New strategic focuses of teacher policy have been specified in the document, which covers all areas, “Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020” [1]. The strategy places an emphasis on the need to change the approach to learning and considers teachers and the heads of schools to be the key actors of the process. For the purposes of the strategy, teachers are 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, team work 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.

The higher education standard sets general requirements for academic personnel.

The Estonian Education Information System [2] 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.

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.

Estonian Lifelong Learning 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.

A trainer of adults is a specialist who supports learning and development of adult people in a purposefully created learning situation. The professional standard for trainers of adults / andragogues has been developed and awarding of professional qualifications is ongoing. Adults are trained in educational institutions of different type and form of ownership and, therefore, teachers’ working conditions and the requirements set for them depend largely on the institution where they work.

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.

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 [3]” funded by the European Social Fund.