

research
estonia

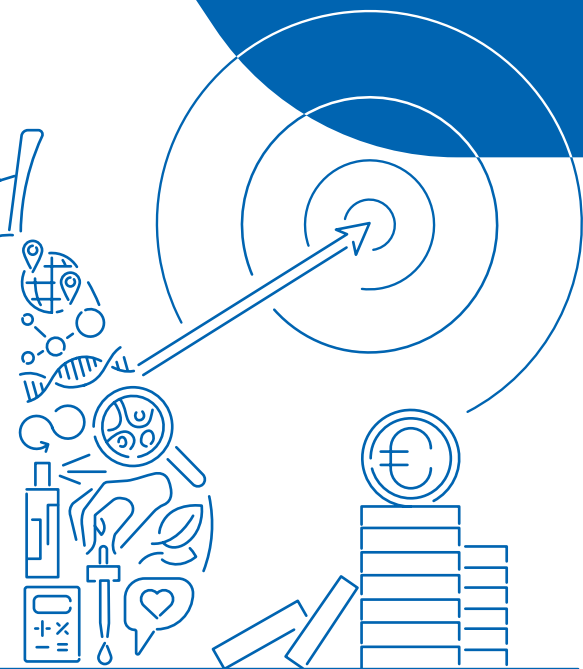
Research Funding in Estonia



About this booklet

Estonia has great infrastructure and well-developed facilities for top-notch research. Local researchers are collaborative, innovative and active international partners working towards 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

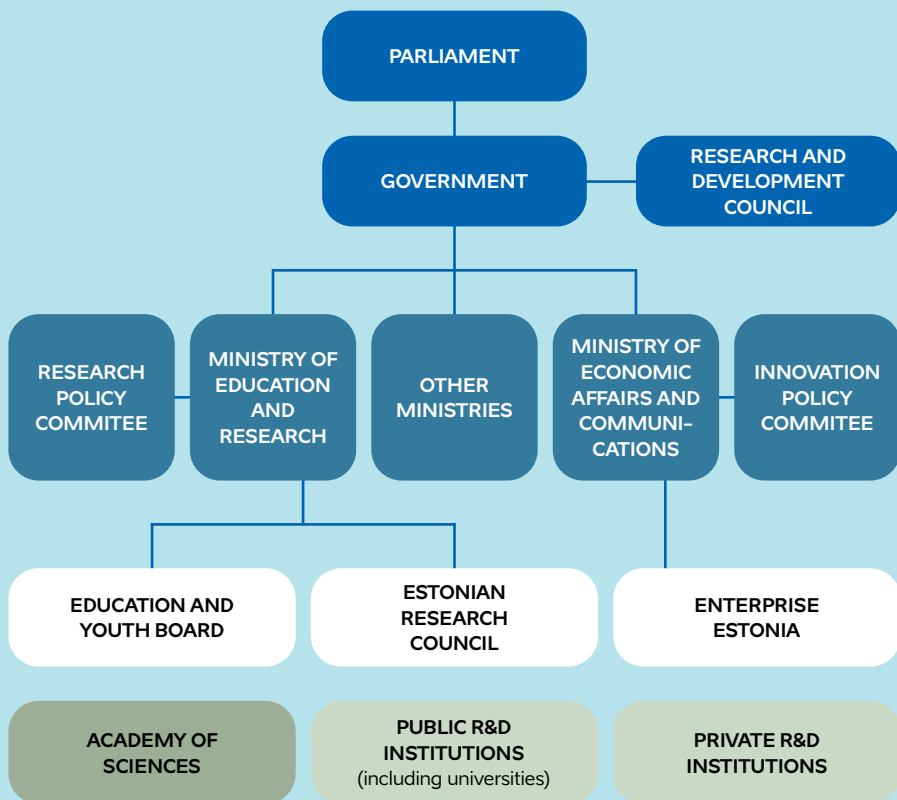


Figure 1. The research and development organisation structure in Estonia.

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 needed¹.

Ministries prepare and implement sectoral policies. The Research Policy Committee is an advisory body of the Ministry of Education and Research. The advisory body of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is the Innovation Policy Committee. State foundations, the Estonian Research Council and the Education and Youth Board, 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 internationally².

1 Estonian Research 2016, etag.ee/estresearch16, accessed 24 March 2021

2 Estonian Research 2019, etag.ee/estresearch19, accessed 24 March 2021

Research funding in Estonia

Followingly, the most important funding instruments will be presented.

Research in Estonia in 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).

