



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

PAQUALITY

**Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement
Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership KA203**

No – 2018-1-SK01-KA203-046330

Slovakia, 09/2018-08/2021

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN ESTONIA

**(country report prepared for the intellectual output 01 – Assessment of
methodology and materials of public administration teaching and its
relevance for practice)**

March 2019

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Note: The report expresses an opinion of the author. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilization of included information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The PAQUALITY project aims to support changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with the Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research, which have not been fully applied in the area of the public administration high education in Slovakia and the new EU states yet.

High education public administration programs vary a lot especially in the Central and Eastern European member countries of the EU - in the new EU member states (NMS). From this perspective it is highly relevant to facilitate quality assurance mechanism which would ensure not only comparable quality of education processes but also comparable outcomes of the education (e.g. quality of graduates, their knowledge, skills and experience) in these countries.

In addition, the project aims at tackling skills gaps and mismatches in the area of public administration high education through designing and developing curricula that meet the learning needs of students that are relevant to the labour market and societal needs, including through better use of open and on-line, work based, multi - disciplinary learning and new quality assessment criteria. Simultaneously, with a view of this priority, promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development, training of academics in new and innovative pedagogical approaches, new curriculum design approaches and sharing of good practices through collaborative platforms will be in the centre of the project.

This report on Estonia represents an input for the intellectual output 01 of the PAQUALITY project. Within this intellectual output country studies developed based on guidelines and surveys are anticipated. The studies will be used in other project phases but also for mutual information of the project partners at the beginning of the project.

This report summarizes findings on

- the national educational system related to present state of PA education,
- system of evaluation
- findings on PA programmes existing in the country
- relevancy to practice based on research among alumni and civil servants / employers.

This research focuses on programmes in Estonia, describe the development and content of public administration related teaching in two public universities in Estonia that are, as of today, the only academic units which programs could be considered public administration. As the recent decades has been rather turbulent with radical changes in terms public administration education in Estonia, the development of higher education institutions, quality assurance systems and civil servants related practices, the report gives overview of these developments to contextualise the recent trajectories of public administration education.

It is based on data available as of the 30th of March 2019.

2. NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND PA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Estonia displays one of the fastest political and economic transformations among post-communist countries, while the Baltic States in general, and arguably Estonia in particular, have followed the most market-radical route of transformation (Bohle and Greskovits 2007). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the framework of public administration (hereinafter PA) development, as well as teaching, is highly fragmented in Estonia and for a long time there was no effective link between teaching, research and development activities and everyday government (Kalev et al. 2008). While there are signs of consolidation and improvement, the past decade has been turbulent for PA education, as both the demographic context and political preferences have resulted in major reforms in higher education in Estonia that have been not in favour of business and administration education, the category mostly responsible for PA so far. However, the consequent consolidation and partial transformation of PA education to be integrated with social science has also shown some positive gains in terms of a clearer focus for different universities and the overall disciplinary richness of PA.

This chapter gives a brief overview of these developments by outlining Estonia's specificity in developing PA education and its linkages with the civil service, the existing evaluation and accreditation system and the main figures and focuses of existing PA study programmes in Estonian universities. This chapter relies on policy documents, university and governmental webpages and expert interviews carried out in March 2019. There were interviews with five people¹ from four universities, all of them experts that have been or still are key persons in developing PA education in Estonia.

2.1 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS A DISCIPLINE IN ESTONIA

As Estonia is a very small country (1.3 million inhabitants) with a rather limited tradition of educating public officials, public administration and political science education in general has had limited scope and is not completely separate. This tendency was strengthened even more after the introduction of the Bologna 3+2 system and some other structural choices. This meant, especially in early years after re-independence, that most of the universities were dependent on foreign partners and/or collaborative projects to be able to cover that academic supply. Furthermore, for a long time there were no clear political decisions about the basic orientation and model of public administration organisation and public service (career vs. position system) (Kalev et al. 2008), and in practice, different factions in the bureaucracy followed their own definition of public administration development strategy. As of today, a very open position-based public service has been developed (Randma-Liiv et al. *forthcoming*).

In terms of PA teaching, recent decades have seen dramatic consolidation and/or closing down PA teaching, leaving Estonia with only one university, namely Tallinn University of Technology (hereinafter TUT), offering classical PA training across all three academic levels (see Appendix and Table 1). Tallinn University (hereinafter TLU), which for a long time was the second-largest university teaching PA, has merged its PA programmes with other curricula, resulting in PA modules taught in several curricula that cover a wider spectrum of political theory across all three academic levels (see Appendix), but not a single curriculum that has an explicit and classical PA focus. Still, as will be seen in 2.2, we consider some of the curricula in TLU still PA curricula as they have many courses devoted to PA. In Tartu University (hereinafter TU), there is only one optional PA course that is present in the curricula, and most of the teaching is explicitly oriented towards political science and international relations, except for a single English-language master's-level curriculum that has a European Union

¹ Arno Almann, Rector and Professor, Estonian Business School; Tiina Randma-Liiv, Professor of Public Management and Policy, Tallinn University of Technology; Georg Sootla – Professor of Public Policy, Tallinn University; Anu Toots, Professor of Social Policy, Tallinn University; Kristiina Tõnisson, Head of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, Tartu University.

focus (see Appendix). The more detailed disciplinary focus of these curricula will be elaborated further in section 2.2, but before that, a slight contextualisation of these changes has been given.

