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POLICY LEARNING IN ESTONIA: THE CASE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT POLICY

Master´s thesis

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I declare I have written the master's thesis independently.
All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates policy learning in Estonia in regard to youth unemployment policy. The aim is to find out whether changes in the aforementioned policy field are due to learning or whether they are just regulations imposed by the European Union. Youth unemployment itself has had several ups and downs in Estonia and considering the fact that it is a high priority within the European Union, it makes an ideal case study. For the purposes of the thesis, a distinction is made between policy change, policy transfer, and policy learning. Using document analysis and a survey complemented by additional interviews, the author has explored policy learning in Estonia. The result proves that both instrumental and social policy learning has taken place in regard to youth unemployment policy. Furthermore, single loop learning has been achieved in the policy field and there is also some evidence of double loop learning. Factors limiting the level of learning primarily consist of differences in policy-makers' individual opinions and beliefs.

Keywords: policy learning, youth unemployment, instrumental learning, social learning, single loop learning, double loop learning

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The European Union – EU

The Advocacy Coalition Framework – ACF

Single Loop Learning – SLL

Double Loop Learning – DLL

INTRODUCTION

Estonia regained its independence on 20 August 1991. The period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, has seen different forms of policy transfer and copying of "best practices" in order to rebuild a democracy. As time passed, the pressures on structural changes started to diminish and Estonia along with other Eastern-European countries began moving towards more in-depth policy learning processes (Savi and Randma-Liiv 2007, 67–79). A change, however, came in 2004 with European Union membership. Several laws and policies needed to be updated or restructured and new policies also needed to be adopted as Estonia's practices needed to be in accordance with the acquis communautaure. For instance, one big push towards innovation in the policy field has been from the pre-structural funding from the European Union that forced Estonia to start thinking about the management of those funds by developing its first strategic documents and policies (Suurna and Kattel 2010, 6) Therefore, Estonia had to start coming up with effective ways of learning new processes.

Youth policy was first regulated internally after Estonia regained its independence by a document adopted on 17 February 1999 called the Estonian Youth Work Act, which set the legal foundation for the organization of Estonian youth policy and describes the different principles and defines terminology. The document has remained relatively unchanged until 2010 when a new Youth Work Act was adopted, which defines the principles in more detail.

Other relevant documents that have guided and are the basis for youth policy in Estonia have been the Estonian Youth Work Concept of 2001 together with the Estonian Youth Work Development Plan for 2001–2004, the Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013, and the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan for 2014–2020. Therefore, the planning of youth policy in Estonia has taken place three times and the documents suggest that youth policy planning has become more integrated and covers different aspects and challenges that youth are facing; therefore, suggesting that policy change has taken place. Policy change itself, however, does not indicate improvement or learning. Therefore, it is also vital to know if there has been policy learning behind those changes or whether the reason behind the changes has just been a plain transfer of policies from the EU.

Youth policy is a broader concept which includes aspects like youth work, health, inclusion, crime prevention, unemployment, etc. The Estonian objective for youth policy is to "develop and implement coordinated and purposeful actions following the actual needs and

challenges of young people in different spheres of life" ("Youth policy"). This paper will focus on youth unemployment (from age 15 to 24) as this is one of the areas that is still a concern not only in Estonia but in Europe as well, and needs more attention from policy-makers. Although, the youth unemployment rate has dropped in Estonia after the crisis years, from 33% in 2010 to 18.7% in 2013, it is still higher than it was before the financial crisis (12% in 2008). Youth have always been the most vulnerable group in society when it comes to employment due to their lack of prior experience. In addition, not getting a job in your home country encourages the emigration of young people, which is also a considerable concern in Estonia right now. Therefore, it is crucial that policies support and prepare the youth for entering the job market as successfully as possible.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate policy learning in Estonia in regard to youth unemployment policy to find out whether there has been any learning taken place in the aforementioned policy field or whether the changes in the policy are due to the European Union imposing regulations. Therefore, the main research question is as follows: has policy learning occurred in Estonia with regard to youth unemployment policy and if so, what kind of learning? In order to answer the research question, single and double loop learning approaches will be applied to the policy changes to find evidence of learning as well as evidence of instrumental and social learning will be looked for.

Extensive literature is available on policy transfer and innovation; however, policy learning itself has not been studied that widely in Estonia. The most prominent scholars in this field include Hans C. Jenkins-Smith, Paul A. Sabatier and Peter A. Hall. In Estonia, policy learning has been studied by Margit Suurna, Rainer Kattel and Marju Lauristin. When it comes to youth unemployment, however, Marge Unt (2011) as well as Erika Teras (2012) have done thorough research in the field.

The introductory part of the thesis provides an overview of the situation of youth policy in Estonia and presents the questions the author intends to analyze and answer. The thesis then goes on to present the theoretical framework. Firstly, the concept of policy learning will be introduced by comparing it to other related concepts such as policy transfer as well as policy change, and secondly, instrumental and social learning approaches will be presented, making up the first chapter of the paper.

The second chapter focuses on the methodology. This part of the thesis explains the methods and sources used as well as the data gathering processes. The third chapter explains

the empirical findings focusing on the case of youth policy in Estonia. To that end, a document analysis will be presented together with the results of a questionnaire and interviews in order to find evidence of learning and answer the research question. The thesis ends with a conclusion which summarizes the paper and also proposes future research in the field of youth unemployment.

1. POLICY LEARNING

1.1. The Concept of Policy Learning

This paper begins with an attempt to define policy learning so that the approach could be applied to policy change in the youth unemployment field in Estonia. From the early stages of this research project it became evident that policy learning literature is complex and often several authors have different views on how learning takes place, what is learned, and also who learns. Therefore, several different concepts have been developed such as political learning, policy change, policy transfer, and so on. Therefore, in order to understand the concept of policy learning those similar terms must also be discussed. This paper argues that there is a difference between those three concepts, which can be of course and ideally are interconnected, but which can also exist independently.

The importance of studying policy learning is also stressed by the authors in this field. Sanderson (2002, 1) has mentioned that there is an increased need for evidence-based policy and emphasizes the importance of policy and program evaluation for achieving an effective and interactive governance of complex social systems. The European Union also supports benchmarking and the exchange of best practices and understanding the dynamics that drive learning; therefore, making policy learning an essential component of EU policy-making (Nedergaard 2006, 312) should be a principle of all member states according to the Open Method of Coordination which is an instrument of the Lisbon Strategy. Consequently, research on the policy learning field is relevant and, even though it has not been studied that widely in Estonia, is becoming more popular in Europe.

As already mentioned, scholars have developed and written about different concepts, such as policy learning, political learning, policy transfer, policy innovation, policy change and so on. Some of those will be discussed in more detail, but a distinction must be made between all those concepts. Firstly, it should be mentioned that political learning, often confused with policy learning, is concerned with politics as a whole and not with individual policies within its system. Even though May (1992) classifies political learning as one of the three types of learning, Skogstad (2007, 4) argues that political learning is more like the consequence of policy learning as opposed to being a concrete type. Therefore, in this paper political learning will not be discussed as a type of policy learning.

If the word "policy" itself refers to a program of actions adopted by a person, group or government, or the set of principles which they are based on, then "policy learning" refers to a structured "change in thinking" about a specific policy issue (Kemp and Weehuizen 2005, 3). Therefore, policy learning is not about policies taken off-the-peg but supports the development of tailored national policies including identifying policy options and one's own system as well as understanding processes of change and issues that could rise with certain policies (Raffe 2011). In other words, policy-makers must have an understanding and knowledge of their own policies and the issues regarding the policy field in order to make changes accordingly and induce learning. Here, a clear distinction can be made between policy learning and policy transfer. This is a relevant distinction as it is easy to transfer policies from the EU but it is not that easy to revise one's entire system and make the policies also suitable to the country's own needs and deficiencies.

To illustrate, policy transfer implies copying. Copying (also known as mimicking or borrowing) means the adaption of policy ideas without a real improved understanding of how certain policy problems, objectives or interventions work. Learning does not necessarily have to mean reaching a "refined understanding of policy cause and effect" but it should "entail judgement about whether a given policy tool is still preferred relative to the alternatives currently being promoted" which copying does not (May 1992, 333). Raffe (2011) also suggests that even though policy-makers want to learn from abroad they often tend to fall back on or stick to borrowing by identifying and transferring the "best practice" from abroad and miss out on the opportunity of a more productive policy learning process (Raffe 2011). Copying, therefore, is seen as much more time efficient for civil servants than going through in-depth policy learning, as well as being cheaper as no observation, visits, or expert opinions are involved. Therefore, this approach does not include the vital component of knowledge about one's own system.

Emulation has also been mentioned by some of the authors and the process, on the contrast to copying, has a slightly more positive connotation. Dictionaries, for example, typically define emulation as wanting to do something as good as somebody else because of admiration and also trying to meet or exceed the latter's achievements or good deed, whereas copying is a plain imitation. In the case of policy emulation, the policy of another country, which serves as a blueprint, is considered an example to be adapted and hopefully improved upon (Bennet 1991, 221). Even though emulation is seen as a more positive way of policy

learning, neither of them are the most effective as plain policy transfer still leaves lot of room for failure as it does not give that much opportunity for learning. For instance, with rational learning, actors investigate all information available and observe experiences in order to draw conclusions in the same manner – therefore knowledge is involved. With emulation and copying, on the other hand, the state may just imitate another state because it is a peer or because the other country is well off, and so the policies "must" function successfully (Meseguer 2005, 72). Therefore, those two policy transfer processes do not provide a full basis for learning. In other words, policy transfer literature seeks to understand the process where policies move from exporter to importer jurisdiction (Stone 2001), and therefore, is not so focused on the questions of if, why, how, and whether learning has been taken place.

It must of course be mentioned that those two processes can also be connected as mentioned earlier. Transfers of ideas or programs can and should be the result of a deeper and prior process of learning or observation; therefore, it can be said that learning is the process that can lead to policy transfer and be the cause of it, and making transfer itself the outcome (Stone 2001). Therefore, policy transfer definitely does not have a negative connotation in this paper but it is vital to know if it has occurred independently or together with learning.

Looking at history, policy transfer has been common for Estonia and other post-Soviet countries, as after the collapse of the Soviet Union there was considerable pressure to start rebuilding their countries. They did not have any previous experience of their own and neither did they have time or finances to start observing and lesson-drawing. However, since then, the countries have moved from plain copying or emulation to more efficient, effective, and in-depth practices of policy learning (Savi and Randma-Liiv 2007, 67–79).

Policy learning, therefore, refers to a process of developing policies as a result of drawing lessons about the effectiveness of particular policies using either international or one's own past experiences (Alexiadou 2014). Meaning, there is observing of experiences and evaluation involved. It is important to also use international experience to improve one's own policies rather than taking the easy way and providing a "quick fix" to policy problems. Learning from others and lesson-drawing can help develop policies that are tailor-made for a specific nation or environment (Raffe 2011). Morrissey and Nelson (2003), however, question whether the policy-makers have sufficient time to learn the best policy or will they just eventually select and stay with the "wrong" policy just because they did not have time. In that case no learning will occur. Both Raffe (2011) and Meseguer (2005, 69–70) agree that it is

important to learn from both failed and successful experiments, not just best working practices, as failed experiments can provide alternative courses of action and an insight into what can go wrong when adopting or designing new reforms. Skogstad (2007, 7), additionally, insists that policy learning or change will not take place just because a certain policy has failed, as for that to happen those sources of failure need to be constructed and recognized by political actors. Overall, with both failed and "best" practices, "judgements about transferability should be the conclusion and not the starting point of the research" (Raffe 2011), meaning that before deeming a policy to be failed or successful, it should be analyzed and the right conclusions drawn. This is also a positive example of policy transfer where first there has been learning involved before adopting and adapting the policy.

Raffe (2011), additionally, says that using international experience and making comparisons can help to understand our own system as well as "make the familiar strange" by showcasing its strengths and weaknesses. Examples of this learning-by-observing in Estonia can also be seen in the youth policy field, as Estonia has a successful system of giving out youth workers' qualifications, and there have been delegations, such as from Austria, that have visited to learn about Estonian practices.

