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National curriculum for basic schools

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The regulation is established on the basis of Subsection 15 (2) of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.

Chapter 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

§ 1. Scope of application and structure of regulation

The national curriculum for basic schools establishes the national standard for basic education. The national curriculum for basic schools (hereinafter *national curriculum*) shall be applied in all basic schools in the Republic of Estonia regardless of the school's legal status, unless set forth otherwise in legislation. The national curriculum consists of a general part and appendixes. The appendixes set forth syllabuses grouped according to subject field and syllabuses of cross-curricular topics. The stages of study in basic schools are the following:

- 1) First stage of study – grades 1-3;
- 2) Second stage of study – grades 4-6;
- 3) Third stage of study – grades 7-9;

Chapter 2 GENERAL PART

Division 1 Core Values of Basic Education

§ 2. Core values of basic education

(1) Basic education provides equal support to pupils' mental, physical, moral, social and emotional development. Basic schools shall create conditions for the balanced development in pupils of a variety of abilities and for self-actualization, and for the shaping of a knowledge-based worldview.

(2) Basic school shall shape the system of values that serve as the basis for the successful interaction of happiness in personal life and society.

(3) The values deemed important in the national curriculum derive from the ethical principles specified in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the basic documents of the European Union. General human values (honesty, compassion, respect for life, justice, human dignity, respect for self and others) are enshrined as core values, as are social values (liberty, democracy, respect for mother tongue and culture, patriotism, cultural diversity, tolerance, environmental sustainability, rule of law, solidarity, responsibility and gender equality).

(4) Socialization of the new generation shall be founded on adoption of Estonian cultural traditions, common European values and achievements of world culture and science. Persons with a strong basic education will be capable of integrating into society and will contribute to the sustainable social, cultural, economic and ecological development of Estonian society.

Division 2

Learning and Educational Objectives

§ 3. Setting of goals for basic schools

(1) A basic school has a role to play in both learning and education. The school shall contribute to growing youth into a creative, diverse personality who are able to self-actualize in full-fledged manner in different roles: in the family, at work and in public life.

(2) In basic school, the main purpose of learning and education is to ensure the pupils' age-appropriate, moral, physical and social development and shaping of a comprehensive worldview.

(3) The purpose of basic school is to create for pupils an age-appropriate, secure learning environment that acts in a positive way and aids their development, and supports the development of intellectual curiosity and learning skills, self-reflection and critical thinking ability, development of their knowledge and qualities related to their will, creative self-expression and social and cultural identity.

(4) Basic school reinforces the shaping of core values. Pupils understand the values underlying their actions and sense responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Basic school lays a foundation for self-management as a self-aware person, as a member of one's family, nation and society, who takes a tolerant and open attitude to the world's diversity and people.

(5) Basic school helps pupils reach clarity on their interests, proclivities and abilities and ensures readiness for continuing studies at the next educational level and for lifelong learning. Youths who graduate from basic school have an understanding of their future roles in family, working life, society and the state.

(6) The acquiring and developing of knowledge, values and practical skills takes place throughout the school learning and educational process and as a result of the combined effect of cooperation between home and school and the pupil's immediate living environment.

(7) Estonian schools have the responsibility to safeguard and develop the Estonian nation, language and culture and this is why special attention in basic school learning and educational process is paid to studying the Estonian language.

§ 4. Competences

(1) In the sense of the national curriculum, competence is the aggregate relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes that ensure the ability to operate productively in a particular area of activity or field. Competence can be categorized as general competences or subject field competences.

(2) General competences are subject field and subject-specific competences that are very important in the development of a person into a human and citizen. General competences are shaped through all subjects as well as in extracurricular and out-of-school activity and their development is monitored and directed by teachers as well as in cooperation between school and home.

(3) The following are general competences:

1) value competence – ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms; to sense and value one's ties with other people, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value art and to shape the sense of aesthetics;

2) social competence – the ability to become self-actualized, to function as an aware and conscientious citizen and to support the democratic development of society; to know and follow values and standards in society and the rules of various environments; to engage in cooperation with other people; to accept interpersonal differences and take them into account in interacting with people;

3) self-management competence – the ability to understand and evaluate oneself, one's weaknesses and strengths; to adhere to healthful lifestyles; to find solutions to problems related to oneself, one's mental and physical health as well as to problems arising in human relations;

4) learning to learn competence – ability to organize the learning environment and procure the information they need for learning; to plan studies and follow the plan; to use the outcome of the learning, including learning skills and strategies, in different contexts and for solving problems; to analyze one's knowledge and skills, strengths and weaknesses and on that basis, the need for further learning;

5) communication competence – ability to clearly and relevantly express oneself, taking into account situations and partners in communication; to present and justify their positions; to read and understand information and literature; to write different types of texts, using appropriate linguistic devices and a suitable style; to prioritize correct use of language and rich expressive language;

6) mathematics competence – the ability to use the language, symbols and methods characteristic of mathematical applications, to solve various situations in all walks of life and spheres of activity

7) entrepreneurship competence – ability to create ideas and implement them, using the acquired knowledge and skills in different walks of life; to see problems and the opportunities that lie within them; to set goals and carry them out; to organize joint activities, show initiative and take responsibility for results; to react flexibly to changes and to take judicious risks.

(4) Subjects with a similar objectives and content make up a subject field. The primary objective of a subject field is to shape the corresponding subject field competences, supported by the objectives of and learning outcomes in each subject. The development of subject field competences is also supported by subjects in other subject fields and extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

(5) The national curriculum includes the following subject fields:

- 1) language and literature;
- 2) foreign languages;
- 3) mathematics;
- 4) natural science
- 5) social studies;
- 6) art subjects;
- 7) technology;
- 8) physical education.

(6) The formation of the general and subject field competences defined in the national curriculum shall be described in the school curriculum.

(7) Syllabuses set forth both learning outcomes for each stage of study as well learning outcomes achieved in the cross-curricular topics or as partial skills. Learning outcomes support the formation of subject field competences. Learning outcomes that express values are not assessed numerically; rather, feedback is given to the pupil regarding achievement.

