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## 1 Educational institutions and educational opportunities for different target groups

### 1.1 Target groups for access strategies

The following target groups can be distinguished on the basis of attitudes towards and opportunities for continuing education:

#### 1. Persons who have dropped out of formal education

In Estonia approximately 15,000 students discontinue formal education each year, of them:

Up to the academic year 2006-2007 lower secondary education was discontinued by approximately 1 000 daytime pupils or 0.7% of all pupils in a year. The number of pupils who discontinue their lower secondary education has recently gone down (423 pupils or 0.4% in the academic year 2008-2009).

Upper secondary education was in previous years discontinued by approximately 600 pupils or 1.7% in a year. In the academic year 2008-2009 the number of drop-outs declined to 373 people or 1.2% of all upper secondary pupils.

Quantitative studies carried out among drop-outs and among those who returned to education (SP3) and qualitative studies carried out among young people indicate that:

- The main reasons for dropping out at a lower level of education are: low academic achievement, problematic home situation, poor attendance records, problems with teachers, changing schools, etc.

Vocational education is discontinued by 5 500 students in a year on average. The majority of drop-outs are those who discontinue secondary or post-secondary vocational education.

- The main reasons for dropping out are poor academic achievement (one third of drop-outs) and finding a job (11%)

In tertiary level education the share of students discontinuing their education is 11-14%. Each year, an average of 8 000-9 000 students quit university. The share of drop-outs is the biggest in natural and exact sciences and technology (up to 21%).

- The main reasons for dropping out of tertiary level education are inability to combine studying and working and economic reasons. In the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology the main reason is inability to cope with studies.

As various studies have shown, entering the labour market is equally difficult for those who have discontinued their education at lower secondary or upper secondary level and for those who have dropped out of vocational education. Adult drop-outs, in particular those who left school before finishing lower secondary education, are more likely to find only low-paid jobs or not to find a job at all and to become long-term unemployed with high risk of social exclusion (14 % of young people in Estonia have only lower secondary or primary education). In the years of economic boom people who discontinued tertiary level education could find a job without difficulty – they were welcome to join the labour market; it was not a situation where drop-outs were looking for a job but rather it was a situation where those who could not reconcile working and studying discontinuing their education.

## 2. Risk groups and marginal groups – people for whom it is difficult to continue education

### *Risk groups:*

- Persons with low educational levels and low income (young people who have dropped out of education at lower levels)
- Persons with poor knowledge of Estonian
- Orphans and children deprived of parental care (according to the Ministry of Social Affairs 1 420 children lived in children's homes and in foster care as at 15 May 2008; as at 31 December 2007, 455 children were in foster care.
- Persons with special needs
- The unemployed. During the economic boom (in 2006) the annual average number of unemployed persons was 18,228; at the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010 the number of registered unemployed was over 95 000 representing approximately 14.6% of people aged 15 to 64 years.

People with lower educational levels and those belonging to risk groups are at a greater risk of unemployment.

Table 1. Registered unemployed by educational levels 30 June 2008-30 June 2009

	Registered unemployed					15-64 yrs	Unemployment rate %
	30.06.08	30.09.08	31.12.08	31.03.09	30.06.09		30.06.09
PRIMARY LEVEL or lower	3 490	3 995	6 144	11 479	12 984	74 200	17,5%
SECONDARY LEVEL	10 158	12 057	18 562	34 022	41 271	373 300	11,1%
incl. general secondary education	4 853	5 673	8 662	15 800	19 645	163 100	12,0%
incl. vocational education	5 305	6 384	9 900	18 222	21 626	210 200	8,5%
TERTIARY LEVEL	3 301	3 982	5 545	9 173	12 195	223 800	5,4%
Undetermined	23	31	56	565			
TOTAL	16 972	20 065	30 307	55 239	67 100	671 300	10,0%

Source: ESA, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, 2009.

The global economic recession has, however, increased unemployment among people with all educational levels and in particular among men (due to slump in construction industry and real estate market).

People in risk groups often need guidance, impetus for continuing their education (SP3; qualitative research). Although general and vocational education is provided free of charge in Estonia, people with low income and the unemployed find it difficult to continue education because even free education involves costs (learning materials, travelling costs,

etc.). The choice is limited to schools that are close to one's home or that offer grants covering all costs of living.

### *Marginal groups:*

#### Prisoners

- As of 1 January 2008 there were 2 540 convicted prisoners and 916 remand prisoners in Estonia <sup>1</sup>.
  - In the academic year 2007/2008 nearly **820 prisoners** were receiving education in prison, of them 330 in general education, 180 learning Estonian and 310 in vocational education.  
In 2007 a small reward was paid to those who were learning Estonian.
  - Teaching is provided within prison premises by general education schools and vocational schools of the region
  - **Higher education** can be acquired in cooperation between the prison, educational institution and the learner; **fees are paid by learners or interested persons**
  - Hobby education is provided by prisons in cooperation with educational institutions
- Number of offenders released on probation was 8 487 (of them: 5 % are studying 70 % are working, 13 % are inactive/ unemployed, and 12% are engaged in other activities).

### 3. Adult persons who have finished formal education at one level and are willing to continue at a higher level

- Highly motivated people with a positive attitude to learning who continue education on their own initiative. These people normally pay themselves for their studies.

### 4. Adult persons who have successfully graduated from previous level of education and are not considering participating in lifelong learning have **not** entered, or have only **recently** entered the education policies. <sup>2</sup>

- They yet need to become aware of and discover learning opportunities and to build motivation. Educational institutions and their activeness play a major part in this process.

### **Conclusion:**

Given the sizes of different target groups and their specific problems, it is important that more attention is given to risk groups and their opportunities to continue education. It is equally important to give due attention to those who have dropped out of education in order to prevent people falling into risk groups. It is very important that *more learning opportunities are offered by both adult secondary schools and vocational educational institutions in particular to those who have discontinued lower secondary education.*

In order to increase the number of participants in lifelong learning particular attention should be paid to adults who have not participated in education for a longer period.

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<sup>1</sup> Estonian Prison System and Probation Supervision Yearbook, Tallinn 2008

<sup>2</sup> Development Plan for Adult Education 2009-2013. MER, September 2009



## 1.2 Funding sources for Formal and Non-Formal Education

### 1.2.1 Funding of formal education

Primary and secondary education is funded by local governments; based on the number of classes in municipal schools funds are allocated from the state budget each year to support local governments in covering the costs of teachers' salaries, social tax, continuous training and teaching materials.

Vocational education is funded by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research; a special coefficient is applied in funding the provision of education by both general secondary schools and vocational educational institutions to students with special needs and prisoners.

Higher education – less than half of all study places are commissioned by the state, the rest of students pay a fee for their studies.

The share of money spent on education in total public sector expenses was 13.1% in 2008; total expenses on education in 2008 were EEK 13 183 million.

Of that (in million EEK):

- |                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| • General education    | 7 097; |
| • Vocational education | 1 340; |
| • Tertiary education   | 2 684; |
| • Other costs          | 2 062  |

### 1.2.2 Funding of non-formal education

Three ministries are responsible for the funding of the professional training of adults (Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008, annex of 10 January 2008)). The new development plan for Estonian adult education adopted in 2009 provides that the same funding principles are applied.

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**1. Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication** – funding of the professional training of adults in employment – **Pillar I**

- Enterprises select training providers, normally private companies, who provide training for managers and specialists. Sometimes, vocational schools or universities are used as training providers.
- A major problem is that enterprises are not aware of the possibilities of applying for training support. Funds are scarce and only part of the applications are approved (SP4 and other studies)

**2. Ministry of Education and Research** – funding of the professional training of adults in employment through educational institutions – **Pillar II**

Three programmes have been initiated with funds from the European Social Fund (training for 73 000 people):

- Professional training of adults by vocational schools and related development activities
- Adult education provided by informal education centres

- Promoting adult education

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Research made professional training of adults one of the categories of education commissioned by the state. In 2008, the number of adults participating in state commissioned professional training was 12 687 people. (According to the Ministry of Education and Research the total number of participants in adult professional training provided by vocational educational institutions was 26 809 people).

Within the framework of the ESF programme “Adult education in informal educational centres” 4 557 people participated in training in 2008; the total number of participants in courses offered by informal educational centres was 28 539 people. The aim of training which is funded from the state budget is to increase the competitiveness of participants in the labour market. Training is provided free of charge; learners may not be completely free in choosing the type of training – it has to be related to the learner’s work and to correspond to the learner’s need for self-development.

Since 2008 it is allowed to fund from the state budget continuous education provided by tertiary educational institutions; this type of education is funded on account of state commissioned study places which are not fulfilled. The aim is to offer more training to people who already have higher education. In 2007 approximately 40 000 people participated in such continuous training.

**III. Ministry of Social Affairs** – funding of refresher training and retraining provided for the unemployed and job-seekers belonging to risk groups; provision of job adjustment training.

- Training is provided by vocational schools, private companies and informal education centres. Training providers are selected by the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

Table 2 illustrates the participation of unemployed people in training and career counselling.

Table 2. Participation of unemployed people in training and career counselling

	Annual average number of unemployed	Number of participants in training	% of participants in training	% of participants in career counselling	
2006	18 228	7073	38%	8356	46%
2008	21 918	5801	26%	12 046	54%
2009	71 537	18 110	25%	23 785	33%

Source: The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, 2010

Given the significant rate of unemployment (at the end of 2009 the registered unemployment rate reached 14%) the Unemployment Insurance Fund is focussing on supporting enterprises in creating new jobs.

The development plan for adult education states that the division of spheres of responsibilities in force was more suitable for a high employment rate and a stable economic situation, but under the conditions of the economic recession that took place in 2009 and the sudden increase in unemployment, the previous measures need rapid and extensive improvement. People have to be directed to obtain professions that are of priority from the

point of view of the development of the country; on the other hand, schemes based on demand also have to be taken into account in developing the financing model and people must have the opportunity to select a suitable training institution, teacher or training by themselves.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.3. Background information on availability of free childcare or reduced fees for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

According to the Ministry of Education and Research Estonia had in 2009 637 pre-school child-care institutions attended by more than 63 000 children aged between one and seven (mother (less frequently father) receives child allowance (so-called mother's salary) for 18 months after the child is born and can stay home to take care of the child). Pre-school child care institutions are attended by 73% of two-year-olds, 91% of children aged 3 to 5 and 77% of six-year-olds (the EU average is 40%)<sup>4</sup>. However, due to the shortage of places not every child can attend a nursery or a kindergarten and in some regions the waiting lists are rather long. Attending a pre-school institution is not compulsory.

Pre-school child care institutions are established by a decision of the local government on the basis of the education licence issued by the Minister for Education and Research. The requirements include the availability of qualified teachers, appropriate premises complying with the health protection and other relevant requirements and the existence of an educational programme. Pre-school institutions provide the child-care service and education appropriate to the age of children.

Children with special needs attend special groups adapted to the needs of children with various disabilities. If the local mainstream (catchment area) pre-school institution has no possibility to open a special group the local government either opens such groups in certain institutions or establishes a pre-school institution for children with special needs.

Majority of costs are covered by the local government. In 2006, parents paid 19% and 11% of costs in towns and in countryside respectively; in 2008 the parents' share of costs was 17% and 10% respectively. The share of costs covered by parents may not exceed 20% of the minimum wage established by the Government of Republic. The number of local governments that do not charge anything from parents is increasing.

Private pre-school institutions are funded by their owners who also determine the share paid by parents.

Local governments support disadvantaged families by paying from 50 to 100% of the costs of their children attending pre-school child-care institutions.<sup>5</sup>

If a child is not attending a pre-school child-care institution the parents may use, after the child turns 18 months old and the "mother's salary" is cancelled, the services of a licensed

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<sup>3</sup> Development Plan for Adult Education 2009-2013. MER, September 2009

<sup>4</sup> Roosalu, T., Täht, K. (2009) Women in the labour market: the effect of parental leave on career opportunities Estonian Human Development Report 2009, pp. 96-99

<sup>5</sup> Eurybase Estonia. MER, 2010

private child minder. The costs are remunerated according to established rates taking into account to which extent the services are used. If the costs exceed the remuneration rate by 1.5 times, the maximum amount remunerated in Tallinn, for example, is EEK 1 668 per month per child; this represents about one fourth of the amount paid for private child-care services. Even with the support of the local government private child-care services are too expensive for many families.

There is also a shortage of qualified child-minders. Some child minders consider obtaining qualification too much hassle and therefore many provide their services informally/illegally (neither do they pay any taxes) or children are looked after by relatives/acquaintances who do not receive any pecuniary remuneration.<sup>6</sup>

As a rule, employers do not offer any child-minding services. Therefore learners with small children have been offered an opportunity to leave their children for the time of classes in the so-called play rooms where children are looked after but not offered any developmental/educational activities or food.

Since kindergartens are open only until the end of working day (5 p.m.) +1-2 extra hours child-minding is a problem, in particular for those parents who study in evening courses or wish to attend study sessions (distance learners). Such parents depend on the availability and cooperativeness of their relatives and friends and the availability of free of charge evening child-care.

Primary pupils are also often home alone after the end of their school day, supervised by parents only over phone. Therefore the lack of child care opportunities may be perceived as a problem also by those learners who have primary school children.

#### **1.4. Background information on availability of free access or reduced fees for formal and non-formal education for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups**

General and vocational education is provided free of charge (private schools charge additional fee).

Teaching aids are provided by the school owner. Textbooks, some workbooks and worksheets are provided free of charge and paid for from the state budget; other school supplies (pens, copybooks, drawing supplies, etc.) are bought by parents. However, parents have to pay for most workbooks and additional textbooks (used mainly in schools providing extra courses on some subjects, in particular foreign languages).

According to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act pupils of years 1 to 9 of mainstream schools get free school lunch; if possible, free lunch is also provided for lower secondary students who study in evening schools or distance courses.

Pupils of schools for children with special needs who live in the dormitory and whose home is in another town or rural municipality are compensated for travel expenses up to four times a month. Pupils who commute are compensated for travel expenses (a return trip once a day).

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<sup>6</sup> Roosalu, T.(2006) Balancing work and family life. Labor Market 2005. Yearbook. Tallinn: ESA, pp. 78-84

Organisation of transport and compensation for expenses for pupils of municipal general educational schools is decided by the local government.

Municipal schools have free of charge dormitory places for children from disadvantaged families. Based on the number of pupils who need a free of charge dormitory place funds are allocated from the state budget to cover the costs of their accommodation (including catering and overhead costs).

**Students of vocational schools** who are studying at state commissioned places and are acquiring vocational education after having finished secondary education or lower secondary education or without the requirements of lower secondary education may receive education allowance. Students who are acquiring post-secondary vocational education may receive study allowance (both main and additional allowance) on the same basis as students at tertiary educational level.

Schools may allocate up to 20% (until October 2009 up to 5%) of study allowances into a special fund aimed at supporting economically disadvantaged students.

Vocational students are compensated for travel expenses (two return trips in a month).

Students who commute between home and school every day are compensated one return trip per day up to 40 km distance (students are recommended to use season tickets).

**Tertiary education** is provided free of charge to those students who study at state commissioned study places. The rest have to pay a fee according to the terms and conditions established by the institutions council.

The aim of state commissioned education is to prepare specialists in certain fields.

The number of many study places allocated to underrepresented groups and students with special needs is determined by the institution's rules for student admissions. Currently only single students are admitted to state commissioned places outside general competition.

However, the government ensures support services (including speech therapist, counselling, and individual tutoring) to students with special needs at all educational levels.

Adults normally pay a tuition fee for higher education. Full-time students can cover their expenses partially from a study loan which, however, is not sufficient for both paying the tuition fee and to cover the expenses of living. This limits the opportunities of people with low income and those belonging to a risk group to continue education at tertiary level.

The government in cooperation with ESF also covers, through the Integration and Migration Foundation, the cost of teaching Estonian as a second language for first year students.

**Main and additional study allowances** are granted to students who study at state commissioned places. The main study allowances are also granted to students who pay for their studies according to their academic achievement.

The amount of allowance is established together with the state budget and funds are allocated to educational institutions from the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Research. Educational institutions may allocate up to 5% of the funds into a special fund aimed at supporting economically disadvantaged students. The procedure for using the special fund is established by the institution's council. Allowances are granted taking into account of circumstances which may prevent students from continuing their studies.

Students who live in another region may apply for additional transport allowance. The sums allocated do not suffice the purpose.

All students are granted travel fare concession upon presentation of a student identification card.

Prisoners like all other learners receive general and vocational education free of charge; higher education is provided for a fee.

Estonian language courses are also provided for free; language studies are treated as being equivalent to working and learners are paid the same wages as for working.

### **1.5 Distinctive features of context for learning in country that impact on access and social inclusion issues**

Pursuant to Adult Education Act, adult education is divided into formal education, work-related training (vocational training) and popular adult education. Adult education institutions are state and municipal institutions, private schools with a teaching license, private or public legal entities if training adults is an activity listed in their statutes, and private entrepreneurs.

#### *Formal education acquired within adult education system*

Under formal adult education basic, upper secondary or higher education obtained outside daytime or fulltime form of study is meant.

Formal education provides the opportunity to:

- acquire basic education and general upper secondary education in the form of evening courses, distance learning or as an external student;
- undergo vocational training in the form of part-time study. Based on the law amendment made in 2006, vocational education institutions may offer several flexible opportunities to participate in vocational training: vocational orientation courses in the framework of preliminary vocational training to basic school and upper secondary school students; vocational training in basic school and upper secondary school, giving basic vocational skills; vocational secondary education; vocational training on the basis of basic education; vocational training on the basis of secondary education; vocational training without the requirement for basic education;
- acquire higher education in part-time study or as an external student. Both professional higher education institutions and universities offer flexible forms of study for acquisition of higher education.

Adults have the possibility to obtain general education, vocational education and higher education in the framework of formal education.

Obtaining of basic education and general upper secondary education in the form of evening courses, distance learning and external study is free for students. Within the scope of the state commissioned education, free education is also provided for obtaining vocational education in the form of part-time study. Obtaining higher education in the part-time form of study is mostly payable, with the exception of for instance teachers' training. Study

allowances and study loans are granted only to students who study full time; this means that they are not available to most of adult learners.

### 1.5.1 General education

General education can be obtained in **adult upper secondary schools** in the form of evening study, distance learning or as an external student and in evening study and distance learning departments of general education schools. In the framework of adults' formal education, people having acquired basic education or being beyond the age of compulsory school attendance (a person is subject to compulsory school attendance until acquisition of basic education or reaching 17 years of age) may start to acquire basic and general upper secondary education. Adult upper secondary schools (17) and general education schools in Estonia are generally municipal schools. In the academic year 2008/2009, there were altogether 35 educational institutions in Estonia where adults could acquire general education in the form of evening study, distance learning or as external students.

The number of adolescents without basic education (grade 9) has increased in Estonia in the 1990s. In 2008, a total of 6,962 students were enrolled in part-time general education. Learners are younger compared with previous years. Gender composition is different in lower secondary and upper secondary education: there are more men among lower secondary students (about 2/3) and more women among upper secondary students (61%). The reason is probably that more boys drop out of lower secondary education. Adult upper secondary schools provide education also in prisons.

### 1.5.2 Vocational education

**Vocational schools** offer possibilities to adult students to acquire vocational education in the form of part-time study. State financing applies to part-time study on the same basis as to full-time study but implementation of part-time study is determined by the school. In 2008 most vocational schools in **Estonia (46 in total) are state schools (31)** but there are also municipal (3) and private schools (12).<sup>7</sup>

The number of vocational educational institutions was reduced as a result of the recent reform. In 200 Estonia had 79 vocational educational institutions. Now the provision of vocational education is concentrated in regional centres and all county centres (with the exception of one) have at least one vocational educational centre.

As at November 2008 27 239 students participated in vocational education, of them 65% were acquiring vocational education and upper secondary education and 32% had come to vocational education after finishing upper secondary education. Fewer students were acquiring only vocational education after finishing lower secondary education (2%) and without finishing lower secondary education (1%).

In recent years the number of students who have enrolled in vocational education after finishing upper secondary education has decreased (more people opt for higher education)

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<sup>7</sup> Kutsehariduse statistika põhinäitajad 2008/2009 õppeaastal. Haridus ja teadusministeerium 2009 (Main statistical indicators of vocational education in the academic year 2008-2009. MER, 2009)

and the number of those with lower general education has increased, in particular the number of students who are acquiring vocational education without having finished lower secondary education (+386 students in the academic year 2008-2009 compared with the academic year 2005-2006 when the number of such students was approximately 500)

These students form a risk group – they had problems in or dropped out of lower secondary school.

In the academic year 2007-2008 299 people finished vocational education after lower secondary education and 102 people finished vocational education without acquiring lower secondary education. These graduates can either continue their education at the next level or enter the labour market.

Traditionally there men dominate among vocational students: in the academic year 2008-2009 56% of students were men:

The share of older learners is increasing. While in the academic year 2004-2005 the share of 25 year old and older students was 37.3%, by 2008-2009 it had increased to 42.7%. The share of older students has increased in particular in post-secondary vocational education. 2/3 of older adult learners are women.

Since the share of pupils finishing Russian-language lower secondary school has decreased from 29.2% in the academic year 2004-2005 to 19.7% in the academic year 2008-2009 the share of vocational students studying in Russian has also decreased from 34.7% to 26% of all vocational students.

Vocational educational institutions provide education also to children with special needs and to prisoners.

### 1.5.3 Higher education

The main factors influencing access to higher education are the availability of flexible study forms, study fee and location of the institution of higher education.

After universities started to establish colleges in various regions of Estonia, higher education has become geographically “closer” to adults.

34 educational institutions offer higher education in Estonia as at June 2008, and they are divided as follows according to their form of ownership: 6 public universities, 4 private universities, 10 state institutions of professional higher education, 11 private institutions of professional higher education, 2 state institutions of vocational education, and 1 private institution of vocational education.

Also **universities and professional higher education institutions** enable adults to study part-time or as an external student. Both professional higher education institutions and universities offer flexible forms of study for acquisition of higher education. In professional higher education institutions and in universities, also in-service training not related to formal education can be carried out. In the middle of the 1990s 78.6% of those participating in part time higher education were under 30 (see Table 3). Now the age distribution of students has changed: two fifths of part time students and one third of full time students are older than 30.

Table 3. Distribution of students of day-time, correspondence and evening courses in higher education institutions by age groups in 1996 and 2006, %

	1996		2006	
	Day-time courses	Evening and correspondence courses	Day-time courses	Evening and correspondence courses
-30	95.9	78.6	81.4	58.4
30-34	2.6	12.2	8.8	18.6
35-40 <sup>8</sup>	1.5	9.2	5.3	11.8
40-49			3.9	9.3
Over 50			0.6	1.9

Source: Statistics Estonia.

According to the Ministry of Education and Research the number of students in higher education was 68 399 in the academic year 2008-2009. This is approximately 8 000 more than in early 2000s and 38 000 more than in mid-1990ies. The increase has been most significant in academic higher education; the increase in professional higher education is partly due to the fact that certain teaching and medical courses were transferred from the level of vocational education to the level of higher education.<sup>9</sup>

In 1993-2008 the number of students studying at state commissioned places was between 23 212 and 31 115.

In the same period the number of fee paying students has increased from 1 852 in 1993 to 37 018 in 2008.

The share of adult learners (30 years and older) is 21%. The share of adult learners is bigger in professional higher education (up to 25% of all learners) and at higher levels – in master's and doctoral courses.

Most adults pay for their studies themselves 70.5% in the academic year 2008-2009). In line with the number of young learners (who go to university immediately after finishing upper secondary education) decreasing the opportunities for adults to study free of charge are increasing. At the moment the share of adult learners is the biggest in the field of teacher training.

The aim of state commissioned higher education is to prepare specialists in certain fields. Other students pay a fee. Employers support higher education relatively little since up to the summer of 2009 they were charged a fringe benefit tax on the amounts paid in support of education and training.

Student admission requirements are established by universities and partly by faculties. Although the requirements set for students studying in open study forms are different from

<sup>8</sup> In 1996 over 35 years of age.

<sup>9</sup> Statistiline ülevaade kõrghariduse õppekavadel õppijate näitajast. HTM 2008. (Statistical overview of students in higher education. MER, 2008)

Täiskasvanuhariduse valdkonna statistika põhinäitajad HTM 2010 (Main indicators of adult education. MER, 2010)

those established for students studying in the daytime study form some potential students may perceive those requirements as a barrier.

## **1.6 Brief introductory overview regarding the status and extent of prison and non-formal education**

### **1.6.1 Access to education in prisons**

Prisoners learn according to the same programmes as the pupils of mainstream schools. Education is provided by regional adult upper secondary schools and vocational schools. Ex-prisoners can continue their education after release from prison.

Higher education is provided for fee. The forms of higher education are limited – prisoners can study only as external students. Computers and the Internet are not permitted for security reasons. Materials and assignments are sent by mail.

Estonia is discussing alleviating punishments, shortening prison terms and for some offences replacing imprisonment with community service. According to the Ministry of Justice 40% of offenders commit a new crime during the first year after release. This concerns in particular those prisoners who served the full sentence.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.6.2 Non-formal education in Estonia**

Non-formal education is offered by various educational institutions.

**Vocational schools** offer possibilities to adult also professional training. In general, a vocational education institution organises work-related training of adults in the areas that they teach, according to the curricula, in the form of courses and individual study.

The offering of non-formal education to adults has increased year by year. While in 2004 continuous education courses were offered by 24 vocational educational institutions to a total of 9 000 people, in 2008 the number of people who participated in training offered by 36 institutions was 26 869.

**Funding of courses.** Courses are funded from various sources. In the past employers and participants paid for most courses. In 2008 the Ministry of Education and Research funded 47.9%, employers 21.2% and participants 13.1% of the total volume of training. The Unemployment Insurance Fund covered the costs of only 2.9% of participants.<sup>11</sup>

### **Continuous training offered by universities**

The adult and continuing education programmes in higher education institutions range from courses preparing school leavers for university entrance examinations to professional

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(<http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=49424/2009+a.+kriminaalpoliitika+aruanne+Riigikogule.pdf>)

<sup>11</sup> The school organisation department, Ministry of Education and Research.

development courses for university leavers. A particular emphasis is on professional development courses for teachers. Courses are available also to learners in formal education who receive credit points for participation.

Funding. The main part of continuous training is paid for by participants or their employers; some of the costs are covered by the state – for example teacher training is funded from the state budget. Support is also applied for through various projects and from the ESF.

### **Non-formal educational institutions**

Non-formal education centres provide versatile and quality training in increasing volumes. Training is available to everybody, incl. risk groups (people with special needs, people without qualification, non-Estonians, people who have passed middle age), and people living in rural areas. Compared to 2004, the share of people learning at government-supported non-formal training centres will reach 30% by 2008. Free elementary computer and Internet training is provided.

### **Private training companies**

Continuing education and training is largely governed by the market. Private training companies and self-employed experts are the main adult education and training providers, while for the significant majority of them training is one of their „additional activities“ apart from the core business.

The main target group of courses offered by private training providers are managers.

Payment. Courses are paid for mainly by enterprises and to some extent by participants.

**The Labour Market Board** commissions courses from different training providers. The courses are targeted for the unemployed adults and oriented on rising of qualification or obtaining new qualification. In general, these courses operate as short time courses and graduates obtain a certificate.

Financing - This training for unemployed people is free of charge. Funds for training courses for persons seeking work and for the unemployed are allocated from the state budget. In addition to free training, which should help a person to engage in work, many other labour market services (e.g. job arbitration, vocational counselling, work practice, support to begin entrepreneurship) and benefits (unemployment benefit, scholarship, travel and lodging benefit) are designated to unemployed people.

## **1.7 Brief summary of major national policy documents and access to education**

From 1993, the overall functionality of the adult training system in Estonia has been regulated by the Adult Education Act. This act defines an adult learner according to the study workload (part-time student, student beyond the daytime form of study, external student). Nevertheless in Estonia, lifelong learning has not yet found a permanent place in the education policy. OECD experts indicated a clear gap in national educational policy. „The lack of a strategy towards adult and continuing training – and by implication towards lifelong learning – is extremely serious given the likelihood of continuing structural change in the

Estonian economy and labour market and the need for the redeployment of the workforce“ (OECD 2000). Initiating the work with the Estonian Strategy on Lifelong Learning was the first time that the Government officially acknowledged adult education and lifelong learning as a part of the educational system and a key for national development.

Headlines of lifelong learning policies are formulated in the National Priorities of Adult Education for 2004-2006 ratified by the Government in 2004 as well as in the Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2005-2008. The general objective of the strategy is to increase the opportunities and motivation of the people in Estonia to participate in formal, non-formal and informal education, in order to improve one's knowledge and skills according to one's own needs, the needs of the civil society, the society and the labour market. The wish is to increase by the year 2008 the ratio of people aged between 25 and 64 years participating in training to **10%** of the whole number of people in the respective age (in 2006, the respective ratio was 6,5%). 9 major goals have been set in the strategy as well as specific measures to achieve these goals. The goals are the following:

- **Opportunities for lifelong learning** have been created for all adults, including people with special needs, according to individual capabilities and needs;
- **Adult education financing system** is transparent, allowing access to training for all adults, including those with special needs;
- **The Estonian language skills** of non-Estonian speaking adult residents of Estonia are sufficient to cope in social and working life; they have the possibility to learn their mother tongue and practice own national culture;
- A system has been developed to guarantee **the quality of adult training**; information on training quality is available for learners;
- **A database on learning and training opportunities** has been established for adults; additionally, people can use career-services;
- **Professional qualification system** is being developed, planned to guarantee the system of lifelong learning and the free movement of labour force;
- **The public, the private and the third sector** have all been involved in the development of adult education and the adult education policy;
- **Adequate statistics** is available and systematic surveys are performed in the area of adult education;
- **The system of recognition of previous learning and working experience (RPLWE)** is applied on all levels in all fields of studies.

Special measures and indicators are indicated for formal and initial education, work-related training, training at workplace and popular adult education.

The majority of actions provided in the strategy have been implemented and the objectives have been achieved. The share of 25 to 64 year old people among participants in lifelong learning increased in 2008 to 9.8%.

In 2006 Estonia started to prepare for using the EU structural funds in 2007-2013. Three implementing plans were prepared:

- The human resource development implementing plan,
- The living environment development implementing plan,

- The economic environment development implementing plan

In 2007 and 2008 three programmes were prepared for the development of adult education and training; the programmes which are financed from the ESF are the following:

- Vocational training of adults in vocational educational institutions and development actions (approved in February 2009);
- Adult education in non-formal educational centres (approved in June 2008);
- Popularisation of adult education (approved in June 2008).

Within the programmes, at least 73 000 people are expected to participate in courses provided by vocational educational institutions and non-formal education centres (folk universities). Participation is free and courses are available in all counties.

On 25 September 2009 the Government of Republic approved the final report on the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy for 2005-2008 and adopted the development plan for adult education for 2009-2013. The development plan is built on and continues to pursue the aims of the lifelong learning strategy for 2005-2008.

The objectives of the development plan are:

- To ensure better access for adults to both formal and non-formal education in order to improve the knowledge of people and the level of education of the population and to increase the percentage of people aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning to 13.5% by 2013.
- To decrease the proportion of adults with only general education (general upper secondary education, lower secondary education or a lower level of education) and without specialised professional or vocational education among people aged 25-64 from 34.6% (in 2008) to 32%.
- To create the preconditions for obtaining education or qualification of the next level through high-quality education and training.

The indicators and actions necessary for achieving the objectives of the development plan are divided under five sub-objectives:

- 1) improving the labour market and economic situation through adult education and training;
- 2) making the educational system more open and offering more continuous training for adults;
- 3) offering non-formal education in order to improve the competitiveness of adults at the labour market and to develop creativeness, talent, initiative and social responsibility in adults;
- 4) ensuring the quality and openness of education; increasing awareness about learning opportunities;
- 5) management of inclusive and effective adult education.

The development plan includes explanations/expected results, responsible people and deadlines of all actions.

