



The Inspection of Education of Estonia

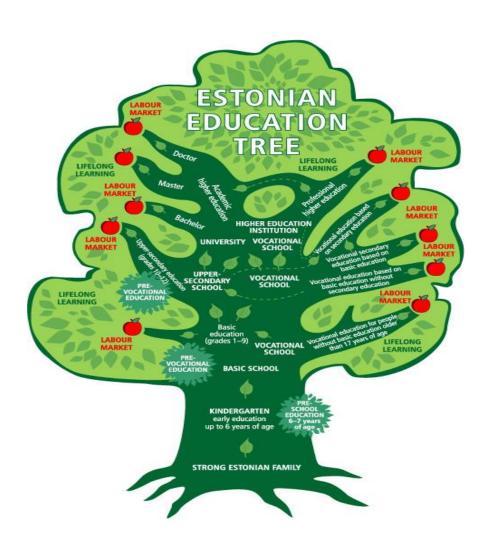


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1. A Summary Profile

1.1. A summary of inspection in educational institutions

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia the provision of education is inspected by the national government. Inspection is conducted in private, municipal and state schools.

The inspection of educational institutions and their actions' legality by the Ministry of Education and Research. In case of handling filed applications and complaints, the documentation is reviewed at first, asking an educational institution for explanations if needed. Decision about purposefulness of conducting the inspection is made after reviewing the explanations.

The Ministry of Education and Research handles the queries related to legality of the education and schooling activities. The main goal of inspection is to ensure the accessibility of education, also organisation of education and schooling, its quality and efficiency on equal bases.

For cases in the area of administrative inspection (primarily administration and economic activities), applications for exercising administrative inspection may be submitted to the owner of an educational institution. Administrative inspection controls the legality and purposefulness of administration and activities.

The administrative inspection in local government is conducted by rural municipality or city. Therefore, the inspection of state schools is exercised by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The tendency of inspection is to make a transition to risk-based evaluation.

1.2 Evaluation of the Education System

There is no separate inspectorate in Estonia. Inspection is exercised by the officials of the Ministry of Education and Research. Inspection exercises control over education and schooling activities.

The administrative inspection over actions in an educational institution is exercised by the owner of the educational institution. First and foremost, administrative inspection controls administration and economic activities. The owner of an educational institution has a right to control school activities in all fields.

For each level of education (pre-school, basic, secondary and higher education), the state establishes requirements, called national standards of education. These are set out in national curricula which determine general objectives of the respective educational level, required content, an estimated length of study period, required knowledge, skills and experience.

Children who turn seven are obliged to attend school. Pre-primary education is provided in pre-primary institutions. Pre-school childcare institutions are educational institutions. Schooling and education in pre-primary institutions are organised according to the national curriculum. In a pre-primary institution, a child acquires pre-primary education which provides the prerequisites for coping successfully in everyday life and at school.

Basic education is compulsory. The basic level of education is acquired in a basic school or an upper secondary school which provides classes for the basic school level. Basic school includes school years from 1 to 9.

Attaining the basic education is based on the national curriculum. In order to graduate from the basic school, students have to complete the curriculum and pass the final examinations of the basic school level.

2. The Education System

2.1. Structure, Table

See pages 17.

2.2. Description

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 the 1^{st} of October of the current year.

A student is at the age of compulsory school attendance until the completion of basic education (until the end of the 9th grade) 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 service area of the school. Schools may accept children from outside the school's service area during the vacancies.

At the government level, an overview of fulfilling compulsory school attendance has been obtained on the basis of statistical data but in 2004 national register of students was launched, aiming to guarantee correct and up to date personalised data. Since 2005, the register of learners forms a part of the integrated Estonian Education Information System.

3. The Tasks, Responsibilities and Role of the Inspectors – General Statement

3.1. Legal Basis, Characterization in Official Documents

The organisation and conduct of inspection for formal education is regulated by the Pre-School Childcare Institutions Act, the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, the Vocational Education Institutions Act, the Private Schools Act, the Universities Act, and the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act.

In order to ensure the legitimacy and expediency of the activities of governmental educational institutions, inspection is conducted according to the Estonian legislation.

In order to ensure the legitimacy and expediency of the activities of municipal educational institutions, the inspection is conducted according to the Local Government Organisation Act.

3.2. Mission Statement

The main goal of inspection is to ensure the accessibility of education, also organisation of education and schooling, its quality and efficiency on equal bases.

3.3. Which Organization and Practices are Inspected Besides Schools?

Inspection is conducted in private, municipal and state schools. All pre-schools, basic schools, general secondary education schools, vocational education schools, higher education institutions, schools providing after school activities and adult training institutions are the subject for inspection.

