

Education in Estonia



Special kindergartens and special groups

The rural municipality or city government is obliged to create for all children living in the territory of the administrative unit, the possibility of go to child care services in the region.

By the proposal the Head of the institution rural municipality or city government may create the child care co-group in which children with special needs go with other children, and also special groups exclusively for children with special needs. For children with special needs can also create special kindergartens.

The special group (or in special preschool) takes a child based on solutions of advisory committee and a written statement of a parent or guardian. It is also necessary to present a birth certificate of a child.



Special schools



The rural municipality or city government shall provide children with speech defects, physical, psychological or mental disabilities, opportunities for learning in the school of residence. Usually children with disabilities learn in a regular school, if necessary - on an individual training program. For the correction and rehabilitation relevant lessons are also provided .

The following possibilities exist for the education of children with special needs:

in a regular school, if necessary - on an individual training program. For the correction and rehabilitation relevant lessons are provided.

special classes in ordinary schools. Subjects provided by the rehabilitation plan, is taught under the supervision of a special teacher.

in a special school, where a child learns general subjects and vocational training classes that are held in parallel to the normal professional school.

For children with special needs created by the state and municipal schools. School-resorts designed for students with impairments, special schools - for children with speech defects, physical and mental disabilities.

Home schooling

The right for “home-schooling for health” have students from 1st till 9th class, who has no opportunity to study in conditions that are required to participate in academic work at school in accordance with disabilities or disadvantages of student health.

Home schooling prescribed to children: with severe somatic illness, functional disorder or others disabilities.

A family doctor or medical specialist appoints a child for Home-schooling at the request of the parent (guardian). Translation a student on a home-schooling and the appointment of his individual educational program approves by a Teaching Council based on the purpose of the family doctor or medical specialist.



Organization of special education

If a student due to his severe disability requires a very specific organization of special education and large resources or support services, it creates the opportunity to study in a special class or special school for him. Parents of a student is given the freedom to chose what is the best for their child - study in a normal or a special one.



Measures to support pupils with special educational needs

In identifying the student's special education needs under the leadership of the coordinator of training of pupils with special educational needs pedagogical or psychological examination will be carried out and additional measures of support. If necessary, the student is provided by the availability of services of a special teacher, psychologist or social teacher. The most common primary measures of support, applicable school are differentiated instruction in the classroom, assistance after hours, the provision of special educational assistance or speech therapy in the sub-study group and preparation of an individual training program.



Individualized Education Program

Individualized Education Program - is a program of training, made for students with special educational needs, which describes the conditions necessary for student learning and development, corresponding to his abilities. Individual training program can be compiled in any school or class for very different reasons. Such program can be composed of one, several or all school subjects.



The county counseling center

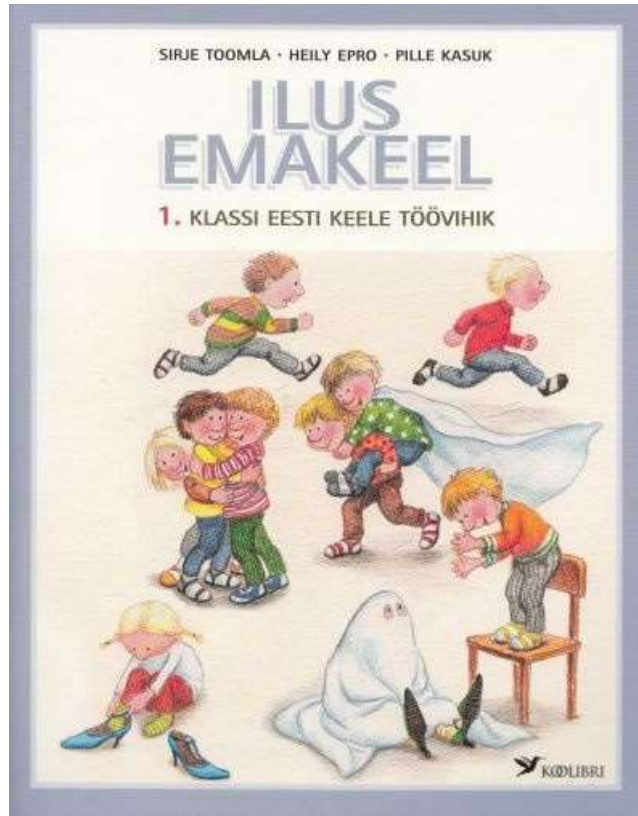
If the support measures in an applicable school do not give the desired results, the school and the student's parents have the opportunity to apply to the county counseling center for further advice.

