



Lifelong Guidance in Estonia

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Strategic View

What Estonia needs is a shared understanding of the direction to take when moving towards a knowledge and innovation-based society. We are successful only when we acknowledge the need to constantly learn and relearn and to be proactive and creative, so that we can cope in today's rapidly changing world. Learning and the knowledgeable application of skills must become an integral part of an active approach towards life.

Our vision for Estonia is:
learning is a lifestyle.
Development opportunities
are noticed and smart
solutions are pursued.

Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (LLL2020) addresses the most important obstacles in the area of lifelong learning. **The general goal** of drafting the Lifelong Learning Strategy is to provide all people in Estonia with learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities throughout their whole lifespan, in order for them to maximize opportunities for dignified self-actualization within society, in their work as well as in their family life.

The overarching strategy includes lifelong guidance and stresses the most crucial issues, including access to guidance for all, quality of service provision and professional practitioners. The strategy sets five strategic goals of which two are closely tied to lifelong guidance.

Correspondence between opportunities for lifelong learning and the needs of the working world. Lifelong learning opportunities and career services that are diverse, flexible and of good quality, resulting in an increase in the number of people with professional or vocational qualifications in different age groups, and an increase in overall participation in lifelong learning across Estonia.

Equal opportunities for lifelong learning and growth of participation in learning – the Estonian state must ensure all people equal opportunities to get a quality education in accordance with their abilities.

In addition to the above mentioned aims are the change in the approach to learning, digital focus in lifelong learning and competent and motivated teachers and school leadership.

According to the LLL2020, the authorities responsible for the development of lifelong guidance are the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research. The main institutions in the provision and development of lifelong guidance in education are schools and Foundation Innove. In the employment sector guidance is provided by the Unemployment Insurance Fund.



Reorganisation of Lifelong Guidance

Lifelong guidance has been practiced in Estonia for years. The services have been provided for different target groups in different centres and have also been known by different names – the latest version being differentiated lifelong guidance system, including two areas: career services and counselling services for special educational needs.

Lessons Learned and Steps Taken from Previous Years in the Education Sector

The system went through a major change in 2014–2015. Service provision, both in the education and labour sector, has been reorganised – differentiated lifelong guidance services have been introduced.

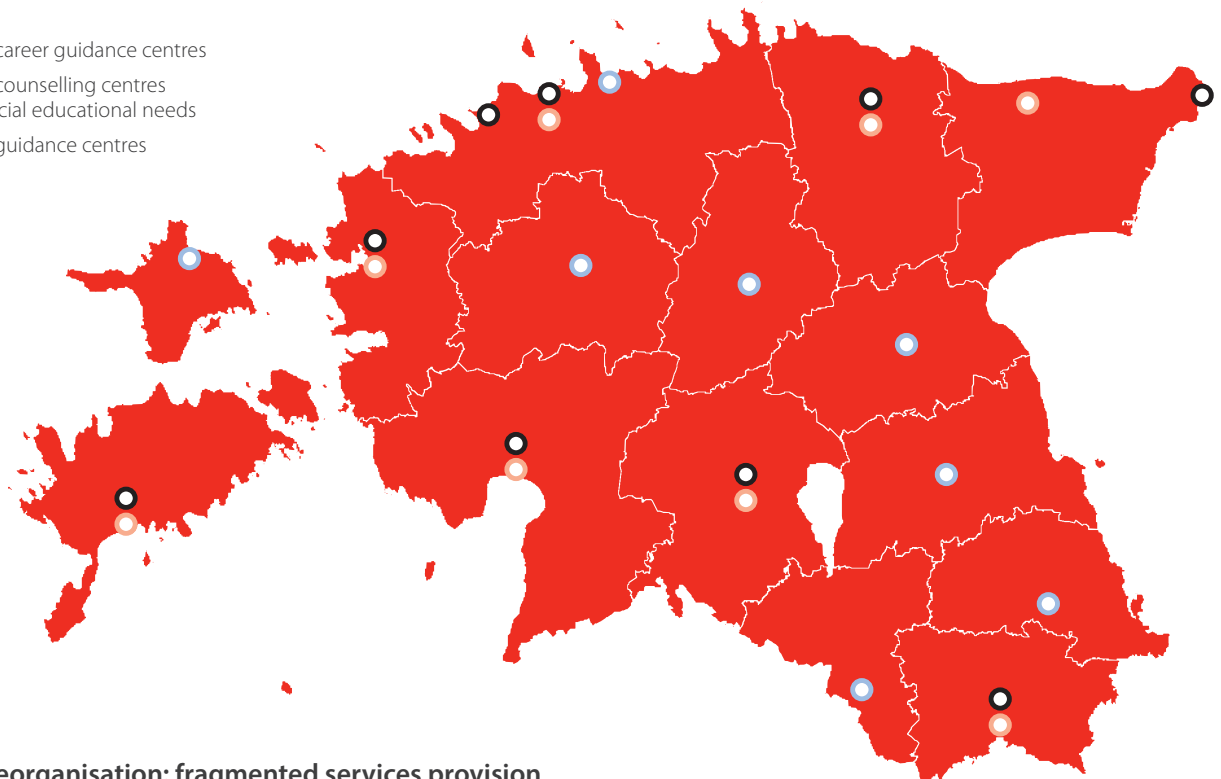
It was recognized that the limited resources of local government budgets do not allow the necessary amount to

