

# The Inspectorate of Education of Estonia

**2012**

## **A Summary Profile of the Inspectorate**

### **Historical Overview**

The first schools that opened in Estonia were Latin-language domschools in the Tallinn and Ösel-Wiek bishoprics. Until the 19th century, the evaluation of peasant schools was carried out by the pastors, together with the Ecclesiastical Council. Until the beginning of Russification in the 1880s, the role of the tsarist government in the supervision of schools was small. Supervision of all schools became the responsibility of the curate and of the public school headteachers and inspectors in 1873.

In 1918 – 1940, schools were supervised and counselled by school counsellors. Later, inspectors and chief inspectors working in rural areas and in the Ministry of Education were responsible for fulfilling these duties. The school counsellors and inspectors were relatively independent in their activities.

As regards the work of counselling, performing checks prevailed over offering advice. In schools, school counsellors checked the economic situation of the school, study materials and their usage, the documentation of the school and writing of the school chronicle, the school library, the checking of children's health by the regional doctor, fulfilling the obligation of school attendance and many other aspects of school life. They doubtlessly visited some lessons, learning about the teacher's own knowledge, teaching skills, children's knowledge and their behaviour.

During the Soviet period, the right to visit and inspect schools belonged to the head of the education department and inspectors of schools, who could participate in lessons, in all kinds of study activities and events organised outside class and school; they could check the knowledge of students and the correctness of student evaluation by teachers, give guidance and advice on education and schooling activities to teachers, instructors and headteachers; they could suspend the illegal commands and actions of schools' headteachers, convene teachers' conferences and take part in the work of teachers' councils and methodological unions; they could demand materials necessary for performing the checks from headteachers and teachers, make suggestions for motivation of teachers, headteachers and other employees, raise questions on firing schools' employees.

The management of schools was reorganised several times in the years 1988 - 1996. In 1993, the Ministry of Culture and Education was created, and its area of government included the State Board of Education as a government institution, carrying out state supervision of education institutions and checking the fulfilment of education related legal acts and national education standards.

In 1993, the procedure of conducting state supervision of basic schools, upper secondary schools and vocational educational institutions was established. The State Board of Education and the inspectors generals, inspectors and inspector-methodologists of structural units organising educational issues in county governments performed state supervision of the organisation of education and schooling activities of basic schools, upper secondary schools and vocational educational institutions and the fulfilment of education related legal acts and national education standards. The main methods of state supervision included observation and analysis of education and schooling activities,

checking students knowledge orally and in writing, discussions with school management, teachers, members of the school board and students, analysis of students' workbooks, schools' documentation, work plans, employees' job descriptions, work contracts and other materials.

The official performing state supervision had the right to receive necessary information from the county government, municipality and educational institution; to visit, after informing the manager of the school, lessons and educational events; to participate in meetings of school managers, teachers, the school board, the teachers' council and parents; to make suggestions for developing education and schooling activities and precepts for elimination of deficiencies to county governments, municipalities and the managers and owners of schools; and to suspend the illegal commands and actions of managers of educational institutions by informing the ministry, the county government and municipality thereof.

### **Evaluation of the education system**

There is no independent inspection in Estonia and the activities of educational institutions are monitored through state supervision or supervisory control. State supervision of education and schooling activities is exercised by the Ministry of Education and Research or a county governor (county government officials) by order of the minister of education and research. Supervisory control of the management and activities of an educational institution is exercised by the owner of the educational institution.

For each level of education (pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and higher education), the state establishes requirements, called national standards of education that are set out in national curricula. The curricula determine general objectives of the respective level, compulsory content and prescribed duration of study and required knowledge, skills and experience.

State supervision over the education and schooling activities of pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools is conducted by officials of the Ministry of Education and Research and county governor on the basis of the decree of the Minister of Education and Research.

The function of state control and supervision of the quality of higher education is performed by the Ministry of Education and Research together with the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council.

# 1. The Education System

## 1.1 Structure, Tables, Numbers

		ISCED level	Sector	Name of subdivision in your country	Age range of pupils	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers
PREPRIMARY (ISCED 0)	pre-school education, 0-6-years of age <sup>1</sup>	0	Preprimary education	koolieelne lasteasutus	0-6	637	62260	9145
PRIMARY (ISCED 1)	elementary education, 7-12 years of age	1	Primary education	algkool, põhikool	7-12	79	73563	14 682 <sup>2</sup>
LOWER SECONDARY	basic education, 13-15 years of age	2	Lower secondary education	põhikool	13-16	260	43971*	
UPPER SECONDARY	general secondary education or vocational training after basic education, 16-18 years of age	3	Upper secondary education	gümnaasium, kutsekool	16-19	243* 37	36947* 18153	
POST SECONDARY	vocational education, 19-... years of age	4	post secondary, non tertiary education	kutsekool	19-	43	8672	2096
TERTIARY (ISCED 5-6)	higher education	5,6	tertiary education	kõrgkool	19-24	34	65934	n.a.
FIRST STAGE OF	higher education, Bachelor's and Master's studies	5	first stage of tertiary education	kõrgkool				182 <sup>3</sup>
ADVANCED RESEARCH	higher education, Doctoral studies	6	advances research programmes	kõrgkool	30-34	9	2465	n.a.
		n.a.	Adult education	Täiskasvanuharidus				



Children who turn 7 are obliged to attend school. Pre-primary education is provided in pre-primary institutions: day nurseries for children up to 3 years and kindergartens for children up to 7 years. Children of up to 7 years of age with special developmental needs may attend regular groups (integration groups) of the local pre-primary institution, special groups or special day nurseries.

Pre-primary institutions are educational institutions. Schooling and education in pre-primary institutions is organised according to the curriculum, which complies with the general curriculum for pre-primary education. In a pre-primary institution, a child acquires pre-primary education, which provides the prerequisites for coping successfully in everyday life and at school. In order to assist children who do not attend pre-primary institutions, preparatory classes at pre-primary institutions or at schools may be established. Participation in these groups is voluntary. A child may start school straight from home as well.