If necessary, a counseling center provides additional psychological or medical examination and advisory commission gives recommendations on the best education for such child. Advisory committee are required to perform recommendations for the school .



Training materials for students with special educational needs

Adapted training materials are available to help .to organize a training of pupils with special educational needs.



STATE SUPPORT

The State supports the organization of training of pupils with special educational needs, based on the needs of a particular student, and the basis of accounting is the marginal rate filling a special class and public education programs, considering specificity training.



Education in Estonia



General education in Estonia is divided into **pre-school, basic** and **upper-secondary education**.

Pre-school education is for children between the ages of 18 months to 7 years in especially dedicated educational institutions. The main aim of the early stages education is to support the child's family through fostering the child's growth and development by taking into account their individuality. Facilities for the pre-school education are provided by the local authorities at the request of parents. Pre-school children's institutions follow state curricula that is specifically formulated for the purpose. Children who have passed the pre-school curriculum will be issued a certificate that records the child's development. The parents will submit this certificate to the school where the child will be enrolled.

Basic education serves as the mandatory minimum of general education requirement, which can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades from 1 to 6), basic schools (grades from 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that also teach basic school curricula.

Education in Estonia

The basic school is divided into three stages:

stage I – grades 1.-3.

stage II – grades 4.-6.

stage III – grades 7.-9.

Basic education is made available through two national curricula:

national curriculum of basic school;

simplified curriculum for basic school.

Graduating the basic school requires that the student learns the curriculum at least a satisfactory level together with passing three basic school graduation exams consisting of the Estonian language or Estonian as a second language, mathematics and an exam on a subject of the student's choice.



Education in Estonia

General secondary education is acquired at the upper secondary school level. Upper secondary schools are designed to help students become creative, multi-talented, socially mature and reliable citizens who have discovered a field of endeavour that is best suited to their individual interests for continuing their future educational path. The study programme at upper secondary school is arranged into mandatory and voluntary courses. Graduation from upper secondary school requires the student to complete a curriculum consisting of at least 96 individual courses passed at a satisfactory level as a minimum, passing the state exams consisting of the Estonian language or Estonian as a second language, mathematics and a foreign language exam, passing the upper secondary school exam as well as completing a student research paper or practical work during the entire study period.

Attaining general secondary education entitles students to continue their studies at a higher educational institution or to obtain vocational education.



Pre-school education

Pre-school children and child care institutions

Parents who want to enrol their children in a pre-school child care institution should contact local authorities to get information about the admission requirements and documents required for enrolment. Municipalities have the obligation to guarantee a place in a pre-school child care institution of the child's residence for all children aged between 1,5-7 years.



Pre-school education

Pre-school child care institutions support the development of children's general skills (personal, social, play and learning skills) and their overall development in seven areas of learning and teaching:

me and the environment;

language development;

Estonian as a second language;

mathematics;

arts;

music;

physical development and movement.



Pre-school education



National curriculum for pre-school child care institutions

The national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions follows the Scandinavian approach of combining different child-centred active learning methods such as “Step by Step”, the Montessori method, the Waldorf method of teaching, Reggio Emilia, language immersion as well as research, entrepreneurship and outdoor learning.

The goal of pre-school education is to support the children’s individuality, creativity and learning through a game by playing. Children whose home language is other than Estonian will receive state support to learn Estonian from the age of three. In addition, methods of teaching foreign languages to Estonian-speaking children of pre-school age are developed.

Comparative international studies indicate that Estonian pre-school child care institutions have created good conditions for child-centred learning and teaching in co-operation with families. Estonian pre-school child care institutions place emphasis on teaching values, including supporting children’s well-being and safety, preventing bullying and developing tolerance, caring, honesty and courage in children.

