

research
estonia

Research Funding in Estonia

About this booklet

Estonia has a great infrastructure and well-developed facilities for top-notch research. Local researchers are collaborative, innovative and active international partners working towards a knowledge-based society. Estonia is the perfect place for independent minds to do research.

An innovative environment combined with great value for money have made Estonia a desirable destination for both students and researchers. This booklet includes an overview of the research system and funding in Estonia, information about grants and funding programmes, and useful links to give a deeper insight into the research system and funding in Estonia.

The research system in Estonia

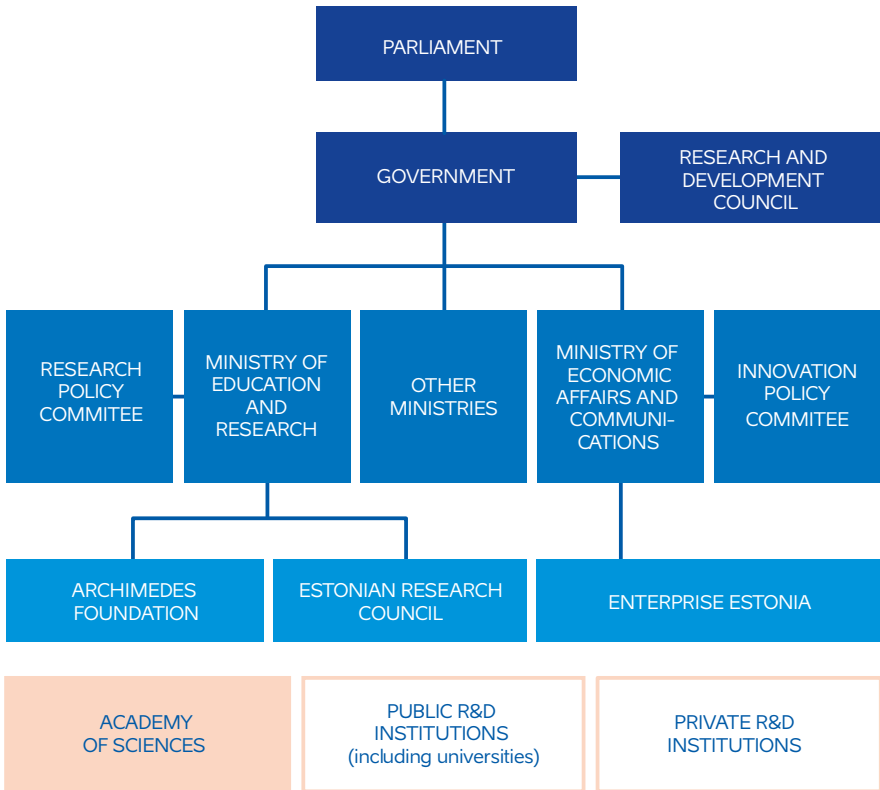


Figure 1.
The research and development organisation structure in Estonia.

Source: Estonian Research Council.

The legal basis for the organisation and functioning of the Estonian research system is the Organisation of Research and Development Act. The parliament of Estonia approves the overall research strategy based on this act. Once a year it also reflects on the prime minister's report on the execution of the strategy, as well as the state budget for research. The government draws up the actual research policy, prepares sectoral development plans and coordinates cooperation between the ministries. The Research and Development Council provides technical advice to the government as needed.¹

Ministries prepare and implement sectoral policies. The Research Policy Committee is an advisory body to the Ministry of Education and Research. The advisory body to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is the Innovation Policy Committee. State foundations, the Estonian Research Council and the Archimedes Foundation, are the principal institutions that organise research within the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. Enterprise Estonia, which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, is the principal institution that funds innovation. Ministries also fund national R&D programmes within their area of responsibility.

Research and development work is carried out by public sector research institutions (primarily universities) and private sector research institutions. The Estonian Academy of Sciences is an independent association of top-level scientists and scholars, with commitment and responsibility to advance scientific research and represent science nationally and internationally.²

1 Estonian Research 2016, http://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TA_teaduskogumik_ENG_veeb.pdf, p 7, accessed 23 May 2019

2 Estonian Research 2019, https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Estonian_Research_2019_veeb.pdf, p 6, accessed 24 May 2019

Research funding in Estonia

Research in Estonia is mainly financed by government and businesses, which both account for approximately 40% of research funding. The rest comes from foreign funds (mainly EU framework programmes).

