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Comments of Auditor General Alar Karis on National Audit Office's overview of participation of adults in vocational training

“Making education accessible not only to young people but to adults as well is and will remain extremely important, as the shortage of labour has created a need to refocus work, skills and knowledge on more technological solutions. In 2014 the share of people with no professional qualifications in the 25-64 age group in Estonia was 30.2%, which means that a large number of people have no primary education, or have primary, basic or general secondary education, but no professional education (vocational or higher education). The share of people with no professional qualifications is highest in the 25-29 age group (38% in 2014). The share of people with no professional qualifications is greater among men than women. This means that education is one of the most important guarantees of the long-term development of people and the state's economy, as it offers the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge required in present and future jobs on a labour market that is becoming increasingly focused on knowledge and technology.

“It is therefore understandable that learning is a big part of our everyday work. In addition to those whose educational pathway was cut short, it is also important for those who have already acquired higher education. Acquiring a specific vocation in addition to higher education allows these people to considerably expand the scope of their skills and knowledge, and feel more secure on the labour market. As the number of young people is decreasing, there is no risk that a person who is young or whose level of education is low will not be admitted by a vocational school because highly educated adults have filled all of the places. The audits of the National Audit Office indicate the same. One of the things the state has to turn more attention to is the dropout rate of vocational schools, which is over a fifth among students in all age groups, and clearly a reason for concern.

“This overview was driven by the desire to determine whether the much-reformed vocational education system can in any way influence people's progress in studies and working life in conditions where the number of young people is decreasing. The National Audit Office compared the progress of studies and work before vocational training with progress after the acquisition of vocational education and found that the results of students did improve – they got better jobs, higher wages and were more inclined to start their own companies. The results of adults with all levels of education improved in comparison with the time before their acquisition of vocational education. This means that everyone benefits.

However, many adults need even more flexible options to acquire the skills and knowledge required in the workplace. Access to education and flexible learning options at all levels of education will remain necessary for the future, as having the highest possible education is not the only thing of importance – we also need people whose education and skills are as diverse as possible.”