In short, there are four major distinguishable contextual aspects that have influenced recent developments at Estonian institutions of higher education in general and PA education and training in particular: 1) demographic decline; 2) policy priorities for favouring technical education; 3) the reform of tuition-free higher education in 2012; and 4) a disciplinary shift in the approach to PA.

First, there is a decline in the generation potentially going to university. Over the last few academic years, admission to higher education study programmes has fallen, primarily at the first level of higher education. When comparing the number of students in higher educational institutions 2007/2008 vs. 2018/2019, there is a decrease of approximately 30 per cent (68 168 in 07/08 vs. 45 815 in 18/19) (see Figure 1). This has caused many universities to adjust their organisational units.

Second, in addition to the demographic changes in recent decades, social sciences and humanities have been in a somewhat difficult position in terms of public funding, as the priorities of the higher educational system are shifted to technology and the sciences. This shift is justified by Estonian higher education strategy 2006-2015, which urged universities, among other things, to clarify the profiles of higher education institutions, to pay more attention to career services and guidance, and to better inform young people about professional prospects. As the teaching of public administration has not been a priority for the ministry, but demand has been high, the majority of study places were not publicly financed (see Figure 1, category ÄRI). According to the study programme group classification, PA teaching has generally been classified under the Business and Administration group. While somewhat contradictory in disciplinary terms (see below), this has resulted in strong business connotations for PA education in the Estonian public discourse and inadequate support for public administration education (Kalev et al. 2008). Thus, while this group of studies has been most popular, the political demand to diminish the share of students educated in this group has been high. This trend has been backed by somewhat stigmatising rhetoric in media discouraging the choice of social sciences in general and PA in particular as a bad choice in terms future career. However, this is not supported by statistics. Still, this policy shift is backed by OSKA (<https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/>) reports, which are salient and have strong support from employers and vocational education representatives.

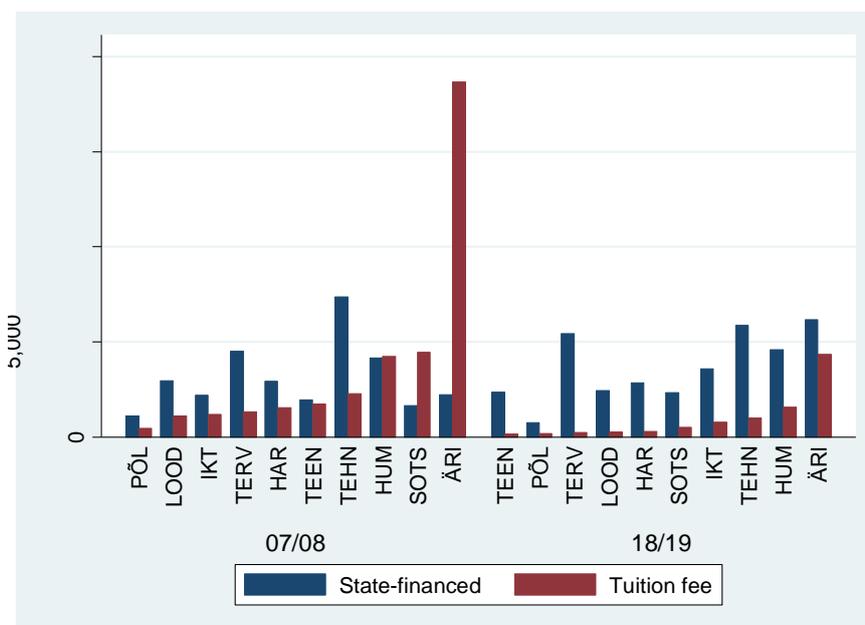


Figure 1: Number of students in higher educational institutions in Estonia across study programme groups

Source: EHIS (<http://www.ehis.ee/>)

Notes: Study PÕL- Agriculture, forestry, fishery; LOOD – Physical sciences; IKT – Informatics and information technology; TERV – Healthcare; HAR - Teacher training and educational science; TEEN – Services; TEHN – Engineering, manufacturing and technology; HUM - Humanities; SOTS – Social sciences; ÄRI – Business and administration

Third, all students who have fully satisfied the requirements of their curricula and meet the full-time study criteria are able to study for free in Estonian-language curricula as of the 2013/2014 academic year. This was a huge change for students and for the financing of higher education in general. Until 2012, there was a dual-track tuition system in Estonia. Students scoring above a certain cut-off point in entrance examinations were admitted to state-funded student places at public higher education institutions. In general, the Ministry of Education and Research set the number of state-funded student places at higher education institutions according to the predicted needs of the labour market. Students that were admitted beyond this quota had to pay tuition. In general, only about 50% of study places were state-funded (see Figure 1). This change meant that the pressure from government to consolidate study programmes became even stronger, resulting in many reforms in universities. As most of them caused tensions between academic staff, the most severe and relevant regarding this report resulted in the collective transfer of political scientists from TU to TUT between 2007 and 2009, where they received full autonomy in terms of both training and research to build a renewed institution focusing on PA. In hindsight, this could indicate the trigger that ended PA education at TU and gave new energy and quality for PA teaching in TUT.