*\*Previous studies:*

Labour market system – a customer study. Tallinn, 2003 (includes both qualitative and quantitative parts)

First years in the labour market. A study carried out among those who have finished or dropped out of vocational or higher education. Tallinn, 2006

Various quantitative and qualitative studies on the career choices of lower secondary, upper secondary and vocational students and the necessity of career counselling (2001, 2006, 2008)

Dropping out of vocational education and opportunities for continuing education. Tartu, 2007

Dropping out of higher education and opportunities for continuing education. An overview of the findings of the study “A New Start”. Tartu, 2007

A study on training providers – Ministry of Education and Research, Andras 2000/2001 (includes both quantitative and qualitative studies)

In-service training. Tallinn, 2007 (includes both qualitative and quantitative studies)

Pilli, E., Valk, A. (2008) Quo vadis, Eesti kõrgharidus? Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus

Paalandi, V., Lühiste, M (2007) Üliõpilaste sotsiaalmajanduslik olukord 2005/2006. Tartu

## 2 Sampling

Considering that general and vocational education is provided in Estonia by schools which have either Estonian or Russian as the language of instruction, as well as by schools which teach in both languages, that the levels of inclusion of underrepresented groups and that the challenges the schools face vary significantly we decided to conduct interviews in all three groups of schools, i.e. to include also the schools which have two languages of instruction.

Another important factor in the choice of respondent schools was the type of school. Besides adult upper secondary schools, vocational schools are the educational institutions which have a bigger share of students belonging to risk groups. Therefore it was important to include vocational educational institutions in the study.

We also made sure that all regions are represented.

Non-formal education is provided by different types of educational institutions – informal educational institutions, vocational schools and higher educational institutions. The sample includes an informal educational institution and a vocational school that provides continuous education and training mainly for Russian-speaking participants. Also, additional interviews were conducted with the heads of continuous education departments of two educational institutions – a vocational school and a university.

The composition of the sample is provided in the following table.

Table 4 Sampling plan

Type of education and institution	Institution's number	Number of interviews	Language of instruction
<b>FORMAL EDUCATION</b>			
<b>SECONDARY LEVEL:</b>			
1. Secondary School for Adults	Institution 1	1	Russian
2. Secondary School for Adults	Institution 2	1	Estonian
3. Vocational School	Institution 3	1	Russian
4. Vocational Centre	Institution 4	1	Estonian
5. Education in Prison	Institution 5	2	Estonian
<b>TERTIARY LEVEL:</b>			
1. University1	Institution 6	2 +(1 )	Estonian
2. University2	Institution 7	1	Estonian
3. Private HS	Institution 8	1	Russian
<b>NON-FORMAL EDUCATION</b>			
1. Non-Formal Educational Institution	Institution 9	1	Estonian
	Institution 10	1	Estonian
2. Vocational Centre	Institution 3	1	Estonian
3. Vocational School	Institution 7	1	Estonian
4. University 2			
<b>GOVERNMENT STATE OFFICIALS:</b>			
1 Ministry of Education	Institution 11	2	Estonian
2 The unemployment insurance fund	Institution 12	1	Estonian

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12 Institutions</b>	<b>17      +(1)</b> <b>Interviews</b>	
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Two interviews concerned education provided in prison; the respondents were the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research and of a university. It appeared that the answers of the interviewed university teacher coincided with those given by the vice rector in the part concerning the level of knowledge of students. However, the teacher had no information about other topics. Therefore we decided to conduct interviews in a bigger number of institutions; in some institutions only one respondent was interviewed.

A total of 17 interviews were conducted with representatives of 12 educational institutions. In two institutions two respondents participated in the conversation and in two institutions additional contacts were made to specify some aspects. Thus information was received from 21 people in total.

There were no problems with contacting respondents and conducting the interviews. Only in one institution (No 7) the vice rector delegated the task to another person.

### 3. Interviews

#### 3.1 Secondary level

##### 3.1.1 Secondary School for Adults (1.)

(with Russian as the main language of instruction)

Interview with the head teacher

### I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

#### General information

The school, situated not far from the capital, in a small town of approximately 16 000 inhabitants, has offered general adult education for nearly 60 years.

The school was established in order to offer general education for the employees of one particular enterprise. The language of instruction was Russian. Later on the school started to accept adult students from other enterprises. Formerly, such schools were called „evening schools” because courses were offered on evenings; now they are called „adult secondary schools”. For most of its 60 years of existence the school had its own building. 10 years ago the town government decided to give the building to an Estonian secondary school for the use of its primary pupils. Since then the two schools have shared the building.

The school has a total of 18 teachers, of whom only three are full-time teachers of the adult secondary school; the main job of six teachers is to teach at the Estonian secondary school and the rest come to teach from other schools, mainly from Tallinn.

The head teacher has worked at the school for 21 years, first as a class teacher and then as the head teacher. The head teacher also teaches history and civics.

- *I do it to meet the students in person, to understand their problems and needs. You have to work with those students non-stop, to deal with their problems like a shrink.*

#### Education offered

The school offers both lower secondary (ISCED 1-2) and upper secondary (ISCED 3) education. The study programmes are the same as those offered at the same level in the initial educational system.

Classes take place on evenings three or four times a week. Those studying on evening courses come to school four times a week and distance learners attend classes three times a week. The latter are required to do more independent work:

- *They have less classes and therefore have to work more independently ...*

The learners need individual support in order to make their independent work more effective.

- *We have dedicated one day of the week, Friday, to consultations; there are no classes on Fridays but students can come in and get personal support and advice from teachers of different subjects...*

We have to take into account that adult students have less time and fewer classes to complete the same programmes as in the initial educational system.

- *In the initial educational system secondary students study 35 hours per week, in evening courses 24 hours per week and in distance courses 15 hours per week but all have to sit the same final exams. (.....) While in the initial educational system, for example, six hours are dedicated to a topic we can deal with the same topic for two hours in an evening course and for only one hour in a distance course. That is far from enough. Teachers have to think how to help students to learn the material. A lot depends on the teacher and his/her teaching skills.*

It is important that teachers know their subject and are good communicators.

Adult secondary schools are similar to „ordinary” secondary schools. Teachers can decide, based on their subject and the aptitude of their students, which topics are dealt with in a class and which the students have to learn independently.

- *We have to decide whether it is sufficient to have two history lessons per week or whether we need three.)*

Teachers have to take into account that their students are adults.

Those enrolled in evening courses are mainly local people or come from Tallinn. Those who have less time prefer distance learning.

- *People with children and those who live further away, in other towns or in the country, prefer distance learning.*

We have some „unconventional distance learners” who are working abroad, in Norway or in Sweden. They come back to Estonia for a month or two and during that time they participate in classes; they are provided with learning materials and tasks which they have to acquire and complete by the next time they come home. This form of study can be called „real” distance learning; such opportunity is offered only exceptionally and not to those who work and live in Estonia because there is concern that such form of learning may have a negative effect on learning results.

- *The more often they attend classes the more they learn.... Not only that, they are quite capable of learning independently. They get more involved in the study process.)*

If a distance learner cannot attend classes, learning materials and tasks are sent to him/her – either by e-mail, fax or ordinary mail. The materials are sent to students either by the subject teacher or the school secretary.

### **Number of students and target groups**

At peak times years ago the school had up to 300 students, now their number has almost halved. The majority is acquiring upper secondary education (years 10 to 12); classes are held both in Russian and Estonian. This year 61 people have registered for state examinations (including those who failed in previous years). The number of students in lower secondary education (up to year 9) is small and years 8 and 9 are taught together.

The learners come from diverse backgrounds and have started their studies for various reasons. Many have had serious problems at school.

- *Many of our students have dropped out of the initial educational system because they had very serious problems. They need individual support. Those who cannot cope drop out unfortunately. Then they return next year because they need a certificate...*

Problems may have different causes – some have dropped out because they were persistent truants, some were in conflict with their teachers, some fell behind so much that they could not catch up, etc

- *For some the „conveyor belt” teaching of the initial educational system is not acceptable...*

Half of those who have chosen Estonian as the language of instruction are Russian speaking students who in the initial educational system studied in an Estonian school. These are mainly year 9 to 12 students.

- *When they reach the final year they understand that they are not able to pass the state exams. Then they come here where they are prepared for the exams individually (p 8).*

Some students at evening and distance courses come from vocational schools; they started vocational education after year 9 and either did not like the chosen occupation or dropped out because they could not cope with the studies.

- *They come to us because they want to study... Unfortunately nearly half lose their interest in studies after first term.*

Nearly half of students come to school because the completion of upper secondary education is required in their occupation (e.g. security personnel). They start their studies in the fear of losing their job.

There are some year 12 students who have completed vocational studies but have not sat any state exams. They revise during the year and sit the state exams in order to gain permission to enter university.

A large part of students belong to disadvantaged groups, either for family related or social reasons or because they have offended against the law.

- *About 60-70% of students come from dysfunctional families. Another risk group comprises those who have broken the law – some have been in prison, some were expelled from school for committing an offence. This cannot be done officially but schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave... and they do. (...) I and our staff have to create an atmosphere where those people feel that they are not rejected but also know that bad behaviour is not accepted either. We hope that they will change. Some do, some unfortunately don't.*

The school accepts everyone who wishes to study.

- *I accept everybody, also those who were expelled from other schools.*

The school also accepts students with special needs. Currently there is a male student who was previously home schooled and has work incapacity of 80%.

- *He wanted to be with other students. (...) He has a severe developmental coordination disorder and moves with difficulty. He is now in year 12 and preparing for state exams. He is very studious. Years 10 and 11 were very difficult for him but he pulled himself together. He has good relations with his classmates. (... ) He asked if he could continue attending classes after finishing the school. I*

*said: „Of course, come to every class if you like.” He got the attention he so desperately needed and has grown a lot.*

Every year there are 2 to 5 students with special needs, each with their own problems.

- *There is people suffering from dysgraphia – they cannot spell at all. They are given special tasks from special textbooks. One of them has reached year 10. We are trying to help them and it is important for them.*

The school accepts all candidates to give people an opportunity for a change.

### **Funding sources**

Studying in adult secondary school is free of charge. Like other lower and upper secondary schools, the adult secondary school is a municipal school. The school cooperates with the local authorities who are aware of the problems of the schools and the students. The local authorities support the school as much as possible – despite sharing the schoolhouse with the other school the adult school has its own secretary and library. The local authorities have also provided transport for study tours.

In the past financial support was offered also by enterprises whose employees were studying in the evening school. However, for the past two decades the school has received no financial or moral support from enterprises. Because of the current economic situation students have faced difficulties, e.g. many do not take a study leave, because they are afraid of losing their job.

### **Institution's mission**

The mission of the school is to support students of different ages in their educational and personal aspirations.

As there are more students from disadvantaged groups who have had problems with studying the main challenge is to change the students' attitude towards studying and personal development by offering support and good examples.

- *To make them understand that education, including reading newspapers and searching the Internet for information, will improve and enrich their life.*

The school is the place where students from disadvantaged groups acquire new behavioural models and get an opportunity to move out of the risk group.

## **II LIFELONG LEARNING IN A FORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

### **Support for students to prevent them from dropping out**

The adult secondary school concerned does not have its own psychologist or a social worker although taking into account the specific nature of the target group there is a need for such services.<sup>12</sup>

Students who have emotional problems or need an advice on career issues can turn to their class teacher, subject teachers or the head teacher.

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<sup>12</sup> The number of students is too small.

- *We do not have a psychologist. I am the head teacher, the director of studies and the psychologist in one person. If there is a problem, I will talk to the student concerned. If the problem persists we will talk again. If it does not help they understand that they cannot continue at our school. Drugs and alcohol are not permitted.*

The school has invited a psychologist to talk to the students. They are considering inviting a cleric also.

Each class has a so-called „class teacher’s class” twice a month where general issues concerning the students are discussed. Every Friday students can receive individual support and tutoring from subject teachers.

- *Problems related to academic progress are dealt with by subject teachers. Class teachers are also informed. The latter make sure that the students do not fall behind. Because many students are very inert they need some „pushing” and individual approach to understand their problems and find solutions.*

Due to the nature of the target group both the head teacher and the staff have to support students more than those in the initial educational system and keep a watchful eye on them.

- *Sometimes the school is in the evening like a party headquarter on the eve of general elections... people rush in and out, want to talk... (...) The school is the place where they can get help. We listen to them and give advice if we can. Problems range from family violence to lack of money. We advise where to go and what to do. We cannot send them to the police. Many are very grateful ...*
- *Family studies taught by the psychologist of the day school are very helpful. In years 10 and 11 we have 4 hours of family studies per week but the psychologist also works with the students on individual basis. She is a very efficient young lady...*

Many students need individual support and tutoring. Sometimes they simply want to talk to somebody they trust, to pour out their heart. The teacher of family studies is in great demand also outside the curriculum:

- *Sometimes the students come and ask: „Has she come yet? I need to talk to her.” Even those who have no classes on that particular day come to school to talk to her (p 28)*

The school on its turn has tried to compensate for the family studies teacher’s extra work.

In terms of supporting career and educational plans the school considers itself to be a typical adult secondary school. These issues are of lower priority compared to initial educational institutions.

## **Dropping out**

Dropping out is a big problem among lower secondary students. Although their number is small more than 60% drop out before completing their studies. Students are expelled only in exceptional cases.

- *They probably need more time to mature. Then they will return. If they drop out for personal reasons there is nothing we can do except trying to convince them to return. If the reason is the school or a teacher then ... I feel guilty...*

In upper secondary school in particular in final years the share of drop-outs is much smaller – about one third discontinue their studies. Many of those do not take their documents out of the school and promise to come back.

It can be said that the student body is not stable. This means that ...

- *...the students are not able to make a continuous effort – they leave and come back to leave again ...*

In order to prevent students dropping out and to improve their progress the adult secondary school has a different attitude towards students; they are treated as responsible adults.

- *The role of class teacher is very important. The class teacher is the person who forms the class. This work should start in primary school already not in year 10 or 11.*

The reason for students' defiance and bad mood may lie outside the school, in particular at the beginning of week. Both younger and older people have problems.

- *When the student has seen his/her parents drinking through the weekend the whole world seems dark. (... ) Here the class teacher plays a very important role. When you see that your student is sad, find time to say a few words to be kind. Everybody wants to be loved and respected.*

The school can influence the student's wish to study and stay in school by providing them an opportunity to change:

- *We are trying to achieve good results by friendly attitude, by treating them as adults, teaching them positive attitude towards life (...) I think that the most important thing is to support their desire to study so that they can learn from professionals and have someone to turn to.(... ) Only individual approach can help us here*

It is not acceptable to start dealing with problems only in year 8 or 9 or 10. Something has to be done much earlier:

- *To prevent students dropping out work must begin in primary school or even earlier. We must tell students that good marks are not the only thing... they must be able to understand that in school they grow spiritually and morally...that they are respected for this. I am trying to explain our adult students that they should feel the need to learn, to develop spiritually. Otherwise they will miss out on many important things. (....) Both now and in the future. )*

### **Programmes for disadvantaged groups**

For two years adult secondary schools can apply longer study periods for weaker students:

- *Students have the right to choose which subjects (from 3 to 5 subjects) they learn during an academic year. It may take four or five years for them to complete secondary education. (...). We talk to new students and offer this opportunity. If we see that the student is weak or has problems...*

Adult students do not receive marks. They have to acquire the knowledge required by the programme and their performance is assessed at the end of the course.

State exams are compulsory in order to complete upper secondary education. From the perspective of adult students it would be practical that they could choose between state

exams (which provide them access to higher education) and school final exams which allow them to continue in vocational schools which have upper secondary education as an entrance requirement.

Another great incentive would be a study support system similar to that used in vocational and higher educational institutions – student grants for those who do well at school. Taking into account that many adult learners come from deprived families or have small children of their own, low paid work or no work at all a grant would be a very important incentive to continue their studies.

### **Active citizens**

Most adult students work at daytime and attend school on evenings. Therefore it is not easy to find time to take part in community events. The school has tried to introduce the community, its history and culture by organising short study trips.

- *We have many places of cultural and historic importance (.... ) You can see a lot during a two hour trip and the students are in awe when they see the ancient landmarks of culture ...*

*The time of a trip has to be agreed and coordinated beforehand and since most students work it is not easy to find suitable time. The school does not have student self-government – on the one hand, it is not required by law, and on the other hand, students do not have time for that.*

The programme includes civic study and other subjects intended to form active citizens. In an ideal world, the school should create a positive learning environment which encourages students to become active citizens.

### **Formal adult education from students' perspective**

The majority of the schools students are adults. There are also some students who are younger than 17 years. They have dropped out of or forced to leave the initial educational system.

Courses are held mainly on evening but students have access to the library and teachers also earlier during daytime and the whole day on Fridays. The head teacher is at school the whole day.

The adult school can use the well equipped facilities of the daytime school which are empty on evenings.

For several years the town has planned to establish an adult education centre offering formal adult education and also non-formal education, i.e. courses that support entry to and coping in the labour market. Cooperation with an enterprise has also been considered. This would increase the opportunities to acquire practical skills and the number of general education learners as combined knowledge and skills would increase the competitiveness of people and help them to gain a better position in the labour market.

The centre would also support more students from disadvantaged groups.

- *The adult training centre should have a dormitory for those students whose situation is so bad that they are rejected by their own family (....) those who are*

*younger than 17 or 18 years could live in the dormitory. It would be easier to teach and direct them. They should be paid a small grant if necessary.*

Negotiations have started with the local authorities but lack of resources is an obstacle yet to be overcome.

### **Links between the school and tertiary education**

Students who pass state exams can continue their education at a higher educational institute. The number of those who go to university is not big but every year one or two students do go to various universities – both state universities and private institutions of higher education where the language of instruction is Russian.

Since the number of students is small and they study mainly on evenings no study tours to universities have been organised; neither have adult students participated in the events organised by the daytime secondary school.

If an institution of higher education comes to introduce itself to the students of the daytime secondary school, the class teachers of the adult secondary school try to attend in order to inform their own students. Teachers also help students to find information about universities and inform them about „open doors” days organised by institutions of higher education.

The school has also organised visits to yearly youth information and education fair „Teeviit” where educational institutions introduce learning opportunities.

Preparatory courses for access to higher education would be useful; in particular for students whose mother tongue is Russian. There is interest in such courses but neither students nor teachers are aware of such courses.

- *Our students are different by their knowledge and life experience (...) I know that students from Narva adult secondary school have attended preparatory courses ... Our students are also interested and have even asked us to help them to enrol for such courses but we cannot help since we have no information whether there are any suitable programmes.(p 38)*

Students want such courses to be held in Russian and to help them to transfer to Estonian as the language of instruction.

- *They sit an exam in Estonian and most of are fluent in Estonian though maybe not proficient enough to enrol in the university. (... ) It is strange that the main problem is the language<sup>13</sup> (pp. 38-39)*

Taking into account the background and modest financial means of the students they need preparatory courses that are provided free of charge or lower fee depending on their economic situation.

In order to attract more adults to general education and higher education changes are needed not only at the level of schools but in society as a whole.

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<sup>13</sup> The school was not aware of the additional year provided by universities for students who are not fluent in Estonian.

The educational system should accept that adult secondary schools form a part of the educational system and are a step from where to continue studies.

- *This should be stressed more... . I have participated in numerous meetings but never has the role of evening studies been stressed. (...) It is not stressed that completion of an adult secondary school gives students access to higher education. People should be more aware of that and it should be promoted.*

### **Learning environment, teacher training and continuing training**

Teachers have participated in various continuing education courses. They value courses where they learn skills necessary for teaching adults. It is important that teachers treat students as adults and hold a dialog, not just give orders. The school has discussed with teachers which approaches to use:

- *These are adults for whom we are equals who just happen to know more about the particular subject. We have to help them. The teachers from the daytime school have certain problems with that – some tend to judge students, even want to talk to their parents, etc.... (p 6)*

When new teachers join the staff they often have difficulties with adjusting psychologically to the fact that their students are independent adults also in the classroom.

- *They (students) like to demonstrate that they are independent even if their knowledge is scarce. If the teacher cannot cope with that the students will lose any desire to learn. (...) It is important to give them a bit of yourself. Students come to teachers who want to teach (p. 6).*

It is difficult to find a good teacher who could work with adults especially if we can offer only a part-time job.

- *I would like to have teachers who would connect immediately with students and... (p. 7)*

Such people have often a natural gift for teaching, they are born teachers.

- *A good teacher must be dedicated to his/her students, be competent both in his/her subject and in teaching.*

It is also important to be able to create a supportive team. Teachers must be aware of that.

Teachers participate in various courses held in various educational centres.

Together with the daytime school the adult school has organised psychology courses for teachers.

- *For each teacher we know which courses they have attended and when ... We have also been able to pay for such courses.*

There is a need for more courses for teachers who teach adults. There are some but not enough.

Recently there was a joint course for teachers of Tallinn and Harjumaa County where many examples were brought from real school life.

- *Teachers from ordinary schools were surprised how adult schools work and how altruistic their teachers are, how much they contribute ...I would like to see that adult secondary schools' teachers cooperate more and share their experiences.*

One cannot rely on continuing training only. It is important to provide relevant training and continuing training, to create an environment that supports open style of teaching and development of students.

### 3.1.2 Secondary School for Adult (2.)

(with Estonian as the main language of instruction)

Interview with the study director

## I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

### General information

The school has provided secondary education for adults since 1919. The school has operated under different names and in different premises; it has been merged with other institutions. The present head teacher has been working in the school since 1996: The school moved to its current premises in 2005; some buildings are still waiting refurbishing.<sup>14</sup>

The school has 1360 students (including those in prison). The number of students has grown in recent years by 900 people. The language of instruction is Estonian. Prisoners are also offered education in Russian.

The lower secondary level has 8 groups; the upper secondary level has a total of 24 groups. This year 7 groups finish upper secondary education. The school employs 42 teachers (including 12 men), a speech therapist, social worker, three IT specialists, librarian and auxiliary staff of 15 people.

The school's mission is to be a reputable educational institution offering education to adults.

### Mission

The school is very competitive, developing and learning organisation that gives an opportunity for **learners** to become educated and ethical citizens; for **staff** to improve their professional qualification; for **education officials** to find solutions for problems related to education; for **partners** to participate in training and receive advice.<sup>15</sup>

### Education offered

Education is provided for free and in different forms:

Evening courses – 24 hours per week. The name is actually misleading because classes take place from 9 a.m. to 9. p.m. three times a week. Some groups attend classes in the morning, some in the afternoon.

Distance learners have classes twice a week (14 hours in total).

- *Each year we open one group that comes to school three days a week so that students could attend classes after work but we still have to start at 4 p.m.*

Single subject study is intended to those who have not finished the course (failed the exam, had a conflict with the teacher, etc.). They can complete the course in two months and continue with their classmates at the next level.

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<sup>14</sup> School's website.

<sup>15</sup> Schools development plan.

- *We give them an opportunity. Our students usually come from other schools. For example best schools expel those who have poor results although they are not required to do that. In our schools they complete the programme and can continue at the next level. Some return to their old schools. We have an experience with a certain school from which pupils come to our school to complete the programme in one or two subjects – to get a positive result. Most of such students continue in our school, some go to other schools.*

This method “saves” about 70 pupils every year. If they didn’t have this opportunity they would have to repeat the year and some would probably drop out. If they have a motivation to continue they can study at two levels at the same time.

- *There are people who cannot achieve a positive result in a couple of months. They dedicate the whole year to one subject and continue at the next level the following year.*

Compared with ordinary schools the adult secondary school supports more students who belong to risk groups or are at the risk of dropping out. The school cooperates with different partners – a prison, the Department of Education, etc.

The school is a typical adult secondary school.

## STUDENTS

The average age of students is between 20 and 22 years. Students become younger and younger each year. 10 years ago there were more working people. Most students come from ordinary secondary schools because they had problems with learning or discipline.

The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school.

- *Lower secondary students are younger than 17 years old. They are referred to us by the Department of Education; we cannot admit such students without the Department’s approval. They could not cope in their old school. (...) Some schools (in particular those that have a social worker) refer their problematic students to us. The main problem is bullying. This year we have two such students and they are doing well. Our students are older and bullies cannot dominate*

Upper secondary students come on their own initiative.

A large group of students have worked for some time and returned to school. These people are older, have families and often their own company. Then they realise that they do not have education.

- *The older they are the more motivated they are. Younger students are less motivated.*

Many people come to study because upper secondary education is required in their profession. These students are slightly older.

- *6-7 years ago many students came from the armed forces after a regulation was adopted that required that military personnel have at least upper secondary education.*

Some students come from children's homes. They receive support from local authorities. Children's homes also take interest in their progress.

Some students are ex-convicts.

- *This year tow young men came from our prison school. They are finishing year 12. Two ex-convicts came from the Viru Prison. People who are released on parole are required to continue or finish their education. They often contact us before they are released and enquire about learning opportunities. They are highly motivated and their performance is good. There is nothing else to do in prison.*

Different ages study in one group.

- *Some students are older and therefore no hierarchies are created. Teachers treat everybody as adults. In September, at the beginning of the school year some teenagers act up but when they see that others do not go along with them they either get bored and leave or start to study seriously. Others think they are childish. They stop and become sensible.*

#### SUPPORT TO STUDENTS WHO ARE AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Learning difficulties occur mainly at the lower secondary level. The school has a speech therapist who is working part time because the school cannot pay for full time.

- *She did work full time and is very busy now. Many students have problems with spelling. The speech therapist helps both lower and upper secondary students. She also supports those who are preparing for state exams.*

All subject teachers have consultation times; tutoring is offered in maths and Russian. Teachers of maths and Russian spend three hours each week to help those who are falling behind.

- *Some upper secondary students do not know even the Russian alphabet although their lower secondary school certificate states that they have learned Russian and received good marks.*

English classes are offered to those who have learned German or Russian in lower secondary school but want to learn English as well.

This year the school opened an opportunity class for students who have not taken necessary tests or have failed. The class is supervised by the social worker, the psychologist or a subject teacher. This has decreased the work load of subject teachers and is of great help to students.

Students can receive counselling if needed. The school has a psychologist. The school also has a career counselling centre where students can receive counselling concerning their further choices. The head of the centre also teaches psychology to year 10 students. The school organises career days on regular basis. The career services are more available to students because the school has close contacts with the people from the career centre. The centre is open to students from other schools also.

If a student has not attended classes for some time he/she is contacted by the class teacher. Students who are younger than 17 and their parents are contacted by the school's social workers.

Studying according to individualised programmes is not offered. However, teachers work more with students whose performance is poor.

- *In the past students who were studying according to simplified programmes had many difficulties. We just cannot support them as much as is needed. This year one student who studied according to a simplified programme will finish lower secondary school. He has developed a lot.*

A step towards individualised programmes is the opportunity to study single subjects.

#### Extracurricular activities

Many students are working. It is difficult to organise any events because working students cannot attend. However the school tries to organise various events to celebrate holidays, etc. This is not easy because it is difficult to find time that would suit everybody. Even graduation ceremonies are held separately.

- *It's a pity. We have tried to change this.*

The school has good sports facilities. Last year basketball was very popular among students.

Lower secondary students have art classes. At first they are somewhat reluctant but then they get interested. The art teachers organises exhibitions of students' works.

- *A group of students organised a drama club. They wrote a play and performed it. Secretarial course is offered as an elective course and only those who are interested attend. The school has signed an agreement with the Estonian Qualifications Authority (Kutsekoda) that students who have completed the secretarial course can take the qualification exam and receive the relevant qualification. Many students use this opportunity. This gives them an advantage in the labour market.*

The school also offers drivers courses. They have signed an agreement with a driving school and students can get a discount.

Study programmes are made more flexible by the e-learning opportunities.

#### ALTERNATIVES TO DROPPING OUT/BEING EXPELLED

About half of lower secondary students drop out of the school.

- *They get everything they want from their parents – food, clothes. They do not feel a need for education. Then they try to find a job and realise that nobody wants them or that they are required to study. Then they come back to us.*

Two social workers are in contact with parents of those students who are younger than 17 years.

- *Some parents say that they are not interested... ask us not to bother them ....*

Upper secondary students drop out less often; however, in the current economic situation the number of drop-outs has increased.

- *Some people do not dare to ask their employer to allow them to leave early two-three times a week; they are afraid of losing their job and being replaced by someone who can work full time. Very few employers – mainly state agencies –*

*support employees who are acquiring general education. Other companies are less supportive. For example chain stores where secondary education is a must. If people can agree with their colleagues and they have a work schedule that allows them to attend classes they can study. Employers make no allowances. Students say that they are not able to continue... Despite the fact that the law requires employers to give study leaves to their employees.*

Some people leave school because of family problems.

- *Young mothers for example. It depends on the person. Some continue and finish their education even after giving birth to a child.*

Students are expelled very rarely. Even if some new students try to act up at the beginning of a new academic year others do not support them. Some students have been punished for smoking in school territory. Usually oral warning is sufficient.

- *We have some students who have been to a specialised school (i.e. special school for underage offenders). They do not dominate and are very sensible. I cannot say anything bad about our students who have been in prison or in a specialised school. On the contrary. They adhere to rules and can behave. For example they know that you have to knock before entering a room, etc.*

#### STUDY PROGRAMMES FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Dropping out of school is related not so much to the study programme as to other factors, such as lack of motivation.

- *Those who are dependant on their parents drop out more often. They have no motivation to learn. They are used to receiving pocket money and their morning porridge. They like to hang out in shopping centres...*

*Last year a mother of three finished our school with honours. She is also the owner of two companies. She coped with everything.*

Class teachers are trying to create a supportive learning environment.

- *There are three year 11 students who tutor others. You can see them in the library or in the canteen teaching others. That's how it is.*

Upper secondary students do not study according to simplified programmes. Those who have finished lower secondary education according to a simplified programme need an additional year to cope with the requirements of upper secondary school.

- *Some had no need for a simplified programme. Many of such students come from children's homes. They are intelligent but had a behavioural problem or attention deficit.*

Lower secondary students have art and music history classes; they have civic studies, psychology classes. Social workers teach civic studies. The head teacher teaches a course of social development – how to learn to learn, how to cope, how to be an adult learner. Students like those courses.

#### ACTIVE CITIZENS

How to be a good citizen and an active member of society is taught in civic study classes; these topics are also discussed during class teacher hours. It is difficult to organise specific activities because it is hard to find time that suits everyone.

The school has active self-government. This year the members of the self government are only upper secondary students.

- *Some years we have also had lower secondary students in the self government. They can participate if they want.*

The school cooperates with other students associations from Estonia, Latvia and Finland.

- *This week we have visitors from Latvia and Finland. Our students show them the city. The guests also attend classes.*

The self government discusses various subjects and tries to find solutions to problems.

- *We have discussed the organisation of child care but health protection regulations are a big obstacle. We cannot just provide a room and a childminder. You have to have documents in order. The person who looks after children must have a relevant qualification. The room must meet certain requirements. We cannot take any risks.*

The problem exists. Parents take their children to classes because they have nobody to leave them with.

- *Nobody objects. Mothers have to make sure that children do not interfere with the class – children draw or play with toys. I have seen our janitor looking after an infant. That happens.*

## ADULT EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SCHOOL

The school is and adult school. The law provides that local authorities must ensure secondary education for adults although many drop-outs do not want to continue in their old school. Therefore this school has students from the whole county.

The unemployed who continue their education in evening courses are paid the unemployment benefit; those who opt for distance learning do not receive the benefit.

The school is planning to provide informal education to local people – language courses, etc. The school has also considered offering courses on the aspects that are not included in the curriculum of the adult school.

Potential participants include older people, including pensioners. The school can start with the courses after the new building is completed. At the moment there is no room.

Local people and enterprises can use the school's gym for a moderate fee.

## DISTANCE LEARNING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SCHOOL

The school offers distance learning opportunities. In distance learning the volume of independent work is bigger and the number of hours spent in the classroom is smaller.

The school has created an internet platform (BIKO). Teachers publish learning materials on the Internet and students can complete tests and assignments.

The school is planning to use the possibilities offered by the e-school even more.

- *We are planning to do this. The e-school enables students to study without losing work days. It is important in the current economic situation.*

However, using the e-school requires from students high motivation and self-discipline.

## LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

Most graduates go to work or continue to work. Each year 20 to 30 graduates go to university.

