No. 10-6/64


The Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 10 January 2012

Enclosure: 8 pages

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

GENEVA
QUESTIONNAIRE ON NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR QUALITY OF EDUCATION

BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

ESTONIA

1. Please list existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education.

Education Act

Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act

Vocational Educational Institutions Act

Private Schools Act

National Curriculum for Basic Schools

National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools

2. Please describe briefly applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to the following:
(Please specify if there are different norms for different types of education institutions including (I) primary schools (II secondary schools)

a. School infra-structure

Education is compulsory for school-age children to the extent specified by law and free of charge in state and local government general education schools. In order to make education accessible, the state and local governments must maintain the requisite number of educational institutions.

Most pupils attend public-sector schools which are funded by the State: in 2010/11 academic year 94% of pupils attended municipal schools, 2% state schools and 4% private schools.

According to the Education Act, the state and local governments shall provide the children who are subject to compulsory school attendance with the opportunities to fulfil the obligation (and to acquire basic education). Basic education can be acquired in a basic school (põhikool) (years 1–9). An upper secondary school (gümnaasium) may also include years of basic school. Primary schools (including pre-primary education institutions combined with primary schools), which may, according to needs and possibilities, encompass years 1 to 6, and pre-primary education institutions combined with basic schools may be established in order to ensure access to education and fulfilment of the compulsory school attendance. They may include, depending on the needs and opportunities, years 1-6.

The school network is planned according to the principle that a primary school must be as close as possible to a child's home.
Schools ensure the mental and physical security and the protection of the health of students during their stay at school.

Teachers observe the development and coping of students at school and, where necessary, adjust schooling according to the needs of students.

Students shall be provided with the services of at least a special education teacher, psychologist, and social educator. Managers of schools create and heads of school organise the opportunities for implementation of the services of support specialists.

Hobby activities are activities supporting the completion of a school curriculum or other extracurricular activities taking place in or organised by a school. A school is required to have a library.

The manager of a school organises catering for students at school. The state budget contains support for covering the school lunch expenses of students acquiring basic education in the stationary form of schooling in municipal and private schools.

Students acquiring basic or general secondary education in the stationary form of schooling are provided with health services at school, including activities carried out by nurses.

b. Class size and pupil-teacher ratio

In 2010/11, the pupil/teacher ratio was 10.1. The average class size was 18.3. The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act specifies that the upper limit of class or study group size in basic school is 24 students (no limits for gymnasium). The owner of a school may, proposed by the school head and agreed upon by the school board, also establish a smaller or higher upper limit of class size (the maximum is 26). If the number of students in two or three classes together is 15 or less, a composite class may be formed of these students. In classes for children with special needs the upper limit of class size is smaller.

c. Teacher qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of students</th>
<th>School forms</th>
<th>Teachers' qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-7</td>
<td>Pre-primary education, Kindergarten</td>
<td>Pre-school teacher (Bachelor) 3 years study, 180 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>Comprehensive school, Primary (1-6 forms), Lower secondary (6-9 forms) 9 years</td>
<td>Class teacher (Master), Subject (specialist) teacher (Master) 5 years study, 300 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>Upper secondary school, 10-12 forms 3 years</td>
<td>Subject teacher (Master) 5 years study, 300 ECTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the Higher Education Standard, the estimation of the volume of study foreseen in a curriculum is carried out in credit points of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS, hereinafter: credit points) from 1 September 2009. One credit point corresponds to 26 hours of study. The volume of an academic year is 60 credit points, i.e. 1560 hours of study.

d. Working conditions for teachers and their professional development

Working conditions

According to the Employment Contracts Act (2008), a regulation of the Government of the Republic has established a list of positions of educationalists to which reduced working time applies. Pre-primary education institutions, general education schools, vocational schools' and hobby schools' teachers are also included. The duration of reduced working time on these positions is 7 hours per day, i.e. 35 hours per seven days. The number of hours spent on study or educational activities is calculated separately.

The hours of study and educational activities is 30 hours for teachers of pre-primary institutions, for basic school specialist teachers' and generalist teachers' it is 18–24 hours and the teaching time of upper secondary school specialist teachers and vocational institutions' teachers is 18–22 hours a week. The use of the general working time left over from teaching is determined by the employment contract, job description, internal procedures of the institution and the collective agreement.

The head teacher establishes in the employment contract for each teacher a particular teaching and education workload, the duration of the general working time and the salary level.

