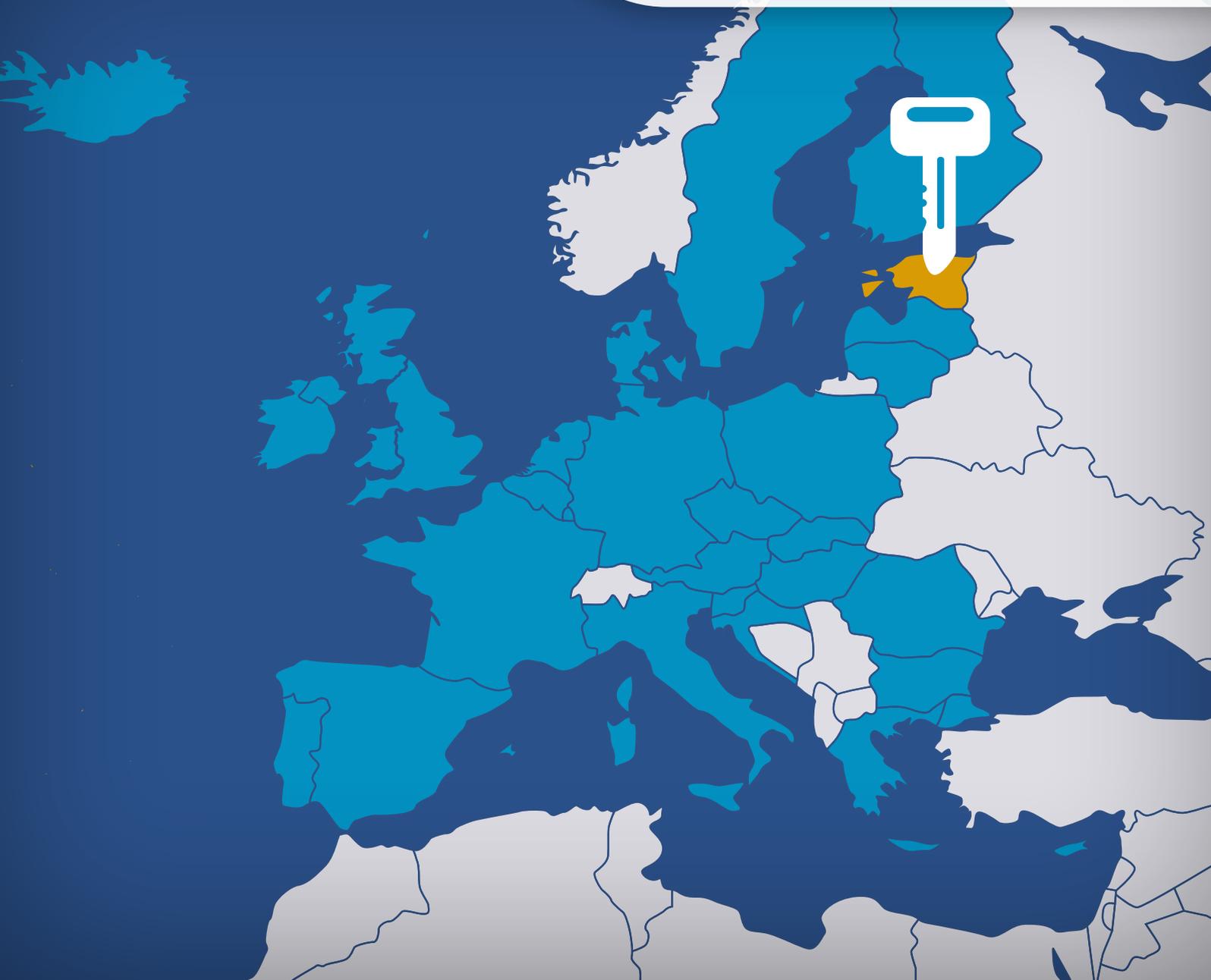


COUNTRY OVERVIEW

ESTONIA 2014



<http://keyconet.eun.org>



SHORT SUMMARY

Providing a national description contextualizing key competence development in your country [rationale, objectives etc.]:

In Estonia, there is a clear distinction between general and domain-specific competences, and between cross-curricular themes. General competence features in the national curriculum and consists of four competences (learning, activity, value and self-definition) while domain-specific competence consists of seven competences (nature, social, reflection and interaction, communication, technology, art, mathematics), which should cover every aspect of the world and environment around us. Finally, the compulsory cross-curricular themes (environment and sustainable development, careers and career planning, media studies and ICT and safety) are not taught as separate subjects but are covered within other subjects.

One of the main objectives of the General Education System Development (GESD) Plan for 2007-2013 was to create opportunities for individualised learning, taking into account students' different learning abilities, and to enhance capacity building in the mathematics, science and technology community.