These turbulent times were concomitant with some of the disciplinary discrepancies between the administrative understanding of the essence of PA teaching and the approach of university scholars. According to many experts interviewed, PA teaching and research has had a strong processual focus at some universities emphasising the importance to re-connect the analysis of public policy and politics, making its classification under the business and administration study programme group rather artificial and misleading in some cases. This was one of the incentives for changes in TLU's PA teaching that resulted in consolidated curricula and changes in the overarching category from business and administration to social sciences. This also means that, as of today, all three universities that have more or less continued teaching in PA have quite distinguishable profiles for PA and/or political science teaching (see sections 2.2 and 4).

TUT preserved the status of PA curricula as part of the Business and administration curriculum group (see also Appendix). Furthermore, the renewed core that shifted from TU to TUT strengthened the links between PA and economics, technology and innovation, and has become established as a leader in classical PA teaching and research. This is the only Estonian university that is a member of EMPA (The European Masters in Public Administration), which requires EAPAA (The European Association for Public Administration Accreditation) accreditation (see also section 3) and are high-quality partners in their field at both the international and local levels. They have managed to preserve Estonian-language teaching across all three levels, to which two international English master programmes have been added. And last but not least, Vasilis Kostakis, Senior Researcher at the TUT Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance, received the prestigious European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant in 2018.

2.2 PA EDUCATION AND ITS SPECIFICS

The abovementioned changes in context have caused quite a dramatic consolidation of PA programmes. Thus, as of 2018/2019 there is only one university, TUT, that explicitly has PA curricula across all three levels of higher education, as compared to nine in 2008/2009. The former focus on local governments and social philosophy in their approach to PA teaching and research were replaced by classical PA, technology management and e-governance (see Appendix). Two English-speaking curricula have additionally been developed - Public Sector Innovation and e-governance (MSc) PIONEER and Technology Governance and Digital Transformation (MA), and both enjoy popularity on the international and domestic levels and are valuable research and training partners

for practitioners and government in Estonia. Key persons responsible for PA education in 2018/2019 in TUT are Tiia Randmaa-Liiv, Wolfgang Drechler, Ringa Raudla, Erki Karo and Robert Krimmer.

At the same, at TLU the curriculum that earlier had an explicit PA focus – the MA-level PA – has been merged with the Government and Administration curriculum and has been moved to the social science studies programme group. This curriculum still has a strong PA module but relies less on linear, rationalists' ideals of policy-making in their approach to PA. However, interdisciplinarity has been retained and the curriculum still combines courses of political science, management, economics and welfare policies. The only curriculum in TLU that has a PA module and has remained under the Business and administration study group category is the bachelor-level Business and Public Administration curriculum. This has for a long time been one of the most popular curricula at TLU, and it is especially designed for more experienced students studying at a distance. However, the recent policy developments described above have forced restrictions on admission to this curriculum, and the study language has been planned to be changed from Estonian to English in the nearest future. According to experts, the approach to PA that emphasises complexities, the ideational turn, and the importance of coordination of relations in governing instead of linear policy-making has not always been easily welcomed by practitioners, and co-operation in research so far has mainly remained at a regional level. Still, there are some good examples from central level in education policy and in reforming the system of municipalities. Key persons responsible for PA teaching in TLU in 2018/2019 are Georg Sootla, Peeter Selg, Leif Kalev, Anu Toots, Kersten Kattai and Triin Lauri.

At TU as of 2018/2019, the PA module is almost non-existent in curricula, as every programme has adopted the explicit focus of political science. There are also new English-language curricula, namely Democracy and governance and European studies. The former has slight touch of PA as well, but the latter is more oriented towards international relations orientation. Still, the academic staff of TU are still valued partners supported by their institute's applied research centre. However, their research focuses more on politics and e-voting than PA explicitly. Furthermore, as opposed to TLU, for instance, where public policy and welfare regimes are well covered by these political science curricula focused in current report, at TU welfare policies have been merged with sociology and moved away from the political science department, while the curriculum combines information society and wellbeing.

In terms of the future, it seems that today's situation reflects present capacity quite accurately, and any major changes in PA teaching in the coming years are not probable. First, recent decades have been rather turbulent in terms of both state-level and university-level reforms, thus the renewed system needs some time to prove its value. Second, the state-level policy to prefer the development of applied education and/or technology and natural science is still prevalent. Third, today's situation quite well reflects the profile of key professors for each university and the areas of responsibility in universities. In other words, as universities were forced to take more explicit profiles, they have responded by designing their curricula accordingly, giving us PA education in TUT with a technological and managerial focus, PA education in TLU with a focus on governance and public policy analysis, and TU with a focus on international relations and democracy studies. The classical PA module is almost entirely missing from the latter.