The second method of learning, besides lesson-drawing, is "learning by doing". This trial-and-error method presumes that policymakers learn exclusively by doing – they try and they might fail but the outcome will show the effectiveness of the policy and then further decisions can be made based on the outcome and the policy-makers' beliefs about the existing alternatives (Morrissey and Nelson 2003). Therefore, a common feature of policy learning methods is the evaluation of information and performance, which according to Sanderson (2002, 5) should be a characteristic of modern government as it helps to improve accountability and provide a picture of what works and what does not. Therefore, having reliable evidence to lean on is crucial and enhances policy learning.

The trial-and-error method could often be used by countries who have no prior experience to learn on, such as the post-Soviet countries at the beginning of the 1990s. The lessons that the "new" countries were able to learn with this method were insights about policy preferences and constraints, as the continuous testing of the feasibility of a policy can provide (May 1992, 333). Birkland (2011, 264) adds that learning from the problems that rise during the implementation process can help policy designers understand ways to better structure those policies so that they have a positive effect. But the opportunity to learn must be used, as there

is a risk of not recognizing one's own failure, and therefore, adapting to it may result in negative effects (Birkland 2011, 273). Raffe (2011) also agrees that the need for constant innovation in policies and the weakness of the institutional memory of government structures often results in not recognizing the past and the mistakes made.

It is also important to note that any observation of experience or evaluation "provides a basis for but does not guarantee learning" (May 1992, 333). Therefore, we are reminded that the political actors involved have an important role to play in order to use those learning opportunities. The role of actors involved in policy-making can influence learning based on their opinions, ideas, beliefs, etc. The question that also arises here is who are those actors who are learning? This point will be elaborated later in the paper.

Earlier, the importance of knowledge in learning was mentioned. One definition of learning, therefore, can be the process that "leads to the development of "consensual knowledge" by specialists about the functioning of state and society but which is also accepted as valid by decision-making elites" (Stone 2001). This view should not be confused with the technocratic view of politics, where decisions are made by the experts from technical fields, which sometimes also has a negative connotation. On the contrary, there still exists a level of elected politicians, but they seek advisory opinions from specialists in certain fields, whose knowledge might be missing from the state officials, and therefore, are a vital source for relevant and helpful information. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) call this an advocacy coalition, a system that includes different actors from different positions or institutions but who are all involved in the same policy field and have the opportunity to influence policy outcomes.

Several other authors also put emphasis on knowledge as a source of learning. Kemp and Weehuizen (2005, 3) describe knowledge as "processed information" in the sense that meaning has been attached to the information or to prior knowledge. Sanderson (2002, 3) adds that knowledge about policy interventions and the changes that they achieve in the social system, and also about how to promote improvement through more effective policies, can improve government effectiveness. These views do not necessarily mean gaining knowledge from advocacy coalition actors, as there are also other ways for receiving new information such as observing, lesson-drawing, etc. Nonetheless, gaining new information is a positive definition of learning because if politicians had all the necessary knowledge about a certain situation then they could adjust their strategies to achieve their core beliefs and alter the policy instruments in a manner that serves their own interest. This is an example that could produce policy change

but not necessarily result in learning. Therefore, learning is a voluntary act (Meseguer 2005, 72). Government officials must have an incentive to take on information from elsewhere and be open to learning. Here, the role of research and evidence can also be emphasized again as it takes away from the role of beliefs, making them less influential in policy decisions (Morrissey and Nelson 2003).

Therefore, when receiving new knowledge from others is seen as one of the views of policy learning, some authors place a lot of importance on the role of beliefs and ideas in policy learning. The concept of beliefs, according to Bandelow (2005, 5), is crucial and not to be overlooked, as it assumes that the beliefs of policy elites are arranged at different levels – a deep and fundamental core level, a policy core including positions about the policy area, and secondary aspects like instrumental decisions within the subsystem (also see Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, 31). It can be argued, however, that the role of knowledge and beliefs are both important, as one can influence the other. For instance, gaining new information on a certain matter can make an actor change his or her beliefs or attitudes. According to Birkland (2011, 275), learning is exactly that – "the process by which participants use information and knowledge to develop, test, and refine their beliefs – the beliefs that motivate political action as well as the beliefs that find their way into policies." Levy (1994, 311) also adds that "a change in beliefs or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs" can be the result of observation or interpretation of experience when new knowledge was gained. Therefore, both the knowledge and beliefs of actors involved in decision-making are integral parts of policy learning.

At the beginning of the chapter, three terms were introduced – policy learning, policy transfer, and policy change. The first two have already been discussed, therefore, the latter will also be briefly explained. Policy learning is often tied to policy change, and rightfully so. Ideally they are connected processes as it is hoped that learning would always lead to a change in policies, otherwise, what would be the point of leaning if there is no positive outcome. However, it is also crucial to realize that sometimes learning can occur without resulting in policy change, and vice versa, policy change can occur without learning, making it hard to understand if learning has actually taken place (Nedergaard 2006, 313). For example, policies can change if there is some sort of external or also internal political pressure not directly related to the effectiveness of the policy in question. Therefore, this paper will not only try to find

change in the youth unemployment policies but also to detect if learning has been the result of the change.

All in all, this first part of the paper focused on understanding the concept of policy learning and how it is connected to other similar terms in the field – policy transfer and policy change. For the purpose of this study, the methods of policy transfer are not regarded as learning, making an interesting case for finding learning in Estonia when so many of the policies come from the EU. Additionally, the role of policy and program evaluation and research for learning was emphasized, as it can help to see what has gone wrong in the past or what should be changed to improve policies. Furthermore, it was found that both the knowledge and beliefs of actors involved in policy-making are crucial for learning. In addition, the importance of researching policy learning in today's political arena was brought out as was the reason for selecting it as the focus of the study. Firstly, policy learning is highly prioritized by the European Union, and therefore, it is an area that should also receive more focus in Estonia. Secondly, policy learning is often a cause for other processes such as policy change and policy transfer. Therefore, understanding the process that leads to these, offers added value.

1.2. Factors Affecting Learning

In the previous chapter it was already mentioned that knowledge and beliefs are crucial for policy learning, however, there are more than just two factors that can affect learning. Some factors may induce it and some, on the other hand, may create obstacles. Stone (2001) also brings out the importance of those internal and external factors besides beliefs and knowledge that can influence policy arrangements and that can either promote harmonization or fragmentation. When harmonization applies to a situation where certain concepts are broadly accepted as descriptions of the social reality known as learning, then fragmentation means that a conceptual consensus concerning the social reality has not been reached (Nedergaard 2006, 315). It does not necessarily mean that no new information was gained but it does imply that no learning concerning a certain policy has been taken place. Or at least it implies for the difficulty of learning when there is no consensus between the decision-makers. This view is also coherent with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) which emphasizes the necessity of shared core beliefs and values of the actors. Lauristin et al (1997) calls all those factors that

affect learning (beliefs, norms, values, traditions, knowledge, rules, etc.) to be part of a bigger political culture.

Norms as internal factors give important reasons for why a certain actions were taken or a choice was made (Eising 2002, 90). For instance, if a policy innovation takes place elsewhere then that is not sufficient for another country to adopt the same policy just because it was successful somewhere else. Nedergaard (2006, 313) also agrees that norms regulate behavior and are the shared collective understanding. However, norms can cause both, fragmentation and harmonization, depending on how they are used and in which setting. Often general norms do not give policy-makers a clear "do" or "do not" and, thus, a lot is depending on the interpretation of those same policy-makers (Eising 2002, 90) whether a certain decision that is made will lead to learning or not. It is up to them to make the final decision. Meseguer (2005, 78) also mentions that since decision-makers are affected by their beliefs and norms when making decisions then bounded learning is more visible in the real world rather than rational learning where all decisions are based on rational choices. Thus, for policies to converge, those beliefs and norms must be shared by politicians so that they would make decisions in the same manner – this, however, is quite unlikely. Very rarely it happens that all policy-makers completely agree on something. Additionally, it is also personal interests that can affect the decision-making. Therefore, for learning to take place a common ground must be found among policy-makers.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) also bring out the role of an authority figure, or "policy broker" according to the authors, based on professional and scientific knowledge as having a big influence on learning because that person is seen relatively neutral by all. Here, it is again not meant technocrats but more like specialist who give advice or who get paid for conducting neutral research and then presenting it to the government. It has become quite regular for governmental bodies to "recruit" an entity to do some work for them that does not require decision-making but rather things like measuring the influences of policies in society, or consumer/market research, etc. According to Nedergaard (2006, 316) "neutrality and a commonly accepted use of language can be extremely constructive for the learning process as participants tend to be more willing to listen to such actors." Therefore, an authoritative figure may have the opportunity to influence the process and direct the outcome. Even though these "policy brokers" are seen as neutral then even they have their own beliefs, norms and interests but those people´s knowledge will also provide a balancing effect.

According to Nedergaard (2006, 316-17) there are five factors that affect learning which can also be taken into account when analyzing learning in the youth unemployment field:

1. Learning is more likely when a committee meets regularly;
2. Learning is more likely when a committee is insulated from direct political pressure;
3. Learning is more likely when a committee is confronted with indisputable evidence of policy failure:
4. Learning is more likely in committees where individuals are willing to reach a common position;
5. Learning is more likely when a committee includes an authoritative member with analytical capabilities or experience beyond the ordinary.

Some of those have already been discussed or are similar to some other authors´ views such as the common positions of actors or having an individual whose opinion is valued based on his knowledge or experience. An interesting point by Nedergaard is, for example, the frequency of meetings. On the one hand, it makes sense as more will get discussed and time is always valuable. On the other hand, it does not seem likely that core beliefs of actors would change just because of the frequent meetings. Perhaps it could just provide a basis, then, for sharing information and knowledge that can actually influence the belief system.

Additionally, policy failure is often discussed in the literature. Policy failure- politically and socially defined- provides a stimulus for learning about how to make better policy (Birkland 2011, 275). It being a proxy indicator for the success of the employment policy (a high level of unemployment), thus, can then be expected to promote learning as policy actors will be looking for new solutions to the problems they confront (Nedergaard 2006, 315). Or at least, it provides an understanding of what not to do. Therefore, having an example which should not be fallowed should make it easier to strive for policy innovation. During the economic recession in 2010 Estonian youth unemployment was one of the highest in the EU and that can definitely be considered as a failure. Whether it has provided a stimulus for making better policies in Estonia or not will be found out in the last chapter.

When talking about learning and the policy processes in EU member states then similarities can be drawn with constructivist learning theory which implies to gaining new information and knowledge through interaction and starting to see the world in new ways as a socially constructed reality (Wittgenstein 1953, 169). Constructivism has often been used in different disciplines and is also well suited to EU studies to explain the internalizing of laws.

Therefore, the membership of the European Union provides a really good environment for learning as there is a continuous interaction between the member states together with having official documents such as the Open Method Coordination which promote learning. For this paper, the following hypostasis concerning policy learning can be conducted:

H1: Learning is more likely when actors involved share common position and opinions about a specific policy issue;

H2: Learning is more likely when there has been evidence of policy failure;

H3: Learning is more likely when there is evidence about the effectiveness of a policy in previous periods;

H4: Lot of the learning takes place due to the EU membership.

1.3. Approaches of Learning

1.3.1. Individual vs Collective

There is a big debate among authors over who learns – more precisely if organizations and institutions also can learn or is that just restricted to individuals such as elected state officials and civil servants, non-state actors or advocacy coalition member (Birkland 2011, 273). The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith has become one of the most used learning approaches among scholars. The theory is based on two assumptions: firstly, policy actors follow hierarchical structured belief systems where the "core" beliefs can be distinguished from the "secondary" ones; and secondly, actors join advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems based on common beliefs and that is where the learning takes place (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, 5). The theory goes deeper by dividing actors involved in policy-making into subsystems and the subsystem on the other hand into advocacy coalitions based on the shared values and beliefs. Therefore, the ACF is more concerned with the individual learning as belief system cannot be identified with an organizational entity. That is something that is personal and attributable to individuals.

In contrast, however, Birkland brings out that a nonhuman entity can learn through experience by getting feedback and then changing its behavior accordingly. For that an organization must rely on its institutional memory and information storage whereas individuals just keep the information and experiences in their minds (Birkland 2011, 273-274). That would

then be more similar to a technical learning as organizational entities do not have emotions that influence individuals. However, the change in the organizational behavior and the governmental learning can be observed by witnessing the growth in intelligence and also the increase in effectiveness (Moyson 2014, 38). It can be measured by the collective decisions that are being made on the group level.

