

Leonardo da Vinci network SME-TraiNet Workshop 3 Report, Partner 6

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Estonia is the smallest country among partners, and due to its limits, it was decided already in the beginning of the SME Trainet project that Partner 6 does not focus only on craft sector and services sector, but analyse problems of management training for young SMEs in complex. The problems identified within young SMEs' management staff training services supply and demand analysis show that gaps in vocational management training for young SMEs are general and do not depend neither on age of the SME nor sector the SME operates in.

Therefore we focused on improving the management education in Estonia.

Following to workshops 1 and 2, Partner 6 had additional workshop where stakeholders gathered to discuss the possible developments to improve training and support services to young SMEs in Estonia.

Prior to the workshop Partner 6 prepared brief overview of education system in Estonia and compared with international development trends in this field.

The overview of education system in Estonia as well as report on demands and supply markets in Estonia (submitted to Lead Partner in Reports 1 and 2) was delivered to all participants of WS 3.

1. International developments in implementation of new curricula of for management staff of young SMEs.

1.1. Vocational education system Estonia (based on Estonian ENIC/NARIC, 2006)

Legal framework

Since the mid-1990s vocational education in Estonia has gone through extensive reforms. The framework of the desired developments and goals was determined in the Government regulations "The Conceptual Framework of Vocational Education" (1998) and "Action Plan for Development of Vocational Education System 2001-2004". The main goal was to increase the attractiveness of vocational education among basic school graduates, as well as to improve the quality of vocational education, also, to better respond to the labour market demands.

The main law stipulating the establishment, reorganisation, and termination of a vocational education institution, its organisation of study and principles of administration, the formation of the budget is "Vocational Education Institution Act" (1998) and "Standard for Vocational Education" (2006). The format and the conditions for issuing a vocational school leaving certificate are stipulated by the Government Regulation *Kutseõppeasutuse lõputunnistuse vorm, statuut ja väljaandmise kord*

(1998).

Types of vocational education institutions

There are state, municipal and private vocational education institutions in Estonia. Depending on the field of study, state vocational education institutions are subject to the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In recent years, according to the development visions, many vocational education institutions have merged into regional vocational education centres that enable to unite resources as well as competence in a certain area to ensure the quality of vocational education.

Study programmes of the vocational education institutions are based on the standard of vocational education, the state curriculum for a certain profession and the school curriculum. The state curriculum is based on the professional standard mutually agreed upon by the professional council of the National Qualifications Authority.

Vocational secondary education may be started either after graduation from a basic school (9 years of study) or after graduation from a general or vocational secondary school. The nominal length of vocational secondary education study programmes based on basic education is at least 3 years (120 study weeks), including general secondary education subjects in the amount of at least 40 study-weeks. The nominal length of vocational secondary education based on general or vocational secondary education is from 20 study weeks to 2.5 years, in the field of performing arts up to 3 years. Graduates who have successfully completed the curriculum receive a certificate confirming that they have obtained secondary vocational education (based on basic or secondary education).

When vocational education is obtained after basic education, but without taking general secondary education subjects, the nominal length of studies can vary from 1 to 2.5 years.

Persons who have not completed basic education, but are older than compulsory education age (over seventeen years of age), are also given an opportunity to obtain vocational education. The nominal length of these programmes is from 20 study weeks to 2.5 years.

In all these study-programmes practical training constitutes at least 25% of curricular time, and work placement not less than 25%.

Vocational training can also be part of general basic education or general secondary education in co-operation with a vocational education institution and a general secondary school. The training period varies from 15 to 40 study weeks.

Holders of vocational secondary education qualifications intending to continue studies at a higher education institution can improve their knowledge of general secondary education subjects for additional 35 weeks. These studies are organised in co-operation with vocational education institutions and general secondary schools.

There are 43 vocational schools in Estonia (30 state and 3 municipal schools, 2 are owned by NGOs, and 8 are private schools).

1.2. Higher Education System in Estonia

Strategic documents and legal framework

In January 2007, after extensive national debate the Minister of Education and Research endorsed the [Estonian higher education internationalisation strategy 2006-2015](#). The objective of the internationalisation of higher education in Estonia is to improve the competitiveness of Estonian higher education in the region, make institutions of higher education more visible and create a legal and institutional environment that supports internationalisation in all its aspects.

Estonian Parliament approved the [Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015](#) in November 2006 and of [Estonian Research, Development and Innovation Strategy 2007-2013](#) in February 2007. The strengthening of the international dimension of higher education and research institutions is identified in both documents as one of the main challenges in the coming years.