Division 3

Concept of Learning and the Learning Environment

§ 5. Concept of learning

(1) The national curriculum for basic schools treats learning on the basis of output, stressing changes in the behavioural abilities of the pupil or group of pupils. More specifically, this means the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experiences, values and attitudes that are necessary for coping in everyday life. The psychological basis for learning is the experience that the pupil acquires in combination with physical, mental and social environment. As the pupil acquires experiences, the pupil begins to behave in a more goal-oriented fashion. The learning environment shall be ensured in school on the basis of systematic and goal-oriented learning and educational activity taking place on the basis of the curriculum, and the learning environment shall also encompass impacts from home and the broader environment. The pupil is an active participant in the learning process who takes part according to his or her abilities in setting goals for his or her studies, studies independently and with companions, learns to value his or her companions and him or herself and to analyze and manage his or her studies. In acquiring new knowledge, the pupil shall proceed from previously acquired knowledge and shall construct his or her knowledge on the basis of the new information. The acquired knowledge shall be implemented in new situations, for resolving problems, making choices, discussing the correctness of arguments, providing supporting evidence for his or her arguments and in the course of further studies. Studying is a lifelong process for which the necessary skills and work habits shall be shaped in the course of acquiring basic education.

(2) In the national curriculum, teaching is considered to be organizing of the learning environment and learning activity in a manner that places the pupil before tasks that conform to his or her development but require effort, and through which he or she has the opportunity to acquire the planned learning outcomes.

(3) Education in the sense of the national curriculum is understood as the shaping of the pupil's relationship with the surrounding world. Successful values education requires trust and cooperation between the entire school community, the pupil and the family. The key person in shaping views is the teacher, whose function is to serve as a personal role model, support pupils' natural desire for clarity with regard to their identity, and to offer, through a suitable development environment, support for the development of behavioural habits that are accepted in various groups and communities and all of society.

(4) In planning and carrying out learning:

- 1) the special character of the pupil's perceptual and cognitive processes, abilities, linguistic, cultural and family background, age, sex, health status, interests and experiences shall be taken into account;
- 2) the pupil's study load should be age- and aptitude-appropriate, allowing him or her time for holiday and leisure activities;
- 3) the pupil is allowed to engage in diverse experiences from different cultural fields;
- 4) knowledge and skills are used in a real situation; research is conducted and the subject matter in different fields is integrated with everyday life;
- 5) possibilities are created for studying and coping in different social relationships (pupil-teacher, pupil-pupil);

6) contemporary and diverse study methods, means and techniques shall be used (including oral and written texts, audio and visual study resources, active study methods, field trips, outdoor and museum learning etc);

7) relevant means and methods of assessment are used;

8) differentiated learning assignments are used, the content and level of difficulty of which allow pupils to study at a suitable level of exertion considering the individuality of everyone.

Learning activity and the results thereof shall be shaped into a whole through integration. Integration supports the development of pupils' general and subject field competences. The achievement of integration shall be planned by the basic school in the course of the development of the school curriculum and planning of learning and educational activities.

Integration of studies shall be achieved by following the common denominator of subjects of different subject fields, common thematic emphases on subjects, internal school projects and cross-curricular topics, and study assignments and methods. To achieve integration, the basic school shall organize studies and shape the learning environment and cooperation between teachers in a manner that enables cross-disciplinary treatment: specifying competences, setting learning objectives and determining common problems and terminology for various subjects.

§ 6. Learning environment

(1) The learning environment is understood to mean the combination of mental, social and physical environment surrounding pupils and in which pupils develop and learn. The learning environment shall support the development of pupils into independent and active learners, promote the core values of basic education and the spirit of school community, and preserve and develop local and school community traditions.

(2) Basic schools shall organize studies that protect and promote the mental and physical health of pupils. The study load shall conform to the pupil's energy resources.

(3) In developing the social and mental environment:

1) the entire school community shall take part;

2) relations that are based on mutual respect and consideration of mutual positions and honouring agreements shall be developed between pupils, parents, teachers, school administration and other participants involved in learning and education;

3) all pupils shall be treated without prejudice, fairly and equally, honouring their self-dignity and personal character;

4) decision-making authority and responsibility shall be distributed in a relevant and clear manner;

5) the efforts and learning success of all pupils shall be noted and recognized; refraining from labelling pupils or decreasing their belief in themselves;

6) violence and bullying among pupils shall be avoided;

7) openness to free exchange of opinions, including criticism, shall be preserved;

8) opportunities shall be created for pupils to display initiative, take part in decision-making and act both alone and together with companions;

9) an atmosphere shall be created characterized by willingness to help and mutual support in the case of learning and personal difficulty;

10) an atmosphere founded on mutual trust, friendliness, and good faith shall be created;

11) school life shall be organized as a model of a society that honours human rights and democracy, characterized by shared and enduring core values in the school community and support for good ideas and positive innovations;

12) school life shall be organized on the basis of principles of ethnic, racial and gender equality.

In developing the physical environment, the basic school shall make sure that:

1) the furnishings and design of the premises and rooms used are expedient for the purpose of studies;

2) it is possible to use, in studies, computers with an Internet connection and presentation equipment, and pupils have the opportunity to use the school library;

3) the furnishings of the rooms and premises used are safe and conform to health protection and safety requirements;

4) rooms, furnishings and study materials have an aesthetic appearance;

5) age-appropriate study materials and materials adapted to individual needs shall be used, including study materials and equipment based on contemporary information and communication technologies;

6) there exist opportunities for promoting physical education and healthful lifestyles within and outside of lessons.

Studies may be organized outside the school premises as well (among other things, in the schoolyard, nature, museums, archives, environmental education centres, companies and institutions) and in virtual study environments.

