



Key activities in the academic year 2025/2026

Ministry of Education and Research 2025



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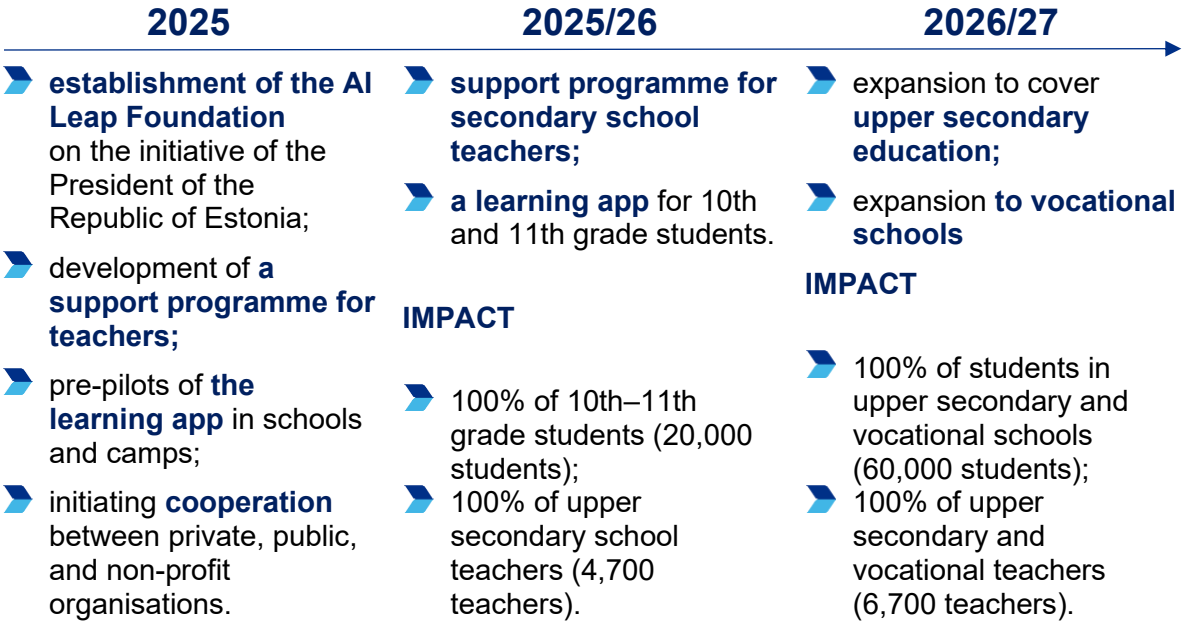
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Key activities in the academic year 2025/2026

AI Leap

One of the biggest changes affecting the school year is the application of artificial intelligence in learning and teaching. Research shows that AI applications can support education, but can also inhibit the development of thinking and learning. To support smart and responsible use of AI, we need to respond in a systemic way, in partnership with schools, researchers and universities, education and technology experts. The AI Leap education programme has been launched in partnership between the President, the state, and the private sector, to give Estonian schoolchildren and teachers free access to the world’s leading AI learning applications and the skills they need to use them wisely in their teaching and studies.

In the first phase of the project, students in grades 10–11 in Estonian schools and their teachers will have access to the best AI-based learning applications. The project will be rolled out to all general education schools with 10th and 11th grades. AI Leap will then be extended to vocational schools and to new secondary school students entering year 10.



In the academic year 2025/2026, AI Leap Foundation will launch three activities in partnership with the state, academia, and the private sector.



STUDENTS' PATH: DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING APPLICATION

We create high-quality learning applications that support meaningful AI use, developing and testing them together with researchers and target groups. We ensure that the learning application reaches all 10th and 11th grade students.



TEACHERS' AND SCHOOLS' PATH: CREATING A SUPPORT PROGRAM

In cooperation with upper secondary schools, we are establishing a school-based learning circle system. We support all 10th and 11th grade teachers with nationwide AI Leap web trainings, access to artificial intelligence applications, and a virtual community.



COOPERATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

We help with the development of digital literacy among parents and students. We support school heads. We lay the foundation for good cooperation between the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

The aim of AI Leap is to maintain the quality of education in Estonia at the highest level by providing students and teachers with modern learning tools to become smarter students. AI Leap will seamlessly integrate technology into education, providing both the knowledge and the support to effectively use AI-based learning software in teaching.

▶ On 21–22 August, the AI Leap Support Programme held its inaugural training for teachers, which can be watched [on the AI Leap YouTube channel](#). More information: <https://thp.voog.com/en>

Reform of the obligation to learn

The aim of the reform is to support the continuation of every student's education beyond basic school and to reduce drop-out rates from vocational or general education, so that young people remain in education until they reach adulthood. The current requirement of compulsory education until the age of 17 will be replaced by the compulsory education obligation until the age of 18. The compulsory education obligation will apply to young people starting their studies in autumn 2025 in the 9th grade. This means that all young people leaving basic school in 2026 will have to continue their education until they are at least 18 years old or until they complete secondary education or vocational training.

Approximately 800 basic school graduates in the academic year 2023/2024 did not continue their studies, with around 600 dropping out during the first year of post-basic studies. As a result, 1 in

10 young people in Estonia are left with only a basic education. However, a basic education is clearly not enough to ensure success in the labour market. The aim is to ensure that you people complete at least an upper secondary or vocational education, preparing them to enter the labour market and become independent.