KCD INITIATIVES:

What relevant key competence related initiatives (e.g. curricular reform/national strategy/pilot project/public consultation etc. in relation to students' curricula and assessment, teacher training, school organisation, and learning resources) have taken place in your country over the past five years, and which are planned in the future? You may also refer here to the 2012 case notes produced for your country, and any other initiatives which will be the focus of the 2013 case notes.

Estonia has recently updated the national curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools (approved by the government in January 2011; implementation: all 550 basic and upper secondary Schools started school-year with new curricula), which place a much stronger emphasis on the acquisition of key competences, including transversal competences.

At school level, assessments for certification and qualification generally cover further competences. There are also national initiatives exploring the potential and consequences of expanding assessment to all key competences. We are developing new instruments for external assessment, including assessment tools for key competences and cross-curricular themes. We are developing assessment for the less familiar key competences that present a new challenge.

Estonian Ministry of Education, in co-operation with Information Technology Foundation (HITSA) and European Schoolnet (EUN) started encouraging Estonian schools to implement EUN developed self-assessment platform "eSafety Label" to assess schools e-safety standards, and overall situation concerning internet safety issues. eSafety label will be included to schools external assessment process.

New materials for elementary and secondary school teachers have been developed to help implement the new curriculum, all of which contain details of how to teach and assess the key competences. ESF funds have been used to support teachers' in-service training on the implementation of key competences and cross-curricular themes. Teacher networks have supported the development of the teaching and assessment of key competences.

OVERALL KCD APPROACH:

How would you characterise the overall approach to key competence development in your country? Is it a holistic approach characterised by an overarching strategy, or rather a targeted approach focusing on one or more specific dimension of the education system (student curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school organisation, learning resources etc.)? Does it cover formal and non-formal learning, both primary and secondary school levels?

The overall approach is a holistic one, with national tests in mother tongue (or language of instruction), mathematics, science, one or more foreign languages and social and civic competences. Even though there are only a few national tests, much more attention has been given to ensuring the cross-curricular competences such as social and civic competences, entrepreneurship, learning to learn, digital and cultural competences as well as career planning and media studies. These competences are not taught separately, but must be covered in other subjects.

As well as the school organisation, the teacher training system is also being developed (e.g. Estonia case note no. 1 – ICT management and assessment model for schools - teacher and school administration education/development – unfortunately it has been implemented only in very few schools, mostly in the capital based schools), through which children will be given better conditions for learning and development.

Through the development of school administrations, the local public administration will have more information and better knowledge of schools' needs in terms of development.

KEY COMPETENCES ADDRESSED:

Is there a focus on any particular EU key competence/s or a combination of them, or perhaps there is more of a focus on alternative/complementary competences defined at national level?

In Estonia, the main objectives in the national education strategy are to enhance capacity building in mathematics, science and technology and digital competences as well as in entrepreneurship.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED:

Who are the main stakeholders involved in key competence development in your country?

- Ministry of Education and Research
- Former The Tiger Leap Foundation now Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA)
- The Estonian Association of Teachers
- The Teacher Training/education providers
- Different associations of subjects (mathematics, geography, foreign languages).

KCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES:

How does the implementation of key competence development/reform in school education function in your country? (*e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.*)

There is a mixed approach to KCD implementation in Estonia, meaning that the implementation process is functional and thematic (divided into smaller themes). The process usually begins with political commitment (Ministry of Education and Research organises a team of experts who will go through all documents and problems). Following this there is a consultation with stakeholders (whose opinions will be taken into consideration), after which the team of experts go over the teaching materials. They then define the exact goals and standards that they want to achieve. The next step is to go through the teacher training programmes and adapt them according to changes in the curricula.

Piloting is an essential part of all described actions, driven either by relevant stakeholder or research company.



OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS:

What would you identify as obstacles and/or facilitators to developing and implementing a key competence approach in your country's education system, or to more generally introducing any type of educational reform related to the definition of key competences and revision of the curriculum, and to joint collaboration on such issues relying on the input from those working on different dimensions (e.g. teacher training, learning resources etc.)?

Teachers are sceptical about new approaches and teacher training should be more innovative in order to overcome this scepticism.

Some teachers do not see the connection between key competences and teaching. They also find it difficult to assess the teaching process through competence development.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/USEFUL URLs:

 HITSA has developed an NETS educational competence model matrix as a self-assessment tool for evaluating teachers' digital competences. During 2014 an expert group and selected focus group of 50 active teachers are working on the matrix, with an aim to add illustrative examples for better understanding and user-friendly implementation. Matrix will soon become available also in English.

/Estonian version of the matrix is added as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2/

ABOUT EUROPEAN SCHOOLNET

European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 31 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet's activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.
- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.
- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

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