Division 4 First Stage of Study (Grades 1-3)

§ 7. Competences sought in the first stage of study

At the end of the first stage of study, the pupil:

1) has respect for his or her family, class and school; is polite, keeps promises; knows that no one is to be humiliated, teased or mocked; is capable of listening to his or her peers and considering them;

- 2) wants to learn, derives pleasure from knowledge and aptitude, is able of learning alone and with others, in pairs and in groups, is capable of budgeting time for studying, hobbies, chores and rest periods;
- 3) is aware of his or her ethnic identity and takes a respectful attitude to his or her people;
- 4) is capable of adapting him or herself to the needs of succeeding at an assignment and making sense of his or her actions in fulfilling the assignment; is able to prepare a schedule for the day and follow it;
- 5) is capable of finding and understanding information in texts (including data, terms, characters, activities, events and their time and place) and presenting it orally and in written form;
- 6) understands and uses learned everyday expressions and simple phrases in foreign language being studied;
- 7) calculates and knows how to use tools suitable for measurement and measurement units in different walks of life for solving age-appropriate assignments;
- 8) acts in a prudent manner with regard to nature;
- 9) knows how to notice and describe in goal-oriented fashion differences and similarities, knows how to compare objects and phenomena, categorize them on the basis of one or two characteristics and to read a simple plan, table diagram and map;
- 10) is able to use simple computer programs and technical devices used at home and at school;
- 11) has respect for his or her hometown or region, homeland and the Estonian state, knows its symbols and complies with the rules of conduct associated with them;
- 12) is able to notice and assess beauty, has an appreciation for creativity and takes pleasure in exercise, creative self-expression and activities;
- 13) maintains cleanliness and order, looks after his or her appearance and health and has a desire to be healthy;
- 14) is able to avoid dangerous situations and summon assistance in the case of danger, knows safe traffic practices;
- 15) knows whom to turn to with various problems and is prepared to do so.

§ 8. Emphasis of learning and education in the first stage of study

(1) The main objective in the first grade is for pupils to become adapted to school life, to experience a sense of security and success and to develop readiness for further successful studies. The readiness of pupils for school and their abilities are different, and therefore study assignments and the time needed to accomplish them are differentiated. The following are the focuses in the first stage of study:

- 1) learning and following moral tenets and good standards of conduct;
- 2) developing a positive attitude toward attending and learning at school;
- 3) developing study habits and skills, perseverance, independence and goal-oriented work skills and ability to make decisions;
- 4) shaping self-expression skills and confidence;
- 5) acquiring primary communication and cooperation skills, including shaping of mutually supportive and valuing relations between students;
- 6) recognition of learning difficulties and offering support systems and aid.

The most important function of the teacher is to support each pupil's belief in him or herself and motivation for learning.

The basis for organizing learning activities in the first stage of study may be studying by topics common to many subjects. Depending on the preparation of the pupils, either a subject-based approach or an option combining a topics-based and subject-based approach may be used.

Division 5 Second Stage of Study (Grades 4-6)

§ 9. Competences in the second stage of study

At the end of the second stage of study, the pupil:

- 1) has an appreciation for harmonious human relationships, understands his or her role as a family members, friend, peer and pupil; shall keep agreements, be trustworthy and be responsible for his or her actions;
- 2) is able to focus on fulfilling study tasks, is able, with guidance, to use age-appropriate techniques (including pair and group techniques) depending on the special nature of the study assignment;
- 3) values his or her ethnicity and culture among other ethnicities and cultures, espouses an attitude toward people that is free of prejudices, recognizes the differences between people, views and situations and understands the need for compromise;
- 4) is capable of planning and evaluating his or her activities and, to attain the result, select and implement the necessary actions, see his or her errors and correct his or her activities;
- 5) is capable of expressing, justifying and defending his or her opinion, knows his or her strengths and weaknesses and tries to become clear on his or her interests;
- 6) is capable of listening to and reading in a mindful fashion age-appropriate texts, creating linguistically correct and situation-appropriate oral and written texts and understanding spoken speech;
- 7) gets by in at least one foreign language in everyday communication situations that require direct and simple exchange of information on familiar and routine topics.

- 8) has mastered computational and measurement skills and knows and is able with guidance to use rules of logic in solving problems in different walks of life;
- 9) values a sustainable lifestyle, is capable of asking questions in the field of natural sciences and obtaining information on natural sciences, knows how to act in nature, takes an interest in nature and exploring nature;
- 10) is capable of using a computer and the Internet as a means of communication and is able to perform word processing with a computer;
- 11) is able to find answers to his or her questions, obtain the necessary information from various sources, interpret, use and convey it, and is able to distinguish between fact and opinion;
- 12) Senses that he or she is a citizen of his or her state and follows social norms;
- 13) values art and is able to express him or herself using artistic means;
- 14) values healthful lifestyles, is aware of factors that harm health and of the hazards of substances that cause dependency;
- 15) has found a hobby to his or her liking and has a general idea of the employment world.

§ 10. Emphasis of learning and education in the second stage of study

(1) The main objective of learning and education in the second stage of study is for pupils to become responsible and independent pupils. It is important to incite and maintain interest on the part of pupils in knowledge and activity areas covered by the curriculum. The following are the focuses in the second stage of study:

- 1) maintaining and building motivation for learning, associating materials with practical aspects and allowing pupils to make decisions and take responsibility for their decisions;
- 2) offering opportunities for hobby activities;
- 3) recognition and development of special abilities and interests of pupils;
- 4) offering support systems and learning aid to pupils with learning difficulties.

Diverse methods and assignments shall be applied, allowing pupils who reach puberty to make independent decisions and associate the material with practical life, and impart the ability to cope with individually different development of pupils, their changing relationships and acting in new roles.

Division 6 Third Stage of Study (Grades 7-9)

§ 11. Competences in the third stage of study

At the end of the third stage of study, the pupil:

- 1) knows the generally recognized values and moral principles in society, follows them in school and outside school, who does not remain indifferent when they are flouted, and intervenes in accordance with his or her abilities when necessary.
- 2) knows and honours his or her language and culture and contributes to the preservation and development of the Estonian language and culture; has an conception and knowledge of different cultures of the world, respects people from other ethnicities;
- 3) is intellectually curious, knows how to study and find opportunities for further study, using relevant advice if necessary;
- 4) is enterprising, believes in him or herself, shapes his or her ideals, sets goals for him or herself and acts in their name, heads and makes adjustments to his or her behaviour and takes responsibility for his or her actions;
- 5) has the ability to clearly and relevantly express oneself, taking into account situations and partners in communication; to present and justify their positions; to understand and interpret different types of texts; knows and follows the rules of orthography;
- 6) is proficient in at least one foreign language at a level that allows him or her to communicate in writing and orally and to read and understand age-appropriate foreign-language texts;
- 7) is capable of resolving issues arising in various fields in everyday life that require use of mathematical thinking methods (logical thinking and spatial reasoning) and presentation methods (formulae, models, diagrams, graphs).
- 8) understands the interrelations between man and environment, takes a responsible attitude to the environment and lives and acts in an environmentally sustainable manner;
- 9) knows how to pose natural science questions, discuss them, present scientific positions and make conclusions on their basis;
- 10) is able to get by in the world of technology and use technology for the designated purpose and with as little risk as possible;
- 11) is an active and responsible citizen who is interested in the democratic development of one's school, home region and the state;
- 12) is able to express him or herself creatively, has respect for art and cultural heritage;
- 13) values and follows a healthful lifestyle and is physically active;
- 14) thinks systematically, creatively and critically, is open to self-development.

