooperation with HITSA ([Information Technology Foundation for Education](#), starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Department](#)) that will give a digital programme for children and young people that schools will be able to use in order to teach creative fields in digital ways. No updates of the process are available in May 2020, so it is unclear when the programme will be available. Other activities held within the Digital Culture theme-year are targeted to all residents in Estonia, and not specific to young people. Read more about the theme-year from [Chapter 8.1](#).

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

Formal Education

Entrepreneurship education is explicitly referred to in the [curricula](#) as follows:

- In ISCED 1-3, new national curricula explicitly recognise EE as a general competence and a cross-curricular objective. It is also included as the cross-curricular topic 'Civic Initiative and Entrepreneurship'
- In ISCED 2-3, it is taught in the optional separate subjects 'Entrepreneurial Studies' (ISCED 2) and 'Economic and Entrepreneurship Studies' (ISCED 3), and in the compulsory subject 'Civics and Citizenship Education' (ISCED 2-3).

Central level recommendations for teaching methods are available through the new curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools.

Learning outcomes for EE are defined in the general part of the National Curricula for Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools as well in subject syllabi. Some examples are:

- in ISCED 1, students are expected, for example, to understand that money pays for things and is earned by working and to know how to cooperate with others;
- in ISCED 2, students are expected, for example, to have an understanding of labour market opportunities for those with different educational levels, as well as know what it means to be an owner, entrepreneur, employer, employee or unemployed person;
- in ISCED 3, students are expected, for example, to understand entrepreneurship as a career choice and understand that it is possible for them to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship education is explicitly referred to in the national curricula, which is described in detail in [chapter 3.8](#).

In higher education, culture management can be studied (BA, MA) in the [Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre](#) and [University of Tartu](#) including in its collage [Viljandi Culture Academy](#).

Non-formal Education

The recognition and validation of the learning, including entrepreneurial learning, in non-formal and informal learning environments, is been an important topic in education and youth policies for a long time. There is a legal framework allowing prior learning and work experience to be recognized and validated in the formal education system. The entrepreneurship of young people has an important place in youth work, described in more detail in [chapter 3.8](#).

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

The initiative "[Creative Estonia](#)" is in the heart of developing and supporting entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors.

Creative Estonia was established in 2009 by Enterprise Estonia, funded by the European Social Fund in order to increase awareness about the potential of creative industries in the Estonian economy. The larger aim is to present the content, unique characteristics, economic, social, and regional value of creative industries and to create a platform for the discussion of creative industry problems and solutions. In addition, to support beginning and established creative businesses with much-needed information and advice, increasing the business and exportability of creative businesses. Creative Estonia has contributed to forming cooperation networks, and the exchange of expertise and information nationally and internationally.

The Creative Estonia portal www.looveesti.ee gathers a lot of information and support material about creative industries in Estonia. It functions as a news portal for the sector in cooperation with partner organizations, offering up-to-date information about events, studies, support measures, and also featuring interviews and articles with outstanding people in the sector. The most visited pages focus on starting and developing a creative business.

As the role of starting and existing creative businesses is vital, Creative Estonia launched the virtual product and service development environment [PESA](#) in 2011. PESA is Estonia's first web-based development program. Each year, 20 companies with great export potential from different parts of Estonia are taking part in the 1-year support program. Businesses and cultural organizations are also invited to free regional marketing seminars taking place once a year in five different towns in Estonia. The [2018 PESA](#) graduates catalog illustrates the activities of these projects and which enterprises graduated from the PESA program.

[TeamLab](#) product development days take place twice a year. TeamLab aims to connect designers, engineers, and managers in order to create new products. The first TeamUp

was held in 2010 autumn as a one-day-event. The next events have already been a two-day event – during the first day teams are formed who will prepare a product project. On the second day, the teams will present their business plan to the jury. The last event took place in 2019 Autumn.

To encourage contact between businesses and creative people, Creative Estonia organizes various events and seminars, open-coffee style meetings, and short lectures where creative businesses and potential investors are brought together. To promote the idea of creative industries, Creative Estonia participates in conferences to do with management, business, and innovation as well as other areas and seeks solutions to problems in the creative industries with input from key figures from local government level right up to the parliament.

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

Infrastructure support for schools

In 2020, Estonia is one of the most digitized societies in the world, with a large number of public services available to citizens online, broadband internet coverage across the majority of the country, WiFi available almost everywhere, etc. In order to provide all schools with computers and internet access, the Tiger Leap Foundation was launched in 1997. Tiger Leap Plus, which followed the Tiger Leap program, focused mainly on the ICT competences of students, teachers and educational staff. Its main activities included the creation of electronic educational materials, in-service training, and support of teacher cooperation and experience exchanges. Under the Tiger Leap Plus program the Learning Tiger program was launched, the main focus of which was to make e-learning a natural part of daily tutorial work, curricula, and teacher training. The Estonian Education and Research Network (EENet) established in 1993, which in 2013 was transferred to be part of the [Information Technology Foundation for Education](#) has been providing high-quality national network infrastructure for Estonia's research, educational and cultural communities. All schools have free internet, including via WIFI, available for their students. The Information Technology Foundation for Education was joint amongst other institutions, and starting from 01.08.2020, a governmental institution called [Education and Youth Board](#).

HITSA

[The Information Technology Foundation for Education \(HITSA\)](#) was a non-profit association established by the Republic of Estonia, the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, Eesti Telekom, and the Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications. The role of the HITSA was to ensure that the graduates at all levels of education have obtained digital skills necessary for the development of economy and society and the possibilities offered by ICT are skilfully used in teaching and learning, which helps improve the quality of learning and teaching at all levels of education. HITSA initiated and guided innovation and development in our area of activities and introduced the best practices.

The activities of the educational programs were targeted at advancing and intensifying the cooperation between ICT industry, universities, other educational institutions, and the state. HITSA also offered [a training portal](#) for educators, youth workers, etc. in the area of digital technologies, including on how to support the creativity of young people.

Starting from 01.08.2020, HITSA is a part of the new organization called [Education and Youth Board](#), which fills in the tasks and goals of the previous organization.

PROGETIGER

With the view of arousing young people's interest in IT and introducing to them the future possibilities in the area, the activities of the program PrigeTiger are aimed at

encouraging preschool, general, and vocational education teachers to use technology (including programming and robotics) more widely in teaching.

To support this goal, [Education and Youth Board](#) (up to 31.07.2020 HIT SA) implements the ProgeTiger technology education program, which offers varied opportunities for integrating technology into studies, including basic and in-service training courses, subject-based model lessons and tasks, learning and teaching materials and examples of curricula that integrate technology.

Program ProgeTiger was launched in Estonia in 2012 when the idea of teaching programming and robotics was introduced to our schools.

In primary education, there is a national cross-curricular theme called "Technology and Innovation" which requires all teachers to implement technology in their teaching. That means that teachers have to integrate technology in their subjects in different fields (for example using Scratch in mathematics, music programs in music lessons, and so on). It does not say what to use or how to use technology specifically. Teachers can choose themselves how they want to do this. Also, there are different national optional curricula and schools own subjects in technology education (programming, robotics, 3D graphics, computer science, informatics, etc.) which schools can choose to add into their school program (approximately 67% of Estonian schools have one or more optional lesson in their program). Some examples of what the teachers do in schools:

- In preschool, teachers teach and use LEGO WeDo (in order to enhance students' curiosity and science skills), Kodu Game Lab (building, playing, and sharing games), tablets (apps), programs to make animations, etc.
- In primary school, teachers teach and use Kodu Game Lab, Logo MSW (programming), Scratch (programming), LEGO Mindstorms EV3 (robotics), mobile app making programs and environments, many different programs and environments which are used for teaching various subjects (music, mathematics, physics, biology), e-labs, etc.
- In high school and vocational education, teachers teach and use different programming languages (Python, JavaScript, etc), Codecademy.com courses, 3D graphics, robotics, programs to make games, web-pages, and apps, etc.

ProgeTiger program is supported and funded by the Estonian government through the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

[Look@World](#)

[Look@World](#) Foundation (Vaata Mailma SA) was founded in 2001. The goal of the foundation is to serve the public interest by supporting education, science, and culture via encouraging and popularizing the use of the Internet and ICT.

The Foundation launched a [SmartLab project](#) in 2012. The project aims to promote ICT related after school hobby education that will contribute to the IT awareness of the youth. During the first season, it gave more than 500 young people the opportunity to engage in activities related to ICT (programming, web design, app development, etc.). Since then the number of kids and clubs has constantly risen.

The Foundation also implemented the Project [„Theatre on the Internet“](#). The target group of the performance comprised of young people aged 12-16. However, the performance also addressed teachers and parents and made them see that in today's world there is no line between the virtual and the real world. The topic is approached in an unusual way and the threats of the online world are explored through theatre. The material for the play was collected through the methods of forum theatre where young people could share stories of the things that had happened to them online. The web-police and Estonian Child welfare Union also provided stories.