For general education schools and vocational educational institutions, the compulsory education obligation means implementing flexible learning pathways and career guidance to ensure that every student continues their education beyond basic school. At the school level, it is important to address the prevention of early school leaving. In supporting students at risk of early school leaving, it is important for schools to work closely with local authorities and for local authorities to monitor and intervene more systematically with needs-based support.

In order to support career learning in schools, regional information seminars will be held this autumn, targeting in particular heads of basic schools, head teachers and hobby leaders, career counsellors, career coordinators, class teachers, subject teachers, support specialists and education specialists from local authorities. During the academic year, schools will be able to review the organisation of their career services, and to create and describe the principles of a career services policy in the curriculum by 1 September 2026.

Guidance material for schools '[Supporting the development of students' career competences](#)' has been produced.

Three new courses will start at the University of Tartu in autumn 2025.

[Basic knowledge of career development and entrepreneurship skills, Integration of career and entrepreneurship education with subject-specific learning, and Elective courses in career and entrepreneurship education in basic and vocational education.](#)

Keeping young people in education will also be supported by [the amendment to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act](#), which will enter into force on 1 September and will ensure that students can count their participation in non-formal learning, such as hobby schools or youth centre activities, towards their formal education curriculum. Such integration will help to reduce the learning burden and maintain motivation.

Starting in the academic year 2025/2026, the standard period of study will be extended to 11 years for students with moderate learning difficulties and to 12 years for students with severe and profound learning difficulties. For students with mild learning difficulties, the nominal period of study will remain at 9 years. Students with mild learning difficulties and moderate learning difficulties will be able to continue their education after completing their basic education for 1 academic year in a general education school. They can then continue their studies in vocational education.

As a result of the reform of the compulsory education obligation, around 1,300 more qualified young people will enter the Estonian labour market each year. The goal of the reform is for 90% of 20–24 year olds in Estonia to have completed their upper secondary education, with the share of 18–24 year olds with a low level of education and not being engaged in education to be below 5%.

[Reform of the obligation to learn](#)

Completion of basic school and the admissions process

Starting in the spring of 2026, all basic school graduates will continue their studies in a programme of studies suited to their abilities, in line with the implementation of the compulsory education obligation.

From the spring, the obligation to take follow-up exams will also be abolished, as all students, regardless of their exam results, will continue their studies at the next level of education. Students who have not reached the threshold in the assessment of learning outcomes in basic school will receive additional support to acquire skills and knowledge in preparatory learning and/or at the next level of education. Previously, it was possible for a student, with the consent of their parent, to finish basic school with up to two failing grades and thus be considered to have fulfilled their school obligations. Now that the compulsory education obligation will apply, it is important that, even if a student does not pass the single basic school-leaving examination with a satisfactory result, they will continue their studies and receive support in their specific area of need.

As a result of the changes to the end-of-school examinations for basic school and the admissions process, schools will be able to count the results of the end-of-school examinations towards admission, thus reducing the duplication of tests in different subjects. Admission to post-basic education will start once the results of the final exams are made public.

Uniform enrolment in vocational and secondary schools will take place from spring 2026 onwards [through the enrolment information system SAIS](#).

Vocational education reform

One of the key objectives of the ongoing reform of vocational education and training is to make vocational education and training a competitive and attractive continuing education option alongside upper secondary education, enabling graduates to successfully find a job in the labour market or continue their studies in higher education. The aim of the reform is to ensure that 40–50% of young people opt for applied upper secondary education or vocational education in 2035.

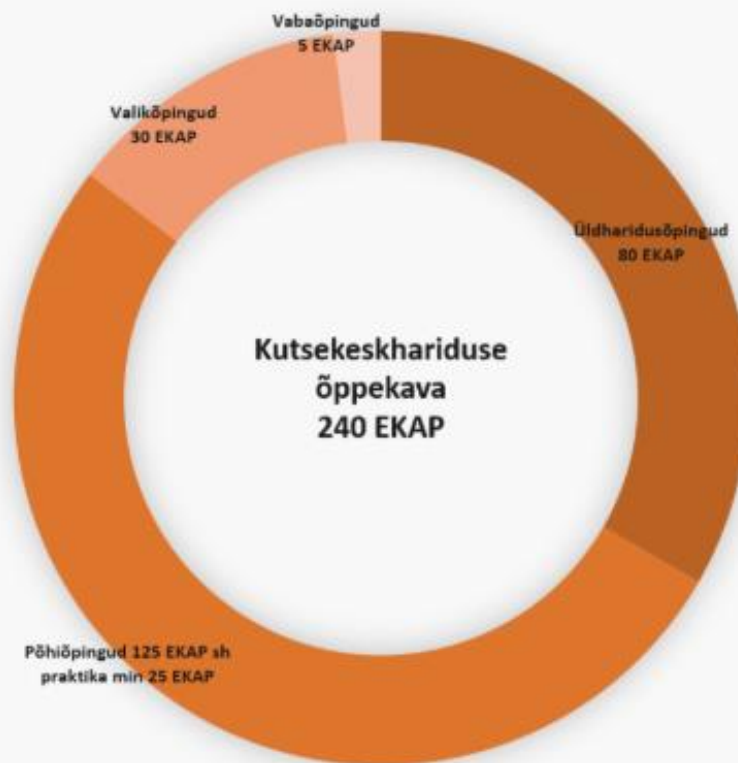
Vocational education and training (VET) is becoming more flexible, with more post-basic education options available. During the current academic year, the first 4-year applied upper secondary school curriculum was opened in vocational schools, where young people will acquire not only a profession but also a solid upper secondary education, which will allow them to enter the labour market and continue their studies in higher education. This autumn, young people will be able to enrol in 13 new applied upper secondary school curricula in 12 schools. These are broad-based, sectoral, and offer a range of specialisation options. Rather than choosing a specific specialisation on entry, students enter a sectoral curriculum and ‘mature’ into the right choice of specialisation. The learning outcomes of these general education courses are comparable to those of general secondary education. Due to the additional volume of general education studies, the length of the upper secondary VET curriculum will also increase from three to four years. All curricula will include an introductory component in the first semester, which will enable students