Overall, the opinion of authors is varying when it comes to the topic of who learns. Both Bandelow (2005, 4) and Nedergaard (2006, 312-313) agree that learning can occur on the individual and collective level in communities or networks if there is a change of beliefs and attitudes based on new information not based on power shift. Kemp and Weehuizen, on the other hand, write that policy is designed and implemented by a range of organizations and thus policy learning is a form of collective learning and being closer to the literature of organizational learning because the interaction in organizations is not only between individual frames of thinking. It is much more complex to find out who learns what and why (Kemp and Weehuizen 2005, 7). May (1992) and Stone (2001) agree that those distinctions between individual and collective learning can be made as the policy elites consist of two learning agents – (1) the governmental actors, elected officials, and relevant agency officials; and (2) leaders of relevant organizations, business associations, trade unions, who also have a stake in the certain issue. Thus, it can be concluded that learning can take place both on individual and collective level. Often these lines, however, are blurred as there are always individuals behind organizations.

When earlier it was mentioned that individuals in real life are largely influenced by their beliefs and knowledge, thus being involved in bounded learning, then how rational or bounded are organizations in their learning. According to Moyson, not purely rational either. Even in organizational learning "the process depends on conditions and barriers as psychology, interests or politics, which bias the treatment of information with respect to the performance criterion that should be attained. Most often, however, organizational learning studies do not point to the fact that the definition of the performance criterion itself may be interested and political" (Moyson 2014, 40). Therefore, no matter who is considered as the learning agent, in neither collective nor individual cases can learning be completely rational.

Therefore, some authors (Birkland 2007; Meseguer 2005) bring out that individuals and organizations that are involved in policy issues are bounded rationally and, thus, trying to make rational decisions in those groups with limited analytical capabilities. Meaning that they are

striving towards being rational but cannot as their learning is influenced by irrational factors such as beliefs. However, that does not mean that people cannot make better decision but the opposite, they want to improve and they want to solve problems. The rationality of political actors and institutions comes out in the ability to draw conclusions that a certain event provides and in an effort to learn (Birkland 2007, 9). With rational learning politicians and decision-makers would have full analytical information-processing capacity and they could analyze all available sources and information in order to make decisions, whereas, with bounded learning only the relevant information is focused on. Therefore, the difference lies in the way the information and experience is scaled (Meseguer 2005, 72). Ultimately, even though governments and governmental actors are expected to be as rational as possible then in the real world that is not the case and thus rational learning is influenced by and mixed with bounded learning.

This paper is more focused on the collective learning as it was already brought out that the governmental learning is more similar to organizational learning as decisions are being formed and made collectively. And since this paper seeks to find out the policy learning in Estonian youth unemployment field then it is more important to see whether the government has learned instead of the individuals. Different decisions concerning organizational learning can be brought out to see what would be the most useful for this paper (see Table 1).

Table 1: Definitions of Organizational Learning

Authors	**Definitions**
Duncan & Weiss (1979)	Organizational learning is the process within the organization by which knowledge about action-outcome relationship and the effect of the environment on these relationships is developed.
Daft & Weick (1984)	Organizational learning is the process by which knowledge about action outcome relationships between the organization and environment is developed.
Fiol & Lyles (1985)	Organizational learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding.
Levitt & March (1988)	Organizational learning is seen as encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behavior.

Stata (1989)	Organizational learning occurs thorough shared insights, knowledge, and mental models. Thus organization can learn as fast the slowest link learns. Learning builds on past knowledge and experience – that is, on memory.
Huber (1991)	An entity learns if through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed.
Argyris & Schon (1996)	Organizational learning is a process of detecting and correcting error, which means the mismatch of outcomes to expectations.
Lipshitz et al (1996)	Organizational learning is the process through which organization members develop shared values and knowledge based on past experience of themselves and others.
Templeton, Lewis, and Snyder (2002)	Organizational learning is the set of actions (knowledge, acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory) within the organization that intentionally and unintentionally influences positive organizational change.
Berrends, Boersma, and Weggeman (2003)	Organizational learning is the development of knowledge held by organizational members that is being accepted as knowledge and is applicable in organizational activities, therewith implying a (potential) change in those activities.

Source: Jang (2010, 12-13)

Lot of those definitions again place an emphasis on knowledge. That is where learning begins as was also discussed earlier in this paper. Therefore, in order for an organization to learn there must be new knowledge gained. However, some authors (Lipshitz et al (1996); Berrends, Boersma, and Weggeman (2003)) especially bring out the role of individuals as well. Thus, the role of individual cannot be overlooked in organizational learning as they are the ones making decision in organizations. Although, those decisions and the knowledge must be accepted and shared by the organization as a whole as well. According to Argyris and Schön (Vliet 2014) employees are an organization's building blocks and they provide an overview of the organizational memory. This paper, however, does not agree with Templeton, Lewis, and Snyder´s (2002) view that learning is a set of actions that unintentionally influences positive

organizational change. Agents must acknowledge the actions taken and understand how the learning occurs as there are lot of research and analysis conducted for that. Any positive change is of course a good thing but it does not necessarily indicate learning. Therefore, learning should be seen as intentional and the fallowing definition of policy learning can be concluded for this paper: policy learning is a process of developing national policies as a result of improved knowledge or a change in thinking about a specific policy issue.

Overall, in this part of the paper it was found out that both collective and individual learning can be studied in the context of policy learning. If the first focuses on the collective decision-making then the latter is a more restrictive view that only portrays individuals involved in politics as sole learning-agents (May 1992, 334). However, in real world individual and collective level may be defused as the policy learning includes both of the levels, therefore, it might be hard to distinguish when the organization has learned or when the actor in the organization has learned. For this paper, however, the organizational learning will be examined.

1.3.2. Social vs Instrumental

This part of the paper will make a distinction between instrumental and social learning. May (1992) has focused his paper on the contrast between learning about means and learning about goals regards to learning from policy failure and has divided policy learning into three types: instrumental, social, and political learning. All of those approaches can be attributed to organizational learning, however, as mentioned earlier then only the first two will be discussed in this paper (see Table 1). May has drawn a list of variables that can be searched for when looking for any evidence of learning. Therefore, the following table will be very useful for this thesis and for the analysis part.

Table 2: Instrumental vs Social Policy Learning

	Policy learning	
	Instrumental	Social
Entails learning about:	Viability of policy interventions or implementation design	Social construction of a policy or a problem
Foci:	Policy instruments or implementation design	Policy problem, scope of policy, policy goals

May lead to	Understanding of source of policy failure, or improved policy performance in reaching existing goals	Changed expectations concerning existing goals, or redefinition of policy goals
Requisite conditions:	Improved understanding of policy instruments or implementation based on experience or formal evaluation	Improved understanding of alteration of dominant causal beliefs about a policy problem or solution within the relevant policy domain.
Prima Facie indicators:	Policy redesign entailing change in instruments for carrying out policy – e.g. inducements, penalties, assistance, funding, timing of implementation, organizational structures.	Policy redefinition entailing change in policy goals or scope – e.g. policy direction, target groups, rights bestowed by the police.
Potentially confused with:	Superstitious learning involving presumed superiority of given instrument, mimicking behavior.	Policy redefinition unrelated to change in dominant causal beliefs within policy domain.
Requires evidence of:	Increased understanding of policy instruments or implementation	Change in dominant casual beliefs within the relevant policy domain.

Source: Peter J. May (1992)

May (1992, 335) describes instrumental policy learning as gaining viable lessons and knowledge about policy instruments or also policy design. The emphasis is on the word "instruments" and the mechanism that are used in politics or that set the policies. Instruments give politicians a change to play around and use tactics and strategies for achieving the goals that they desire (Alcantara 2009, 327). Birkland, additionally, connects instrumental learning with lesson-drawing but deems them different in the sense that instrumental learning can also involve both indirect and direct experience with the performance of policy instruments. The author also brings out that is easy to investigate policy change and find evidence of instrumental

learning by looking at legislations and regulations (Birkland 2011, 16). Thus, the design of the policy is important for improving the policy itself.

When examining the documents it can first be identified if any changes have taken place in the instruments of the policies and then the reason behind the changes must be examined. For finding evidence of instrumental learning in the Estonian youth unemployment policy, youth policy development plans will be analyzed. However, this also means that instrumental approach can only be observed over time as the policies do not change that fast. Jenkins and Sabatier (1999) point out that policy change needs at least a decade because at least one formulation/implementation/reformation cycle has to be completed. Youth unemployment policy, thus, provides a good basis for research as the planning of youth policy has taken place 3 times in Estonia.

Social learning according to May (1992, 332) is the process of gaining viable lessons about the overall social construction of policy issues including the goal and scope of the policy. This theory "goes beyond the simple adjustments in program management to the heart of the problem itself (Birkland 2011, 16). It focuses on the adoption of new normative and cognitive scripts that are in accordance with the shifting of the policy goals and beliefs of the actors (Alcantara 2009, 327). Therefore, when the instrumental learning focuses on people´s improved understanding of the policy instruments, then social learning focuses on the problem itself. To illustrate, the empowerment of youth is often supported also in the employment sector. For instance, with instrumental learning policy-makers may understand that changing the regulations and lowering the voting age in elections gives the youth more empowerment but they might not know the "how" behind it. Or even more, how have their own beliefs about the problem or solution concerning youth empowerment improved is the question with social learning - do they even see it as an issue. According to Hall the problem with the social learning theory is that the concept emphasizes the role of ideas in policy making but the overarching image of the way in which ideas fit into the policy process or a clear conception of how those ideas might change has yet to develop (Hall 1993, 278). Thus, examining both social and instrumental approaches will provide a better overview of the learning taken place, especially about what the learning has been taking place.

Additionally, to find evidence of learning based on May´s approach (Table 1) it will also be helpful to make a distinction between a single loop and double loop learning developed by Argyris and Schön (Figure 1) when analyzing the results from qualitative and quantitative

research. In literature this approach is often used when finding evidence of organizational learning, thus, this approach is also useful for this paper. When the single loop learning refers to learning about the policy process itself and making adjustments accordingly then the second involves a deeper learning about the fundamental assumptions about that policy (Birkland 2011, 275). Thus, this classification helps to understand the level of learning that has taken place in the youth unemployment field in Estonia.

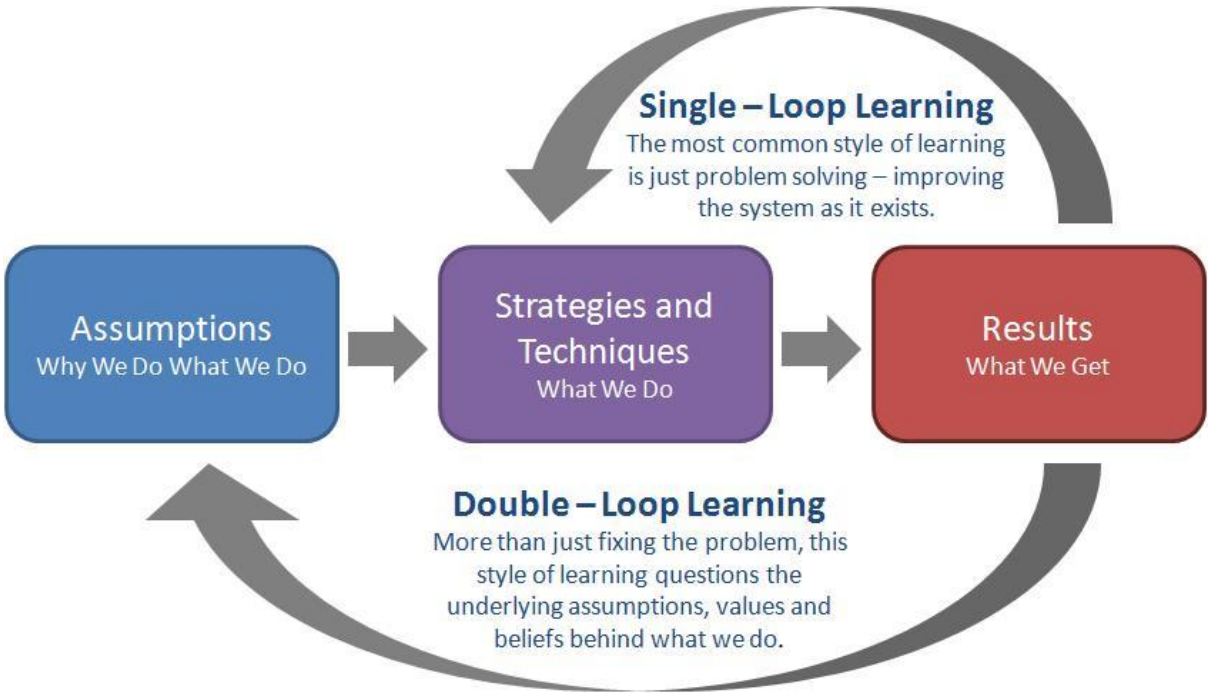

Figure 1: Single vs Double Loop Learning
Source: Romeropereda, 2012

Therefore, with the single loop the strategy is changed based on feedback or evaluations but the aim and the policy goal stays the same (Aufenanger 2012, 48). Meaning that the policy is being improved by developing new strategies or just by adjusting the existing tools for achieving the same goal. The strategies can be changed by coming up with different approaches if it is learnt that the previous ones were not effective enough. This level of learning does not include a deep analysis of the policy issue nor produce drastic changes in the policy and, therefore, the real issue might not be dealt with at all, but sometimes even smaller changes can bring positive results. "Double loop learning on the other hand requires organizations to drill down and look for the recurring, often systemic failures and the values that govern such

behavior and by changing these before action may be said to have achieved second order or higher learning" (Argyris 2002). Therefore, double loop learning may also bring changes in the policy goals as it means thoroughly revising the policy area and taking actions accordingly. Often the double loop learning results in completely new instruments or measures together with a new strategy and goals. If May´s classification helps to find the type of learning that has taken place then the systematization of single and double loop learning will, as already mentioned, help to understand to what extent the learning has been taken place.