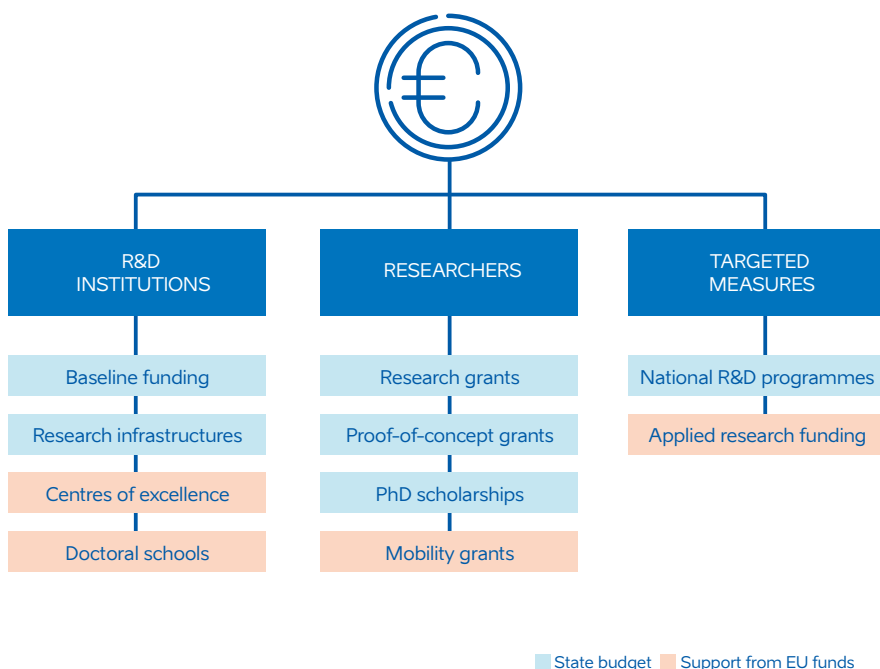


Figure 2.

Research funding measures from Estonian ministries and European Union programmes. The relevant ministries can give information about national R&D programmes. Other measures are introduced in this booklet.

Baseline funding

Baseline funding means financing of R&D institutions for the purpose of attaining their strategic development objectives, including co-financing national and foreign projects and opening up new research routes, and investing in infrastructure. Baseline funding is provided from the state budget via the Ministry of Education and Research to R&D institutions who have been evaluated positively. Baseline funding maintains financial stability and gives R&D institutions a better chance to focus on their core activities.³

More information:

<https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence>

³ <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence>, accessed 27 May 2019



Research infrastructures

The Ministry of Education and Research provides support for R&D institutions to cover their infrastructure costs.⁴ Investments are planned using a long-term planning tool – the national research infrastructure roadmap, which acts as input for investment decisions.⁵ A research infrastructure is comprised of facilities, equipment, collections, archives and structured information. The infrastructures that are included in the roadmap can be physical objects, service providers or memberships in international organisations.⁴ Estonia is also a member of several international research infrastructures.⁶

More information:

<https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/infrastructure-funding>

4 <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/financing-infrastructure>, accessed 27 May 2019

5 <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/infrastructure-funding/estonian-research-infrastructures-roadmap/>, accessed 27 May 2019

6 <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/infrastructure-funding/estonias-participation-in-international-research-infrastructures/>, accessed 27 May 2019



The Estonian Genome Center is a research infrastructure of national importance, receiving 1.82 million euros in the period 2016–2022.⁷

Photo by Renee Altrov.