to develop the competences and skills necessary for lifelong learning and for coping with social life, and which will support them in their future life and studies.

For students starting in September 2025, changes to the Vocational Education and Training Act will apply to free and fee-paying learning.

Until now, vocational education and training has been mostly free of charge for students, including adults, in state institutions. As the state is not in a position to provide unlimited free education, recurrent vocational training for adults was made paid. The resources freed up are used to create additional places in applied upper secondary education for graduates of basic education.

Vocational education as the first choice after completing general education will continue to be free of charge. Vocational education and training will be subject to a tuition fee for adult students who have already completed studies at the same or higher level or who have interrupted their studies several times. Studying in foreign languages is also subject to a tuition fee. The possibility to study



free of charge again will be possible 5 years after vocational studies or 10 years after the acquisition of higher education. As an exception, until 1 September 2030, young people up to the age of 26 who are enrolled for the second time in vocational training at the same level or who have completed higher education will not have to pay fees.

The entire network of vocational education and training schools is being reviewed and education centres offering both upper secondary and vocational education are being planned.

Preparations are also underway for the reform of the vocational system and the introduction of a new Professions Act. The changes aim to improve the coherence between education and the world of work, so that it provides even stronger support for the development of skills and career development for different target groups and for lifelong learning. The changes will significantly reduce the number of occupational standards and expand the possibilities for skills assessment and recognition.

Reform of the transition to Estonian-language education

In the second year of the transition to Estonian-language education, teaching will take place in Estonian in all grades 1, 2, 4 and 5 and in preschools. While in the first year of the transition the emphasis was on teachers' language skills, this year the focus is more on methodological support for teachers.

Teachers will be supported by the Institute of the Estonian Language's [Language Step](#) development programmes, methodology training, seminars, and support from language advisers. Educational institutions can also outsource Language Step training to their own institutions to develop a common understanding of an effective methodological approach within the institution and to foster cooperation between teachers. Methodological and pedagogical training is also provided for educators by Tallinn University and the University of Tartu, including UT Narva College.

This autumn, the Ministry is preparing teacher guidance materials, which will be made available free of charge on e-Koolikott and Moodle.

In Ida-Viru County, teachers teaching in Estonian will continue to receive higher salaries. In addition, support will be provided to improve the management of educational institutions. Applications for support for the September–December period must be submitted by the owners of the schools by 11 September, at the latest. In autumn 2025, around 1,500 teachers should receive the support, plus around 150 head teachers.

The state supported private, state, and municipal schools in purchasing additional learning materials. The amount of the subsidy in spring 2025 was EUR 100 per student of a mother tongue other than Estonian in grades 2 and 5. In spring 2026, support will be provided for students in grades 3 and 6. To purchase additional learning materials, the owner of the school applies for a subsidy.

In order to raise parents' awareness, a range of learning events will be organised with partners, including training sessions, webinars, and workshops, to share both research-based and practical knowledge and skills to support children more effectively in their education.

For students whose home language is different from Estonian, developing their mother tongue is also very important as it promotes second language learning. Schools and school owners must ensure that those who wish to learn their home language do so. It is important that it is taught as a mother tongue, rather than mixing students who are learning it as a foreign language with those who are learning it as their mother tongue.

The Ministry has put together a comprehensive [leaflet](#) with detailed information and references on aspects of the transition.

Rearranging school network reform

The goal is to rearrange the secondary school network and its organisation at the legislative level by 2035. Efforts are ongoing to transfer responsibility for secondary education to the state by 2035. The aim is to achieve an optimal school network that takes into account the decreasing population and ensures equal access to quality education across Estonia. Education centres combining general and vocational education are being created – centres for post-basic education, where it is possible to obtain a vocational qualification, applied upper secondary education, both non-stationary and academic upper secondary education, or to complete a preparatory year of study.

By 2035, there could be around 100 upper secondary schools and 30 education centres across Estonia. Analyses and studies are currently underway to find the most optimal school network solution per region, matching the needs and aspirations of young people with the capacities of school owners to provide quality education in every county.

Viljandi Adult Secondary School and Maarjamaa State School were added to the list of state schools.