2.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRANCE TO CIVIL SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The Estonian government has developed a very open position-based public service system where the responsibility for all the main components of the public service such as recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, and pay are in the hands of individual organisations, and where the level of politicisation level is among the lowest for post-communist countries (Randmaa-Liiv et al. *forthcoming*). Furthermore, there is no requirement to sit an

examination in order to acquire the status of public servant. The short overview of the development phases and the main qualitative aspects of this system are outlined below.

The first Public Service Act was prepared without any major conceptual discussions either in broader society or political circles (ibid). According to this piece of legislation, every individual employed by a central or a local government agency automatically received the status of a public servant, without taking any examination or assessment. The public service system entailed an open, position-based civil service with a few elements drawn from a career system (e.g. seniority pay, civil service pensions). Public servants were mostly recruited on a permanent basis and fixed-term contracts were used for temporary staff and for a limited number of senior civil servants. Despite a few deficiencies compared to the EU standards, it can be concluded that Estonia was one of the few post-communist countries where EU accession did not influence the public service institution, because the existing legislation – and its actual implementation – was already sufficiently in line with those standards (Meyer-Sahling, 2011).

Still, progress in public service reforms stopped due to the lack of an underlying consensus on the direction of reform (Randma-Liiv and Drechler 2017) and the long postponement of the public service reform causing the situation, where the legal basis and actual practices of public service policy were occasionally seen as two different worlds (Meyer-Sahling, 2011). A significant driver behind the public service reform was the motive of cost efficiency, which remained acute even during the years of the economic boom in the early 2000s, being further accelerated during the fiscal crisis in 2008-2012 and boosting several initiatives that were aimed at cost-saving (Randmaa-Liiv et al. *forthcoming*).

A new Public Service Act was adopted by the Estonian parliament in 2012. The reform further endorsed the open and segmented nature of Estonian public administration and aimed to decrease the number of public servants and abolish 'disparities' that were perceived between the public service and private sector employment (Ibid.). It restricted the former narrow, institution-based definition of the public service even more and re-oriented the system towards differentiating officials who were engaged in executing public power and employees that did not have this responsibility. The lack of a central human resource strategy that was acknowledged earlier (Järvalt and Randma-Liiv 2010) was preserved, and each ministry and executive agency remained responsible for the recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and pay of its own officials (with the exception of around 100 top officials).

In terms of rewards, competencies and requirements, the regulation does not guarantee career advancement and 'automatic' promotion cannot be expected when entering the public service. Estonia's public service is very small, having actual career ladders with only 2-4 levels. Accordingly, many people may reach the peak of their careers very quickly and then encounter a career plateau. Because the Estonian public service is open and position-based at all hierarchical levels, internal and external candidates have equal opportunities when vacancies are advertised. Mobility between the public and private sectors is encouraged. Formal requirements for education, knowledge and skills have been kept rather low in order to allow for a large range of candidates with different experiences to enter the public service. Still, specific job descriptions and vacancy announcements usually provide for higher and more specific requirements (Randma-Liiv et al. *forthcoming*).

The central training budget is remarkably dependent on EU funds, and the importance of external support has gradually increased. Top civil servants have a generous development programme with the main emphasis on managerial training (Randma-Liiv et al. 2015). Although top executives have been treated as a special group for training and development purposes since 2004, with a rather complex system evolving incrementally, including a competency model and a voluntary development programme under the leadership of the Government Office, it existed without any statutory basis until 2012 (Ibid.).

To conclude, the prevailing neo-liberal ideology of consecutive governments has legitimised the use of private-sector tools and enable the consideration of the state as a ‘corporation’ in the development of public service and in public-sector human resource management. Although such an approach has its downsides, it values professionalism, efficiency and a results-oriented approach in public service, thereby contributing to the development of meritocratic practices and eliminating the post-communist legacy of patronage. Still, public servants lost many of their distinct rewards through the recent reform. The lower the job security, the more it should be compensated by other rewards (such as pay) in order to retain an optimal balance of public service bargain. Furthermore, insufficient rewards may contribute to a vicious circle of temporary public servants, including problems with recruiting new officials and a further increase in their turnover, ultimately leading to a ‘temporary state.’ As problematized by Randmaa-Liiv et al (*forthcoming*), limited qualification requirements provided by the law, the absence of written entrance exams and the opportunity for single organisations to choose appropriate selection methods and make final personnel decisions indicate very high managerial discretion in the recruitment and selection process. This may not only lead to nepotism and even politicisation, but the highly decentralised selection process facilitates the development of narrow ‘job-specific’ competences rather than public service generalists, thus further cementing the position-based approach rather than developing collaboration-oriented competences. Moreover, the decentralised management within the public service cements further fragmentation and rivalry between public sector organisations, thus moving away from the idea of a whole-of-government approach. Consequently, the approach to public service as an institution carrying certain values and ensuring democratic governance has been in the shadow. This makes the entire institution of public service vulnerable and dependent on the political parties in power.