[For real though?](#) is a project of the foundation initiated in 2013. 10 440 young people aged 10-15 were advised during the active phase of the project. Additionally, an

interactive web-environment www.pariseltkavoi.ee was developed. The page provides access to information materials for youth and adults alike. One can also find lesson plans for teachers. The information regarding the safe use of mobile and smart devices is available on the project web page www.pariseltkavoi.ee.

Smart youth work

In 2017, a [concept of smart youth work](#) was introduced with an aim to support and develop better usage of technological advancement in youth work. It aims to create more opportunities for young people to explore and develop their full potential and in order to do so, among other approaches, states the need to develop a [concept for smart youth work](#):

1. to make greater use of information technology in working with youth, including raising the digital literacy of young people by offering ICT-related hobby activities;
2. developing youth work using new means;
3. raising the competencies of young people and youth workers.

See more information regarding Smart Youth Work from [Chapter 10.4](#).

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

In Estonia, there are several initiatives aiming at access to culture through technologies, however, there are none specifically targeting young people as the only or main target group. The programmes or initiatives may also be targeted to teachers, parents, etc.

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

In Estonia, there is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation, which also covers the area of promoting young people's creativity and capacity for innovation. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports, monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#). Based on the [State Budget Act](#), the [Ministry of Finance](#) also plays a coordinating role in planning, monitoring and ensuring division of resources of different financial instruments including the state budget, among all the policy fields.

As an example, the Government Office coordinated the division of tasks to create the opportunity for additional funding of hobby education and hobby activities (see in more detail in [chapter 8.5](#)). In 2017, the Government proposed and the Parliament [decided to finance additionally hobby education and hobby activities](#) from state budget with an aim to increase access to, variety and quality of hobby education and activities for young people between 7-19 years old. The initiative was developed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and the implementation is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. See more about the results of this programme from [Chapter 10.4](#).

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

There is no established regular policy/programme/initiative by national authorities to foster partnerships between stakeholders of the cultural sector (professionals, entrepreneurs, cultural institutions, associations...) and youth organisations and youth workers. As both the cultural sector and youth sector has a number of active umbrella organisations representing different areas of culture or youth field, and also active formats of cooperation between those organisations, the dialogue and partnerships are created based on their aims and objectives and by them.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

The main new initiative to foster equality and young people involvement through participation in cultural activities (including youth work) is the Additional financing for hobby education and activities since 2017. The programme is described in [chapter 8.5](#). This programme is specifically designed to target young people.

According to the programme "[Culture 2020](#)", the involvement of young people in cultural activities is a recurring topic in different cultural fields. The responsible body for this is the [Ministry of Culture](#). This programme is not targeted to young people only, but young people as one possible target group.

However, many of the initiatives described in the [next section](#) directly support this aim as well.

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

Integrating Estonia 2020

"Integrating Estonia 2020" is a strategy of the Government to ensure integration and social cohesion in Estonia in the period 2014-2020. The Ministry of Culture is in charge of the coordination of the strategy.

The general objective of the development plan "Integrating Estonia 2020" is a socially cohesive society where individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds actively participate in society and share democratic values. The new development plan serves as the basis for integration policy that is carried out during 2014–2020, and it aims at:

- increasing the cohesion of society;
- increasing the competitiveness of the Republic of Estonia;
- ensuring security;
- preserving the Estonian language and culture;
- preserving the culture and language of the ethnic minorities;
- ensuring increasing tolerance towards different groups of society;
- ensuring a stronger civic identity.

In the framework of the strategy, several objectives are defined relevant to social inclusion of young people and intercultural awareness. The youth-specific objective of the strategy is "Students with a native language different from Estonian actively participate in youth work and have close contacts with Estonian-speaking peers". The objective shall be achieved through increasing opportunities for initiatives, joint activities and increasing the involvement of young people in youth work.

The [report about the implementation of the strategy in 2019](#) states the following outcomes under the indicators concerned with young people:

- The participation of young people in youth work in municipalities, where the majority of the population has not Estonian ethnic origin has risen from 44.3% in 2018 to 44.8% in 2019.
- The percentage of young people, who are not in employment, education or training (the NEET) is 10.2% in 2019 and the difference between Estonians and young people with other ethnic origin has decreased from 1.0% in 2018 to 1.2% in 2019.

The youth specific target groups addressed in this document are young people in general (i.e. 7-26 years old) and young people with an ethnic minority background.

The estimated total cost of the development plan from 2014–2020 is 73,52 million euros.

National minorities' Sunday schools

The [Integration Foundation](#) provided up to 2018 annual funding for national minorities' [Sunday schools and their development](#), including training leaders and teachers of Sunday schools. National minorities' Sunday schools are a form of hobby schools that provide children aged 3- 18 opportunity to develop their National language and culture studies. The aim is to support National and cultural identity of young people.

The annual funding was available to Sunday schools, which offered to learn at least 100 academic hours per year in which at least 10 children or young people participate.

Caring Values

In 2016, [Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency](#) (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)) started to implement the Activity Plan for Caring Values, aimed at the field of youth in Estonia.

The aim of the Activity Plan for Caring Values is to highlight positive values, such as compassion, respect, kindness, diversity, in the field of youth. The aim is to advance understanding and deepening of these values among youth in Estonia, as well as in the larger society, through the means of youth work. The basis of the Activity Plan has been developed and stipulated from November 2015 under the framework of a joint think tank 'The Role of Youth Work in Shaping Friendly Estonia', co-organised by the Youth Agency alongside with the Estonian Youth Work Centre (both are a part of the [Education and Youth Board](#) in 2021).

Main Activities for 2016 and 2017 included:

- Organising youth workers' basic training on human rights education, cultural diversity, marginalized and vulnerable target groups, prevention of hate speech, and enhancing value-based youth work. Basic training is provided in Estonian and in Russian. A Value Forum of Youth Work will be organised, based on the outcomes of the training
- Organising Value campaign for youth that comprises of cultural cooking action 'Culture to the Jar' in youth centres and in schools all over Estonia; a social media campaign advancing media critical competence in youth; idea competition for artistic gifts, and various workshops for youth
- Translation and mapping of human rights education study material

The main target group of the activity plan are young people (7-26) and youth workers.

The Activity Plan is financed by the [Estonian Ministry of Education and Research](#).

"I dare to think, to do, to stand up, to understand"

The Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency (since 01.01.2021 the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the Education and Youth Board) established a central theme "I dare to think, to do, to stand up, to understand" for all the youth projects in 2017. The central theme highlights the range of topics that are important in society today. The Youth Agency had established this theme in order to encourage people to write projects that significantly add to the relevant debates. The central theme focuses on socially critical projects on the following issues (the list is not final):

- Migration and refugees
- Human rights, including gender equality and LGBT projects
- Intercultural dialogue, including challenging cultural stereotypes
- Dialogue between youth and their peers in socially vulnerable positions
- Creative projects (art as a medium for social messages)

- Advancing media literacy and critical analysis (skills) in youth

Under the central theme, focus consultations are provided for applicants. During the consultation, there is an opportunity to obtain thorough feedback on the quality of the project. Applicants pondering how to set the focus of the project are offered the opportunity to register for a consultation on issues concerning the content of the project.

The central theme was valid until the end of 2017, after that the theme ended.

Youth Meetings

Youth Meetings is a programme established to increase interactions between young people from a different ethnic background and thus increase their mutual understanding and development but also to enhance their cultural awareness, openness and tolerance. Through the programme, organisers promote positive contacts between young people (11 to 16 years-of-age) living in Estonia but speaking different mother tongues (mainly Estonian and Russian) by giving them an opportunity to carry out projects together. These projects detail the goals and targets they expect to achieve.

“Youth Meetings” has been very popular since its creation in 2015 with approximately 1,700 Estonian and Russian speaking young people participating annually in the project. Altogether, “Youth Meetings” has brought together more than 7,600 young people to cooperate in youth meetings and trainings since the project started.

The “Youth Meetings” programme is financed through the Ministry of Education and Research. The budget for the programme in 2021 is 234,022 euros. The programme is being implemented by the [Education and Youth Board](#).

In addition, Estonian Youth Work magazine MIHUS has focused on issues such as inclusion and solidarity among young people:

- [Youth work with young people with fewer opportunities](#) (2010),
- [Youth work and sensitivity towards different cultures](#) (2016).

Additionally, a manual for inclusive youth work has been created and published in Estonian and Russian languages: “[Inclusive youth work](#)” (2012).

8.10 Current debates and reforms

In 2017, a new financial instrument was introduced in Estonia from the state budget to support young people’s participation in hobby education and hobby activities ([see chapter 8.5](#)). The impact of this instrument on its main aims: greater access of young people to hobby education, enlarged variability of the offer, and better quality of hobby education and hobby activities. The first [results](#) were published in August 2019. Almost 20 million euros enabled to create 1,800 different activities for 59,000 young people.