The basis for determining the salaries of general education school and vocational school teachers is the teacher's workload and the salary fund allocated to the owner of the school. Support for teachers' salaries is allocated to local authorities as a single sum.

The minimum salaries of teachers, including of class teachers, are agreed upon by the authorised representatives of the Government of the Republic, national unions of local municipality organisations and of registered teachers' unions.

The remuneration principles of municipal school teachers are approved by the owner of the school, i.e. the municipality or city council, according to the state-wide agreement or the precept on minimum rates.

The duration of annual holidays is 28 calendar days in Estonia. Teachers have the right for extended annual holidays of up to 55 calendar days. In addition to regular annual holidays, teachers may take study leave, if necessary.

Estonian teachers shall pass a minimum of 160 hours of in-service training within every five years. The in-service training market is free; in-service training for teachers is offered by universities, professional
higher education institutions, privately owned in-service training institutions, general education schools, vocational schools, hobby schools and individuals.

e. School curricula content and pedagogical materials

The standard of basic education (requirements for the contents of studies and study results) is determined by the National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011 – see http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1512622). The national curriculum establishes study objectives, expected learning outcomes, conditions and process of evaluation as well as requirements for study environment, organisation of education and schooling, graduation and schools' curricula. The school creates opportunities for maximal improvement of each student's abilities, creative self-realisation, development of scientific perspective, and the achievement of emotional, social and moral maturity.

Secondary education is based on basic education. General secondary education is a set of requirements established with the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2011 – see http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1512619). Acquisition of general secondary education creates the preconditions and gives the right for continuation of studies for acquisition of higher education.

There are different types of pedagogical materials. These materials are not obligatory. It means that teachers and school decide about the teaching materials and methods they use in their work. A big amount of materials were created under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research to help teachers in the process of implementing new curricula (see www.oppekeave.ee).

f. Teaching-learning process

The concepts of learning and teaching are set up by national curricula. The monitoring of the quality of teaching-learning process is held through internal and external evaluation/assessment.

According to the national curriculum, assessment of study results is an inseparable part of the education and schooling process.

Schools use both formative assessment (assessment for learning) as well as assessment of knowledge and skills (assessment of learning). In the course of assessment for learning, a teacher gives a student continuous oral or written feedback on results and deficiencies, arouses one's enthusiasm and guides the student in upcoming studies, as well as plans, in cooperation with parents, support specialists and other teachers the objectives and ways of future learning.

A student's knowledge and skills of a subject are assessed with regard to all compulsory and optional subjects foreseen by the curriculum. A teacher may assess subject related knowledge and skills both during study activities as well as at the end of a study theme.

At least once during the academic year, a student development process oriented interview is carried out at school in which a parent also participates and the general objective of which is to support the development of a student.
In basic school, the external assessment of learning outcomes is conducted by means of national standard-determined tests and unified basic school final examinations. Standard-determined tests are designed to check the acquisition of study results necessary for finishing a stage of study.

For finishing basic school, students of year 9 who have studied according to the national curriculum for basic schools shall pass three final examinations with unified questions: in Estonian language and literature or in Estonian as second language, an examination in mathematics and in one more subject on the student’s choice.

For graduation from upper secondary school students of the 12th year have to pass 5 final examinations, at least 3 of which have to be state examinations and 2 may be passed as school examinations; but students may also pass all 5 final examinations as state examinations. The state examination in Estonian language is compulsory for all students graduating from upper secondary school (in schools where the language of instruction is other than Estonian the examination of Estonian as second language is compulsory). The rest of state examinations can be chosen from mathematics, foreign languages (English, German, Russian, and French), physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography and social study. The final examinations of the upper secondary school are generally unified with entrance examinations to higher education institutions.

g. School management, including student and parents participation

A school is directed by a head of the school. A school is managed by a head of the school in cooperation with the teachers’ council and the board of trustees. Heads of educational institutions are recruited with a competitive procedure.

A school has a teachers’ council (öppenõukogu) whose function is to organise, analyse and evaluate schooling and education and make decisions required for the management of the school within the limits of its competence. The teachers of the school are members of the teachers’ council. The representative of students appointed by the student council is involved in the activities of the teachers’ council.

The board of trustees (hoolekogu) is a standing body whose function is to ensure the joint activities of the students, teachers, manager, parents of students, graduates and organisations supporting the school in guiding, planning and observing schooling and education, and creation of better opportunities for schooling and education. The board of trustees comprises the manager of the school, the teachers’ council, representatives of parents, graduates and organisations supporting the school.

