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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

ESTONIA

School year 2007/08

The Republic of Estonia Education Act (1992) provides the organisation and principles of the education system. Basic education is minimum compulsory general education. Minimum school leaving age is 17. After graduating from basic school, there are several options for the acquisition of further education: acquire general secondary education at an upper secondary school, secondary vocational education at a vocational educational institution or simply enter a profession.

Guidance in Estonia is mainly provided by the public sector within the education and labour market structures. Provision in the education sector tends to be more complex and is divided across many institutions compared to the labour market sector. In the education sector, guidance is provided both as part of youth work as well as part of formal education. Private career services exist, and tend to provide a different type of service, related mainly to job mediation and web-based career management resources.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The objectives of vocational guidance education in compulsory education are defined in the National Curriculum of Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools (2002). The objective is to allow pupils to become familiar with different professions, to determine their centres of interest, to develop the necessary capacities and skills to plan their professional life, and to learn how to learn, communicate, work in a group, and take decisions in a perspective of lifelong learning and future career choice.

The Education Act of the Republic of Estonia (1992) stipulates that the vocational guidance of children and youth (7-26) is the responsibility of local governments. It stipulates that the official guidance and vocational information services must be organised by these authorities according to their needs and their local characteristics, and must be offered to young people free of charge.

RESPONSIBILITIES

According to the Youth Work Act, the county governor is responsible for the organisation of guidance and counselling of young people in the county by contracting a respective institution or specialist. The responsibility is divided between the education and labour sectors. Guidance and counselling for youth (7-26 years) takes place under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research and has been organised in all counties of Estonia through the service provision of information and counselling centres operating with support from state financing, which offer

services both in the centre and at schools. Career centres operate in several institutions of higher education. Employment services under the Labour Market Boards, which report to the Ministry of Social Affairs, provide counselling to people entering the labour market and the unemployed. Recently, they have extended some of their services to working adults who contemplate career change.

In order to develop a lifelong guidance system, the current situation of different types of guidance and counselling services, needs and providers was identified in 2006, and the basis was laid for integrating the counselling systems in the area of government of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs into an integrated system.

A contractual agreement was signed between these two ministries on 12 March 2008. The contract was signed to decide the areas of responsibility in providing high quality guidance and counselling services to the whole population and to promote a unified qualification and training system for career practitioners, unified methodology for career services as well as to assess the impact and quality of the provided services. The Foundation Innove National Resource Centre for Guidance will implement the methodology and development activities. The relevant ESF programme will be launched in 2008-2013 to support these developments.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Within general education, all schools must implement *Professional Career and its Development* as a compulsory cross-curricular theme since September 2004. In addition, career guidance is often carried out during advisory teacher's class.

Furthermore, the opportunities for the students of general schools to acquire preliminary vocational education and training (VET) knowledge and skills have widened. Students in basic and secondary education have been given two options:

- Vocational preliminary training – VET orientation course which lasts up to 15 study weeks.
- VET in basic school and upper secondary school – courses that enable the students to acquire realistic VET skills in a VET institution studying a VET curriculum whose volume is 15-40 study weeks. If the student continues his or her studies in a VET school, the courses taken will be credited to his or her account.

In the 2007/08 academic year, only 13 % of general education schools gave this opportunity to their pupils.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Guidance services at school

As a pilot project, a model of a school guidance plan has been developed. The aim is to produce a well-structured guidance plan which organises the resources of the school to the best effect in meeting students' needs. The school career education action plan is the document in

which the school systematically defines the activities it offers, and states how resources are organised to deliver the programme. The plan defines target groups, objectives, activities, resources and review.

Guidance services outside school

In 2000, the guidance and vocational information centres for young people were set up according to the needs and characteristics of each region. Guidance offered to pupils is only part of the activities of the counsellors who work there. They must meet the specific needs of young people, see them without an appointment, and provide them with personalised and confidential counselling on a wide range of subjects. The services are free of charge. If agreements exist at local level, counsellors may go to schools to provide counselling, testing and interview services to pupils.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

Currently, Estonian universities do not provide higher education in the field of career services. However, the knowledge and skills necessary for working in the field of guidance may be obtained by taking an elective subject at Tallinn University, Tartu University or Tallinn University of Technology. These subjects include career counselling and coordination, a career guidance module within human resource management studies.

The majority of career service providers in Estonia have taken various short- and long-term in-service courses and obtained the basic knowledge for working in the field. They have also improved their knowledge through non-formal and informal education, acknowledging the importance of continuing individual and professional development. Most guidance practitioners have a background in psychology or education.

As part of the Estonian qualification system, there are three professional standards for career practitioners: career counsellor, career information specialist and career coordinator at school (including VET institutions and higher education institutions). Professional standards contain requirements for the knowledge, skills, experience, values and personal characteristics arising from professional qualifications. The Estonian Qualification Authority adopted all three in December 2005.