As of 1 September 2025, Viljandi Adult Gymnasium will be a state school. The school will continue its work in a new location – Posti 22, where the teaching conditions are better than in the current school building. The Viljandi Adult High School is a one-form comprehensive school and a gymnasium, offering the possibility of completing comprehensive school or gymnasium as a non-stationary or external student. The school was one of the first in Estonia to widely adopt e-learning. The school currently enrolls around 450 students.

Since 1 July, the new state school is the Maarjamaa State School, which was created by merging seven schools for children with special needs. The merger of small schools will help to maintain learning opportunities close to home in a shrinking student population, improve the quality of education, attract qualified staff, reduce bureaucracy and red tape, simplify the admission process and streamline management.

The Maarjamaa Education College was merged with the Tallinn Konstantin Päts Open Air School, and due to the amendment of the Social Welfare Act, the provision of the closed childcare service was transferred to AS Hoolekandeteenus.

Since 1 July, Tartu Tähtvere State School has been in operation, formed by the merger of Tartu Emajõgi School with Tartu Hiie School. The school is an enhanced school for students with speech, hearing and visual impairments requiring special support. The main aim of the change is to improve the recruitment of qualified specialists and the learning conditions for students.

In Tallinn, state vocational training institutions will be merged into two vocational colleges.

Two vocational colleges will be created in Tallinn, formed by merging existing state vocational training institutions – Tallinn IT, energy, technology, and construction vocational college and Tallinn service and business vocational college. The new education centres will be created by the merging of Tallinn School of Service, Tallinn School of Economics, Tallinn Construction School, Tallinn Industrial Education Centre, Tallinn Lasnamäe School of Mechanics, and Tallinn Polytechnic School.

The heads of the new education centres in Tallinn have started their work and preparations are currently underway to merge the schools. Teaching in the new schools will start in September 2026.

The goal behind reorganising Tallinn's vocational school network is to make the school network more efficient, eliminate duplication of specialisations, and optimise the use of resources. All current students at vocational schools will be able to complete their studies in the normal way.

Rapla County Vocational College to open its doors

From 1 September 2025, the Vana-Vigala Technical and Service School will be transformed into a place of study that is part of the current Kehtna KHK, and the new combined school will be called the Rapla County Vocational College. All current Vana-Vigala students will be able to complete their studies in their chosen fields at the Vana-Vigala campus of the Rapla County Vocational College.

Reform of the student loan system

The maximum amount of student loans guaranteed by the state will be doubled – in the 2025/2026 academic year, up to EUR 6,000 per student can be applied for. The aim of the change is to provide students with sufficient support to cover their living expenses. In addition to the increase in the loan amount, a major reform has been launched to make student loans more flexible and appealing to students.

The ministry has prepared a draft act on student grants and student loans, which will extend the repayment period of student loans, lower the interest rate, and abolish the requirement for a private guarantor or real estate guarantee.

The draft act provides for the possibility to extend the loan repayment period to four times the standard period of the study programme. This will reduce the monthly loan payments for students after graduation, as payments will be spread more evenly over a longer period. Students will also have the option to repay the loan over a shorter period, subject to an agreement with the bank.

In the event of interruption of studies, the student loan must continue to be repaid over a period of one and half times the duration of study. Interest will start to accrue as soon as the loan amount reaches the student. The repayment of the principal of the loan starts no later than 12 months after graduation or other reasons for leaving school. Exceptionally, the start of the repayment period can be extended up to 18 months. The reform abolishes the requirement for a guarantor

and a real estate guarantee, so that students from more difficult socio-economic backgrounds can also take out student loans.

The maximum commercial interest rate on student loans is to be reduced to 1.5% plus 6 months' Euribor and the maximum interest rate paid by students is to be lowered from 5% to 4%.

The legislative reform is planned over a longer period, with a drafting proposal ready at the end of 2024. The reform is currently scheduled to enter into force on 1 September 2026.

New generation of teachers

The state has given universities extra money to take on more than 400 additional teacher trainees

For the third year in a row, the ministry allocated extra money to the University of Tartu and Tallinn University to open more than 400 additional places (i.e. in addition to the places created by the operating grant) in teacher training and support specialist programmes. In 2025, nearly EUR 7 million was allocated for this purpose.

The aim of increasing the number of places is to alleviate the shortage of teachers and to support the transition to teaching in Estonian. In total, universities have created around 1,500 teacher training places this year with the support of state funding, which is the same order of magnitude as in 2024 and 2023. In addition, the Ministry allocated a total of EUR 6.55 million to three universities (UT, TUT, EMTA) this year to pay scholarships to students studying in teacher training and support specialist programmes. The EUR 400 scholarship will be paid to students starting full-time studies from the academic year 2023/2024. The aim is to make studying to become a teacher more popular and to fill the additional places created by the state with talented candidates.

[The admission numbers](#) of Tallinn University and the University of Tartu showed a very high interest in studying to become a teacher this year. There were 19% more applications to the teacher training programme at the University of Tartu this year than a year ago, and the average number of applicants to the teacher training programme was 4.2 per space. More than a third of all applications were submitted to Tallinn University's programmes in the field of education, with a total of nearly 3,330 applications.

The law establishes a career model for teachers and sets up an accreditation system for school heads

Amendments to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act are currently pending in the Riigikogu, with a view to introducing a career model for general and vocational teachers and a related minimum salary.