Table 3: Comparison of Surface Change and Deep Change

Surface Change (caused by single loop learning)	• Focus on short-term result, quick fix • Accepting ideas and information passively • Effective for maintenance of norms • Normally top-down, less true involvement from staff
Deep Change (caused by double loop learning)	• Focus on long-term result, more sustainable fix • Change "taken for granted" • Challenge underlying assumptions • Change values, norms, beliefs, systems, practices • Change culture • Change paradigm • More involvement from all stakeholders

Source: Kantamara and Ractham (2014, 57)

Kantamara and Ractham (2014) also suggest two levels of change related to single and double loop learning – surface change and deep change (see Table 3). Thus, again we are reminded that single loop learning is not as deep as a double loop learning and does not result in thorough changes in the policies as the real issue about a policy problem is not dealt with. It does offer more like a quick fix to a policy problem. Therefore, DLL should be strived for in order to achieve innovation in public sector.

To sum up, this chapter has given us an overview of two contrasting types of learning. If one focuses more on the community as a whole and the actors involved in the community then the other is more concerned with the technical or legal aspects that form the basis for

policies. May emphasizes that in order to study instrumental learning "documentation of policy elites´ increased understanding of policy instruments or design" is needed. For this paper, that can be achieved by analyzing relevant documents regarding youth unemployment. On the other hand, for finding evidence of social learning, policy-makers´ beliefs and opinion must be changed or reaffirmed in the course of policy experience (May 1992, 332-338). For that, a survey will be conducted in a form of a questionnaire and an additional interviews will be carried out in order to find out about the personal ideas and interests of the actors involved in the youth unemployment policy field.

2. METHODOLOGY

The thesis project began with collecting secondary data, which provided an informative background to the topic and helped form a theoretical framework for later use in the empirical part of the study.

The thesis is based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative approach focused on document analysis during which data was collected by analyzing official documents, reports and publications related to youth unemployment. The dependent variable for the paper is policy change. The document analysis, therefore, helps to better understand youth unemployment policy in Estonia, and also provides an opportunity to find evidence of learning by examining whether there has been a change in policy instruments, design, and so on, as ideally governmental learning should also be reflected in policy documents. In addition, the qualitative part is important because, as Kemp and Weehuizen (2005, 17-18) highlight the discovery by Argyris that the actions of people often tell a different story from what they say their opinions are. Meaning that the document analysis is important to support the results from the questionnaire. However, as the response rate of the questionnaire was quite low (32.80 %), additional semi-structured interviews were also carried out.

In order to find evidence of learning, the paper introduces a quantitative approach in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is based on the results of the document analysis and was sent to respondents thorough the Survey Monkey online survey site. The questionnaire was first prepared in English and then translated into Estonian for the respondents. Afterwards, the questions were translated into English. As we have already discovered that according to learning theories there needs to be a change in people's opinions and values over time, then the questionnaire will focus on the change of preferences and knowledge among actors involved in the youth unemployment policy field in regard to the policy changes that have taken place over time. Furthermore, questions concerning learning itself are also asked to measure the level of learning – single versus double loop learning. The questionnaire was chosen as it is well suited for finding evidence of learning by analyzing the individual results of policy-makers and their change over time. In addition, using a questionnaire, responses from a wider range of people can be examined rather than just the preferences of a few people as would be the case with interviews. However, the response rate was quite low. The questionnaire was sent to 128 people

involved in the youth unemployment field (both at government and NGO level) and 42 of them returned answers for a response rate of 32.8%.

The first part will measure the preferences of policy-makers. To measure the evolution of policy preferences and opinions over time, two types of questions are used (see Moyson 2015):

"What did you think about this before Estonia entered the EU?" and;

"What do you think about this now?"

Having two questions rather than one that asks how the beliefs have evolved about the certain matter, it will be more helpful to find out what policy-makers really think at two separate moments in time – the past and the present – and not just the evolution of preferences (Moyson 2015). Even though focusing on one question would limit the number of questions, with two there will be a better overview of change.

The first period was chosen to be before Estonia entered the EU to see if the policy-makers preferences have also changed during the era of EU membership as it has affected the policies. Although, an earlier period could also have been chosen, for instance 1999, when the first Youth Work Act was adopted, but then most likely many of the respondents would not have remembered that period.

In addition, questions concerning SLL and DLL were asked to see how their organizations support learning. The respondents were asked to answer the questions using a scale from "much in disfavor" [–2] to "much in favor" [+2]. This makes it possible to see whether the preferences and opinions have changed negatively or whether there has been a favorable evolution regarding policy (see Moyson 2015). Moyson (2015) adds that the level of certainty should also be measured by asking the respondents to evaluate their degree of conviction (from "completely unconvinced" [–2] to "completely convinced" [+2]) about the policy preferences they reported to have had in the past and those they have in the present. This systematization will help to dismiss respondents who were not convinced in their preferences and gave a reply "completely unconvinced" [–2].

Finally, the second part will focus on the background of the people so that later common patterns could be drawn on possible factors or consequences of policy learning. This part is the final part of the questionnaire, as according to Moyson (2015, 127), by that time people are not that focused anymore, and as policy learning is the key variable then that part should receive the most attention.

However, as already mentioned, the response rate was quite low and it was therefore necessary to carry out additional interviews. This offered a chance to ask more in-depth questions and also to discuss the results of the questionnaire. Therefore, three people were interviewed and two answered the additional interview questions in writing. Three of those people were from government organizations and two from NGOs. All of the interviews were recorded. Both the interviews and the questionnaire were conducted in Estonian and later translated into English.

3. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT POLICY IN ESTONIA

3.1. Background and the Problem of Youth Unemployment

This chapter will take a closer look at the problem of youth unemployment in Estonia by analyzing relevant documents and then later connecting the findings with the results from the questionnaire and interviews. As youth are a valuable resource for a country, then all should be done from the government's side in order to use that potential and to have happy and satisfied people living in Estonia who are contributing to the economy. Combating youth unemployment is also one of the priorities of the European Union, as the unemployment rate in some of the member countries is high. "Using the full potential of youth is a requisite for future economic growth and social cohesion in the EU. Labor markets need to urgently respond to these challenges in order to fulfil the potential of the youth population" ("Promoting young people's" 2007, 4).

To begin with the history of youth unemployment in Estonia it should be mentioned that youth policy in Estonia at the beginning of the 1990s was quite an unregulated area. Youth organizations and communities did not have a clear understanding of where they belonged. No strategies had been developed and different groups were doing their own things. Similarly, youth unemployment policy was more or less non-existent, and was only dealt with under the broader fields of youth policy and employment policy; therefore, the evolution of youth policy must first be explained as must general employment policy.

Youth policy itself is a field that involves several affairs related to and directed towards young people. According to the Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013, Youth Policy is defined as "a purposeful and coordinated activity in different spheres of life that proceeds from the actual needs and challenges of young people" (2006, 34) and "the necessity of youth policy is conditioned by the need to specify the actions that society has to take to provide every young person in Estonia with the possibilities for his personal development, support and training experience for his positive self-identification, self-education, self-affirmation and self-dignity and through this be able and willing to take responsibility for social welfare and development" (2006, 15). One of the interviewees also said that youth unemployment policy in Estonia is not really a separate policy but rather connected with different youth policy fields and the measures

that we have now are not only targeted towards getting unemployed youth to work but also directed towards the problems that cause youth unemployment. Therefore, Estonia has decided to tackle the causes not just the issue itself, which of course is necessary.

Overall, the developments in youth policy in Estonia can be divided into 5 different periods (Taru et al., 2014, 15–30):

- The national awakening before national independence, 1860s to 1918: prehistory of youth work;
- The democratic period of the first independence, 1918 to 1940: the beginning of organized youth work within the education system, the authoritarian period of the first independence and emergence of state-controlled youth work;
- The beginning of Soviet occupation, the Second World War and youth work under the German occupation, 1942 to 1944;
- The Soviet occupation, 1945 to 1989: explosive increase in youth work opportunities as a tool for ideological socialization;
- The restoration of independence and independent statehood, 1990 and onwards: youth work as developmental experience, and contemporary methods of youth work.

This paper will only focus on the last period and policy learning from the period of the restoration of independence.

Youth affairs in general in Estonia, including youth unemployment, are regulated and developed by the Ministry of Education and Research. When the planning part is left to the Ministry then the organizational part is carried out by the Estonian Youth Work Centre administrated by the Ministry. Employment policy in Estonia is regulated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. As mentioned before, in the 1990s, the youth policy field was quite unregulated as there were not so many documents or regulations adopted during that time. Therefore, a breakthrough took place in 1999, when the first Youth Work Act was introduced, which aimed to define the general principles and activities related to youth. The second Youth Work Act adopted in 2010, together with the national development plan, is the basis for youth policy in Estonia. Therefore, these documents will be the main instruments under analysis for this chapter. However, the usage of the term "youth work" is a bit confusing in some of those legislative documents, especially the earlier ones. The term "youth work" is used a bit too broadly, sometimes actually referring to youth policy and not to youth work or referring to both

of them simultaneously. The focus was on working with youth but not necessarily helping young people find jobs. Therefore, the earlier documents raise the question of whether youth work equals youth policy in Estonia; however, in later documents a better distinction is made. However, all of those documents and also some authors (Unt 2011, 9) bring out the role of youth work and informal learning in regard to employment policy as an instrument that can support youth to be successful in the labor market. Therefore, again we are reminded that youth unemployment policy is interconnected with other fields, which cannot be overlooked.

In addition, the author brings out in her study that in Estonia mostly reactive policies have been developed to assist the unemployed enter the labor market. However, "there is a clear need for a wider range of measures, including those related to formal education and training" as well, in order to promote a more proactive approach and more sustained prospects. The co-ordination of youth policy measures between the Ministry of Social Affairs (employment office) and the Ministry of Education and Research (education system) is vital (Unt 2011, 1). Therefore, the author emphasizes the need for better cooperation and for better policies especially in the two sectors that influence unemployment the most.

The planning of youth policy has taken place three times in Estonia. The first development plan covered 2001 – 2004. After that the Youth Work Strategy 2006 – 2013 was conducted. While the first development plan put most of the effort on youth work and not on youth policy in general, then the second already focused more on youth policy. The third and current development plan is for 2014 – 2020, which is also in accordance with the Europe 2020 strategy. One of the areas of youth policy is also youth unemployment as mentioned earlier. An unemployed person is somebody who wants to work and is capable of working; however, has not found a job even though he or she has been looking ("Töötu" 2000). Sometimes youth unemployment can also be seen as a phenomenon that takes place during the transition from education to the labor market (also called frictional unemployment), but it can also be a problem that has much more serious causes and effects such as the lack of education and skills, geographical problems, or social and personal development problems (also called structural unemployment) ("Noorte hariduses" 2007, 4–6). Youth employment can also be characterized by lower wages, short-term contracts, modest work conditions, etc. ("Noorteseire Eestis" 2010, 12). However, not all unemployed youth have registered themselves as unemployed and are actively looking for a job. Nevertheless, those youngsters must also be reached and that is also

one of the reasons why youth unemployment policy is so connected with other areas and covers a variety of measures.