The general principles of legislation are determined in the Universities Act and in the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act. The Vocational Educational Institutions Act, the Private Schools Act and the Adult Education Act also regulate some aspects of higher education.

The Education Act determines higher education as third level education and determines the types of higher education institutions (institutions of professional higher education, universities and both as in-service training centres).

The Estonian system of higher education is binary consisting of academic and professional higher education.

Universities, institutions of professional higher education and vocational educational organisations can provide higher education.

Since 2000 the changes in the higher education system development follows the principles of the Bologna process.

Estonian higher education system has two cycles – bachelor's level studies as a first cycle and master level studies as the second cycle. The nominal length of bachelor and master level studies are 3 and 2 years accordingly. The nominal duration of bachelor studies is generally 3 years, 120 AP (180 ECTS credits), and in few disciplines up to 4 years, 160 AP (240 ECTS credits). The nominal duration of master studies is 1 to 2 years, 40 to 80 AP (60 to 120 ECTS credits), but along with the first stage at least 5 years, 200 AP (300 ECTS credits).

The new two-cycle structure applies to most disciplines, with the exception of medicine, pharmacy, stomatology, veterinary medicine, architecture and civil engineering – these long one-cycle programmes are called “integrated bachelor and master-level study programmes” with the nominal duration of 5 or 6 years and lead to a master-level diploma.

Besides bachelor and master-level, also doctoral-level studies are carried out in various fields of study (nominal duration of studies is 3 to 4 years, 120 to 160 AP (180 to 240 ECTS credits).

There are no intermediate qualifications In the Estonian higher education system – all higher education diplomas and degrees issued are final higher education qualifications.

All recognised state and public higher education institutions have the right to award the state sample of diplomas of a certain format and content. Private higher education institutions have the right to award the state diploma only to the graduates who

have completed an accredited study programme.

There are 6 public and 4 private universities, and 2 universities of applied sciences in Estonia (2010).

To fulfill the tasks of project (concept of management training and support structures for young SMEs prepared and carried out on May 25 – 26, 2010 in Tartu.

The agenda of the 2-day workshop in premises of Tartu Science Park, was as follows below:

Day 1, May 25, 2010:

Time	Topic	Presenter
13.30	Welcome refreshments	
14.00 – 14.10	Welcome! Brief overview of the project “SME Trainet”	Kersti Kraas, EVEA Anne Randmer, EMI-ECO
14.15 – 14.50	Educational system in Estonia, experiences and potential developments of training for young SMEs Answers to questions	Mart Laidmets, Ministry of Education and Science
14.55 – 15.25	Educational system in Germany and other Baltic Sea countries, experiences and further development. Answers to questions	Dr. Jürgen Hogefoster, Hanse-parlament
15.30 – 15.50	<i>Coffee break</i>	
15.50 – 17.00	Vocational training for entrepreneurs and management staff of young SMEs:	
	Perspectives and changes in general conditions, what consequences for the vocational training and support structures	Dr. Jürgen Hogefoster, Hanse-parlament
	Courses of and experience of the University 21	Oliver Hartvig, University 21, Buxtehude
	Courses and experiences in Hamburg and other Baltic sea countries	Dr. Jürgen Hogefoster, Hanseparlament
17.00 – 18.30	Discussion and exchange of experiences	Kersti Kraas, Anne Randmer

Day 2, May 26, 2010:

Time	Topic	Presenter / moderator
09.30	Welcome refreshments	
	Requirements of the enterprises in Estonia in dual vocational training	
10.00 – 11.00	Results of the survey on expectations of target groups in vocational training for young SMEs (2008, 2010)	Anne Randmer, EMI-ECO
	Discussion and joint evaluation of the demands. Formulation of the consequences for the dual bachelor studies in Estonia	Moderator Kersti Kraas, EVEA

11.00 – 11.45	Joint development of different structures and models for realisation of vocational management training in Estonia (group work)	Moderator Kersti Kraas
11.45 – 12.15	Presentation of result in groups, development of possible models	Group leaders
12.15 – 13.00	<i>Lunch</i>	
13.00 – 13.45	Development of organisational structure and content of a basic concept for possible realisation of vocational management training system in Estonia. (Group work)	Participants
13.45 – 14.15	Presentation of result in groups, development of models	Group leaders
14.15 – 14.30	Closing the seminar , further steps	Kersti Kraas, EVEA
14.45 – 16.00	Visit at the mechatronic laboratory of Tartu Science Park	

The list of participants is attached.

The overview of international developments in implementation of new curricula of for management staff of young SMEs, presented in presentations by Mr Hogeforster and Hartvig are attached.