The introduction of a four-cycle career model for teachers is intended to support teachers' professional development, ensure the next generation of teachers, and to guarantee equal working conditions. Hereafter, teachers in both general and vocational education will be assigned a career stage corresponding to the qualification requirements, with the corresponding coefficients of the minimum salary scale for 2026–2028 being: beginner teacher 1.0; teacher 1.0; senior teacher 1.1; master teacher 1.3. Currently, there is no teacher career model and the same

national minimum salary scale applies to all general education teachers. Until now, there was no statutory minimum rate of pay for teachers in vocational education.

In order to ensure that people with the necessary professional knowledge and experience have a smooth transition into teaching, the amendment will broaden the entry routes for general education teachers. In addition to holders of a master's degree and a teaching qualification, people with a doctorate will also be able to work as a teacher as required. It will be the responsibility of the head of school to assess the competence and training needs of each new teacher, according to their duties and the age of the students, and to support them in acquiring the necessary competences.

Hereafter, the head of a school may conclude a fixed-term contract of up to three years instead of the current one year with a teacher who is still in teacher training. This will give both the school and the teacher the certainty that the job will be retained while the required qualifications are being acquired.

In addition, the current requirement that a person who had completed a vocational secondary or higher education before 1 September 2013 must also have worked as a teacher before that date will be abolished.

In order to support the professional development of school heads, a development interview will be held at least once a year with the head of a general education school and an evaluation will be performed during the fifth year of work. While it is the responsibility of the employer to carry out the development interview, the evaluation process will be managed by school heads through the Estonian School Heads Association.

The establishment of an evaluation system for school heads is based on the Estonian Education Development Plan, which aims to support the professional development of school heads and to implement an appraisal system. The concept of the evaluation system has been developed by the Academy for Educational Leadership of Tallinn University in cooperation with the Estonian School Heads Association and the Ministry of Education, with the involvement of the University of Tartu's Education Innovation Working Group and school owners. To implement the planned changes, the Ministry is providing in-service training for school heads and school owners under the ESF+ external action.

The amendment to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act is planned to enter into force on 1 January 2026, and the amendment to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act on 1 June 2026.

New professional standards for teachers will enter into force

In addition to preschool and school teachers, teachers of special needs and hobby education will also be able to apply for the same professional standards.

Innovations in early childhood education

On 1 September 2025, the Early Childhood Education Act will enter into force, bringing significant changes to early childhood education. The principles and organisation of child development

support in early childhood education will be aligned with the regulation of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. The provision of support will be similar regardless of the level of education and will be based primarily on the individual needs of the child, rather than on diagnosis or disability.

Childcare providers will move from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. More information on the new law is available [on the website of the State Gazette](#).

On 1 September 2025, the implementing acts of the Early Childhood Education Act – the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and the requirements for the learning and growing environment in childcare and preschools – will also enter into force. In addition, childcare centres will be under a new obligation to draw up a curriculum to support the development of the child's general skills. The Ministry has commissioned guidance materials from universities to support the curriculum and its updating, which will be ready by the end of October.

Miscellaneous

Requirements for the learning and growing environment in schools were updated

All the provisions on the protection and welfare of students' health and well-being have been brought together in a single document and a number of bureaucratic requirements have been removed.

The main changes will enter into force this autumn:

- Students must be allowed at least 20 minutes to eat.
- Students must be given at least 20 consecutive minutes to move about outdoors during the school day.
- Provisions must be made for storing bicycles and other mobility equipment on school grounds.
- No lessons shall be held in classrooms where the air temperature is above 27°C.
- The requirement setting the distance of the student's desk from external walls and windows or blackboards has been abolished.
- There is no regulation regarding the surface covering of classroom blackboards and the positioning of tables and desks.
- There is no regulation stipulating that all classrooms, toilets and showers in use must be cleaned daily, and more frequently if necessary.
- Rules regarding lesson planning and the scheduling of tests have been omitted.

From the 2026/2027 school year, the change to the start time of the school day will enter into force – the school day will generally start at 09.00 or later. From September 2026, a second major change will also enter into force, clarifying the responsibilities of the school owner with regard to school transport. If a student's route to school is along a busy road, the local authority will have to arrange transport to and from school.

The requirements for micro-qualifications were introduced by law.

From 1 September 2025, the requirements for micro-qualifications introduced [by the Adult Education Act](#) will enter into force. Micro-skills are designed for adults who wish to acquire a comprehensive skill by learning in smaller modules. They will facilitate mobility between different educational pathways and increase learning flexibility. Micro-qualification courses range from 5 to 30 credits and are awarded with a micro-qualification certificate, which is registered in EHIS. [More information](#).

Law on the organisation of research and innovation, five years in the making, enters into force.

The new [Organisation of Research, Development and Innovation Act](#) will enter into force on 1 October 2025, creating a coherent framework for research, development and innovation, streamlining funding, clarifying quality assessment, and highlighting research ethics as a new theme.

Publication of the results of the TALIS 2024 survey

On 7 October 2025, the results of the international survey of teachers will be published. TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) is an OECD survey that collects information on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers. The TALIS 2024 survey randomly selected 200 schools in each country, including 20 teachers in grades 7–9, and the school head. The aim of the survey was to gather data on teachers, teaching, and the role of teachers in the learning process at the national and international level. It also represents a good opportunity for teachers and school heads to express their views and thus contribute to the shaping of education policy.