Youth unemployment in Estonia has had its ups and downs (see Table 1) with the highest youth unemployment rate being in 2010. The high unemployment rate for 2009 – 2010 can be explained by the economic recession when a lot of young people lost their jobs as youth have always been one of the more vulnerable groups in society who feel economic instability first. However, 35.49% of the questionnaire respondents think that Estonia has not learned from its policy failure during the crisis whereas 25.81% remained neutral. The interviewees mentioned that Estonia had learned to some extent and that the field is definitely getting more attention after the crisis than it did before. The unemployment rate itself supports the fact that Estonia has learned, as the rate has decreased since 2010, and therefore, for H2 it can be said that learning is more likely when there has been evidence of policy failure mostly because it helps to draw attention to the field but does not necessarily guarantee learning as there are other factors involved. Although the Estonian Ministry of Finance ("Noorteseire aastaraamat" 2010, 27) has evaluated that after the recession the youth unemployment rate will drop below 10% in 2014, Table 1 shows that this goal was not reached. Therefore, getting the youth unemployment rate below 10% is currently one of the goals of the Estonia 2020 strategy. Although it is positive that in the past few years the Estonian youth unemployment rate has been in decline coming from 28% in 2010 to 13.9% in 2014, there is still lot of work to be done to get the rate below 10%.

What is also visible is that the youth unemployment rate improved considerably after Estonia joined the EU, hinting that there were new policies that were adopted and more money available for this field as youth unemployment is a huge priority for the EU. Although youth unemployment has started to improve again since the crisis, it is still higher than it was before 2008. Therefore, a coordinated youth employment policy is important so that young people could obtain help or advice for individual growth and developing the skills they need to be successful in the labor market and to reduce the unemployment rate to the pre-crisis level, as professional skills and good education are not always enough. In addition, the question arises of whether any policy learning has taken place. Even though the numbers have improved since joining the EU and also after the crisis years, this could just be a result of a plain transfer of policies from the EU or because of reasons such as the decreasing number of young people in

Estonia. Whether there has actually been any learning taking place in the youth unemployment policy field and what kind of learning, will be ascertained later in the paper.

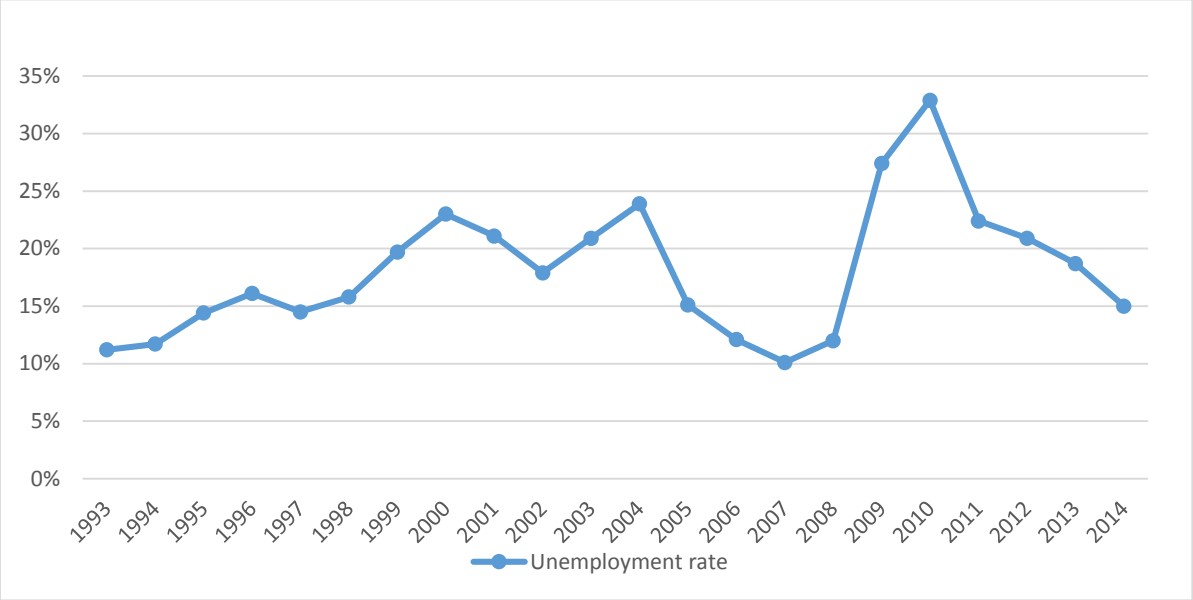

Figure 2: Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate in Estonia (%)
Source: Statistics Estonia

The reasons for unemployment are often divided into two groups, the macro and micro levels of unemployment (Unt 2011, 21). The former refers to structural and societal causes related to the economic system and the labor market, while the latter refers to personal reasons related to individual skills and characteristics that limit access to the labor market.

As mentioned previously, Unt (2011, 1) highlights the main issue as education: "people who have been educated for longer are better able to engage in retraining, if necessary, and to adjust to economic changes." However, the reasons for youth unemployment will not be discussed in detail as it is only important here to know what they are and what the policy-makers think about the causes, and then it can be seen if any action has been taken.

The economic recession was an example of a macroeconomic cause that seriously affected youth unemployment in Estonia. However, when we think about the percentage of young people in Estonia then that number is decreasing, meaning that there are less people in need of a job in the future. According to that way of thinking the unemployment rate should drop in the future. However, personal characteristics (age, gender, education, etc.) are another

factor that affect the employment of young people (See Figure 3, Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8).

One of the characteristics of youth unemployment (aged 15–24) in Estonia is that the unemployment rate for men has almost always been higher than for women. The gap was especially large in 2014. One of the reasons for that could be that there are more jobs available that are suited to women. In addition, as more women tend to continue their education than men, then that could also be the reason why the unemployment rate for men is higher.

In regard to the rate based on education, two issues arise (Figure 3). Overall, as expected, people with lower education find it more difficult to find jobs than people with higher education. "Young people know that their employability, and therefore their chances on the job market, increase when they have a good education and skills and when they have spent some time in a school or university in another country" ("Youth in the UNECE Region" 2003). However, another issue, especially in 2013, is the unemployment of youth with higher (third level) education. During the interviews it was also mentioned that the measures for combating youth unemployment should be divided into two target groups – one focusing on how to get educated youth into employment and second focusing on youth in the risk group who are in danger of being left out of the employment field.

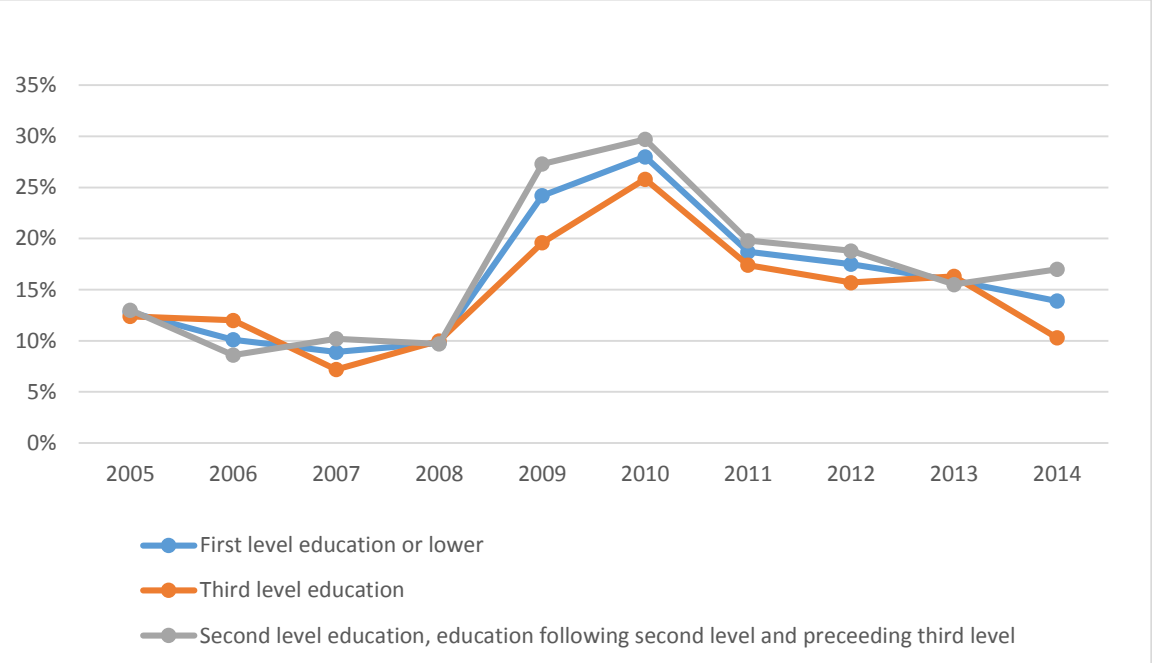

Figure 3: Youth (age 15–24) unemployment rate in Estonia based on education (%)
Source: Statistics Estonia

When talking about nationality, then it has always been a sensitive topic in Estonia with its sizeable non-Estonian community. The unemployment rate has always been higher among non-Estonians than Estonians. This could most likely come from the language barrier. When it comes to regional differences, then before the recession the unemployment rate among youth was higher in rural areas for several years; however, the last couple of years show that there are now more problems with youth employment in urban areas.

3.2. Policies against Youth Unemployment in Estonia

3.2.1. The First Period

The first period in regard to youth unemployment policy could be seen as from 1991 to 2004. As mentioned earlier, the field at that time was quite an unregulated and Estonia had no previous practices to learn from. Therefore, all had to be established from scratch. In 1999, the first Youth Work Act was adopted, which defines youth as people 7 – 26 years of age. The Youth Work Act is a general legislative document and does not describe different areas of youth policy separately. Therefore, it also does not mention youth employment. Before the Act the youth field was just generally involved in other transformations without any independent or autonomous status as a youth policy field, and youth employment had a weak position ("Youth Policy in Estonia" 2001, 18).

Estonia's first Employment Contracts Act was adopted in 1992. The act establishes the rules and age limits for hiring a minor, but does not separately put any emphasis on youth. The act was renewed in 2009 and the new Employment Contracts Act is already much more thorough when it comes to hiring minors but also makes no distinction between youth and adults. There are only regulations regarding minors and their salaries, the jobs they are allowed or not allowed to do. Therefore, it is more a regulatory act and does not focus on causes or approaches to dealing with youth unemployment. However, it does create "more flexible regulations in terms of the options for employers to hire and dismiss employees. //…// The positive side of this should be that as employers take less risk when hiring newcomers, it might make it easier for young persons to enter the labor market" (Unt 2011, 6).

As youth policy in Estonia still needed to be more defined and regulated in order to come up with better policies and strategies, then the same year a Forum of Estonian Youth Work took place and shortly after that the "Estonian Youth Work Concept" and the "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001 - 2004" were adopted.

The development plan 2001 – 2004 describes the most important activities in eight areas concerning youth policy (2001, 2):

1. Special youth work
2. Hobby education
3. Information on youth and for youth, counselling and studies
4. Training, further training and re-training in youth work
5. Recreational holidays and leisure activities
6. Work education of youth
7. International youth work
8. Structures of youth work and youth participation

The point directly concerning youth employment is number 6 – work education of youth. The priorities for this stated in the development plan (2001, 8) were to start a public discussion about youth employment; to increase the competences of youth through counselling and informing; to develop methods for youth employment and work education and different opportunities through youth projects; and to update the laws regulating youth employment. Firstly, the work education of youth is important for preparing young people for the labor market; however, if there are laws that limit youth employment negatively then no work education will help. Therefore, it is vital for the country to have up-to-date regulations.