The year 2020 is the year of Digital Culture. See more in [Chapter 8.5](#) and [8.1](#). Therefore, there are many activities connected to digital culture and making culture more available to all age groups, not only young people.

Because of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020, the [Ministry of Culture](#) has given out financial support to all cultural fields and institutions in order to help them through these difficult periods. The whole [culture help package](#) is 25 million euros, from which:

- 6 million euros go to museums;
- 4 million euros go to theatres;
- 4 million euros go to music;
- 2.3 million euros go to sports;
- 1.3 million euros go to movies;
- 0.6 million euros go to arts;

- 0.5 million euros go to design;
- 4.2 million euros go to creative support;
- 0.6 million euros go to choir and dance leaders;
- 0.4 million euros go to sports coaches.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

In the [Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2016–2020](#) the main objective of Estonian development cooperation is defined as follows: to contribute to the eradication of poverty and to attaining the other Sustainable Development Goals. The Document states, that Estonian development cooperation has always focused on safeguarding human rights and environmental friendliness. Estonia considers it important to observe the principles of empowering women and gender equality in all activities of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, to ensure the performance and sustainability of development cooperation. Read more about the general context of the topic from [Chapter 9.1](#). Young people are rather interested in global issues, especially the climate change.

The main governmental authority responsible for youth policy, including youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up, including youth cooperation at the global level is [the Ministry of Education and Research](#), the Youth Affairs Department (starting from 01.01.2021 the Youth and Talent Department). The main function of the Ministry of Education and Research is to ensure targeted and effective development of education, research, youth and language policy. More information on the administration and cooperation can be found from [Chapter 9.2](#).

In Estonia, there are no additional specific top-level policies, programs, projects or initiatives aimed to allow young people to exchange views at home with regional, national or international policy-makers, which are not described in [chapter 5](#) as youth participation and consultation mechanisms.

Raising awareness about global issues is addressed in [Chapter 9.4](#), green volunteering, production and consumption in [Chapter 9.5](#).

Under the Japanese International Youth Development Exchange Program youth exchanges between Estonia and Japan have taken place since 2007. The aim is to support the development of friendship and understanding between young people, intercultural learning and international cooperation. See more in [Chapter 9.6](#).

9.1 General context

Main concepts

In the [Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2016–2020](#) the main objective of Estonian development cooperation is defined as follows: to contribute to the eradication of poverty and to attaining the other Sustainable Development Goals.

The goals of Estonian development cooperation across the areas of activities are the following:

1. supporting the quality of education,
2. supporting the development of health care,
3. guaranteeing peace and stability,

4. supporting the development of democracy, the introduction of good governance practices and guaranteeing human rights,
5. promoting economic development,
6. fostering environmentally friendly development,
7. raising the awareness of the Estonian public, particularly younger people, concerning development cooperation and humanitarian aid, as well as global development problems.

The document states, that Estonian development cooperation has always focused on safeguarding human rights and environmental friendliness. Estonia considers it important to observe the principles of empowering women and gender equality in all activities of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, to ensure the performance and sustainability of development cooperation.

Although the strategy ends in 2020 according to the [program document](#), the activities are implemented until 2023.

Youth interest in global issues

According to [the study about global issues and values in schools](#), young people were more aware of two global issues in 2016: poverty and refugees. The number of students claiming that it is important to put Estonian issues in a global context in order to understand them has dropped significantly. In 2020, OECD published the last part of the PISA research of 2018, which was called "Are students ready to thrive in an interconnected world?". Based on these results, the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) in cooperation with the [Education and Youth Board](#) published a report "Is the Estonian young person a world citizen?" ([Kas Eesti noor on maailmakodanik?](#)) that brought out that young people are quite aware of the world's global issues. The topics they were most aware of were the equality of men and women and climate change. Compared to the study conducted in 2016, poverty also came out in the TOP 7 topics.

The Ministry of Environment has commissioned regular surveys on environmental awareness of the population, which are representative of population 15- 74 years old. The [most recent survey](#) (2018) indicates that young people (15-19 years old) give the highest evaluation to the condition of the environment in Estonia, they assess their environmental awareness to be somewhat lower and they are more actively taking part in activities connected with environmental issues compared to other age groups. The previous study was conducted in 2016 that showed the same results.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Research and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with Estonian and foreign experts introduced a report "[Global Education in Estonia](#)", which also showed a growing trend of young people being interested in climate change. There are more and more groups of young people protesting against the lack of national efforts in combatting climate change.

[Summary research on youth work and global issues in Estonia](#) indicates that youth organizations have a positive interest in global issues. Respondents of the online survey claimed that the most interesting topics in global issues are intercultural dialogue (79% of the respondents), access to education (75%), sustainable development (70%), human rights and discrimination (62%). According to the study, organizations show high interest in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes connected with global education, however, Estonian youth and youth organization members are not accustomed to think about global issues or to link local issues to global problems.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The main governmental authority responsible for youth policy, including youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up, including youth cooperation at the global level is [the Ministry of Education and Research](#), the Youth Affairs Department (starting from 01.01.2021 the Youth and Talent Department). The main function of the Ministry of Education and Research is to ensure targeted and effective development of education, research, youth and language policy.

The main other Governmental authorities:

- the [Government Office](#): responsible for the coordination of cooperation in the area of sustainable development,
- the [Ministry of Environment](#): responsible for environment and sustainable development issues,
- the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#): responsible for global cooperation,
- the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#): responsible for labour market policy, but also for social protection and services including child and family policy,
- the [Environmental Board](#): responsible for fostering a sense of responsibility and economy in the people of Estonia – particularly young people – in regard to nature.

Main public actors and foundations:

- [The Foundation Environmental Investments Centre](#) (EIC) is an independent body established by the government under the Ministry of Finance, responsible for mediating state budget funds, EU funds, funds from foreign aid programmes and the Green Investment Scheme, and granting loans for the implementation of environmental projects,
- [Education and Youth Board](#), a governmental body responsible for implementing youth and education policy,
- education institutions of Estonia.

The main non-public actors

- [Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation](#), the umbrella organisation for organisations active in the field of development co-operation and global education;
- [Mondo](#), a non-governmental organisation, devoted to development cooperation, global education and humanitarian aid;
- [National Youth Council](#), the umbrella organization of youth associations and youth organisations;
- the [Estonian Green Movement](#): a non-profit organisation for environmental protection the aim of which is to improve the environmental situation in Estonia and to guide our society to sustainable, green thinking.
- *The general distribution of responsibilities*
- The responsibility for youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up, including youth cooperation at the global level is divided between the central government and non-governmental organizations.
- Local governments are vested with the primary responsibility for the youth work provision, which might include activities on global issues, however, it is not obligatory. The regional (county) governments were abolished on 1.01.2018.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is a mechanism established to ensure harmonized policy-making and implementation, which also covers the area of youth and global issues. The central position in this mechanism - approving the propositions to develop a policy document or to change the existing one, monitoring the implementation through approving the action plans and their reports, monitoring the cooperation and in case of need initiating the cooperation - is granted to the [Government](#) and the [Government Office](#).

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

In Estonia, there are no additional specific top-level policies, programs, projects or initiatives aimed to allow young people to exchange views at home with regional, national or international policy-makers, which are not described in [chapter 5](#) as youth participation and consultation mechanisms.

Starting from 2013, an annual event "Opinion Festival" ([Arvamusfestival](#)) takes place, which is one platform for young people to exchange views at the domestic level on different topics. Occasionally, there have been topics that are connected with global issues (e.g. human rights), but the form the topic is being handled might not always be including the exchange of views. Also, the Opinion Festival is not directly targeted to young people, but usually it has a section targeted to the youth field in general.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

In Estonia, there are no additional specific top-level policies, programs, projects or initiatives aimed to allow young people to exchange views abroad with policy-makers, which are not described in [chapter 5](#) as youth participation and consultation mechanisms.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Formal learning

[National curricula for upper secondary schools](#) defines two general competences most related to global issues:

- cultural and value competence - ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms and ethics; to sense and value one's ties with other people, the society, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value art and creation, and shape the sense of aesthetics; to value general human and societal values, to value human, cultural and natural diversity; to acknowledge one's values and take them into consideration when making decisions; be tolerant and cooperative and to contribute for achieving joint objectives;
- social and citizenship competence – the ability to become self-actualized; to function as an active, aware, helpful and responsible citizen and to support the democratic development of society; to know and follow values and moral standards in society; to respect the rules of various environments, including communication environments and societal diversity, human rights, the particularities of religions and nations; to engage in cooperation with other people in different situations; to accept differences in people and their values and to take them into account in interacting with people; the ability to understand global problems, take responsibility for solving them; value and follow

the principles of sustainable development: feel like a member of society capable of dialogue in the context of Estonia, Europe and the whole world.