Since 2010, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research is supporting a joint venture between the Danish branch of “Save the Children” and the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, entitled “Bully-Free Kindergarten”. The majority of Estonian pre-school child care institutions have joined the initiative. Estonian pre-school child care institutions also belong to a network dedicated to improve children’s health.

Pre-school education

Speech therapists and special education teachers in pre-school child care institutions

Children attending pre-school child care institutions have guaranteed access to speech therapists and special education teachers. According to the 2012 data from the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), such support systems are made available to nearly 14% of children attending pre-school child care institutions.

The 2012 data from the Estonian Education Information System also shows that around 11% of children attending pre-school child care institutions have special needs. Local governments and pre-school child care institutions also use the services provided by regional counselling centres (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling) that receive state support.



Pre-school education

The attendance fees of pre-school child care institutions

In Estonia, parents pay an attendance fee to pre-school child care institutions, which may not exceed 20% of the minimum wage rate established by the Government. The exact amounts of attendance fees are established by local governments who can differentiate the fees based on the child's age, the costs of management of the child care institution or other factors. Attendance fees vary between different areas of Estonia, ranging from 0 to 58 euros. Parents also pay for meals provided by child care institutions. The average amount paid is 26,10 euros. The fees may differ based on families' economic status.



Basic education

Compulsory school attendance and home schooling

Basic education is minimum compulsory general education. All children who reach compulsory school age of seven by 1 October of the given year have to start school. Compulsory school attendance lasts until basic education is completed or the child reaches the minimum school leaving age of 17.

The rural municipality government or the town government has a duty to provide basic education for all children of compulsory school age who live within the territory of the town or municipality. The local government designates a school for every child in the area where the child lives. The main criteria for designating a school are the proximity of the school to home, a sibling already attending the same school and, if possible, the parents' choice of school.

Basic education can be provided by home schooling upon request of a parent or for health reasons.

Distance learning is available for individuals of at least 17 years of age and in special cases and on the recommendation of the advisory commission for younger students.



Basic education

Admission criteria and choice of school



Before starting school, children's readiness for school is assessed by pre-school child care institutions (for those children who do not attend a pre-school child care institution, also by regional advisory centres). A parent will submit a school readiness card to the school where their child starts compulsory education.

Children younger than the compulsory school age may also start school if their parents desire that and the advisory commission or the pre-school child care institution which the child is attending has assessed the child's readiness for school and confirmed that the child is ready for formal instruction.

Each school must accept all children within its catchment area. Parents may also choose a school in another catchment area if that school has available places.

Students are accepted to the school of their place of residence without entry tests. Some schools that provide intensive classes and accept students from across Estonia may use entry tests to determine the abilities and potential of children. In private schools, the school council may establish additional admission criteria.

If a student has previously studied abroad or according to a different curriculum, the teachers' council of the school decides which class the student is assigned to by taking into account the age of the student and the education that the student has previously acquired.

Basic education

Graduation

The basic school graduation certificate is issued to students who have completed basic education in accordance with the national curriculum and:



whose school level marks are at least ‘satisfied’;

who have carried out a creative project in their third stage of study;

who have achieved at least ‘satisfied’ marks for the Estonian language and mathematics exams and for one exam in the subject of their choice.

For further information, look at [the national curriculum for basic schools](#)

In simplified education, the basic school leaving certificate is awarded to students whose school level marks are at least ‘satisfactory’, who have sat the school leaving exams in the Estonian language and mathematics as well as in a subject chosen by the school from among the compulsory subjects. The subject and the type of exam are determined by the head of school and communicated to students by 1 February of the given academic year.

Basic education

Assessment

Assessment means systematic collection and analysis of information and providing feedback about the development of a student. Assessment is the basis for planning further education. There are multiple methods, means and ways of assessing students' performance.

Students' knowledge, skills and proficiency are usually assessed on a five-point scale where «5» is «very good», «4» is «good», «3» is «satisfied», «2» is «poor» and «1» is «weak».