- *The majority go to private universities or pay for their studies. Few are admitted to state financed places.*

Higher educational institutions are introduced in career events; people from the career centre also spread information about learning opportunities.

The majority of the school's graduates pay for their studies in university. Most students already are independent during their studies in the secondary school.

Many cope better in university than those who have come from an ordinary school. They are used to working independently.

- *The do it for themselves. In an ordinary school students feel that they are forced to study.*

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, TEACHER TRAINING AND CONTINUOUS TRAINING

The school has no problems with discipline and teachers can teach instead of keeping order in the classroom. Teachers are more cooperative and attentive. The problems that forced students to leave day school often seem insignificant ....<sup>16</sup>

- *We try to make them understand the importance of their work and responsibility, to make them see that they are lucky to be able to learn. (...) Our teachers are probably more satisfied with their work. Students can perceive this. Teachers are flexible, requirements are not too strict – 14 days to hand over your homework and that's all!!! Everybody is calm, nobody gets nervous. (...) That's how it is. These are the teachers we want.*

The school has organised courses on teaching adults. The focus is on training that expands one's horizon – for example a trip to Alutaguse forests.

Teachers have also participated in joint courses organised in cooperation with other adult secondary schools.

The school has three teachers who are certified adult educators/andragogues; two more are on the way of getting the certificate.

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<sup>16</sup> This remark concerns only the schools from where the students of the adult secondary school have come and it cannot be extended to all schools.

New teachers are assigned a mentor who helps them to adapt to the school life, to learn new teaching methods, to get answers to any questions that may arise, etc. New teachers also participate in continuous training on the specifics of teaching adults.

Teachers also work in think tanks to discuss issues related to the school – what needs to be changed, what kind of events should be organised, etc. The school's development plan was also prepared in cooperation with teachers.

The school cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Research; the ministry takes the school's suggestions and recommendations into account. The school also cooperates with the city's Department of Education.

On the example of Finland the adult educators union is being established to unite all Estonian teachers who are teaching adults.

### 3.1 3 Vocational school (3.)

Interview with the head teacher

#### I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

##### General information

The vocational school operates partly on the same premises that were used by the Aleksandrikool, the first Estonian-language secondary school, established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The language of instruction is Estonian, courses are offered to both boys and girls; however, boys outnumber girls.

At the end of the 1990ies and in early 2000s the authorities considered joining the school with another vocational educational institution but these plans were not realized.

- *We said that we able to manage on our own.*

Currently more than 500 students study in formal education and 500 more participate in other types of courses. The school premises (meant for 350 students) are used to the full – from early morning till late evening and even during weekends.

The school has modern sports facilities, classrooms, labs and a boiler house. The management is planning to build an extension.

##### Education

The school offers vocational education in the fields of farming, home economics, construction, motoring and cooking on the basis of lower secondary education.

Students who have finished lower secondary education on the basis of a simplified study programme can study home economics and farming and also acquire upper secondary education. Those who have dropped out of lower secondary school are offered prevocational training.

Students who have finished upper secondary education can study construction and catering (waiters/barmen).

Social workers and sales personnel are offered in-service training.

- *Since last autumn we are offering a course on sales organisation for shop managers. The course takes place in Elva – our staff members travel to Elva to teach.*

The school offers also continuing training, re-training and initial vocational training for adults. A new study form is on-the-job training provided in cooperation with employers.

##### Mission

The mission of the school is to provide state-commissioned vocational education at national and regional levels and to react quickly to any changes in the labour and training markets.

This means that the school must meet the expectations of all target groups and stakeholders: students expect tolerant and respectful treatment; an opportunity to make a fresh start despite former and current problems; support from the school; taking into account their personal problems so that everyone could develop according to their needs and abilities.

Stakeholders are parents, employers, local authorities, the county government, local people, other vocational and general educational institutions, The Ministry of Education and Research, the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the police.

### **Financing**

Formal education is financed by the government. Students' travel expenses (to travel home twice a month) are compensated and they also receive a grant. In addition, the government covers partly the cost of catering – EEK 13 per day per student.

- *Students receive EEK 600 per month if their academic achievement and behaviour are satisfactory. Those who have not finished lower secondary education receive additional support. The government has done a lot...*

Farming students receive a grant from the Rural Development Foundation and the Ministry of Agriculture. Local authorities support students who come from their region.

- *At the beginning of each academic year class teachers gather information about students' background and need for financial support. The school applies for support to local authorities. Local authorities are willing to help despite limited resources. More than 60 local authorities pay for their children's sustenance and accommodation. Although the cost of a place in the dormitory is only EEK 150 per month many families struggle to pay the sum.*

### **Target groups**

Half of students come from Jõgeva County where the school is situated; others come from other Estonian towns and villages. The language of instruction is Estonian.

In general the knowledge of students with lower secondary education is rather poor.

- *General educational knowledge very poor. I don't know why this is so but it's a fact. About half of students have difficulties with certain subjects – maths, physics, chemistry, Estonian and geography have been stumbling blocks for years. Some students probably do not have a solid basis in these subjects and now it is difficult to catch up ... Another reason may be that they were a bit slower and could not catch up with others and their teachers focused on working with brighter pupils. Weaker pupils need more thorough explanations and individual approach.*

The number of students who have finished lower secondary education on the basis of a simplified study programme is increasing year by year.

- *They are ordinary kids but they need more time to understand things. That's the only difference. Here some of them even do better than former high-fliers. They are hardworking kids and have set their hearts on studies. Only very few are less stable, i.e. when they feel that they cannot cope they lose heart and want to give up.*

Eight years ago the school started in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and the local secondary school to offer vocational pre-training and lower secondary education to those older than 17 years and have not finished lower secondary education. (See MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE)

Based on that experience the school opened groups for those who left lower secondary education earlier, at the compulsory school attendance age. These students can study home economics or become car mechanics, carpenters and assistant chefs and finish lower secondary education.

Adults are admitted to all courses. The unemployed are also welcome. Adults are admitted on the same conditions as younger students and can live in the dormitory and get a grant.

- *Our oldest student is 46.*

Those who cannot study full time are offered an opportunity to finish their education by distance learning.

- *These are usually girls who have had a baby or found a job and are motivated enough to finish their studies.*

Adults are offered on-the-job training in cooperation with employers; teachers go to enterprises.

## **II LIFELONG LEARNING**

In order to prevent students dropping out the school needs to help them with solving their problems. Respectful treatment is the basis of everything. The school needs to set rules and both students and the staff have to follow the rules so that everybody would know what to expect.

Because vocational students come from very diverse backgrounds and, as a rule, their academic achievement has been low they need support, motivation and recognition.

The school is open to all ages and has long-term tradition of teaching adults in cooperation with employers. Various courses are offered to adults – professional training, courses aimed at raising qualification, self development (languages, IT), etc.

The school is supporting students from disadvantaged groups perhaps more than other vocational schools. It was the first school to admit people who had dropped out of lower secondary schools.

The school has more experience with offering adult formal education; the number of participants in adult formal education is almost equal to the number of students.

### **Support to students in order to prevent dropping out**

Because many students have poor general educational knowledge they need help catch up with others.

- *To study construction you need to know physics. This motivates students. We work with them individually and this requires a lot of effort and patience from teachers. It is not the question of kids not being able to learn...*

All teachers are involved in individual work with students.

- *Teachers give those students different tasks, simpler tasks. Students receive individual tutoring. They work hard and this is considered natural.*

The school has a learning information centre in the library where students can revise, do their homework and get extra support from teachers.

- *For example a student has to work independently and to do homework in maths. He/she can do it in the centre where the teacher is present to answer any questions. Students can also use the centre in evenings – to use the computer, to read. The centre was opened quite recently; it is early to talk about results. If it doesn't work we'll try something else, change the concept.*

The school has a social teacher; each group has a supervisor who is well informed about each student and his/her personal problems. The supervisor works in cooperation with subject teachers. The school monitors attendance and academic achievement both by groups and by subjects in order to have a good overview and to nip any problems in the bud.

The school has joined the e-school project – parents can log on to the school's home page and get information about the academic achievement of their children.

The school has three dormitories accommodating 380 students. 11 supervisors work in the dormitories; a supervisor is present 24 hours a day.

- *Each September we have problems with establishing order. Alcohol is not allowed in dormitories. We had an agreement with the police and they visited the dormitories three times a week. Eventually everybody calms down. Those who don't will have to leave the dormitory.*

Depending on the problem students are counselled by the social teacher, supervisors or other teachers.

Students are also offered various extracurricular activities; special activities are offered to those who are at risk of dropping out. They can do sports, participate in hobby clubs, in events organised by the student self-government, in driving courses for adults, etc.

- *It is called the „late shift“.*

Career issues can be divided into two groups: career guidance of pupils in general educational institutions and issues relating to further educational paths of students.

- *The school and professions are introduced by our teachers and some members of the management. Last year we visited 48 general educational schools ...*

The opportunities to continue education are discussed with teachers, supervisors and the head teacher.

If a student cannot attend classes – is expecting, has started working for economic reasons, etc. – he/she is provided with a personal study programme. This allows them to finish at the time that suits them most.

Those who have found a job during studies are offered more flexible timetable.

- *For some it works but some just disappear and have to be deleted from the student list.*

### **Alternatives to dropping out**

About 10% of students drop out of the school. Some years are better some are worse. The main reason for discontinuing studies is finding a job; this phenomenon has increased in the current economic situation.

- *This is very sad. Even if they are paid the minimum wages, even if they are paid only 2000 kroons. This is such a big money for them that they leave; it is pointless to try to make them change their minds. They say that their parents are unemployed or they don't have any parents and were raised by grandparents or siblings and have to cope on their own.*

Although everybody is offered a flexible timetable, not all are motivated enough to continue. Girls come back more often.

Very few are expelled because of behavioural problems – only one or two students each year.

### **Study programmes for disadvantaged groups**

Both those who have finished lower secondary education by a simplified study programme and those who have difficulties with some subjects are studying according to the same programme with others. They receive additional tasks. When such students come to the vocational school they find themselves in a different environment that helps to overcome their problems. Another factor is practical work – students see the results, they see that they can do something. The school can provide help and direction.

- *Building, cooking and woodwork are the favourites. At first boys were reluctant to learn to cook. I told them that a real man must be able to make at least pancakes... And they liked it.*

The students also have to learn to cope – the skills of life.

- *We try to teach them different skills. At first some are not able to manage their money – they spend it in a couple of days and then do not have anything to travel home for a weekend. (...) They have no experience.*

Responsibility is also one of the skills students must learn. When they start working later they cannot be late or miss a day. They have to take responsibility

The school also teaches family studies – important topics are discussed, such as how to take care of children.

10-12 hours per week are dedicated to personal development: art, handicraft, music, etc.

- *Younger students tire quickly. Handicraft classes are in the afternoon, sometimes they finish at five o'clock. There are breaks of course. Sometimes girls finish their work in their rooms and then show the teacher.*

### **Active citizens**

The school offers civic studies which include coping in life. These topics are also discussed in subject classes.

The school has active student self-government; each group is represented by two students. They elect the president and two vice presidents. The self-government's work is done in sections: studies, dormitories, sports, culture, etc. Each section presents their ideas and makes suggestions in their area. Then it is decided what to do and how – be it helping those who are falling behind, rewarding the best, keeping order at events, organising competitions and functions or something else. Anything to make the life of students interesting.

Students also use the skills they have learned in classes: helped to redecorate the schoolhouse, the gym, dormitories.

The school works in close cooperation with local authorities; students can demonstrate their skills and offer help.

- *Functions, events, etc. – for the past 8 years our students have helped with catering and service. They prepare food in our kitchen. Even when the President of Republic participated in a function our students were there... They have also helped with construction and woodwork. We also planted trees in the park.*

### **Formal adult education from the perspective of the school**

The school offers various courses to adults. These are mainly professional courses but also language courses and computer courses for local people (*MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION: NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS*)

### **Distance learning from the perspective of the school**

The school also offers some distance course for those who cannot attend daytime classes.

The school is well equipped with computers, has a computer class, students can use computers after classes and all teachers have laptop computers.

### **Links between the school and the third level**

Each year there are students who continue their education in higher educational institutions. Graduates from vocational schools can use an additional year at the beginning of their studies to catch up with others. Vocational school is not a blind alley.

- *Each year our graduates continue their studies in higher education. Some go to the Tallinn University of Applied Sciences which has groups for vocational school graduates. Teachers take our students there to introduce learning opportunities. Some go to the Estonian University of Life Sciences. Financially it is difficult for them. Some switch between work and studies, some prefer distance learning. Not everybody wants to take a study loan.*

### **Learning environment and teacher training**

The teachers are of different ages; many are very experienced and know how to teach, to see what problems students have, to help. More experienced teachers are mentors to young teachers.

- *We are trying to keep good teachers whose experience is priceless. As they say: if you have only young employees it is a comedy, if you have only old people it is a tragedy... Young and old together make a symphony.*

Teachers are offered training on various topics: education, problems of young people (e.g. prevention of drug problems), how to cope with children with behavioural problems. Some courses last for several weeks and are provided in the school by specialists from Tallinn University. Some courses are provided by our own teachers.

Teachers have also participated in courses provided by the Ministry of Education and Research, the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre, professional associations. For three years the school participated in an EU project „School for training”. All teachers participated. Some teachers are participating in adult formal education:

- *Three teachers study at Tallinn University (vocational pedagogy), two are in Lääne-Viru College studying management, and two just finished their master studies. Plus work experience. Our staff is very stable, teachers do not change often.*

### **III MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE**

#### **RETURNING SECONDARY SCHOOL DROP-OUTS TO EDUCATION**

##### **History of the model**

For eight years the school has offered people who are older than the compulsory school attendance age (17 years) and have not finished lower secondary education initial vocational education with the possibility to finish lower secondary education.

- *We were the authors of the idea. When visiting general educational institutions and talking to people from local governments we discovered that there are many adults who have not finished lower secondary education. We discussed the problem with the Ministry of Education and Research and found a solution: such people are offered an opportunity to acquire lower secondary education at the local secondary school by distance learning and at the same time they can live in our dormitory and acquire initial vocational education.*

For the second year such opportunity is offered also to younger drop-outs. The Ministry has implemented this policy in two other vocational schools.

##### **Funding sources and other support**

Those who have dropped out of lower secondary school can study free of charge.

- *Initially we paid for their studies together with local authorities. Teachers calculated the cost, prepared study programmes. The programmes were approved by the Ministry and we signed a contract. Food and accommodation are also free of charge. Meals are prepared by the school. This helps a lot.*

The Ministry is recognising the work of the school.

- *They are interested; officials have met students, parents and teachers. They appreciate our work. This is good because the work is hard. I have been the class teacher of one of the most difficult groups for years.*

##### **Target groups and background**

At first this opportunity was offered only to local people. Now there are students from all over Estonia, both boys and girls.

- *Students leave education for various reasons. Lack of responsibility, parents have problems and cannot cope and take care of their children who go astray. Some have financial problems, some have social problems. I am not pointing a finger at their schools – no school wants their pupils to drop out. Here they can change the environment (...) different friends, different attitude.*

##### **Objectives of the practice**

First year only 25 students were admitted (two groups). These were pilot groups with two supervisors. Now each group has one supervisor. The groups have to be small, no more than 12 students per group.

- *At first teachers came from the local secondary school, now most of our teachers have signed an employment contract with the secondary school. If the students had to go to classes to another school they would never get there (or back) .... ☺*
- *They like to do something with their hands, to build, to cook. They want to see the result immediately. Our carpentry teacher is a young man who can teach students to make all kinds of things. Those flower boxes are made by students from that group. Teaching only theory would not have the same results.*

Teachers try to motivate those students and to praise them for achievements. No allowances are made however when it comes to marking. All assignments have to be done and handed in order to get a positive mark. The class teachers and subject teachers work together. Truancy is a problem though.

- *It seems that results are hard to get but easy to lose.*

Sometimes it happens that some students still drop out. No one can be made to learn if they do not want to.

Parents are very cooperative. The school organises parents' meetings four times a year. There are only some students whose parents do not attend those meetings. In case of some students both parents come. They have understood that children need education.

- *A lot of work and worries but a lot of joy also when they finish. Parents and students are grateful and the changes in students compensate for the troubles we had during the year when sometimes they make you think: Good Heavens! Why are we going to all this trouble if they do not want to learn!! Then it's over and next year everything starts from the beginning with new students.*

### **Number of participants**

First year only 25 students were admitted and the number of students has increased year by year. Last year 30 young people finished vocational pre-training and lower secondary school; this year there are 6 groups with 50 students. This is about 10% of the total number of students. More cannot be admitted because then this group of students would dominate in the school.

### **Results**

Each year some students continue their education and start vocational secondary education both in this school and in other vocational schools.

- *At first I thought that if one of 25 would continue we have achieved our aim. Actually seven students decided to continue. And so every year. Even if they do not continue they have finished lower secondary education and some vocational skill, they can find a job more easily because employers can see what they have learned and what they can do. A certificate is a proof that you are not a failure, you can do something. Those who do not want to continue studying full time can study in evening or distance courses. They have a basis for continuing learning. This is our objective. This required hard work and very understanding and competent teachers.*

**Problems**

What needs to be sorted out is the statistical side. Probably some changes are needed in legislation for vocational schools to be able provide lower secondary education. At the moment these students study officially in the local secondary school. The problem has been discussed but no solution has been found so far. At the same time this has not been an obstacle – all problems have been solved in cooperation with the coordinating specialist from the Ministry of Education and research.

### 3.1.4 Vocational educational centre (4.)

Interview with the head of the study department

#### I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

##### General information

The institution is the largest vocational educational centre in the region and also in Estonia. The centre has 1700 students and 178 employees, of them 95 teachers. The centre's cooperation partners are more than 400 enterprises.

The vocational educational centre was established in 2005 as a result of a merger of three vocational schools. In 2006 the fourth vocational school merged with the centre. Currently the centre operates in two towns and has a dormitory for 150 students.

##### Programmes

The centre offers education in four fields – information technology and economics, service and catering, engineering and technology. Languages of instruction are Estonian and Russian. The number of courses offered in Russian is larger (about 2/3) because about 80% of pupils in the county's general educational schools are Russians.

Beside the above mentioned fields the centre has departments of general education and continuing education and re-training. The latter offers continuing and re-training courses on information technology, electrical engineering, chemistry, technology, mining, construction, business service and business management, occupational health and safety, food hygiene, etc.

##### Mission

The mission of the school is to prepare qualified workforce and to participate in the county's development.

The school's objective is to be the best vocational educational institution in the county with highly qualified staff and up-to-date facilities. The management and the staff promote development and cooperate to achieve common goals. The school uses diverse teaching methods and has created an interactive learning environment.<sup>17</sup>

##### Target groups

The centre offers courses on the basis of both lower and upper secondary education; some courses are available also for students with special needs. Adults who have upper secondary education or vocational education can acquire new qualification in 2-3 years depending on the profession. Adults can study according to flexible programmes.

- *The re-training department offers courses to adults who wish to acquire a new qualification. Some students are older than 50 years (...). Admission requirement is finished upper secondary education.*

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<sup>17</sup> The centre's website.

Adults who have not finished upper secondary education study together with young students who have come to the centre after finishing lower secondary education and together with a vocation acquire upper secondary education.

- *There very few such people. Usually they had problems with studying and dropped out of general education or did not pass the state exams. Therefore they cannot continue in higher education and come to us. They only take those general educational subjects they had problems with. In addition they have vocational studies.*

The centre does not accept those who have not finished lower secondary education.

- *We do not accept such students. Three years ago we took part in the project „Apprentice” and offered vocational training to those who had not finished lower secondary education. It was a one year course – they acquired qualification and left. These were... let’s say difficult students. Children with behavioural problems. Some were drug addicts; we had to keep an eye on them. The project lasted for one year and we did not... we did not continue with the project. Although some other schools do.*

The school had to find students for the project and to persuade them to participate.

- *.. they would not have come otherwise. They only came because we insisted. (...) We fed them, paid for them money for studying, paid for transport and study materials. We worked with those who had problems... cooperated with the police... Difficult people.*

Other vocational schools still participate in the project. According to the respondent the project is now financed by the Ministry of Education and Research.

## II LIFELONG LEARNING IN FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

### **Disadvantaged groups**

Vocational education is offered to students with learning disability. The school has a group of students with learning difficulties who study construction; some years ago the school also taught sewing to such students.

- *They come after finishing special school.*

Those students study according to a simplified programme and approach is more individualised.

- *Some of them are good students. For them the learning environment, support, relations are more important than studying as such. They cannot focus, to keep their attention on studies. Sometimes we make a break and have tea during a class. The main thing is to keep them in school...*

Students with learning difficulties are taught by teachers who have received relevant training.

- *Teachers participated in a course to learn how to deal with such children. They are also group supervisors. .. The groups are small – from 5 to 8 people. Many drop out though.*

The school has a social teacher whose responsibility is to deal with students with learning difficulties. A portfolio is compiled for each student; they are monitored by the psychologist.

Prevention of dropping out is important in case of other students as well. The school has to prevent problems, to know who is not doing well, who is missing classes. Class teachers are in contact with other teachers, parents and children's homes.

- *Problematic students often come from children's homes. We cooperate with children's homes, keep in touch.*

The main problem is truancy.

- *Usually it is just laziness – they cannot be bothered to get out of bed and to go to school. This is the main reason. If students have problems with certain subjects, such as maths or chemistry, they receive tutoring; teachers work with them. (...) The school has created all conditions to prevent dropping out.*

Many drop-outs are girls who have got pregnant.

- *How can we keep them in school if they have other interests...? They may never return to education... Maybe some don't need education? (...) There is an alternative – evening school. They can study if they want!*

The school considers students who have problems with learning or are at risk of dropping out to belong to the disadvantaged group. Financial background is not taken into account.

- *Practically all our students come from families with low income. Some have only one parent, some do not have any. Some live with grandparents. Some receive the survivor's pension. Our students come from families that have similar background and if we determined disadvantaged groups according to the income of families everybody would belong to that group.*

Compared with general educational schools the vocational educational centre has more students who have problems or are at risk of dropping out.

- *Those who are more motivated go to upper secondary schools. We get those who are not admitted to secondary schools. They had problems already at younger age. Their problems were not dealt with. Our task is to help them, to talk to them to motivate them to finish the school. This is never ending work. We have what to offer them.*

The centre is probably a typical vocational school with typical problems. This applies also to adult education. Adults are offered general education and continuous training in various fields.

### **Support to prevent dropping out**

In order to prevent students dropping out of school the centre has established subject committees. Committee members talk to students, discuss their problems, ask what kind of help is needed. The school has a social teacher and a psychologist who deal with complicated cases.

If a student has problems with a certain subject he/she can get help from the subject teacher.

Students who have difficulties with functional literacy can get individual help.

- *In classes and after classes (...) We carry out student evaluations, talk about their performance. Parents and the class teacher are included in the discussion.*

#### Counselling in case of personal problems, i.e. death in family.

Students who have personal problems receive moral and sometimes financial support. Students can talk to the psychologist and the class teacher. They know that they are not left alone with their problems.

- *Recently a student lost his home – there was a fire and the family lost everything. We offered financial support. Or another case... girl's mother was put in prison. We helped with money and offered a place in the dormitory... We help as much as we can. (...) We want them to stay in the school and finish their education.*

Problems change over time:

- *In the past children spent their time on the streets, now they are lost in the virtual world. We had a girl who could not study and failed all exams. She was online all night, created a virtual family. Could not get up in the morning. She was transferred to another course but it did not help.*

The school used to have a career counsellor. Now there is no such person but the practical training manager is acquainting herself with the field.

#### Non-attendance

Non-attendance is a problem. Class teachers keep a record of non-attendances. Each student is required to inform the class teacher about the reasons of non-attendance and present a not from a parent or a doctor. If a student misses classes for no reason he/she has to explain it to the methodological committee (including the head teacher, head of the study department, etc.).

- *Sometimes they come with parents, sometimes alone. They are grown-ups and have to take responsibility. I do not know which is better. Depending on the circumstances.*

To prevent the problem it is important to reiterate how important it is to attend school.

- *They have to understand that we want them to finish the school and that it is up to them whether they do or not.*

Students who have learning disability can study according to a simplified programme. Some struggle with certain subjects, such as maths or chemistry or some other subject. They cannot study according to simplified programmes. They can receive support and tutoring from subject teachers. New programmes are being prepared and in the future such students can study only the vocation.

- *Indeed, some cannot cope with maths or chemistry .....*

#### Extracurricular activity

The school has a specialist whose responsibility is to organise extracurricular activities. The school organise various events. The school has a band, chess club, sports facilities. The school is making an effort to include those who have problems but these attempts have not been very successful.

- *It is difficult to deal with them... it is difficult even to talk to them. They are... they are not open. They are withdrawn and often have communication problems. (...) The psychologist is trying to help such children.*

### Preventing dropping out

The school is trying to do everything they can to prevent students from dropping out.

- *I do not know what else we could do. What they need is love and parents' attention...*

The school also tries to work with parents but it is difficult because students often come from problematic families.

- *It happens that a student gets a grant and his mother takes the money ... What can a child do if his mother takes the money he gets from us? And spends it on booze. How can a child learn if his mother is in prison? What can we do? We talk; we offer them a place in the dormitory. They can study and live here. But they need love and attention of their parents.*

These are social problems that cannot be solved by the school alone. The school cannot concentrate on parents.

- *This is the state's responsibility. Unfortunately these problems have a huge impact on children and their future...*

### Flexible learning conditions

The school participates in the vocational educational institutions' e-learning programme „Vanker“. Teachers publish learning materials on the Internet and students can read the materials or listen to lectures on the Internet at their convenience.

- *Unfortunately, not all teachers participate in the project. If materials are available online attending classes is not compulsory. (...) Most students like the system.*

Currently five teachers participate in the project. This requires from teachers good computer skills in addition to profound knowledge of their subject.

### **Alternatives to dropping out/ being expelled**

About 10% of students discontinue their studies. The number of students expelled is very small. The school is trying to meet the students half way and to work individually with those at risk of being expelled. However, students must be interested in staying at school. No other alternatives were mentioned.

- *We cannot say that we have discovered something new, something that would work...*

If a student stops attending classes all relevant people – the class teacher, the head of school and social services – get involved. It is not that easy to drop out.

- *It works in 50% of cases – students stay.*

### **Study programmes for disadvantaged groups**

For students from disadvantaged groups learning a vocation and at the same time acquiring upper secondary education is difficult despite the fact that the volume of general educational subjects is smaller than in secondary school. Many do not sit all five state exams and take only one compulsory exam - Estonian.

- *We cannot change the rules because knowing Estonian is important. Many students still struggle to learn the language. A lot depends on the teacher...*

To motivate the disadvantaged groups the school should be able to use simplified study programmes. At the same time nobody wants to learn according to a simplified programme.

- *Students say: „What? I’m in that group?” I don’t know how this problem can be solved. It is not difficult to learn. They know that because they get very little homework. However, this 10% of students are not interested. I do not know if they are interested in anything in life. Therefore I would not change anything. The only thing is that these people could have an option to study only vocation without the obligation to finish upper secondary education. Why should everybody have upper secondary education anyway?*

Practical training is one way to prevent dropping out. Those who have not completed their tasks are not allowed to practical training. This motivates them to hand in their homework.

- *We do not allow them to practical training before everything is done.*

### **Supporting personal development**

Personal development is important. Students have psychology classes, civic studies. They learn how to overcome problems, what are the risks, etc.

- *Six hours per week are dedicated to those topics.....*

First year students have art and music classes, a total of 40 hours.

### **Active citizens**

The students have civic studies – they discuss topics related to the state and citizenship and how to be an active citizen. The school has student self-government.

- *They have meetings, they participate in various projects, summer camps are organised together with other schools... I do not know exactly what else they do. Sometimes even the administration asks for students’ opinion.*

The school has not taken part in other local events.

### **Adult formal education from the perspective of the school**

The school offers adult formal education and continuous training for adults.

- *We have a number of projects for the unemployed and for employed people.<sup>18</sup>*

The courses take place on evenings and weekends. The school offers courses similar to those in daytime study.

### **Distance learning from the perspective of the school**

The school has all conditions, including computers, for offering distance courses. The main thing is to find people.

- *We need intelligent people.*

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<sup>18</sup> Courses commissioned by the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Ministry of Education and Research.

The school uses learning modules.

- *Credit points and learning modules.... That's what we use.*

### **Links between the school and tertiary education**

In order to continue in higher education students must pass state exams. Some do. The school has signed a cooperation agreement with Tartu University's Ida-Virumaa College.

- *Our graduates get one extra point in admission.*

Students who are interested in higher education visit higher educational institutions to get information about learning opportunities. They do it on their own initiative. The school used to organise study tours to universities.

Increasing access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, i.e. students who are not fluent in Estonian, is not considered important. Financial support to disadvantaged students is needed.

- *I think that universities admit too many people. Is this a problem? Everybody can study in Estonia.*

*What about the minorities, people who do not speak Estonian?*

- *It is their problem. They have 12 years to learn the language and nothing stops them from going to university.<sup>19</sup>*

*How could adults who have financial difficulties study?*

- *The government should help more. Offer financial support... I don't know what system they could use. Although now, in the conditions of economic recession, this is not possible. The state cannot help.*

### **Learning environment, teacher training and continuous training**

Teachers have participated in different courses. The main fields in which teachers have received training are the following:

- *Courses on relevant subjects, language courses. We had a three-day course on active teaching methods. Improving teaching skills...*

Teachers are interested in improving their professional skills, knowing their subject better, exchanging experiences with colleagues from other schools.

*What about courses on conflict management and problem solving?*

- *That would be good. I support this idea. Especially if it is more practical, not just a lecture. I am very positive about that!<sup>20</sup>*

The main factor in creating supportive learning environment – the one that supports continuing education and prevents students from dropping out – is not the volume of training teachers receive but their salaries.

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<sup>19</sup> The respondents did not know that higher educational institutions offer students an extra year during which they can learn Estonian.

<sup>20</sup> The development plan does not mention such training for teachers.

- *We have to pay teachers more. Their work is not valued any more – neither morally nor financially.*

### 3.1.5 Education available in prison (5-1)

Interview with education organiser

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON

The prison was established in 1919. This is a closed cell-type prison for 1070 inmates.

500 of the inmates are convicts; these are male prisoners, mainly local people. The rest are remand prisoners, held in custody for up to 6 months. The latter include both men and women who will be placed in different prisons after their conviction (depending on the type of offence, gender, age, etc.). Only some stay in the same prison.

Education is offered to those prisoners similarly to other prisons. The actual share of learners and the educational level of prisoners vary. Before a new prison was opened in north-eastern Estonia (the Viru Prison) there were more young people, people with higher educational levels and thus the number of learners was bigger. Now younger people are kept in other prisons and the educational level of remaining prisoners is lower.

#### EDUCATION AVAILABLE IN PRISON

Of 350 inmates housed in living quarters 38 are acquiring general education and 58 are acquiring vocational education. The ages and prison terms of learners vary. The majority of prisoners are Russian-speaking. The majority of learners are acquiring lower secondary education (years 6 to 9). A couple of years ago (i.e. before the Viru Prison was opened) there were more those acquiring upper secondary education.

Convicts receive both general and vocational education; they can participate in language courses and social programmes.

Remand prisoners can participate in language courses (Estonian and English) and in social programmes.

The choice of education or course depends on the results of risk assessment carried out for each prisoner since 2007.

- *A development plan is prepared for each prisoner based on the results of individual risk assessment: the behaviour of the person before his imprisonment, potential risks during imprisonment and after release; how and where to manage risks (...) If low educational level is a risk factor the person must be persuaded to study. If there is the risk that the person would not find a job because he doesn't speak Estonian then we offer language courses. So that they could cope better after being released.*

Risk assessment is carried out by a committee consisting of a social worker, psychologist and the prison's security officer. Taking into account the background of the prisoner and the results of the interview it is decided whether it is necessary to acquire/continue education, learn a vocation, learn Estonian, etc.