General competences are shaped through learning outcomes expected in all subjects, but also through discussing cross-curricular subjects at lessons, extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

The relevant subjects in this field are History; Civics and citizenship education; Personal, social and health education and Geography (Human Geography). The subjects are divided into compulsory and optional courses.

The compulsory courses by subject are the following:

1. History 6 courses: General History; Estonian History I (until the sixteenth and turn of the seventeenth centuries); Estonian History II (until the end of the nineteenth century); Contemporary History I – Estonia and the world in the first half of the twentieth century; Contemporary History II – Estonia and the world in the second half of the twentieth century; and Modern History III – Main characteristics of the developments of the twentieth century: Estonia and the world.
2. Human Studies 1 course: Family Studies
3. Civics and citizenship education 2 courses: „Development of the society and democracy“, „Economy and world politics“.

The optional courses in the subject field are:

1. History 2 courses: General History – World History: Civilization outside Europe; and General History – History of European countries and the United States of America.
2. Human Studies 1 course: Psychology.
3. Civics and citizenship education 1 course: Everyday law.

The field of social studies includes the compulsory course on 'Population and economy', which is described in the field of natural sciences under human geography, and the optional course on 'The globalizing world'.

Non-formal learning

Youth participation in non-formal learning is supported mostly in youth work. There is a large variety of opportunities provided for youth to participate in youth organisations, youth centre activities and hobby schools. All of these formats may provide a non-formal learning experience for youth also related to the promotion of knowledge or understanding of global issues. There are hobby schools with dedicated activities on nature and environment, a lot of activities in youth organisations and youth centres are based on self-initiative and volunteerism of young people, which is also encouraged; etc.

There is a number of youth work programmes initiated by the top-level authority and many of them support the awareness and understanding of global issues among youth, however, there is no specifically addressed to them.

In addition, the Erasmus+ programme opportunities for youth, including European Voluntary Service, provide a considerable part of opportunities for available for youth in Estonia in relation to global issues.

Educators' support

The non-governmental organisation [Mondo](#) has created a portal for educators called [Maailmakool](#), where training materials and information, including about training courses is available. The materials for educators are presented by age group, subject and possible subject field in school curricula. The materials are available in Estonian and Russian.

There are training courses offered for teachers and youth workers on subjects connected with youth and global issues. For example, [Mondo](#) provided a [training course “Digital learning through global education for secondary schools”](#) targeted to teachers.

The Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 31.12.2020, the [Youth Agency of the Foundation Archimedes](#)) is providing materials for youth workers mostly in a dedicated portal [mitteformaalne.ee](#). Up until 2019, they also provided training activities. They have also publicised [the special issue on intercultural topics](#) in youth work in youth work magazine [MIHUS](#).

Mondo had a network of film clubs targeted to young (16-30) people, who are interested to show documentary films in their schools, community, networks on global issues. In 2019, there was a variety of educational films available for free on their [website](#).

[Keskkonnaharidus.ee](#) mediates information on environmental education opportunities in Estonia. The portal aims to support teachers and nature enthusiasts by providing information on nature centres, educational programmes and educational materials.

Informal learning

[HeaTeoTöö päev](#)

The HeaTeoTöö päev (HTT) is a new innovative activity for young people, local communities and enterprises. Young people are encouraged to work for a day and the money earned is donated to the development cooperation causes. Young people can also initiate joint activities to raise money. The programme started in 2014 and is ongoing. The organisation in charge - the non-governmental organisation [Mondo](#) - is partly supported by the public funding, however many of the funding comes also from fundraising activities, private support, etc.

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

The non-governmental organisation [Mondo](#) has supported by the public funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, created a portal for educators [Maailmakool](#), which is also developing and promoting campaigns and information activities targeted at youth, specifically in schools.

The portal encourages youth workers and teachers to initiate [campaigns](#), [competitions](#), [theme days](#), [exhibitions](#) for youth in order to support the awareness-raising about global issues for youth.

Most prominent campaigns have since 2005 throughout the years been the World Day celebration. There is [support available](#) for local celebrations by organisation [Mondo](#).

In 2015, [the youth climate campaign](#) was held with an aim for youth to take part in shaping the climate policy in Estonia.

[Crass-root campaigns](#) - the non-governmental organisation [Mondo](#) has implemented the project “Crass-root Campaigns” in 2013-2014 aimed to raise youth awareness about basic rights and active citizenship through encouraging local youth-led campaigns and helping young people with the creation of films, materials etc. Young people receive also training about social campaigns.

Information providers

Public authorities

Youth information belongs to the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, a central organization responsible for the system of Rajaleidja centres is the [Education and Youth Board](#), which also implements youth policy, including developing the provision of youth information in Estonia.

Contact points for youth and youth information and counselling structures

Youth information has been recognized as a specific field in youth work since 2001. There was a separate system of youth information centres, which in 2014 were merged with career guidance centres. In 2016 there were 16 centralised publicly financed centres in all counties. The regional youth guidance centres, called [Pathfinder centres](#) (Rajaleidja), provide information and counselling for young people up to 26 years.

There are also dedicated websites available for the provision of youth information:

- National portal www.eesti.ee
- Web-sites providing information for youth www.rajaleidja.ee; www.teeviit.ee
- Regional youth information portals such as www.polvanoored.ee; www.noorteinfo.ee

The centres and youth information activities are receiving annual public funding.

Key initiatives

There have been no additional key initiatives to specifically disseminate information on global issues among young people besides the campaigns noted in section *Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues* in Estonia.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

Junior Ranger

The objective of Junior Ranger courses is to increase the awareness of the environment and nature among youngsters and to create and develop the cooperation network around national parks. In Estonia, the courses have been organised since 2004 and are ongoing.

The objective of the summer course and the continuing seminars of Junior Ranger is to increase the awareness of the environment and nature among youngsters. Junior Rangers are shown the practical work of nature conservation, they acquire knowledge of flora and fauna of the national park and discuss how to make the world a better place. In the camps, several necessary works are performed which can help endangered species and conserve cultural heritage.

The target group is young people from 6 to 12 grade who are interested in nature, who live in the territory of a national park or nearby, who have participated in natural science quizzes, subject Olympics and/or are truly interested in nature can participate in the summer courses. In the summer courses, up to 20 youngsters can participate in each national park; in the autumn and spring continuing seminars, up to 15 youngsters interested in nature can participate.

The responsible authority is the [Environmental Board](#). The programme is funded from the state budget.

Green production and consumption

The Ministry of Environment initiated [the environmental awareness programme](#) in 2006 and the programme is ongoing. The aim is to support the development of environmentally friendly consumption habits by the Estonian people and an awareness of ecological balance.

Four action lines are supported under the programme, of which one is explicitly targeting young people in general education schools: „Activities supporting the development of environmentally friendly consumption habits and learning about the ecological balance by students in the general educational system.”

The activities supported under this line of action:

- Study trips with active learning programmes in nature- or environment education centres
- Outdoor camps for young people
- Local school project to support environmentally friendly consumption and the richness of the ecological environment.
- Development of study materials to support trips, camps, projects.

The responsible authority for the implementation is [The Foundation Environmental Investments Centre](#) (EIC). The programme is funded from the state budget.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

[Youth exchanges with Japan](#)

Under the Japanese International Youth Development Exchange Program youth exchanges between Estonia and Japan have taken place since 2007.

The aim is to support the development of friendship and understanding between young people, intercultural learning and international cooperation.

The target group of the program in Estonia are young people 18-30 years old.

The organization in charge of topic Estonia is the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 31.07.2020 [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#)). The program is funded from the Japan and Estonia state budgets.

Development cooperation activities

[GLEN Estonia](#)

Global Education Network of Young Europeans (GLEN) was a network (up to 2019) of non-governmental and governmental organizations as well as committed young people who were involved in global education. GLEN's core activity was an annual training and experience program for young Europeans consisting of three seminars, a three-month project-based internship in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caucasus or Southeast Europe as well as awareness-raising and global education activities. GLEN Estonia sent annually 5-10 volunteers to participate in the program during 2004-2019.

The target group was young people in the age group 21-30. The program was supported by private funding. The organization in charge of topic Estonia is the [Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation](#).

9.7 Current debates and reforms

In the end of 2020, there are no current debates and reforms ongoing.

10. YOUTH WORK

Youth work in Estonia has a history of more than 100 years as the roots of youth work go back to the 19th century with the creation of forerunners of youth work. The first act regarding youth work was accepted in 1936 (Youth Organization Act). Youth work has a certain definition by law: *"Youth work is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons, which enable them to be active outside their families,*

formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their free will.” See more in [Chapter 10.1](#).

In Estonia, the youth field is considered to consist of two parts – youth work and youth policy – that are tightly connected to each other and the policy-making includes both parts. According to the [Local Government Organization Act](#), the local governments have a key role in organizing youth work. Most of the financing of youth work comes also from the budget and own income of the local municipalities. See more in [Chapter 10.2](#).

