

2015 INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION COUNTRY UPDATE ON 2014 GOALS

ESTONIA

a) Developing internalised responsibility for CPD of teachers balanced with outward support

The Estonian Teachers' Association has fostered teachers' professional development through introducing the renewed teacher occupational qualification standards and launching the process of awarding occupational qualifications to teachers. When applying for the occupational qualification, teachers undergo self-assessment in order to provide evidence about meeting the expected standards and to map and plan their professional development.

Teacher assessor training has been an important part in the process of setting up the system of awarding occupational qualifications. The assessors are working teachers, who also serve as a valuable source of external feedback to the teachers.

Tallinn University, which is one of the universities responsible for teacher training, has begun piloting a development program in cooperation with its partners and has introduced supervision as the core method. The program concentrates on implementing supervision in the process of strategic change making at schools, in order to assure that schools remain good places for both learning and teaching.

In the framework of the in-service training organised at state level, preparations are made to offer teachers more diversified support and advisory services from autumn 2015. Additionally, the choice of self-assessment instruments has increased. In particular, a teacher competence model has been developed, which is based on the teacher occupational qualification standards as well as the critical competences for achieving the desired changes described in the national Lifelong Learning Strategy. The model can be used by teachers for self-assessment and by the heads of schools for giving feedback to the teachers, in order for development needs to be better identified and supported.

b) Exchange program or rotation of experienced principals and excellent teachers to homogenise institutional practices and culture

In 2014, the main task was to lay the necessary foundation. School indicators have been agreed on at state level and, in addition to teacher qualification standards and competence model, the central principles for evaluating school heads have been developed in order to be able to identify excellent teachers and principals. In February 2014, the Estonian Parliament adopted the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian_lifelong_strategy.pdf), which

became the basis for the Competent and Motivated Teachers and Heads of Educational Institutions program. The program foresees rotation as one of the development activities.

In addition to the traditional formats of cooperation, e.g., school visits, cooperation networks, etc., several new initiatives were launched in 2014. One of them is the Best Practice Day of the *Huvitav Kool* (direct translation: Interesting School) Initiative. Firstly, the format of the day is new in Estonia, combining multiple forms of practice sharing, such as workshops, presentations, demonstrations and more, to facilitate first hand learning from teacher to teacher and from school to school. Secondly, the *Huvitav Kool* Initiative is innovative, as it provides a sustainable national framework for motivating schools, parents and the community to cooperate, making schools more visible in society and recognising those who have succeeded in making their school an exciting place for learning. The initiative serves as the messenger to communicate that schools can and have to be creative, and that developing the naturally curious minds of young people comes first. As part of the *Huvitav Kool* Initiative, various projects have also been collected, which provide the state funding for the smartest cooperation projects that contribute to the aims of the initiative.

The state annually allocates a subsidy to local governments for the in-service training of teachers and school heads. The subsidy is targeted at supporting the local systemic dissemination of best practices and for encouraging cooperative learning.

c) Comprehensive development of teacher competences for early identification of both gifted and talented special needs

According to the Estonian Lifelong Strategy 2020, it is the role of a teacher to support a student's path towards becoming a learner who can manage their own learning, can cope with changes in their surroundings independently and takes responsibility for their own development and learning. Teachers and the team of support specialists need to approach each learner individually, according to their needs. The main goal of the in-service training system is to assist in rethinking the role of the school heads and that of the teachers, so that they are able to meet these expectations and create an atmosphere in which attention is paid to the development of each learner, maximising their potential and valuing individual differences.

In 2014, the concept of the organisation of studies for students with special educational needs was adopted. The concept provides for the inclusion of all students in education according to their capabilities. An important aspect in the implementation of the concept is the in-service training of teachers and school heads. It has been agreed among the stakeholders that the implementation of inclusive education is one of the main priorities of the in-service training of teachers for the next two years, with a particular focus on the cooperation of teachers, support specialists and the whole school team in supporting learners. In addition to the in-service training provided by the universities, there will be various local and international workshops, seminars and conferences about inclusive education organised by different unions of teachers.

In every county in Estonia, *Rajaleidja* (direct translation: Pathfinder) centres have been launched. These centres offer educational support services i.e. career and education advisory services. One of the tasks of the centres is also to provide the necessary training and consultation to teachers in order to support their learners' development in the best possible way.