4. Full Inspection of Schools

General Description

In Estonia there is no separate inspectorate, thus no complex, full-scale inspection is conducted. The ministry carries out inspection in individual matters, for example, when an educational institution has applied for an educational licence or in case of problems (complaints). Therefore, if necessary, it is possible to control the educational institutions' activities in certain field (thematic inspection).

4.1. Main Aspects of Quality to be Inspected

Only schooling and education activities are controlled during the inspection. The fulfilment and implementation of legal acts are inspected as well.

4.2. The Inspection Process

The inspection takes up from 2 to 4 working days. The Ministry of Education and Research is in charge of the designs of inspection and the analyses of its results.

Inspection Exercised by the Ministry of Education and Research

The Ministry of Education and Research exercises inspection of educational institutions on individual matters, if any problems have been noticed in the activities of an educational institution. Inspection is carried out in all educational institutions that receive a new activity or educational licence. The purpose of the inspection is to ensure that the actual activities of the educational institution correspond to the documents submitted with the application of the educational licence. If necessary, it is possible to control the educational institutions' activities in certain field (thematic inspection).

4.3. Practical Organisation

The team that exercises inspection usually consists of 1–2 officials. An inspection official may include experts.

Exercise of inspection is preceded by a planning stage where the objective and scope of inspection are defined, the team formed, data collected, available data analysed, the schedule composed, the directive of the minister and educational institutions are notified of the forthcoming inspection.

The conduct of inspection 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 the inspector is to collect appropriate and sufficient evidence, which provide the basis for substantiated conclusions.

4.4. School's Quality and the Possible Consequences

The results of inspection are documented in a report and must be as specific as possible.

A draft report is sent to the educational institution to notify it of the results of the inspection and receive feedback from the educational institution. The head of the educational institution is given at least three working days to review the draft report and compose their own explanations. The educational institution is asked to provide a reply to the draft report in writing by the specified deadline. Reasonable corrections are to be included in the report.

In the case of precepts, a deadline is given to the educational institution for the elimination of deficiencies. The report is signed by all of the officials who took part in the inspection process. The signature confirms the liability of the inspectors exercising inspection for the accuracy and objectivity of the materials included in the report.

The report is submitted to the educational institution whose activities were monitored, to the owner of the educational institution, to the inspectors who carried out the inspection and, if necessary, to other institutions. The report of inspection is a public document.

The reports of the inspections carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research are available on the ministry's website (www.hm.ee/en).

A report of inspection may include advisory proposals or compulsory precepts for the head or owner of an educational institution. In case of non-compliance with precepts, penalty payment of up to $640 \in$ may be demanded or the education- or activity licence of the educational institution may be revoked.

4.5. Full Inspection of Non-Public Schools

The inspection 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 an activity licence for a specified term to private educational institutions on their first application, 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. After issuing schooling permits, the inspection is conducted in the educational institution.

Owners of Schools

The owner of a private school can be a foundation, private limited company or a non-profit organization. Local government is the owner of the municipal school. Public schools are operated by the Ministry of Education and Research.

5. Internal-Evaluation

5.1. Obligation of Schools Concerning Quality Assurance and Improvement

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established a mandatory requirement for internal evaluation in pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools.

The objective of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions for child development and consistent development of the educational institution. This is done by identifying the strengths and areas for improvement for the institution. Based on that an action plan for implementation of development plan is established. During the internal evaluation, the educative activities and administration are analysed and their effectiveness is evaluated. Internal evaluation is linked to the development plan of the institution. Firstly, they will analyse their performance and then prepare a development plan.

The criteria of internal evaluation (leadership and administration, 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 institutions.

The methods for carrying out internal evaluation are chosen by the educational institutions.

Pre-primary institutions can apply for a counsellor from the Ministry of Education and Research which means the process will be financed by the ministry.

5.2. Stand Point about the Inspection of Internal Evaluation

Internal evaluations are mandatory in pre-school child care institutions, general education institutions and vocational education institutions. During evaluation, it is possible to check the process of internal evaluation and use the results if they are related to the objective of inspection.

5.3. Practice

The administration of an educational institution is responsible for carrying out internal evaluations. The entire school staff participates in internal evaluation. An internal evaluation report is discussed by the school staff council and approved by the board of trustees and the owner. The procedure of internal evaluation is imposed by the headmaster.

5.4. Reporting on the School's Self-Evaluation and Possible Consequences

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

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.

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

6. Inspection of Particular Themes of Quality

6.1. General Position

The lawfulness and efficiency of the activities of educational institutions are evaluated through inspection.