§ 12. Emphasis of learning and education in the third stage of study

In the third stage of study, the main objective of learning and education is to help pupils develop into responsible members of society, who cope independently in everyday life and who are able to choose a path that conforms to their interests and abilities. The following is the focus in the third stage of study:

- 1) maintaining motivation for learning;
- 2) associating learning content and acquired skills with everyday life and introducing their applicability in future working life and future studies;
- 3) the mindful use of various learning strategies and developing self-analytical skills;
- 4) evaluation, planning, setting goals and assessment of results of longer-term study assignments (including research study assignments);
- 5) development of special abilities and interests in pupils;
- 6) supporting pupils in making of choices for further studies and career.

Division 7

Organization of Studies

§ 13. Compulsory and optional subjects

- (1) The national curriculum sets forth the following syllabuses for compulsory subjects:
- 1) language and literature: Estonian, literature (in schools where the language of instruction is Estonian), Russian, literature (in schools where the language of instruction is Russian) (appendix 1);
 - 2) foreign languages: foreign language A, foreign language B, and Estonian as a second language (appendix 2);
 - 3) mathematics: mathematics (appendix 3);
 - 4) natural science: science, biology, geography, physics, chemistry (appendix 4);
 - 5) social studies: personal, social and health education (PSHE), history, civics and citizenship education (appendix 5);
 - 6) art subjects: music, art (appendix 6)
 - 7) technology: employment studies, handicraft and home economics, technology studies (appendix 7);
 - 8) physical education: physical education (appendix 8).

(2) English, Russian, German, or French is studied as foreign language A. English, Russian, German, French or another foreign language is studied as foreign language B. In schools with a language of instruction other than Estonian, Estonian is generally studied as a second language. In the case of a pupil who studies Estonian as a second language, foreign language B is not required. Foreign language A and B shall be selected by the basis school, taking into consideration the possibilities of the school and the pupils' desires.

(3) The national curriculum sets forth the following syllabuses for optional subjects:

- 1) religion studies syllabus (appendix 9);
- 2) informatics syllabus (appendix 10);
- 3) career education syllabus (appendix 11);

(4) Religion studies shall be taught only according to the syllabus specified in the national curriculum.

§ 14. Cross-curricular topics

(1) Cross-curricular topics are a means of integrating general and subject field competences, subjects and subject fields and are taken into account in developing the school environment. Cross-curricular topics span numerous subjects, and fields that are priorities for society, and enable creation of an idea of the development of society as a whole, supporting the pupil's capacity to apply his or her knowledge in different situations.

(2) Study of cross-curricular topics is realized above all through:

- 1) the structure of the learning environment – the content and aims of cross-curricular topics is taken into account in developing the school's mental, social and physical learning environment;
- 2) subject study – proceeding from the cross-curricular topics, suitable treatments of subjects, examples and methods shall be introduced into teaching of subjects; cross-subject, multiple-class and school projects are carried out jointly. The role of a subject in study of cross-curricular topics is different based on the subject's aims and content depending on how closely related the subject field is to the cross-curricular topic;
- 3) selection of optional subjects – optional subjects support the aims of cross-curricular topics;
- 4) creative work that stems from cross-curricular topics or which integrates subjects – pupils may proceed from a cross-curricular topic in choice of creative work done independently or as a group project;
- 5) organizing if possible, in cooperation with the owner of the school, regional institutions and enterprises, other educational and cultural institutions and civic associations, extracurricular learning activities and hobby circle activities and taking part in county, pan-Estonian and international projects.

(3) The cross-curricular topics treated in study and educational activity are the following:

- 1) lifelong learning and career planning – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a person who is prepared to learn lifelong, perform different roles in a changing educational, living and work environments and shape his or her life through conscious decisions, including making of reasonable career choices;

- 2) environment and sustainable development – the aim is for the pupil to become a socially active, responsible and environmentally conscious person who preserves and protects the environment, and in valuing sustainability, is prepared to find solutions to issues pertaining to the environment and human development;
- 3) civic initiative and entrepreneurship – the aim is for the pupil to become an active and responsible member of the community and society who understands the principles and mechanisms of the functioning of society and the importance of civic initiative, feels like a member of society and draws on the country's cultural traditions and development directions in his or her activities;
- 4) cultural identity – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a person who is culturally aware, who understands the role of culture in shaping people's thought and behaviour and who knows how cultures have changed over history, who has acquired an idea of the versatility of cultures and particularities of lifestyles determined by culture and who values native culture and cultural diversity and is culturally tolerant and prepared for cooperation;
- 5) information environment – the aim is for the pupil to develop into an information-conscious person who senses and is aware of the surrounding information environment, is able to analyze it critically and acts according to his or her aims and society's communication ethics;
- 6) technology and innovation – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a person who is well-disposed toward innovation and who knows how to use contemporary technologies for the designated purpose, who copes with the rapidly changing technological living, learning and work environment;
- 7) health and safety – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a mentally, emotionally, socially and physically healthy member of society who is capable of following healthful lifestyles, act in a safe manner and take part in developing a health promoting environment;
- 8) values and morals – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a morally advanced person, who knows the generally recognized values and moral principles in society, follows them in school and outside school, who does not remain indifferent when they are flouted, and who intervenes in accordance with his or her abilities when necessary.

(4) The descriptions of cross-curricular topics are set forth in appendix 12.