- *If the prisoner has not finished his education they can continue in prison at the relevant level. Some volunteer. Anyone who wishes can continue his education.*

The prison cooperates with the Adult Upper Secondary School that provides teachers. Both programmes and requirements are the same used in ordinary school. (Prisoners can continue in the same school after being released from prison.) The prison has special premises for learning activities – classrooms, etc.

Vocational education is provided by the prison's vocational school that has its own teachers. Prisoners can learn professions related to construction industry. The study period is usually one year, on some courses two years.

Language courses are provided by a company chosen among different education providers. The prison offers courses on Estonian at four levels. Prisoners can participate in language course if not knowing Estonian is considered to be a risk factor. Language knowledge is tested and the level chosen based on the results of the test. The duration of the course is 60 hours (one month). Some prisoners study according to the same programme on intensive courses. Participants are required to work intensively in the classroom and also to work individually.

- *It is difficult for them – they are not used to making an effort. They have to study, do homework. It is difficult for them to concentrate. The aim is to learn the language at a certain level and to pass the relevant test.*

Participation in language courses is equivalent to working and is remunerated similarly – EEK 1080 per month. If the person's attendance record is good he is paid one third of this amount immediately and 70% is transferred to his release fund after passing the test.

Language tests are financed centrally by various ministries.

Prisoners also participate in a social programme intended to develop their social skills. The programme includes 9 topics: family relations, anger management, replacement of aggressiveness, fighting addiction and other issues of coping with life. At the end of the programme prisoners receive a certificate. Programme leaders are the prison officers.

All prisoners can participate in hobby activities. The prison has a specialist whose responsibility is to organise hobby activities. The prison has sports facilities; prisoners can attend classes of music and art: prisoners publish the prison newsletter. Some prisoners record books for the Estonian Blind Union and other prisoners like to attend the recording sessions.

The prison has its own library consisting of more than 10 000 books. Each prisoner can order 5 books in a fortnight. Prisoners working in the library complete the orders and deliver books. Currently the work of the library is being reorganised. A new computer programme is adopted for keeping account of orders.

General educational school works five days per week. Learners have three classes in the morning and three in the afternoon. Learning conditions are good, comparable to those in an ordinary school. Participation in learning activities is considered to be equivalent of working.

- *Since courses are chosen in cooperation with prisoners they are motivated to learn. They feel that learning will help them to cope better after being released. Learning is a privilege.*

Programmes are the same used in the Adult Secondary School at the relevant level.

## BACKGROUND OF PRISON EDUCATION

Prison officers work with prisoners to reduce risks that put them behind bars. The aim of education, language learning and social programmes is rehabilitation of prisoners.

- *People think that it is enough to put criminals behind bars. This is not right.*

General education and vocational education are provided free of charge like elsewhere in the country. The prison provides learners with school supplies (paper, pens, copies, etc.).

- *Prisoners are like children and the prison acts as their parent – provides clothing, pens and notebooks, other school supplies. Textbooks are provided by school. Like in any other school.*

Higher education is provided for fee.

For more than four years both general and vocational education was provided by a special vocational school established for this purpose. Tow education is provided in cooperation with general educational and vocational schools. Learning conditions are the same as in ordinary schools; programmes are also the same. Teaching methods are those used in adult education. Prisoners sit state examinations equally to students in ordinary schools. This is real learning not a pastime activity. It provides an opportunity to continue education after release.

- *It is very important for prisoners. We want them to acquire education, to provide them an opportunity continue their education.*

The aim is to take the prisoners to the next level of education – e.g. from lower secondary to upper secondary. If a person is released in 2 or 3 months it is pointless to send them to school unless they are finishing their studies or are preparing for state exams. Therefore short-term prisoners' development plans more often foresee working rather than learning.

## CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL PATH

Prisoners acquiring general education are students of the Adult Secondary School. Prisoners whose term is coming to an end inform teachers and education organisers. After being released they can continue in the adult secondary school outside the prison.

- *They can continue from the same point.*

If a prisoner is released on parole they must follow personal parole plan and their attendance in school is checked.

If a prisoner is released after serving his sentence in full the prison has no right to control his life and to make him go to school.

- *In general they are interested in finishing their education because they are aware of the requirements of the labour market and know that otherwise it will be difficult for them to find a job.*

## DISTANCE LEARNING

Prisoners can not participate in distance learning because they do not have access to computers outside the prison's computer class and are not allowed to use the Internet.

- *They cannot communicate with the world outside the prison.*

The prison has a computer class and prisoners are taught computer skills – to use various programmes.

Homework is done by traditional method – using pen and paper. If a prisoner cannot attend classes because of court procedures, illness, etc. homework and learning materials are delivered by prison officers.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Literacy level of prisoners is assessed by teachers. Teachers determine prisoners' learning needs and difficulties. Prisoners are interviewed by the prison psychologist; discussions concerning the development plan also include discussions about continuing education.

Discipline is not a problem.

- *All disciplinary offences are punished. They do not want this to happen. There are some difficult people though. The majority of learners want to study, to go to school. Why cause difficulties and sit in the punishment cell instead of being in the classroom?*

Teachers are assisted by prison guards.

## PROFILE OF PRISONERS

The educational level of prisoners depends on the prison. In this prison the educational level of prisoners is below average. A typical prisoner has lower secondary education or primary education. Very few have higher education. The majority of prisoners are Russian-speaking.

## TUTORS

The prison does not have any tutors. Instead there are education organisers who act as contact persons between teachers and prisoners. They deliver homework to those who cannot attend classes. The prison has a total of 25 employees dealing with social rehabilitation of prisoners and 105 parole officers.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

There are no restrictions on acquiring education if learning is foreseen in the prisoner's development plan. Prisoners can learn both in Estonian and in Russian.

The economic recession has had no impact on the availability of education in prison.

### 3.1.6 Education available in prison (5-2)

Interview with education coordinator of school offering education in prison

#### BACKGROUND

This Adult Upper Secondary School became a partner of a prison four years ago when the former prison school system was abolished and general educational schools started offering education in prisons.

- *I had some experience with teaching in prison. I had worked in a women's prison and with young offenders. I was a member of the team, together with specialists from the Ministry of Education and Research, proposing and making the amendment to the system (p. 1)*

Each group of learners has its peculiarities. Women are more motivated and hardworking – they attend classes and also work. They are less aggressive and less angry. Just like in real life.

This prison is a male prison. Most learners are convicts, men aged 20 to 30 years but also older.

#### EDUCATION AVAILABLE IN PRISON

The number of students in general education varies depending on how many new prisoners arrive in the prison, how many are released or transferred to other prisons. The ethnic background of learners also varies by years – some years see an almost equal number of Estonian and Russian speaking learners but in general Russian speakers dominate.

16 teachers teach in the prison. Some teachers (e.g. the teachers of English and civic studies) teach both language groups, some only Estonians or Russians. The teachers also teach in the Adult Upper Secondary School because their workload in the prison is small – from 2 to 4 hours per week. A group normally consists of 10 people who learn at different levels (composite classes). There is a lower secondary group (years 6 to 9) and an upper secondary group (years 10 to 12) for students of each language.

- *This is not a rule – the number of groups depends on how many learners at each level arrive in the prison, are released or transferred. Sometimes the numbers of lower and upper secondary students are almost equal; sometimes there are more students at the lower level. (p. 2)*

Provision of education in prison is funded by the Ministry of Education and Research. While in ordinary schools the capitation is calculated for classes of 24 pupils, in prison the average group size is 10 people.

- *We make plans in August – how many learners are expected, how many groups should be formed, what levels are taught.*

Information about each prisoner's education level is in his file. Groups are determined on the basis of this information.

#### Studies

Prisoners are taught by the same programme as students of ordinary schools. They learn 24 hour per week on average. Russian prisoners and school leavers learn 25 hours per week. The choice of subjects is somewhat different – there are more art classes and classes related to personal development.

- *They have three hours of Estonian per week, civic and social studies, music, art, including history of art. They do not have physical education and handicraft. There is a graduation ceremony and everything else normal students have....*

School leavers sit their final and state exams similarly to ordinary students – the exam procedure is the same no matter how few people take the exam.

- *They just had an exam – the essay. The topics were announced by the radio and an examination board of three members was present.*

Each student who has finished either a level (lower or upper secondary) or a year receives a certificate. It must be noted that on average, the exam results of prisoners are better than the results of ordinary students.

- *Groups are small; we do a lot of individual work.*

Naturally, the abilities and motivation of prisoners differ.

- *In classes we read and discuss short texts. Compulsory literature is available but some read and some don't – just like in ordinary schools. However, their learning conditions are very good.*

Sometimes the learning conditions are even better than in ordinary schools:

- *They had a course on English taught by native speakers from US and United Kingdom. Ordinary people pay a lot of money for such courses. The prisoners also participate in a social programme – they were offered a series of lectures on various subjects. Ordinary people must pay considerable amounts in order to attend such lectures.*
- *They have extremely good learning opportunities. Really.*

The prison has classrooms.

- *First we got some start-up money from EU to furnish classrooms – desks, teaching materials. Everything is nice and clean. Nothing has been vandalised.*

## BACKGROUND AND CHANGES

Five years ago it seemed that prison education was stuck in a stagnant state. Now things are changing constantly – learning culture, etc. The system has improved significantly.

The changes have had a great impact on both the quality of education and the learning environment.

- *Classes used to be a place to meet acquaintances and to have a break from everyday prison life. Few were interested in learning.*

The changes in the learning environment, teachers' attitudes and teaching methods have had a noticeable impact on the prisoners' attitudes to learning.

- *The first year was a breaking point – we came with new ideas and practices; we were enthusiastic and that was catching. The prison psychologist said at the graduation ceremony: „The people who sit here are not convicts; they are students.” Such positive feedback...*

Learning also changes the prisoners' behaviour.

- *You have to be open and show your feelings. First it seems that you are talking to a wall. They are closed and cautious... then they start to open up ... Their behaviour improves – there is less resistance and reluctance. First they are defiant and angry... because they are in prison. Then they get interested in learning. (...) A judge once asked me: „Where did you get such great guys?” They behave differently.*

Since 2007 a development plan is prepared for each prisoner. Those whose development plan foresees studying attend classes. The development plans are prepared by prison officers.

- *Prisoners are talked to and persuades; sometimes they are just ordered to study. Not everybody understands first what it means to them. In general they must want to learn.*

In an ideal world the development plans should be prepared in cooperation with school representatives. However, there is a rationale for the current system – school representatives do not have all background information on prisoners and might not perceive the situation adequately.

- *I trust prison officers and their decisions. There are also security risks involved....*

An additional incentive is an opportunity to live in a separate section of prison where learners have a little more freedom – extra time outside cells. Learning as activity and established daily routine are also great motivators.

- *The school is a piece of open society. Relations are different. Topics are different. You are not a prisoner, you are a student.*

Being inside the system makes people look at things differently. Outsiders have a slightly different perception of life.

The school cooperates with prison staff – education coordinators and social officers – to discuss organisation of studies, any problems with learners, etc.

## CONTINUING OF ONE'S EDUCATIONAL PATH

There is not much information how many people continue their education after being released from prison. Plans are discussed but information is available about only those who continue in the same school.

- *A young man was released and he sat the state exams in our school. Then he enrolled on a hotel management course. Another was released during final exams – sat some exams and then just disappeared. If we had persuaded him more maybe he had taken all exams .... I heard he is working in Norway. Don't know exactly.*

The life of ex-convicts changes a lot after they are released. Many struggle to find a job and a place to live.

- *They admit that they have so much to do that learning becomes poor second. Many are emotionally broken. They find themselves in a totally different situation; sometimes it is difficult to adapt to a new life, in particular for those who served a long sentence. They have learned to cope in prison but cannot cope outside. It depends where they go after being released... (..) Some return to prison, some need additional help.*

Some prisoners acquire lower secondary education and continue in a vocational school.

- *Four people finished lower secondary education and continued in vocational education (which is also provided in prison).*

## DISTANCE LEARNING

Some prisoners cannot attend classes because of court procedures or because they are placed in a punishment cell. In such case they are provided with learning materials and individual assignments.

- *Very few complete their assignments. Many are not interested. They have no motivation because their primary needs – communication with relatives, private space – are not satisfied.*

Prisoners who are hospitalised also receive learning materials through prison officers. The materials are disinfected as there is a great threat of tuberculosis. Teachers do not meet these prisoners.

Computers are not used for security reasons. This issue should be solved in the future. It should be decided who and on which conditions could use the computer.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

The knowledge of learners is very different notwithstanding of which certificates they have. It depends on the time they received the certificate, their personality, the school they went to, etc.

- *It is difficult to determine what to teach. There are people with learning difficulties and there are also very bright and intelligent people.*

This means that all learners must be approached on individual basis. Since new learners join classes from September to May individual work is necessary throughout the academic year. The aim is to help them to finish a school year or an educational level.

The levels of functional literacy vary. People with learning difficulties have sometimes very low literacy level. These learners are offered individual tutoring to teach them to cope with simple tasks, such as shopping. This is difficult work – teachers have to find a way to make them interested in learning to read.

## DISCIPLINE

The background of learners was described above. The issue of discipline is related to learning atmosphere in a class. This may vary from group to group. There have been no critical situations but sometime tension can be felt in the classroom.

- *It depends on the day, previous events and situation in the prison. Some people have had a difficult day – they attended a court session or received information about family or friends... They may be restless. Sometimes it is more difficult to manage teenagers in ordinary school. In prison teachers can call for help....*

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Learning opportunities are offered to all prisoners irrespective of their ethnic background. They can learn both in Estonian and in Russian. They only have to want to learn. Prison officers try to identify motivated learners.

### Expanding educational opportunities

The new prison which is under construction will have a separate educational centre. This gives the prison an opportunity to offer more hobby activities. Currently extracurricular activities are organised by prison officers. Schools (both general educational institutions and vocational educational institutions) should cooperate more with prison workers in this field. Compared with four years ago the prison system has evolved significantly: attitudes have changed towards learning, organisation of learning, cooperation of prison officers and teachers.

- *Distance learning opportunities are still not offered. Prisoners should be able to attend distance courses but how to organise this...*

### Changes

Funding of prison education need to be changed. The current system of capitation fees is not adequate taking into account the changing number of students.

- *Last year many learners were released from prison. I hope that we contributed to this, changed their attitudes. At least the judge said so.*

At least four groups should be opened each year – two for lower secondary students and two for upper secondary students. This would increase add to security.

Otherwise the system works and a working system should not be demolished. Changes can be made according to the need.

- *I have an idea concerning composite classes. We should offer module learning and the remuneration of teachers should be adapted this model of learning. It would be easier to measure results. Otherwise some learners disappear before they can finish a class or a level because they are transferred or released.*

### Support to teachers

Teachers are instructed before starting working in prison. The school has organised meetings and exchanges of practices and experience. Teachers from different prisons are in contact

with each other; they attend seminars and information days organised by different ministries.

- *Each institution is different. We can learn from each other. We have visited Viru, Tartu and Murru prisons. The Ministry of Justice is planning a seminar for teachers. The Ministry of Education and Research organised an information day. We have also attended international conferences.*

More training is needed for teachers. Currently they learn in the course of work.

- *Learning and taking risks.*

It is important to offer supervision to teachers to prevent them from getting tired; to keep them fit.

- *Teachers are starting to change. Working in prison is emotionally difficult: the prison atmosphere – gates, bars, behaviour – this is difficult. People burn out. One day they suddenly feel that they cannot do it any more. The nights before prison days are especially difficult – you feel that you just don't want to go. Once you are in the classroom, everything changes; teaching feels good.*

Teachers who teach in prison should have the same fringe benefits as prison officers.

- *At least life insurance. That would help.*

The economic depression has not changed the number of learners. However, it has had an impact on other factors – availability of teaching materials, etc.

- *Less money is spent on pens and paper; tea during breaks was cancelled. The number of events has been reduced... Right now we are living off old resources.*

## 3.2 Tertiary level

### 3.2.1 University 1 (6.)

*Interview with the university's Vice Rector of Studies*

*In addition:* certain points were specified by a teacher and the head of the Open University's continuing education department

## I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

### Background information

Tallinn University of Technology (hereinafter: TUT) is one of the largest universities in Estonia. The university has eight faculties, four colleges, three institutes as well as a library, certification body and Technomedicum (R&D institution). The university has about 14 000 students, 1700 of them in distance learning, and nearly 2000 employees.

In 2008 TUT celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. TUT is a technical university focussing on teaching sciences, technology and exact sciences.

The majority of Estonian engineers (about 80%), economists and IT specialists have studied at TUT.

- *Our graduates are highly valued in the private sector.*

## II UNIVERSITY APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

### ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURES

TUT is the only higher educational institution in which male students dominate.

- *It is the peculiarity of our university that we have less female students than male students. For a long time the share of female students has been about 45%. The number of females may have increased a little but more than half of students are still male. Taking into account that we focus on technical professions this is not too much.*

Most students come from Tallinn and surrounding regions; many come from North-eastern Estonia where we have a college (Virumaa College) that was established to secure the region with qualified specialists. In Virumaa College three courses are taught in Russian; however, Russian students study some general subjects in Estonian (financed by the Ministry of Education and Research).

Some first year courses are taught in Russian; students learn Estonian in parallel to main studies and starting from the second year the courses are taught in Estonian. Estonian language courses are free of charge to all including students who pay for their studies. Russian is the mother tongue for more than 40% of students.

The majority of students come to the university immediately after finishing secondary school.

- *This is typical in natural and exact sciences. In other courses there are more adults; most of them already have a technical qualification. People rarely switch from a „soft“ field to technical professions.*

Therefore, the fact that the number of secondary school pupils is decreasing constantly hits technical professions hardest. This is made worse by the fact that less boys than girls finish upper secondary education.

- *There are more boys among drop-outs (3/4 of all pupils who drop out of secondary school). Our choice is narrower.*

TUT have more state-commissioned study places than other universities. Therefore there are more students whose economic situation is slightly worse.

Despite that some state-commissioned study places are not filled because both young people and adults tend to prefer „soft“ courses which are mainly provided for a fee.

Each year the university admits 100-150 vocational schools' graduates who make up about 10% of first year students.

- *Their general knowledge is slightly poorer but they are highly motivated. They study hard and by the end of the first year most of them catch up with other. If they continue in the same field they studied in vocational school we give them an extra point at admission.*

Each faculty sets additional admission requirements to screen out unsuitable candidates and to admit those who are genuinely interested in the profession.

There are no admission quotas for different groups.

- *We do not take into account candidates background or nationality; we only look for talent.*

Disadvantaged students and people with special needs do not receive any financial support.

- *Only some students with special needs and some athletes receive support. (...)*

At the same time there is a need for such support.

- *The government should support and the school should also support talented students who are in a bad economic situation. We will discuss that. So far we have not set such rules. The system may change. The OSCD report also indicated that the support system is elitist, those who need help are not supported.*

Adults can study by distance learning – on evenings and weekends. The university has a special adult education unit, the Open University. (see: **model of good practice**)

If men and economically disadvantaged young people are to be considered the underrepresented groups the university (having more male students and state-commissioned study places) is somewhat more accessible to those groups. The Open University also provides adults a good opportunity to study.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Both students and the staff include people of different ages, gender and nationality. Lectures are delivered in Estonian and in Russian as well as in English.

- *At one point we were worried that we could not find new Russian teachers to replace those who had retired but now there is a new generation of young Russians who are fluent in three languages – Russian, Estonian and English.*

There are definitely people among the staff who have never belonged to the disadvantaged group but now relevant background information has been gathered.

- *One of our professors was raised in an orphanage. He will be 60 soon. Talented people always find a way to study and develop.*

Students come from different backgrounds and speak different languages:

- *The university was one of the first to offer programmes in English. Recently a private university was merged with our institution and the number of foreign students and teachers doubled. This is diversification.*

## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Links with adult formal education are created through the Open University (non-formal education), which offers pre-training – preparatory courses for school leavers revising for state examinations, continuing courses and re-training courses. Adults may also study by open learning subjects that are of particular interest to them; they acquire higher education as external students.

In 2008 the number of participants in non-formal education was more than 9000 people, 1700 of them in open learning.

The students of the Open University pay for each credit point similarly to full-time students.

## SOCIAL INTEGRATION TO PROMOTE SUPPORT NETWORK

The university has tutors since 2001. These are third year students who help first year students to adapt to the life at the university.

TUT has an active self-government that helps to organise student events. Once a month they meet with the management of the university to discuss problems and action plans.

Once a year, each spring students organise a job fair „A key to the future” for employers and graduates.

- *This spring the number of participants in the fair exceeded all expectations. We got many job offers. This indicates that despite the high unemployment rate specialists with higher education are in demand.*

The members of the student council come from all faculties; all nationalities are represented.

- *Half of the members of the student council are Russians. They are active and are fluent in Estonian.*

TUT has several choirs, a folk dance group, photography and cinematography clubs, a newspaper. Hobby clubs are open to both graduates and undergraduates.

Information about admission requirements and courses can be found at the university's website. The university also publishes a brochure introducing courses.

- *People must be informed.*

The representatives of the university also visit schools to introduce learning opportunities. As the share of drop-outs is very big among first year students the university is looking for people who are interested in the chosen profession and motivated to learn.

- *We want people who are interested in a certain profession not those who just want to acquire higher education. (...) If a person wants to study psychology but was not admitted to another university and comes to our university to study telecommunication just because the course is free of charge then he/she probably drop out during the first year.*

## TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The university has offered preparatory courses for more than 50 years. The courses are offered by the Open University. The courses are offered for fee and focus on subjects of state examinations: physics, maths, chemistry, mother tongue (essay writing).

- *We offer courses of different duration – a year, a couple of months and shorter. These are evening courses offered in Tallinn, Pärnu and some other towns. Participants are those who finished upper secondary education some years ago or those who wish to re-take the state examinations. After finishing the course participants go to different higher educational institutions.*

TUT, its faculties and institutes are actively looking for highly motivated young people. In 2005 the „Children's university" project was launched for that purpose. In 2006 the project was continued as the TUT Technology School. The project is financed by the university, the Ministry of Education and Research and by the ESF (joint project of TUT, Tartu University and Tallinn University „LoTe"; the aim of the project is to ensure sustainability of science and technical education).

TUT organises courses, summer schools and workshops for upper secondary students.

- *We have signed cooperation agreements with 17 schools. Faculties and institutes introduce learning opportunities. Our students also take part in these events. For example one institute brought hundreds of young people to our labs. They were shown the equipment, rock samples... They had an opportunity to ask questions.*

From next autumn the university will offer subject courses to upper secondary students.

Within the framework of the LoTe project information days are organised for secondary school teachers to keep them informed about the activities of the university.

TUT has participated in events organised by counties for school leavers, the information fair „Teeviit" and had open doors days.

## ADMISSION POLICY

TUT admits candidates according to its admission regulations applying admission thresholds. Faculties have established additional requirements – an essay, interview, etc. – find candidates who are interested in the profession and highly motivated.

Some candidates – those who have finished upper secondary school with honours, have won subject competitions, have passed a certain state exam with very good results or have graduated from a vocational school where they studied the same profession.

Not much can be done to support the disadvantaged groups: the selection board can admit up to five students who have a disability or were raised in an orphanage or lived in a shelter; they have to pay only the registration fee. If the number of such candidates is bigger five people are selected who are admitted.

Distance learners must have finished upper secondary education. Adults pay for their studies similarly to other students. There are however some free of charge places in distance learning too.

Best performing students can apply for a study allowance. Students can also apply for travel support.

All students can take a study loan.

- *Paying for studies is a problem in Estonia. Many students come from financially disadvantaged families. There are those who struggle to pay for their dormitory place. Therefore it is sometimes difficult to study away from home. It is cheaper to choose an institution that is close to one's home.*

#### RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Prior learning and work experience are recognised more systematically. The implementation of VÕTA is analysed and monitored to see how prior learning is linked with study programmes and its objectives, what is the students' attitude towards the recognition of prior learning.

- *There is room for improvement. VÕTA will probably become more important when there is a shortage of students caused by the current economic recession. The so-called lost sons and daughters – those who have dropped out for various reasons – are coming back to continue their education. It happened also during the last recession.*

VÕTA is becoming more and more important also in connection with adult formal education. However, it is easier to take into account prior learning than work experience. Prior learning is proved by certificates and other records.

#### Necessary initial skills

Although full-time students are admitted by applying the admission thresholds (results of the state exams) the number of those who discontinue their education is big.

- *Practically half of first year students drop out. They just cannot manage.*

Certain subjects, e.g. maths, physics, are the main stumbling blocks.

- *All students can participate in catch-up courses according to the US model. They study secondary school maths and physics for 1.5 months. The number of hours dedicated to these subjects in secondary schools has reduced; there are debates about whether there should be state exams in these subjects...*

Attitudes towards state exams have changed.

- *Even some of the members of the student council have participated in the catch-up courses and now they are doing well. They say that these subjects were taught quite sporadically at the secondary level. Some schools are better than others in preparing pupils for state exams. However, abilities and creativity get lost in the course of learning. Some active and creative people are narrowly admitted...*
- *The ratings based on the results of state exams harm our educational system and our country. It is regrettable that some schools discourage or forbid their pupils to sit state exams in maths, physics or chemistry to keep their place in the league table. I used to support the state examinations system but now I doubt...*

For some students even the catching-up courses are not enough to keep them at the university.

- *Although all students have passed the state exams their levels are very different. For some maths is easy, for some it is unattainable. They lost the track and do not understand the simplest things. They have study materials and they can get tutoring but they just don't show up. They fail exams repeatedly and then disappear (teachers)*

A survey of candidates was recently carried out in all faculties and institutes. It survey showed that the knowledge of foreign languages has improved but the knowledge in maths, physics, geometry and mother tongue has deteriorated.

- *We introduced a course on comprehension and expression of Estonian as a compulsory subject to all study programmes. This was required by employers. The level of functional literacy is also low. The first essays show that students are not able to connect ideas. The secondary school programmes are clearly missing something.*

Adults who are studying the so-called soft professions have fewer difficulties with functional literacy.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Students can turn to a psychologist if they need advice.

Career counselling has also become more available and diverse.

- *We have a counselling strategy to take into account the needs and expectations of all groups – distance learners, foreign students, first year students.*

The career centre has contacts with employers; career counsellors participate in job fairs, organise practical training, etc.

- *Everybody can get an advice. The career centre has all the information, including information on the labour market.*

Candidates can also contact the career centre to get information about admission requirements, future job opportunities, professional suitability, etc. Counselling will help them to choose suitable courses.

Academic counselling is done by faculties and institutes.

The university informs students about financial support available to students who have financial difficulties.

- *Some students (1-2% of all students) can get financial support according to the rates established by law. They have to file an application.*

## DISTANCE LEARNING

- *About 1700 students graduate each year from distance courses.*

Distance courses are for working people. Distance students can study either full time or part time. Full time distance students can take a study loan.

Some daytime students find a job during their studies and transfer to distance courses.

## CONTENT OF STUDIES

Teachers are offered courses on teaching methods, teaching science, information technology, etc. PhD candidates also receive relevant training so that they could work as university teachers.

- *Half of our PhD candidates continue with us as teachers – they are offered courses on didactics and they also undergo compulsory practical training on teaching. Like in the Nordic countries.*

Teachers from other universities have also been invited to deliver courses on teaching science.

TUT has implemented a quality insurance system. Students assess teachers and various aspects of learning and teaching. The results are taken into account and some teachers have not been re-elected.

The economic recession has caused the university to pay more attention to the changes in labour market.

The recession has also given a signal to candidates. Specialists of the so-called hard professions, including IT specialists, are in demand. The construction sector has suffered and people are moving to other areas.

- *Those who study economics have also difficulties with finding a job.*

The state's influence should increase. In commissioning education and paying for it the state focuses on certain professions.

- *Estonia is too small for 55% of students to decide what they want to study for their own money.*

The state should maintain the current level of financing education and research. Since the number of pupils in general education is decreasing, soon 75% of students could study free of charge if the number of state-commissioned study places remains the same. This would provide an opportunity to study for those who do not want to take a study loan.

## Specific questions based on SP3

*Underrepresented groups do not get discounts and financial support to buy textbooks, etc. This is the problem that needs to be solved.*

*Preparatory courses are offered in different regions for school leavers who are revising for the state exams. These courses are available for all.*

*The number of study places reserved for disadvantaged groups is very small. There is a need for more.*

*The university has not allocated additional resources to pay travelling allowances. The student self government has in cooperation with transport companies tried to find solutions to offer students more favourable prices on the Tallinn- Tartu route.*

*The issue of childcare has been discussed by the student self government.*

### **III MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE**

#### **Objectives of the practice**

Open University was established at TUT in 1996. The Open University offers also open studies – an opportunity for adults to study certain subjects together with daytime students. Participants study together with daytime students, pass exams and receive credit points.

Open study enables people to:

- receive training and improve their knowledge in certain fields,
- acquire additional qualifications,
- continue studies,
- re-train,
- develop personally,
- start higher education,
- study at their own pace,
- combine studies at different universities,
- study subjects in which they have previously failed.

This form of study:

- a) is a bridge between non-formal and formal education; provides an opportunity for people who are not certain that they can study and work at the same time;
- b) enables those who have dropped out of university to continue at their own pace;
- c) avoid dropping out if only one subject is a stumbling block for a student;
- d) study subjects which interest students in particular.

#### **The main target groups:**

**1) Working people** who can develop themselves and re-train in certain fields or acquire a degree at their own pace.

If a person can study at the same pace with full time students can enrol on daytime or distance courses and continue as a students, including on a state-commissioned study place if such place is available.

- *They first come to improve their knowledge. Then they discover that they are interested in the field and successful in studies and want to continue as full time students. They do not have to decide immediately.*

There are no admission requirements for open courses.

- 2) People who have discontinued their studies at a university and wish to obtain a degree as external students or to catch up in certain subjects and to continue their studies.
- 3) Students who have repeatedly failed their exams.
- 4) Students who have taken an academic leave and guest students from other universities.

#### Funding Sources

Participants in open courses pay for credit points according to the price lists established by faculties. This system enables them to manage better their expenses on education.

#### Number of service users annually

The number of participants is increasing year by year. While in 2000 more than 600 people participated in open courses by 2008 their number had increased to 1700. Although the majority of participants are younger people, the number of older participants is growing. The number of Russian-speaking participants has increased significantly – mainly due to the fact that more effort is made to inform the target group about learning opportunities.

#### Perceived strengths and weaknesses of the model used:

Open study is flexible and therefore suits people who belong to disadvantaged groups and are underrepresented in higher education. Participants can choose what and when to study and are not limited by the obligation to achieve during fixed period a certain number of credit points.

The weak point is that participants are not students – i.e. they do not have student's health insurance and cannot apply for study loan.

### **3.2.2 University 2 (7.)**

Interview with the head of department of the Open University

Interview with the head of the study department of the Open University

## **I INSTITUTION`S PROFILE**

### **General Information**

The University of Tartu (UT) is the oldest and largest university in Estonia. The university has nine faculties and five colleges located in different regions of Estonia. The university has approximately 17 000 students and 3 500 employees (2/3 of whom are teaching and scientific staff).

The University of Tartu is the only classical university in Estonia. The university offers academic and professional higher education, bachelor, masters and doctoral studies.

UT is a national university uniting various fields of science. The mission of the University of Tartu is to act as the leading force driving the development of knowledge-based society in Estonia and the guarantor of its continuity. In order to fulfil its mission, the University of Tartu advances research, education and culture and serves society through teaching and research, creating the preconditions for development of world-class research fields through international cooperation and, as Estonia's national university, assuming its share of responsibility for the preservation of the Estonian people and nation.<sup>21</sup>

In April 2009 the university adopted the principles of lifelong learning:

Lifelong learning at the university is purposeful study, creative, scientific and R&D activity combining formal and continuous learning (including pre-training and vocational training). Lifelong learning creates opportunities for individual development irrespective of the age of learners and method of learning and promotes comprehensive social, cultural and economic development of the society.<sup>22</sup>

### **Courses offered**

The university offers adults both daytime and distance courses through the Open University. The number of full time students is approximately 12 000 people and more than 5 000 people study at the Open University. The Open University offers more than 70 study programmes. The Open University also has the continuous education department offering continuous training courses and an opportunity to study certain modules of formal education (for continuous training see in more detail: non-formal education)

### **Funding sources**

State commissioned education is provided free of charge. The rest of students pay for their studies. The fee is lower for students of the Open University. The amount of the fee depends on the course; the highest fee is charged by the Medical Faculty – approximately EEK 35 000 per term.