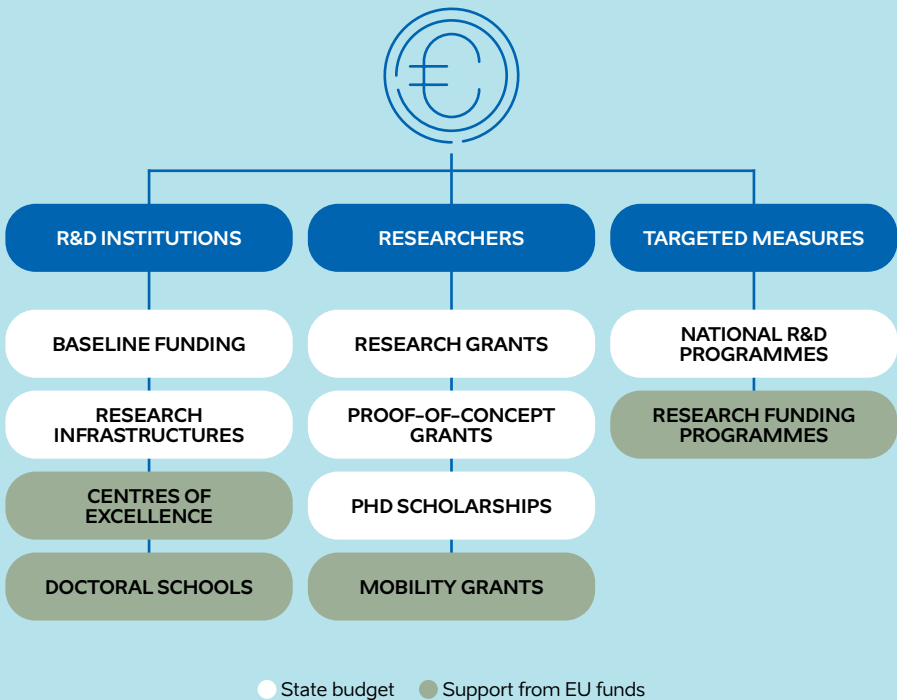


Figure 2. Research funding measures from Estonian ministries and European Union programmes. The relevant ministries can give information about national R&D programmes. Other measures are introduced in this booklet.

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 routines, 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 activities³.



MORE INFORMATION: hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence

Research infrastructures

The Ministry of Education and Research provides support for R&D institutions to cover their infrastructure costs⁴. Investments are planned using a long-term planning tool — the national research infrastructure roadmap, which acts as input for investment decisions⁵. 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 organisations⁶. Estonia is also a member of several international research infrastructures⁷.

The Estonian Genome Centre is a research infrastructure of national importance, receiving

3 hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence, accessed 24 March 2021

4 hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/financing-infrastructure, accessed 24 March 2021

5 etag.ee/is_roadmap, accessed 24 March 2021

6 hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/financing-infrastructure, accessed 24 March 2021

7 etag.ee/est_iis, accessed 24 March 2021



1.82 million euros in the period 2016–2022⁸. Photo by Renee Altrov.

Estonian Research Council provides funding for Core Infrastructures. These are the infrastructures which belong to the Estonian Research Infrastructures Roadmap and their main task is to provide expertise and analytical possibilities in different areas for external users from the research community, other public sector, and the private sector. Core Infrastructures bring a high level of scientific equipment or technology and highly skilled manpower. Currently there are 17 research infrastructures which belong to the list of Core Infrastructures.



MORE INFORMATION:
etag.ee/is_funding

⁸ etag.ee/support_is, accessed 24 March 2021

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.⁹



MORE INFORMATION: hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence



Ecology of Global Change: Natural and Managed Ecosystem is a centre of excellence focused on environmental and agricultural research and adaption to climate change. It consists of six research teams from the Estonian University of Life Sciences and University of Tartu. Funding received for the 2016-2023 period is 4.21 million euros¹⁰.

⁹ hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/base-funding-and-centres-excellence, accessed 24 March 2021

¹⁰ emu.ee/en/research/centre-of-excellence-ecolchange/, accessed 24 March 2021

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 sectors¹¹.



MORE INFORMATION:

hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/doctoral-schools



¹¹ hm.ee/en/activities/research-and-development/doctoral-schools, accessed 24 March 2021

RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH TEAMS

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 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 starting 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)¹².



MORE INFORMATION:
etag.ee/pr_funding

¹² etag.ee/pr_funding, accessed 24 March 2021

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)¹³.



MORE INFORMATION:

etag.ee/poc_grant



¹³ etag.ee/poc_grant, accessed 24 March 2021

Mobility Funding

Researcher mobility support enables both Estonian and foreign researchers to carry out research in a new research environment to exchange experience, expand their co-operation networks and obtain new skills. It is supported both from the Mobilitas Plus programme (co-funded by the ERDF) and state budget.

There are several 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 institutions¹⁴.



MORE INFORMATION:
etag.ee/mo_funding

¹⁴ etag.ee/mo_funding, accessed 24 March 2021

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:

- ▷ Scholarships for 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 activity¹⁵.



MORE INFORMATION: harno.ee/en/scholarships-and-grants/scholarships-studying-and-working-abroad/kristjan-jaak-scholarships

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 abroad¹⁶.



MORE INFORMATION: haridus.archimedes.ee/en/dora-plus-programme

¹⁵ harno.ee/en/scholarships-and-grants/scholarships-studying-and-working-abroad/kristjan-jaak-scholarships, accessed 24 March 2021

¹⁶ haridus.archimedes.ee/en/dora-plus-programme, accessed 24 March 2021

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 2021, 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/doctoral-degree-scholarships and on university websites.



ACADEMIA-BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA-PUBLIC SECTOR COOPERATION

Applied research support instruments

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 SekMo¹⁷ and RITA¹⁸.

Inter-sectoral mobility grant (SekMo)

This instrument aims to enhance research cooperation by supporting researcher mobility from academia to private or public enterprises and to diversify researchers' careers.

To be eligible for the support an enterprise hires a researcher who:

- ▷ has a doctoral degree;
- ▷ has worked as a researcher for at least two years or has just defended the degree;
- ▷ carries out a research project in the enterprise;
- ▷ works for the enterprise during the project at least 50% of his/her time.

The project can be 3 Months to 2 Years long and the support per Month is 3264 € for personnel cost + 40% for other costs.



MORE INFORMATION:

etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/sekmo_en.pdf

¹⁷ etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/sekmo_en.pdf, accessed 24 March 2021

¹⁸ etag.ee/ar_funding, accessed 24 March 2021

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 falls 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 intervention¹⁹.



MORE INFORMATION:
etag.ee/support_srd



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 minimize greenhouse gas emission rates from the oil shale industry in Estonia. Photo by Eesti Energia.

¹⁹ etag.ee/support_srd, accessed 24.03.2021

Links

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



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Eesti Teadusagentuur
Estonian Research Council



European Union
European Structural
and Investment Funds



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