Strategic focuses of teacher policy have been specified in the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020. The strategy emphasises the need to transfer to a modern concept of learning that is focused on the learner, deems key competences important and integrates subjects and different fields; and considers teachers and heads of schools the key actors of the process. For the purposes of the strategy, teachers mean all the persons who guide learning processes and form learning environment in kindergartens, general education schools, vocational schools, higher education institutions, hobby schools, non-formal and informal education centres, continuing education centres, open youth centres, museums and other cultural institutions. Heads of schools mean the heads of the educational institutions mentioned. The teacher’s role is to support a student’s development into a learner who can manage his or her own learning, who can independently cope with changes in the environment and take responsibility for his or her own development and learning. A teacher is also a person who creates connections and forms value judgements, whose task is to develop critical and creative thinking in a student, as well as analytical skills, entrepreneurship, teamwork skills and written and oral communication skills.

For the implementation of the goals specified in the strategy, measures have been provided for making the teaching profession more attractive, for reorganising continuing education of teachers and heads of schools, and for providing feedback on the performance of teachers, as well as for improving the digital competence of learners and teachers.

Implementation of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy and development of academic staff takes place under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Research, largely in the framework of the programme “Competent and Motivated Teachers and Heads of Educational Institutions” funded by the European Social Fund. Strategy 2020 provides for the development of competence centres at Tallinn University and the University of Tartu that are responsible for the development of teacher training and educational sciences. The competence centres are targeted at collecting and developing knowledge about learning and teaching, and passing on such knowledge to other educational institutions, incl. institutions of higher education.

Professional standards form a conceptual basis for the initial and continuing education of teachers; continuing education of heads and teaching staff is based on competence models.

The higher education standard sets general requirements for academic personnel.

The Estonian Education Information System includes a sub-register of teachers and teaching staff, in which teachers, teaching staff, support specialists and heads of all educational institutions involved in the provision of formal education are registered.
The professional standard for trainers of adults has been developed and awarding of professional qualifications is ongoing.

The teaching staff and management of all educational institutions works on the basis of employment contracts, with the exception of the rector of the professional higher education institution related to national defence. Many educational employees have been guaranteed a shorter working time and longer annual leave.

**Legislative References**

- Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 [3]
- Adult Education Act [5]
- Professions Act [5]

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