As for co-operation between universities and practitioners, this aptitude to temporality is challenging: since institutional memory is often short and co-operation agreements are often not particularly well institutionalised, the rebuilding of co-operation networks is an ongoing task for academia. Tiia Randmaa-Liiv, one of the most prominent expert on PA in Estonia, notes: “Estonia has never had such high-quality PA teaching and research as it has now, but its results are still quite underused by our government”.

SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>3.1 Is PA education in your country specific for some reasons? If yes, why?</p>	<p>PA education was one of the most popular curricula in Estonia for quite some time. However, the situation has changed and today there are only two universities that teach PA (in case we exclude TU, which has, as shown above, very limited focus on PA). There are four factors influencing recent developments in higher education institutions in Estonia in general and PA education and training in particular: 1) demographic decline; 2) policy priorities favouring technical education; 3) the tuition-free higher education reform in 2012, which caused budgetary tensions forcing universities to consolidate their curricula; and 4) disciplinary shift in approaches to PA, resulting in changes in some former PA curricula, that have been revised to cover a wider spectrum of policy cycles and moved to social science programme groups instead of business administration, the group where PA curricula have traditionally belonged.</p>
<p>3.2 Is PA a well-established own</p>	<p>In some universities, such as TUT, yes. In others, like TLU and TU, no. At TLU especially, the disciplinary understanding of PA has</p>

(inter-) discipline?	sometimes been hard to embed with the administrative logic that places PA under the business and administration group, as at TLU the processual, actor-centred approach to public policy analysis has been prevalent. Therefore, the state-level policy that has urged universities to adopt profiles has resulted in three rather distinguishable approaches to the teaching of political science out of which only TUT follows the classical approach to PA.
3.3 Is any formal exam required for entrance to civil service? If yes, what are the requirements?	No, Estonia has a very open position-based public service system, where the responsibility for all the main components of the public service is in the hands of individual organisations, and where politicisation is among the lowest for post-communist countries.

3. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

3.1 EXISTING EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

The quality assurance system of Estonia, which is based on an accreditation scheme, has undergone major changes recently, during which “the state returned to the quality assurance system” (Toots and Kalev 2016). This means that the relatively loose networks of the early Bologna years that allowed a significant degree of autonomy for higher education institutions were replaced by new governance structures with executive agencies in the middle. The agency responsible for implementing quality assurance policy in the higher education system is the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA).

There are two types of evaluation: **institutional accreditation** and **quality assessment of a study programme group**. Institutional accreditation involves an external evaluation that assesses the conformity of the institution’s management, work procedures, study and research activities and study and research environment with legislation and the goals and development plan of the institution. Quality assessment of a study programme group involves external evaluation that assesses the conformity of study programmes and the studies and developmental activities based on those programmes with legislation, national and international standards, and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations for improvements in the quality of studies.

Quality assessment takes place once every seven years, unless EKKA has established a term of up to three years based on the results of the quality assessment. In terms of outcomes of quality assurance policy, institutions or programmes may achieve accredited status, indicating that they meet the set requirements; they may receive conditional accreditation, meaning that there are major shortcomings that must be addressed within three years; or they may be rejected, receiving a ‘not accredited’ decision, which means that the problems found jeopardise the quality of graduates’ knowledge and skills. Since 2010, the quality of study programme groups has been assessed, rather than the former assessment of study programmes. As of 1 January 2012, higher education programmes may be provided only if the quality of the respective study programme group has been assessed and the Government of the Republic has granted a licence to provide instruction in the respective group.

3.2 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

The last quality assessment of the business administration study programme group took place in spring 2016. This involved all PA curricula at TUT whose study language is Estonian (see Appendix), and the Public and Business Management (bachelor) and Public Administration (master) programmes at TLU. All remaining curricula that have some PA modules at TLU and TU were accredited under the social science study programme group during the previous year, in 2015. All received accredited status.

The programme-specific feedback from 2016 in TUT emphasised the high research quality and high share of internationalisation of the assessed PA programmes. One of the concerns was the high dropout rate, which unfortunately is quite an issue in all programmes in Estonia, mainly explained by the high share of students who also work full-time. The programme-specific feedback from 2016 at TLU emphasised TLU's distinctive profile compared to other universities, which is well acknowledged among students and employers. Furthermore, TLU has increased the compulsory interdisciplinary part of all curricula by implementing LIFE - Learning in Interdisciplinary Focused Environment – that was positively acknowledged in the assessment evaluation. LIFE is a study course focused on project- and problem-based learning, where students from different study areas collaborate with academics and partners from outside the university to carry out projects with interdisciplinary problems. Still, the high share of student dropouts, the limited number of graduates, and the moderate share of internationalisation and modest international mobility of students were mentioned as areas for improvement.

3.3 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The internal quality plans are university-dependent and there are no standardised regulations. However, in most cases, the university development plan defines the priorities in the activity of the university. Development prerequisites are added for completion of the objectives, which is assessed using the key indicators fixed in the development plan that plan the unit development (development plans) and assessment (activity reports). The university administrative units, and by recommendation, academic and support units as well, compile their action plans for each financial year to achieve the objectives of the university development plan. The compilation of action plans is also often based on the feedback and analyses of the previous period (e.g. student feedback, employer feedback, employee satisfaction study and audits). Each study programme has a programme director or curator, who is responsible for the quality of the given programme and for submitting yearly report on curriculum progress. However, as the management structures of universities are complex, the lines of responsibility and autonomy to anticipate changes in programmes is rather limited.