The main top-level policies and regulations on youth work are as following:

- [Youth Work Act](#) - provides a legal basis for the organization and financing of youth work; see more in [Chapter 1.2](#).
- Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)) – addresses causes of problems pertaining to young people; see more in [Chapter 1.3](#).

See the main structures that provide different youth work activities and their funding in Estonia from [Chapter 10.3](#).

The quality of youth work is assessed differently depending on the mechanism, project, or programme. For example, there are the competencies of youth workers (including occupational standard), quality assessment model for local municipalities, and financing of hobby education and hobby activities in local municipalities. These are just a few examples brought out in the Youth Wiki, but as there are many different activities, there are just as many quality assurance mechanisms. See more in [Chapter 10.4](#). The most recent tool for displaying data and statistics on young people is called [Noorteseire Juhtimislaud](#). Estonia has also participated in an international project “[Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe](#)”, which aimed to identify the impact of open youth work in the UK (England), Finland, Estonian, Italy, and France. Estonia also has a [concept of smart youth work](#) from which you can learn more also from [Chapter 10.4](#).

Youth workers are not defined in the [Youth Work Act](#). The youth workers are mostly paid, about 8% of youth workers do the work voluntarily. Everybody who works with young people is called a youth worker, regardless of whether they receive a salary or not. Youth work can be studied in three universities in Estonia on different levels - higher applied sciences degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree. Read more about youth workers, their training and study possibilities, and mobility, from [Chapter 10.5](#).

Young people are able to assess their experiences obtained from youth work in experience baggage on the website [Teeviit](#). It is possible to add the learning experience (formal education, student/pupil exchanges, trainings, seminars and conferences, voluntary activities, youth camps, youth exchanges, and hobbies) and working experience (jobs, practice, working camps, belonging to organizations, tutoring) and analyze the outcomes by yourself. As a result of the process, it is possible to combine it into a CV and send it to potential employers by e-mail. See more in [Chapter 10.6](#).

Mainly the youth work institutions, organizations, youth workers and local municipalities, are disseminating information regarding youth work. There is no single website to provide all information on youth work to young people. Youth information provides young people information regarding the surrounding life, supports their independency, increases their knowledge of different opportunities and choices to organize their life better, and increases the meaningful participation in the society. Youth information in Estonia is targeted to young people aged 7- 26 and is based on the needs and interests of young people. The key initiatives on youth awareness-raising are, for example, National Youth Work Week and International Youth Day. Regarding the impact of youth work, there are also some initiatives, e.g. [Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work across Europe](#) and Thorough monitoring and analyzing system for youth work quality and impact. Read more about information providers, national youth information and key initiatives on the topic from [Chapter 10.7](#).

In October 2019, the official process of a new “Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035” was started. 28.11.2019 the government approved the proposals of compiling a new development plan that continues the last, currently valid development plan. In November 2020, the new development plan got the Government's approval and has been passed on to the Parliament who should confirm it the latest by the end of the year.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned [a study](#) on the administrative agencies under the ministry, services offered and finding solutions to reorganize the services and functions. As there are several institutions implementing the same or similar policies, it was proposed that the institutions would be merged into one large joint agency. The reform was put into force on 01.08.2020 and the new organization is called the [Education and Youth Board](#). See more about current debates and reforms from [Chapter 10.8](#).

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Youth work in Estonia has a history of more than 100 years as the roots of youth work go back to the 19th century with the creation of forerunners of youth work. The first act regarding youth work was accepted in 1936 (Youth Organization Act), which included the age group of young people (all students and other citizens under the age of 20), tasks of the Ministry of Education regarding youth, the definition of youth organizations, and funding youth work. During the first Estonian Republic, 1918-1940, extra structures were created in order to socialize young people – e.g. pupil's leisure time activities organized by schools, associations created by young people, etc.

After the first independent republic, Estonia was under the occupation of different countries. During World War II, Estonia was under the occupation of Germany, young people were used in helping with agricultural work. During the occupation of the Soviet Union, only one youth organization called Comsomol was allowed and all other organizations were demolished. All the activities targeted to youth were ideological and connected with raising a good Soviet person with the correct ideology. From the positive side, during that time there was a wide range of activities, which was not the case before the Soviet Union – for example, there were hobby activities, hobby schools, sports, summer camps, working camps, etc. In addition, the first steps were made in order to create youth policy and national programs.

In 1990, in the Ministry of Education, a department called youth service was created, which aim was to create the basis of youth policy and national programs that would ensure young people with more possibilities to develop. They also started the process of figuring out the structures and system of youth work, and the creation of laws, documents and programs needed for implementing the policy.

Estonia restored its independence in 1991 and after that, lots of youth organizations were created or re-created. The national system was re-organized and a new foundation for youth work was set. In 1991, the Estonian Students Association was created, being one of the oldest youth organizations in the history of second independent Estonia. In 1992, the [Child Protection Act](#) was accepted (put in force in 1993), which was the first step in child protection. In 1993, [Local Government Organization Act](#) was accepted, which put the responsibility of the organization of hobby schools and hobby activities to the local municipalities. In 1999, when the first Youth Work Act was accepted, the local municipalities got the responsibility to organize whole youth work in their area. The same year, the first Youth Work Forum was held, which aimed in discussing youth work organization with young people, youth organizations and people working with youth, and the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (EYWC) was founded. EYWC was a legal successor of numerous forerunners, e.g. the ESSR Children's Excursion and Tourism Center (1965-1980), ESSR House of Young Tourists (1980-1990), Estonian Youth Tourism House (1990-1994), and Estonian Youth Initiative Center (1994-1999). The Youth Policy Council

was established in 1999 and its aim was to consult the minister of education in issues concerning youth work. Since 01.08.2020, Estonian Youth Work Centre amongst with other organizations under the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), were reorganized into one institution called the [Education and Youth Board](#).

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

In Estonia, there is a set definition for youth work in the [Youth Work Act](#), which defines youth work as following:

"Youth work is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons, which enable them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their free will."

This means that youth work is done outside the family, work and formal education, is based on free will and promotes the development of a young person.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

In Estonia, the youth field is considered to consist of two parts – youth work and youth policy – that are tightly connected to each other and the policy-making includes both parts.

Therefore, the main top-level actors are the same as with youth policy (see more in [Chapter 1. Youth Policy Governance](#)). The ministry in charge of youth is the [Ministry of Education and Research](#), the department responsible is the Department of [Youth and Talent Policy](#). The national youth work agency up to 31.07.2020 was the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#). Since 01.08.2020, there is a new governmental body under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research called the [Education and Youth Board](#). The joint institution was established on the basis of the services of Foundation Innove, Foundation Archimedes, Information Technology Foundation for Education and Estonian Youth Work Centre. The main objective of the new organization is to implement the education and youth policy.

According to the [Local Government Organization Act](#), the local governments have a key role in organizing youth work. Most of the financing of youth work comes also from the budget and own income of the local municipalities. The municipalities have the obligation to have a general development plan according to the aforementioned act, but there are no regulations stating that there should be a separate strategy or development plan for youth work. The [Youth Work Act](#) states that a local government council has to determine their youth work priorities and set out the tasks in the local development plan. Therefore, there are municipalities that have a separate youth work development plan, and others, who have a paragraph of youth work in the general development plan.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The cross-sectorial cooperation between the main public actors is described in [Chapter 1.5. Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries](#).

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy/legal framework

In Estonia, the youth field consists of both youth work and youth policy, and therefore, most of the legislation covers both the topics at once. The main top-level policies and regulations on youth work are as following:

- [Youth Work Act](#) - provides a legal basis for the organization and financing of youth work; see more in [Chapter 1.2](#).

- Youth Field Development Plan 2014- 2020 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)) – addresses causes of problems pertaining to young people; see more in [Chapter 1.3](#).

The [Youth Work Act](#) sets also the general definitions and the target groups of youth work. The main target group of youth work, in general, is a young person between 7 and 26 years of age. The youth field programme for the years 2020-2023 ([Noortevaldkonna programm 2020-2023](#)) targets more specifically the young people in the risk of exclusion.

The main structures of youth work that provide different youth work activities are:

- Youth center – youth work establishment that is managed by the local municipalities or non-governmental organizations. A youth center has the widest range of youth work services and is the main youth work executor on the local level. Youth centers might act in different forms, but most of the centers use the open youth work method. In 2019, there were 281 youth centers in Estonia.
- Hobby school – an educational institution that acts in the field of youth work and creates the conditions for developing young people in different fields of hobby education. See more in the [Glossary](#). In the academic year 2019/2020, there were 782 hobby schools in Estonia.
- Youth association – non-profitable organization, in which at least two-thirds of the members are young people and which objective covers the organization and performance of youth work.
- Youth work camp – a workplace project that supports the competitiveness of young people combining work and youth work opportunities, through the development of young people’s skills and knowledge. See more in the [Glossary](#). In 2019, though the programmes of Work Summer and Youth Working Camps altogether 54 work camp organizers were supported and 4 439 young people participated in the activities.
- Youth permanent and project camps – school holiday camps, which last at least six 24-hour periods. See more in the [Glossary](#). In 2020, there were 75 camp organizers supported by the state and more than 27 000 young people participate in the activities.
- Youth work association – non-profit association, a union of non-profit associations or a foundation the objective of which is the integration of youth workers, youth work agencies or other exercisers and organizers of youth work and representation of their interests.
- Youth council – an advisory participation council consisting of young people, which operates in a rural municipality or city council. In 2019, 89 different youth councils were acting.
- Youth work in schools – youth work that is done in formal education and vocational education schools that supports the school’s curricula’ goals, is based on extracurricular activities and is organized by school youth workers, pupils unions and activity leaders. Each year, more than 70 000 young people participate in formal education hobby activities (see more in the [Glossary](#)).