Basic education is the minimum compulsory general education. Basic education provides the prerequisites and grants the right to continue studies to acquire upper secondary education (in a general upper secondary school or a vocational school), but the graduate may also enter the labour market instead. Basic education is acquired in a basic school or upper secondary school which has basic school classes. Basic school includes years 1–9. Attaining the basic education is based on the national curriculum. In order to graduate from basic school, students have to complete the curriculum and pass three basic school final examinations.

Since autumn 2004, schools may after basic school implement, if necessary, one supplementary year for students with light and medium mental disabilities, and up to three supplementary years for students with severe mental disabilities. The length of general upper secondary education is three years; the basis of studies is the national curriculum. At the end of the studies, students have to pass five examinations, at least 3 of which have to be national examinations. Acquisition of general upper secondary education establishes the conditions to continue studies in higher education. A graduate may also start working.

Vocational education may be acquired either after graduation from basic school or after graduation from upper secondary school. Studies according to the secondary vocational education curricula on the basis of basic education last the minimum of 3 years. Graduates receive a certificate on acquisition of vocational secondary education. The duration of vocational education on the basis of secondary education last from 0,5 to 2,5 years (from 20 to 100 study weeks). Graduates from vocational schools who wish to continue their studies at a university must generally pass the national examinations required by a university for entrance on the same basis as graduates from upper secondary schools.

Higher education may be acquired in a vocational education institution, an institution of professional higher education or a university. All persons with upper secondary education or foreign qualifications equal thereto have an equal right to compete to be admitted to the above named educational institutions.

The standard period of study in professional higher education is three to four years

(120–160 credit points). A person who has acquired professional higher education has the right to continue his or her studies in Master's study under the conditions and pursuant to the procedures established by the board of the educational institution.

Academic higher education is divided into three levels: Bachelor's Study (standard period of study 3–4 years, 120–160 credit points), Master's study (standard period of study 1–2 years, 40–80 credit points) and Doctoral study (standard period of study 3–4 years, 120–160 credit points). The standard period of Bachelor's and Master's study is at least five years in total. In case of medical training, veterinary training, pharmacist training, dentistry training, architectural studies, civil engineering studies and teacher training for general teachers is based on integrated curricula of Bachelor's and Master's study, the standard period of which is five to six years and the volume is 200–240 credit points. The first two levels of academic higher education study end with the taking of an examination or defence of a respective thesis and award of the degree. Doctoral study ends with the defence of a doctoral thesis and award of an academic degree.

In Estonia, adult education is divided into formal education acquired within the adult education system, professional education and training, and informal education. An adult learner is not defined by age; instead, an adult learner is regarded as a learner to whom learning is not the primary activity. On these grounds, adult formal education refers to a study provided in the form other than daytime study to acquire basic education, upper secondary education or higher education.

Institutions that provide adult formal education are obliged to follow legal acts that regulate the level concerned (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, the Vocational educational institutions Act, the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, the Universities Act, the Private Schools Act). Professional education and training is regarded as in-service training or retraining provided by different educational institutions in the form of courses with the aim to raise the learner's competitiveness on the labour market.

Informal education is regarded as training that provides development of creativity, talents, initiative, social skills etc. Informal education is provided in the form of either courses or study circles.

### ***Compulsory school attendance***

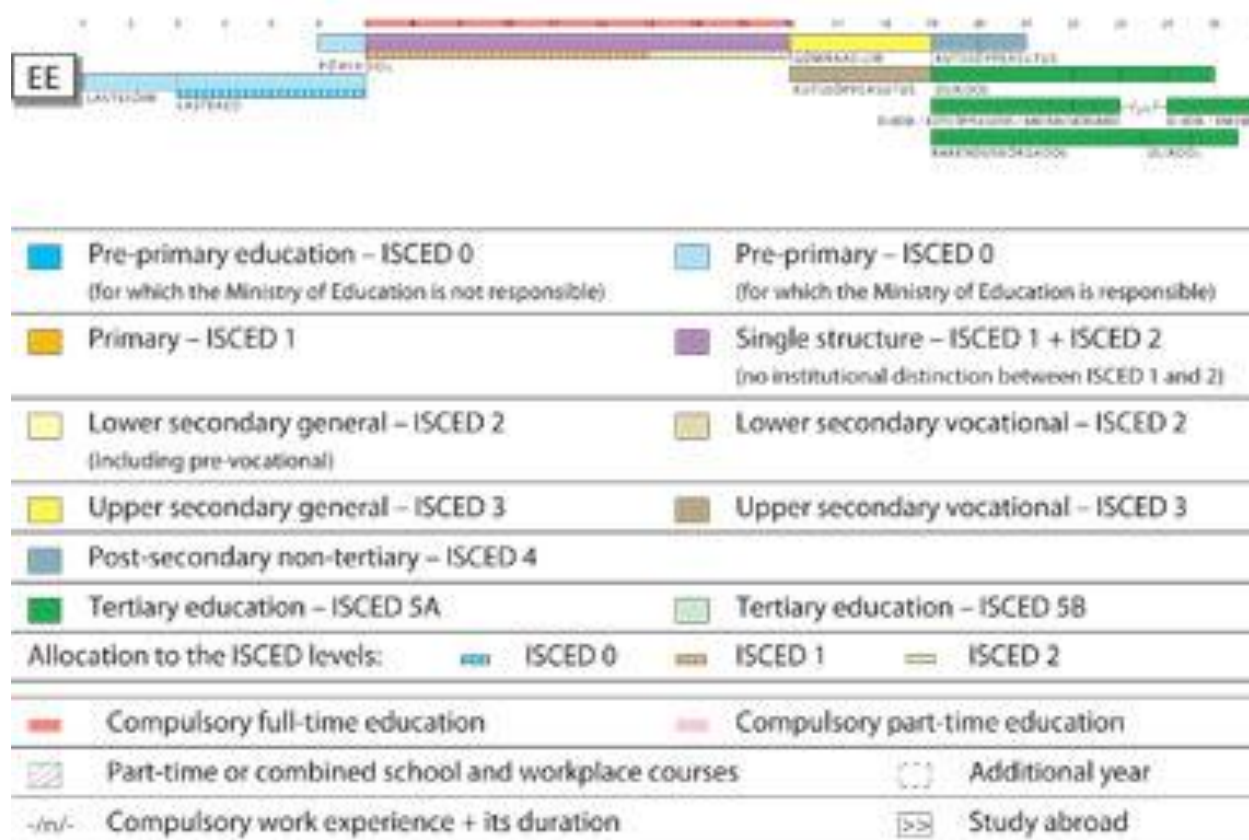
Education is compulsory for school-age children to the extent specified by law. A child is at the age of compulsory school attendance if he or she is seven years old by 1 October of the current year. A parent may ask the counselling committee to postpone the beginning of compulsory education. A student is at the age of compulsory school attendance until the completion of basic education (until the end of the 9th class) or until he or she is 17 years old. A school is required to ensure study opportunities for each child who is subject to the obligation to attend school and who resides in the catchment area of the school. Schools may accept children from outside the school's catchment area if there are vacancies.