§ 15. Basis for organization of learning and education

(1) The organization of learning and education is set forth in the school curriculum, based on the requirements forth in the national curriculum.

(2) Studies may be organized in many ways: all subjects are learned throughout the academic year or the teaching of various subjects takes place at a certain time during the academic year; studying by topics is the approach where certain topics are focused on without distinguishing between conventional subject lessons.

(3) The weekly number of lessons for compulsory subjects in basic school for the first, second and third stage of study are the following:

- 1) Estonian/Russian or other language of instruction: 19 11 6
- 2) literature: 0 4 6
- 3) Estonian as a second language: 6 12 12
- 4) foreign language A: 3 9 9
- 5) foreign language B: 0 3 9
- 6) mathematics: 10 13 13
- 7) science: 3 7 2
- 8) geography: 0 0 5
- 9) biology: 0 0 5
- 10) chemistry: 0 0 4
- 11) physics: 0 0 4
- 12) history: 0 3 6
- 13) human studies: 2 2 2
- 14) social studies: 0 1 2
- 15) music: 6 4 3
- 16) art: 4.5 3 3
- 17) manual training, handicraft and home economics, technology studies: 4.5 5 5
- 18) physical education. 8 8 6

(4) In addition to the provisions of Subsection 3, a basic school where the language of instruction is Estonian shall determine in the school curriculum the use of the following amounts of weekly lessons: eight in the first stage of study, 10 in the second stage of study and four in the third stage of study; and basic schools with a language other than Estonian as the language of instruction, two in the first stage of study, one in the second stage of study and one in the third stage of study.

(5) For the purpose of taking into account school or regional particularities, administering vocational preliminary training or using optional subjects and content and language integrated learning (including language immersion) at basic schools with a language of instruction other than Estonian, a basic school may, with the consent of the school's board of trustees, modify the list of the compulsory subjects and cross-curricular topics specified by the national curriculum (among other things, merge and restructure the subjects) and change the arrangement of teaching school time, ensuring its pupils attain the general competences, learning outcomes and learning and educational objectives set forth in the national curriculum by the end of each stage of study. These differences shall be described in the school curriculum, and the pupils' parents, or the pupil himself or herself

in the case of a pupil with legal capacity, shall be notified thereof. In the case of the aforesaid differences, summarizing grades or evaluations shall be presented at the end of the school year in the first and second stage of study at the request of a parent, or in the case of a pupil with legal capacity at the request of the pupil, and at the end of the school year in the third stage of study for all pupils, on the basis of the list of compulsory subjects in the national curriculum.

(6) With the consent of the school's board of trustees, the basic school may, in its activity, proceed from the principles and aspirations approved by the *European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education* and organize the studies stemming therefore in a manner in which the learning outcomes set forth in the national curriculum first and second stage of study are not sought as the objective by the end of the respective stage of study. The relevant exceptions shall be specified in the school curriculum and the school curriculum shall be coordinated with an organization uniting schools in Estonia that follow the principles of Waldorf education and is dedicated to organizing cooperation between Waldorf educational institutions and more popularization and development of Waldorf teaching methods.

(7) In the third stage of study where preliminary vocational training in music is offered, handicraft and home economics and technology studies may be supplanted, with the agreement of the school's board of trustees, by specialty subjects of preliminary vocational training.

(8) In the third stage of study, the basic school shall assign for pupils a creative project that is based on cross-curricular topics or integrates subjects, which shall be a research paper, project, artwork or the like. The theme for the creative project shall be selected by the school, and the precise choice of topic shall be made by the pupils. The creative project may be completed either individually or collectively. The organization of the creative project shall be described in the school curriculum.

(9) With the consent of the pupil or, in the case of a pupil with limited legal capacity, of the pupil's parent, and with the agreement of the director or a teacher authorized by the director, the school may take into consideration extra-school-curricular study or activity, including studies in some other general education school, as a part of studies to be undertaken at the school, on condition that it enables the pupil to attain the learning outcomes set forth in the school or individual curriculum.

§ 16. Notification and counselling of pupils and parents

(1) Generalist or specialist teachers shall monitor the development of their pupils and how they cope at school, and if necessary shall adjust studies based on the pupil's needs. To develop the pupil's abilities and talents to a higher level, the basic school must ascertain the pupil's individual learning needs, select suitable educational methods and arrange for differentiated study. Basic schools shall ensure pupils who fall temporarily behind with respect to achievement of required learning outcomes additional supervision outside of lessons.

(2) If necessary, the basic school shall provide consultation to the pupil's parent in supporting the development of the pupil and in learning at home.

(3) The basic school shall organize notification of pupils and parents regarding opportunities for further study and shall ensure the availability of career services to pupils (career studies, information or counselling).

(4) The basic school shall ensure pupils' and their parents' availability of information on the organization of learning and education as well as consultation and counselling in matters relating to studies. The primary study topics, necessary study materials, organization of assessment and planned events shall be announced to pupils at the beginning of the academic quarter or semester.

§ 17. Exceptions applied to pupils with special educational needs

(1) If a pupil with a mother tongue other than Estonian is studying at a basic school where the language of instruction is Estonian, or the pupil has arrived from abroad where the experience of Estonian-language instruction in basic school has been less than six academic years, the school may organize study of Estonian on the basis of the "Estonian as a second language" syllabus, with the consent of the pupil or, in the case of a pupil with limited legal capacity, the consent of the pupil's parent.

(2) In the case of a pupil who has lived in Estonia for less than three years, foreign language B study may be waived on request of the pupil or, in the case of a pupil with limited legal capacity, on request of the parent.

(3) For the purpose of supporting studies of pupils with special educational needs, the lesson allocation set forth in Subsection 15 (4) may be used.

(4) An individual curriculum shall be prepared, as required, for a pupil with special educational needs.

(5) In the case of a pupil, for whom study in a class for pupils with a mobility disability has been recommended through a decision by a specialist doctor, the school may set, using the school curriculum or an individual curriculum, 10 academic years as the nominal period of study in basic school.