The [Youth Work Act](#) defines youth permanent and project camps, youth work associations, youth councils, youth associations, and mentions the financing of hobby education and recreational activities.

Funding

There is a specific budget for youth policy and youth work development on the national level, see more in [Chapter 1.7](#). As youth policy and youth work are a part of the youth field, then the funding goes to the youth field, not specifically to youth work.

As local municipalities organize youth work, the funding for it comes mainly from the municipal budgets. No certain amounts can be brought out, because the municipalities

decide, which amounts are targeted to youth work. Extra funding for the development of youth work services is given to local municipalities through the ESF co-financed programme “Inclusion of young people at risk of exclusion and improving the employability of young people” (Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine). The activity is called cooperation groups of local municipalities. For 2019, the activity was funded with 384 000 euros.

Starting from 2017, additional support for hobby education and hobby activities is given to local municipalities and this is funded by the state budget. The aim of the support is to improve the accessibility and diversity of systematic and supervised hobby education and recreational activities for 7- to 19-year-old young persons with the aim of increasing their opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to the chosen hobby. This support measure is regulated in the [Youth Work Act](#). The amount of funding was 14.3 million euros for 2019. In order to improve the quality of hobby fields, there is funding directed to the umbrella organizations. The funding for 2018 was 464 449 euros.

There are different funding measures directed to the organization of youth work directly to the organizations, for example:

- youth camps – funding comes from the gambling taxes, 2020 amount 1.4 million euros, support enabling young people to participate in camp activities;
- work camps – funding comes from the gambling taxes, 2020 amount 240 400 euros, support enabling young people to participate in work camp activities, and from the ESF funding from activity “Work Summer”, amount 96 667 euros, support enabling to organize work camps in municipalities that have no work camps in place;
- hobby schools – funding comes from the gambling taxes, 2020 amount 260 000 euros, support for hobby schools to buy inventory;
- youth centers – funding comes from the state budget, 2019 amount 256 000, support for youth centers to buy inventory.

Youth organizations have also a specific funding measure, which has a ministerial-level regulation for the conditions. The amount for 2018 was 489 000 euros. The aim of this measure is to support the activities of youth organizations. See more in [Chapter 5.6](#).

Cooperation

Cross-sectorial cooperation is an overall system of policy planning and delivery in Estonia in the field of youth. See more in [Chapter 1.5](#). Therefore, most of the youth work organizations cooperate with each other, but in some cases, there are some measures that encourage youth work organizations to cooperate with each other more.

Most of the measures or mechanisms that support cooperation between different youth work stakeholders are usually connected with funding, as there are different funding schemes that support cooperation between different organizations in the field of youth. For example, the funding measure for youth centers described in the section Funding has a section for smart projects, where the aim is to work out new IT solutions for open youth work and do that in cooperation with other youth work stakeholders. The same goes for the funding measure for hobby schools – projects aim to integrate non-formal and formal education.

The financial support to local municipalities in order to develop youth work services that are also described in the section Funding makes youth work stakeholders cooperate with each other, as in one cooperation group there are several municipalities and they have to create a common activity plan.

In Estonia, there is [Youth Monitor](#) (Noorteseire) that should promote the cooperation between researchers, policymakers and practitioners in the youth field. The annual youth monitor yearbooks give good input to the policymakers in different fields that concern young people. See more in [Chapter 1.6](#).

Starting from 2019, the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) has gone over to a new system of strategic partnership – in each field, there will be picked out partners, who will receive activity support for the next three years.

The strategic partners for 2019- 2021 in the field of youth are as following:

1. [Eesti Gaidide Liit](#) (Estonian Association of Girl Guides)
2. [Eesti Koolispordi Liit](#) (Estonian School Sports Union)
3. [Eesti Kunstikoolide Liit](#) (Estonian Art Schools Union)
4. [Eesti Muusikakoolide Liit](#) (Estonian Music Schools Union)
5. Eesti Noorsootöötajate Kogu ([Estonian Association of Youth Workers](#))
6. [Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit](#) (Estonian Youth Council)
7. [Eesti Skautide Ühing](#) (Estonian Scout Movement)
8. [Eesti Tantsuhuvihariduse Liit](#) (Estonian Dance Hobby Education Union)
9. Eesti Teadushuvihariduse Liit ([Estonian STEM Education Union](#))
10. [Eesti Väitlusselts](#) (Estonian Debate Society)
11. [Eesti Õpilasesinduste Liit](#) (Federation of Estonian Pupil Unions)
12. Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit ([Federation of Estonian Student Unions](#))
13. [Huvikoolide Liit](#) (Hobby Schools Union)
14. Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus ([Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres](#))
15. [Noorteühendus ELO](#) (Youth Association ELO)
16. [Noorteühing Eesti 4H](#) (Youth Association Estonia 4H)
17. [Noorteühing TORE](#) (Youth Association TORE)

The strategic partnership is funded from the youth field programme for 1.1 million euros and from the gambling taxes for 1.2 million euros. During the negotiations with strategic partners, there are specific cooperation activities agreed on.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

The quality of youth work is assessed differently depending on the mechanism, project, or programme. For example, there are three out of many mechanisms brought out.

Competences of youth workers

[Occupational standard of youth workers](#) levels 4, 6 and 7, which have all a bit different competences (level 4 has organizing youth work, interacting with the public and cooperation, providing a safe environment, professional personal development, and youth worker recurring competence; levels 6 and 7 have additionally competences like management, youth field development). The awarding body of youth worker professional certificates was up to 31.07.2020 the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#). Starting from 01.08.2020, the Estonian Youth Work Centre amongst with other organizations under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research were joint and a new organization called [Education and Youth Board](#) was set up.

First, the youth workers have to go through a self-assessment process by filling in a portfolio based on the occupational standard. After that, an interview is conducted, which decides if the youth worker is awarded with a professional qualification certificate or not. Besides a professional qualification of youth workers, there is also a partial qualification

certificate for youth personnel, which is mandatory to have when working in a youth camp. The competences are assessed through a written exam. By the end of 2020, there are more than 300 valid youth worker certificates and more than 2 600 camp counselor or director partial professional certificates.

Quality assessment model for local municipalities

A tool for local municipalities helping them map the strengths and weaknesses of youth work, plan future developments based on the results and monitor progress. There are four main indicators that have sub-indicators:

1. there are versatile possibilities for non-formal learning for young people;
2. there are possibilities of gaining participation experience;
3. there are conditions created of receiving youth information, prevention and counseling activities;
4. the environment needed for quality youth work has been created.

First, the local municipality conducts a self-assessment after which external evaluation is being carried out. During the assessments, different youth work stakeholders have to be involved. The outcomes are based on the self- and external assessment results and shows the municipality their weak and strong points. After that, the municipality can plan future developments in order to reach their goals. The assessment process is not mandatory for the local municipalities, but help the municipality to improve the quality of youth work done in their area. By the end of 2019, 62 local municipalities out of 79 have gone through the assessment process. In the end of 2020, there are debates on how to make the quality assessment model electronic.

Financing of hobby education and hobby activities in local municipalities

The aim of state funding is to improve the availability of hobby education and activities and to offer more versatile participation possibilities. The municipalities have to compile a plan on how they will be using the financial support, in which they have to bring out:

1. number of unique young people aged 7-19 participating in youth work;
2. number of possibilities to participate in youth work;
3. description of weaknesses and solutions to solve the problems.

In order to describe the weaknesses, the municipality can use the results of the quality assessment model. Each year, the local municipality has to present the results of the activities to the [Education and Youth Board](#). There is a specific platform made for inserting the results, called [Digilahendus](#) (Digital Solution). The state funding has helped the local municipalities to involve young people better and to enlarge the possibilities of participating in hobby education and activities. During the years 2017-2018, there have been conducted almost 1 800 different activities participated by 59 000 young people. This means that 63% more young people can participate in the hobby education and activities than without state support. There is a specific page created in order to visualize the results of the activity - <https://noortehuviheaks.entk.ee/>.

