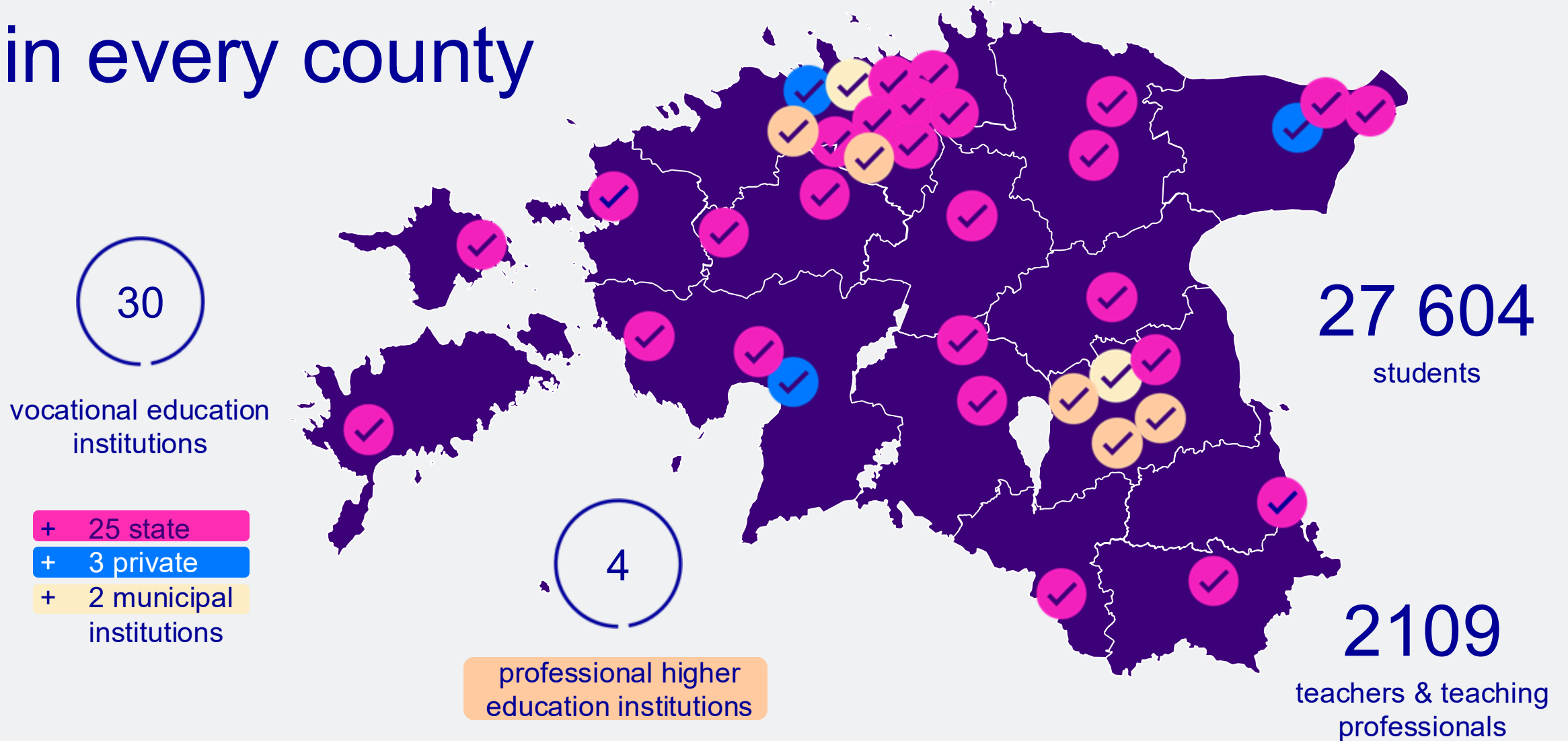


Implementing major reform with the tools of quality management: what we gained and what we lost

Eveli Kuklane

Võru County Education and Technology Centre

VET. Accessible in every county









Võrumaa Haridus- ja
Tehnoloogialooskus

National development programme „The School of Quality“

From Estonian Quality Agency for VET Education

October 2024 – January 2025; 5 meetings and development project

What We Learned

- Focus on the beneficiary and the core process
- Harmonised principles: clear processes, measurable goals, regular feedback cycles
- Key lesson: systematic self-assessment helps to drive improvement
- Collaboration is a central part of quality management: open dialogue, networking and feedback
- Quality is not the project, but a professional habit 😊

Vocational education reform

to enhance VET's appeal to better align with future trends, expand choices after graduation, and ensure a longer-lasting skill set.

