# The Tiger Leap program in Estonian schools of general education


**Executive summary**

In Estonia the issue of education has been in the centre-point of attention for a number of years. The Tiger Leap program, which was envisaged as one of the catalysts of educational innovations, has been implemented since 1996. The vision states that in 2005 the Estonian educational system will develop the educational community in a conscious and purposeful manner and help Estonia in becoming a competitive player in the global information society. This audit examines only one aspect of the set of educational innovations – the readiness of the system of general educational to employ information and communication technology (ICT) facilities directly in the learning process.

The Tiger Leap program brought computers and Internet to the schools, but the implementation of the development plan of the Tiger Leap Plus program in 2001 to 2005 should create the preconditions for using ICT facilities as an integral part of the learning process in all Estonian schools. From 1997 to 2002 a total of 215 million kroons have been allocated to the Tiger Leap program from the state budget. The local governments have contributed 120 million kroons and the sponsors have added a further 5 millions. The SAO examined the implementation of measures envisaged in the Tiger Leap Plus development plan in 2001 and 2002, comparing data to the earlier periods where necessary.

As concerns the implementation of the Tiger Leap program, the SAO finds that by 2003 the minimum required degree of readiness to use ICT facilities in the learning process of the schools of general education on a regular basis has been achieved with regard to the preparation of teachers and the teaching aids (educational software and ICT infrastructure). All the main activities have been carried out on the initiative of the Tiger Leap Foundation and pursuant to the decisions of its Board. The goals set in the Tiger Leap Plus development plan (2001 to 2005) are feasible. However, the Ministry of Education and Research has failed to guide the implementation and furtherance of the development plan in an adequate manner. Neither has it linked the program to other strategy documents nor created an environment, which would motivate both teachers and students to use the new technology for essentially changing the learning process. As a result, only a part of the potential created in schools is exploited and the issues of preserving and developing this potential have not been solved.


**Proposals of the SAO to the Minister of Education and Research**

- To include in the framework requirements to the training of teachers a training module concerning the use of ICT facilities in the learning process and to establish the ICT competency requirements developed by the Ministry (but currently of an indicative nature) for subject teachers and to refer to these in the evaluation of teachers.
- To supplement the qualification requirements to teachers with provisions, which would facilitate the competency building of school managers in the area of information society and educational analysis, and to apply these to the higher officials of the Ministry in order to improve the management of development activities.
- To define the place of ICT and educational software among teaching aids and to co-ordinate the implementation of new teaching methods based thereon in all stages of study.
- To instruct subject-specific panels in helping schools to integrate ICT training in syllabuses so that these would be in line with the ICT competencies set out in the national curriculum by no later than September 1, 2004.
- To instruct the National Examination and Qualification Centre to develop and adopt standards for the evaluation of the ICT competencies of students for all stages of study and to begin with evaluation already in the academic year 2003/2004. To develop appropriate ICT competency requirements also for the 1st and 2nd stages of study.
- To establish for schools of general education compulsory ICT infrastructure standards and an up-to-date minimum list of ICT facilities necessary for tutorial work and to suggest to the Government that these should be taken into account in the establishment of the budget of the owners of schools (local government bodies).
- To concentrate the efforts of the Tiger Leap Foundation on the substantive development of educational environments with the aim of achieving the employment of ICT in tutorial work on a daily basis in all Estonian schools. To this end, the Foundation should co-operate with the National Examination and Qualification Centre.

***

The Ministry supports most of the proposals made to the Minister of Education and Research. The Ministry is preparing an action plan for the implementation of proposals made in the audit report as well as of other relevant activities, which need to be modified or launched. The Ministry will present this plan by April 30, 2003 the latest.

Margus Kurm
Head of Department