A good example that can already be mentioned in this period, and which has actually been in practice already from the mid-60s is the pupils' work brigade. This involves youth camps that are directed at young people so they can earn some pocket money in the summer during the school break. Often those camps offer young people their first job experience and gives them a valuable experience of what it means to have a job and earn money of their own. This is an opportunity for youngsters to learn about work ethics and also about employment laws and career planning.

Overall, as the "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001 – 2004" was the first one in Estonia in the youth policy field, there was nothing before this to compare with in order to find evidence of policy change or learning. Therefore, the two other development plans and

periods must also be examined. Although, the approaches for implementation are brought out in the document, the first development plan remains quite superficial. On the one hand, it is a step forward in terms of having a long-term framework and looking to the future. In addition, the unemployment rate itself has gradually risen since the restoration of independence; therefore, suggesting that no learning has occurred in this period. Some effectiveness reports have been conducted on youth policies in general, but nothing specifically about youth unemployment. Therefore, it seems that youth unemployment is part of the general employment policy during this period and does not get much separate focus. In summary, so far we have an overview of the causes of youth unemployment in Estonia so that later we can see if the measures adopted are reasonable. In addition, we can see whether there has been any understanding of the viability of policy intervention or implementation (instrumental learning) or the social construction of a policy or a problem (social learning) concerning those causes.

3.2.2. The Second Period

The second period concerning youth unemployment policy can be seen as the period 2005 – 2006. As Estonia was already in the European Union by that time, the period brings more interesting policies. The preparations for the "Youth Work Strategy 2006 – 2013" began with the Youth Work Forum, which emphasized in its final document ("Eesti III" 2005) the role of an integrated youth policy and a strong connection between youth policy and youth work and the need for equality.

While the policy document from the first period only describes the role of the work education of youth as a priority and brings out approaches for dealing with that (as explained in the previous chapter), the development plan in the second period adds youth employment as a priority, which was completely absent in the first development plan. The goal of "employment policy in regard to youth is to increase the employment rate by improving social and professional skills" ("Estonian Youth Work" 2006, 16). The second plan also improves the section on the work education of youth – "the work education of youth is the increase in the youth employment readiness and improvement of the position of youth in entering the labor market" ("Estonian Youth Work" 2006, 24). Therefore, the second development plan also already makes a distinction between youth policy and youth work and highlights that youth employment is an integral part of both of them. The strong role of youth work is also evident

in the Estonian "Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2005–2007" (2005, 45) which states that "to prevent getting caught in the "unemployed and inexperienced trap" it is important to acquire knowledge and skills in fields usually not covered by formal education: the social competence and practical work experiences in changing work conditions". Therefore, the role of internships is mentioned in the second development plan, whereas it was absent in the previous plan, although it was seen as one of the most necessary measures for decreasing youth unemployment.

The second development plan of 2006 – 2013 is also much more thorough in the sense that it presents measures for action and also the measurements of efficiency such as: the network of work education will have been established; the cooperation mechanisms of work and work education will function; at least 1,000 young people will have participated in the training of labor law; and there will be an Internet information site describing the labor law for youth ("Estonian Youth Work" 2006, 30). This could indicate that knowledge about the situation of young people has improved and now that the first planning period was over and the conclusions have been made; therefore, policy-makers understand better how to make the next development plan more detailed and also how to evaluate its effectiveness.

It was evident in Table 2 that after 2004, youth unemployment was in decline. This could be because of the fact that by that time Estonia was already in the European Union and the development plan itself and other regulations had to be in accordance with the EU.

For instance, the "Youth Work Strategy 2006 – 2013" is largely based on the following EU documents together with the final document of the 3rd Forum of Estonian Youth Work in 2005 and the effectiveness reports from the previous development plan (2006, 7):

- The white paper of the youth policy of the EU and other development issues specified in the framework of the EU youth policy cooperation;
- The Council of Europe's framework document for youth policy and documents of youth policy indicators;
- The European Council's expert report on youth policy in Estonia.

All of those documents also focus on youth unemployment. The White Paper, for instance, states "the need for policies to prevent long-term unemployment based on individual counselling; improved education and training systems; reducing the number of young people who leave education and training systems prematurely; and making instruction in the new technologies universally available" (2001, 20). Therefore, it is emphasized that information and

counselling be more available as well as training to better prepare young people for employment. The first two documents also present the role of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit in gaining confidence and overcoming barriers, which is also briefly mentioned in the second development plan.

One important EU document adopted in 2005 in regard to youth employment was the "European Youth Pact", which stressed the importance of dealing with youth unemployment and social inclusion. This document also highlights the importance of better education systems and investing in youth by proposing actions for improving young people's transitions from education to the labor market through internships; promoting entrepreneurship by providing information, financial incentives and lifting unnecessary legal and administrative burdens. Therefore, the EU is willing to spend money on youth and invites the member states to use the funds. All of those documents also prove that youth unemployment is an important priority in the EU.

Terms like entrepreneurship, internships, youth work, investment are also mentioned in the EU youth strategy "Youth – investing and empowering". The actions it sets for youth unemployment are:

- Lower barriers to the free movement of labor across the EU
- Develop youth employability through youth work
- Promote quality internships and employment schemes
- Develop 'start up' funds
- Encourage recognition of junior enterprises
- Widen access to creative tools, particularly those involving new technologies

Overall, there are some terms that are used in several policies and documents related to youth unemployment such as the role of youth work, improved trainings, and information sharing and counselling. Some of the actions like entrepreneurship and internships become more frequent in later documents. Also the emphasis on the use of EU funds is more evident in later documents. Estonia has also adopted documents that describe the use of EU funds, for instance the "Program for Developing Youth Work" that also helps promote employment. In addition, the "Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013", which was a big improvement from the previous one and more detailed in explaining different measures regarding youth unemployment and also the ways to evaluate the effectiveness, also describes activities funded by the EU.

Therefore, there is no doubt that a lot of the input for the second development plan came from the EU. The interviewees, however, stated that this was not a case of plain copying but rather that the reasons for youth unemployment are similar across Europe; therefore, the measures that are developed on the EU-level are also suitable for Estonia. There has been a lot of work done by the EU expert-groups and there is no reason to start from scratch. The interviewees also mentioned that a lot of those expert-groups also include Estonians, and therefore, Estonia's voice is also heard.

The interviewees also agreed that analyses and reports have been conducted to measure the efficiency of certain actions as is also emphasized by the second development plan, although their opinion about the effectiveness of those analyses varies. Most interviewees agreed that unemployment policy is getting more attention thanks to the EU, but without it Estonia would still be capable of dealing with the issue.

To sum up, it can be said that this period resulted in a lot of policies, documents, reports and articles in regard to youth unemployment. The reasons for this could be that Estonia had become a member of the EU and there were a lot more opportunities available as well as obligations. As the EU has done lot of work in preparing policies to combat youth unemployment, it is reasonable for Estonia to use those policies and make them more suitable for its own needs. In addition, this period saw a deep economic recession that had a negative impact on youth employment and new strategies were needed to improve the situation. However, Estonia also experienced a large transition crisis when it entered the EU, which did not give rise to such policies, so why the 2008 one suddenly did. Most likely, because the economic recession affected the whole of Europe, whereas the transition period did not. Therefore, it is also visible how the policies of the EU affect Estonian policies.

Overall, while the first "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan 2001 ¬– 2004" only prioritizes the work education of youth, the second plan has two priorities – the work education of youth and youth unemployment. Both present approaches for achieving those goals but the second also supports the integration of youth policy areas, which then supports dealing with the causes of youth unemployment and not only with the consequences. There are also more measures introduced in this period, which together with several effectiveness reports, provides evidence of single loop learning in both instrumental and social approaches.

3.2.3. The Third Period

The third period runs from 2014 to 2020, which is also an important period for the EU in achieving the Europe 2020 goals. One of flagship initiatives of the strategy is the "Youth on the move" (2014, 3) initiative, which seeks to improve the entry of young people to the labor market and the actions to be taken are:

- To explore ways of promoting entrepreneurship through mobility programs for young professionals;
- To launch a youth employment framework outlining policies aimed at reducing youth unemployment rates: this should promote, with Member States and social partners, young people's entry into the labor market through apprenticeships, stages or other work experience, including a scheme ("Your first EURES job") aimed at increasing job opportunities for young people by favoring mobility across the EU.
- To enhance the openness and relevance of education systems by building national qualification frameworks and better gearing learning outcomes towards labor market needs;
- To improve young people's entry into the labor market through integrated action covering guidance, counselling and apprenticeships.

The current Estonian youth development plan is named the “Youth Field Development Plan 2014–2020”. It places strong emphasis on integrated cooperation between different institutions and partnerships, which was already introduced in the “Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013”, and which aims to realize these goals as well as the integration of different measures within the policy. The main focus is on 5 areas:

- More possibilities for personal development and for executing ideas
- To decrease the effects of disparities in young people’s development and inclusion
- Active participation in the community and decision-making
- Success in the labor market
- Quality of youth policy and youth work

Therefore, all of the three development plans place importance on youth employment and bring it out as a separate activity that needs attention. Although, the unemployment rate had already improved by 2014, it is still higher than it was before the recession and the goal of reducing it below 10% in 2014 was not realized. Now, according to the “National Reform Program Estonia 2020” (2013) the goal is to get the youth unemployment rate at least to the

pre-crisis level of 10% by 2020. To do so, it is planned to implement additional measures especially aimed at the younger generation (for example, the “EU Youth Guarantee” initiative) (2014, 10).

“The Youth Guarantee” is a new approach to guarantee that people under 25 will "receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education" (2013, 3). The initiative was started by the EU to combat youth unemployment after the economic recession and is part of a larger “Youth Employment Package” (2012). The measures brought out within the initiative are (“Noortegarantii”):

1. Improving the quality of education, supporting the successful study experience and bringing those who have dropped out back to education;
2. Improving the skills and knowledge of young people through youth work;
3. Systematic development of career services;
4. Offering labor market services to unemployed young people.

Therefore, for the first time there are measures that are directly proposing actions dealing with the issue that the policy-makers have considered to be one of the main factors affecting youth unemployment – education. In previous periods, this field did not get much attention in the youth unemployment context; however, it can be concluded that the policy-makers have understood the necessity of adding such instruments to the agenda. The actions within the “Youth Guarantee” program in Estonia began in 2015.

As already mentioned, this period also had in mind the Europe 2020 goals, which prioritize combating youth unemployment, and has produced initiatives such as “The Youth Guarantee”, “Youth on the Move” and “An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs.” In addition, “The Youth Opportunities Initiative,” for instance, stressed the need for dealing with NEET people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (“EU Youth” 2012). “National Reform Program Estonia 2020” states that measures must be taken to find youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) and bring them back to vigorous activities (2013, 12). Considering the implementation of youth policies in Estonia is generally left to the Ministry of Education and Research, in this case the NEET project is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Estonia 2020 action plans for both 2011–2015 and 2014-2018 put an emphasis on aligning training and education with the needs of the modern labor market (including making

better use of the potential of the EU internal market and other policies) and increase the proportion of people with specialized education at the at the vocational or higher education level by, for instance, supporting the educational path of young people and better supporting the professional choices, with the aim to increase the students' awareness of the working world and reduce the number of school dropouts.

In addition, both mention developing entrepreneurship and other key competences as well as ensuring career services for youth at general and higher education levels, providing career counsellors and pupils with up-to-date labor market information (salaries, labor market trends, job profiles etc.), increasing the awareness of parents of further study opportunities and career planning for young people, and systematically promoting enterprising initiative and entrepreneurship studies or subjects at all education levels.

However, the later document has more measures targeted against youth unemployment which the first does not mention. Mostly, these are related to ensuring high-quality education and taking an advantage of the EU measures such as the youth guarantee for young people from 16–29 for work, education and training opportunities and the "First job" support scheme combined with training, involvement and activation of youth not in education or employment. Therefore, the later action plan has improved compared to the previous one and also seems to be directed at the right needs. For example, in the unemployment rate of young people with a second level education was higher than the unemployment rate of young people with first level education in 2014 (Figure 3), meaning that measures were needed to deal with the effectiveness of education and which would also support those youngster to get a deserving job. However, there are no specific measures directed at non-Estonian youth whose unemployment rate has always been higher than the one of Estonian youth (Figure 7). This is probably because of the language barrier and there are different policies dealing with that, however, in the future with an increasing migration youth unemployment policy may also need additional measures directed at non-Estonian youth.