(6) In the case of a pupil, for whom study in a class for pupils with a speech disability has been recommended through a decision by a specialist doctor, the school may set, using the school curriculum or an individual curriculum, 10 academic years as the nominal period of study in basic school, and:

- 1) in the first stage of study, the course load for Estonian (in the case of Estonian as the language of instruction) or Russian (in the case of Russian as the language of instruction) shall be at least 32 academic hours, in the second stage of study at least 22 academic hours, and in the third stage of study at least 15 academic hours;
- 2) the teaching of foreign language B may be waived, if this is foreseen in the school curriculum or the individual curriculum.

(7) In the case of a pupil, for whom study in a class for pupils with a hearing disability has been recommended through a decision by a specialist doctor, the school may set, using the school curriculum or an individual curriculum, 11 academic years as the nominal period of study in basic school, and:

- 1) in the first stage of study, the course load for Estonian (in the case of Estonian as the language of instruction) or Russian (in the case of Russian as the language of instruction) shall be at least 36 academic hours, in the second stage of study at least 36 academic hours, and in the third stage of study at least 18 academic hours, whereby the Estonian language or Russian language hours that are added on the basis of this Subsection may be substituted with sign language study;
- 2) the teaching of foreign language B may be waived, if this is foreseen in the school curriculum or the individual curriculum.

(8) In the case of a pupil, for whom study in a class for pupils with a sight disability has been recommended through a decision by a specialist doctor, the school may set, using the school curriculum or an individual curriculum, 10 academic years as the nominal period of study in basic school, and manual training, handicraft and home economics shall be taught in the third stage of study for at least 12 lessons weekly, whereby the study may also contain vocational preliminary training.

(9) In the case of a class for pupils with learning difficulties, learning outcomes that have been reduced or replaced in comparison to the learning outcomes set in this Regulation, may be foreseen in the curriculum of the school.

(10) In the case of a small class, or study concentrated on one pupil, it is possible to change, compared to this Regulation, the arrangement of teaching time in the school curriculum, to foresee reduced or replaced learning outcomes, compared to the learning outcomes specified in this Regulation, as well as a reduced course load, but not less than 20 academic hours per academic week.

(11) In the case of a class for pupils with behavioural difficulties, a course load lighter than the one set forth in this Regulation may be specified in the school curriculum, but not less than 20 academic hours per academic week. In addition, for a class for pupils with behavioural difficulties, vocational preliminary training or vocational study in basic schools shall be carried out, in cooperation with a vocational school. Foreign language B, manual training, handicraft and home economics or technology studies need not be taught in a class for pupils with behavioural difficulties if this is foreseen in the school curriculum or individual curriculum.

(12) In the case of a class with behavioural problems, where study is carried out in a prison, the school curriculum may specify the implementation of the course load and arrangement of teaching time as set forth in Section 18 for distance learning.

§ 18. Exceptions applied in the case of distance learning

(1) The arrangement of teaching time in distance learning shall be specified in the school curriculum, ensuring for the pupils the general competencies, learning outcomes and achievement of the learning and educational objectives as specified in the national curriculum by the end of the stage of study, and taking into account the course load set forth in Section 22 of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, and the exceptions set forth in Subsections 2 and 3 of this Section.

(2) In the case of distance learning, physical education, manual training, handicraft and home economics, and technology studies, shall not be compulsory subjects.

(3) In the case of a pupil enrolled in distance learning, foreign language B study may be waived on request of the pupil.

Division 8 Assessment and Graduation from Basic School

§ 19. Assessment

(1) The purpose of assessment is the following:

- 1) to support the pupil's development;
- 2) to provide feedback regarding the pupil's learning progress;
- 3) to encourage and direct the pupil to study independently;
- 4) to guide the development of the pupil's self-esteem, and support the pupil in his or her choice of future educational career;
- 5) to guide the teacher's activities in supporting the pupils' learning and individual development;
- 6) to provide a basis for pupil's progression to the next grade and for the making of the decision on his or her graduation from basic school.

(2) Assessment is a systematic gathering of information about the pupil's development, analysis of such information and providing of feedback. Assessment is a basis for further planning of studies. Assessment relies on various methods, evaluation tools and ways. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning.

(3) The school shall provide written feedback to pupils, and in the case of a pupil with limited legal capacity also to the parent, on the pupil's behaviour (including care and attentiveness) at least twice an academic year in accordance with procedure set forth in the school curriculum.

(4) Pupils have the right to receive information on the assessment system and on their grades and evaluations. Pupils have the right to know what grade or evaluation is the basis for the summarized grade and evaluation. The assessment system and the procedure for notification of pupils and parents of grades and evaluations shall be set forth in the school's rules of procedure, and the procedure for challenging grades and evaluations shall be set forth in the school curriculum.

(5) Requirements for pupil behaviour shall be set forth in the basic school's rules of procedure.

§ 20. Formative assessment

(1) Formative assessment shall mean assessment taking place during studies, in the course of which the pupil's knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour are analyzed, feedback if provided on the pupil's previous results and shortcomings, the pupil is encouraged and guided in further studies and the future objectives and routes of studying are planned. Formative assessment focuses above all on comparing the pupil's development with his or her previous accomplishments. Feedback shall describe, at the right time and as precisely as possible, the pupil's strengths and shortcomings and shall include proposals for further activities that support the pupil's development.

(2) In the course of the lesson, the pupil shall receive mainly oral or written verbal feedback regarding knowledge and skills pertaining to the subject and the subject field (including general competences, learning and educational objectives of a stage of study and cross-curricular topics). Teachers shall provide pupils with feedback throughout the school day in order to support the formation of the pupil's behaviour, attitudes and values. The basic school shall respond to cases in conflict with generally recognized values and good practice.

(3) Pupils shall be involved in the assessment process of themselves and their companions in order to develop their skills in setting their objectives and to analyze their learning and behaviour on the basis of their objectives, as well as to increase their motivation for learning.

(4) One instrument used for formative assessment is the portfolio. The portfolio shall be a diary of learning and shall contain assignments as well as analysis and feedback of work. The portfolio may be compiled in a subject- or subject field-based manner, regarding cross-curricular topics or general competences.

