

Foreword

This report for Estonia forms part of the OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools (also referred to as the School Resources Review, see Annex A for further details). The purpose of the review is to explore how school resources can be governed, distributed, utilised and managed to improve the quality, equity and efficiency of school education. School resources are understood in a broad way, including financial resources (e.g. expenditures on education, school budget), physical resources (e.g. school infrastructure, computers), human resources (e.g. teachers, school leaders) and other resources (e.g. learning time).

Estonia was one of the countries which opted to participate in the country review strand and host a visit by an external review team. Members of the OECD review team were Paulo Santiago (OECD Secretariat), co-ordinator of the review; Anthony Levitas (Senior Fellow in International Studies, Brown University, the United States), Péter Radó (Education Consultant based in Budapest) and Claire Shewbridge (OECD Secretariat). The biographies of the members of the review team are provided in Annex B. This publication is the report from the review team. It provides, from an international perspective, an independent analysis of major issues facing the use of school resources in Estonia, current policy initiatives, and possible future approaches. The report serves three purposes: i) to provide insights and advice to Estonian education authorities; ii) to help other countries understand the Estonian approach to the use of school resources; and iii) to provide input for the final comparative analysis of the OECD School Resources Review.

The scope for the analysis in this report includes early childhood education and school education (both general and vocational programmes). At the request of Estonian authorities, the focus areas of the Review of School Resources in Estonia were: i) funding of school education (including distribution, incentives and transparency); ii) organisation of the school network; and iii) the teaching profession (including improving its attractiveness). Also, issues of special needs education and vocational education are addressed from the funding perspective, i.e. how the funding system can facilitate the achievement of policy objectives in special education and vocational education. The analysis presented in the report refers to the situation faced by the education system in October 2014, when the review team visited Estonia.

Estonia's involvement in the OECD review was co-ordinated by Pärt-Eo Rannap, Head of the Finance Department, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia together with Kadi Serbak, Analyst, and Signe Uustal, Chief Expert, both in the Finance Department, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. An important part of Estonia's involvement was the preparation of a comprehensive and informative Country Background Report (CBR) on school resource use authored by Kadi Serbak and Signe Uustal from the Finance Department of the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. The OECD review team is very grateful to the main authors of the CBR and to all those who assisted them in providing a high-quality informative document. The CBR is an important output from the OECD Project in its own right as well as an important source for the review team. Unless indicated otherwise, the data for this report are taken from the Estonian Country Background Report. The CBR follows guidelines prepared by the OECD Secretariat and

provides extensive information, analysis and discussion in regard to the national context, the organisation of the education system, the use of school resources and the views of key stakeholders. In this sense, the CBR and this report complement each other and, for a more comprehensive view of the effectiveness of school resource use in Estonia, should be read in conjunction.

The OECD and the European Commission (EC) have established a partnership for the Project, whereby participation costs of countries which are part of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme are partly covered. The review of Estonia was organised with the support of the EC in the context of this partnership.* The EC was part of the planning process of the review of Estonia (providing comments on Estonia's CBR, participating in the preparatory visit and providing feedback on the planning of the review visit) and offered comments on drafts of this report. This contribution was co-ordinated by Krzysztof Kania, Country Desk Officer for Estonia as regards education and training, working within the "Country Analysis" Unit of the Directorate for "Lifelong Learning: horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy", which is part of the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission. The review team is grateful to Krzysztof Kania for his contribution to the planning of the review and also for the helpful comments he provided on drafts of this report.

The review visit to Estonia took place on 20 to 27 October 2014. The itinerary is provided in Annex C. The visit was designed by the OECD (with input from the EC) in collaboration with Estonian authorities. It also involved a preparatory visit by the OECD Secretariat on 26 to 27 June 2014, with the participation of Krzysztof Kania, from the EC. The review team held discussions with a wide range of groups at all levels of government (central and municipal). At the national level, the review team met with Jevgeni Ossinovski, Minister of Education and Research; other officials of the Ministry of Education and Research; the State Chancellery; Ministries in charge of public expenditure; funding and quality assurance agencies; other relevant agencies dealing with the use of school resources; student associations; teacher associations; representatives of municipalities and cities; representatives of the private school sector; organisations representing the interests of students with special needs; representatives of providers of teacher education; and researchers with an interest in the effectiveness of school resource use. At the municipal and city levels, meetings were held with educational and finance authorities of the cities of Narva, Tallinn, Tartu and the municipalities of Jõhvi and Vaivara. The team also visited a range of schools in different municipalities, interacting with school management, teachers and students. The intention was to provide the review team with a broad cross-section of information and opinions on school resource use and how its effectiveness can be improved. Overall, the OECD review team held 45 meetings and interviewed about 200 individuals.

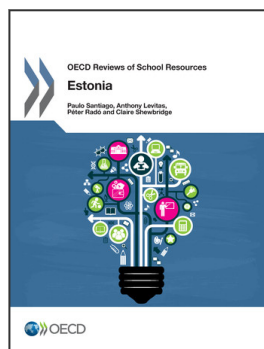
The OECD review team wishes to record its gratitude to the many people who gave time from their busy schedules to inform the review team of their views, experiences and knowledge. The meetings were open and provided a wealth of insights. Special words of appreciation are due to the co-ordinators, Pärt-Eo Rannap, Kadi Serbak and Signe Uustal, for going to great lengths to respond to the questions and needs of the review team. The review team was impressed by their efficiency and expertise. The courtesy and hospitality extended to us throughout our stay in Estonia made our task as a review team as pleasant and enjoyable as it was stimulating and challenging.

The OECD review team is also grateful to colleagues at the OECD, especially to Francesc Masdeu and Thomas Radinger for analytical support. Eleonore Morena provided key administrative, editorial and layout support. Deborah Nusche provided advice while Yuri Belfali provided guidance and support.

* This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

This report is organised in five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the national context, with information on the Estonian school system, main trends and concerns as well as recent developments. Chapter 2 analyses the governance of schooling and the organisation of the school network. Chapter 3 reviews approaches to school funding. Chapter 4 examines school organisation and operation while Chapter 5 looks at the management of the teaching workforce. Each chapter presents strengths, challenges and policy recommendations.

The policy recommendations attempt to build on and strengthen reforms that are already underway in Estonia, and the strong commitment to further improvement that was evident among those the OECD review team met. The suggestions should take into account the difficulties that face any visiting group, no matter how well briefed, in grasping the complexity of Estonia and fully understanding all the issues. Of course, this report is the responsibility of the OECD review team. While the Team benefited greatly from the Estonian CBR and other documents, as well as the many discussions with a wide range of Estonian personnel, any errors or misinterpretations in this report are its responsibility.



From:

OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264251731-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Santiago, Paulo, *et al.* (2016), "Foreword", in *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264251731-1-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.