

Estonia

Tõnis Lukas

Minister of Education



Born in 1962, Mr. Tõnis Lukas Tallinn is a historian and politician. He graduated from the Tartu State University, Faculty of History. His Doctoral Studies were done at the University of Tartu. Mr. Tõnis Lukas became Teacher at Rõngu Elementary School. For ten years, he served as Lecturer at the University of Tartu. In 1992, he was appointed Director of Estonian National Museum. He was Delegate to the Congress of Estonia (1990-1992), Member of Tartu City Council (1993-1999), Member of Parliament of Estonia and Chairman of Cultural Affairs Committee (1995-1996) and Mayor of Tartu (1996-1997). In 1999, he was appointed Minister of Education.

Technological Progress for the Benefit of People

Dear colleagues, Estonia lies in the North but people who live here love tigers. For that reason we have the Tiger Leap Programme for general education schools and Tiger University Programme for higher education institutions.

Tigers, both small and big, are ambitious. So have been our targets. Since the mid- nineties we have consistently worked on the computerisation and internetisation of schools and local governments. During that time we have created an effective countrywide infrastructure. There is an average of 25 students per computer in Estonian general education schools, and it is worthwhile to note that this proportion is actually better in rural schools than in the city schools. 75% of all schools have permanent Internet connection and the rest have dialup facilities. With the infrastructure for general education well catered for, we are now dedicating more attention to teacher training. Our national Tiger Leap Plus Programme puts emphases to ICT as a teaching tool in various subject lessons.

There are common goals and values, many of which have been also expressed in the documents of this conference. But in addition to the “common”, each country has to have goals and values that each citizen may consider as “their own”. In this regard, Estonia is lucky. We have established a mechanism for democratic debate. For years, the Ministry of Education has worked closely together with the Estonian Education Forum. The Forum is a voluntary organisation of a broad basis that has brought together representatives of different interest groups. Together we have prepared a strategic document “Learning Estonia” where emphasis is on lifelong learning and creating preconditions for all our people for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience that would help them to cope successfully with personal life as well as with career and society.

We call upon every country to clarify what the concept of life-long learning actually means for us from the viewpoint of administration, legislation and finance and, last but not least, from the aspect of human resources.

Without answering the previously mentioned questions, the Tiger could leap nowhere. *☞*