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<sup>21</sup> UT development plan 2008

<sup>22</sup> UT lifelong learning principles. 24 April 2009

## II LIFELONG LEARNING

### INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES: STRUCTURE AND ANALYSIS

About two thirds of students are women. Women have dominated among students for years. The gender structure differs somewhat by faculties.

The main language of instruction is Estonian. At the Ida-Viru College one of the languages of instruction is also Russian. There is no precise information about the number of students whose native language is Russian. Those Russians who are fluent in Estonian start in courses where the language of instruction is Estonian. Those who need to improve their Estonian are provided an extra year or six months to learn the language. This means that their period of study is longer. Students studying at state-funded places can study Estonian free of charge; the rest have to pay a fee.\*

The number of adult learners started to increase at the beginning of the 2000s and has reached approximately 5 000. This number does not include the adults studying in daytime courses – about 6 000 students aged 30 and older. Adults form more than a third of the student body of the university.

- *The majority of adult learners are also women – they work and study, many have a family.*

The university has a special unit for adult learners – the Open University (the former Department of Distance Learning). Students attend lectures and seminars twice a month; in some faculties lectures and seminars are delivered on weekends (from Friday to Sunday).

No admission limits have been set forth for adults and disadvantaged groups. All applicants are welcome.

- *We disseminate information in counties. We used to do this more often but now people already know us. Our students and graduates also spread the word.*

The number of division of state-funded study places is determined by the state commissioned education needs. Adults study at the Open University mainly for a fee. The Open University offers more than 70 study programmes; there are, however, some state funded places in 20 programmes.

- *For teachers and some other specialists. Those who are willing to work in schools can study free of charge.*

The university also accepts students with special needs. These students can use supportive services depending on their disability.

- *We have sign language interpretation service, taxi service for students who have mobility problems.*

For students with disabilities it is difficult to finish their studies within the required period (3+1 years). Now they can take an academic leave and to extend their study period.

The University Council adopted a decision in last April to allow students participate in studies during their academic leave.

- *They can catch up with others. Now they can also take a study leave.*

The issues related to students with special needs – learning materials, etc. – need to be studied in detail.

Taking into account the large number of adult students the university has been accessible to adults. Regional colleges also contribute to the accessibility of higher education.

#### INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

The teaching staff consists of people of different ages, both men and women. The language backgrounds of the teaching staff also differ. Some programmes are delivered in English, some consist parts that are delivered in English.

The majority of students come from Tallinn and Tartu and also from other counties. More than 500 students come from other countries.

#### OUTREACH

The number of adult students increased significantly at the beginning of the 2000s when the university carried out extensive information campaigns in Estonian counties.

- *Our former name was the Distance Learning Centre. We organised information days in counties and towns. It was important to inform people. Now they already know about us Former participants also spread the word.*

Establishing colleges in different regions has also helped to bring the university closer to people. While less than a third of all students are adults the share of adult students is considerably higher in regional colleges. Studying close to one's home reduces transport and accommodation costs.

- *We have problems with accommodation. We cannot guarantee accommodation in the Student Village. Accommodation is provided for distance learners only if there are places available. People stay with their relatives and friends. This adds to the costs.*

The colleges also offer evening and summer courses to local people.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

Tutors are used mainly in daytime study. Tutors help first year students and foreign students to become acquainted with the university and to solve possible problems. Adults who study on weekends do not use the help of tutors.

- *Our tutors are the study coordinators of faculties. They also help to sign various contracts, etc.*

Adult students participate less in extracurricular activities.

- *They stay away. They are not here all the time and they have families and work. Some groups have closer relations and organise various events.*

Information about admission requirements and learning opportunities is available at the university's website.

The Open University has also conducted studies to get feedback from students.

## TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The university has the School of Sciences that offers various courses to lower and upper secondary students. Some courses are e-courses – students can participate through the Internet. The School of Sciences also organises scientific competitions in Estonia and prepares secondary school students for international competitions.

In addition faculties organise study tours for secondary school students.

- *These tours are offered in different forms. The Faculty of Science and Technology has invited pupils to their chemistry and physics labs to see what is done and how and which are the employment opportunities after graduation. The aim is to broaden the horizon of pupils and to make them think in more realistic terms about their future. The medical faculty has invited pupils to see how doctors work. We need motivated next generation specialists.*

Representatives of faculties also go to schools to introduce their faculty.

- *The schools are not always interested – their schedules are very tight and it is difficult to find time. Our students who go to their former schools are good ambassadors.*

The choices of adults are more informed than those of the students who have come to the university immediately after finishing secondary school.

- *It is not easier to study at the Open University. Students need to do more independent work and to be more motivated.*

## ADMISSION POLICIES

The results of state exams are not taken into account in admission of adults. Some have finished secondary education before state exams were introduced.

- *They take a test and are interviewed; or they have to write an essay. The requirements differ from faculty to faculty.*

Studying is funded by the state for teachers; other disadvantaged groups do not have this opportunity, except for people with disabilities for whom a couple of places are reserved in daytime courses and in the Open University. However, there is a need for such places.

State funded study places are filled according to the rating of applicants.

Main support and additional support (transport allowance for students from other regions) is paid only to those students who study at state funded places (taken into account their academic performance).

Adults can apply for a subsistence benefit by filing an application and documents concerning their income.

- *A couple of weeks ago the university's lifelong learning principles were adopted. These principles include the policy of supporting underrepresented target groups.*

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR STUDIES

The university has a well functioning system of recognition of prior learning and work experience (VÖTA).

- *VÖTA is functioning well. All types of learning are taken into account, including informal learning. Recognition of work experience is more difficult.*

VÖTA is important for adults. Adults often discontinue their studies for reasons not related to the university. VÖTA helps them to return to their studies.

Applicants are very different. Some come from strong schools, have participated in national and international competitions or studied some subjects in depth.

- *Applicants who come from weaker schools have difficulties with linking different subjects – history, music, art, literature. They often cannot distinguish between what is important and what is not. They have problems with making notes and reading materials. Their essays reveal that they have the knowledge but they are not able to bring out what is important.*

## SUPPORTS

The university offers both psychological and career counselling.

- *Those whose functional literacy is inadequate receive counselling. Transfer from school to university may be tough. You have to be able to distinguish important from unimportant, to organize your studies. First year students are often discouraged by this responsibility and doubt whether they have chosen the right field of study. We offer training to teach them how to cope, how to learn to learn.*

Credit points are awarded for participation in this course. The main beneficiaries are those who have not studied for a longer period and need time to adjust. The course helps them to get used to the university life and learning routine.

- *It is a preventive course.*

Adult students can also consult a psychologist. For those who come from other regions it is more difficult to get an appointment with a psychologist because psychologists work only on weekdays.

- *Study coordinators are also there to give a shoulder to cry on if a student has problems with his/her studies or other problems.*

Counselling is available also in summer. Counselling is provided free of charge.

- *We also work in summer and people come to us. (...) Secondary school students have a vision of their future education but sometimes they doubt. Then they are looking for an advice – whether to study economics or physics? Counselling is provided in parallel to accepting applications.*

This also applies to adult learners. The majority of adult applicants know what they want but some only know that they want to study.

- *They would like to study but don't know what to study. They would like to develop personally... Such applicants have enrolled in philosophy courses and started religious studies.*

Counselling is needed when people want to learn a new profession.

- *For example an agricultural worker who wanted to become a teacher.*

Academic counselling is provided by faculty coordinators who also review contracts.

- *Learning is made easier for adults by the Internet – materials are available and they can study independently.*

Students at Open University can also study part time. However, part time students cannot draw a student's loan so the decision is not taken easily.

## DISTANCE EDUCATION

Open University students attend lectures and seminars by sessions from three to five times during the term. The volume of independent work is bigger. The study period is also longer – 4 years in bachelor studies and 2.5 years in master studies.

Not all courses are available through the Open University.

- *For example natural and exact sciences and medical studies – they have to do more practical work.*

In early years the opportunities offered by the Open University were introduced in counties. Now the university participates in information fairs and other events. Information is also available at the university's website.

- *The number of master's candidates has increased. People continue after having received their bachelor's degree.*

## COURSE CONTENT

As a classical university UT offers studies in various fields. The university has a strong support structure – the Educational Technology Centre – that helps faculties to develop e-learning opportunities and systems.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the current economic downturn to the availability of education.

- *It has been discussed that the system of supports needs to be reviewed and changed to take more into account the needs of students. It is difficult to say anything. Much depends on how the country will recover from the recession.*

Some students have difficulties with paying the tuition fee. Adults cannot get away from work on Fridays – they are afraid of losing their job.

- *The number of students may decrease but this is not certain. It may be that those who have discontinued their studies want to come back. If they can because sometimes the real life is more difficult than they imagine.*

**Additional questions according to SP3:**

The university offers various e-courses that enable students to study independently and to save on transport and accommodation costs. The Ministry of Education and Research has reserved state-funded study places for teachers.

Faculties and colleges introduce learning opportunities. To make the transfer from school or work easier the university offers preparatory courses.

Last autumn the university opened a child care centre; university employees and students can use the service at favourable prices.

### 3.2.3 Private higher educational institution (8.)

#### I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

##### General description

This private higher educational institution was established in 1996.

- *We have been in the educational market for 16 years.*

The institution offer four year programmes for charge. The cost of one academic year depends on the study form. Daytime study is most expensive, approximately EEK 25 000 per year. The institution started with 25 students; now the number of students reaches 1000.

The institution has departments in several towns – Tallinn, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve and Narva – in order to ensure better access for students. This is the only institution of higher education in Estonia with Russian as the only language of instruction. The students come from various backgrounds – there are Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Kazakhs but also Estonians who have studied Russian as the primary foreign language at school (foreign language A).

- *If Estonian students have difficulties because of the language they can write papers and make presentations in Estonian. We have such individual approach.*

The programmes (mainly on economy and management) have been officially accredited.

#### II STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

##### INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES: STRUCTURE AND ANALYSIS

In early days the majority of students (~70%) were those who had just finished upper secondary education and only one third were adult learners who were already working. Now, the situation is the opposite – about 70% of students are adults. The number of students has increased mainly due to the fact that the institution was the first to offer higher education in the region (North-eastern Estonia).

The reasons for starting studies vary.

- *There are students who already have higher or vocational education; they wish to have higher level or more up-to-date education. There are also unemployed people who do not want to waste time and dedicate the period of unemployment to studies.*

A couple of last years have seen an increase in the number of older participants – aged 40 to 50 or even older. The reason is twofold: rise in pension age and job requirements:

- *They work but they do not have the necessary qualification... There are a number of such people here.*

A new group has also emerged – prisoners.

- *It seems that the form of study we offer – distance learning – suits them.... The government should probably simplify some rules... prisoners are not allowed to use the computer and therefore cannot contact their teacher.*

Assignments are sent to such students by mail.

- *They get textbooks and other materials from their family members. We have a library including materials developed by our teachers – they can use those materials.*

Some students are former drug addicts and alcoholics.

- *They have understood that only education can save them. (...) They have overcome their addiction and their current jobs are related either to the unemployed, ex-convicts or rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholics. There are organisations that help such people.*

These people study social management to acquire knowledge and skills necessary in their work.

There are also students with special needs; the institution has created necessary conditions for them.

- *For example visually impaired people – they have very good hearing memory. Last year one visually impaired person graduated with honours. This year we have a visually impaired young man among our students. There are also some people with other types of disability.*

Disadvantaged and marginal groups need financial support, e.g. a student loan under favourable conditions. Or a grant or education allowance.

- *A student loan is enough to pay the tuition fee but you also need money to pay your bills...*

For a couple of years the institution has not had any state-commissioned study places.

### Admission of disadvantaged groups

The institution does not have any quotas for students from disadvantaged groups; neither has it been defined which people belong to disadvantaged groups. The institution accepts everybody. Students pay tuition fee; their families help them with expenses and many draw a student loan to pay the fee.

There is no special department or special employees who deal with the inclusion of disadvantaged and under-represented group. However, channels to inform potential students are carefully selected to make sure that the information reaches a large range of target groups. Heads of departments deal with inclusion of students and potential problems.

Since disadvantaged groups are not defined it is difficult to point out any characteristics. However, it is possible to determine the share of students with special needs – 3-5%. The institution is willing to admit all students with special need who apply.

### Favourable access

The institution does not have any entrance tests. Candidates present evidence of formal education and are interviewed.

- *Our doors are open to everybody. The rest depends on students – not everybody will get their diploma.*

The number of students would probably be bigger if there were more state-commissioned study places or the least privileged students could get some financial support. They need financial support more than moral support from their families.

Despite the fact that the institution charges tuition fee there are probably more students from disadvantaged groups than in other higher educational institutions because access is simpler – one only needs to have a certificate of upper secondary education.

## INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

There are no employees who have belonged to a disadvantaged group. If being unemployed is considered to be belonging to a disadvantaged group then some teachers have been temporarily unemployed in the early nineties.

- *They are brilliant teachers and they are familiar with this social problem – being unemployed and having difficulties. (...) Our teachers value their jobs. They are experienced teachers and specialists; some have worked in enterprises. Our close-knit and very competent staff comprises people with different backgrounds. (p. 6)*

The student body is also very diverse. Younger students are aware of the problems of older students and vice versa. Because of the demographic situation – the number of secondary school pupils is decreasing - the share of adult students will probably increase in the future.

- *This is why we are planning to include more unemployed people. We help them to get a study loan and will probably reduce the fee. (...) One of our graduates works with the Unemployment Insurance Fund and potential students get information from him. Our graduates help to find new students.*

## OUTREACH

There are no special activities targeted to disadvantaged groups. However, the institution does have contacts with local social workers.

- *I think that social departments spread information about our institution – our graduates are everywhere. (...) They recommend us to people from disadvantaged groups, to people who wish to change their life course, to improve their status... There is a number of positive examples.(...) People who have experienced difficulties can better understand the problems of others (disadvantaged people).*

Adults get information also from their family and friends.

- *We have whole families studying – mother, father, children; or husband and wife.*

The institution is trying to be visible everywhere where there are potential students. They meet heads of enterprises and personnel managers, information leaflets are disseminated in shopping centres, information fairs; twice a year the representatives of the institution visit schools to talk to potential students.

- *Every year we have a special conference for secondary school pupils „Ideas of young people from North-eastern Estonia” introducing various business ideas and social events. (...) We are supported by the town government – they even provide money for the event. Young people have many wonderful ideas, especially concerning social*

*problems because everybody faces those problems. They have fantastic ideas and suggestions. Our students also attend those events...The selection board includes representatives of enterprises, the authors of best ideas get a prize.*

The institution advertises itself in the media – newspapers, the radio, TV – trying to increase the range of potential students. The best advertisement, however, are the graduates.

- *We had a graduate forum to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our institution. (...) Many well-known business people attended the event. They can recommend us to their employees.*

The institution has also offered language courses and courses on other subjects to local people. They offer both group and individual tuition.

The institution has also participated in several projects concerning convicted minors.

- *We offered computer courses and preparatory courses in Russian to minors on probation. These non-formal courses were offered during two years. Many participants returned to school afterwards and completed upper secondary education.*

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

There are no tutors in the institution. Students can discuss their problems and get advice from department heads. There is a daytime study department, evening study department and distance study department. Problems differ but the institution always tries to find a solution.

The institution organises various events – freshmen inauguration, meetings between different departments, etc..

- *Study tours for freshmen and others. We have a café where we celebrate 8 March, St Valentine's Day, etc.. These events unite our students. Graduation day is very important. The town government helps to organise the graduation day which is held in the community centre. Parents and family members of students come... Representatives of the town government... speeches, gifts....*

People from disadvantaged groups like to participate in these events which provide them an opportunity for self-fulfilment.

People who need more detailed information can visit the institution or call.

#### TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The institution offers preparatory courses. Tuition fee is smaller. The purpose of these courses is to prepare potential students for studies, to align their knowledge with that of others. Participation in preparatory courses is taken into account in admission. The courses are offered in tow towns and are meant to those who have not completed upper secondary education, i.e. school-leavers who wish to continue their education in this particular institution.

- *These are distance courses*

These courses are also targeted to disadvantaged groups and those who completed their upper secondary education some time ago.

- *... those who re not confident... they have forgotten and need to refresh their memories.*

The courses are open to everybody, including those who do not plan to start studying in this particular institution.

- *Some parents believe that children must have something to do in order not to be led astray so they enrol their children to our preparatory courses. It doesn't harm... on the contrary, participation in our courses may help some to get better results at state exams.*

## ADMISSION POLICIES

The institution cannot offer direct financial support or exempt students from paying the fee. They can, however, apply flexible payment terms:

- *We can extend the term for payment for up to six months if the person loses his/her job or becomes insolvent for any other serious reason. The study period can also be extended – from 8 terms to 9. During the 9<sup>th</sup> term students have to pay only for credit points earned. Fee is reduced when more than one person from one family studies in our institution.*

Some students with special needs participated in a programme funded by the city government of Moscow; Russian students studying abroad are supported within that programme.

- *The head of our institution is a member of the programme council. The grant is sufficient to finance studies and all three of our visually impaired students got the grant.*

## RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies and work experience are recognised by the institution.

- *People can reduce the study period from four to three or even two years. It is a kind of social support.*

Only formal education is taken into account, i.e. studies in an accredited educational institution.

- *This is the condition set by the Ministry of Education and research. Course organised at workplaces are not recognised. We take into account work experience if the student's course paper is related to the field.*

Those who have studied a subject somewhere else do not have to attend classes – they can sit the exam immediately.

The admission requirement is completed upper secondary education. Upper secondary education should ensure essential skills and knowledge necessary for studying in a higher educational institution.

- *Unfortunately, the level of literacy worsened... This is so everywhere.*

Some students drop out because they overestimated their abilities.

## SUPPORTS

The institution does not have their own psychologist nor are relevant services provided. If necessary, department heads provide counselling.

- *Our psychologists are the heads of departments.*

Study counselling is also a responsibility of department heads. Career planning is included in several subjects. The courses on psychology, sociology, law, business ethics, business etiquette and communication are compulsory.

Prospective students are counselled during admission interviews. Teachers and heads of departments introduce the institution, programmes and subjects. Candidates can meet various teachers. This service is provided free of charge.

- *These consultations are both explanatory and „propagandist“.*

Besides preparatory courses candidates are offered courses on certain subjects – math, English, IT.

- *In Narva we offer Estonian language courses for those who prepare for final exams.*

The institution has a library and students do not have to buy their textbooks or materials. There is also an e-library consisting of materials prepared by teachers. The e-library helps to save money and time. Other types of financial support are not offered. Best students can benefit from reduced tuition fee (reduction of 5-10%).

## DISTANCE EDUCATION

Studies are organised in various forms taking into account the composition of the student body and their needs. Distance learning is one possibility to study.

- *Adults study mainly in evening courses, distance or partly distance courses. We also offer possibility to study as an extern – students get their materials in modules and can sit the exams at their convenience. These are students who temporarily work on another town/region or abroad.*

Tuition fee is also smaller than in daytime studies.

- *Evening courses are cheaper by 2000 EEK and distance courses by 4000 EEK.*

Each candidate is interviewed by the selection board to identify which study form suits them best depending on their work, marital status, number of children, etc.

## COURSE CONTENT

The institution prepares many social workers. Students who study social work have practical training in social departments or personnel departments. The same method is used in other departments also.

- *Students who study tourism undergo practical training in travel agencies.*

If there was a comprehensive policy promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups many more people would certainly continue their studies. This particular institution is a good example – despite the fact that students have to pay for their studies there are many students from disadvantaged groups.

The present economic situation does not favour access to education. The number of those who discontinue their studies because they do not have the necessary means will probably increase. The only thing the institution can do to help those students is to extend terms of payment.

### **Additional questions according to SP3:**

#### *SUPPORT FROM THE INSTITUTION TO SOLVE THE STUDENTS' TRANSPORT PROBLEMS*

*Transport is a big problem indeed. Our students live in different places and have to travel. Travel fare concessions are minimum. We have organised video conferences and so-called TV bridges to reduce the necessity to travel.*

This is all the institution can do to help. Travel fare concessions are meant for students studying in state-commissioned study places.

#### *CHILD CARE*

*We are planning to organise child care – to prepare a room where children could play while their parents are studying.*

#### *INCLUSION OF ADULTS*

*To include more adults convenient and diverse study forms are needed; the institution should become closer to students, offer on-line courses. Learning possibilities should be advertised more and we have done that already.*

#### *LIFELONG LEARNING*

*We definitely support lifelong learning. Distance learning opportunities can help here.*

### 3.3 Non-Formal education

#### 3.3.1 Non-formal education organization (9.)

Interview with the head of the institution

#### I INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

##### GENERAL INFORMATION – HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTION

This is an informal education institution established on 2001. The predecessor of the institution was MTÜ Koostöökoda, a non-profit association established by seven people in 1998. The target group of the association were people with special needs who were offered training, study trips, meetings with interesting people, etc. The activities of the association were financed by various projects, the town government provided venues for meetings.

Then the activities were expanded and young people were included in the target group. A youth centre was established in the premises of the association. Logically the activities included career counselling provided for the youth of the county. This area is financed by the state and from EU projects.

In 2001 the informal education centre was established. A programme of life studies was prepared and accredited. The organisation also became a member of the Estonian Non-Formal Adult Education Association and moved to the country, to an old manor house. The centre continues to cooperate with MTÜ Koostöökoda to be more flexible, to save on expenses and to offer activities for different target groups.

##### FINANCING

The school's activities are financed from three main sources: some programmes are funded by the Ministry of Education and Research from the funds received from EU (programmes with duration of five years), some courses are supported by the local authorities and from fees and some programmes are financed as projects.

The Ministry of Education and Research provides EEK 200 000 per year. This sum includes training providers' fees and accounting fees.

The turnover from fees is about EEK 30 000 per year. The support received from local authorities depends on their resources and attitudes and also from earlier cooperation experiences. County governments play an important role in shaping the attitudes of local authorities.

- *If a county government is interested in the development of the region local governments join in. It is good that our activities are valued and that we can support local governments in their aspirations (p. 4).*

##### OFFERED COURSES

The Ministry of Education and Research has financed two programmes. The first programme, „Learning improves the quality of life”, lasted for five years.

- *The topics were psychology, career planning... We cooperated with the local school and social services. (p. 1)*

The second, ongoing programme, „Adult education in informal education institutions”, will continue until 2013. The programme promotes lifelong learning to enable people to keep their jobs and to cope better. The programme offers career studies, computer training and language courses for adults. The courses are intended for working people; the unemployed are not accepted. The latter are offered courses by the Labour Market Board<sup>23</sup>.

- *Life has changed and the unemployed also need such training. On the other hand, those who have a job may soon become unemployed ...(p. 2)*

The centre also offers art and handicraft courses but only if these are related to work or professional knowledge.

- *It is not allowed to offer courses that are dedicated to just handicraft or art – these are considered to be merely hobby groups. The course has to have a programme and it has to be related to the labour market. So our art teacher has prepared a programme including various techniques that can be used in work. The course was suspended because we did not know whether we would have money for it. Now it is open again. We have also added other features that can be used in work.*
- *We are planning to offer a book binding course; the teacher is a freelancer and will also talk about how to start own business and how to survive in the business world....*

The centre also offers courses for fee – a baby school, women’s health hour, summer camp for families (partly funded by the local government), etc. With support from four local governments a programme for leaders and a training course for parents were launched. A number of people have enrolled for a course on setting flowers.

- *We have also had courses on art therapy and motivation development, including conflict management and coping techniques; we also had a social skills workshop for pupils but it was not very popular.*

The emphasis is on courses supporting personal development and coping in the labour market. These courses are rather popular – more than 30 people have enrolled. Courses offered free of charge are especially sought after.

The centre offers computer courses and language courses for various levels.

- *I do not think we will be short of participants (...). Personal development and getting to know oneself are also popular. Art, handicraft... we also have a teacher of massage.*

However, when planning a course the centre has to consider whether there enough money. The courses outside the programme can be either project based or offered for fee.

## STAFF

The centre employs only one person on permanent basis; five people work part-time.

- *This is a wide spread practice in Estonian informal education.*

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<sup>23</sup> Since 1 May 2009 the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund.

Training providers are hired on contractual basis to provide particular courses. There are certain people who are invited to provide training. These include teachers from the local school (psychologist, IT teacher) and also other training providers, specialists and practicing professionals. Some courses are provided by the centre's own staff.

Providers of non-formal and informal courses are certainly paid less than teachers in formal education. A big problem is the lack of general support system. The existing support is limited to financing particular training programmes for which the state has established concrete requirements.

- *There is no support system for non-profit associations. It is difficult to survive. We can pay the teachers and the training manager but we cannot pay for managing the organisation. We are in a very difficult situation if we cannot get support from local governments. We work without any pay. The Estonian Non-formal Education Association has dealt with these problems. Some day maybe the government will support us too.... In other countries centres like ours get support from the government. When the economic situation improves the local governments will support us more.*

## TEACHING METHODS

Lecturers are people who can teach adults, are competent professionals and good speakers; they can create an open learning environment and have a dialogue with learners. Feedback questionnaires received after training confirm that the choice of lectures has been proved right.

## II LIFELONG LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

### PARTICIPANTS

The numbers of both courses and participants have increased constantly. 2009 saw more participants than ever.

- *In previous years the number of participants in courses was 200-250 people in a year; up to one third of them participated in several courses. This year (2009) we have more newcomers.*

The participants are mainly local inhabitants but also people from other municipalities. The majority of participants are women. A typical participant is a 40-50 year old woman. In terms of educational level there are more people who have completed upper secondary education.

- *It is more difficult to attract people who do not cope with life so well, for example those with a low income. Those who are disadvantaged do not come to us and we cannot find them either. This is a major problem. (...) Those people often lack motivation. However, there are some who have heard about the courses. Some are school drop-outs....*

### IMPROVING ACCESS FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The target group of participants has expanded in recent years. Moving to the country has helped; local people get to know trainers and premises.

- *Local people have discovered us. They help to organise events. For example we organised a cleaning up day and many local people participated. After such events they also get interested in courses.*

The number of men among participants is also increasing. The number of male participants depends on the topic.

- *We wanted to support the development of local government as an organisation and organised team work training. It was the first time we had more men than women in the group. They were very satisfied with the training.*

Men are interested in training that is more related to the practical side of life.

- *Another successful event was a course on project preparation and management. Many participants were men. We just need to find a topic that would interest men. There were participants from other municipalities; they got information from our website and from other sources. People have started to look for training, in particular for courses that are free of charge. We have a photography course and men are interested in it. They want something related to technology and real life.*

The „right“ choice of topics offered may help to increase the range of participants. Information on which groups have an interest in which topics is provided by former participants:

- *We have a feedback form which we ask the participants to complete after each course. We get a lot of information from these forms ....*

Also the participants help to expand the range of target groups:

- *Each participant is promoting the courses. They talk to their friends and more people learn about us.*

The organisation has its own website where people can find information; people can get information also on the websites of the Non-Formal Education Association and the Ministry of Education and Research.

It is difficult to compare the activities of the organisation with the activities of other informal educational institutions.

- *It is difficult to compare. I have little information about others. Every organisation is focused on different things.*

## LINKS WITH FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

It is difficult to assess whether and how the courses are linked to formal adult education.

- *Hard to say... we do not stay in touch with former participants...*

Cooperation with institutions offering formal adult education is limited to using their staff (psychologist, IT teacher, etc.).

- *Our approach is different. We are trying to be more practical, to relate our course to real life. We are less bound by rules and look at the bigger picture.*

- *I have worked with school teachers for a long time. At first they are very matter of fact: „We do not have time for games; let’s do it and we are finished...” But the more they work with us the more relaxed they become. Life goes on and teachers have to learn to involve participants more. Sometimes they doubt whether this is possible. Teachers have been acting within boundaries for a very long time but these boundaries are starting to crumble.*

The convergence of attitudes and teaching methods encourages further cooperation between formal educational schools and informal education providers and will hopefully help to change the attitude of teachers towards informal education and encourage them to use more diverse teaching methods.

## RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Unfortunately cooperation between formal and informal educational institutions has been limited. In particular this applies to recognitions of previous studies and work experience (VÕTA).

- *Unfortunately knowledge acquired in informal education is not recognised by formal education. I think that the VÕTA concept is not working... Efforts have been made but it does not seem to function properly. Informal education is seen as a hobby club – it is not taken very seriously ...*

There is no real cooperation with formal education providers to implement VÕTA. Therefore there is no information about whether and how knowledge acquired in informal education is taken into account when people continue their education.

- *We know that people are motivated to continue their studies but whether the things they have learned on our courses are recognised or not, we do not know.*

All participants receive a certificate specifying the hours and content of their studies.

- *The certificate specifies the school, No of education licence, course, topics, duration, financing. I do not know if anyone has used our certificate and if it has been of any help. It seems that it may help to find a job but otherwise....*

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

In Estonia the main organisation to deal with the development of informal education is the Non-formal Education Association.

- *A number of unique education centres have emerged and they are doing wonderful job. They have to fight for their survival. It is not easy to get funding for their courses. They have to work hard and compete with open universities.*

This opinion is based on the experience of other institutions. Because of its location in a remote region, this particular organisation has not felt that they have to compete with formal education providers.

The institution has a plan of courses up to 2013; then the programme funded by the Ministry of Education and Research will end. Non-profit organisations can not rely on stable financing outside the above mentioned programmes. The economically difficult times do not allow

making longer plans. This sets limits to both the content of courses and the number of participants as well as to the extent of cooperation with local authorities. On the other hand, difficult times have increased people's interest in training.

- *The current economic situation has made people more active. We could see this when we offered a course on project management. We find new ideas from feedback questionnaires – people suggest new topics, tell us what they would like to learn.*

Participating in informal education encourages people to enrol in other courses or to start formal adult education.

- *Seeing that learning is not so difficult encourages people to go on. (.....) Our learning environment and approach to teaching are different, less lectures and more hands-on activities.*

The more practical approach and more open learning environment are what differentiate informal education from formal education.

- *It seems that adult learners are better motivated and more aware of what they want. They can relate the skills and knowledge to those acquired earlier. The atmosphere is more relaxed. They do not have to prove themselves. When I went back to school as an adult I discovered that my attitude was completely different. It is inspiring to know that you can learn and are not rejected. Life changes and we change with it and we can keep pace with those changes. This is what I like about informal learning.*

## STRATEGIES FOR THE INFORMAL EDUCATION SECTOR

The Adult Education Development Plan 2009-2013 includes a chapter dedicated to non-formal and informal education.<sup>24</sup> However, there are no regional networks of informal education providers neither is there a relevant strategy in place.

- *It would be useful. Currently everybody acts on their own. The need for training should be investigated in connection with the Rural Development Plan.*

A comprehensive strategy would have a great impact on informal education.

For both existing and potential training providers it is important which courses to offer.

- *An informal education institution can not start independently. It needs support from a larger organisation. Informal education contributes to regional development. It is also a good opportunity for local teachers for professional development.*

It helps to have a local organisation or establishment (e.g. library, community centre) which people are used to and which could offer various courses. Involvement of local authorities is very important.

The problems related to informal education are mainly financial:

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<sup>24</sup> Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education 2009. Enabling non-formal study for adults in order to increase their competitiveness and to develop their creativity, talent, initiative and social responsibility, p.22

- *It is difficult to work as a non-profit organisation. It is difficult to survive without a solid support system. I have also heard that some institutions have to compete with the formal education system although we have not had such problems yet.*

### 3.3.1 Vocational educational centre (10)

Interview with the head of continuing training department

## I INSTITUTIONS PROFILE

### Background information.

This is one of the largest vocational education centre located in Tallinn and offering vocational secondary education both to Estonian and Russian language students. The institution has recently expanded because different vocational schools were joined to it; the centre has well equipped up-to-date classrooms and workshops. The students study professions of both industrial and service sector. The centre has for years hosted international competitions for students who study hairstyling, sewing and automatics. The centre also organises fashion shows for students.