The main outcomes of the workshop in Tartu were:

1. Introduction of education system in Estonia focusing on higher education. All Estonian universities take part in ERASMUS programme, but only supporting student to take part of curricula in abroad. The internship and work placement practically does not exist with exception of medical veterinary, civil engineering and art curricula.
2. Overview of expectations of different stakeholders in vocational management training programmes in Estonia:

Questionnaires (attached in Annex) were mailed to 300 SMEs, 10 universities and 250 students. None of SMEs and universities responded. 114 students responded.

The responds demonstrate very high need of practical training in curricula – all respondents admitted the work placement programme is not sufficient in curricula and expressed the interest to take part either in domestic or international work placement programme. The preferred duration of work placement programme is 3 weeks up to 3 months. Surprisingly, Estonian students do not see the availability of financial support being potential obstacle for participation in work placement programme. However, the most serious obstacle for participating in international exchange programme is poor command in English or Germany – only 7% of respondents would not have communication problems at work in abroad.

Universities that provide management curricula and selected SMEs were interviewed by phone to define reasons they did not responded.

Universities are going through extensive evaluation process (second one since 2000 when Estonia joined the Bologna process. The evaluation will end in fall

semester 2010, and therefore no changes are considered possible at the study time. Universities also considered that introduction of work placement into curricula would need extension of the study time by one semester at least. The extension of study time leads to the increasing teaching costs and the need additional financing either by the Ministry (public universities) or students (private universities).

Responses from SMEs resulted in following:

- Due to economic recession most of SMEs are restructuring their management activities and processes to be more efficient. Therefore many SMEs have cut down personnel costs and released staff (mainly administrative). Many owners of SMEs predict that need on management staff will not raise even economic recession is over – the processes are more efficient.
- Hosting interns in SME means that company needs to designate experienced staff to mentor the student. Again, this leads to additional expenses and reduction of profit at the SME, while it is not sure at all that student will remain with the company.
- Quite many SMEs brought up the problem of not having staff with mentoring skills (pedagogy, communication, psychology) what is definitely precondition for successful work placing.

2. Develop a concept of implementation of vocational management training in Estonia.

The issue was discussed thoroughly at the workshop in May in Tartu.

The starting positions for further development were defined as follows:

1. Vocational education organisations have much more developed as to integration of practical management training and work placement into curricula.
2. However, although in principal schools issue the diploma of completion the curricula they are not entitled to issue bachelor certificate. The subject is under public discussion at the time being.

After concluding the evaluation of university curricula (most likely in 2011) representatives of main stakeholders – Ministry of Education and Research, universities and SMEs shall meet and outline the strategy to integrate practical training and work placement into bachelor and master management studies.

Some assumptions were drawn up at the workshop:

1. Development of functional cooperation between universities and SMEs to provide universities with reliable partners for work placement programme.
2. Elaboration of pilot curriculum either at vocational education organisation or university and run the pilot curriculum in practice.
3. Elaboration of special training programme for mentors at SMEs and run the training for university partners. University could provide this training free of charge if SME will host interns.
4. The language training need to be improved to enable students participates in work placement programmes in abroad.

Ministry of Education and Research (Head of Department of university education, Mr Mart Laidmets) indicated interest and readiness to participate in the process.

It also was agreed that SMEs themselves need to take the leading role as they are the most interested stakeholders in process.

Conclusions.

Most important result is, that the project launched discussion of improvement of university education in Estonia.

1. There is much disaffection between SMEs and universities as to the skills of university graduates, especially at bachelor level. Clear implications of this policy at the labour market – while there are many un-employed graduates, SMEs cannot hire management specialists with required skills.
2. The workshops organised by SME Trainet project took together stakeholders in university education – Ministry of Education and Research, universities and SMEs first time to discuss the issue of improvement of university education by integrating practical training and work placement into bachelor curricula.
3. There are many good examples of integration of practical training and work placement at vocational education organisations as well as at universities in Estonia, which should be better disseminated.
4. International models introduced by the project are to learn in depth to determine possibilities of using the experience.
5. Stakeholders agreed to develop a functional cooperation between universities and SMEs to provide universities with reliable partners for work placement programme.
5. Stakeholders plan to develop a pilot curriculum either at vocational education organisation or university and run the pilot curriculum in practice.
6. Ministry of Education and Research in cooperation with vocational education organisations and universities plan to elaborate of special training programme for mentors at SMEs and run the training for university partners. University could provide this training free of charge if SME will host interns.
7. The language training need to be improved to enable students participates in work placement programmes in abroad.
6. Project leaves good domestic and international contacts to all participants, especially to establish a network for work placements for students.