3.4 ANTICIPATED CHANGES

In early 1990s, after re-independence, Estonia took a neoliberal approach to higher education policy, which resulted in remarkable autonomy of universities and competition. By 2001, there were 22 public and 27 private HE institutions in a country with 1.4 million inhabitants, varying greatly in number of students, resources and quality (Tõnisson 2011). This variety made the higher education policy community fragmented and laissez-faire in terms of quality assurance (Toots and Kalev 2016).

The starting of stricter quality assurance policy in higher education dates back to 1997, when HEQAC (Higher Education Quality Assessment Council) took the lead in implementing the policy. The accreditation process of that time was based on qualitative self-evaluation reports and peer reviews by foreign experts. However, standards were rather loose and concern remained regarding the problem of the quality problem of some universities and their degrees (Toots and Kalev 2016). The amended University Act (2003) made rules for accreditation stricter and also reconfigured the

decision-making powers of HEQAC and the Ministry. In 2004, Estonia joined the EU and this coincided with two landmark events in European quality assurance policy. In 2004, the European Network (later Association) for quality Assurance in Higher Education was established, and in 2005 the European Qualification Framework and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance were adopted. Estonian policymakers responded to this with a second wave of higher education reform, with the strong standardisation agenda through the development of national education databases (Toots and Kalev 2016). The National Higher Education Information System (EHIS) was launched in 2004, and the National Research Information System (ETIS) followed in 2006. Within a few years, both databases gained high importance in national education policy, especially with regards to quality assurance. In 2009, the former units that implemented quality assurance policy in higher education were reorganised into the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA). The new system is based on routine inspections stipulated by law and administered by the renewed government agency, EKKA. Furthermore, the new system is stricter - teaching is legal only if the national government has granted the right. Thus, the former problem of numerous small private universities has been solved by implementing a stringent quality assurance policy. The latter can be understood as a case of 'governing by standards,' which allows the provision of services by all those that meet minimum quality standards (Toots and Kalev 2016). From 2012 onwards, sanctions were replaced by recommendations to improve teaching and organisational development, which is in line with contemporary European guidelines emphasising self-evaluation. Under these, 'the EU helps to conduct reforms,' 'gives an opportunity to get something done' and 'gives us more confidence to go for policy change.' This may be regarded as evidence of strengthening executive actors' capacity using the EU in domestic agenda setting and policy legitimisation (Ibid.). Estonia has been very enthusiastic in transferring European initiatives to national higher education policy and comparing, and naming and shaming, fit well in Estonian policy traditions.

3.5 SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>3.1 What is the general governance structure with regard to external quality assurance of higher education institutions? Is it the same or is it different for PA programmes?</p>	<p>There are two types of evaluations: institutional accreditation and quality assessment for a study programme group. Institutional accreditation is an external evaluation that assesses the conformity of the institution's management, work procedure, study and research activities and study and research environment with legislation and the institution's goals and development plan. Quality assessment of a study programme group is an external evaluation that assesses the conformity of study programmes and the studies and developmental activities based on those programmes with legislation, state and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies. The quality assurance of PA programmes is the same as for other programmes.</p>
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<p>3.2 Which are the main providers of programme accreditation? Is there a national body (regulator etc), e.g. as an agency under control of the Ministry of Education, responsible for the regulation of accreditation? What is the status of relevant institutions (government authorities, semi-autonomous or independent organizations)?</p>	<p>The agency responsible for implementing quality assurance policy in higher education system is the Estonian Quality Agency of Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA), following the 2009 reorganisation of units that previously implemented quality assurance policy in higher education. The new system is based on routine inspections stipulated by law and administered by EKKA. Furthermore, the new system is stricter - teaching is legal only if the national government has granted the right. From 2012 onwards, sanctions were replaced by recommendations to improve teaching and organisational development, which is in line with contemporary European guidelines emphasising self-evaluation.</p>
<p>3.3 What are the rules and requirements for accreditation (e.g. are all programmes subject of accreditation or only new programmes? Are only state or public universities to be evaluated? etc)?</p>	<p>Quality assessment takes place once every seven years, unless EKKA has established a term of up to three years based on the results of quality assessment. In terms of outcomes of quality assurance policy, institutions or programmes may achieve accredited status, indicating that they meet the set requirements; they may receive conditional accreditation, meaning that there are major shortcomings that must be addressed within three years; or they may be rejected, receiving a 'not accredited' decision, meaning that the problems found jeopardise the quality of graduates' knowledge and skills. All programmes are evaluated at both public and private universities.</p>
<p>3.4 Who is allowed to do programme accreditation? Only an official government agency, (like e.g. in Austria) or other (ENQA- or EQAR-) recognized institutions?</p>	<p>The Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) is the national quality assurance agency responsible for evaluations of higher and vocational education in Estonia. EKKA's mission is to promote quality in the field of education and thereby increase the competitiveness of Estonian society.</p> <p>EKKA is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE); Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and is included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).</p>