More than 600 students are admitted each year.

The interview concerns non-formal education offered by the centre: courses and training days.

Compared with other vocational schools the centre offers fewer courses to adults. There are few continuing education courses and the school has only recently become more active in the field and hired a person whose responsibility is coordinating continuing education.

- *This is a relatively new area for us. The department of continuing education was established only a year ago. Before that we had only few courses for welders. This is all new.*

During the past year training was offered to 300 people. About half of them participated in short welders' courses (from a couple of hours to a day).

### Financing

The department of continuing education offers free of charge courses in fields related to professions taught in formal education. The courses are financed by the Ministry of Education and Research from the European Social Fund. Participants do not have to pay for the courses.

The centre also offers courses for fee (300-1000 EEK per day/per person). The fee is paid either by participants or their employers depending on whether people enrol themselves or are enrolled by their employer.

### COURSES

The school offers vocational continuing training at different levels; the aim is to help people cope better with their work. Enterprises send their employees (from one or two to 8-10 people) to these courses. If there are only one or two people from one enterprise the courses are free of charge; if there are more the course is paid by their employer.

The duration of courses differs. Welders are offered short courses for fee. These courses are meant to check their vocational skills and to issue relevant certificates.

Courses are also offered on other professions; levels range from beginners to experienced workers who need to improve their skills or plan to take a professional examination.

- *The aim of initial training is to teach general skills and to introduce basic working methods. Some people have worked in the field for quite a long time and then they come here and discover new methods. Our teachers show them all methods in three days. Participants are satisfied with the courses.*

Information about various courses can be found at the centre's website but participants in non-formal education come mainly through enterprises. The centre has good relations with enterprises who contact the school when they want their employees to have training in a certain fields. The department of continuing training informs enterprises about upcoming courses and available places.

## STAFF CONDITIONS

Organisation of courses is the responsibility of one person – the head of the department of continuing training.

All teachers come from the centre; some of them have 6 to 10 years of experience in the fields. Teachers are paid by hour similarly to formal education. If a course is popular and there are many participants they may be paid more.

The government commissions courses for one year but reporting covers shorter periods. There are no longer plans with regard to courses for charge. Courses are offered to employees of both industrial and service sector.

## PARTICIPANTS

The majority of participants are men because the centre is the only provider of many courses targeted to professionals working in fields where the majority of workers are men.

- *Courses for men are in demand – hydraulics, pneumatics, etc. We are the only providers...*

People show more interest in the courses because the up-to-date classrooms and workshops of the centre are used.

The number of training providers who offer continuing and re-training courses for women is much bigger.

Participants are very diverse:

- *Participants of very different educational level come from all over Estonia. There are people with lower secondary education and those with higher education. The age of participants is also different. There are managers and top specialists but also unskilled workers. Enterprises also send to courses workers who acquired their qualification long time ago; these people learn new working methods and get to know new machinery.*

Courses are offered in both Estonian and Russian. One group can include both Estonian and Russian speaking participants. Teachers are fluent in both languages. Practical activities – teaching working methods, showing new machinery, etc. – help to overcome the language barrier.

The centre has not made any special effort to include people from disadvantaged groups, except for an unsuccessful attempt to offer training to the unemployed.

- *We sent information to the Labour Board and asked for feedback to see if they are interested. We never got an answer. I contacted them and was told that they do not refer the unemployed to courses. An unemployed person has to fill a form and if there is an available job which requires training and the employer agrees to employ this person only then the person is referred to us.*

The average group size is 8 to 10 people, sometimes less.

#### LINKS WITH FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

Quite often people who have received initial training decide to continue learning the profession. They get the taste of it and learn that they like the profession.

- *It has happened that a participant in an initial course has become interested in the profession and has continued in formal adult education.*

Those who want to master the profession also participate in formal education.

- *These people are usually older – over 30 – and they prefer distance learning. All distance students are adults.*

Non-formal training is linked to formal adult education mainly through students who enrol in formal adult education. Contacts obtained during continuing training help to find enterprises that accept trainees. We can choose enterprises if we know their field of activity.

The complexity of courses varies. Since most participants come from enterprises the level of a course depends on which employee groups need training – whether they are beginners or experienced specialists – and also on which machinery and technology are used by the enterprise. Courses are tailored to suit the needs of employers.

- *Some employers want training that is focussed only on certain brands of tools.*

Connections with other training providers are scarce. The centre cooperates with other schools through different projects: for example vocational Estonian related to leather industry is taught in cooperation with a private art school.

The main partners of the centre are employers.

#### RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Prior learning and work experience are recognised mainly in the fields where it is easy to check the level of knowledge and skills.

After completion of a course all participants receive a certificate specifying the volume and content of learning. Certificates are used mainly to prove one's skills in the labour market; employers take certificates into account. There is no information about how the certificates are recognised by other educational institutions.

#### INCREASING ACCESS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Learning is made more accessible by offering free of charge courses.

- *People and enterprises are poor. Free of charge courses give enterprises an opportunity to send at least one or two employees to training.*

Individual learners, including Russian speaking people, are also interested in free training.

- *Russians are either referred to us by their employers or find the information elsewhere. They are more interested in courses on welding. Welding is an area where there are traditionally more Russians.*

*Motoring is less popular. There are Russians in formal education learning the profession of a car mechanic but very few participate in continuing training.*

The information channels to advertise courses are chosen depending on the nature of a course. For example hairstylists are contacted individually by phone.

- *Hairstylists are mainly self-employed or work in SMEs. We call them and offer participation in our courses.*

Sometimes courses are advertised in the free of charge local newspaper Linnaleht.

## TUTORING METHODS

Teachers like working with adults because adults are more motivated. Most have long-term working experience and it is easy to explain new material to them. As the share of practical training is quite big everyone is actively involved in learning and participants can be given individual tasks depending on their skills and experience.

If a course is commissioned by an enterprise the needs of this enterprise are taken into account in preparing the course.

- *Some companies commission courses for different levels and for different groups of employees.*

All participants complete a feedback form and assess the training and the teachers; they are also asked whether they would participate in a similar training in the future.

Teachers themselves participate in various continuing training: the centre has had a course on active learning methods, Estonian language courses, re-training courses for those whose profession is not in demand any more: The latter was organised by the Integration and Migration Foundation.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Courses are planned taking into account the availability of teachers and the number of potential participants.

- *Enterprises keep an eye on our offers. Both enterprises and participants are particularly interested in free of charge courses. In the current economic situation many cannot afford to pay for training.*

Enterprises that are interested in training contact the centre and agree on the content, target group and time of training.

Since the school has modern learning facilities and experienced teachers it is able to offer more courses. Naturally, everything depends on the demand.

The centre is not aware of which courses are offered by other schools and has little information about overall development plans in the field of non-formal education. Neither does the centre cooperate with local authorities. The main partners are enterprises. Individual learners are also welcomed.

From the perspective of the centre non-formal education and formal adult education complement each other.

#### DEVELOPING A STRATEGY OF NON-FORMAL TRAINING

Since the centre has offered non-formal training only for a short time they are not yet up-to-date with the latest developments in the field.

Offering non-formal education provides an opportunity to learn about the needs and expectations of the labour market – from the perspectives of both employers and employees – to cooperate with employers in both non-formal and formal adult education. Participants get in contact with enterprises, find a place for practical training and later maybe even a job.

The representative of the centre could not assess the impact of recession to non-formal education in Estonia.

- *Based on my experience I can say that free of charge courses have become more popular. People enquire about new courses, visit our website... People have also become more responsible. Once they have enrolled on a course they do not quit easily. Attendance is good. Training makes people more confident and gives them hope that they can keep their job. I believe that people have become more interested in training.*

### 3.3. 3 Vocational school (3.)

Interview with the head of continuing training department of a vocational school

#### I BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The interview concerns non-formal education offered by the school to various target groups.

Compared with other vocational educational institutions the school offers more adult education. The volume of continuous education is remarkable: the number of participants in various courses is equal to the number of students in formal education – more than 500. The school premises are full of learners from early morning to late night. Some courses are provided on Saturdays.

- *We have all necessary facilities and qualified staff. We can offer evening courses from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Efficiency is high.*

The school has reached the point where no additional courses can be offered.

The course has offered adult continuous education for at least 50 years.

- *Teaching adults is nothing new for us. We have always done this.*

The number of courses and participants increased significantly in 2007 when resources became available from EU funds.

Taking into account the ratio of formal and non-formal learners (1:1) the school is a leader in the field of adult education – not only by the number of participants but also by the number of hours since most courses are long-term courses.

#### Financing

Courses are financed from various sources. A large part is financed from EU funds and by the Ministry of Education and Research. Participation in such courses is free of charge for both working people and the unregistered unemployed.

Some courses are paid for by employers who send their employees to the school or ask the school to provide training in the company.

Some participants pay themselves for courses. The number of such participants has decreased due to the increased share state commissioned education.

In the past some courses were commissioned and paid for by the Labour Market Board.

It is difficult to assess the cost of a typical course but the estimated cost is between 8 000 and 10 000 EEK per participant. The cost of one hour is EEK 60 plus a coefficient according to the additional costs related to the course (food products used in cookery classes, petrol used in driving classes, etc.).

#### CONTENT OF COURSES

The majority of courses are aimed at teaching or improving vocational skills. The school offers more than 20 courses to people who work in different fields (construction, transport, animal husbandry, accounting, catering, service, trade, social work). The number of courses varies according to the area of activity. Courses are offered at different levels – from beginners to highly qualified specialists who want to take a professional qualification exam.

For example there are driving courses for different categories (B, C, D, T); courses end with an exam and the participants get a driving licence of the relevant category.

Local people are offered computer training and English language courses.

- *We also offered German but nobody was interested.*

Language and computer courses are very popular. Many continue at the next level.

The duration of courses for adults varies from 20 to 200 hours. The average length of a course is 80 hours.

In the past the school offered vocational re-training for unemployed people and adaptation courses for the long-term unemployed.

- *They have not been working for a long time. They need psychological help and even treatment in hospital to be able to attend courses and receive knowledge. Otherwise the whole work is pointless. They need help and attention.*

## STAFF CONDITIONS

Courses are delivered mainly by the teachers of the school; sometimes lecturers are hired outside the school – top specialists, university teachers.

- *To give the participants an opportunity to learn from the best ...*

Teachers are paid similarly to formal education plus remuneration for overtime. External lecturers are paid according to their usual rates, including remuneration for academic degree.

## TARGET GROUPS

Because of the content of courses (construction, metal work, driving) the number of men is higher among participants.

Courses on cooking, social work and sales are more attractive to women.

Participants in language and computer courses are men and women of all ages – from schoolchildren to pensioners.

- *Even retired people come; they want to learn how to use the computer.*

Participants have usually lower education than an average participant in continuous training – they have lower secondary, secondary, vocational or secondary vocational education – because the courses are intended mainly for low skilled workers and people working in the field of service. Some people have not even finished lower secondary education. The number of participants with higher education is small –nursing, computer and language courses have had some participants with higher education.

Group size depends on the topic and whether the course is for fee or free of charge. The average group size is between 8 and 12 people.

## LINKS WITH FORMAL EDUCATION

Courses are offered at different levels. Participants can start from the beginner's level and then continue in adult formal education either in the same school or elsewhere. Depending on the topic and content of the course participants can continue at the next level. Those

who complete courses that prepare for professional qualification exams have to work for a certain period after taking the exam before they can take a higher level exam. Therefore they return to the school after some time to prepare for the higher level exam.

All participants receive a certificate specifying the content and duration of training. Employers and educational institutions take the completion of such courses into account. There is no precise information about which educational institutions recognise non-formal education and which don't.

- *I have heard that the University of Life Sciences recognises our certificates and students do not have to take the same course again. Institutions of professional higher education also recognise our certificates.*

As the school offers courses at different levels the school's own graduates can also participate in continuous training as advanced learners.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

It is logical to recognise participant's prior learning and existing skills. The school determines in cooperation with participants or employers what participants should learn and what they already know.

## ACCESS TO COURSES

The school has a website where people can find information about all courses. Potential participants contact the school to enrol on a course. The school has also advertised its courses in newspapers.

People are especially interested in free courses.

The school's reputation and the fact that it is well known in the region is an advantage. The school is cooperating with local authorities, companies and general educational schools. Teachers introduce courses at various information events. This has increased the number of participants and brought new orders for training in enterprises.

- *A metal company wanted a course on theory and technology of metal work for their employees. We delivered four courses.*

Free courses and driving courses are carried out according to approved programmes. Other courses can be adapted according to the participants' needs and requirements.

## TEACHING METHODS

Teachers and lecturers are all qualified specialists with long-term teaching experience. Teachers receive training on various topics – e.g. how to involve and motivate learners. Teachers have proven that they are able to motivate learners, even those who have discontinued their education earlier.

Each course has objectives to be reached; some courses end with a final test.

- *The participants in the course for shop assistants took the professional qualification exam.*

Participants are asked to complete a feedback questionnaire.

- *They are asked questions about how did they like the course, what did they learn, whether they would participate in a similar course in the future, etc. The questionnaires are maintained for three years.*

Feedback is gathered continuously and teachers are informed about the results so that they could make changes – treat a topic more profoundly, etc.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The school's capacity to offer courses has reached its maximum. Until a new building is completed the number of courses cannot be increased, except for courses offered in enterprises.

The school is also keeping an eye on the developments in the labour market and is ready to make changes in terms of content and target groups depending on the demand and educational needs.

The biggest challenge is to determine which course to offer to guarantee better opportunities for participants in the labour market and to contribute to economic growth.

- *I wish there was a wise man who could tell us which skills are needed to help the country out of the recession ... I believe that education providers should know where the country is heading and what kind of workers are needed. In which direction we should move. The government should also help to create jobs otherwise our work is pointless.*

The school can offer various courses to different target groups, including courses for those who have finished formal education, to those who wish to improve their skills and qualification. The school has the facilities and staff necessary for reacting quickly to the changes in the labour market. Participants receive a certificate and employers can be confident that people actually have the skills and knowledge specified on the certificate.

The school has not offered training for the unemployed for some time.

- *The Labour Market Board is so bureaucratic – we had to prepare a file of 25 pages to train one person. You cannot provide training in the evening, the course must end at 5 p.m., the day can not be longer than 8 hours, and participants can not attend courses at weekends... A long list of requirements. However, it seems that things are going to change; ministry officials have declared that. The Ministry of Social Affairs could learn from the Ministry of Education and Research how things should be done ...*

## DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR THE NON-FORMAL SECTOR

The respondent has little information about the developments in the field of non-formal education.

- *I will probably receive such information soon but I do not have it at the moment. Adult education is less developed than in other countries. I was in Ireland and their opinion was that offering courses for the unemployed is better than leaving them alone and letting them to alienate from work. If a person completed a course and did not find a job he can enrol on another course and is paid for it. He*

*has something to do, a purpose. Here we leave the unemployed alone and then complain that they have lost motivation ....*

The respondents however admitted that things have started to change. While in the past non-formal education was paid for by participants or employers then now:

- *The government is supporting participants in adult non-formal education – both employers and participants. This is much needed.*

There is no regional strategy concerning adult education. The local authorities, enterprises and schools should be involved more. The school cooperates with different partners, including general educational institutions.

We probably have closer relations with schools than other vocational educational institutions.

The economic depression has probably changed the way of thinking; people look for solutions and that will help the country to move on.

- *People are more realistic. They understand that education is the key to success. Education is paramount. Education helps the country to move on.*

At the moment there is no requirement that free courses should be closely related to the participant's field of activity. On the one hand this may create a situation where people who wish to improve their skills can not attend the course they are interested in, on the other hand it gives participants an opportunity to experience something new, to acquire new skills and knowledge that can be used in the future. Everybody benefits from diversity - participants and employers and the country.

### 3.3.4 University 2 (7)

#### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

Interview with the head of department of the Open University (b)

#### I BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The university has constantly increased the number and volume of continuous training courses for different target groups. The courses are intended for university employees, students and other people who wish to improve their skills, develop personally and diversify their choices.

In 2007 the number of participants in continuous training (18 000) exceeded the number of students in formal education for the first time; in 2008 the number of participants amounted to 20 000 people. Courses are offered in cooperation with faculties.

- *Faculties can offer courses independently and get technical support from the Open University. The Open University offers interdisciplinary courses involving several faculties.*

The majority of courses are offered by two centres – the Medical Staff Continuous Training Centre (20%) and the Educators' Continuous Training Centre (1/3 of the volume).

- *The rest of courses are offered by the Open University, faculties and colleges. The latter offer more courses in regions and has become regional training centres.*

The numbers of courses and participants have contributed to the development of the university and increased demand for training. Faculties also earn money from courses.

The Open University is developing a system of e-learning with support from the ESF. The Open University offers technical help to faculties and teachers. E-courses are available to both students in formal education and participants in continuous training.

- *Some employers allow their employees to participate in e-course during working hours. Participants can save money (transport costs) and time.*

Teachers have received training on the possibilities of e-learning – how to use the system, etc.

- *These courses are offered within the framework of the ESF programme.*

Taking into account the number of courses and the number of participants the Open University is one of the largest providers of non-formal education in Estonia.

#### TARGET GROUPS

The majority of participants are women. Participants come from all fields of activity. The majority of participants are people who have higher education and want to improve their skills or learn something new. The number of course for beginners is relatively small. The range of participants has increased.

- *Colleges make the courses available to people from different regions and also to people whose mother tongue is Russian. Some unemployed people also participate. However, these are people from financially secure families.*

The courses are available to students also; students are awarded credit points for participating in a continuous training course.

## COURSE CONTENT

The majority of courses are professional continuous courses. The biggest number of courses is offered in the fields of medicine and education.

Pre-training courses are also popular; a new course is offered on learning strategies to teach potential students how to learn and to help first year students to cope.

The number of interdisciplinary courses has increased and so has the number of participants in those courses.

- *Courses on personal development are especially popular in summer. It is more difficult to find participants in professional courses. Course on personal development (psychology, art, tennis, languages) are also offered as e-courses.*

The courses are offered for charge. The prices range from 1000 to 3000 EEK. Credit points are also awarded for completion of a course.

The university develops new courses depending on the needs of participants.

- *In view of the big number of pupils who drop out of general educational schools we are offering courses for teachers on teaching pupils with special needs. We are also developing a new programme concerning conflict management and coping in a situation of crisis. This course was triggered by increasing school violence, school shootings in other countries. The course is developed in cooperation with the police and social services. We hope to complete the work by next autumn. The Ministry of Education and Research has also made suggestions for teacher training courses and has funded such courses.*

The university is also ready to offer courses for general education and vocational teachers who work in prisons.

- *We have offered courses on stress management. I think that crisis management would be also a good topic for those teachers. And a course on reflection. We have some experience in the field.*

Continuous training is offered to specialists of different fields, including local authorities.

## EDUCATORS

The courses are provided by university teachers. Different remuneration principles are used:

- *If they work part time they can also provide continuous training courses. In such case the income from the course goes to the faculty. If they work full time they are paid extra on hourly bases depending on their qualification. In some field the price is determined by the market. Our aim is to motivate people to work for the university. Everything depends on the market situation...*

Sometimes lecturers are hired outside the university. They work on contractual basis.

- *These are mainly practitioners.*

## LINKS WITH FORMAL EDUCATION

Lifelong learning includes both continuous training and formal education. The Open University offers flexible learning opportunities for people who wish to improve their professional skills and knowledge.

In addition the university offers single modules from the formal education study programmes (for participants who are not students at the university) and various other continuous training opportunities.

- *Learning opportunities have become more diverse and the university more flexible – we offer both continuous courses and selective modules from formal educational courses.*

Continuous education courses include course for different levels and on different topics.

Faculties offer pre-training to make formal education more accessible.

Prior learning and participation in courses is recognised as main or elective subjects depending on how much they are related to the student's study programme.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Prior learning, including non-formal education, is taken into account in formal education. Students can choose a summer course among non-formal courses and their participation is recognised as main or elective subjects depending on how much they are related to their study programme. The same applies to participation in courses offered by vocational educational institutions or by informal education providers.

- *Competition does not play a part in the recognition of participation – some informal education providers and other training providers offer very good courses on communication and other topics.*

The university competes with other higher educational institutions but this is not considered to be a problem.

- *Some other universities offer similar courses. I don't perceive any competition. Some of them offer very good courses. If the topics of courses coincide with the specifics of the university then I don't see any problems...*

The university competes with other training providers for lectures.

- *Sometimes they just ask for a lecturer's phone number... Give us the number and we will agree with them... This is predatory behaviour; they offer more money.*

VÖTA could be improved and made for students easier to use if there was a counsellor who deals with relevant issues.

- *I think that universities should have professional counsellors who deal with adults. Some people have come to us with their certificates and asked what they should study. A professional counsellor would talk to people, ask what they have learned, what kind of work experience they have and then make recommendations.*

## IMPROVING ACCESS FOR MARGINALISED GROUPS

Information about courses is available at the university's website. The university cooperates with enterprises and organisations that order training for their employees. Colleges offer courses in their respective regions. This helps to improve access to education for people from outmost regions.

Courses take place in the premises of the university/colleges.

## TEACHING METHODS

Not all the teaching staff is used in the provision of continuous training. Both teaching and scientific activities are important for the university.

Some people are excellent scientists but not good lecturers. There is also difference in learners. Adults have working experience, they have already achieved something. Those who come straight from school lack experience.

- *We have offered training to the teaching staff on the methods of teaching adults, on e-learning, etc.*

All participants complete a feedback questionnaire.

- *Most opinions are positive. However, sometimes the participants think that the course was too theoretical.*

Both participants and lecturers benefit from continuous training courses – they former acquire new knowledge and the latter get feedback concerning their teaching methods, etc.

- *Some like teaching adults because they get to meet a different target group and receive feedback from people who are more in touch with the practical side. Teaching enriches. Teachers can use the experience with students...*

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Since the courses are very popular the university plans to increase the volume of continuous training. The university is also thinking about how to attract people who rarely go to courses or did this many years ago.

- *We organised a round table to discuss which programmes should be offered to the people who usually do not participate – the Russian-speaking population, disadvantaged groups, and senior citizens.*

New courses are planned in cooperation with employers and other partners, including schools and vocational educational institutions.

The university is also ready to offer continuous or re-training to the unemployed after the training card system is introduced.

- *So that people who have the training card could participate in the courses.*

Employment offices have contacted the university to order continuous training for the unemployed but then cancelled the order because they could not get the group together. Additional options would make formal education more accessible for the unemployed.

- *The unemployed could also participate in formal education. In particular those who have discontinued their studies. The adult learning development plan foresees*

*grants for adult participants. This would help a lot. Right now they have to pay for formal education.*

Non-formal training and formal education are closely connected and supplement each other.

#### DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR NON-FORMAL TRAINING SECTOR

Recently a strategy for lifelong learning was adopted in Estonia. A part of the strategy concerned non-formal education. An adult education development plan is being prepared and specialists from UT participate in this work.

The adult education development plan includes a section dedicated to regional strategies.

- *I read the development plan and regional strategies are in it. This is exactly the document that should deal with regional strategies. No separate strategy is necessary. I know that a measure was proposed focussing on opening competence centres in different regions. These include vocational educational institutions and professional higher education institutions; local training centres also play an important role – people will have access to education and training.*

Adults can participate in continuous training courses funded from the ESF and provided by vocational schools and providers of informal training. Higher educational institutions have been left aside. Non-formal education is developed by universities themselves based on their own visions or feedback received from employers.

- *The Ministry of Education and Research should take on the coordination of the provision of non-formal education.*

Employers should be supported more – abolishing the fringe benefit tax payable on training costs would help. Hopefully this is reflected in the new law.

The economic recession has made it harder to find money for training.

Participants in formal education can use the child care service. Participants in non-formal training do not have this possibility.

### **3.4. Government state officials**

#### **3. 4.1 Interview with a government official - the Ministry of Education and Research (1<sup>st</sup> interview)**

Adviser to the minister

*THE MAIN TOPIC OF THE INTERVIEW IS: HOW COULD THE GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTE TO SYSTEM LEVEL CHANGE TO BETTER PROMOTE ACCESS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN EDUCATION FOR UNDERREPRESENTED AND RISK GROUPS?*

*WE WILL TALK ABOUT WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, WHAT IS BEING DONE AND WHAT IS PLANNED TO DO IN THIS AREA.*

#### **ABOUT THE STRUCTURE**

*IS THERE A CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN YOUR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT WITH SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FOLLOWING AREAS, FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESPECTIVE POLICIES:*

##### *A) SOCIAL INCLUSION? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE AND HOW IS WORK ORGANISED*

This is a horizontal responsibility in our ministry. Partners are involved in the work of the decision-making bodies preparing new proposals or, for example, the use of the funds from the European Structural Funds. For example, at the level of higher education our partners are the Federation of Estonian Students' Unions, the Estonian Rectors' Conference, and the rectors' conferences of the institutions of professional higher education and of private universities. At the level of general education we are cooperating with the Teachers' Association, the local governments' union's body for cooperation and the learners' advisory committee. I think that in the field of general education the inclusion is more diverse and being regulated more at the government level – the focus of cooperation is on strategic issues. I believe that in other areas it is not the case.

The institutions of higher education are relatively autonomous and the ministry is less involved in details. Therefore it is easier to include the representatives of these institutions and that is what we have done. A different question is how well the representatives of these organisations are doing their job – agreeing on various issues. I think that the situation has improved. The ministry has also allocated more time for consultations and discussions. Inclusion means that you must have time for discussions. It seems that the situation has improved over years.

Every ministry official is responsible for inclusion – every official has contacts with people. Policies are developed separately at each level of education. We have a person – the head of the youth division – who is responsible for liaising with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and reporting on inclusions practices.

##### *B) ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS*

In Estonia the main underrepresented group are the Russian-speaking population. I think that we should also talk about gender, region, and social economic status. We are trying to bring to the fore the issue of underrepresented groups. Take, for example, the language issue. We have taken it into account in higher education. Then there is the regional aspect. As regards the access of adults to higher education it has not been recognized as a problem yet.

The mainstream understanding is that if a person is hard working enough he/she will manage without any help. The studies of people over 30 years old should not be supported financially. There is even no discussion in the society. We don't talk about it; we do not have comprehensive policies. The issue is becoming more important, but the problem is that during the recent economic boom it seemed that everything was possible – if you wanted to study, you could obtain a student loan and pay for your studies. Up until now only very few have experienced problems with repaying the loan. This situation (difficulties in repaying a student loan – A. T.) is very new for us.

Any representative of an underrepresented group who has an initiative or a problem should contact the relevant ministry department and the minister will be notified of the problem.

### *C) LIFELONG LEARNING?*

We have a special division – the Adult Education Division. This division forms a part of the Vocational Education Department. Other departments are also involved in lifelong learning. For example VÕTA (acknowledgement of **earlier** studies and work experience), qualification frameworks, changing the principles of state-commissioned education so that the funds that are meant for formal education acquired within the adult education system can be used for in-service training. Thus the issue is dealt with horizontally, which is logical, I think.

### *D) (FUNCTIONAL) LITERACY;*

The topic has come up only thanks to the PISA tests of recent years. It is discussed in general education and recently also in connection with adults and upper secondary schools for adults. There are many people in Estonia who have only general secondary education (12 years) or lower secondary education (9 years), obtained a rather long time ago. Not to mention the general skills and knowledge. The topic is included in the new adult education strategy. The idea is that Estonia could also adopt the one- step strategy – to increase the general educational level of the population by one step.

### *FROM THE MINISTRY'S PERSPECTIVE, HOW IS THE ISSUE DEALT WITH?*

In vocational education one additional study year is funded. As far as I know, nobody has talked about stopping the funding even in the current economic conditions.

### *THIS REGARDS CONTINUING EDUCATION. WHAT ABOUT ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION?*

In Estonia where the institutions of higher education are financially rather autonomous these issues are dealt with through preparatory courses. These courses are funded from two sources – by the students and by the university (who is interested in recruiting new students and increasing their level of knowledge).

*THESE COURSES ARE PAID COURSES AND PREPARE LEARNERS FOR STATE EXAMINATIONS.*

The general funding level per learner is low and if people are willing to pay for the courses, their money is naturally accepted.

*ARE THE ISSUES CONCERNING THE FUNCTIONAL LITERACY DEALT WITH THE MINISTRY COORDINATORS OF THE RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL?*

Yes, in the area of vocational education they are. In the area of higher education the ministry is practically not involved. This is the responsibility of universities.

*E) WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION?*

Adult non-formal education is the responsibility of the adult education department. Non-formal education of young people is the responsibility of the youth department.

*WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE OCCURRED IN CREATING RELEVANT STRUCTURAL UNITS? IS THE MINISTRY PLANNING TO CREATE ANY STRUCTURAL UNITS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABOVE-MENTIONED AREAS?*

If we wished to create such structural units we should change the present division of work. Greater centralisation means more officials. We cannot afford that at the moment so the answer is no – the creation of such structural units is not on the agenda right now. Educational institutions, in particular institutions of higher education should be able to solve these problems themselves – this is what autonomy means. Speaking about long term development – maybe one day there will be some structural changes as well.

As regards the question how students cope with financing their studies and which support and loans can be offered, if we have declared that we support learning then some structural changes will be needed. Taking into account the current economic situation this will probably not happen in the near future.

*HOW ARE RELEVANT POLICIES DEVELOPED AND WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT?*

In the areas of higher education and lifelong learning our cooperation partners are vice rectors for academic affairs or heads of departments for studies of universities, members of academic networks, people from open universities. Communication is largely informal and frequent. If an amendment to legislation is prepared these people are appointed as members of working groups and the cooperation body.

If we have to find a solution for a problem we contact officially the Rectors' Conference and the Students' Union and ask to appoint representatives. They will decide who should participate; it depends on the knowledge and qualification of the person.

Much depends on how active, exuberant and competent local people are. We are interested in partners who can contribute to the process. If a destructive person is appointed we will not be happy but we have to work with that person too ....

*UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS? THEIR INVOLVEMENT?*

They cooperate. The main partner of the Adult Education Department are Andras (the Association of Estonian Adult Educators) and ENAEA (Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association).

*HOW IS THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING POPULATION INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICIES?*

The Students' Union has Russian-speaking members representing the Russian-speaking population. For example in the discussions concerning the social dimensions the union was represented by a Russian lady (who is fluent in Estonian). The division between two language groups is not that big in this area.

*WHAT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF ADULTS? DO THEY REACH THE MINISTRY LEVEL? ADULTS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITY OF THE STUDENTS' UNION BECAUSE THEY ARE WORKING.*

That is true; their problems often do not reach us. That has to be admitted. Whether their problems reach the officials of the ministry or not depends on how much is the university's administration aware of their problems and needs. Employers are more easily involved. We do not know what the problems of people over 40 years old who work full-time and study half-time are.

*PART-TIME STUDENTS CAN NOT OBTAIN A STUDENT LOAN EITHER. MOREOVER, ADULTS STUDYING PART-TIME HAVE HIGHER TRANSPORT COSTS AS THEY ARE NOT QUALIFIED FOR TRAVEL CONCESSIONS.*

The reason is weak social guarantees. The number of students who receive study and transport allowances is not big – approximately 15%.

As regards the possibility for part-time students to obtain a study loan a relevant proposal will be made in the adult education strategy. The Ministry of Finances argues that this would boost the number of potential loan applicants but it may not necessarily happen. The number of people declaring that they study full-time is bigger than the number of actual full-time students – some are actually studying part-time- So the number of borrowers will remain more or less the same.

*WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL ALLOWANCES?*

It all depends on available funds. Unfortunately.

*IS THE MINISTRY OFFERING ANY SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES RELATED TO ADULT EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL OR REGIONAL LEVEL, FOR EXAMPLE THE RELEVANT SERVICE PROVIDERS, ETC.?*

We have some resources from the Structural Funds. The ministry has commissioned training courses from various local service providers.

## **STRATEGIES**

*IS THERE A NATIONAL AND/OR GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR:*

*A) SOCIAL INCLUSION;*

We have a civil society concept and the relevant action plans in place. The performance of the plans is monitored.