Compulsory school attendance may also be fulfilled in special educational institutions or classes and in sanatorium schools for children with special needs, but in the form of home study as well. Children needing special conditions for schooling have to study in

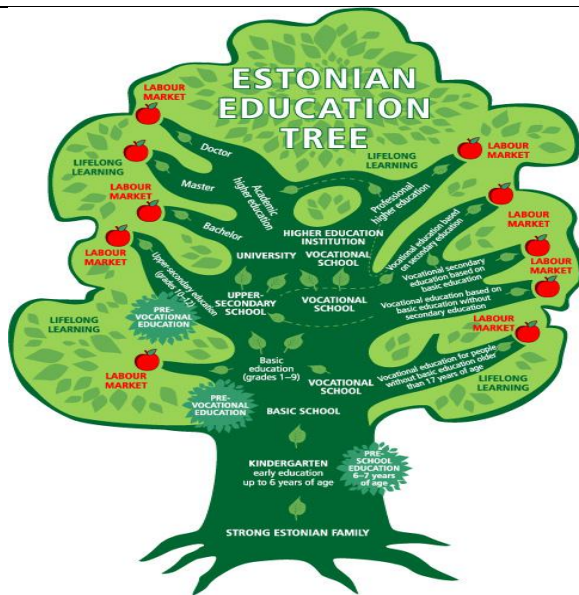
specifically created institutions or in classes for pupils with educational difficulties. The procedures for fulfilling the compulsory school attendance and the registering of children at the age of compulsory school attendance are regulated by legal acts. Children of foreign citizens and people without citizenship who are residents of Estonia, except children of representatives of foreign countries, are required to attend school.

According to the Education Act and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, local governments have the obligation of maintaining a register of children subject to the obligation of school attendance, of exercising control over and creating conditions for fulfilling the compulsory school attendance. At state level, an overview of fulfilling compulsory school attendance has been obtained on the basis of statistical data but in 2004, a national register of learners was launched, aiming to guarantee correct and current personalised data. Since 2005, the register of learners forms a part of the integrated Estonian Education Information System. A parent is obliged to create conditions at home that are favourable for studying and fulfilling the compulsory school attendance.

### Organisation of the education system in Estonia, 2007/08



Source: Eurydice.



## **The Tasks, Responsibilities and Role of the Inspectorate – General Statement Legal Basis, Characterization in Official Documents**

In formal education, the organisation and conduct of state supervision is regulated by the Pre-School Childcare Institutions Act (1999), the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2010), the Vocational educational institutions Act (1998), the Private Schools Act (1998), the Universities Act (1995) and the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act (1998).

The Universities Act establishes that the evaluation of educational institutions and their curricula is conducted through accreditation. The same applies to institutions of professional higher education as the relevant provisions of the Universities Act also apply to the accreditation of institutions of professional higher education and their curricula. The State Audit Office controls the legality of universities' activities according to the State Audit Office Act.

In order to ensure the lawfulness and expediency of the activities of state educational institutions, supervisory control is organised under the Government of the Republic Act (1995).

In order to ensure the lawfulness and expediency of the activities of municipal education institutions, supervisory control is organised under the Local Government Organisation Act (1993).

### **Mission Statement**

The main objective of state supervision is to contribute to acquiring quality education and to ensure the efficiency and lawfulness of education and schooling activities.

### **Which Organization and Practices are Inspected Except Schools?**

The Ministry of Education and Research or a county governor by order of the minister exercises supervision of the legality of the educational activities of the educational institution. Supervision is exercised in private schools as well as municipal and state schools.

### **Full Inspection of Schools as a Task of the Inspectorate**

## **General Description**

There is no independent inspection in Estonia and no complex, comprehensive full evaluation of educational institutions is carried out. Complex supervision, which used to be carried out after every 6 years, is no longer conducted in pre-primary institutions and general education institutions. The Ministry of Education and Research establishes the priorities of national supervision for each school year and according to them the county governors carry out thematic supervision. The Ministry carries out supervision in individual matters.

In 2006 internal evaluation of educational institutions was made compulsory. Educational institutions are provided with advisory services on internal evaluation. Therefore, organisation of state supervision has also been changed and the volume of supervision has been reduced. Supervision is exercised in a specific thematic area (e.g. qualification of teachers or providing support to students).

The Ministry of Education and Research manages the supervision procedures, supervision is conducted by the Ministry or by county governments. The Ministry of Education and Research organises the exercise of supervision, the county governments carry out supervision only by order of the minister of education and research.