<p>3.5 Who are the evaluators (bureaucrats and/or academic peers, are foreign academic peers involved)?</p>	<p>The assessment committee comprises four to six members, including at least one member from outside higher education institutions, one member from outside Estonia and one student. The experts must have previous experience in assessing institutions of higher education and at least one must also have experience managing such an institution. Committee membership is approved with the institution of higher education that is to be assessed. All members of the committee undergo EKKK training before the assessment visit to the institution of higher education.</p>
<p>3.6 Which methods of accreditation are primarily applied in the respective country?</p>	<p>There are two types of evaluations: institutional accreditation and quality assessment of a study program group.</p>
<p>3.7 Who takes the decision to accredit a programme? (is it the institution doing the evaluation or a superior government body?)</p>	<p>Approval of the institutional accreditation of an institution of higher education for three or seven years (or a decision not to accredit the institution) is issued by EKKK's assessment council based on the institution's self-analysis report, assessments by the assessment committee and comments from the institution.</p> <p>For a quality assessment of a study programme group, the result of quality assessment is a decision of the EKKK assessment council which sets out whether the next assessment will take place in seven years or in a shorter time, and specific suggestions for the educational institution to improve the quality of its studies.</p>

4. EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

4.1 DATA, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

In Estonia, study programme evaluations are conducted in subdivisions of study programmes (based on ISCED97 levels), which are established in annexes to the standard of higher education and which contains features of fields of study and curriculum groups. Historically, PA curricula have belonged to the Business and Administration study group. However, this has changed, and there are both political and disciplinary reasons behind these changes (see section 2.1). Therefore, it is not always easy to distinguish between PA curricula and other curricula teaching political science.

For this report, general EAPAA guidelines and the following specific criteria were followed:

- All political science-oriented curricula belonging to the Business and Administration study group that explicitly focus on preparing students for analysis and employment in the academic sector are considered to be PA curricula.

- All political science curricula that belong to the social science study group but explicitly state in their study objectives that PA in the broadest sense of the word is the major subject are considered to be PA curricula.

See Appendix for a more detailed overview on the selection results (the curricula where the columns of the name of programme and the category and group of curriculum are in **Bold** are considered PA programmes).

While this criteria included TUT and TLU and excluded TU, it should be mentioned that TUT has a much more explicit classical PA focus compared to TLU. The latter teaches the whole spectrum of political science, and in approaching PA, they have taken a public policy analysis and governance-oriented approach. TU also has some governance focus in their curricula, but have clearly focused on politics and international relations, this being the main reason for their exclusion as PA curricula.

4.2 EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

Table 1 – Existing PA study programmes

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	PhD.	MBA	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
Name 1						
Tallinn University of Technology	1	1	1		2	5
Tallinn University	1	1	1			3
Private HEIs						
Foreign universities / colleges						
Name 1						
Other types you would like to distinguish						
Name 1						
TOTAL						

Source: Compiled by Triin Lauri based on University websites (see Appendix)

Table 1 maps the today's situation of existing PA programmes in Estonia. As was described in section 2, last decades have been rather turbulent for Estonian higher educational sector. Among other things it has meant that universities were forced to take more explicit profiles. Regarding PA it means that we have PA education in TUT with a technological and managerial focus, PA education in TLU with a focus on governance and public policy analysis, and TU with none of the curricula with PA

focus according to the criteria described above. Compared to the period decade ago (see Kalev et al. 2008) it shows a dramatic decrease. At the same time it illustrates the consolidation and transformation of PA education to be integrated with social science and it might be seen to bear also some positive gains in terms of a clearer focus for different universities and the overall disciplinary richness of PA aligned with the academic profiles of key professors active in this field.

4.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

University websites are very informative and information for all the curricula analysed in this report is well structured and thorough (see Appendix for specific links) linking to official databases with very detailed information about subjects, academic staff, curriculum profiles and goals etc.

4.4 SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>4.1 How many relevant PA study programmes have you identified and what is their structure?</p>	<p>Altogether, there are 8 study programmes in Estonia identified as PA programmes in this study. However, only 3 of them – 1 BA, 1 MA and 1 PhD programme at TUT – are classical PA programmes. The remaining 5 have either a PA module or are integrated programmes where a wider political spectrum cycle is covered, including PA.</p> <p>The standard structure is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General courses, including methods - Core course, including compulsory and optional courses - Electives, i.e. students are free to choose whichever course - Thesis. <p>TLU’s general courses also include English (based on placement tests) and the interdisciplinary LIFE project (see 2.2).</p>
<p>4.2 What information are available on the study programmes on their web pages?</p>	<p>Websites have detailed information in for all programmes analysed, including information about graduate profiles and programme learning outcomes, curriculum structure, staff etc. Also, for all programmes analysed, it is possible to go to the database to check specific courses and their requirements.</p>