*B) ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS;*

We have some problems in this area. At the level of higher education we are participating in the project *Eurostudent 4*; we are currently mapping the situation of the students. Our hidden agenda, our aim is to gather as much information as possible so that when the economic situation improves and we can start talking about serious support and loan system based on actual needs, we will know what it will mean for Estonia. Which structures will be used is not known yet because we know that universities are not interested in managing a system which is based on needs. We are aware of the problem and are trying to find a solution although it can not be done until after few years. This is an issue for the future.

*C) IS THERE A STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION?*

Yes, there is. Non-formal education is covered by lifelong learning strategy. Young people are addressed separately – there are separate strategies for young people and adults.

*DESPITE THE FACT THAT SOME EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFER NON-FORMAL EDUCATION TO BOTH YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS TOGETHER?*

It will be offered to both groups together.

*(The second interview with the representative of the ministry concerns adult education and strategy and the relevant resources in detail)*

*WHAT PART OF YOUR MINISTRY'S BUDGET IS ALLOCATED TO ADULT EDUCATION?*

*A) FORMAL EDUCATION;*

In higher education more than 20% of students are older than 30 years. They are mainly reading business management and law but also teaching and healthcare.

In the field of social sciences the studies are fully funded by students. In teacher training and nursing education is mainly free. I do not know how big is the actual share but I can obtain these figures.

*B) NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (COURSES, TRAINING SESSIONS)?*

*PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT ADULT EDUCATION OUTSIDE LARGER TOWNS.*

This is done by allocating student places funded from the state budget to regional colleges which are either university colleges situated elsewhere than the main university or other educational institutions.

*HOW IS THIS DECIDED? IN SOME PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS PEOPLE SAID THAT FEW STATE FUNDED STUDENT PLACES ARE ALLOCATED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WHERE THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IS RUSSIAN. WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WHERE THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IS RUSSIAN?*

State funded student places are allocated to those institutions also. There is the Virumaa College of Tallinn University of Technology, then Narva College of Tartu University. We also support the Russian-language IT college in Tallinn although to a somewhat lesser extent. We have funded some student places there. The Government of Estonia is not that hostile towards Russians as some people might like to believe.

*HOW ABOUT SUPPORTING PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES?*

Some private educational institutions have had problems with observing Estonian laws. Even if we did allocate some state funded student places to them in the past then now we have stopped doing this – they have huge quality problems and let's be honest, some of them are involved in the so-called „diploma laundering”. The government can fund education only if people studying in an educational institution will receive an acknowledged diploma/degree. This is a very strict requirement and no concessions are made.

*PLEASE COMMENT ON FUTURE PLANS BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP LIFELONG LEARNING [ADULT PARTICIPATION] AT SPECIFIC ISCED LEVELS 2, 3, 4 AND 5 RESPECTIVELY.*

Formal education is provided free in upper secondary schools for adults. Vocational education is also free. The government has always supported formal education of adults and will continue doing it.

People who have not obtained formal general education, in particular lower secondary education (9 years) need a more personal approach – it is rather difficult to make them understand that lack of education or low level of education may be a problem.

The Adult Education act provides for the right to take a study leave with certain social guarantees preserved.

How the needs-based study support system will function at the level of higher education is difficult to say. I believe that when such system is introduced, the needs of adults as one target groups must be taken into account. Teaching must become more personalised and take into account the needs of adults as a group. One thing that we do not yet have in Estonia is the recognition of earlier studies and work experience in admitting students (it is done in several Nordic countries). In Estonia earlier studies can be used (for obtaining credit points) only after being admitted. It is not permitted to use earlier studies in admission. I am one person who is against it. The reason is that our higher education network is very weak. Weak educational institutions are obviously interested in attracting more students and may therefore give up quality standards.

This year we will introduce the so-called transfer marking in higher education. This means that all acting institutions of higher education are subjected to quality control. Those that pass the control will have the right to award diplomas/degrees recognised by the state and they will have that right either for a specified term or without a term.

This way we can separate the wheat from the chaff and then it is time to talk about giving more rights and setting more lenient formal acquirements in admitting students. You must look at the bigger picture. This is one thing that needs to be done in Estonia.

Actually, in connection with the Bologna process many formal things have been done: we have the qualification frameworks; we have introduced the study output system, earlier studies and work experience are used for earning credit points. Now we need to pay more attention to the implementing of these things because we have amended the legislation but the academic circles are not ready to implement. Academics, professors still think that their courses must be completed in full and do not understand how is it possible to obtain the same competence on the labour market. This is the problem we will have to address.

*DOES IT MEAN THAT EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE TEACHING STAFF OF A PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION? SOME PEOPLE HAVE SAID THAT ONE OBSTACLE IS COMPETITION, THE FACT THAT UNIVERSITIES WANT MONEY FOR CREDIT POINTS AWARDED? WHAT IS THE MINISTRY'S OPINION?*

This is definitely one of the aspects that hinder the implementation of the changes. We have no quick and perfect solution to the problems related to implementing VÕTA. In the end it is the university who is responsible for the quality of the diplomas/degrees it awards. Nobody is going to relieve the universities from this responsibility. That's why the rules must be such as to enable the university to award diplomas/degrees. I believe that due to the small size of the Estonian market competition is not very tough and therefore the quality-based competition is not a big problem. In a situation where the number of students is actually decreasing all universities are forced to change their behaviour. In the fields where the implementation of VÕTA is inherently easier, for example in the field of IT, the progress has already been made.

*WORK EXPERIENCE IS ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ADMISSION?*

Yes, the development is in that direction. The schools have huge responsibilities; they must prepare students. They have to bring back those who have dropped out and they cannot presume that people who have work experience start from the scratch.

*I UNDERSTAND THAT FEW STUDENTS APPLY FOR VÕTA ...*

I think that the aim is to implement VÕTA first of all in the fields of regulated professions where the qualification requirements are very important and where there is a shortage of specialists. If the government pays for specific professions and wishes to have those specialists quickly it is interested in a quicker process. This is a question of time and money. Teacher training is a good example. We have commissioned shorter study periods when the students are working teachers. Their experience is taken into account and they skip a part of the programme.

*DO YOU OFFER ALSO STUDENT PLACES FREE OF CHARGE?*

Yes. For teachers definitely.

*HOW MUCH ARE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS AND THOSE WITH DIFFERENT LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS REPRESENTED?*

We are not claiming that one third of the courses must be offered in Russian. The competition is not very big. We can satisfy our needs without additional restrictions. There plenty of free student places for teachers. This is a specific group.

*WHAT ABOUT GOVERNMENT FUNDED STUDENT PLACES IN OTHER PROFESSIONS WHICH REQUIRE HIGHER EDUCATION, SUCH AS (A) LAW, (B) SOCIAL WORK, (C) YOUTH WORK, (D) PSYCHOLOGY, ETC., SO THAT THE GRADUATES COULD START WORKING IN THE FIELDS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT?*

No. There are no discussions about supporting higher education for people who are already active in the relevant field. Social work is a positive example – free of charge education is provided also to people who are already working the field. Educational institutions are provided the student places. This is not the case in the field of law. Very few places are funded by the government.

*COULD YOU PLEASE NAME THE TARGET GROUPS WHOSE ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED IN THE FIRST PLACE?*

There is no obvious answer. We do not have a clear picture about which target groups are underrepresented. Maybe the non-Estonian population? Actually, they have a proportional share of state commissioned (free of charge) study places.

I believe that in the future we will be talking more about the success of students from country schools in competing for free of charge study places. The level of country schools varies and as the main criterion in securing access to a state funded study place is the results of the state exams the issue is becoming more and more important. In this context the educational reform is very relevant.

As regards the access of men and women to education then we have less boys than girls.

*WHY IS IT SO? IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT THERE ARE LESS BOYS THAN GIRLS ALREADY IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS. TEACHERS SAY THAT BOYS DROP OUT MORE OFTEN AND ALSO HAVE MORE PROBLEMS*

It is a very complicated issue. There are very few male teachers in general education. The share of male drop-outs is the biggest in years 7 to 9 when the children are in their teens.

*HOW COULD SCHOOLS ATTRACT MORE MALE TEACHERS?*

This is a cultural issue and also an issue of pay, although some local governments do pay male teachers more. They have agreed to do so. They say it is important. Sometimes a male teacher is paid more than the head teacher. There are several reasons why we do not have enough male teachers. One of the reasons is that boys' performance is worse at school.

**STATE POLICY: NON-FORMAL SECTOR**

*HOW IS NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FUNDED?*

*HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE THE STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SECTOR COMPARED WITH 5 YEARS AGO? HAS IT EXPANDED OR INCREASED OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS? (Supplement to two interviews)*

Unfortunately the simple answer is we practically do not have any budgetary means to fund education outside the state commissioned education except some mobility grants. The investments have also been minuscule so far.

It is presumed that the volume and content of courses supporting personal development are decided at the level of an institution based on how interested the students are. Most institutions can find an optimal solution.

As regards projects funded from the Structural Funds we are not leaving much to the discretion of schools. It seemed that the funds were used somewhat inefficiently because there were no government guidelines and open application procedure was used. People wanted to do very different things. The courses were user-friendly but not so efficient from the state's point of view. There was no focus.

In higher education no funds are allocated to non-formal education. Funding is focuses on areas which are important for the country's competitiveness, such as teacher training, curricula development, cooperation with industries VÕTA.

We have also given money for the development of various topics. For example if they suggest a project related to teacher development or personal development they will get money.

*WHICH PROBLEMS AND/OR OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE IN USING **SCHOOL PREMISES** FOR ADULT CLASSES?*

This depends on local governments as they are they own the schools.

*WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES IN INVOLVING THE GROUPS WHO HAVE LEFT EDUCATION?*

There are three main components: money, individual approach and recognising the problem. Each of these plays its part.

*RECOGNISING THE PROBLEM? WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN? WHO SHOULD RECONGNISE THE PROBLEM?*

I mean that we must be aware of the problem. For example the support system based on students' needs and social fairness. Two years ago we participated in an OSCE study and the experts were amazed that our higher educational institutions do not recognise that there is a problem. They – both the staff and the management – do not see it as a problem and neither do the students. The currents system of state commissioned education is considered normal – people believe that if you have finished a so-called elite school (one of the best schools in Tallinn or Tartu that accept 7 year olds to year one on the basis of entrance tests) then you have the right to a state funded study place, because you are better than others. Nobody seems to realise that the advantages of an elite school graduate may be the result of his/her

better starting position compared with a graduate from a secondary school in the countryside or a small town. Our society does not recognise that social fairness is a problem. People do not want to see it.

*YOU HAVE NOT DISCUSSED IT?*

Exactly. I think that the problem lies there. Another obstacle is money. Lack of funds means that we cannot afford specifically targeted policies. Therefore our policies are rather general and we assume that the schools deal with the problem. We haven't done much to encourage the underrepresented groups to use the opportunities that actually already exist in the system.

*TO USE AND TO INFORM?*

We are not using individual approach because it is always more expensive. General approach requires much less money.

*WHAT ABOUT PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING?*

I think that the three problems I mentioned are the same at all levels of education. Our culture and mentality is that if you help yourself you will be helped.

*LIBERAL ECONOMY AND MENTALITY. IS THIS BREAKING?*

Yes, it is breaking but is not broken yet.

*WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT? WHAT SHOULD YOUR DEPARTMENT DO TO MAKE ACCESS TO EDUCATION EASIER FOR THOSE GROUPS WHO ARE MOST AT RISK OF BEING LEFT OUTSIDE THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?*

What we have done and continue to do is improving the access of the Russians to education. They have an opportunity to have an extra year for language learning.

*IS THIS EXTRA YEAR FREE OF CHARGE FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO ARE ACCEPTED TO GOVERNMENT FUNDED STUDY PLACES? WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO PAY FOR THEIR STUDIES?*

All institutions get money from the Structural Funds for Estonian language courses.

*DO THEY USE THIS OPPORTUNITY? DO THEY KNOW ABOUT IT?*

It is a new thing, it was introduced only last year if I remember correctly. Support can be applied for through the Integration Foundation. We had a wide discussion. Private universities that have few government funded study places can apply for money through the Integration Foundation.

*WHAT ABOUT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES? IT WAS SAID THAT THOSE WHO PAY FOR THEIR STUDIES MUST ALSO PAY FOR THE EXTRA YEAR OF LEARNING ESTONIAN*

Universities have not been very interested so far. They can get money from the Structural Funds. A lot depends on how active a university is.

*WHAT COULD OUR UNIVERSITIES DO TO HELP THEIR STUDENTS?*

Our universities are very autonomous and a lot depends on how active they are.

*WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS OFFERED TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?*

It is decided on a case-to-case basis. We can offer support to 15 to 20 or a maximum of 40 students each year. For example we have signed individual agreements with visually impaired or hearing impaired students. We cover the extra costs caused by their disability so that the students do not have to worry about that.

*WHAT ABOUT STUDY PLACES? DO THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR THEIR EDUCATION?.*

As far as I know they do not have to pay. This is for their university to decide. It does not apply to all universities or to all specialities.

*THESE ARE SINGLE PLACES DEPENDING ON THE SPECIALITY – A DROP IN AN OCEAN. ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO GRADUATE WITHIN THE REQUIRED STUDY PERIOD TO STUDY FULL TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND IF THEY STUDY PART TIME THEY CANNOT GET A STUDENT LOAN TO PAY FOR THEIR STUDIES.*

Sadly it is so. I will not deny it. The Ministry makes decisions based on single persons who are very highly motivated. There are not many – about 20 to 40 people get money every year.

Universities have not been very active either.

*COULD IT BE BECAUSE THERE ARE MORE WILLING TO STUDY THAT UNIVERSITIES CAN ACCEPT?*

Probably yes.

*WHAT ABOUT THE CONNECTION OF FORMAL EDUCATION WITH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION. VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS ARE DOING WELL, THEY ARE OFFERING VARIOUS COURSES. IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS THE SITUATION IS NOT SO GOOD. WHAT IS HOLDING THEM BACK FROM OPENING THEIR DOORS TO EVENING COURSES?*

I do not know. I think it depends on their willingness to do that.

*AND WHAT DOES THEIR WILLINGNESS DEPEND ON?*

I do not know. Both vocational schools and universities are willing to offer evening and weekend courses. Probably local governments, the owners of secondary schools, are not considering it important enough to put some pressure on schools.

*WHICH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT IS FUNDING THE LIBRARIES?*

The libraries are funded from the budget of the Ministry for Culture.

*IS DISTANCE EDUCATION RUN FROM ANY LIBRARIES?*

Libraries have computers, clients have access to the Internet. Libraries do not deal with organising distance learning. They have had some computer courses providing initial knowledge about computers, the Internet, etc. Some libraries have worked with the unemployed, giving them information about available jobs, encouraging them to use the computer.

*PLEASE COMMENT ON WAYS TO OVERCOME THE DIGITAL DIVIDE BETWEEN DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS.*

*WHAT EFFECTS, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK THE RECESSION MAY HAVE ON LIFELONG LEARNING IN ESTONIA?*

*ANY PROBLEMS?*

There is less money. However, people are increasingly more willing to learn.

**+ Specific questions (based on SP3)**

*- ABOUT HALF OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL AND MORE THAN A QUARTER OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ESTONIA RESERVE SOME STUDY PLACES FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS. WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THIS?*

As I said our universities are autonomous. The government has reserved study places for teachers and some places for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

*- MORE THAN A THIRD OF ADULTS AT THE SECONDARY AND LESS THAN A THIRD AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION HAVE HAD EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS THAT AFFECTED THEIR STUDIES. WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT PLANNING TO DO TO OFFER PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR ADULT LEARNERS?*

There is a need for such services. The field is evolving. We are supporting the training of student councillors.

I can bring as a positive example the attitude of the rector of a private university. The university has offices outside the major cities. Some people ridicule the idea of opening regional universities. The rector said that people who have a single family member who has higher education are somewhat reluctant to obtain higher education. Even those who live and work in the capital prefer a regional university (regional branch of a university). They are not confident enough and are afraid that they will fail in a large educational institution. They choose a less known and smaller university/college. We already have educational institutions that are focussing to those target groups who can also be called underrepresented. That is a part of the mission of those universities.

*(BACKGROUND: Estonian larger schools, including adult secondary schools have a psychologist on their payroll. We also have counselling centres in counties offering the*

*services of a psychologist and a career councillor. Universities also have career centres that offer the services of a psychologist. The system is not fully operational yet.)*

- WHAT COULD THE GOVERNMENT DO TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION?

The adult education development plan provides for relevant measures and instruments.

- ADULT SECONDARY SCHOOLS HAVE OPPORTUNITY CLASSES. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY? HOW IS THE INITIATIVE SUPPORTED?

The Ministry has supported the initiative and will continue to do so.

- THREE QUARTERS OF THE PROVIDERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DO NOT MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS TO THE UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS (E.G. FEE, ETC). WHAT CAN THE MINISTRY DO TO HELP?

We are planning to establish a support system based on needs. I cannot say that the universities are too interested in this system.

*ONE IN FIVE ADULT LEARNERS HAS PROBLEMS WITH CHILDCARE. WHAT CAN THE GOVERNMENT DO TO HELP?*

This problem must be solved at the university level.

*WHAT ABOUT OTHER SCHOOLS?*

Other schools lack a policy. Some have tried to do something to solve the problem.

SOME PEOPLE MENTIONED THAT STRICT REQUIREMENTS (THE SO CALLED EURO REQUIREMENTS) INHIBIT THESE ACTIVITIES.

I cannot comment on that.

### 3.4.3 Interview with a government official – the unemployment insurance fund (under the authority of the ministry for social affairs)

#### CONTEXT

*On 1 May 2009 the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund merged with the Labour Market Board. The management and partly the staff were replaced with new people. The new agency which is acting under the authority of the Ministry for Social Affairs is called the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund.*

*The number of the unemployed is growing rapidly in Estonia. The number of the registered unemployed was 75 000 people as at the beginning of September 2009. The long waiting period for retraining has become a big talking point. The new agency is providing labour market services and paying out unemployment insurance benefits.*

*The interview was conducted with Pille Liimal, a member of the management board of the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Karin Andra, a service manager of the same agency, helped out with questions concerning training.*

#### STRUCTURE

*HOW COULD GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND POLICIES ENSURE BETTER ACCESS TO EDUCATION, BOTH FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL, FOR THE UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS?*

*HOW COULD THEY BE INCLUDED BETTER?*

Our clients are the unemployed. Within that group we define sub-groups, e.g. disabled people, people who do not speak Estonian, young people, the long-term unemployed, etc.

We have to look up the data...

*I DID NOT FIND MUCH FROM YOUR WEBSITE.*

Yes, the website is work in progress. We have 8 risk groups. One person can belong to several risk groups:

- Persons released from a penal institution, disabled people, people who do not speak Estonian.
- People aged 55+ years;
- Young people aged 16 to 24 years;
- People who do not speak Estonian and need a language course;
- Caregivers;
- Long-term unemployed;
- Disabled people;
- Persons released from a penal institution.

*WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WITH LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION?*

No, this criterion is not used. If such person is unemployed for a long time he is classified as a long-term unemployed..

*DO YOU HAVE A CENTRAL UNIT (DEPARTMENT, COMMITTEE, ETC.) RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING AREAS:*

*REFERRING THE UNEMPLOYED TO TRAINING?*

Yes, we have a service department; service managers are responsible for supervising the provision of various labour market services. We also have a training manager and a person responsible for coaching for working life who is coordinating the provision of the service in county offices. In counties we have two types of customer service personnel/councillors: employment mediation consultants and case managers. The case managers deal with people for whom for one or another reason it is more difficult to find a job (mainly the people from the risk groups but not only) The employment mediation consultants deal with all other people.

A case manager interferes more intensively and offers different solutions to help people back to the labour market.

A councillor should establish if the person needs training in order to find a job and if training would help him/her to find a job. If yes, what kind of training is required?

Each county office has a training consultant who is responsible for establishing the county's training needs and for counselling case managers and employment mediation consultants on how to counsel people and to find out what they need – what they should learn, how their wishes and abilities comply with the requirements of the labour market.

Training managers are providing input to our centre about what types of training are needed in a certain region. Our services manager forwards the information to our procuring entity and the procuring entity finds training providers and organises training.

*THE PROCURING ENTITY CHOOSES TRAINING PROVIDERS AND SIGNS AGREEMENTS WITH THEM?*

Yes, that is correct and then the county office will sign more specific agreements with the training providers (time and place of training, number of participants, etc.)

If the employment mediation consultant is not able to establish what kind of training is needed he/she will refer the client to the career councillor.

*THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAINING. WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED IN FORMAL EDUCATION?*

Back to school. Actually we do not offer formal education per se. We can advise and inform. Labour market training is basically refresher training and retraining. We can provide courses of one year's duration.

*WHAT SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT FINISHED LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL AND ARE OVER 18 YEARS OLD DO? NO EMPLOYER WILL EMPLOY THEM.*

We can refer them to training courses that do not require lower secondary education. In a perfect world the case manager should in cooperation with local government find a suitable training provider.

*THE MAIN PROBLEM LIES IN LIVING AND TRANSPORT COSTS; LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION IS FREE OF CHARGE:*

We do not pay any training support or benefits to people acquiring formal education except when they are eligible to receive the unemployment benefit. Another thing is that our services and benefits are for those who are actively looking for a job. This means that the person must be willing to start working immediately. For those who are studying looking for a job and accepting one immediately is more difficult. We should have an alternative option for those people.

*ACQUIRING FORMAL EDUCATION AND WORKING AT THE SAME TIME SHOULD IN PRINCIPLE BE POSSIBLE.*

We have the VÕTA project for people acquiring higher education. We can provide information to those who have discontinued their education but we cannot offer any financial support.

*HOW AND WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU OFFER WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VÕTA PROJECT?*

We send information materials to all counties. That is all we have at the moment. We can also offer refresher courses or retraining, vocational training.

*Note: higher education is not free of charge; the main way of funding one's studies is taking a student loan.*

*SO YOU CAN HELP WITH PROVIDING OTHER TYPES OF TRAINING BUT NOT FORMAL EDUCATION. WHAT ABOUT NON-FORMAL EDUCATION THAT IS NOT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION? MANY PEOPLE PROBABLY NEED ALSO PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT, RELEVANT TRAINING?*

Could you give an example?

*PSYCHOLOGY, SELF-HELP...*

No, we have not organised that type of training. We can offer support, the services of a psychologist if people need it. We also have a training course on how to look for a job (how to write an application, how to compile a CV, how to behave during a job interview).

*ARE THE PROVIDERS OF THIS TYPE OF TRAINING FOUND BY THE SAME PROCEDURE?*

Yes. However, the purpose of labour market training is to facilitate employment. We cannot provide hobby education. We have to consider whether the skills and knowledge acquired as a result of training help people to find a job. However, provision of a different kind of training is not ruled out if it is needed. We buy training services from different providers not only from vocational schools...

*SO YOU ARE NOT DEALING WITH SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE UNEMPLOYED AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE THAT ALSO HELPS THEM TO ENTER THE LABOUR MARKET?*

There are some types of training which are not labour market training in the strict sense. We have funded (with the help of the Social Fund) work clubs for young people and the elderly. People come together and learn about different things, such as counselling, looking for a job, introducing different professions, etc. This is a support service. People exchange their experiences and knowledge, get support from the group, they can communicate with each other.

It is also a form of group counselling, coaching for working life, teaching social skills. We do not consider it as labour market training. Labour market training is professional training and learning how to look for a job.

The work clubs service is also outsourced. We sign agreements with local offices. Work clubs are in the area of responsibility of people who also deal with the disabled, risk groups, etc. They are also responsible for social inclusion and non-formal education.

*HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING DIFFERENT AREAS OF ACTIVITY – TRAINING, CASE MANAGEMENT, ETC.?*

We have 6 services managers and a chief specialist responsible for redundancy issues. We are using the funds of the Social Fund according to a national programme that is divided into two year periods. There are also sub-programme managers, a total of six people. Each of them is focussing on a different target group: young people, disabled people, non-Estonians, the long-term unemployed, etc.

For example one person is working with young people, another with older people.

*THE TARGET GROUP BASED APPROACH SEEMS TO BE WIDESPREAD IN ESTONIA?*

It has also complicated the provision of services and implementation of measures.

*FUTURE PLANS?*

We are trying to shift from the target group based approach to the measure based approach. Training could be planned in a more comprehensive way, in a way that is not focused on target groups so much. Budget funds would be allocated to training projects. Money from the Social Funds would be allocated to target groups – young people, older people, etc.

As most of the money comes from the Social Fund and less from the state budget we must use the target group based approach.

*DO YOU DEAL WITH THE FUNCTIONAL LITERACY OF YOUR CLIENTS? IF YES, HOW?*

If the case is more complicated the case manager and the career councillor will take a more individual approach based on the needs of the person. Like it is done in the case of the disabled – blind people receive massage therapy training, etc.

*NOW ABOUT COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT LEVELS; WE TALKED ABOUT THE INFORMATION MOVEMENT IN YOUR ORGANISATION. HOW IS COOPERATION ORGANISED HORIZONTALLY, BETWEEN DIFFERENT MINISTRIES?*

It is difficult to assess whether there is cooperation or not. Now when the resources are limited there is a little more cooperation. It seems to me that we are starting to coordinate the use of funds between different ministries to ensure that they rather complement than duplicate each other. There is still some duplication and sometimes target groups are divided between ministries too strictly, e.g. you will be responsible for this and you for that.

I cannot say that the Unemployment Insurance Fund does not want to cooperate. We want different measures to complement each other.

An important partner is the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Communication – it is important that we know who should receive training and what kind of training these people need. It is important to know about investment plans. The main challenge for us is to find out what should we teach people, what kind of employees are needed on the labour market. The labour market is changing rapidly. Training is not cheap. We can refer people to many different training programmes but that does not necessarily give us the results we want.

*THE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION OFFERS FREE TRAINING TO EVERYBODY BUT THE UNEMPLOYED. THIS MAKES PEOPLE TO ASK: WHY? CANNOT THEY REACH AN AGREEMENT?*

Actually, both the employed people and the unemployed can participate in the same courses. This is an issue of funding – where does the money come from.

*CAN THE UNEMPLOYED ASK FOR FUNDING? THEY ARE LOOKING FOR INFORMATION AND READ FROM THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE THAT FREE COURSES ARE FOR EVERYBODY BUT THE UNEMPLOYED.*

( ..... ) The registered unemployed can. We should be able to inform them.

This kind of training is offered on a different basis. This is lifelong learning. In the case of the unemployed we are trying to help them to find a job as quickly as possible. I doubt that participating in these courses would help them. These courses are different.

*MAYBE TO KEEP THEM GOING, TO GIVE THEM HOPE?*

Yes but for me it is an ideological question. Is training the best way to boost their willingness to work? Maybe they should do voluntary work instead? In some cases it may be justified. But to offer training to keep people active? Should this be our objective?

*HAVE YOU EVER PAID FOR PARTICIPATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED IN A TRAINING ORGANISED BY THE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION?*

For example we have had florists' courses to which people were referred by both our department and the Ministry for Education. If we have procured such training then everything is correct.

*ANOTHER ISSUE MENTIONED BY SCHOOLS REGARDING THE RETRAINING OF THE UNEMPLOYED: THE WHOLE GROUP SHOULD COMPRISE ONLY THE UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE:*

It depends on how many people there are who want the training and also on their abilities. Training providers will not organise training for one person only.

*CANNOT THEY JOIN ANOTHER GROUP?*

Yes, they can.

*THIS SEEMS TO BE A PROBLEM OF PERIPHERAL REGIONS – THEY DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE TO FORM A STUDY GROUP.*

We have already changed the way training is procured. In a more stable economic situation we bought training on the basis of a long list of professions. Now we are trying to shift to smaller groups – to buy training for smaller groups.

*DO YOU BUY THE WHOLE PACKAGE FROM ONE TRAINING PROVIDER OR CAN YOU BUY TRAINING COURSES BY MODULES*

We can buy by modules. We discuss it with the relevant case manager. It also depends on whether it is retraining or a refresher course we want. In the case of the latter we can buy only one module. It is important that people complete the study programme. In order to get a certificate or a qualification they have to study a certain number of hours. Then we cannot commission shorter courses.

*HAVE YOU INFORMED THE TRAINING PROVIDERS ABOUT YOUR NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS?*

We had an information day early this year. We informed training providers about the requirements. As regards the courses – we have to think about it. We have to understand ourselves what we want and what we expect...

In the past we bought a long list of training courses and referred bigger groups to training. Now we are buying a smaller number of courses and for smaller groups. We should discuss this...

We have made some changes. Adjusted our activity to the needs of the unemployed and the labour market. We have also had meetings with the training providers and got feedback from them. We need to work more to get more feedback from training providers. We need to work with schools. We need to understand what they can offer.

*IS THERE A SPECIAL STRUCTURE OR A COOPERATION COMMITTEE THAT DISCUSSES THE OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, DEVELOPS STRATEGIES?*

We have several structures. I personally have not a clear picture. We have a career services cooperation committee. Curricula are discussed four times a year...

It seems that many issues are discussed by round tables on education and labour market. They should also discuss specific educational and labour market measures. I don't even know

which one is more important. At least there is willingness to cooperate and to coordinate educational and labour market activities.

*IS THERE AN APPROVED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE FOLLOWING:*

*a) SOCIAL INCLUSION*

Actually, yes, there is. Member States are cooperating in this field. The cooperation started in 2002 or 2003 when the Member States agreed to prepare an action plan for social inclusion and update it after every two years; then there is a strategy for pensions and health; I believe that the Member States will submit a three pillar strategy for social inclusion, pensions and health/long-term care. These are the three pillars. And each Member State will have their own objectives and measures based on overall EU objectives and measures. The work should be finished by 2010. I was once involved in this work.

*DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT ONLY BECAUSE OF YOUR PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN IT?*

Yes. It started when Estonia was still a candidate country. Then it was the first time we talked about poverty and social exclusion. It was an EU framework. The strategy is focused on access to education, health, social protection, and housing. The relevant objectives are set on the basis of this strategy.

*HAVE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES BEEN SET?*

I know that there is a national programme involving funds from the Social Fund. Obstacles have been discussed. There are various projects and we are aware of the problems.

*WHAT PART OF YOUR BUDGET IS ALLOCATED TO TRAINING?*

I do not know exactly. I believe that the amount was about 200 million kroons.

*HOW MUCH ARE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF RISK GROUPS INVOLVED IN YOUR WORK?*

I think there are some people working in our centre who were previously unemployed. The work clubs and so on.. Some people have established a non-profit association and they know the problems and needs of the long-term unemployed. Yes, there are some examples.

*COMING BACK TO NON-FORMAL EDUCATION. ARE YOU PLANNING TO PROVIDE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED OR FOR THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED?*

Some people may need this kind of training. I wouldn't rule it out. It depends on what kind of problem the unemployed person has, what prevents him/her from getting a job.

*SO FIRST THEY ARE ASSESSED?*

Yes.

*WHAT ABOUT COURSES SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT? THE COURSES THAT HELP THE UNEMPLOYED TO GET INVOLVED*

We have different activities. Sometimes our clients are referred to the local government. There is also coaching for working life.

*HOW DO YOUR LOCAL OFFICES COOPERATE WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES?*

It is different. It depends on the head of the office – how active he/she is. And it also depends on the willingness of the local government to cooperate.

*WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE? WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES? WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO INCREASE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED ACCESS TO TRAINING AND TO MAKE TRAINING EFFECTIVE?*

We have to establish the needs of the unemployed and how these needs comply with the needs of the labour market so that we could provide relevant training.

*HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE FROM GETTING THE RELEVANT INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS TO PROVIDING A COURSE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED? HOW LONG IS THE WAITING LIST FOR THE UNEMPLOYED?*

I do not know exactly. We are at the beginning of the process. First couple of weeks were spent to get a clear picture of the situation: how many training contracts we have signed and how many courses are organised on the basis of these contracts. We did not have an overview. There were some cases when people had to wait for 4 or 5 months but the average is 1 to 2 months.