be invested into the development and maintenance of regional counselling services, and the centres established on the basis of non-profits and smaller foundations were also not capable of ensuring the consistency and quality of services.

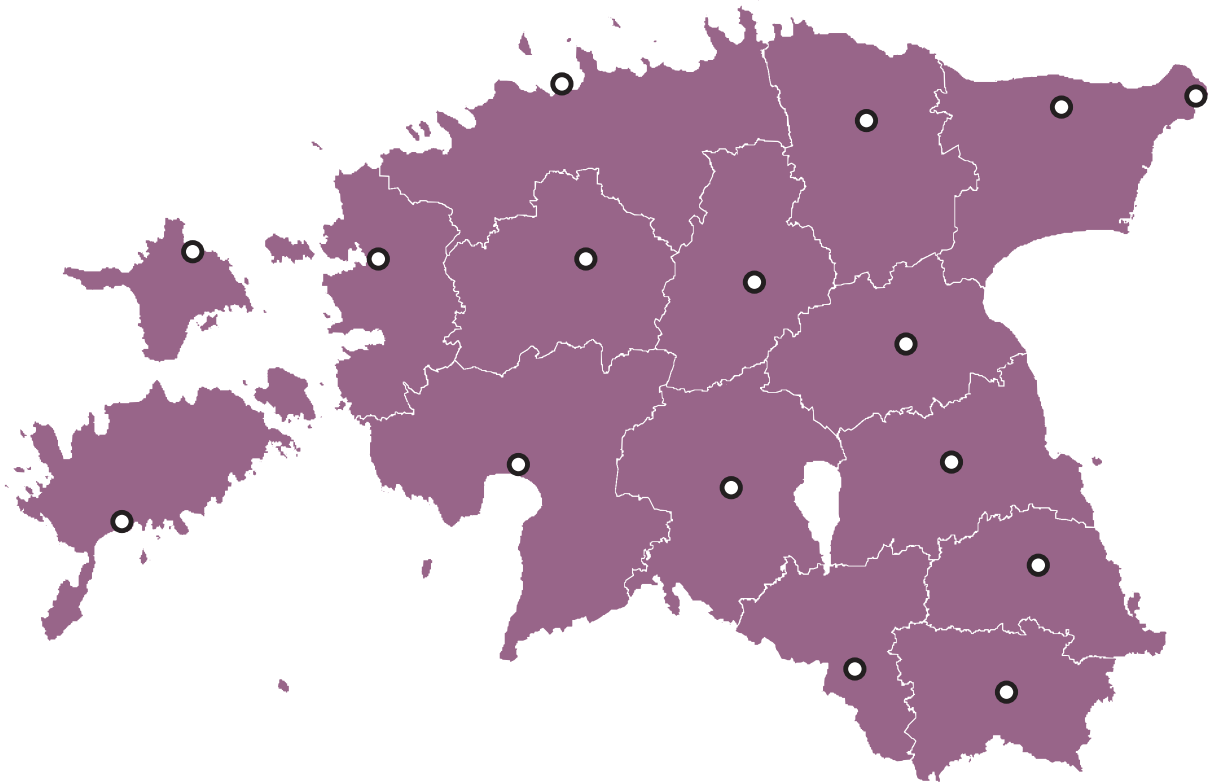
Since autumn 2014, 24 fragmented youth guidance centres were replaced by **16 centralised public centres** by the Foundation Innove and its **Rajaleidja** (Pathfinder in English) centres in all counties to support young people in their studies and career related issues, including opportunities for small municipalities with under 350 students. In addition the role of counselling committees was given to the newly established centres – Foundation Innove took over from county governments the responsibility for a counselling committee in each county.