Estonia will host the International Summit on the Teaching Profession in 2026

From 8 to 11 March 2026, Estonia will host the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) 'Switching Gears: Teachers and Learners in the Future Learning Environment. Hosting the summit will help to raise the international profile of Estonia's education system, allow for the sharing of success stories, and create opportunities to learn from the experiences of other countries. It will also provide a platform for showcasing educational innovations and supporting the export of EdTech solutions. The summit is open to education ministers and teachers' union representatives from the world's leading education systems, and is organised in partnership with the OECD and Education International, the global federation of teachers' and education employees' unions.

Recommendations for educators, young people, and parents on the use of smart devices

Recommendations for adults (school staff) and parents who come into daily contact with children are being developed in cooperation between the Ministry and the National Institute for Health Development (TAI). They are based on research in scientific journals, national and international recommendations, and knowledge about what children need to thrive and grow. The recommendations will be sent to schools shortly and will be added to the TAI website.

Guidance for educational institutions on how to prepare crisis plans has been finalised

The Ministry, in cooperation with its partners, has finalised [a crisis planning guide](#) for educational institutions, together with a model crisis plan and action cards. These are indicative supporting materials. When drawing up your own crisis plan, you should base it on the needs and capabilities of the individual educational establishment. It is a tool that educational establishments can use as a basis for drawing up a crisis plan or for updating an existing plan. It will help to deal with crisis situations and to raise the awareness of the staff and students of education institutions on how to react and prepare for different types of emergencies.

Good governance for education and youth institutions has been updated.

Local elections are approaching, and for the third time young people from the age of 16 will be able to vote. The Estonian Federation of Youth Associations, in cooperation with the Ministry and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, has updated its good election practices for educational institutions. We encourage educational institutions to address the issue of elections with young people in a neutral and balanced way, following good election practices. The updated practices can be found on the Ministry's [website](#).

Reminder to schools: the quality of the data submitted to the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) is very important

Greater precision is required when submitting data concerning teachers, as well as when indicating the need for support specialists and support services. The EHIS dataset serves as a basis for the Ministry to plan education expenditures and to get an overview of teachers' work. The data entrant can contact EHIS support with any questions.

Figures for the academic year 2025/2026

- In September, around 161,000 students will enrol on a permanent basis in general education schools, which is more than a thousand fewer than a year earlier. In the coming years, the number of students will continue to fall. This academic year, approximately 14,000 students will be starting school for the first time.
- The total number of VET students increased slightly in 2024/25, and a small increase is also expected for this academic year. The increase is mainly due to the increase in the number of students in vocational secondary education, while the number and share of adult students has decreased in recent years.
- After several years of decline, the number of students at all levels of higher education increased in 2024/2025, and is expected to continue to increase in the coming academic year.
- Compared to a year earlier, the number of teachers in general education fell in 2024/2025 for the first time after a dozen years of growth. Teachers' salaries have been rising steadily, while at the same time many teachers in general education continue to work part-time.
- Exact figures for students, students, and teachers for the academic year 2025/2026 will be available in mid-November, once the data have been entered into the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS).
- More detailed education, research, youth and language indicators can be found in the education statistics portal haridussilm.ee and studies and analyses [on the Ministry's homepage](#).

Basic and upper secondary school students and higher education students

General education

A total of around 161,000 students will be enrolled in stationary studies in general education schools in the academic year 2025/2026, which is more than 1,000 fewer than in the previous academic year. The total number of students is projected to continue to fall in the coming academic years. Around 14,000 students will enter first grade this year. Around 87,000 students will start basic school in grades 1–6. Around 46,000 students will enter basic school in years 7–9. Around 28,000 young people will enter upper secondary school, grades 10–12.

Number of students in full-time education in general education in grades 1, 10 and 12.

Class	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
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1st class	14,898	14,094	13,892	14,058	14,727	14,997	14,211
Class 10	7,988	8,156	8,633	8,834	9,180	9,539	10,234
12th grade	7,015	7,052	7,134	7411	7,622	7,815	8,203
Total	151,164	153,155	155,104	156,786	162,919	163,649	162,982

Source: EHIS

Vocational education and training

According to preliminary data, more than 27,000 students will be enrolled in vocational education and training in 2025/26. The share of students aged 19 and under in VET has increased in recent years (half of all VET students in the previous academic year). In the 2024/2025 school year, 12,140 students were enrolled in vocational secondary education; the last time the same number of students were enrolled in vocational secondary education was 10 years ago. The increase in the number of students is mainly due to the increase in the number of graduates from basic school: the large cohorts born between 2008–2011 (15,000–16,000) have reached the final years of basic school.

The number of adult vocational students has been decreasing over the last four years. While in 2020/2021 as many as 42% of VET students were aged 25 and over, by 2024/2025 the share of adult students had fallen to 36%.