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

6.2. Examples of Particular Themes or Topics

Inspection is carried out in different topics, for example: pre-primary education: supporting child development (organising schooling and education for children with special needs; work organisation of teachers; a secure physical environment for children) and assuring the accuracy of data in the Estonian Education Information System; general education: supporting child development (organising schooling and education for children with special needs; security assurance) and assuring the accuracy of data in the Estonian Education Information System.

6.3. Processes and Methods in Inspections

The following methods are used during the exercising of inspection:

- 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 owner 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 and its analysis.

6.4. Inspection of Staff

As a rule, lessons and activities of individual teachers are not inspected in Estonia. In general, lessons are only inspected in case of complaints about a teacher or the teaching process. During inspection, the administration of an educational institution is interviewed and if necessary the teachers, board of trustees and the owner as well.

6.5. The results of inspection

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

7. Advising

7.1. Areas and Tasks

The major task of the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research is to manage the development and evaluation of the quality systems of educational institutions, including management of inspection and analysis of its results within the area of government of the ministry and providing advice to the minister, secretary general, deputy secretary generals, advisers and departments in the respective areas.

7.2. Practices

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

The external evaluation department of the ministry 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 inspection over educational institutions and co-ordinates their co-operation; and co-ordinates co-operation with international organisations in the area of external evaluation.

8. Other Tasks of the Inspectors

8.1. Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is not a task for external evaluation department.

8.2. Databases

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

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

- 1) the sub-register of documents certifying education;
- 2) the sub-register of teachers;
- 3) the sub-register of pupils, university students and resident physicians;
- 4) sub-register of educational institutions;
- 5) the sub-register of curricula and education licenses

The Estonian Education Information System (<u>www.ehis.ee</u>) provides everyone with an opportunity to review the performance indicators of educational institutions. Data established by the minister's regulation are available for each educational institution.

For example, the following information is available concerning general education institutions: support for students with special educational needs; the ratio of students

repeating a class course, the results of final examinations in basic schools and state examinations in secondary schools by subject; 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 ratio; the average size of classes; the number of students per computer; and the number of teachers per computer.

One of the performance indicators- School Value Added, is measured in mathematics, in native language. In its analysis the indicator takes into account the results of final examinations in basic schools and state examinations in secondary schools.

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, owners 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.

The performance indicators provide inspectors exercising inspection with information to evaluate the performance of an educational institution.

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 find out their examination results here);
- 3) the register of professions: lists all the existing professional councils (http://www.kutsekoda.ee);
- 4) <u>HaridusSILM</u> is a database consisting all the information related to the education system. It consist of different criteria regarding students, teachers, teachers' salary analyses, education expenditures, teaching staff, research and performance indicators.

8.3. Examinations

Inspectors exercising inspection do not have direct tasks concerning the organisation and carrying out of examinations.

From September 2015, the tests conducted in the electronic testing system will be assessed electronically. Open end questions which cannot be assessed electronically will be assessed by a teacher assigned by the headmaster. The analysis of the results is conducted by Foundation Innove.

In order to evaluate the quality of basic education, the final examinations are carried out with common materials and common assessment criteria. Basic school graduation examinations include an examination in Estonian language, a Mathematics examination and an examination in a subject chosen by the pupil. At the end of upper secondary school students carry out a research or practical work and take national examinations which are administered, composed and assessed by Foundation Innove. National examinations include examinations in Estonian and foreign language, as well as Mathematics. International foreign language examinations, replacing national foreign language examinations are organised and assessed by Innove who is directed by the requirements set by international testing centres.

Since 2006 Estonia has participated in the study of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), which is conducted on the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) initiative: 2006 (natural sciences); 2009 (reading); 2012 (mathematics); 2015 (natural sciences).

According to PISA 2015, Estonian students rank 1^{st} in Europe and 3^{rd} in the world after Singapore and Japan, in science. In mathematics, Estonian students rank 2^{nd} in Europe and 9^{th} in the world. In reading Estonian students rank 3^{rd} in Europe and 6^{th} in the world.

More information concerning study of PISA and Estonian's participation in it: http://www.innove.ee/en/general-education/pisa & www.oecd.org/pisa/.

8.4. Handling Complaints

Complaints about the activities of an educational institution may be lodged by students, teachers, parents and other interest groups to the owner 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 reviewing documentation. If problem-solving requires the exercising of inspection, then the inspection is exercised. For cases in the area of administrative inspection (primarily administration and economic activities), applications for exercising administrative inspection may be submitted to the owner of a municipal or state educational institution.