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

National authorities in Estonia support better knowledge and understanding of youth work. In the ESF-funded programme "Inclusion of young people at risk of exclusion and improvement of youth employability" ("Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine"), there is an activity called "Increasing knowledge of young people and the impact of activities aimed to young people". The aim of the activity is to get a better knowledge of the reasons young people are at the risk of exclusion and assessing the impact of activities targeted to young people (including young people at risk of exclusion). The budget for the whole activity for 2020 was more than 2.3 million euros.

With that activity, there will be data collected regarding the current situation of young people; the data is available to all people on webpages www.noorteseire.ee and <https://juhtimislaudad.stat.ee/>. In addition, there are different analyses' conducted yearly, in order to show the general situation of the young people in different fields of their lives, for example, through the [Youth Monitor](#) (Noorteseire). This is done in cooperation with [Tallinn University](#) and the [Statistics Estonia](#). The activity has other measures as well that are connected with obtaining a better knowledge of young people, including seminars on youth data awareness and usage for youth workers, tools or models in order to obtain a better knowledge of youth and the results of youth work, etc.

During the years 2016-2018, Estonia participated in an international project "[Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work in Europe](#)", which aimed to identify the impact of open youth work in the UK (England), Finland, Estonian, Italy, and France. The results of the projects show that participation in open youth work in Estonia has enabled to broaden the developmental possibilities of young people and it affects significantly the development of social skills of young people. After the end of the project, Estonia has used this method of measuring impact as one of the official measures to measure and show the impact of youth work.

In the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)), there is one indicator called "Youth satisfaction with youth work" that is being measured regularly based on research. The last research was conducted in 2018 and that showed that almost 90% of the young people are satisfied with youth work. In the end of 2020, a new survey is being conducted.

There is no specific budget for supporting research on youth work, but throughout the ESF-funded programme mentioned above, it is possible to support research activities. Additionally, the state budget has funding for the whole youth field, including research activities.

Each policy field in Estonia has its own way to evaluate the policies and regulations on the basis of evidence from research. It is possible to read more regarding evidence-based youth policy from [Chapter 1.6](#).

Participative youth work

In Estonia, the youth field consists of youth work and youth policy. Therefore, the information regarding participative youth work is the same as in [Chapter 5.4](#).

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

The current national youth development plan of Estonia - Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020](#)) - aims to create more opportunities for young people to explore and develop their full potential and in order to do so, among other approaches, states the need to develop a [concept for smart youth work](#):

1. to make greater use of information technology in working with youth, including raising the digital literacy of young people by offering ICT-related hobby activities;
2. developing youth work using new means;
3. raising the competencies of young people and youth workers.

As one of the milestones in the further development process, the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) commissioned a study "[The use and possibilities of using digital solutions in youth work](#)" in 2016 and later during the same year, the national concept paper on [Smart Youth Work](#) was adopted as a result of the national working group. The concept paper was further supported by the respective action plan until 2020, which translates the ambition for the development of smart youth work into specific activities on the national level.

In 2017, Estonia held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union with smart youth work as one of its working priorities in the youth field, resulting in the adoption of the [Council conclusions on smart youth work](#) in November 2017.

The concept of smart youth work describes the main principles and strategic objectives in three key areas:

- activities aimed at young people;
- development needs of youth workers for implementing smart youth work;
- developing quality of youth work and a better knowledge of youth using digital means.

All of these three key areas are respectively supported via relevant trainings, various measures aimed at further development of digital and technological infrastructure as well as facilitating diverse cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships. Here are some examples to illustrate the measures:

- A specific call for tenders with the aim to inspire and support the development of smart youth work, especially the new practices and digi-technological solutions in youth work practice. Such specific funds are allocated to support smart solutions for example in open youth centers as well as in hobby education and the results show increased opportunities for youth for digital content creation (e.g. programming and gaming), communication and collaboration as well as raising their competences in information and data literacy, safety and problem solving, etc. In all of these projects, also the cooperation with technology field experts on the local level is required.
- In order to support the competence development of youth workers, specific competencies related to smart youth work are addressed both in the youth work curricula as well as through non-formal education targeted at youth workers on various levels, on national level specifically by the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 31.07.2020, the [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) and until 31.12.2020, the [Foundation Archimedes youth agency](#), which also is the National Agency for Erasmus+). Some examples of topics include new digital tools and the use of these in youth work settings; digital behavior of young people and communication trends in the digital era, development of the network of digital ambassadors in the youth field, etc. Compilation of educational materials in the field of smart youth work is also under attention, for example, a publication "[Digitalization and youth work](#)" has been developed in cooperation between [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (since 01.08.2020 the Education and ouh Board) and [Verke](#), an e-course on [digital youth work](#) by Tartu University Narva College, etc.
- Estonia is dedicated to continually develop new approaches and tools to support the further quality of youth field and as one of the innovative tools, a [youth statistics dashboard](#) has been launched in cooperation of Estonian Youth Work Centre (starting from 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)) and Statistics Estonia in October 2019 to support data evident and informed youth policy decisions on all levels.

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

Youth workers are not defined in the [Youth Work Act](#).

The youth workers are mostly paid, about 8% of youth workers do the work voluntarily. Everybody who works with young people is called a youth worker, regardless of whether they receive a salary or not.

In Estonia, there is an Occupational standard for youth workers (see more in [Chapter 10.4](#)). There are minimum requirements set that a youth worker should know or do, including the code of ethics. If a youth worker finishes the assessment process positively, they will be issued a professional certificate of a youth worker. This is not mandatory to

obtain, but there are more and more local municipalities that have connected the existence of youth work education and/or professional certificate with funding of youth work and salaries or vacations of youth workers.

Education, training and skills recognition

Youth work can be studied in three universities in Estonia:

1. Tallinn University – higher applied sciences degree in youth work and a master’s degree in youth work organization;
2. Tartu University Narva college – bachelor’s degree in youth work;
3. Tartu University Viljandi cultural academy – higher applied sciences degree in community education and hobby activities.

The training of youth workers was organized through the ESF programme “Development of youth workers training” (“[Noorsootöötajate koolituste arendamine](#)”) until 2020 that compiles of two parts:

- training activities targeted at youth field workers;
- support of the development and quality of the training system.

The programme was implemented by the [Foundation Archimedes youth agency](#) (since 01.01.2021, the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)) in cooperation with the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) and [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)). All the trainings in the programme support the competences brought out in the occupational standard for youth workers.

The validation of skills and competencies gained by youth workers through non-formal, informal and formal learning is carried out with the applying process of youth worker’s professional qualification. The assessment is based only on the competences, regardless of how they were obtained. See more in [Chapter 10.4](#).

Mobility of youth workers

Mobility of youth workers is organized by the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#) (until 31.12.2020 the [Foundation Archimedes youth agency](#)), and it supports the professional development of youth workers through international seminars, trainings, study visits, etc. Additionally, job-shadowing possibilities in youth work organizations are offered. Erasmus+ funds the mobility of youth workers on the international level.

In addition, it is possible to participate in various international training activities that are mediated through [SALTO-YOUTH](#) or the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#). The last one also organized national level trainings up to 2019 through the programme “Development of youth workers training” co-funded by ESF.

It is possible to read more about the cross-border mobility programmes in [Chapter 2.5](#).

There are some regional-level initiatives as well. For example, the Tartu County Youth Workers Association ([Tartumaa Noorsootöötajate Ühendus](#)) has visited all the Tartu County youth field organizations, organized seminars where there are presented best practices, organized training programmes in order to raise the competences in the field of ICT, organized study visits abroad, etc. The activities are funded from the national LEADER programme within the Tartu County measure through the project “Developing and empowering of the Tartu county youth work cooperation network”.

The main objective of all mobility activities is professional development, capacity building, sharing experiences, etc.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

Young people are able to assess their experiences obtained from youth work in experience baggage on the website [Teeviit](#). It is possible to add the learning experience (formal education, student/pupil exchanges, trainings, seminars and conferences, voluntary activities, youth camps, youth exchanges, and hobbies) and working experience (jobs, practice, working camps, belonging to organizations, tutoring) and analyze the outcomes by yourself. As a result of the process, it is possible to combine it into a CV and send it to potential employers by e-mail.

An alternative to Teeviit is [YouthPass](#) that enables to issue a certificate of participation in youth work activities of the Erasmus+ programme.

There are some regional initiatives as well that offer the possibility to write down all of the important voluntary experiences and the obtained knowledge and skills. For example, Tankla volunteer pass ([Tankla vabatahtliku pass](#)).

Depending on a school and teacher, there are also practices where youth work is recognized in formal education. For example, if a young person participates regularly in some kind of sports hobby activity or education, he or she will get grades in physical education lessons. Unfortunately, this is not something very common and depends on the cooperation between school and youth work organizations.

On the national level, there is the recognition of prior learning and working experience ([VÕTA](#)), which helps in validating the prior experiences for formal education, no matter how you studied. VÕTA can also be used in the applying process of a professional qualifications certificate (also with youth worker certificates). This is something young people aged 18-26 can use as this is targeted to adult education mainly. Please see more in Chapters [3.5](#). and [6.4](#).