In addition, the newly appointed government, for instance, has made an effort to also make combating youth unemployment part of their coalition plans. The priority for the first 100 days states that youth need to be helped and prepared for entering the labor market. To that end, the Ministry of Education and Research must come up with the conditions of financial support for youngsters with fewer opportunities in the job market (“100 päeva plaan”). However, this is among many measures that focus on youth that are at risk of becoming unemployed in the

future. Of course, that is something that should be dealt with and where there seems to be learning taken place, but the educated unemployed youth should not be forgotten. Although, there are a few measures that were mentioned earlier and also a few EU documents also adopted by Estonia dealing with educated unemployed youth in the form of internships (such as the "Social partner consultation on a quality framework for traineeships" and the "European Alliance for Apprenticeships"), then that has only taken place recently and should continue receiving attention.

3.3. Policy Learning Revised

3.3.1. Survey

This section of the paper presents the characteristics of the survey. As it has already been mentioned then the questionnaire was sent to several people both from the governmental level and from NGO´s involved in youth unemployment field. The questionnaire was sent out using an online survey site to 128 and the response rate was 32.8% making a total of 42 responses. Table 4 illustrates the background of the respondents. Most of the respondents were women and also most of them had a higher education. However, 30.95% of the respondents were under 26 years of age, which could mean that they have not worked in the field for that long and also that they might not remember their past preferences that well regarding youth unemployment policy.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	33	78.57
	Male	9	21.43
Age	>26	13	30.95
	27-40	16	38.10
	41-60	9	21.43
	60<	4	9.52
Education	Higher (university) education	34	80.95
	Unfinished higher education	4	9.52

	Vocational education	2	4.76
	High-school education or lower	1	2.38
	Other	1	2.38
Organization	Governmental organization	31	73.81
	NGO	11	26.19

Source: conducted by the author

3.3.2. Transfer vs learning

This chapter will try to draw conclusions about whether there has been policy learning or just transfer in Estonian youth unemployment policy. When the respondents of the questionnaire were asked about their past preferences and opinions about measures that would have been necessary for combating youth unemployment before Estonia was part of the EU, then the responses were mostly about improving the education system, as was also concluded by Marge Unt (2011) in her study, and more internship opportunities (Figure 4).

When asked about the necessary measures for combating youth unemployment in the present then the answers were quite similar (Figure 5). Therefore, it seems that people consider the same issues to be the cause of youth unemployment both in the past and present. As some of the factors are no longer considered necessary today (more youth workers, mobility programs), then it could be that some of them have been dealt with already. For instance, youth mobility programs and funding issues most likely have improved directly because of EU membership, as the EU supports the movement of youth as well as workforce, and furthermore, Estonia receives a lot of funding from the EU to support this. Concerning the number of youth workers, people tend to think that not so many are needed today as in the past. During the interviews it was also mentioned that Estonia has a successful system of giving out youth worker certificates and the youth work field is actually ahead of a lot of the other EU countries.

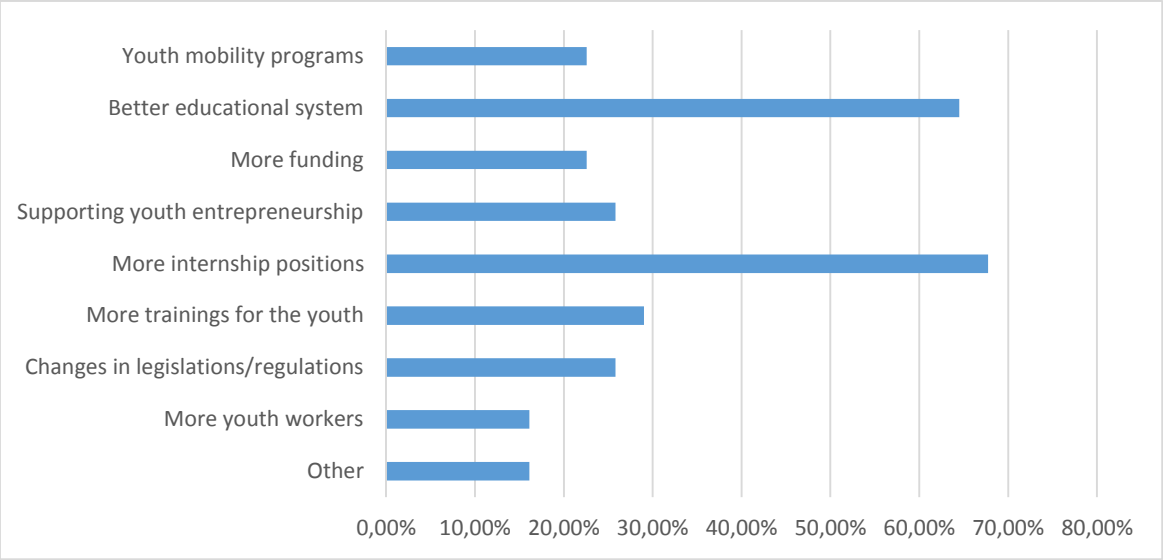

Figure 4: Necessary measures to combat youth unemployment in the past (%)

Source: conducted by the author

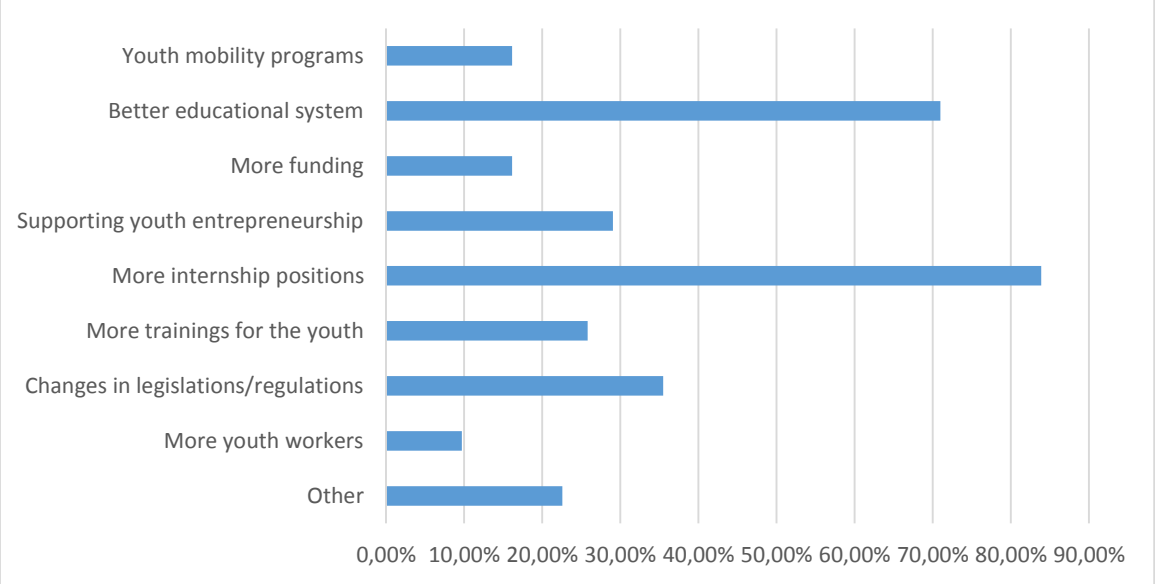

Figure 5: Necessary measures to combat youth unemployment today (%)

Source: conducted by the author

Therefore, it can be concluded that the actors overall know about the causes of youth unemployment; however, the two main issues have not been dealt with or at least not successfully during the three periods of planning youth policy. However, in the document analysis it became clear that in the last period there are now already more measures directed at both creating internship positions and also dealing with education in the youth unemployment

framework. Therefore, considering the policy-makers' statements it can be said that the understanding of the policy problem and its causes has improved together with an understanding about the viability of policy instruments and design.

The questionnaire respondents were asked additional questions regarding their opinion about youth unemployment policy in Estonia:

1. Policy-makers have enough knowledge about the causes of youth unemployment.
2. Policy-makers know how to improve youth unemployment.
3. You have sufficient knowledge about the youth unemployment issue.
4. The youth unemployment field started getting more attention after Estonia's accession to the EU.
5. Estonia counts too much on the EU and its measures for combating youth unemployment.
6. Estonia has learned from practices for combating youth unemployment in the EU and other countries rather than just transferring policies.

Table 5 illustrates that the opinions of policy-makers are quite divided. Overall, it was found that the respondents estimated their knowledge of youth unemployment to be sufficient (weighted mean 0.43), whereas the opinions about the knowledge of policy-makers in general was estimated to be slightly lacking (weighted mean -0.19). In addition, the respondents agreed that the policy field started getting more attention in Estonia after its accession to the EU, and Estonia is probably counting too much on the Union and its measures. However, when asked about whether learning or just policy transfer has taken place, the respondents mostly agree that learning has taken place (Q 6).

Table 5: Actors' preferences

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer	Total	Weighted Mean
Q 1	7	10	5	13	2	5	42	-0.19
Q 2	7	16	4	10	3	2	42	-0.35
Q 3	3	3	11	23	2	0	42	0.43
Q 4	2	6	8	16	8	2	42	0.58
Q 5	4	4	9	12	11	2	42	0.55
Q 6	4	4	8	21	3	2	42	0.38

Source: conducted by the author

When the interviewees were asked the same question (Q 6), then 4 out of 5 thought that the changes that have taken place in the youth unemployment field are based on learning, and more precisely, on lesson-drawing from the EU and other member states rather than learning-by-doing. It was mentioned that Estonia has understood that it is more beneficial to give attention to the field and to avoid the situation that we were in during the recession in 2008 or that Spain is facing now. Therefore, not placing emphasis on the field and dealing with the consequences later is impractical. In addition, the interviews highlighted that Estonia would probably have dealt with the youth unemployment issue even without the EU. However, as a lot of the work has been done by the Union in the form of expert groups, evaluations, etc., then it is useful to use those practices as well. It is also important to state that 4 of the 5 interviewees thought that although many of the measures do come from the EU, they are still necessary in Estonia, as most of the causes of youth unemployment are the same across Europe. Therefore, it is beneficial to use all the information that the EU has gathered and then make the measures suitable and apply them in Estonia. There was only one interviewee who thought that Estonia is just transferring the imposed policies rather than learning from them.

In summary, it can be concluded that according to the policy-makers policy learning has taken place in Estonia in the youth unemployment field. According to them Estonia uses EU experience, knowledge, and the opportunities that the EU has provided and draws lessons but does not create that many initiatives itself. Therefore, much of the learning does take place due to EU membership (H4), but at least in the youth unemployment policy field the EU provides an environment for learning and does not just impose regulations. The knowledge of policy-makers, however, could be better and if new knowledge was being acquired then there would be more learning taken place as well.

In addition, both instrumental and social learning seem to be evident; although, there seems to be more evidence of instrumental learning. Policy-makers tend to understand the viability of policy instruments and implementation design, as there have been many new measures developed over time. Analyses have been conducted and reports written and there is understanding and knowledge about policy instruments. This is because Estonia does transfer policies from the EU, but they are then adapted to suit local needs and local problems. The EU is not seen as a resource for copying ideas but rather as an opportunity for successful lesson-drawing. In addition, social learning is also evident as the understanding of the policy problem and its scope has improved. For instance, education has been seen as one of the factors affecting

learning for a long time, but only in the third period were measures adopted that were already directly dealing with the educational problem in the context of youth unemployment. Furthermore, the target groups have changed. While earlier measures mostly dealt with unemployed youth with fewer opportunities, the later measures also support unemployed youth with higher education, which is very important as that has also been a big issue in Estonia in the past. The measures concerning youth at risk of becoming unemployed in the future have also increased. Therefore, learning is definitely more likely when there is evidence about the effectiveness of a policy in previous periods (H3), as this provides information for the necessary next course of action.

The interviewees stated that youth should be more empowered by society and that could also help them be more involved in policy issues and also influence youth unemployment policy either directly or indirectly. However, just recently the government passed a law giving people from the age of 16 the right to vote in local elections. This is definitely a sign of both social and instrumental learning.

3.3.3. Type of Learning

Now that we have established that learning has in fact taken place in youth unemployment policy rather than just imposing the laws of the European Union, we can further investigate the level of learning that has taken place with reference to single and double loop learning.