⁷ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/infrastructure-funding/support-for-research-infrastructures-of-national-importance/>, accessed 10 June 2019



Centres of excellence

A centre of excellence consists of one or more high-level research teams with international reach that have a clear set of common research objectives. The research teams may be from one or several R&D institutions. The aim is to support high-level research and enhance the international impact of Estonian research. Centres of excellence receive support from the EU Regional Development Fund for a financing period of seven years. The funded activities include research and development, acquisition of equipment, mobility of researchers, national and international cooperation and popularisation of research findings.⁸

More information:

<https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence>

⁸ <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence>, accessed 27 May 2019



Ecology of Global Change: Natural and Managed Ecosystems is a centre of excellence focused on environmental and agricultural research and adaptation to climate change. It consists of six research teams from the Estonian University of Life Sciences and the University of Tartu. Funding received for the 2016–2023 period is 4.21 million euros.⁹

Photo by Renee Altrov.

⁹ <http://ecolchange.emu.ee/en/>, accessed 28 May 2019



Doctoral schools

Doctoral schools are launched in partnership between at least three R&D institutions. In the 2014–2020 period, Estonian universities launched 13 doctoral schools. They are project-based and funded from the EU Regional Development Fund. Their general purpose is to enhance the efficiency and quality of doctoral studies and to ensure accordance with the needs of the labour market. Doctoral schools support various events and research projects, and the mobility of PhD students as well as mobility across sectors.¹⁰

More information:

<https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/doctoral-schools>

¹⁰ <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/doctoral-schools>, accessed 28 May 2019



Research grants

Research grants are intended for high-level R&D projects undertaken by individual researchers or research groups working in Estonian R&D institutions.

There are three categories of grants that correspond to different levels of research careers:

- ▶ **A postdoctoral research grant** (up to three years) supports researchers who obtained their doctoral degree from an Estonian R&D institution who are launching their career at a foreign R&D institution.
- ▶ **A start-up research grant** (up to four years) supports researchers who are launching their independent career at an Estonian R&D institution in setting up their own research group and educating doctoral students.
- ▶ **A team grant** (up to five years) supports researchers who are continuing their career at an Estonian R&D institution in leading a strong research group and educating doctoral students.

Research grants are awarded on a competitive basis by the Estonian Research Council from the state budget. Grant applications are evaluated by expert committees and the Evaluation Committee of the Estonian Research Council. Applications for funding are submitted via the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS).¹¹

More information: <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/research-funding/personal-research-funding>

¹¹ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/research-funding/personal-research-funding/>, accessed 28 May 2019



Proof-of-concept grant

A proof-of-concept (PoC) grant (up to one year) is a competency-based research funding instrument for experimental development in order to test and/or create conditions for the commercialisation of research outcomes. The PoC grant is aimed at enhancing technology transfer, applying research outcomes in enterprises and in society, and strengthening the societal and economic impact of research.

PoC funding is organised by the Estonian Research Council and the means for it come from the state budget. Grant applications are evaluated by expert committees and by the Evaluation Committee of the Estonian Research Council. Applications for funding are submitted via the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS).¹²

More information: <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/research-funding/proof-of-concept-grant>

¹² <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/research-funding/proof-of-concept-grant/>, accessed 28 May 2019



Mobilitas Pluss Programme

The objective of the Mobilitas Pluss Programme is to internationalise research, increase mobility and support early career researchers. The programme is supported with funds from the EU Regional Development Fund.

The programme has various mobility support schemes:

- ▷ **Postdoctoral grants** (one to two years) support researchers who obtained their doctoral degree abroad in carrying out their research projects at an Estonian R&D institution.
- ▷ **Returning researcher grants** (one to two years) support Estonian researchers who have worked at foreign R&D institutions and wish to return to continue their research at an Estonian R&D institution.
- ▷ Support for **study visits and training abroad** for researchers working in Estonian R&D institutions.
- ▷ Measures to support **participation in Horizon 2020** for Estonian researchers and Estonian R&D institutions.¹³

More information:

<https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/programmes/mobilitas-pluss>

¹³ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/programmes/mobilitas-pluss/>, accessed 28 May 2019



Kristjan Jaak Scholarships

Kristjan Jaak Scholarships are a governmental programme that awards mobility scholarships to MA/PhD students and young faculty members. Researchers can apply for:

- ▶ Scholarship for **a short study visit abroad** (up to 30 days), which covers conferences, intensive courses, visiting libraries or labs, fieldwork, meeting relevant experts, preparing teaching material or any other study-, research- or teaching-related activity.¹⁴