Private schools have a board as a collegial decision-making body. The statute of the private educational institution shall provide the procedure for appointment and removal of members of the board and their term of office. The board shall comprise the head teacher, representatives of the teaching staff and representatives of the manager of the private educational institution.

To include parents is obligatory for a board of pre-primary institutions and schools where parents have to form one fifth of the composition of the board. A board of upper secondary schools shall obligatorily include students. Students also have to form one fifth of the composition of the board.
Parents partake in the decision-making on the education of their children through parents' meetings and board of trustees.

In order to coordinate cooperation between the school and the parents, the head of school calls a meeting of the parents of the students studying in the stationary form of schooling, thereby giving all parents the chance to participate in the parents' meeting at least once a year.

The students of a school constitute the student body. A student body has the right to elect a student council who represents the student body within the competence of the student council specified in the statutes of the student council in the internal relationships of the school and in relations with other organisations, institutions and persons.

Where possible, funds for funding the activities of the student council may be allocated in the school budget, considering the needs of the student council and students.

Schools in Estonia have considerable degree of autonomy. Private general education schools are supported by the state on the same principles. However, in private schools parents pay also fees.

Schooling and education and management is analysed and their effectiveness is evaluated in the course of internal evaluation. Schools draw up an internal evaluation report at least once every three academic years. The report indicates the strengths and weaknesses of the activities of the school. The internal evaluation report shall be established by the head of the school who submits it to the board of trustees and the manager of the school for the expression of an opinion beforehand.

h. Methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes

The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act establishes external evaluation of study results or in other words, state level evaluation of study results defined in the national curriculum of basic schools and upper secondary schools. This is carried out through upper secondary school state examinations, basic school final examinations and nation-wide standard-determining tests, the principles, organisation and other conditions of which are established by the respective regulation of the Minister of Education and Research.

For graduation from upper secondary school, students must pass at least five final exams, at least three of which must be state exams and of which one is compulsory (Estonian language) and other state exams may be selected (between English, German, French, Russian, social study, mathematics, biology, history, geography, chemistry and physics).

The Ministry of Education and Research annually prepares an overview of external evaluation of the education system. The overview includes a summary of results of state supervision in general education schools. Overview is given of the results of internal evaluations and counselling in educational institutions, national education surveys and other projects related to evaluation. The overview is available both as a printed version and on the webpage of the ministry.

3. Please identify the institutional mechanisms in your country used to collect and process information and to assess adherence to norms and standards established to ensure
quality of education (*Please specify if there are different mechanisms monitoring public or private institutions*)

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, offering of education in Estonia is under state supervision (§ 37).

In general education, the organisation and conduct of state supervision is regulated by the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2010), the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (1996), the Private Schools Act (1993). The aforementioned acts are the basis for supervision of state, private and municipal educational institutions.

In order to ensure the lawfulness and expediency of the activities of state and municipal educational institutions, supervisory control is conducted under the Government of the Republic Act (1995) and the Local Government Organisation Act (1993).

Quality Assurance in General Education

The task of state supervision is:

- to check the fulfilment of requirements deriving from legal acts regulating education and schooling activities;
- to analyse problems in implementation of legal acts regulating education and schooling activities.

The results of supervision are formulated as a report and such reports are public documents. The Ministry of Education and Research analyses the results of supervision and publishes them in the annual overview of external evaluation of the education system.

Since 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established the obligation to conduct internal evaluation in general education schools.

External evaluation of learning outcomes (standard determining tests and examinations) in basic school and upper secondary school is organised by, as well as its results are analysed by and schools are informed of their results by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre.

Regarding vocational and professional qualifications, the quality of education is checked by vocational councils whose work is organised by the Estonian Qualifications Authority.

Internal evaluation is used to evaluate pre-primary institutions’, basic schools’, upper secondary schools’ and vocational schools’ education and schooling activities and management and their effectiveness. The report lists the strengths and areas of improvement of the activities of the school. In conducting internal evaluation, schools take internal evaluation criteria and the indicators of the school’s performance as point of departure.

Internal evaluation criteria (leadership and management, human resource management, cooperation with stakeholders, resource management, education and schooling process, results related to children/learners, personnel and stakeholders and the school’s indicators) have been established with a
regulation of the minister. The activity indicators are available through the Estonian Education Information System.

The Chancellor of Justice conducts supervision over educational institutions in matters related to his jurisdiction, i.e. over guaranteeing students' constitutional rights. The results of supervision conducted by the Chancellor of Justice are published as a yearbook.

4. Please provide information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education.