In the schools

In many cases (1/3 of general education schools), a person is appointed to be responsible for the coordination of the career management activities within the whole school. Tasks of a career coordinator include cooperation with regional information and counselling centres and class teachers, supporting subject teachers in the implementation of the cross-curricular theme, organisation of student visits to/by employers, and in some cases, delivery of a designated career lesson. The latter is usually provided as an elective course for students in the last years of either basic or general upper secondary school who are generally considered as the main target group for guidance.

According to the abovementioned professional standards, presuppositions for applying for the professional qualification of a school career coordinator III are higher education, further training in the field of career services and two years of work experience in school ([1]).

In other guidance services

Career counsellors and career information specialists provide services outside formal education. Their background, accordingly, is mainly psychology or youth work. Presuppositions for applying for the professional qualification of a career counsellor IV are a master's degree or a corresponding qualification, at least three years of work experience as a career counsellor, basic training in counselling and further training in career services. Presuppositions for applying for the professional qualification of a career information specialist III are higher education in information sciences and one year of professional work experience or higher education in any other speciality, and two years of work experience as a career information employee. In addition, the applicant for the professional qualification of a career information specialist III shall have passed further training in career services.

Pilot guidance training programme

Between November 2005 and June 2006, three Estonian public universities piloted a joint 9 ECTS training programme in guidance within the framework of the EU Structural Funds career guidance project. This was followed by three separate 3 ECTS specialisation courses for career counsellors, career information specialists and career coordinators at schools in 2007 and 2008 leading to the (voluntary) professional examinations to acquire one of the three qualifications. The pilot course was designed by 55 currently practising specialists, including 20 career coordinators from schools. The objective of the training was to synchronise basic knowledge and competency levels of career practitioners, and enhance their specific skills with the aim to ensure a higher level of service provision, corresponding to the needs of different target groups.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Collaboration between stakeholders is a challenge in Estonia. The issue has been on the agenda at national level in recent years. As an activity within an EU-funded project, a strategic plan for the establishment of a National Guidance Policy Forum in Estonia was agreed in the end of 2006. The role of the National Guidance Forum in Estonia would be to provide an opportunity for different stakeholders to agree upon a meaning of lifelong guidance services, and devise a corresponding model of a coherent lifelong guidance system in Estonia.

Cooperation between schools and employers varies according to the region and is often based on personal contacts. Employer organisations may be involved in the development of strategies and curricula by the schools. The organisation of work-shadowing days is another example of cooperation, where pupils have an opportunity to get acquainted with the world of work.

([1]) There are five qualification levels (I–V) in the Estonian qualification system. Qualifications that require obtaining higher education usually start from the third level (III).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Both services of the Ministry of Education, the Youth Work Centre and the Foundation Innove National Resource Centre for Guidance (NRCG) are responsible for gathering and disseminating information related to vocational guidance. The first is concentrated on gathering information on important subjects for the general development of young people likely to help them in their career choices. The aim of the NRCG is to contribute to the development of the national system of guidance by introducing the best European practice; the development and introduction of ICT applications in guidance and counselling; the strengthening of cooperation and information exchange within the institutional network in the fields of education, training, guidance, youth work and labour market policy in Estonia; and participation in transnational projects under both Community and national programmes in the field of education and guidance.

Rajaleidja (Pathfinder; www.rajaleidja.ee; only in Estonian) is a career planning website divided into three subsections on the basis of different target groups: young people, advisers and adults. The subsection for young people is aimed at pupils who are at the very start of their career planning process, and therefore require both advice and information in getting to know themselves, investigating the world of work and finding suitable learning opportunities both at home as well as abroad. Information for young people is also divided into three subsections: Who am I? What do I want to become? Where to study? The subsection for advisers is aimed at teachers, counsellors and parents, and comprises both exercises and guidelines about supporting young people in their career planning process. One can also a find a variety of materials that help to learn more about career guidance in general. The subsection for adults provides practical advice to people of all ages who wish to review their professional careers and make plans for the future, taking into consideration the current situation on the labour market. In addition, people can find news about studying and working, various competitions and scholarships.

The organisation of and/or participation in youth information fairs is also a way to meet young people in order to raise their awareness about learning and working opportunities, occupations and guidance in general, including access to relevant services.

Internet references

Youth Work Centre: www.entk.ee

Foundation for Lifelong Development Innove, National Resource Centre for Guidance: www.innove.ee

Labour Market Board: www.tta.ee

Ministry of Education and Research: www.hm.ee

Ministry of Social Affairs: www.sm.ee

Sources

National survey of guidance services – Expectations and needs of career guidance providers and users in Estonia. Foundation Innove, 2006.