8.5. Financial or Staff Management of Schools

The control over the use of financial resources and the management of staff is exercised by administrative inspection, which is carried out by the owner of an educational institution.

8.6. Issuing Schooling Permits

The external evaluation department of the ministry handles issuing schooling permits which has a preventive character. In order to get the schooling permit it is necessary to submit to the ministry: curriculum of the school, development plan, the proof about the teachers who correspond to the qualification requirements; information concerning the existence of study rooms (buildings) and their compliance to the requirements of the Rescue- or Health Board.

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 and to make proposals for the improvement of the situation based on the evaluation.

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 inspection where necessary.

The tendency of inspection is to make a transition to risk-based evaluation, which means that an educational institution will be inspected only if the results are below imposed education standard, for example when the students' study results are low, the number of pupils dropping out of school or repeating one class is large or when there are complaints about the educational institution.

10. Reports of Inspectors

10.1. Reporting at the School Level

The results of state inspection are documented in a report. The report includes brief information about the educational institution, the names of the inspectors exercising the inspection and the experts involved, a summary of the inspection and any precepts and proposals which have been made.

The report is signed by the officials who took part in the process of inspection. The report is approved by the Minister of Education and Research.

10.2. 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 also includes conclusions and analysis of the results of inspection.

10.3. Target Audiences

The Ministry of Education and Research submits a copy of the report to the educational institution, the owner 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.

10.4. Confidential or Public

The results of inspection are public and the report is published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Research.

11. Structure, Position and Staff

11.1. Structure

Inspection of 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.

Inspection of educational institutions in pre-school child care institutions, general education institutions, vocational education institutions and schools providing hobby activities is coordinated by the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research. The department employs a head of department, deputy head, adviser and experts.

There are 79 local governments. The local governments exercise administrative inspection over the legality and purposefulness of the administration and activities of the educational institutions administered by them.

11.2. Position

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 the inspection system.

11.3. Staff

There are 16 officials in the external evaluation department of the Ministry of Education and Research. Primary task of eight officials is to organise the conduct of inspection in preschools and schools of general education, and if necessary, to participate in the exercise of inspection.

12. Recruitment and Training of Inspectors

12.1. General Remarks

Inspectors exercising inspection are public servants and their positions are filled by public competition.

12.2. Recruitment Conditions

The (chief) expert (inspector) 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 inspectors exercising inspection 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 teamwork 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 inspection, 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 used 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, politeness, 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.

The requirements for the position depend on the work assignments of the employee.

12.3. Training

A new official is supervised at work by more experienced colleagues.

12.4. In-service Training

An annual appraisal is carried out with the ministry officials, which includes the analysis of work results and training completed. Objectives for the next period are set based on these results and training needs are also assessed. The staff has an opportunity to participate in in-service trainings financed by the ministry.

13. Evaluation of the inspectors

13.1. Internal

Inspection is exercised on the basis of a developed plan and its execution is monitored and analysed. The work results of each official are evaluated by the head of department or deputy head 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. The designing of the monitoring can be also be evaluated by the National Audit Office, Chancellor of Justice or an auditor.

13.3. Consequences

Feedback is necessary for the rearrangement of the system and the self-development of each official. According to the results, the procedures are checked, if necessary, the changes are made in the working order.

14. Developments, Prospects

In 2014 the minister approved a new concept for external evaluation. Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020 pursues the change in assessment. The new concept includes external evaluation of study results, counselling and management of inspection.

The tendency of inspection is to focus more on educational institutions facing problems and poor performance, meaning transitioning to risk-based evaluation.

Since 1st September 2017 the organisation of inspection has changed. The inspection is exercised only by the Ministry of Education and Research (previously also exercised by county government officials).

Since 1st September 2017 it is possible to control the activities of the educational institution's owners.

The objective of inspection has changed. The main objective is to ensure the accessibility of basic and secondary general education, also organisation of education and schooling, its quality and efficiency on equal bases. The legality of educational institution and the owner's actions are controlled when conducting the inspection.

The inspectors are located in four regions. Their main tasks are to consult educational institutions, the owners, parents and local community; response to requests; build cooperation network; arrange information interchange between the ministry, educational institution and its owner. The inspection is conducted across the country by experts in case of schooling permits and inspection in individual matters. If necessary, it is possible to control the educational institutions' activities in certain field (thematic inspection).

15. Contact, Links

The Website of the Ministry of Education and Research, http://www.hm.ee.
Contact person:
Hille Voolaid
Deputy Head
External Evaluation Department
Munga 18, 50088 Tartu, Estonia
Phone +372 735 0109
Fax +372 735 0250
Hille.Voolaid@hm.ee

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