§ 21. Assessment of knowledge and skills as the grounds for summarizing grades

(1) The pupil's subject-related knowledge and skills shall be compared with the expected learning outcomes listed in the syllabus that is the basis for the pupil's studies. The subject-related knowledge and skills may be evaluated in the course of the studies as well as at the end of the study topic.

(2) Grading using the 5-point scale:

- 1) The grade 5 or "very good" is used in evaluating the achievements in learning outcomes during the observed period or observed topic, if the achieved learning outcomes are fully in accordance with, or exceed, the required learning outcomes that are the basis for the student's study;
- 2) The grade 4 or "good" is used in evaluating the achievements in learning outcomes during the observed period or observed topic, if the achieved learning outcomes are generally in accordance with the required learning outcomes that are the basis for the student's study;
- 3) The grade 3 or "satisfactory" is used in evaluating the achievements in learning outcomes during the observed period or observed topic, if the achieved learning outcomes enable the pupil to continue studies or graduate from the school without him or her having substantial problems managing continued study or his or her future life;

4) The grade 2 or “poor” is used in evaluating the achievements in learning outcomes during the observed period or observed topic, if there has been development for the pupil in these learning outcomes, but it is insufficient for the pupil to manage without substantial problems in continued study or in his or her future life;
5) The grade 1 or “weak” is used in evaluating the achievements in learning outcomes during the observed period or observed topic, if the achieved learning outcomes mean not being able to manage without substantial difficulties in continued study or in his or her future life, and if there has been no development for the pupil in these learning outcomes.

(3) In preparing and assessing the written work that will be assessed using the 5-point scale, the principle shall be followed that if the 5-point scale is used and the teacher has not stated otherwise, the work shall be compiled such that the student who has achieved 90-100% of the maximum number of possible points shall be assessed as grade 5, with grade 4 – 75-89%, grade 3 – 50-74%, grade 2 – 20-49%, and grade 1 – 0-19%.

(4) A basic school may use internally, in lieu of the five-point scale, a different grading system. The grading system used and the principles for converting the grades to the five-point scale shall be set forth in the school curriculum. Upon the pupil’s departure from the school, the summarized grades of that academic year, and the grades received during the quarter in progress shall be converted to a five-point scale.

(5) In the second and third stages of study in basic school, descriptive word grades that do not have a numerical equivalent may be used in assessing a pupil. The use of descriptive word assessments in a school shall be set forth in the school curriculum. Upon a pupil’s departure from the school, or by the end of the second stage of study, the word assessments from the year in progress that are the basis for progression to the next grade must be converted to the assessment scale set forth in Subsection 2.

(6) If the use of unauthorized assistance or copying is discovered in the evaluation process, the relevant written or practical assignment, oral answer, practical activity or outcome thereof may be graded as “weak” if so specified in the school curriculum.

(7) If written or practical assignment, oral answer, practical activity or outcome thereof is graded with the grade “poor” or “weak” or the grade was not given, the pupil shall be given the opportunity for retaking the answer or the assignment. The procedure for redoing assignments or parts thereof shall be set forth in the school curriculum.

§ 22. Summarizing grades and progression to the next grade

(1) Summarizing grading consists of summarizing of grades into semester grades and semester grades into the yearly grades.

(2) The basic school may raise the frequency of summarizing of grades and use, in lieu of semester grades, for example, quarterly or trimester grades. In such a case, the provisions in this Section for semester grades shall be applied to the summarized grades being used in lieu of the semester grades.

(3) Certification of knowledge and skills shall also be considered as summarized assessment if the school, according to Subsection 15 (9), takes into account study or activity that is external to the school curriculum as part of that taught in the school.

(4) The pupil, and in the case of a pupil with limited legal capacity also the parent, shall be notified of the summarized grades.

(5) In the first and second stage of study, summarizing assessment may employ the use of summarized descriptive verbal assessments twice an academic year, which need not have a numerical equivalent. The summarizing assessment must clearly reflect to what extent the learning outcomes have been achieved.

(6) If, in the middle of the study period, a semester grade or evaluation in a subject was not given and the pupil did not take the opportunity retake the subject, the knowledge and skills acquired in the respective period shall be assessed for the purposes of the grade or evaluation for the year as in conformity with the grade “weak” or an equivalent word assessment shall be given to the results.

(7) In the case of pupils whose semester grade was “poor” or “weak”, and who were given an equivalent verbal assessment or who were not assigned a grade, an individual curriculum shall be prepared in that subject or another support system will be assigned (such as speech therapy, remedial studies etc.) pursuant to the provisions of the school curriculum, to help the pupil acquire the required knowledge and skills.

(8) The teachers' council shall decide on the basis of the semester grades or evaluations whether the pupil should progress to the next grade, be assigned supplementary study or should he or she repeat a year. The decision on progression of pupils to the next grade shall be made before the end of the study period.

(9) A pupil shall be assigned supplementary study in subjects in which, based on the semester grades or assessments, a yearly grade of “poor” or “weak” or an equivalent word evaluation should be given. The teachers' council shall decide on assigning supplementary study before the end of the study period. In the framework of supplementary study, the pupil shall under the direct supervision of the teacher complete special assignments to acquire the knowledge and skills required in the curriculum. Supplementary study shall be completed after

the end of the study period. The yearly grade or evaluation shall be assigned after the end of the supplementary study, taking into account the results of the supplementary study.

(10) By justified decision of the teachers' council, a pupil may be obliged to repeat a grade in exceptional cases if the pupil has a yearly grade of “poor” or “weak” or an equivalent word assessment in three or more subjects, the supplementary study has not produced results, and it would not be expedient to achieve the learning outcomes required in the curriculum by applying an individual curriculum or other support systems applied in the school. In making the decision, the teachers' council shall involve the pupil or his or her legal guardian and shall hear his or her opinion. The decision of the teachers' council must list the considerations on the basis of which it was considered expedient for the pupil to repeat the grade.

(11) By justified decision of the teachers' council, a pupil may be obliged to repeat a grade if due to unjustified absenteeism the pupil has a yearly grade of “poor” or “weak” or an equivalent word assessment in three or more subjects. In making the decision, the teachers' council shall involve the pupil or his or her legal guardian and shall hear his or her opinion.

(12) Ninth-grade pupils shall be given their yearly grades before the final examinations are held, except for subjects in which the pupil will be assigned supplementary study.