## **Main Aspects of Quality to be Inspected**

The tasks of the state supervisory agency in a pre-primary institution, general education institution and vocational school are the following:

- 1) to inspect the fulfilment of requirements deriving from legal acts governing education and schooling activities;
- 2) to analyse problems in implementing legal acts governing education and schooling activities.

## **The Inspection Process**

### ***Thematic supervision exercised by county governors***

The priorities of thematic supervision, as well as the sample of educational institutions, are established for each academic year by the minister of education and research. The sample includes app. 10% of educational institutions. The inspection takes up to 8 working days.

The Ministry of Education and Research designs and carries out the control and analyses its result

### ***Supervision exercised by the Ministry of Education and Research***

The Ministry of Education and Research exercises supervision of educational institutions in individual matters, mostly in private educational institutions or if problems are noticed in the activities of an educational institution. In 2010 a provision came into force, according to which state supervision is carried out in all educational institutions that receive a new education licence. Whether the actual activities of the educational institution correspond to the documents submitted at the application of the education licence is checked.

The results of state supervision are registered officially by a statement. In case the results of the inspection prove the non-conformity of the activities of the educational institution to its statutes or stage of education stated on the education license, a precept is issued to the manager or owner of the educational institution. It is mandatory to comply with the precepts. In case the owner does not eliminate the shortcomings by the set deadline, the Ministry of Education and Research may demand penalty payment or cancel the validity of the educational institution's education license.

### **Practical Organization**

During the exercising of supervision the conformity of the activities of the educational institution with legislation in a specific area are evaluated. Thematic supervision is exercised each academic year in ca 10% of educational institutions: in 60 pre-school child care institutions, 60 general education institutions and 5 vocational educational institutions. In addition there is supervision which is exercised by the Ministry of Education and Research in ca 10 educational institutions each year.

The team that exercises supervision usually consists of 1-2 officials. A supervision official may include experts. This is necessary when the person exercising supervision is not competent to make an evaluation in a certain area. It is recommended that the team should include at least two members.

Exercise of supervision is preceded by a planning stage, where the objective and scope of supervision is defined, the team formed, data collected and available data analysed, the schedule composed, the directive of the minister or the order of a county governor prepared, and educational institutions notified of the forthcoming supervision.

Exercising of supervision is based upon the collection of evidence necessary to make an evaluation, as all opinions, recommendations and evaluations must be based upon documents. Copies of collected documents are made on site and signed by the head or secretary of the educational institution.

The objective of a person exercising supervision, irrespective of the selected methods, is to obtain appropriate and sufficient evidence which provides the basis for substantiated conclusions.

### **Reporting with a Judgement about the School's Quality and the Possible Consequences**

The results of supervision are documented in a certificate which must be as specific as possible without detriment to the content of information.

A draft certificate is sent to the educational institution to notify it of the results of supervision and receive feedback from the educational institution regarding the conclusions made by the persons exercising supervision. The manager of the educational institution is given at least three working days to review the draft certificate and compose their own explanations so that clarifications and corrections made by the educational institution about possible distortions of facts and interpretation of information can be included in the final certificate (in the case of state supervision no such obligation arises from the law; in the case of supervisory control this obligation arises from the law in state educa-

tional institutions.) The educational institution is asked to provide a reply to the draft certificate in writing by the specified deadline.

After this the person exercising supervision, on the basis of the corrections, notes and explanations provided by the educational institution, composes the draft certificate with which the results of the supervision are confirmed. In the case of precepts, a deadline is given to the educational institution for the elimination of deficiencies. The certificate is signed by all of the officials who took part in the exercising of supervision. The signature confirms the liability of the persons exercising supervision for the accuracy and objectivity of the materials included in the certificate.

The certificate is submitted to the educational institution whose activities were monitored, to the owner of the educational institution, to the officials who carried out the supervision and, if necessary, to other institutions. A certificate of supervision is a public document. The certificates of the supervisions carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research are available on the Ministry's website.

A certificate of state supervision may include advisory proposals or compulsory precepts for the manager or owner of an educational institution. In the case of non-compliance with precepts, penalty payment may be demanded or the education licence of the educational institution may be revoked.

### **Full Inspection of Non-Public Schools**

State supervision takes place on equal bases in educational institutions managed by the state and in municipal and private educational institutions.

The Ministry of Education and Research issues private educational institutions on their first application with an education licence for a specified term, for which the educational institution has to submit the following documents: the statutes of the private school; the development plan; the proof of the owner of the educational institution about the teachers who correspond to the qualification requirements; information concerning the existence of study rooms (buildings), furnishings and other property necessary for the operation of the private school; for the provision of instruction in higher education, the information concerning the material resources required for the education and research activities.

The Ministry of Education and Research usually monitors the activities of a private educational institution in the first year after the issuing of the education licence. The existence of and compliance with curriculum and development plan and qualifications of teachers is principally monitored.

### ***Owners of schools***

The owner of a university can be a public limited company whose share capital is at least €639 100, a private limited company whose share capital is at least €639 100 or a foundation or a non-profit organization whose equity capital is at least €639 100.

The owner of an institution of higher education or a vocational educational institution that provides professional higher education can be a public limited company whose share capital is at least €383 400, a private limited company whose share capital is at

least €383 400 or a foundation or a non-profit organization whose equity capital is at least €383 400.

The owner of a private vocational educational institution can be a public limited company whose share capital is at least €63 900, a private limited company whose share capital is at least €63 900 or a foundation or a non-profit organization whose equity capital is at least €63 900.

### **School's Self-Evaluation**

#### **Obligation of Schools Concerning Quality Assurance and Improvement**

In centralised and decentralised management systems, the proportion of internal and external evaluation of efficiency differs. In case of a centralised management system, emphasis is placed on external evaluation regardless of the aim of the evaluation. It is carried out by someone else, not by the education institution itself. Generally it is the task of educational supervision. In a decentralised management system, internal evaluation is given a greater role. In this system, external evaluation is necessary for supporting internal evaluation, for feedback and for offering a basis of decision-making.