Number of VET students by type of study

<i>Type of study[1]</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
Level 2 and Level 3 vocational training, total	1,183	1,431	1,534	1,649	1,522	1,739	2144
Level 4 Vocational Training	8,269	8,668	9,382	9,145	8,752	8,594	8989
Vocational education and training	10,027	9,897	10,300	10,645	10,966	11,616	12140
Level 5 Vocational Training	3,908	4,021	4,332	4,423	4,229	4,362	4331
Total	23,387	24,017	25,548	25,862	25,469	26,311	27,604
Percentage of students aged 25 and over	39.6%	41.7%	42.4%	41.1%	38.5%	37.2%	36.6%

Source: EHIS

Higher education

After several years of decline, the number of students at all levels of higher education increased during academic year 2024/2025, once again exceeding the 45,000 mark – the last time a similar number of students were enrolled was in the academic year 2020/2021.

The number of foreign students has decreased in recent academic years due to the international security situation and related restrictions. Foreign students accounted for 9% of all students in Estonian higher education in 2024/2025. At the same time, the number of foreign students in doctoral studies has continued to grow, accounting for 41% of all doctoral students.

Number of students in higher education, by field of study and academic year

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
Studies in professional higher education	11,967	11,721	11,462	11,246	11,262	11,474
Bachelor's studies	15,707	15,953	15,786	15,929	16,503	16,885
Integrated Bachelor's and Master's studies	3,222	3,306	3,324	3,287	3,413	3,480
Master's studies	11,966	11,962	11,686	11,377	11,167	11,287
Doctoral studies	2,316	2,317	2,353	2,292	2,283	2,324
Total	45,178	45,259	44,611	44,131	44,628	45,450

Source: EHIS

Number of foreign students in higher education, by field of study and academic year.

<i>Study level</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
Applied higher education	387	418	390	396	315	289
Undergraduate studies	1,777	1,616	1,456	1,324	1,179	976
Integrated bachelor and master studies	328	346	347	347	354	351
Master's degree	2,445	2,184	2,122	2,043	1,700	1,522
Doctoral studies	591	671	757	763	792	816
Total	5,528	5,235	5,072	4,873	4,340	3,954
Percentage of international students, %	12.2%	11.6%	11.4%	11.0%	9.7%	8.7%

Source: EHIS

Number of admissions to higher education during the year, by level and year of study.

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
Applied higher education	3,297	3,319	3,191	3,222	3,355	3,408
Undergraduate studies	5,012	5,006	4,967	5,193	5,440	5,370
Integrated bachelor and master studies	652	680	677	637	746	777
Master studies	4,392	4,203	4,246	3,868	4,060	4,382
Doctoral studies	343	387	400	362	393	467
Total	13,696	13,595	13,481	13,282	13,994	14,404

Source: EHIS

Adult education

Participation rates in lifelong learning have been increasing steadily in recent years. In 2023, 23% of 25–64 year olds participated in lifelong learning, i.e. around 167,900 people, and the same participation rate was maintained in 2024, when an estimated 168,675 people participated in lifelong learning.

The number of students in non-stationary general education increased by 334 in 2024/2025 to 6,293.

In recent years, the share of adult students (those aged 25 and over) in VET has remained stable at around 36–37%. At the same time, there has been an increase in the absolute number of adult students (10,104 in the last academic year), indicating that the total number of entrants has increased.

In the academic year 2024/2025, there were 3,126 adult students (25 years and older) in general education, of whom 1,458 were studying individual subjects and in turn 1,354 of them were studying at the Narva School for Adults.

Adult students in upper secondary education

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Non-stationary students in general education*	5,579	5129	5215	5,486	5,959	6,293
Adult students in general education (25+)	1,783	1890	1893	1,900	2,837	3,126
Adult students in VET (25+)	10,007	10,830	10,639	9,795	9,783	10,104
Adult students in higher education (30+)	13,362	13,905	13,972	14,433	13,975	13,913

Source: EHIS

* 20% of students in non-stationary education are aged 17 or younger.

Percentage of 25–64 year olds (%) who participated in a level of education or training in the last 4 weeks.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Estonia	20.1	17.1	18.4	21.1	23.2	23.3
EL27	10.8	9.2	10.8	11.9	12.8	13.5

Source: Eurostat

Teachers

Number of teachers per educational establishment

The number of teachers continues to be significantly higher than the number of positions, indicating that a significant proportion of teachers are working part-time.

Number of teachers and teaching positions[2] in the previous academic year 2024/2025 (source: EHIS).

Type of education	Number of teachers	Number of teaching posts
In general education schools	17,390	14,341
In vocational education and training institutions	2,109	1,330
Preschools	7,076	6,805

Source: EHIS

Teachers in general education schools

Both the minimum and the average gross monthly salary of teachers in municipal schools have increased by nearly three times since 2011. In the comparison of the last two periods (2023 vs 2024), the minimum basic salary for teachers in compulsory education increased by 4% and the average gross monthly salary by 6%.

Average gross monthly salary and minimum wage of teachers compared to the average in Estonia

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average gross monthly salary for teachers in municipal schools, EUR	1,579	1,621	1,632	1,760	2,191	2,322
Minimum teacher's salary, EUR	1,250	1,315	1,315	1,412	1,749	1,820
Average gross monthly wage in Estonia, EUR (ESA)	1,407	1,448	1,548	1,645	1,832	1,981
Average gross monthly wage of municipal school teachers as % of average gross monthly wage in Estonia	112%	112%	105%	104%	120%	117%

Source.

The ratio of students to teaching positions in general education schools is very low, in recent years it has been around 12 students per teaching position. Twenty-five years ago, it reached 19 students per teaching position. In the 2024/2025 school year, the ratio of students to teaching positions in general education schools was 11.9 students per teaching position, the same as in the 2023/2024 school year.

