Inclusive education in Estonia

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General information

- **Area:** 45 000 km^2
- **Total population:** 1,294,000 (2012)

- 24,000 students have indicated a special educational need. The majority (79%) attend a mainstream schools.

- About 4,000 students, or 3.2% of the total number of students in general education have a visual, auditory, multiple disabilities, intellectual, emotional and behavioral problems. 74% of them are enrolled in SEN schools.

Fundamental principles

- Estonian education policy is based on principles of inclusive education and equal opportunities, availability and access.

- In Estonia, every child has the right to receive basic education at nearby school.

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Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs

Pupils with special educational needs are pupils whose outstanding talent, learning or behavioural difficulties, health problems, disabilities or long-term absence from studies creates the need to make changes or adaptations in the content of studies, the study processes or the learning environment (study aids, classrooms, language of communication, incl. alternative communications, specially trained teachers, support staff, etc.), or in the work plan prepared by the teacher for work with the relevant class (Estonian Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act 2010)

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Organisation of studies of students with special educational needs (§ 47)

- The principles of inclusive schooling is implemented.

- Students with special educational needs usually study in an ordinary class of their school.

- The principles of organisation of schooling students with special educational needs shall be laid down in the school curriculum.

- The head of school appoints a coordinator of schooling of student with special educational needs.

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Estonian National curriculums

- In January 2011, the new versions of National Curriculum for basic school and upper secondary school came into effect.

- Teachers shall monitor the development of their pupils and how they cope at school.

National Curriculum establishes

- Basis for organization of learning and education
- Notification and counselling of pupils and parents
- Exceptions applied to pupils with special educational needs (§ 17).
- Concept of learning (§ 5).

Findings from PISA 2006 and 2009

- Estonia performed at higher levels than the OECD average and also showed above average performance and below-average socio-economic inequalities.

- Estonia was among the school systems that offer schools greater autonomy in determining their curricula, but offer limited school choice to parents and students.

- Among all OECD countries, Estonia was characterised by low levels of differentiation in selecting and grouping students. In these school systems, students are not systematically streamed, schools are not selective in their admissions processes, and students usually do not repeat grades and are not transferred to other schools.

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Increasing educational achievement in basic skills

- EU Member States have committed to reducing to below 15% the proportion of low achievers in reading literacy, math and science by 2020.

- Only EE, FI, and NL have currently less than 15% low achievers in all three PISA domains: reading literacy, mathematics and science and thus have already reached the benchmark.

The level of high and low performers in PISA 2009 in science

	Students, who performed below at Levels 2		Students, who performed at Levels 5 and 6	
	%	Ranking place	%	Ranking place
Changhai-China	24,3	1	96,8	1
Finland	18,7	2	94,0	3
Korea	11,6	3	93,7	11
Hong Kong-China	16,2	4	93,4	6
Estonia	10,4	**5**	91,7	**14**

The proportion of top performers in 2009 was even lower than in 2006.

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On-going initiatives

- Educational reform. The education reform includes the development of „Strategy of organization of study of SEN students".

- Implementation of National curricula.

- Developing counselling service centres and inter-sectorial cooperation work.

- Modernisation teacher education, developing professionalism of school-leaders and support specialists.

- Increase the access for disabled children to high quality level schooling

Our challenges

- Reduction of the dropout rate and support for children with SEN (including talented children).

- Support for local government to regulate upper-secondary school network organization.

- Improvement the collaboration between counselling centres and schools.

- Support the students whose native language is not Estonian and who have different cultural backround.

- Supervising and assessing achievements of SEN students

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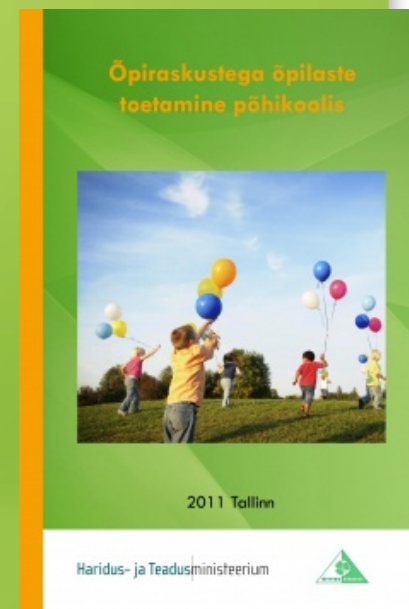# Implementation activities on national level

- Development of instructional materials for teachers, the teaching resources for SEN pupils at the national level.

- Support the professionals and teachers.

- Organisation the basic and in-service trainings (Teachers' Training Strategy for 2009–2013 has been developed and established that the teacher basic training must include organization of study modules on special need education).

Study materials for students with SEN

- The purpose of the ESF's "Preparation of Study Materials for Students with Special Educational Needs" programme is to improve the quality of education and access to education for students with special educational needs. The programme activities will help prevent school dropout and ensure equal educational opportunities.

- Support for students with learning difficulties in basic schools 2011 (subject-related methodological and learning materials *„Methodological materials for teaching low achievers"*)
  http://www.oppekava.ee/index.php/%C3%95piraskustega_%C3%B5pilaste_toetamine_p%C3%B5hikoolis_(ainealased_metoodilised-_ja_%C3%B5ppematerjalid)

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Thank you!

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