Since the year 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established an internal evaluation obligation in pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools and changed the organisation of state supervision.

The aim of the changes was to support the creation of internal quality insurance systems in educational institutions. This signifies an important shift in approach: instead of regularly checking educational institutions and thereby collecting information for education policy decision-making, educational institutions are directed towards self-analysis of their activities. This approach is in line with the overall tendency of education policy – to increase the independence and self-management of educational institutions.

In order to successfully implement internal evaluation, state counselling is guaranteed to educational institutions. The purpose of counselling is to enhance the objectiveness of evaluation and deepen educational institutions' awareness of their actual situation; offer necessary additional information for comparison; support and develop the conduct of internal evaluation and the development of evaluation readiness and evaluation culture. Advisory services are not obligatory to educational institutions.

The objective of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions that support children's development and a consistent development of the educational institution by identifying the strengths and areas of improvement as regards the activities of the institution, according to which an action plan for the implementation of the development plan is developed. On the basis of this objective, education and schooling activities and management are analysed, and their effectiveness is evaluated.

The criteria of internal evaluation (leadership and management, personnel management, cooperation with interest groups, resource management, the education and schooling process; results related to a child/student, personnel and interest groups and statistics of the educational institution) are advisory to the educational institution. The methods

for carrying out internal evaluation are chosen by the educational institution.

### **Stand point of the Inspectorate about the Inspection of School Self-Evaluation**

Internal evaluations are compulsory in pre-school child care institutions, general education institutions and vocational educational institutions. During inspection, the carrying out of internal evaluations may be monitored and the results of internal evaluations may be used if they are related to the objective of supervision, but this is not a goal per se, because at present the aim is rather to support the implementation of internal evaluations in educational institutions.

### **Practice**

As a rule, educational institutions are not provided with advisory services concerning internal evaluation matters by persons exercising supervision at the level of county governments, the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research organises both supervision and advisory services. There is one adviser position in the Ministry and almost 200 trained advisers who provide services to educational institutions concerning internal evaluations on a contractual basis. The advisers are either full-time managers of educational institutions or education officials.

The management of an educational institution is responsible for carrying out internal evaluations. The entire staff of a school participates in internal evaluations. An internal evaluation report is discussed by the school's teachers council and approved by the board of trustees (school board) and the owner.

### **Reporting on the School's Self-Evaluation and Possible Consequences**

Educational institutions compose an internal evaluation report at least once every three years. The internal evaluation report points out the strengths of an educational institution and areas which need improvement. The results are used by educational institutions in their development plans.

If educational institutions apply for funding of advisory services at the ministry, they submit to the Ministry internal evaluation reports together with a feedback report composed by the adviser. All educational institutions submit data to the Estonian Education Information system about the internal evaluation reports and the time of the composition of the adviser's feedback reports. Thus the Ministry is able to review whether internal evaluations have been conducted in an educational institution and whether it has been provided with advisory services. If internal evaluations have not been carried out in an educational institution, supervision of internal evaluations in the educational institution may also be initiated.

The results of internal evaluations are public, but their publication on the website of the educational institution is not compulsory.

### **Inspection of Particular Themes of Quality**

#### **General Position**

The lawfulness and efficiency of the activities of educational institutions are evaluated through state supervision and supervisory control.

The organisation of external evaluation of the study results of general education institutions – standarddetermined tests, basic school final examinations and national examinations – is carried out through Foundation Innove.

### **Examples of Particular Themes or Topics**

Thematic state supervision is exercised by a county governor and is carried out on the basis of the supervision priorities established by the Ministry, for example:

- 1) pre-school education: qualification of teachers, organisation of evaluation and enabling in-service training;
- 2) general education: effectiveness of measures aimed at supporting academic performance of students and preventing drop-outs;
- 3) vocational education: organisation of work practice and evaluation of students.

### **Processes and Methods in Thematic Inspections**

The following methods are used during the exercising of supervision:

- 1) analysis of statistical and financial reports, study results and other collected information, including analysis and verification of data in the Estonian Education Information System;
- 2) review of the educational institution's documentation and analysis of its content;
- 3) interviews with employees, members of the board of trustees (council), parents, students (children) and the manager of the educational institution; in the case of a state and private educational institution, with the representative of the local government of the location of the educational institution;
- 4) review of the learning and growing environment of the educational institution, including education and schooling activities.

### **Inspection of Staff**

Documentation in an educational institution is reviewed during inspection. As a rule, lessons and activities of individual teachers are not inspected in Estonia. Observation of education and schooling activities during supervision is carried out in the presence of the manager of the educational institution or the person appointed by them. During inspection, the management of an educational institution is interviewed and, if necessary, teachers, board of trustees, the owner and students as well.

The supervision of the management of an educational institution is exercised by the owner of the educational institution during supervisory control.

### **The Judgment about Themes, Topics and Staff and its Possible Consequences**

During the exercising of supervision, an overview of the effectiveness of educational institutions is obtained (since the education policy took effect). Summaries of supervision results are composed each academic year at the level of county government and at the state level. The information received is used for the dissemination of the best practice in educational institutions; for the training of managers and teachers of educational institutions; for the introduction of necessary changes to legislation; and for making decisions concerning education policy.

The results of inspection are public and the certificate of state supervision is published on the website of the county or Ministry.

## **Advisory Tasks of the Inspectorate**

### **Areas and Tasks**

The major task of the external evaluation department is to manage the development and evaluation of the quality systems of educational institutions, including management of supervision and analysis of its results within the area of government of the ministry and providing advice to the minister, chancellor, vice-chancellors, counsellors and departments in the said area.