Ministry of Education and Research has launched two initiatives as part of the youth guarantee to support young people aged 7–26 when entering the labour market and coping there, and bringing NEET youth back to education.

- Youth career guidance centres
- Youth counselling centres for special educational needs
- Youth guidance centres



Before reorganisation: fragmented services provision



After reorganisation: centralised Rajaleidja centres for children and youth

Later development has taken place due to the changes in expectations and requirements of the labour market as well as due to the advanced concept of lifelong learning. The core idea for the reorganisation was to establish a centralised network of youth guidance centres in regions to reduce the fragmentation of the service provision – improve access and raise the quality of lifelong guidance.

In addition to existing labour market measures, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund introduced a new labour market measure My First Job designed for young people, without professional education or work experience. The measure aims to decrease youth unemployment due to little or no work experience, and to help youth without specialized education to find a job. Wage subsidies combined with training compensation can be granted to employers who hire these young people.

Changes in the Employment Sector

The new strategy in the employment sector foresees the provision of career information and counselling to all adults. So far, the services have been provided only to the unemployed. However, since 2015, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian public employment service) has expanded its career counselling services to all people of working or retirement age.

Lifelong Guidance Structure

In the Employment Sector,

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 (EUIF) and its offices in every county. The legal basis of the activities of EUIF is defined by two laws: the **Unemployment Insurance Act**¹, which describes the unemployment insurance system and the organisation of EUIF, and the **Labour Market Services and Benefits Act**, which contains the provisions concerning job mediation and related services.

In the Education Sector,

guidance is provided both as a part of youth work as well as a part of formal education. Career management skills of a child are formed already at the kindergarten stage. A child discovers what are work and study in general, that his/her parents go to work and what this work is. Development of such competencies is supported during the entire time of study – at general and applied education levels.

The **Education Act** of the Republic of Estonia stipulates career guidance of children and youth to be the responsibility of local governments.

National curriculum for pre-school study institutions

sets out the basics of study and upbringing regardless of the legal status of the institution. The curriculum indicates the goals and the content of study and upbringing and the expected results with regard to the development of 6–7 year-old children.

At school development of students is regulated by **national curricula for basic schools² and upper secondary schools** that set out what support services of special pedagogues (including speech therapists), psychologists and social pedagogues are provided to students free of charge.

The basic education standard is set out in the national curriculum and in the simplified national curriculum for basic schools for students studying under simplified con-

ditions, as well as coping or nursing programs. The general secondary education standard is set out in the national curriculum for upper secondary schools.

In 2014 the national general education curricula were adjusted. In particular, more specific study goals in connection with career planning were included. A national curriculum does not prescribe to the school precisely what actions are to be taken to achieve the set goals – each school is able to select the best ways, methods and means based on the specifics and abilities of the school. The school is obliged to ensure the availability of career-related services. The national basic school curriculum and national upper secondary school include eight compulsory central topics, 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 elective course in careers education, which enhances the use of this possibility in the school curriculum. A school can order differentiated lifelong guidance and career services from Innove.

The goal of the **Vocational Educational Institutions Act** is to set out the basics of organization of studies in vocational education institutions. The task of a vocational education institution is to create opportunities for students to obtain knowledge, skills and ethical guidance necessary for life and work, including professional training and re-training, considering the needs of society, students and the labour market.

Vocational training in basic schools and upper secondary schools are studies based on vocational training curriculum carried out by the vocational school of which basic or general secondary education students are to receive basic vocational and professional knowledge and skills.

Obligation of schools regarding vocational training applies with regard to persons who lack basic education, and is a form of study that takes place on the basis of vocational education standards and the vocational or professional national curriculum, where no restrictions in connection with the education level are set for the commencement of studies and the nominal duration of the curriculum is up to 2.5 years.

¹ Unofficial texts of English translations of Estonian legislation are available at www.riigiteataja.ee.

² Compulsory school grades 1-8.

