National strategy(ies)


The general objective of the National Health Plan 2009–2020 is to achieve a longer health adjusted life expectancy by decreasing premature mortality and illness. As people’s ability to cope with daily life and participate in society and working life depends on their health, the achievement of the objectives of the National Health Plan is an essential prerequisite for the objectives of the social inclusion.

The priorities for achievement of the strategic general objective of the development plan have been divided between five thematic fields:

- increased social cohesion and equal opportunities,
- ensuring healthy and safe development for children,
- shaping of a living, working and learning environment supporting health,
- facilitation of healthy lifestyle,
• ensuring the sustainability of the health care system.

The priorities in these thematic fields rely on one or more of the core values of the development plan: human rights, common responsibility for health, equal opportunities and justice, social inclusion, relying on evidence and consideration of international documents. The objectives of the plan emphasise the need to reduce gender inequality and the promotion of equal opportunities. With regard to the efficient operation and sustainability of the health and social protection system, the plan also points out the need to improve integration between the health and social protection system.

Safe and healthy development of children and adolescents is defined as one of the four main fields of development in the plan. The main objective in this field is to decrease mortality and primary mental and behaviour disorders of children and youth and to increase of young people’s positive evaluation of their health. The measures under this objective are targeted at promotion of reproductive and infant health, health promotion of pre-school children and school-aged children.

The youth-specific target groups identified in the plan are children and young people in general (i.e. from 0 to 26 years old), children up to 18 years old, students in general education, young people with special needs and young people with behaviour that puts their health at risk.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is the main responsible authority for the implementation of the Plan.

No evidence-based assessment or evaluation of the implementation of both policy document has been conducted.

The document has been revised once in 2012.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

The Network of Health Promoting Kindergartens and Schools

Estonia is a member of the Schools for Health in Europe network [2] since 1993. In Estonia the health promoting schools movement started in 1993, when 16 schools became members of the European Network of Health Promoting Schools [3]. Since 2000, the movement was broadened to kindergartens. By the end of 2016, 488 educational institutions (45% of the total number) are members of the Health Promoting Kindergartens and Schools network in Estonia. The network is coordinated by National Institute for Health Development.

Health promoting educational institutions are defined as institutions that implement a structured and systematic plan for the health and well-being of all children and of teaching and non-teaching staff. This is characterised as a whole school approach and contains - healthy policies, physical and social environment, individual health skills and action competencies, links within the community and health and well-being services.

At county level there is a network of coordinators, who usually work in school or kindergarten and the coordination is additional work for them. There are coordinators in all 15 counties and also the 4 largest cities.

The coordination in state and county level is financed by the state through National Health Plan 2009-2020 and Estonian Health Insurance Fund. Kindergartens and schools finance their activities itself and/or through different projects.
The PAX Good Behaviour Game (GBG) (in Estonian VEPA Käitumisoskuste mäng) [4]

VEPA is an environmental intervention used in the classroom to create a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. The intervention is designed to reduce off-task behaviour; increase attentiveness; decrease aggressive and disruptive behaviour, as well as shy and withdrawn behaviour. PAX GBG has also shown improvements with academic success, and mental health well-being and reduces substance abuse later in life.

Since 2014 in 65 schools have been implemented PAX GBG in Estonia.

PAX game is implemented by the National Institute for Health Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and funded by European Social Fund.

KiVa [5]

KiVa is a research-based anti-bullying program that has been developed in the University of Turku, Finland. The effectiveness of KiVa has been shown in a large randomized controlled trial. Since 2014 in 40 schools have been implemented KIVA in Estonia. He programme in Estonia is supported by the Ministry of Education and Research.

School invites to move [6]

The research group of physical activity for health in Institute of Sport Sciences and Physiotherapy in University of Tartu is designing school-based interventions and their aim is to promote physical activity in whole community, as sufficient physical activity supports mental, physical and social well-being.

Current shortcomings in promoting active lifestyle lie in the lack of focus on environmental factors and the over-concentration on sports. The objective measurements show that children involved in organised sport activities do not necessarily have higher physical activity. The pilot project by Tartu University showed that it is far too frequent in Estonian schools to discourage the physical activity of children during school day.

The research group is a permanent research unit in the structure of the University of Tartu.

Good School and Good Preschool [7]

The “Good school, good preschool” is an ongoing project by Centre for Ethics, University of Tartu [8] , which is supported by the Ministry of Education and Research [9].

The aim of the good school model is to describe different aspects of a good school and to find the criteria that indicate that a school actually deals with these aspects.

The focus of the model is on evaluation. The ultimate aim of the project is to achieve the situation where all schools are evaluated fairly and feel motivated to improve.

Free of Bulling [10]

The Estonian Union for Child Welfare has been leading a project called “Kiusamisest vaba lasteaed ja kool” (Kindergartens and schools free of bullying) since 2010, currently ongoing.

The mission of Free of Bullying is:

- To reduce the number of children subjected to bullying in preschools and primary schools
• To create a safe, positive and healthy environment for children attending preschool or primary school

The mission is to be achieved by:

• Teaching children how to be a good friend
• Giving children the courage to say no if they experience bullying
• Supporting the children to act based on the values of tolerance, respect, care and courage
• Strengthening group spirit among children and thus preventing bullying

Programme is supported by Ministry of Education and Research.

Estonian Youth Work Centre supports annually the participation of young people in summer camps [11]. In 2016, 29 423 young people participated.

**Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

*Health education*

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools is part of national curricula subject Human Study in Basic school and in addition, the subject Personal, Social and Health Education in upper secondary school. Human studies were included in all levels of the school curriculum as a compulsory subject in 1996. The main topics are physical activity, nutrition, social and life skills training (preventing risky behaviour and substance (e.g. drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse), injury prevention and safety skills, mental health, etc.

One of eight cross-curricular topic is *health and safety* – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a mentally, emotionally, socially and physically healthy member of society who is capable of following healthful lifestyles, act in a safe manner and take part in developing a health promoting environment.

There are different kind of supporting materials and training for teachers both in Estonian and Russian languages (teacher or trainer guidelines; web resources such as: www.toitumine.ee [12], www.tubakainfo.ee [13]; www.noored.alkinfo.ee [14]; www.narko.ee [15] etc.; films: http://www.terviseinfo.ee/et/valdkonnad/narkomaania/narkomaania-ennetamine/oppefilm-motteaine [16] etc.).

*Sex education and personal relationships education*

In Estonia, human studies was included in all levels of the school curriculum as a compulsory subject in 1996 and sex education and personal relationships education is part of it.

Sexual education and personal relationships education are based on „Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. A framework for policy makers, educational and health authorities and specialists“. These standards are translated to Estonian language and are freely available [17].

Apart from the standards there are different kind of tools and trainings in sexual health field created and available for teachers both in Estonian and Russian language (teacher or trainer guidelines; web resources: www.amor.ee [18], www.hiv.ee [19]; films: http://raagiasjast.hiv.ee/et/raagi-asjast.html [20] etc.)
Peer-to-peer education approaches

There is no central framework policy or guidelines established to develop peer-to-peer educational approaches aiming to enhance young people's knowledge and understanding of factors related to their health and well-being.

TORE [21] is a youth organisation that promotes movement of support students in general education schools and vocational education schools. The organisation developing the programme in Estonia started in 1996 and is ongoing.

The main goal of the organisation is to increase the number of schools and people in schools, who support and develop friendly learning atmosphere, social skills and the anti-bullying standpoint. The network is based on training students to be support-students for peers and training adults in schools to be able to cooperate better with youth. TORE is also member of anti-bullying coalition (see below). TORE targets general education and vocational education school students and adults in schools. The organisation is supported from the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Research. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the activities in the organisation are not available.

Collaboration and partnerships

There is no obligatory or policy framework for partnerships between formal education providers, youth workers and health professionals. Cooperation between different stakeholders may occur at the local, regional or national level, however it is not guided centrally.

Local governments are obliged to analyse the public health and security situation and prepare health and well-being profile, and the format of the profile analyses foresees a cooperation between the specialists in different areas. This cooperation is however not formed as a permanent cooperation body in general.

In 2014 a Bullying Free Education Coalition was created. This coalition has been recognised and supported by Ministry of Education and Research. The number of partners has been increased and in 2016 the coalition under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research developed a “Concept for education path without bullying [22]” - a document stating the main understanding of bullying, its prevention and interventions in Estonia. It lists the main programmes available to address bullying through all levels of education. The concept does not ensure public funding for the programmes.

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Youth information

In general, well-being and healthy lifestyle issues are considered to be part of youth information, youth information is defined as one area of youth work in Estonia. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible governmental authority in charge of youth information.

There are 16 centralised public regional youth guidance and information centres, called Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja), which provide career information, career counselling, psychological, socio-pedagogical, special education counselling and speech therapy. Please see chapter 3.4. [23] for more
information on guidance and counselling in Rajaleidja Centres.

Estonian Youth Work Centre organised yearly for 24 years an information fair for youth called Teeviit [24], which was attended by thousands of young people in Estonia. Teeviit 2017 was the last youth information fair. Now the brand “Teeviit” is being used only web-based as a youth information platform.

Foundation Innove hosts also a portal Rajaleidja [25] (Pathfinder). The portal aims to support youth, adults and practitioners, providing information on career planning, work and education possibilities in Estonia and abroad. In addition, local and regional information for youth is available through local youth information portals such as

- www.noor.laanemaa.ee [26]
- www.polvanoored.ee [27]
- www.noorteinfo.ee [28]
- www.tni.ee [29]


Health counselling

Estonian Union for Sexual Health [31] coordinates the work of centres for youth counselling on sexual health, relationships and violence issues. The target group for the centres is young people up to 24 years of age. There is also a web-portal www.amor.ee [18] to provide online information and counselling on sexual health issues. There are 17 centres in the network and most of them are based in clinics or medical centres.

The service is financed by Health Board and National Institute for Health Development

Youth information campaigns

There are different kind of web and social media based materials in campaigns for youth:

- Alcohol prevention - http://noored.alkoinfo.ee/ [33]
- Sexual health - www.amor.ee [18]
- Mental health - http://peaasi.ee/ [34]
- HIV prevention - www.hiv.ee [19]

Regular national campaigns have been held in the areas of safe sex, nutrition, tobacco and alcohol prevention, oral health etc. In general the target group of the youth campaign is general youth age 7-26.

The programme “Protect yourself and help the other” for 6-8 class year students and 15 youth camps (one in each county). The aim of the camp is to develop a way of thinking that would support and promote the health of children. In the camps, specialists in their fields teach how to foresee risks and cope with emergency situations. The programme is organised by cooperation of the Estonian Road Administration, Rescue Board, Estonian Health Insurance Fund, Police and Border Guard Board, county governments, local governments etc.