### **Practices**

The external evaluation department of the ministry organises the issuing of education licences to educational institutions and activity licences to youth camps; co-ordinates the external evaluation of study results in general education system; organises state supervision of education and schooling in educational institutions and youth work agencies; provides services to the ministry concerning the organisation of supervisory control; co-ordinates international surveys in the area of education quality; and organises the generalisation and publication of external evaluation results.

To fulfil this objective, the department develops an external evaluation system of education and youth work; plans and co-ordinates activities which help to ensure quality; organises the elaboration of legislation in the area of external evaluation; advises (in its area of activity) specialists in the area of education and youth work; advises officials exercising supervision over educational institutions and co-ordinates their co-operation; and co-ordinates co-operation with international organisations in the area of external evaluation.

Since 2009 the external evaluation department of the ministry has also organised advisory services for educational institutions in internal evaluation matters.

## **8. Other Tasks of the Inspectorate**

### **8.1 Curriculum Development**

Curriculum development is not a task for external evaluation department.

### **8.2 Databases**

In 2004, the state register "the Estonian Education Information System" was founded in order to collect information for organising and purposefully administering the education system.

The Estonian Education Information System consists of five sub-registers (see <http://ehis.hm.ee>):

- 1) the sub-register of documents certifying education: records are kept of the issuing of graduation documents certifying basic, general secondary, vocational secondary and higher education and of certificates proving the completion of residency;
- 2) the sub-register of teachers: contains information on teachers, headteachers and vacancies involved in provision of formal education in educational institutions enabling the acquisition of pre-primary, basic, general secondary and vocational secondary education, and on teachers, headteachers and vacancies in educational institutions enabling the acquisition of hobby education;
- 3) the sub-register of pupils, students and resident physicians: records are kept of pupils, students, external students and resident physicians acquiring basic,

general secondary, vocational secondary and higher education;

- 4) sub-register of educational institutions: records are kept of educational institutions enabling the acquisition of basic, general secondary, vocational secondary, higher and hobby education, and of general data and the inventory required for education and schooling in these institutions;
- 5) the sub-register of curricula and education licenses: contains information on the curricula, programmes and education licenses of educational institutions enabling the acquisition of preprimary, basic, general secondary, vocational secondary, higher and hobby education or inservice training.

The Estonian Education Information System ([www.ehis.ee](http://www.ehis.ee)) provides everyone with an opportunity to review the performance indicators of educational institutions. Available for each educational institution are data established by the minister's regulation. For example, the following information is available concerning general education institutions: support for students with special educational needs; the ratio of students remaining in the same class for the second year to the number of students acquiring basic education; the results of state examinations in basic schools by subject; the proportion of graduates of an upper secondary school among students who started the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the same graduating class; the proportion of students who do not fulfil the obligation to attend basic school; the number of graduates among the number of school entrants (for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades); the proportion of students continuing education among the total number of basic school graduates; the number of teachers with the required qualifications; the average amount of in-service training of teachers (in hours); the age pattern of teachers; the proportion of teachers who left the school during the academic year among the total number of teachers; the percentage of female teachers among the total number of school teachers; a student-to-teacher; average size of classes; the number of students per computer; and the number of teachers per computer.

The goal of performance indicators is to provide educational institutions with an opportunity to monitor their indicators as a trend, e.g. compare the indicators of the last three years as well as compare them with average indicators of educational institutions of the same type. As performance indicators of educational institutions are publicly available, they also provide information about educational institutions to students, parents, managers of educational institutions and other interest groups. Performance indicators published in the Estonian Education Information System are also used in the preparation and carrying out of inspections.

In addition to the aforementioned information system, several other registers are also kept, the following of them are related to education:

- 1) the register of research and development institutions (<http://www.etis.ee>);
- 2) the results of state examinations (not a public register but all examinees can here find out their examination results);
- 3) the register of professions: lists all the existing professional councils (<http://www.kutsekoda.ee>).

### **8.3 Examinations**

Persons exercising supervision do not have direct tasks concerning the organisation and

carrying out of examinations.

At the end of the stages of study (years 3, 6 and 9) national standardised tests are taken. The papers of the national standardised tests and final examinations of the basic school are assessed internally at school. The analysis of the results is based on a sample and conducted by Foundation Innove.

For evaluating the quality of basic education, at the end of basic school final examinations are carried out with common materials and common assessment criteria. At the end of upper secondary school students take national examinations, which are administered and assessed by Foundation Innove.

In 2001, Estonia participated in the international comparative study of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) to assess the situation in teaching social subjects. In 2003, Estonia participated for the first time in the international comparative study of TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study). In 2006 and 2009, Estonia also participated in the study of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment).

The results of tests and examinations provide persons exercising supervision with information needed for the evaluation of the effectiveness of an educational institution's activities.

#### **8.4 Handling Complaints**

Complaints about the activities of an educational institution may be lodged by students, teachers, parents and other interest groups to a county government, the manager or the Ministry of Education and Research. Problems are first attempted to be solved through advisory services, asking an educational institution for additional information and/or documentation review. If problem-solving requires the exercising of supervision, the Minister of Education and Research appoints a person to exercise the supervision – an official of the Ministry of Education and Research, or the county governor. For cases in the area of supervisory control (primarily management and economic activities), applications for exercising supervisory control may be submitted to the manager of a municipal or state educational institution.

#### **8.5 Financial or Staff Management of Schools or Districts**

Control over the use of financial resources and the management of staff is exercised by supervisory control, which is exercised by the manager of an educational institution.

### **9. Risk – Based Evaluation**

Private educational institutions have to audit the financial activities of the educational institution. An audit is a check of a certain aspect of the institution's activities in order to provide an independent and professional evaluation of it and to make proposals as to the improvement of the situation based on the evaluation. Inspectors do not carry out regular risk-based evaluations, but the Ministry of Education and Research may monitor data about an educational institution's activities through the Estonian Education Information System and plan the exercising of supervision, where necessary.