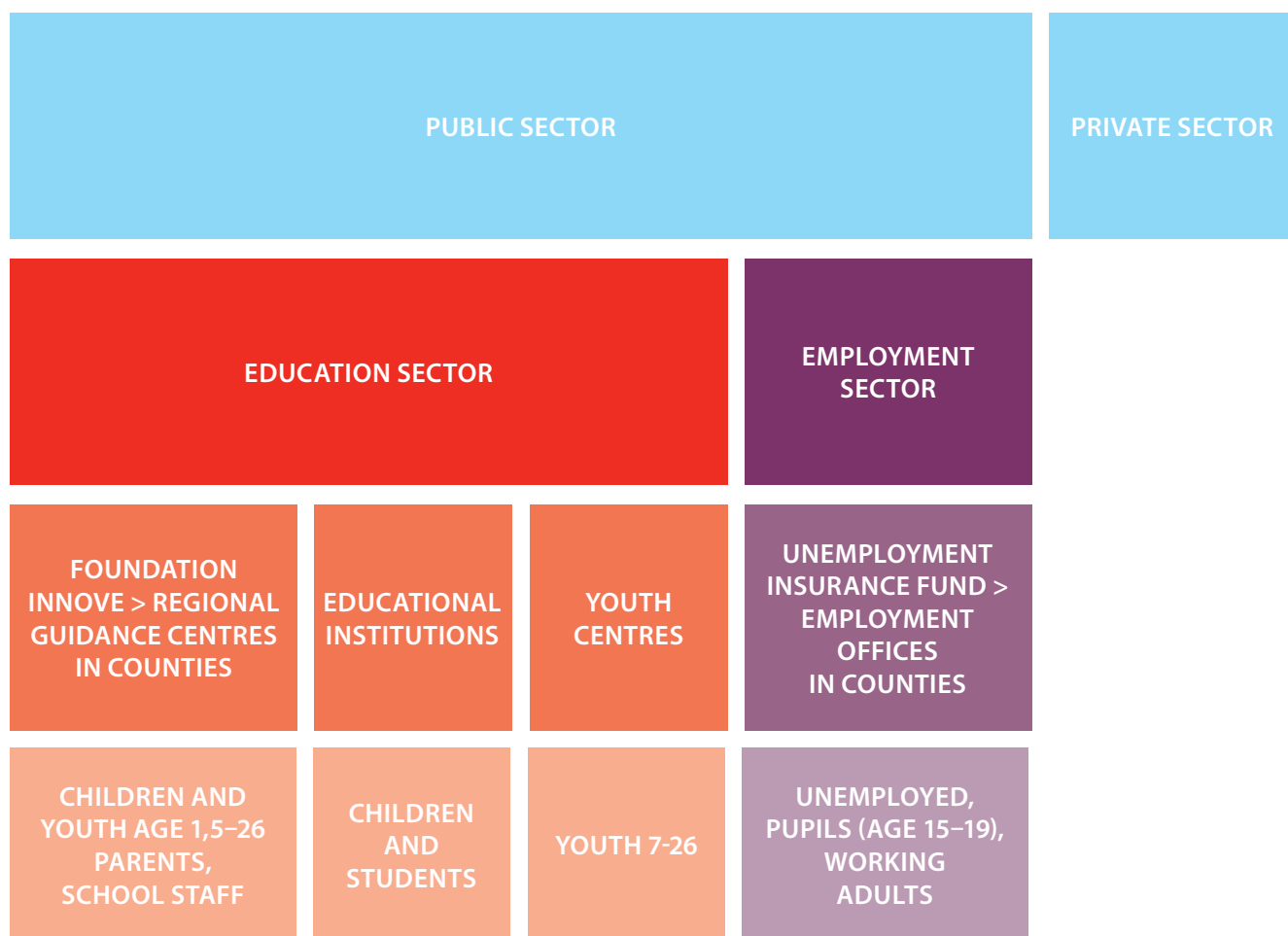
Development of career management skills takes place in vocational education both through vocational training and generic skills modules.

The goal of the **Universities Act** is to set the procedure for organization of studies in universities and graduation from universities as well as the forms and conditions of obtaining higher education. The Universities Act applies to six public-law universities (University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, Tallinn University, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonian Academy of Arts and Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre). The act applies to private universities as far as the Private Schools Act does not provide otherwise. The **Private Schools Act** applies to pri-

vate-law legal persons as the result of activities of which it is possible to obtain pre-school, primary, secondary or higher education in a private school.