In the last academic year, 2024/2025, both the number of teachers and the number of teaching positions decreased compared to a year earlier. The changes in the number of teachers and the number of teaching positions have had virtually no impact on the average workload, as for almost the last couple of decades, teachers in general education schools have been working with an average workload of 0.82–0.84. The average workload of 0.82–0.84 has been the same for teachers in general education schools for almost the last couple of decades. This indicates that many general education teachers work part-time. The TALIS^[3] survey (focusing on teachers in grades 7–9) shows that many of the part-time teachers would like to work full-time. The working arrangements in schools depend on the human resources policy of the school head and the school network policy of the school owner.

Change in the number of teachers and students in general education schools for the academic year 2018/2019–2024/2025.

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Number of teaching posts</i>	<i>Number of students in full-time education</i>	<i>Number of students in full-time and part-time education[4]</i>	<i>Number of students per teaching post</i>
2018/2019	15,465	12,852	151,164	156,650	12.2
2019/2020	15,483	13,216	153,155	158,734	12
2020/2021	16,357	13,525	155,104	160,829	11.9
2021/2022	16,569	13,755	156,786	162,576	11.8
2022/2023	16,942	14,107	162,919	169,111	12
2023/2024	17,483	14,439	163,649	171,217	11.9
2024/2025	17,390	14,341	162,982	171,045	11.9

Source: EHIS

Distribution of teachers in general education schools by workload for the academic year 2018/2019–2024/2025¹

<i>Load range</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
1. Partial load less than 0.5	16.8%	16.5%	16.7%	16.3%	16.2%	16.8%	16.5%
2. Part load 0.5-0.99	25.3%	25.2%	25.4%	25.2%	24.9%	25.2%	25.6%
3. Full load 1.0	48.2%	48.9%	50.5%	50.3%	50.8%	51.3%	51.5%
4. Above full time	9.7%	9.5%	7.4%	8.2%	8.1%	6.7%	6.3%

Source: EHIS

¹ Change in methodology: the load is rounded to the nearest hundredth and divided into load ranges.

Number and size of schools

Size of schools by size of school

There were 533 preschools and 3,898 groups in Estonia in the academic year 2024/2025. The overwhelming majority (89%) of preschools are under municipal ownership. Compared to the previous year, the number of children, child care institutions, and groups has decreased.

General education schools

The number of schools has decreased, mainly due to the merging of schools, and the reorganisation of the school network is likely to continue in the coming years, this includes the consolidation of former independent institutions into single-managed, multi-site schools. The growth of non-stationary general education is likely. In the academic year 2025/26, general education schools will be in operation (this does not include vocational educational institutions providing non-stationary general education):

<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Number of educational institutions</i>
Basic school without stage III (grades 1–6)	40
Basic school (grades 1–9)	275
Full-cycle school (grades 1–12)	112
Exclusively upper secondary school (grades 10–12)	34
Upper secondary school with classes in stages II and III	14
Total	475

The number of students in general education schools varies widely. In the academic year 2024/25, 56 schools had fewer than 50 students in permanent education, including 12 schools with fewer than 20 students, while 28 schools had more than 1,000 students.

Vocational training institutions

In the academic year 2024/2025, 30 vocational education and training institutions and five state-owned higher vocational education institutions were offering vocational education and training.

The 30 vocational schools include:

- 25 state-run vocational training institutions;
- 3 private VET institutions;
- 2 municipal vocational training institutions.

In the academic year 2025/2026, two private secondary schools will remain – from 01/09/2025, The First Estonian Private Cosmetic School will cease its activities. Also, in the academic year 2025/2026, 24 state vocational schools will remain – from 01/09/2025, a new joint school, the Rapla County Vocational College, will start, in place of the current Kehtna Vocational Education Centre and Vana-Vigala Technical and Service School.

Higher education institutions

In the academic year 2024/25, higher education was available at a total of 18 institutions, including:

- 6 public universities;
- 1 private university;
- 7 public and 4 private professional higher education institutions.

Hobby schools and youth centres

The number of hobby schools has increased significantly over the years, with the growth continuing in recent years. The number of youth centres has fluctuated in both directions in recent years.

The statistics per school year in the table only include those leisure schools that have validated their data in EHIS in due time for the school year under consideration.

Hobby schools and open youth centres by year

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>20/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>2024/25</i>
Hobby schools	774	787	807	840	849
Open youth centres	304	299	307	288	280
Hobby schools per 1,000 young people	2.83	2.88	2.87	2.91	2.9
Open youth centres per 1,000 young people	1.11	1.09	1.09	1.0	0.96

Source: EHIS, HARNO

[1]

Level 2 and Level 3 vocational training can be started without having completed upper secondary education.

For level 4 vocational training, the prerequisite for entry is a basic education.

Vocational secondary education provides both an upper secondary education and vocational skills (qualification level 4).

Level 5 vocational training requires the successful completion of upper secondary education.

[2] Number of teaching positions – this is the number of full-time employment positions.

[3] TALIS (The Teaching and Learning International Survey) is an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) international survey of teaching and learning that collects data on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers.

[4] The number of students includes also external students.

[5] Includes both in-station, non-stationary and external students.