More information:

<http://haridus.archimedes.ee/en/kristjan-jaak-scholarships>

¹⁴ <http://haridus.archimedes.ee/en/kristjan-jaak-scholarships>, accessed 28 May 2019



Dora Plus Programme

Dora Plus is an Estonian government programme that was launched with the aim of improving Estonia's visibility and attractiveness as a destination for studies and research. The programme will be implemented in 2015-2023 with support from the EU Regional Development Fund. Dora Plus encompasses several actions including:

- ▶ **Study and research-related outgoing mobility:** scholarships for young researchers and MA/PhD students from Estonian higher education institutes for participating in conferences, seminars or courses abroad.¹⁵

More information:

<http://haridus.archimedes.ee/en/dora-plus-programme>

¹⁵ <http://haridus.archimedes.ee/en/dora-plus-programme>, accessed 28 May 2019



PhD students

PhD studies in Estonia

Doctoral students in Estonia are an integral part of research teams. Many doctoral programmes require students to publish three articles in international scientific journals about their research findings.

Doctoral studies at public universities are free of charge and the tuition fee of private institutions can be waived. In 2019, the monthly scholarship for full-time doctoral students is 660 euros. The monthly scholarship also covers the doctoral student's national health insurance. Many additional scholarships are available for international PhD students.

More information: studyinestonia.ee/en/scholarships
and on university websites.



Applied research

To further increase the economic and social impact of science in Estonia, targeted funding measures have been created in support of applied research. These projects are funded from the EU Regional Development Fund through the programmes NUTIKAS and RITA.¹⁶

NUTIKAS

The support aims to increase the research-intensity of the Estonian economy, supporting collaboration between R&D institutions and companies. The funding (between 20 000 euros and 2 million euros) supports companies in commissioning the necessary applied research or product development projects from universities or research institutions in smart specialisation growth areas. These are:

- ▷ Information and communications technology (ICT).
- ▷ Health technologies and services.
- ▷ More effective use of resources.¹⁷

More information:

<https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/applied-research-funding/23917-2>

¹⁶ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/applied-research-funding/>, accessed 11 May 2019

¹⁷ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/applied-research-funding/23917-2/>, accessed 11 May 2019



RITA

The RITA programme aims to increase the state's role in the strategic managing of research. Ministries select the topics for applied research based on their sectoral needs and the research is conducted by Estonian R&D institutions. RITA supports applied research under two activities:

- ▷ Support for **strategic R&D activities** aiming to tackle major interdisciplinary social problems faced by the society that fall under the jurisdiction of several ministries.
- ▷ Support for **knowledge-based policy formulation**, which aims to tackle issues of national importance faced by the state that require speedy intervention.¹⁸

More information:

<https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/applied-research-funding/support-for-sectoral-rd/>

¹⁸ <https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/applied-research-funding/support-for-sectoral-rd/>, accessed 11 May 2019



TalTech and the University of Tartu received 0.94 million euros of funding from the RITA programme to carry out the project “Climate change mitigation with CCS and CCU technologies” in the period 2019–2021. The project will result in a multifaceted overview of the feasibility of investing in a carbon capture infrastructure to help minimise greenhouse gas emission rates from the oil shale industry in Estonia.

Photo by Eesti Energia.

Links

- ▷ Research news and information researchinestonia.eu
- ▷ Research funding etag.ee/en/funding
- ▷ Estonian Ministry of Education and Research hm.ee/en
- ▷ Enterprise Estonia eas.ee/?lang=en
- ▷ Estonian Research Information System etis.ee
- ▷ Information for incoming researchers euraxess.ee
- ▷ Archimedes Foundation archimedes.ee/en
- ▷ Higher education opportunities studyinestonia.ee
- ▷ Find a suitable degree programme estonia.dreamapply.com



facebook.com/www.researchinestonia.eu



twitter.com/researchestonia

research
estonia



Eesti Teadusagentuur
Estonian Research Council



This booklet was made with support from the European Union Regional Development Fund through the Estonian Research Council.