The Private Schools Act also applies to self-employed persons and private-law legal persons that provide for obtaining hobby-based education or organize professional or voluntary training for adults, where the organized studies last longer than 120 hours or six months a year.

Youth work is mainly legislated by **Youth Work Act** providing a legal basis for the organisation of youth work. The Act defines youth work as a creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons, which



Lifelong guidance structure in Estonia

enable them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their own free will. The Act defines a young person – between 7 and 26 years of age.

Innove’s regional youth guidance centres, called **Rajaleidja** centres, provide career information, career counselling, psychological, socio-pedagogical, special education counselling and speech therapy.

Career guidance is provided for young people (aged 7–26 years). The priority target group is the third level of basic school, pupils at upper secondary schools, vocational educational institutions and 18 to 24-year-olds, who dropped out of the education system early without having acquired more than a basic education.

The other four services are focused on children and youth (aged 1,5–18) with **special educational needs** and the practitioners’ main direct target group is school personnel and parents. In addition, counselling is also provided to local governments and other specialists on topics related to child development and support, organisation of studies and implementation of support measures.



Specifications of the organisation of studies of students with special educational needs including establishment and the role of the counselling committee. Foundation Innove has established **counselling committees**. If the measures applied at school have not been successful or the student requires additional in-depth examination and more efficient support in his or her studies or more comprehensive changes in his or her curriculum, the school or parent will turn to the counselling committee.

The counselling committee:

- is competent to assign a curriculum that corresponds to the abilities of a child with special needs (simplified curriculum);
- makes decisions regarding the postponement of the duty to attend school;
- makes recommendations for the application of one-to-one teaching;
- makes recommendations to the school with regard to the creation and development of the conditions necessary for inclusive studies.

Private Sector

As in Estonia we mainly have small and medium enterprises the responsibility lies on employers, heads of companies. In bigger companies personnel staff is available. On the basis of main services the guidance companies can be divided into two:

- **recruitment companies** – free services for job seekers (tools for inserting CVs) and fee-charging recruitment services for companies. As support services they usually also offer career and training information, tests etc.
- **consulting companies** mainly provide careers counselling (both on outplacement and career development purposes), coaching and competency assessment. Their main target group are companies that are interested in using their human resource as efficiently as possible, and to assess teamwork within the company or for outplacement reasons. In addition, they provide career development services for managerial staff or specialists.

Qualifications of Guidance Practitioners

The occupational qualifications system is a link between the labour market and the lifelong learning system enhancing the development, assessment and recognition of a person's occupational competence. According to the Occupational Qualifications Act, the **Estonian Qualification Framework** has 8 levels, the first of which is the lowest and the eighth is the highest. The descriptions of the qualification levels are identical with the EQF level descriptions.

Occupational qualification standard (OQS) is a document which describes occupational activities and provides the competency requirements for occupational qualifications and their levels. **Part A** of the standard provides an **overview of the nature of work, major parts of work and tasks, necessary tools, work environment**, including the specificities of work and describes the personal characteristics and skills enhancing occupational activities. This is a source of information for a person upon selection

of an occupation and shaping his or her career path. This also contains useful information for the career advisers, labour market consultants, human resources managers and trainers.

The **competence requirements presented in part B** of the standard **serve as a basis for the assessment of the applicant for the occupational qualification**. These requirements are presented as descriptions of mandatory and optional competences. Competence is an ability to perform a specific part of work or a task together with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for that. Proceeding from the nature of the occupation, its specificity and traditions, attesting competences related to a specialization or optional competences may be the prerequisite for being awarded the occupational qualification.

There are occupational standards available for six specialist groups in the field of lifelong guidance (see table below).

SPECIALIST GROUP	OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATION LEVELS	MAIN TASKS
Career Counsellor	Level 6–7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual career counselling. • Group counselling. • Networking needed for the provision of services. • Service development. • Informing the public about the services.
Career Information Specialist	Level 5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of career information. • Informing the public about the services. • Networking needed for the provision of services. • Service development.
Social pedagogue	Level 6–7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning social pedagogical activities. • Social pedagogical assessment. • Case management and counselling. • Creating a safe learning and working environment. • Service development.
Special pedagogue	Level 7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotting, researching and evaluating learner's special needs. • Planning learning • Designing a learning environment. • Teaching. • Reflection and professional self-development. • Special pedagogical counselling and mentoring. • Participating in development, creative and scientific activities.
Speech therapist	Level 7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating communication abilities and swallowing function. • Analysing and interpreting evaluation results. • Planning and conducting speech therapy work. • Counselling.
Psychologist	Level 7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating factors affecting the child's development. • Preventing problems hindering the child's development. • Intervention. • Conducting studies. • Training and instructing.