Skills

There are no top-level policies and/or recognition mechanisms for young people. The national recognition mechanism that can be used for young people aged 18-26, is called [VÕTA](#) (the recognition of prior learning and working experience) mentioned in the previous section. In the draft document of the new Youth Field Development Plan for the years 2021-2035 ([Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035 eelnõu](#)), there is one activity that is targetted on recognition mechanisms so the skills obtained from youth work would be more recognized in formal education.

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

Mainly the youth work institutions, organizations, youth workers and local municipalities, are disseminating information regarding youth work. There is no single website to provide all information on youth work to young people.

In the end of 2020, the website of [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (since 01.08.2020 the [Education and Youth Board](#)) has a general overview of different youth work activities on their website and it is targeted to youth workers mainly. Starting from 2021, a new site called Education Portal ([Haridusportaal](#)) will gather information of youth work. For example, in 2020 on the site of Estonian Youth Work Centre, there are brought out the number of open youth centers, hobby schools and youth camps in local municipalities. Starting from 01.08.2020 Estonian Youth Work Centre amongst other organizations under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research were joint into one

institution called [Education and Youth Board](#), which also manages the youth information website [Teeviit](#) that includes also youth work possibilities.

As youth work is the task of a local municipality by law in Estonia, most of them have information regarding youth work on their websites. Some of them have organized their youth work through one subordinate establishment that offers information on youth work possibilities on their websites. For example, one of many, [Tartu city](#) has created an institution called Tartu Youth Work Centre ([Tartu Noorsootöö Keskus](#)) that has all the relevant information on youth work targeted to young people. Some regions have their own youth websites that offer youth work information, e.g. Youth Information Portal of Valga County called [TANKLA](#). Open youth centers have a big role in disseminating information on youth work possibilities and they do it through websites, social media, and direct contact with young people, etc.

National Youth Information

Youth information provides young people information regarding the surrounding life, supports their independency, increases their knowledge of different opportunities and choices to organize their life better, and increases the meaningful participation in the society. Youth information in Estonia is targeted to young people aged 7-26 and is based on the needs and interests of young people.

The youth information service is provided by youth work institutions and workers of the youth field.

The leading youth information developer in Estonia is the [Education and Youth Board](#) that has the role of developing youth information on the national level. EYWC is also participating in the network of [ERYICA](#) (European Youth Information and Counselling Agency). The youth information activities are funded by the national youth information budget and through the ESF programme "Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine".

A national development group for youth information has been created. It aims to create a unitary national basis for developing youth information systematically. The development group consists of the [Estonian Youth Workers Association](#), [Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres](#), [Foundation Archimedes youth agency](#) (since 01.01.2021, the Department of Youth Programs of the Agency of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps of the [Education and Youth Board](#)), [Estonian Youth Council](#), youth department of Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Council of Viimsi, youth delegates of ERYICA, [Education and Youth Board](#) and ERYICA trainer.

On the national level, a website called [Teeviit](#) (in translation "signpost") is being used as a youth information channel for young people. It offers (in addition to the possibility of analyzing your experiences mentioned in [Chapter 10.6.](#)) information regarding education and studying possibilities, work and career, relationships, health, and society. There are also youth work possibilities, stories based on experiences, contacts for help and advice, information on different offers and events for young people.

Key initiatives

National Youth Work Week

The [Education and Youth Board](#) organizes Youth Work Week annually since 2011 (up to 31.07.2020 it was organized by the Estonian Youth Work Centre), which aims to raise awareness on the whole field of youth and youth work opportunities offered all over Estonia, introduce the occupation of a youth worker and offer experiences for young people and to analyze those experiences as well.

Each year, there is a certain topic set to focus on. In 2019, the topic was called "Health. My wellbeing" and it focused on mental, physical and social health. There were almost 300 events organized through this campaign and the ESF programme "Tõrjutusriskis noorte kaasamine ja noorte tööhõivevalmiduse parandamine" funded the activities. Youth

Work Week is targeted to raise awareness of all people, including young people, society, communities, youth workers, etc.

International Youth Day

The International Youth Day has been celebrated in Estonia since 2003. Through that, different activities have been organized for young people and possibilities for young people have been introduced. Each year, similar to Youth Work Week, a specific topic is being set based on the UN focus topic. The [Education and Youth Board](#) organizes the International Youth Day. Different campaigns (including social media) are being organized annually. International Youth Day is targeted to raise awareness of all people, including young people, society, communities, youth workers, etc.

Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work across Europe

During the years 2016-2018, [Estonian Youth Work Centre](#) (starting from 01.08.2020 [Education and Youth Board](#)) with the [Estonian Youth Workers Association](#) and the [Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres](#) participated in the Erasmus+ project "[Developing and Communicating the Impact of Youth Work across Europe](#)". UK, Finland, France, and Italy also participated. The project was piloted in open youth centers using transformative evaluation based on storytelling. The findings of the project were introduced at the international conference held at Plymouth University, UK, in September 2018. The main results showed that young people participating in open youth work had four key changes – broadening of the spectrum of experiences, new friends, development of pro-social behavior, improvement of social and communication skills. In November 2019, a development day "Important Story" was conducted as a result of the pilot project. In the first half of 2020, 8 local municipalities have the possibility to participate in the project of assessing impact. 300-400 stories will be gathered from young people that will give an overview of what changes are brought by participating in open youth work. The project is now funded by the [Education and Youth Board](#) and implemented by the [Estonian Youth Workers Association](#) and the [Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres](#).

Thorough monitoring and analyzing system for youth work quality and impact

The Youth Work Programme 2019-2022 ([Noortevaldkonna programm 2019-2022](#)) has an activity 4.2. called "Improvement of youth work quality and promoting youth work impact" sub-activity "Improvement of youth work impact and visibility of results of youth work", which aims in raising awareness of youth work impact and results. Through the activities, a thorough monitoring and analyzing system for youth work quality and impact will be created. The programme is funded by the ESF.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

In October 2019, the official process of a new "Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035" was started. 28.11.2019 the government approved the proposals of compiling a new development plan that continues the last, currently valid development plan. The "Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035" focuses on creating even more broader opportunities for young people, active inclusion in the decision-making processes and ensuring quality youth work and availability for young people. By November 2020, the development plan was sent to the Parliament to be confirmed. The prognosis is that it will be confirmed by the end of 2020.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned [a study](#) on the administrative agencies under the ministry, services offered and finding solutions to reorganize the services and functions. As there are several institutions implementing the same or similar policies, it was proposed that the institutions would be merged into one large joint agency. The reform entered into force by 01.08.2020 when the [Education and](#)

[Youth Board](#) was created. Because of the new organization being created, other changes are being conducted in the Ministry of Education and Research as well. For example, the youth department will be changed into youth and talent department, and will receive more tasks.

Ongoing debates

The new Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035 is currently being confirmed by the Parliament. There are several preparation activities going on in the end of 2020 in order to create new programs for the years 2021-2024.

GLOSSARY

Hobby activities: short-term with no demand for curriculum systematic and supervised engagements with one's hobbies at one's will outside formal education or job for acquiring intensive knowledge and skills in the selected hobby.

Hobby education: long-term and curricula-based systematic and supervised engagements with one's hobbies at one's will outside formal education or job for acquiring intensive knowledge and skills in the selected hobby.

Hobby school: an educational establishment operating in the area of youth work which creates an opportunity for the acquisition of hobby education and for the diverse development of the personality, including cultivation of one's own language and culture, in different areas of hobby education ([Hobby Schools Act](#)).

Juvenile committee: an institution that coordinates work in the field of crime prevention carried out with minors within its administrative territory ([Juvenile Sanctions Act](#)).

Work camp: the camp of work training, which aims to enhance the situation of young people in the labor market and to increase their employment readiness ([Estonian Youth Work Strategy](#)).

Youth camp: a general term for two types of camps – a [youth project camp](#) and a [youth permanent camp](#) ([Youth Work Act](#)).

Youth permanent camp: a camp of a person entered in the commercial register, the non-profit associations and foundations register or the register of religious associations, or a camp of an agency entered in state register of state and local government agencies, or a camp of a legal person in public law, which is conducted on the basis of youth camp statutes and activity license issued by the minister responsible for the area and the duration of one camp period of which is at least six twenty-four hour periods and which operates more than sixty days in a year ([Youth Work Act](#)).

Youth participation council: an advisory participation council consisting of young people who operate in rural municipality or city council ([Youth Work Act](#)).

Youth project camp: a camp of a person entered in the commercial register, the non-profit associations and foundations register or the register of religious associations, or a camp of an agency entered in state register of state and local government agencies, or a camp of a legal person in public law, which is conducted with the permission of rural municipality or city government and the duration of one camp period of which is at least six twenty-four hour periods and which operates up to sixty days in a year ([Youth Work Act](#)).

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2019

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2018

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