### **10. Reports of Inspectors**

## **10.1 Kinds of Reports**

### **Reporting at the school level**

#### ***Thematic supervision exercised by a county governor***

The results of supervision are documented on a separate certificate for each educational institution. All data on the certificate is verified on site in an educational institution. The county governor submits a draft certificate to the educational institution within 10 working days of the end of supervision in the educational institution. The educational institution may submit proposals as to clarifications in regard to the certificate within 3 working days.

The certificate is signed by all of the officials who took part in the exercising of supervision. The certificate is approved by the county governor.

#### ***Supervision in individual matters exercised by a county governor or the Ministry of Education and Research***

The results of state supervision are documented on a certificate. The certificate includes brief information about the educational institution, the names of the persons exercising the supervision and the experts involved, a summary of the supervision and any precepts and proposals which have been made.

The certificate is signed by the officials who took part in the exercising of supervision. The certificate is approved by the Minister of Education and Research or the county governor.

### **Reporting at the county level**

By 25 June each academic year a county governor submits to the Ministry of Education and Research separate consolidated summaries of child care institutions, schools which enable the acquiring of general education and vocational educational institutions in which the results of thematic state supervision in the county have been analysed. A consolidated summary includes a description and analysis of the situation.

### **Reporting at the level of the Ministry of Education and Research**

By the end of each calendar year, the Ministry of Education and Research composes an overview of the functioning of the education system, which includes also conclusions and analysis of the results of supervision.

## **10.2 Target Audiences**

A county governor submits a copy of the certificate to the educational institution, the owner of the educational institution, the Ministry of Education and Research and, in the case of state and private educational institutions, to the county government of the location of the educational institution.

The Ministry of Education and Research submits a copy of the certificate to the educational institution, the manager of the educational institution and, in the case of state and private educational institutions, to the county government of the location of the educational institution.

## **10.3 Confidential or Public**

The results of inspection are public and the certificate is published on the website of the county government or the Ministry of Education and Research.

## **11. Structure, Position, Staff and Budget**

### **11.1 Structure**

State supervision over the education and schooling activities of pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools is conducted by officials of the Ministry of Education and Research and county governor on the basis of the decree of the Minister of Education and Research.

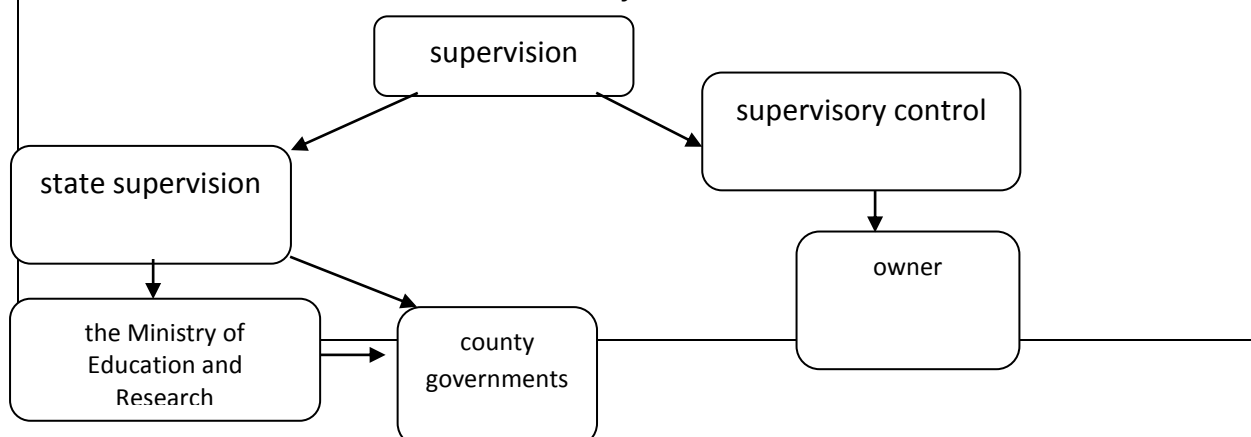
The function of state control and supervision of the quality of higher education is performed by the Ministry of Education and Research together with the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council. Supervision of higher education is organised by the higher education department of the Ministry of Education and Research.

As regards vocational and professional qualifications, the quality control of education is carried out by vocational councils. Private educational institutions where the standard period of study exceeds 120 hours or the total study period exceeds 6 months, must possess an education license issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. To qualify for the license, an education institution must prove its conformity with the requirements established by legal acts.

Regarding universities and institutions of professional higher education, institutional accreditation of curricula and educational institutions is carried out. Accreditation is organised and carried out by a person or agency authorised by the Ministry of Education and Research in co-operation with the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council.

Supervision of educational institutions in pre-school child care institutions, general education institutions, vocational educational institutions and hobby schools is co-ordinated by the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research. The department employs a head of department, deputy head, adviser and experts. If necessary, state supervision in individual matters or supervisory control is exercised in educational institutions administered by the Ministry of Education and Research (60 educational institutions).

There are 15 county governments and the officials of education departments of these county governments exercise thematic state supervision and supervisory control in individual matters. There are 227 local governments. The local governments exercise supervisory control over the legality and purposefulness of the management and activities of the educational institutions administered by them.



## **11.2 Position**

The major task of the external evaluation department is to manage the development and evaluation of the quality systems of educational institutions, including management of supervision and the analysis of its results within the area of government of the ministry and providing advice to the minister, chancellor, vice-chancellors, counsellors and departments in the said area.

The objectives of the activities of the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research are: to ensure adequate evaluation of the quality, lawfulness and purposefulness of the education and youth work system in the ministry's area of government; to develop the quality assurance system of education and youth work, including the effective functioning and development of supervision system; and to provide adequate evaluation of the lawfulness of a system of subsidies from the Structural Funds.