- Extended study duration
- New concept for secondary education
- Emphasis on cross-disciplinary skills
- Comprehensive, individualised curricula
- Practical skill assessments



Our Development Project

Transition to 4-year VET curriculas

Complex Change Management

Vision of the future	+	People and Skills	+	Motivators	+	Resources	+	Action Plan	=	CHANGE
	+	People and Skills	+	Motivators	+	Resources	+	Action Plan	=	CONFUSION
Vision of the future	+		+	Motivators	+	Resources	+	Action Plan	=	ANXIETY
Vision of the future	+	People and Skills	+		+	Resources	+	Action Plan	=	RESISTANCE
Vision of the future	+	People and Skills	+	Motivators	+		+	Action Plan	=	FRUSTRATION
Vision of the future	+	People and Skills	+	Motivators	+	Resources	+		=	FALSE START

One Step at a Time...

Vision of the Future

To start, we described the scope of the journey from the perspective of reform and (more importantly) from the perspective of EWERS.

1. Why?
 - Description of the current state
 - Description of the problem
2. How? – how we get there
3. What? – desired state of the future

Hint: Put your own ambition to the reform. Team trusted the goals of EWERS. Even if they were sceptical with the goals of the reform.

Second Step... Action Plan

28.10.2024 — Board discussion: selection of curricula to be launched in 2025

25.11.2024 — Board discussion: presentation and discussion of the transition process concept

09.12.2024 — Teachers' meeting: introduction of the transition process

16.12.2024 — Board discussion: planning of the school year (internships, study visits, in-school skills competition), planning of the school week, mentoring, internship scheduling, textbook needs

03.01.2025 — Teachers' collaboration day: introduction of the assignment, team-based familiarisation with the curriculum and planning of the implementation plan, initial allocation of module leads, topics

03.01.2025 — **Checkpoint 1: module leads assigned**

31.01.2025 — Development and launch of the marketing plan

03.02.2025 — **Checkpoint 2: topics, subtopics and elective modules formulated; responsible persons appointed**

07.02.2025 — School Advisory Council: approval of curricula, confirmation of study places

13–14.02.2025 — Teachers' collaboration days: development of implementation plans, mentoring

03.03.2025 — **Checkpoint 3: assessment tasks and assessment methods for topics and modules described; learning materials identified**

10.03.2025 — Approval of curricula and implementation plans in the School Board

11.03.2025 — Submission of curriculum and implementation plan to the Ministry of Education and Research

31.03.2025 — Implementation plans entered into Tahvel

30.04.2025 — Review of implementation plans entered into Tahvel

04.04.2024 — Timetable plan completed and approved with lead teachers

30.04.2025 — Negotiations with teachers

30.04.2025 — Announcement of competitions (recruitment)

31.05.2025 — Agreement on the mentoring system (Board and teaching staff)

Hint: Communication with sufficient time so the team can emotionally get on board and plan their time.
Checkpoints help maintain discipline with critical activities.

Third step... practical questions

Who does what?

Who provides guidance?

Where we keep information and documents in progress?

How to get extra resources if necessary?

Hint: Knowing brings peace.

Fourth Step... Standards for Content

1. Core principles of the implementation plans. For us, they were:
 - Learner-centered approach
 - Diverse teaching methods, including practical ones (acquiring theory through hands-on activities)
 - Safety of the learning environment (physical, mental, emotional)
 - Systematic support for the development of transversal skills
2. Practical tips and requirements
3. Create a simple self-assessment model so that the team can evaluate whether all requirements have been met.

Hint: Trust self-assessment, but give the assessment methodology

Resources

- We reduced the teaching load of teachers involved in development work,
- cancelled routine collaboration meetings,
- cancelled scheduled training days.

Hint: Giving something up is a difficult choice. Returning to routine after a challenging period also requires attention later on.

Motivators

- Being in it with entire team
- There is close consultation with informal leaders.
- Being *first* or *most*...
- Bonuses
- Recognition
- ???

Hint: Find out what makes the team tick.

(I still haven't figured out the real motivators of EWERS' team, but it apparently worked)

How Do We Know It Was Quality?

Indicator 1: Learner feedback survey (on a 1–5 scale, at least 4) – twice a year during the first year, once a year thereafter. (?)

- The teacher asks for my input regarding how the learning process is conducted.
- Learning in my specialty is interesting.
- I have formulated my goals for participating in studies and for my future.
- My mentor supports my progress at school.
- I feel good at school.
- Teachers emphasise the importance of correct writing in written assignments (from “none of the teachers” ... to “all teachers”).
- Teachers provide opportunities for teamwork and communication in lessons (from “none of the teachers” ... to “all teachers”).

Indicator 2: All first-year teaching positions are filled by 1 September. (-/+)

Indicator 3: Teacher satisfaction does not decline. (+)

Uncommunicated indicator 4: New enrolments in the updated curricula do not drop by more than 5%. (++)

What we learned?

1. When the change is driven by needs genuinely recognised within the organisation, the team's willingness to contribute to the change is higher. There must be something to aspire to.
2. **Change also requires an action plan for the period after the implementation.**
A change does not end when the new arrangements come into force.
3. The risk of burnout is high with complex changes. Trust that people are driven by the desire to do their work well. Communicate that it is not necessary to perform at full capacity every single day. It is sometimes OK to be tired sometimes or to run late. Build time buffers before deadline-critical tasks.