As shown above, there are two universities, TUT and TLU, that offer PA education in Estonia. However, only TUT has an explicit PA focus in its curricula across all three academic levels. At TUT, PA teaching has a strong economic focus, and the faculty are well-known experts on government's role in the economy, in public finance, innovation in the public sector and developments in the public service. Furthermore, TUT is the only Estonian university that is a member of EMPA. At TLU, the explicit focus on PA in those curricula is more blurred compared to TUT while still having PA modules in some programmes. However, scholars at TLU that have had PA focus in research and teaching have relied much less on classical linear-rational models in their approach to the field and differently

from others have included comparative education and welfare policies in their PA programs. Therefore, the recent turn towards the social science study group with their PA programmes is a logical consequence. While TU and its Johann Skytte Institute of Political Science does indeed have a strong focus on political science, PA modules are almost non-existent.

In terms of co-operation between government agencies and universities, the fragmented yet open position-based civil service system has not supported long-term institutional collaboration. Still, in current practice, universities play an important role in public service training and applied research. Besides universities, think tanks also play a crucial role, and constellations of different scholars from various units, both from universities and private-sector think tanks, are often formed to cover a wide spectrum of government needs in public tenders that require PA expertise.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS, POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS, CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

5.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

PA teaching in Estonia has gone through major changes, and what some decades ago was one of the most popular curricula, taught in up to ten different units, now remains to a greater or lesser extent only at three public universities, while classical PA is taught across all three academic levels only at TUT. There are various reasons behind this transformation, including exogenous ones such as demographic change and policy preferences that do not favour PA. However, there are also more substantial reasons indicating some scholars formerly active in PA have followed the paradigmatic change from government to governance and follow a more processual and actors-centred approach to public policy analysis than the classical managerial approach of PA has entailed. Furthermore, as Estonia is a very small country, personal relations and/or the decisions of a few people may change universities' entire developmental status in providing some programmes. This was the case for TUT, which welcomed PA scholars who left TU in the late 2000s due to worsened personal relationships caused by harsh top-down reforms. This also means that as of today, all three universities that have more or less continued teaching PA have rather distinguishable profiles for PA and/or political science teaching. TUT has preserved the status of PA curricula as belonging to the Business and administration curriculum group (see also Appendix). Furthermore, the renewed core staff that moved from TU to TUT have tightened links between PA and economics, technology and innovation, and the unit has established itself as a leader in classical PA teaching and research. TUT is the only Estonian university that is a member of EMPA (The European Masters in Public Administration), which assumes EAPAA (The European Association for Public Administration Accreditation) accreditation (see also section 3), and the staff are high-quality partners in their field at both the international and local levels. At the same time, at TLU the curriculum that earlier had an explicit PA focus, namely the master's-level PA, has been merged with the Government and Administration curriculum and has been moved to the social science study programme group and has strong linkages with the curriculum of politics. This curriculum still has a strong PA module, but it relies more on a processual approach to PA and has a focus on public policy analysis and governance, often with social constructivism groundings. Other political studies programmes at TLU cover a broader spectrum of political science. At TU, the PA component is almost missing from their study programmes.

5.2 POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Since policymaking is inherently messy and complex, while at the same time the importance of evidence-informed policy-making has increased, there is a growing need to improve communication between universities that teach political science and PA and its practitioners. This assumes that policy-making is often the coordination of relations than a work-based plan. This also admits that we need, among other things, facilitative interaction between decision-makers and researchers, and to build the skillset required to engage with research. In today's practice, it is still the economic, often simplistic and linear understanding of the policy-making process that seem to prevail in governmental agencies and the understanding of good governance has a strong "lean state" ethos. These tendencies may pose a threat that the academic understanding of a policy process that admits the complexities and wickedness of contemporary governance and practical demand for concrete solutions will grow further apart. To avoid this, it would be necessary to look further afield than just at cost-efficiency calculations and admit that values should often be at the centre of political analysis, as policy is the mechanism for giving citizens in a democracy the societal outcomes they seek, meaning that politics is almost inherently part of it. The teaching practices of PA that rope in

practitioners and/or facilitate the co-operation between universities and practitioners would be a good platform for that.

5.3 CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

The challenge lies in how to create an academic career model that will attract the best young scientists to work at the university in an increasingly competitive situation. The building of a new academic career model has been a priority in recent years and the process is still ongoing. Another concern is the faculty's willingness and capability to engage in communication about their research results. While scientists are well prepared for collegial communications, the communication and co-operation link between scientists and practitioners or policy-makers is much more vague and fragile. As showed in 2.3, the civil service model might raise the risk of high turnover in public careers, challenging the stable co-operation between universities and public sector organisations. Still, the transformed state and governance model and multi-level governance entail ever-increasing demands for highly skilled public-sector employers and citizens that understand the main logic of contemporary governance and the state's role in that. This means that an active and informed citizen should have a certain level of education in political science in general and PA in particular.

And finally, regarding the potential limitations of this report, as the author is amongst the staff part of the faculty of at TLU, the information provided might have some imbalances, as since the data of on TLU was the most easily accessible by for the author.

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