

## FACTSHEETS

### Higher Education

#### Estonia

### Legal framework

Until 2019, the higher education system was regulated by Universities Act (*Ülikooliseadus* – 1995), Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act (*Rakendus kõrgkooli seadus* – 1998), Private Schools Act (*Erakooliseadus* – 1998), and Standard of Higher Education (*Kõrgharidusstandard* – 1996; 2002; 2008).

Since 2019, the higher education area is regulated by Higher Education Act (*Kõrgharidusseadus* – 2019) and Standard of Higher Education (*Kõrgharidusstandard* – 2019). The purpose of the Higher Education Act is to provide the grounds for the organisation of higher education studies, quality assurance in higher education, principles of management of state professional higher education institutions and private higher education institutions, the procedure for financing public higher education institutions, and the basic rights and obligations of students.

The status, purpose, functions, bases of operation and management bodies of a public university are provided for in an Act governing the university. There are governing Acts for each public university in Estonia - *Eesti Kunstiakadeemia* (Estonian Academy of Arts), *Eesti Maaülikool* (Estonian University of Life Sciences), *Eesti Muusika- ja Teatriakadeemia* (Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre), *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool* (Tallinn University of Technology), *Tallinna Ülikool* (Tallinn University), *Tartu Ülikool* (University of Tartu).

The framework document, the Standard of Higher Education, establishes requirements for higher education programmes, objectives and learning outcomes to be achieved, requirements for the members of the teaching staff, and study programme groups where given educational institutions have the right to conduct studies and to issue qualifications and the principles of recognition of prior learning. The Standard of Higher Education is based on Republic of Estonia Education Act and Higher Education Act, and is valid for all cycles and forms of higher education, irrespective of the ownership or the legal status of the higher education institution. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the implementation of the Standard of Higher Education.

The administration of higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research (except higher education in the fields of public security and national defence). The Ministry defines the principles of higher education policy. The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Research include:

- Regulation of the establishment, merger, division or closure of universities on the basis of decisions made by the *Riigikogu* (Parliament), and in case of professional higher education institutions on the basis of decisions made by the Government;
- keeping the registry of state diplomas issued by higher education institutions and vocational education institutions;
- development of the rules for state financing of education, approving the budgets of universities, and distributing budgeted funds to higher education institutions;
- approval of the development plans of universities and professional higher education institutions;
- preparation and implementation of the national education and research development programmes;

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- adoption of the procedures for opening and closing study programmes;
- carrying out the state supervisory activities.

In its role, the Ministry of Education and Research is assisted by a number of management and consultative bodies with an administrative or teaching capacity.

Professional higher education institutions for public security are state agencies administered by the Ministry of the Interior and professional higher education institutions for national defence are structural units of the Defence Forces.