## **11.3 Staff and Budget**

There are seven officials in the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research who are charged with the organisation of exercising supervision in pre-school child care institutions, general education institutions, vocational educational institutions and hobby schools and participation in the process of exercising supervision, where necessary. There are app. 31 officials in the education departments of county governments (15 county governments) who are also charged with exercising supervision in educational institutions.

2 officials from the Ministry of Education and Research, who work in the higher education department, deal with supervision of the higher education area.

## **12. Recruitment and Training of Inspectors**

### **12.1 General Remarks**

Persons exercising state supervision are public servants and their positions are filled by way of public competition.

### **12.2 Recruitment Conditions**

Qualification requirements have been established for persons exercising state supervision:

- 1) Master's degree or corresponding qualification; and
- 2) at least 5 years' teaching experience, having acquired at least a teacher's grade; and
- 3) 160 hours of management training; and
- 4) at least 3 years' experience in school or pre-school child care institution management in the position of director or head of institution, deputy director or deputy head of institution; and
- 5) at least 160 hours of in-service training in their field of work over the last five years

The (chief) expert of the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research proceeds in their activities from legislation regulating the activities of the ministry, the statutes of the external evaluation department and the job description. The job description also establishes requirements related to the education level, experience, knowledge and skills and personal qualities of the (chief) expert.

Requirements related to education level, experience, knowledge and skills and personal qualities of (chief) expert

- Master's degree or corresponding qualification;
- it is recommended to have undergone professional and occupational training during the last year in order to raise the level of knowledge and skills required in the service;
- compliance with qualification requirements for persons exercising supervision over educational institutions as established by the minister;
- 6 months' experience in the position of senior official in a state institution or a local government or at least 2 years' experience in their field of work;
- good team work and communication skills;
- good knowledge of the education system, skills related to searching for and using occupational information;
- thorough knowledge of the principles and organisation of supervision, thorough knowledge of their field of work (legislation, its implementation);
- command of Estonian at a high level, command of one foreign language at an average level, with knowledge of occupational terminology;
- computer skills within the limits of the computer programs the use of which is necessary in the position
- recommended knowledge of the state's constitutional order, civil rights and freedoms, the organisation of general government and legislation regulating public service;
- conscientiousness, ability to take responsibility and make decisions, ability to foresee consequences, trustworthiness, civility, accuracy;
- initiative and creativity in the development and implementation of new solutions;
- the ability to analyse and synthesise;
- stress tolerance;
- loyalty and orientation towards the state's interests;
- presentability, with a good perception of style and situation, empathy.

### **12.3 Training**

A new official is supervised at work by more experienced colleagues, and the ministry has also initiated coaching.

### **12.4 In-service Training**

An annual appraisal is carried out with ministry officials, which includes an analysis of work results and training undergone. Objectives for the next period are set based on these results and training needs are also assessed. Training of inspectors in county governments is organised internally in a county government.

## **13. Evaluation of the Inspectorate**

### **13.1 Internal**

Supervision is exercised on the basis of a developed plan and its execution is monitored and analysed. Information about activities is provided in the work plans of both the ministry and the department. The work results of each official are evaluated by their direct supervisor during an appraisal.

### **13.2 External**

The Ministry of Education and Research has conducted surveys in inspected schools in order to receive feedback concerning the effectiveness of the inspections.

### **13.3 Consequences**

Feedback is necessary for the rearrangement of the system and the self-development of each official.

### **14. Developments, Prospects**

Since the year 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established an internal evaluation obligation in pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools and changed the organisation of state supervision.

Until 31.08.2009 advisory activities were co-ordinated by the National Examination and Qualification Centre; since 01.09.2009 advisory services for educational institutions have been organised by the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research.

Advisory activities in educational institutions have been made more flexible: educational institutions may apply for such services before the preparation of an internal evaluation report, during the preparation of the report or after the preparation of the report. In such cases the services are provided by agreement between the educational institution and the adviser selected by it. The objective of the adviser is to assist the management of the educational institution in conducting an adequate analysis of the institution's activities and making the right decisions on the basis of such an analysis. Advisory services are not obligatory for the educational institutions.

In the future advisory services are no longer organized by the ministry and the educational institutions themselves decide whether they would like to have advisory services or not and they organize advisory services by themselves.

The development of the external evaluation system was based on the principle that system development should embrace pre-school, basic and secondary education, including vocational education.

Through internal evaluation:

- 1) educational institutions are given stimulus for self-development;
- 2) educational institutions receive external support for the implementation of internal evaluations and analysis of results;
- 3) different participants in an educational institution – the collective, the manager, students and the parents of students – are involved in the process of internal evaluations in an educational institution;
- 4) decision-making rights of the head of an educational institution are enhanced, but their responsibility for the effectiveness of education and schooling activities through internal evaluations and collective responsibility for education and schooling activities are also increased;
- 5) information about the activities of an educational institution is made available through the Estonian Education Information System.

The Ministry of Education and Research has initiated several programmes to assist the development of external and internal evaluation systems for educational institutions, which are managed by Foundation Innove:

- 1) "Improving the quality of education in educational institutions through an internal evaluation system, an academic performance-based external evaluation system, and through the development of legislation."

Overall objective

To effect a rise in the quality of education by improving the quality of the management of the general educational system and educational institutions, the provision of flexible feedback on academic performance and the development of supporting legislation.

- 2) "Development of the content of vocational education 2008 – 2013"

Overall objective

To update the content of vocational education, to bring it into conformity with the needs of personal development, the economy and the labour market, to effect a rise in the quality of vocational education and in the competitiveness of students on the labour market.

- 3) "Raising the qualifications of general education teachers 2008-2014"

Overall objective

To create conditions that support the professional development and activity of general education teachers throughout their careers.

## **15. Information: Website, Liaison – Contact, Links**

The Website of the Ministry for Education and Research <http://www.hm.ee>.

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