*AND THE QUICKEST?*

Starting from one week. There is always a certain waiting time for professional training. People cannot join a group in the middle. Maybe the criticism has not been fair ...

It also depends on our clients. Sometimes people want to receive training but the time is not suitable for objective reasons.

It is important to establish who needs training and if people are motivated enough. We cannot commission courses based only on people's wishes.

*SOME TRAINING PROVIDERS HAVE SAID THAT THE PARTICIPANTS NEED SOME KIND OF PRE-TRAINING OR EVEN TREATMENT BEFORE THEY ENTER A COURSE. OTHERWISE THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO PARTICIPATE.*

Maybe they should participate in a welfare measure. Studying is not easy. They have to be present 8 hours a day.

*WHICH TARGET GROUPS NEED MORE HELP AND SUPPORT?*

For example there is a 16-hour training for prisoners who are about to be released; the money comes from the EU Social Fund. They are taught how to look for a job and they also receive 3 hours of counselling. When they are released they should know where and how to look for a job; which opportunities the Estonian labour market offers. The prisons do not offer such training so we decided to do it and offer group counselling.

We have also met with people from the Tallinn probation supervision department and informed them about our services. We also cooperate with social workers. We have found two training providers who work in prisons.

*HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE LEVEL OF TRAINING PROVIDERS?*

It varies. We have feedback questionnaires with questions about satisfaction with the course, efficiency of the course. That is all we have. There are some training providers with whom we have terminated the contract and there are some with whom we have cooperated for years.

*WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE? WILL THERE BE ANY CHANGES IN SUPPORTING TARGET GROUPS AND OFFERING TRAINING?*

I have already mentioned the most important plans. We want to develop the skills of our staff so that they could provide better services and in-depth support. We want to develop service providers' networks. The number of the unemployed is growing fast and the situation is complicated. We work with risk groups and offer various measures. An important amendment was made to the legislation: before 2006 those disabled people who had 100% disability could not register as unemployed. Now they can.

In the autumn we are going to implement a system of training cards. We want to offer refresher courses based on the needs of the unemployed people to make finding a job easier for them. The courses are refresher courses to improve their previously acquired qualifications. Within this project we will not offer management courses or courses on general social or personal skills.

## **4 Promoting Access of Adults to Formal Educational Institutions**

This chapter concerns the accessibility of education to adults, underrepresented and risk groups and the factors limiting access to education from the perspective of heads of educational institutions (adult upper secondary schools, vocational schools, schools providing education in prisons, higher educational institutions and providers of non-formal education) and representatives of relevant ministries.

### **4.1. Accessibility of formal education**

#### **4.1.1 Accessibility of general and vocational education**

General education is provided to adults by adult secondary schools; post-lower secondary and post-upper secondary vocational education is provided by vocational schools. Languages of instruction are both Estonian and Russian.

Education is free for all participants.

#### **Cost of education**

Adult secondary schools provide free education for everybody. Adults can continue discontinued education; upon the approval of the local government pupils who have dropped out of school before reaching the minimum school-leaving age and victims of school bullying can continue studying in both Estonian and Russian.

Adult secondary school students receive no study allowance. This means that they either have to work or are supported by parents. Orphans are supported by the state or receive a survivor's pension.

Vocational education is provided free of charge except for some post-secondary programmes which are not included in the state commissioned education.

Vocational schools pay a study allowance if the student's academic achievement and behaviour are satisfactory. All vocational schools have also dormitories for students from other regions. Some vocational schools receive support from local governments to cover the accommodation and catering costs of students from economically disadvantaged homes.

Vocational educational institutions can offer more support to risk groups by paying study allowances and travel allowances, by offering dormitory places, etc. Therefore vocational schools are very important in providing education to risk groups.

All vocational schools offer learning opportunities for adults. Although the information is available on the schools' websites some potential students are probably not aware of such possibility to learn a (new) profession.

#### **Transport problems**

According to SP3 about 22% of students experience problems with transport. The travel fare concessions granted to pupils of general educational institutions are decided by local

governments. Although students can use travel fare concession, transport costs may be significant for those who live away from schools (since busses stop running early students may have problems with returning home from county centres after classes). Adult secondary schools do not have dormitories where students from economically disadvantaged homes or distant regions could stay during week. Since even those studying in evening or distance courses have to attend classes several times a week, the distance of school or lack of transportation may prevent people from starting or continuing learning.

## **Access to education for risk groups and underrepresented groups**

### **1. People who have dropped out of school**

Those who have dropped out of general education can continue their education in vocational schools (and acquire secondary vocational education and vocational education without lower secondary education; some schools offer vocational education with lower secondary education in cooperation with mainstream schools) and in adult secondary schools. Education is provided both in Estonian and in Russian. As there are more learning opportunities the number of people who drop out of the educational system has decreased.

In 2010 programme “Vocation” was launched enabling 500 learners who have dropped out of vocational schools to complete their education; the programme is funded from ESF.

### **2. Risk groups and marginal groups**

Unemployed people also experience difficulties in obtaining general education. The training offered to the unemployed lasts the maximum of one year and funds are available mainly for vocational pre-training, re-training or continuous training in a certain field. The unemployed who attend those types of courses are also remunerated the transport costs. It is difficult for unemployed people to start acquiring general education. Those who study on evening courses continue to receive the unemployment benefit; those who opt for distance learning lose the benefit.

Studying in vocational educational institutions should be made better accessible to unemployed people.

Prisoners can acquire general education and vocational education in prisons according to the same study programmes used in mainstream schools.

One of the target groups of adult secondary schools are ex-prisoners or people released on parole who continue their education in the same school that provided education in prison. Those released on parole are more likely to continue and complete their education.

3. Adult people have also become more aware of educational opportunities. This is proved by the growing number of learners in general education (+13% in the academic year 2009-2010 compared with previous academic years). Despite the fact that there are more learning opportunities the share of adult learners in vocational education has been stable (around 15-16%). Although the information is available on the schools’ websites some potential students are probably not aware of such possibility to learn a (new) profession.

One important factor in **expanding the range of learners** in the current economic situation is motivation. According to the respondents motivation for learning can be increased mainly by offering pre-training in adult secondary schools and linking studies with practical work. This will enable graduates to be more competitive in the labour market.

Besides finding a suitable profession it is important that completing one's education offers better opportunities in the labour market. The state should be more precise about which professions are needed in the changed economic situation and support vocational educational institutions in their effort to teach new professions.

#### **4.1.2 Access to tertiary education**

Tertiary education is offered by public universities and colleges as well as private universities. Professional higher education is also offered by some vocational educational institutions.

As a rule, adults pay for studying in a higher educational institution. However, certain courses, in particular those targeted to teachers, are provided for free.

Therefore one of the most important obstacles in making higher education more accessible to adults is money.

Paying for one's studies means that learners should earn a decent income or have the possibility to draw a study loan. Those studying part-time cannot draw a loan. It has been proposed to grant study loans also to those studying part-time. However, given the fact that more than 100 000 people are unemployed in Estonia and those who have a job can not be sure that they will continue to have a job the number of those who will use this option will probably not be very big.

The financial burden of adult learners is increased by transport and accommodation costs (universities do not offer accommodation for those who have to attend lectures on weekends).

#### **Reserved places in higher education**

In higher education reserving places for certain groups is not very widely used – only very few free of charge study places are reserved for people with special needs and athletes. The issue has only started to be discussed in the context of decreasing number of school leavers, precarious economic situation and apprehensions of potential students about drawing a study loan on the one hand and insufficient funding of higher education by the state on the other hand.

It is hoped that because the number of school leavers is decreasing the current level of funding will enable to offer more free of charge study places to adults and underrepresented target groups. The situation is made worse by the current economic depression – representatives of higher educational institutions noted that an increasing number of students are struggling to pay the study fee.

To some extent, higher education has become more accessible due to colleges opened in regions. An opportunity to study close to one's home decreases transport and accommodation costs. Local colleges are also perceived as more student friendly.

Costs are also reduced by e-learning opportunities and availability of on-line materials. This however only alleviates the problem but does not solve it.

According to the survey on adult education people who start studying are more often those on lower positions and lower income. Costs are an obstacle also for risk groups – unemployed people, prisoners and ex-prisoners. Distance learning is not available to prisoners due to security risks.

Another barrier to starting higher education is the **existing skills of students**. Universities apply thresholds for admitting students. Applicants who have finished best schools and come from economically well-off families have much better opportunities to be admitted than those who come from weaker schools or have special needs because, as a rule, they achieve better results in state examinations. Thus they are more likely to be admitted to state-commissioned study places.

The knowledge (both general knowledge and knowledge of certain subjects) of school leavers were considered to be rather uneven. This means that candidates from schools where the level of teaching is lower are less likely to be admitted to daytime courses. Although universities offer preparatory courses to those who wish to improve their knowledge, these courses are provided for a fee and are not available in all regions.

Faculties organize professional events and competitions which enable participants to learn more about their area of interest and universities to attract students who are motivated. Unfortunately, such events are less accessible to people from remote regions or weaker schools. Universities also tend to cooperate more with strong secondary schools.

Graduates from vocational schools who continue their education in the same field and winners of subject competitions are granted extra points in admission to university.

A prerequisite for studying in open forms of education is completion of upper secondary education. Some universities also interview candidates to be sure that they are able to cope with studies. For some candidates, in particular those who have finished the previous educational level some time ago, the interview may become a barrier discouraging them from even filing an application. This target group should have an opportunity to study certain subjects in order to acquire the knowledge necessary for studying in higher education.

Although students at secondary and vocational schools in which the language of instruction is Russian are required to sit a state exam in Estonian their knowledge of Estonian is not sufficient to study at university in Estonian. Russians are also less informed about learning opportunities – the heads of Russian schools lack adequate information about:

- which public universities offer courses in Russian together with additional language course to help students learn Estonian;

- the fact that universities offer Estonian courses for a certain period before the start of studies or in parallel of them.

Russian secondary students are also interested in preparatory courses provided in Russian.

Another barrier is the lack of confidence - people are **not sure that the chosen course is suitable or that they can cope with studies**. Given that considerable amounts are paid for studying such lack of confidence can discourage people from applying.

Those who return to education after a number of years need counselling as to which courses and study forms are most suitable for them. Universities' career centres are willing to help but many people are not aware of the opportunity to receive counselling.

Universities offer also an opportunity to enrol for courses through the Open University. Such learners are not "officially" students and can study one or two subjects by paying only for the credit points received. This provides adult learners an opportunity to test their ability and willingness to study and to assess the quality of the course. Later, they can transfer to formal education.

Although several universities have the Open University department, their focuses are different.

In order to remove barriers caused by lack of confidence and information such learning opportunities and conditions need to be advertised more.

So far only some institutions have actively advertised learning opportunities for adults. Private educational institutions as newcomers in the educational market have to compete for students and thus have found new students mainly among adults. Public universities have the advantage of being able to choose among the best candidates. Due to the decreasing number of school leavers all universities have started to think more about attracting adult learners. The economic depression has also raised the issue of supporting students. The representatives of both universities included in the survey sample noted that discussions concerning financial support of students have started or will start soon (situation as at May 2009). If respective decisions are adopted universities can make amendments to admission requirements and also change the policy of supporting different groups of students.

In 2010 a new programme "TULE" ("COME") will be launched for those who have discontinued higher education. The target group of the programme are students who have discontinued their bachelor or master studies at state-commissioned places after completing at least 50% of the programme. 1000 students will receive support to continue their studies; it is notable that they do not have to choose the same institution or the same programme.

## 4.2 Supporting studies at different educational levels

### 4.2.1. Supports for students to enable them to stay on at school

The main reasons for dropping out of general or vocational education are **poor attendance and weak academic achievement**.

In both adult secondary schools and vocational schools there is a number of students who have had problems in school and whose academic achievement in lower secondary school was low.

Also those whose average academic achievement in lower secondary school was satisfactory have lower levels of knowledge in certain subjects, such as sciences, although this is not always reflected in their marks.

In order to continue studies those gaps in knowledge must be filled by doing more individual work. Schools are introducing different forms of study to help students to catch up with others (individual tutoring, extra classes)..

Those who have finished lower secondary school according to **a simplified programme** also need additional help. Individual work and revising helps them to catch up and fill the gaps in general knowledge and in their knowledge of certain subjects. It is important that students are motivated and feel that teachers are interested in their performance and wish to support and help them.

Some students are **not used to study and lack the skill of working independently**. This may add to their problems. Vocational schools teach such skills by practical activities, such as handicraft, cooking, woodwork, etc. Practical activities and the sense of success teach students to finish what they have started and restore their self-confidence lost in lower secondary school.

Adult secondary schools where the use of practical activities is more limited can help by creating a positive learning environment and treating students as adults and equals. This also helps to prevent discipline problems. When students see that disruptive behaviour is not approved they give up and either start working with others or leave.

Some adult secondary schools and also some mainstream schools offer vocational pre-training in addition to general education. This diversifies studies and also helps school leavers to enter the labour market. 982 students received vocational pre-training in the academic year 2008-2009.

Both adult secondary schools included in the sample have also considered offering training courses. So far the idea has not been realized due to the lack of space or financial support from the local government. Such courses would attract additional target groups, including older people, and offer knowledge that was not offered when they were at school. On the other hand, practical courses could offer new opportunities and teach specific skills also to

students and help them to adapt to the requirements of the labour market. This is important for students who belong to risk groups.

Some young learners (who have dropped out of their former school) come from problematic or disadvantaged families or have lost contact with their families and therefore lack elementary life skills, such as managing one's money, etc. They also need support to cope with personal problems – someone to talk to. Such support can be provided by teachers. All schools teach family studies but these are not enough. Such students need extra support and an opportunity to turn to somebody – the school head, a teacher, a psychologist, etc. – outside classes. Such conversations improve students' communication skills and the skill of solving problems. They acquire positive behavioural models from a positive example. An opportunity to live in dormitory increases the sense of security.

All schools are willing to help and guide students from risk groups although the methods used are different depending on the composition of the school staff and the skills of teachers in working with risk groups.

**Active citizen.** Civic studies are included in the curricula of all schools. Given the fact that many students of adult secondary schools work it is difficult to organize common events that would bring all students together.

Vocational schools can participate in community life by organising practical training, cooperating with local governments and enterprises and involving students in these activities. Being a citizen is a part of being a human. Being a citizen means being interested in life and willing to learn and improve one's knowledge and skills.

### **External factors causing students to discontinue their education**

As a rule, students of adult secondary schools and vocational schools come from less advantaged economic background. SP3 revealed that 30% of adult secondary students and 38% of vocational students experience financial problems.

One of the main reasons for dropping out of vocational school is finding a job. Because of financial problems many students are ready to change school for even the lowest paid jobs. Some continue their education in open forms of study, others leave school for good.

Students of adult secondary schools have problems with attending classes – they do not dare to ask their employers for permission to leave early on those days they have to attend classes. If they have to choose between studying and keeping their job they quit school rather than risk losing their job.

Those issues need to be discussed with employers.

### **Small children**

Another reason for dropping out of school may be the existence of small children, in particular if the learner is a single parent. Mothers can continue studying in open forms of

study – as distance or external learners. Schools try to find a solution by offering flexible forms of learning or personalized study programmes.

Child care is also a problem (for 16% of learners). Students have to attend classes mainly in evenings when nurseries and kindergartens are closed. Larger secondary schools have classes both in daytime and in evenings. More students prefer daytime classes. Others need help from their families or friends. Schools consider organising child care in school premises too complicated because of very strict requirements.

#### **4.2.2 Support for continuing studies**

Since 2007, the Ministry of Education and Research has been gathering data on adults who have finished general or vocational education. Six months after finishing the school 16% have continued their education at a higher level, both in vocational schools and higher educational institutions.

Those who come from vocational schools can have an extra year to catch up and prepare for state exams. Some universities grant students of vocational schools an extra point in admission if they continue their education in the same profession.

Some graduates of adult secondary schools also continue their education at universities. The number of such graduates is different depending on the year and the school. According to teachers adults find it even easier to adapt to university life because they have experience in working independently.

Availability of career counselling and counselling on learning opportunities differs from school to school. However, all counties have career centres where potential learners can get free advice and information.

#### **4.2.3 Continuous training of teachers**

Teachers are required to participate in continuous training for 160 hours in every five years; vocational teachers are required to participate in professional continuous training for two months in every three years. Each school has to spend 3% of their teachers' salary fund on staff training.

Since 2001 funds intended for teacher training are allocated to the budgets of local governments who forward the money to schools. Schools make decisions on training based on their own needs and the school's development plan. The head of school is responsible for organising training and selecting courses.

The in-depth interviews revealed that schools offer different types of training to their staff. Some schools focus on subject-related continuous training, others offer also more general courses, including courses tailored to the specific needs of the staff (courses on teamwork, active teaching methods, etc.). These courses are more diverse and based on cooperation between teachers and various specialists.

Adult secondary schools are actively exchanging experiences and organising continuous training courses; vocational schools are somewhat less active in this field and cooperate less

with each other. They have more information about other schools in the region but less about their counterparts in other regions.

#### **4.2.3 Preventing students from dropping out of higher education. Support offered by universities**

In preventing students from dropping out and supporting their efforts to continue education activities must be focused on two groups:

- 1) students who have come to university immediately after finishing upper secondary school
- 2) adult learners who study in open courses

**Students in the first group** tend to drop out during their first year at the university; this concerns in particular students who study natural and exact sciences and technology. The representatives of universities pointed out that the levels of knowledge are very different irrespective of the results of state exams. Therefore students who are at risk of dropping out are offered catching up courses in various subjects. Unfortunately this does not help everybody.

Some students have problems with the Estonian language, with linking knowledge in various subjects and with functional literacy. Therefore, universities offer special courses to improve students' functional literacy and to teach them how to study.

These problems indicate that there have been serious deficiencies in previous educational levels and secondary schools provide education at **uneven levels**.

Adult learners discontinue their education more often for **reasons not related to their studies**.

The main reasons are the current economic situation - many people struggle to pay study fees and accommodation and travel costs.

Some people cannot attend weekend courses which start on Fridays because they are afraid of losing their job. The problem can be alleviated by offering more e-learning and online courses.

#### **4.3 Non-formal education**

Various training courses are offered by vocational educational institutions, higher educational institutions, informal education centres, private training providers and community centres/libraries. A more diverse range of courses is offered in bigger towns because there are more training providers.

Non-formal training is paid by participants and employers. Training providers also apply for funding through various projects. The Adult Education Act provides that local governments may support work related training, including training offered to unemployed people and

those looking for a job, and non-formal training. Informal training centres have more difficulties in raising funds necessary for development.

Since 2007 free training is provided by vocational schools and informal education centres with ESF support. The majority of courses are work related continuous training courses the aim of which is to increase the competitiveness of participants in the labour market.

### *Staff conditions*

Vocational schools and universities use their own teaching staff in the provision of continuous training courses. Informal education centres hire lecturers on the basis of contracts for services. One or two members of staff are responsible for planning and organising courses in informal education centres.

Private training providers have their own teaching staff and they also hire external lecturers to provide certain courses.

Training providers compete for lecturers.

The respondents pointed out that non-formal training differs from formal training – irrespective of the topic non-formal courses encourage dialogue and discussions with participants. Besides good theoretical knowledge lecturers must be aware of practical issues related to the topic. Active teaching methods enable participants and lecturers to exchange information; training providers become better aware of the labour market issues and to find solutions in cooperation with participants and employers.

### *Target groups and expanding the range of participants*

There are more people working in higher positions, more women and younger people among participants in continuous training courses. The shares of men, older age groups, skilled and unskilled workers are smaller. The findings of the Adult Training Survey 2007 indicated that people who hold lower positions and whose income is also lower more often pay themselves for training.

The in-depth interviews revealed that according to both training providers and decision makers the following factors help to expand the range of participants:

- Free courses (for people with lower income),
- Interesting topics (help attract more men) and courses related to personal development and strengthening the sense of community rather than courses on how to cope in the labour market. People are interested in acting and learning together – this is proved by the popularity of various art and handicraft courses, folk dancing and choir singing. Also, language courses are not the only way to learn Estonian – it can be done through various hobby activities.
- Active inclusion of new target groups through different events, through cooperation with various institutions (e.g. schools, local governments, libraries, community centres, etc.) and by advertising courses to local people.

Although information about courses is available on the websites of training providers, people who have not participated in any courses hardly ever visit those websites. Training providers who wish to expand the range of participants should find an appropriate channel to inform that particular group of potential participants about available courses.

The heads of educational institutions had little experience with providing courses for unemployed people; some had negative experience with the organisation of such courses.

Respondents believed that from the perspective of education and training unemployed people should not be treated as a separate group; such training is complicated to organise and does not help to connect the unemployed with other participants.

Although teachers and local government officials can participate in various courses on predefined topics training providers considered it important to offer them also courses that teach how to understand self and the surrounding world; courses that give a positive experience with lifelong learning. Decision makers also agree that local government officials and teachers are the people whose attitudes have a direct or indirect impact on the attitudes of pupils and local people towards lifelong learning.

#### **4.3.1 Links with formal education**

Non-formal education is closely connected with formal education both through participants and through training providers.

Participants can cross the bridge between non-formal and formal education from two directions:

##### **1) From non-formal education to formal education**

Participation in a non-formal training course may trigger a wish to start learning a profession either in a vocational school or university. This concerns in particular those people who hesitate and cannot decide which profession or educational institution to choose. Non-formal training increases confidence in their choice. If the course is related to participant's work (which is very likely in the case of continuous courses) the employer is more likely to support participation in formal education.

Completion of a non-formal training course increases the participants' confidence and creates a positive attitude towards learning.

##### **2) From formal education to non-formal education**

After graduating from an educational institution and starting working people need continuous training in various fields. Such training is provided by all non-formal education providers. Continuous education department so vocational schools and universities focus on professional continuous training, private training providers offer more general training on management and teamwork skills.

Also, various courses on personal development are important for those who have completed formal education.

Non-formal training courses also enable to make formal education offered by vocational schools and universities more diverse by participating in the continuous education courses offered either by the same institution or other training providers. Participation in such courses can be taken into account in formal education provided the topic of the course is related to the study programme.

### *Recognition of prior learning*

Opinions about the recognition of prior learning (VŮTA) differed. Vocational schools had no problems with recognising prior learning and work experience – after all, the skills and knowledge can be verified by a couple of practical tasks or questions if necessary.

Some higher educational institutions recognise only prior formal education; some recognise all types of learning.

However, vocational schools and universities as well as non-formal education centres did not have comprehensive information about to what extent the knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal courses are recognised in formal education. Those who confirmed that such knowledge and skills are recognised based their opinion on the feedback received from learners.

### *Future developments*

The volume of non-formal training has increased and continues increasing. More attention is paid to including groups of population who have never participated in any courses. This means that in addition to offering new courses such courses must be advertised and made more accessible in regions. Various partners, including libraries should be included in this work.

The Ministry of Education and Research is negotiating with training providers in order to offer courses tailored to the specific needs of each region.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education adopted in 2009 provides for improved access for adults to both formal and non-formal education through various measures. The objective of the proposed measures is to make educational institutions more open and to ensure the flexibility and high quality of education. The issue of the inclusion of people who have not participated in any training or have participated a long time ago in both formal and non-formal education is specified in the development plan as a separate issue that needs to be solved.

The main objective of this sub-project was to find an answer to the question how to ensure access to education for adults, risk groups and other groups underrepresented in formal educational system and how could their efforts be supported by developing relevant policies.

On the basis of interviews conducted with representatives of educational institutions and policy-makers we can say that both educational institutions and ministries are aware of the problems and difficulties and have developed or are developing general measures to solve these problems. However, the measures must be put into practice and specific actions must be taken. The interviews also revealed that educational institutions have different experiences with including and supporting underrepresented groups.

We hope that the comparative analysis of the issues highlighted by representatives of educational institutions and policy-makers and our recommendations will provide additional insight and help the relevant stakeholders to become more aware of and to find solutions to the problems faced by underrepresented and risk groups.

### INCLUSION OF NEW LEARNERS

#### *General formal education*

Despite general education being provided free of charge (except for private schools) studying may be financially difficult for some unemployed people or people with limited resources (transport costs, reduced pay for leaving early on certain days).

- The problem could be alleviated by compensating for transport costs similarly to vocational students.

#### *Vocational education*

Information on learning opportunities and conditions in vocational educational institutions is available on schools' websites and on the educational portal "Rajaleidja" that is targeted mainly to school pupils.

- Adult learners need more detailed information on learning conditions, including open study forms and individualised study programmes, recognition of prior learning and work experience, fees, etc.

- Besides the Internet other channels should be used to inform also those potential learners who are not regular Internet users.

In Estonia there are many people (34%) who have only general education and no specific qualifications. Some of them lack practical skills which are necessary to cope and experience success and to ensure their competitiveness in the labour market. This hinders the development of sustainable economy and society. This concerns in particular unemployed people who have no professional qualification and find it difficult to enter the labour market. Helping them back to work only by paying financial support to employers is not a sustainable solution.

- Cooperation between the Unemployment Insurance Fund and vocational educational institutions in providing formal education to unemployed and long-term unemployed people and helping them acquire a new qualification should become more active and comprehensive.

### *Higher education*

Access to higher education for adult learners, economically disadvantaged people, people living in rural areas, people belonging to underrepresented groups and people with special needs is limited for both financial and social reasons and because their knowledge obtained at lower levels of education is not adequate.

- The following issues need to be discussed:
  - Creation of a means-tested support system in higher education; introducing a system of personal training vouchers which can be used by learners to cover part of the cost of their formal education;
  - More equal division of study fees in order to reduce the fees;
- Study loans should be made available to part-time students.
- Preparatory courses on specific subjects should be offered to adults in order to provide them an opportunity to revise and reinforce their knowledge of these subjects; potential learners should be informed about this opportunity;
- Preparatory courses for students from Russian-language schools and vocational educational institutions; potential learners should be informed about this opportunity.
- In 2010 the project TULE was launched in order to provide for people who have discontinued their higher education to resume their studies. Only those students who have completed at least 50% of their study programme are eligible under the project.

## HELPING LEARNERS TO MAKE A CHOICE

### *Counselling services*

Career counselling is available to both unemployed people and pupils; more active adults also find receive counselling and information from schools. Counselling services should be made available also to groups of adults.

- To develop a counselling system that would take into account the need for information of various target groups and the information channels available to them;
- To include schools in the process of creating the counselling system and to develop a system of updating information on learning opportunities and conditions, including on open study forms at different educational levels;
- To promote Open Universities as a gateway to higher education (participants can start from studying one subject that they feel they need most or they can participate in continuous training courses); to use other channels besides the universities' websites to inform potential participants about this opportunity;
- To create counselling services to advise people about recognition of prior learning and work experience;

#### *Creating a supportive environment*

Many adults, in particular those who have lower education and who have been away from school for a longer period are not able to perceive themselves as learners; also, public opinion (including family, co-workers, employers) does not always encourage adults to return to education.

- To create favourable public opinion about adult education; to encourage potential learners;
- To promote the idea of lifelong learning in general educational institutions and to introduce the opportunities of returning to education.

### SUPPORTING LEARNING AND REDUCING THE NUMBER OF DROP-OUTS

#### *Difficulties*

Many learners need help to cope with their studies. One of the main reasons for falling behind in one or more subjects is the unequal level of education provided by mainstream schools.

- Estonian schools (both lower and upper secondary schools) need to implement changes to ensure better quality and more equal level of education provided. State examinations taken at the end of an educational level are not an adequate solution.

Both adult secondary schools and vocational schools support students who have finished lower secondary education according to a simplified study programme. In some cases transferring a student to a simplified programme has not been justified; the students had fallen behind because the school was not willing or could not support him/her sufficiently.

- To create more opportunities and to build capacity to react fast to social or behavioural problems in order to prevent students from falling behind in mainstream schools.
- To assess the achievability of study programmes and if necessary offer more personal support to pupils of mainstream schools.

### *Readiness to support and motivate risk groups*

All educational institutions included in the sample offered support to adult learners and underrepresented groups (including ex-prisoners) in order to help them overcome problems faced in their studies. Some school heads and teachers have participated in courses on methods of working with risk groups and motivating them.

- Support offered to underrepresented and risk groups and methods used should be discussed among school heads and teachers in the course of exchanging experiences; teachers of mainstream schools should also be involved in this process;
- Special attention should be paid to supporting these students; support should be offered in all areas of school life;
- Teachers should receive special training on how to cope with risk groups; management should be informed about training opportunities and it should be considered to require schools to produce evidence that teachers have undergone such training;
- Teachers who teach prisoners need specific training and supervision.

### Problems not related to school

#### *Childcare opportunities for adult learners*

Lack of childcare is a problem often faced by parents with small children. Schools cannot offer childcare services because of health care requirements.

- The Ministry of Education and Research should seek for opportunities to cooperate with local governments to solve the problem. Learners should have an opportunity to use childcare services (in particular on evenings and weekends);
- To find flexible childcare opportunities (play rooms) and to inform schools about them.

#### *Transport problems*

Although adults can acquire both secondary and higher education in schools and regional colleges that are close to their homes cost and availability of transport is a problem for some students.

- Needs of learners should be taken into account in organising public transport (schedules, etc);

- Transport costs should be remunerated also to fee paying students;
- To consider compensating for the time spent on travelling;
- To bring schools closer to learners (e-study, video lectures, etc)

### *Role and involvement of employers in lifelong learning*

Most adult learners have a job. Even if they opt for open forms of study it requires them to leave early on certain days and to take study leaves. Representatives of educational institutions said that some people have problems with participating in classes because they are afraid of asking their employers for permission to leave.

- In addition to what is provided by law A social agreement is needed between the state and employers in order to specify the expectations and liabilities of learners and employers in this area.

The SP4 and the interviews conducted with representatives of schools indicated that employers' attitudes towards studying vary significantly; some employers fully support their employees, others believe that coping with work and studies is learner's own problem. Although most employers admit that education is important there is room for development at the level of single enterprises. This concerns in particular general education.

- A discussion is needed on how to support adult learners, what does education mean to employers, learners and economy as a whole in order to change employers' attitude and to make them aware of the problems their employees face.

## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

### *Expanding the range of learners*

The majority of participants in courses are women, younger people and people with higher educational levels.

- The range of participants could be expanded by offering courses that would meet the expectations of different target groups;
- Courses should be advertised through various channels taking into account the background of potential learners.

### *Diversification of courses*

In Estonia non-formal education is more related to continuous professional training than in other European countries; less courses are related to personal development and being a good citizen.

- More attention should be paid to personal and community development and cooperation; such courses increase creativity and initiative in people and also make them more competitive in their work;

- People from different (language) backgrounds and of different ages should be encouraged to work and learn together.

### *Training of key persons*

Teachers of mainstream schools and employees of local governments play an important role in promoting lifelong learning, creating learning opportunities for underrepresented and risk groups and supporting learners.

- More diverse continuous training (including non-formal training) for teachers is needed;
- School heads need specific training and information on courses on managing risk groups for teachers; they also need an opportunity to share relevant experiences;
- Various training should be provided to local government officials (on lifelong learning, issues related to adult learners and educational institutions offering education to adults, community development and networking, importance of training, etc)

### *Training courses for unemployed people*

Currently the only acceptable performance indicator for assessing training provided to unemployed people is the employability of participants.

- Unemployed people should be offered various types of training that support personal development, community relations, development of knowledge and skills – important factors that help to avoid long-term unemployment and enter the labour market.

Respondents provided little information on employment training – they had not cooperated recently with the employment office (now the Unemployment Insurance Fund) in the field of training. However, based on previous experiences the respondents noted that they had had problems with organisation of training (briefing, requirements on group size and time of training, etc.). They said that offering training to unemployed people separately from other target groups is too time consuming and complicated and not justified.

- Unemployed people should have more freedom in choosing training courses; the training card system should be used more extensively;
- Unemployed people should be offered training together with other target groups, not separately.

### *Funding*

The state finances non-formal training through educational institutions, employers and the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

- Funding through participants (learners are issued personal training vouchers which are used to pay for training) – this would ensure wider choice for participants and encourage training providers to innovate their services.