



Life-Long Learning in Estonia

Estonia is one of the smallest countries in Europe, both in term of the area *45,200 km²* and the population *1.34 million*. Throughout centuries, Estonians have always lived in the corner of the world where there is a large-scale migration of peoples. Currently, Estonia has nearly 30% of its population other than of ethnic Estonian background.

Education in Estonia is highly valued among the society members and its prestige has increased. In 2005, the Estonian Government adopted the Estonian Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2005-2008. Lifelong Learning Strategy was the first strategic document that fixed the government's goals in adult education after Estonia re-established its independence in 1991.

The main objective of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy is to improve adults' opportunities and motivation for participating in formal, non-formal and informal learning in order to improve their knowledge and skills according to their own needs, the needs of the society and labour market.

Despite the name of the strategy it focuses mainly on developments in adult education. In Estonia the concept of adult learner is in general not related to the age of the learner. According to Estonia's legislation adult learner is a learner whose main activity is other than studying.

Since November 1993, adult education is governed by the Adult Education Act which provides for adults lifelong individual development i.e. settles the obligations of the government and local authorities as well as employers in coordination and implementation of adult education; the funding of adult education from the state budget.

Estonia is characterised by the low participation rate of people involved in adult education. According to surveys, the main reasons for not participating in further training or retraining are a low level of motivation, shortage of money, and the understanding that learning is the privilege of the young. As a result, in addition to the creation of flexible learning opportunities, it is necessary to bring extra financial resources into adult education, and also activities that change the learning attitudes of people. / http://www.avalikteenistus.ee/public/OP1_21juuni2007_ENG.pdf, p 77/

Adult education is in Estonia generally not financed from the state budget: to participate in courses the participant has to pay for it or it is paid by employers. The work to develop new financing scheme in adult education has started. The goal is to find a scheme, which supports in-service training and retraining of adults and motivates entrepreneurs to train their employees. This scheme includes three paying parties – learners, employers and state.

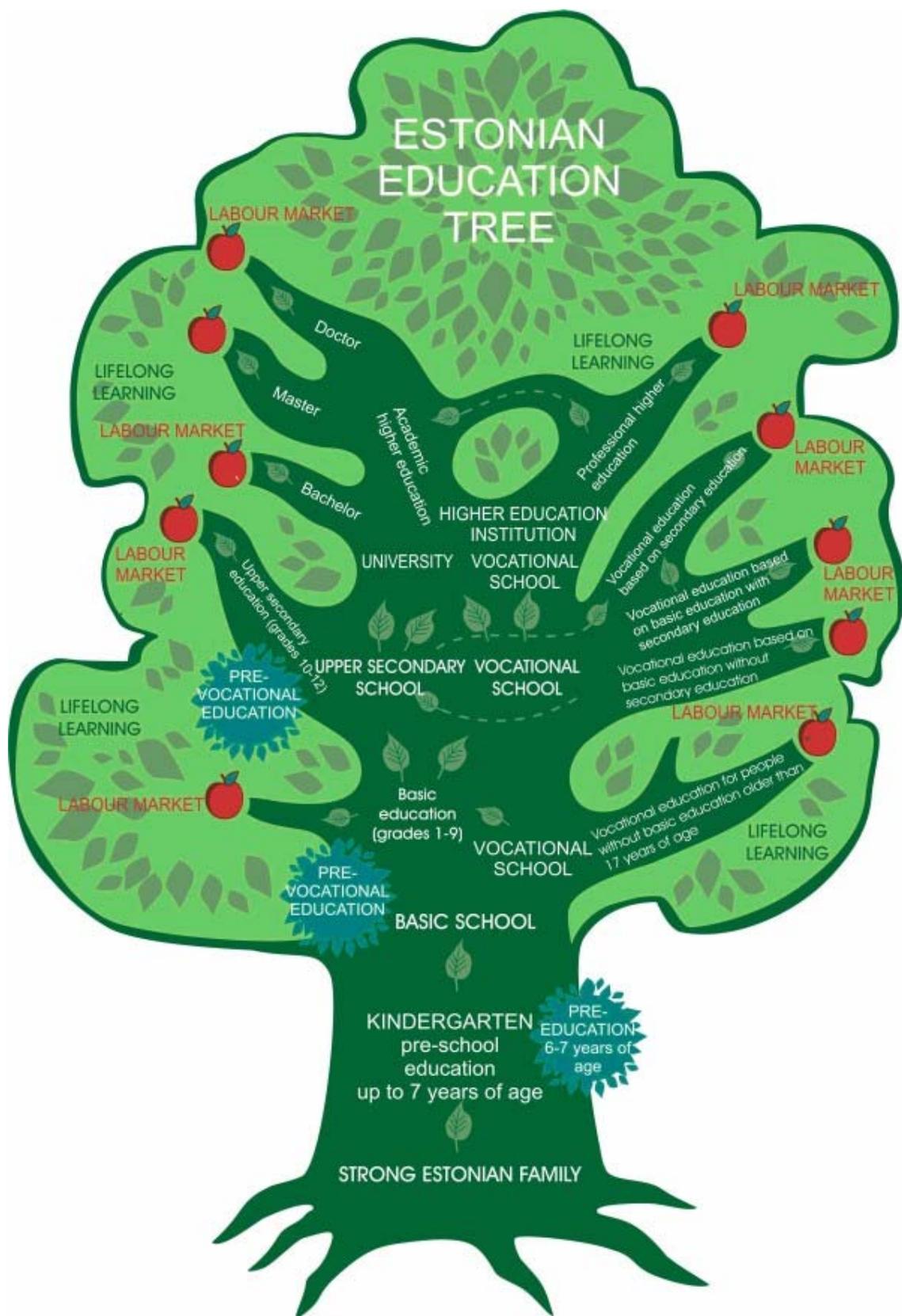
Due to the high proportion of non-Estonians, Estonia also focuses in the Life Long Learning context on people from ethnic groups other than Estonian whose proportion in the risk groups continues to be too great in comparison with non-Estonian-speakers in the population. This means that, in addition to school pupils, attention is also to be paid to adult language learners, and also to new immigrants whose number is limited as yet. It also continues to be important to ensure the smooth introduction into the non-Estonian medium upper secondary schools of partial Estonian-language study, in order to reduce the number of young people who have limited Estonian-language skills and who are therefore excluded from continued education and from the labour market. Estonian-language learning often contains introduction to Estonian (traditional) culture and life styles, in particular under the language immersion programmes.

As Estonia reorients its growing economy towards more high-technology and knowledge-based industries, ESF funding is being used to help the workforce adapt to the new needs of businesses. It helps create new opportunities for existing workers through training and lifelong learning, bringing excluded groups into employment, and educating the young to meet the needs of the economy as it evolves.

Sources:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/members/ee_en.htm

http://www.andras.ee/client/default.asp?wa_id=1003&wa_object_id=1&wa_id_key=



Source: http://www.andras.ee/client/default.asp?wa_id=840&wa_object_id=1&wa_id_key=

Abstract provided by Riina Kütt, Centre for Development of Public Administration, NGO