(13) The terms set forth in Subsections 8 and 12 shall not be applied with regard to pupils for whom an individual curriculum has been prepared in which exceptions are set forth with regard to the time for progression to the next grade.

§ 23. Graduation from basic school

(1) Pupils whose most recent yearly grades in subjects are at least “satisfactory”, who have carried out a creative work in the third stage of study, as well as who have scored at least a satisfactory on the examination in Estonian or Estonian as a second language, mathematics examination and one freely chosen examination shall graduate from basic school.

(2) A pupil may be considered to have graduated from basic school on the basis of written request by the pupil or his or her legal guardian, and decision of the teachers' council, and a basic school graduation certificate be awarded to a pupil:

- 1) who has one weak or poor examination grade or most recent yearly grade in a subject;
- 2) who has, in each of two subjects, one weak or poor examination grade or most recent yearly grade.

(3) In the case of pupils with educational special needs, where the required learning outcomes set forth in this Regulation have been reduced or replaced through an individual curriculum, according to the conditions specified in this Regulation or on recommendation from an advisory committee, the basis for graduation is achieving the learning outcomes specified in the school curriculum or the individual curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs shall have the right to take basic school final examinations on special conditions pursuant to the conditions and procedure for organizing final examinations established by regulation of the Minister of Education and Research, on the basis of Subsection 30 (2) of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.

(4) A pupil whose language of instruction is not Estonian, who studies in a language immersion class or who began studies during the last six academic years in a school or a class where the language of instruction is Estonian, may take the examination of Estonian as a second language in lieu of the aforementioned Estonian examination.

(5) A pupil who has previously studied in a foreign country, who before the taking place of final examinations has studied in Estonia up to three consecutive academic years, and for whom an individual curriculum has been compiled for studying Estonian, may take the Estonian, or Estonian as a second language, as a school examination, prepared on the basis of the individual curriculum prepared for him or her. The preparation and assessment of the school examination shall proceed from the provisions set forth in Sections 20-22.

(6) An external pupil shall be considered to have graduated from basic school if he or she has passed the basic school final examinations and passed the subject examinations in courses in which he or she lacks grades to be entered on to the basic school graduation certificate or in which he or she has not proved his or her knowledge and skills through assessment of previous learning and work experience. An external pupil shall not be assessed in physical education, handicraft and home economics or technology studies. Schools where distance learning is implemented shall be obliged to create conditions for graduation as an external pupil for a person beyond the compulsory schooling age who has submitted a relevant written application to the school by 1 November of the academic year in progress. The school shall provide for the external pupil study activity supervised by the school, comprising at least 15 academic hours. For the remainder, learning shall take place independently.

Division 9

School Curriculum

§ 24. Fundamentals and structure of preparation of school curriculum

(1) The basic school shall prepare the school curriculum on the basis of the national curriculum. The school curriculum is the basic document of learning and educational activity at basic schools.

(2) In preparing the school curriculum, the basis shall be the national curriculum and the school development plan, taking into consideration the regional needs, the needs of school staff, parents and pupils and resources to be used.

(3) The head of a basic school is responsible for the democratic organization of preparing and developing the school curriculum. The school curriculum shall be approved by the head. Amendments to the school curriculum shall be submitted before establishment for an opinion to the board of trustees, pupil representative board and teachers' council.

(4) The school curriculum shall consist of a general part and syllabuses.

(5) The general part of the school curriculum shall set forth the following:

- 1) learning and educational objectives and principles;
- 2) arrangement of teaching time by subject and year, lists of optional subjects and selection principles, use of various languages of instruction by each subject;
- 3) cross-curricular topics and principles for treating them, principles of integration, thereat principles for organizing creative work that stems from cross-curricular topics in the third stage of study or which integrates subjects and thematic emphases;
- 4) principles for planning school-wide and interschool projects;
- 5) organization of learning and education (including the time required for project, outdoor and museum study, excursions and study trips);
- 6) organization of assessment;
- 7) principles for notification and counselling of pupils and parents;
- 8) principles for mentoring pupils and organization of studies for pupils with special educational needs;
- 9) organization of career services;
- 10) principles for compiling the teacher's work plan;
- 11) procedures for updating and supplementing the school curriculum;

(6) Syllabuses grouped according to subject field shall be submitted by grade.

Chapter 3 Implementing Provisions

§ 25. Implementation of regulation

(1) Schools shall bring learning and educational activity and the school curriculum into conformity with this Regulation.

- 1) by 1 September 2011 in the case of the first, fourth and seventh grade.
- 2) by 1 September 2012 in the case of the second, fifth and eighth grade.
- 3) by 1 September 2013 in the case of the third, sixth and ninth grade

(2) Schools shall bring the learning activity and the school curriculum into conformity with Subsection 15 (4) by 1 September 2011. Up until the end of the 2010/2011 academic year, a school with Estonian as the language of instruction may specify, in the third stage of study, the use of six weekly lessons in the school curriculum, and a school with a language of instruction other than Estonian, three weekly lessons.

(3) The learning environment shall be brought into conformity with the requirement set out for the physical environment in this Regulation by 1 September 2013.

(4) Until the situation has been brought into conformity with this Regulation, the school's learning and educational activities and curriculum must conform to the Government of the Republic Regulation no. 56, "National curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary schools" (RT I 2002, 20, 116; 2007, 61, 392).

(5) Until 1 September 2013, carrying out a creative work shall not be a condition for graduation from basic school.

(6) In the 2010/2011 academic year, schools where distance learning is implemented are obliged to create conditions create conditions for graduation as an external pupil for a person beyond the compulsory schooling age who has submitted a relevant written application to the school by 1 February of the academic year in progress.

§ 26. Repeal of regulation

Regulation No 14 of the Government of the Republic of 28 January 2010, “National curriculum for basic schools” (RT I 28.12.2010, 17) is hereby repealed.

Andrus Ansip
Prime Minister

Hanno Pevkur
Minister of Social Affairs, Acting as Minister of Education and Research

Heiki Loot
Secretary of State

[Annex 1](#)

[Annex 2](#)

[Annex 3](#)

[Annex 4](#)

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