International Co-operation

Lifelong guidance is on the agenda of many international forums. The main aims and components of the Estonian guidance system are very much in line with EU and OECD recommendations on guidance policies and practices. The importance of promoting an international dimension in Estonian guidance is a value and therefore co-operation with partners outside Estonia is our priority – experience from other countries inspires us in meeting the challenges and opportunities at home.

We are active partners in following European guidance and mobility networks:

- Many of the international activities for guidance practitioners are initiated by the Estonian Euroguidance Centre, placed in Agency for Lifelong Guidance within Foundation Innove. European network of **Euroguidance Centres** includes national centres in 34 European countries and supports the development of the European dimension in guidance and promotes mobility, mutual awareness and cooperation between guidance services in Europe. See more www.euroguidance.eu
- Since the year 2000 Estonia has been part of the **Academia network** which aims at providing practitioners with an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in an international context, to study the changes that take place in Europe and learn from the experiences of their colleagues in other countries. Each year there are approximately 150 European practitioners who participate in the exchanges. In the framework of Academia, Estonia has been visited by 128 professionals from European countries and 125 practitioners have participated in study visits in fifteen different countries. See more www.euroguidance.eu/academia
- **Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe** includes more than 40 higher education institutions across Europe. NICE is dedicated to professionalism and academic excellence in careers work. The network has published extensive guidelines on the academic training of career guidance professionals. Our mission in this network is to encourage academic training of practitioners in Estonia. See more www.nice-network.eu

- Furthermore, Estonia is part of the **European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network** and plays an active role in developing guidance within the EU. The Network aims to assist the European Union Member States and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors. The Estonian country team members are from the Ministry of Education and Research, Unemployment Insurance Fund and Foundation Innove Agency for Lifelong Guidance. See more www.elgpn.eu

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network meeting 2013 in Tallinn



Additional Information

About Foundation Innove

The mission of the Foundation Innove is to support the development of learners' life skills by creating and stimulating the learning environment and efficiently mediate European funds to the organisations that implement educational, labour and social policies. As a Government established non-profit foundation, Innove has long-term experience in the development of lifelong guidance in education.

Euroguidance in Estonia

Euroguidance Estonia is the Estonian National Resource Centre for Guidance and provides a range of services to Estonian guidance professionals and to professionals abroad. As a member of the Euroguidance Network we provide support in the areas of learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training and employment.

Euroguidance Estonia is part of Foundation Innove Agency for Lifelong Guidance.

Are you interested in developing your own skills and competencies in relation to a global education and labour market? Would you like to expand your professional network and establish contacts with colleagues from other countries? Do you think that new inspiration from other countries and cultures might be good for your professional development? If yes, then the national Euroguidance centres are at your disposal.

Experts and practitioners within the field of lifelong guidance are welcome to contact us for further information:

Foundation Innove
Agency for Lifelong Guidance
Lõõtsa 4, 11415 Tallinn ESTONIA
euroguidance.estonia@innove.ee
www.innove.ee



References

References to Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020, Rajaleidja, guidance research, legislation, Estonia in general and other useful sites are available at www.innove.ee/en/references

Other Institutions

- Ministry of Education and Research
www.hm.ee
- Ministry of Social Affairs
www.sm.ee
- Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES)
www.tootukassa.ee
- Estonian Qualification Authority
www.koda.ee





Estonia in Brief

- **Capital:** Tallinn
- **Language:** Estonian
- **Head of state:** President
- **System of government:** Parliamentary republic
- **Area:** 45,228 km²
- **Population:** 1,3 million
- **Administrative divisions:** 15 counties
- **Currency:** EUR
- **Calling code:** 372
- **Highest point:** 318 m
- **Number of islands:** 1521
- **Member of** NATO, EU, UN, OSCE, OECD & WTO, Schengen zone



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