Questions concerning SLL and DLL were taken from Jang's research (2010) and adjusted to suit this paper:

Single Loop Learning:

1. We usually use feedback and performance information to correct our work procedures and methods
2. We are encouraged to learn from our mistakes
3. Our organization helps employees use performance information to simplify and streamline its work processes and/or procedures
4. We use existing tools and methods when learning how to do things better

Table 8: Single Loop Learning

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer	Total	Weighted Mean

SLL 1	1	4	2	21	13	1	42	1.00
SLL 2	1	13	7	11	9	1	42	0.34
SLL 3	2	11	16	3	2	8	42	-0.24
SLL 4	2	7	9	18	6	0	42	0.45

Source: conducted by the author

Double Loop Learning:

1. We usually use feedback and performance information to revise program or policy goals
2. We integrate performance information and act intelligently on that information in regard to program or policy goals
3. Our organization often uses performance information to make changes to program priorities or strategies
4. We focus on creating new methods or ways when learning how to do things better

Table 9: Double Loop Learning

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer	Total	Mean
DLL 1	4	8	22	4	2	2	42	-0.20
DLL 2	3	12	11	10	2	4	42	-0.11
DLL 3	4	5	9	16	2	6	42	0.19
DLL 4	1	8	7	21	5	0	42	0.50

Source: conducted by the author

It can be seen that the use of feedback and performance evaluation is more evident and used in the performance of individual actors rather than revising policy or program goals. In addition, the respondents agreed that they are encouraged to learn from their mistakes in their work; however, more tend to think that when it comes to applying the performance information to program or policy goals, it is not that often practiced. Although, the negative mean for this question is rather minor -0.11. The third question was quite similar and as the mean for that question was also only slightly positive 0.19, then it can be assumed that most of the respondents remain neutral on the question of whether their organization also applies the information received in performance evaluations. However, the respondents agree that both

existing tools are used when learning how to do things better as well as establishing new methods.

All of the interviewees agree that performance evaluations are used but should be more applied to overall policy goals. It was brought out that sometimes there is lot of money spent on effectiveness reports, but not much will be changed in the policies after that. However, all in all, the interviewees agreed with what also became evident during the document analysis; that is, there has been a change in the paradigm when comparing the different periods, and the focus is now more on long-term results. Meaning, that not only are the consequences of youth unemployment dealt with but also the causes. In addition, youth unemployment policy is now seen more as a separate policy rather than part of the general employment policy, which also explains the involvement of different stakeholders. All of those changes point to DLL.

However, there does not seem to be that much change in the values or beliefs of individual policy-makers. The questionnaire respondents were also asked about their personal opinion about youth unemployment policy both in the past and present to see how their opinion has changed in time. The questions that were asked were the following and the answers are reflected in Table 6 and Table 7:

1. Youth unemployment policy is more important than other youth related policies.
2. Youth unemployment policy should get more attention from the government.
3. There are enough measures adopted which are directed to youth unemployment.
4. There should be more funding put in to combating youth unemployment.
5. A monitoring system should be established in order to keep track of the NEET youth.
6. Social support should be provided for low in-come families.
7. Raise the obligatory school age to 18.
8. Study place at secondary level (vocational or upper secondary) should be guaranteed for all students.
9. Better cooperation between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research.

Table 6: Preferences in the past

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer	Total	Weighted Mean
Q 1	1	9	15	9	1	7	42	0.00

Q 2	2	5	6	6	16	7	42	0.83
Q 3	6	16	8	3	0	9	42	-0.76
Q 4	1	4	11	15	2	9	42	0.39
Q 5	3	1	5	12	12	9	42	0.88
Q 6	0	1	7	21	7	6	42	0.94
Q 7	1	3	13	13	3	9	42	0.42
Q 8	0	5	5	17	9	6	42	0.83
Q 9	0	1	3	20	7	11	42	1.06

Source: conducted by the author

Table 7: Preferences in the present

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer	Total	Weighted Mean
Q 1	3	8	6	17	8	0	42	0.45
Q 2	2	4	3	21	12	0	42	0.88
Q 3	3	10	7	17	5	0	42	0.26
Q 4	2	6	12	15	6	1	42	0.41
Q 5	0	0	4	17	20	1	42	1.39
Q 6	1	2	5	16	18	0	42	1.14
Q 7	2	3	10	13	13	1	42	0.78
Q 8	1	9	8	12	12	0	42	0.60
Q 9	0	0	5	9	27	1	42	1.54

Source: conducted by the author

Unt (2011) presented the role of better cooperation. In this study, 36 questionnaire respondents out of 42 also thought that cooperation between the two ministries should be better. One of the interviewees said that there is always lot of talk in the public sector about more cooperation but often it remains talk and no actual action is taken, even though there have been special expert groups formed for that. The reason could be that the people who work in the public sector or in ministries often do not have the required education for their job or the field that they work in, which also causes a lack of motivation or interest. For instance, a person might have studied public administration and knows how the government sector works but his or her knowledge of youth work is zero; therefore, they do not really know how to approach the problems or have limited motivation to make the extra effort. Even though there are lot of NGOs or youth organizations that are willing to do the work, the framework must still be set at the government level.

In the questionnaire it became evident that actors involved in the youth unemployment policy field are roughly divided into two groups. First, those who agree that youth unemployment is a big problem in Estonia and should get more attention from the government, and then those who remained either neutral about the argument or did not agree and thought that the issue is even overrated. Nobody was directly against youth having better opportunities in the job market, but it was mentioned that there are issues that are more serious these days and need more attention from the government. If actors involved in policy do not even agree with regard to the seriousness of the problem, which could affect learning, and individual beliefs are also important. Therefore, it can be said that there has been single loop learning in Estonia in the youth unemployment field and there is some evidence of double loop learning; however, there is still much that could be improved. In addition, there is evidence in regard to H1 that learning is more likely when the actors involved share a common position and opinions about a specific policy issue. However, as opinions about the seriousness of youth unemployment are not shared by all, the level of learning has also been affected.

CONCLUSION

The aim this thesis is to investigate policy learning in Estonia in regard to youth unemployment policy. The topic was chosen because throughout history Estonia has seen different forms of policy change, and therefore, it would be interesting to find out about learning processes in the European Union. More precisely, whether the EU imposes regulations and policy in the youth unemployment field is simply transferred, or whether it provides an environment for learning. As youth unemployment is a priority for the European Union then this also makes this a good topic for a case study.

Youth unemployment in Estonia has had its ups and downs. Although, the unemployment rate has dropped since the financial recession, from 33% in 2010 to 18.7% in 2013, it is still higher than it was before the crisis (being 12% in 2008). Youth have always been the most vulnerable group in society when it comes to employment mostly due to their lack of prior experience. Therefore, it is crucial that policies support and prepare youth for entering the job market as successfully as possible as they are a huge resource that needs to be used.

Therefore, the main research question would be the following: Has policy learning occurred in Estonia with regard to youth unemployment policy, and if so, what kind of learning? To find an answer to the research question, single and double loop learning approaches were applied as well as evidence of instrumental and social learning was sought.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to make a distinction between different concepts such as policy learning, policy change and policy transfer. It is vital to understand that all of these can be interconnected processes but can also take place independently. Policy transfer and change does not always mean that learning has happened as well, as learning does not always lead to a change in policies. Therefore, policy learning in this paper can be defined as a process of developing national policies as a result of improved knowledge or a change in thinking about a specific policy issue.

The thesis project began with collecting secondary data, which provided an informative background to the topic and helped form a theoretical framework. The empirical part was based on document analysis together with a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, both instrumental and social learning are evident. Proof of instrumental learning can be found in the fact that policy-makers have started to understand the viability of policy

instruments and implementation design, as there has been many new measures developed over time directed towards the needs of Estonia. That is because Estonia places lot of emphasis on analyses and effectiveness reports, so the policy-makers have gained knowledge about the necessary instruments.

The respondents to the questionnaire agree that the policy field started getting more attention in Estonia after its accession to the EU, and that although Estonia does transfer policies from the EU, they are still adapted according to Estonia's needs and problems, and therefore, are based on learning rather than being imposed. When the interviewees were asked the same question, 4 out of 5 thought that the changes that have been taken place in the youth unemployment field are based on learning, and more precisely, on lesson-drawing. It was mentioned that Estonia has understood that it is more beneficial to give attention to the field and to avoid the situation that we were in during the recession. In addition, it was brought out that Estonia would probably have dealt with the youth unemployment issue even without the EU. However, as much of the work has been done by the Union in the form of expert groups, evaluations, etc., it is useful to use those practices as well, especially as most of the causes of youth unemployment are the same across Europe.

In addition, social learning is evident, as the understanding of the policy problem and its scope has improved. For instance, education has for a long time been seen as one of the factors affecting learning, but only recently were there measures adopted that were already directly dealing with the education problem as part of youth unemployment policy. Furthermore, the target groups have also changed. Earlier measures mostly dealt with unemployed youth with fewer opportunities or in risk groups, while later measures also support unemployed youth with higher education, which is also a problem in Estonia.

It can also be said that SLL is achieved in the policy field, and that there is some evidence of DLL. According to the actors, feedback and performance information is used to correct their work procedures and methods and they are encouraged to learn from their mistakes in their organization. However, that feedback is not often applied when revising policy or program goals. It was brought out that sometimes there is lot of money spent on effectiveness reports but not much changes in the policies afterwards, or that some discussion events are organized, albeit with no real outcome. In other words, the information is gathered but not always used. If all of the information were used, the learning would be even deeper.

To sum up, many new strategies have been adopted over the years, and the focus has shifted to long-term results and dealing with the causes rather than the consequences. In addition, youth unemployment policy is these days seen more as a separate policy rather than part of the general employment policy, which also explains the involvement of different stakeholders. Therefore, all forms of learning are evident to some extent. However, it was concluded that double loop learning has not been fully achieved, mainly concerning the policy-makers' individual opinions and beliefs, which could be due to a lack of motivation among policy makers as many government actors are not working in the field of their interest.

This paper, however, only briefly touches upon the issue of beliefs. Therefore, there could be more research done investigating the policy-makers' individual belief systems in the youth unemployment field, for instance, by applying the Advocacy Coalition Framework approach.

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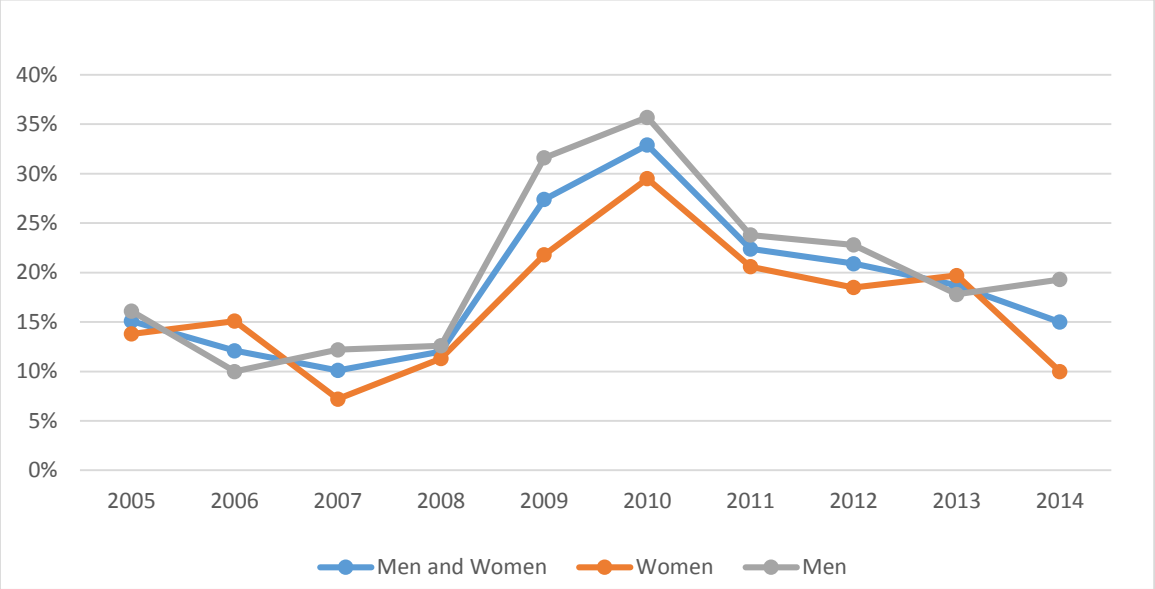
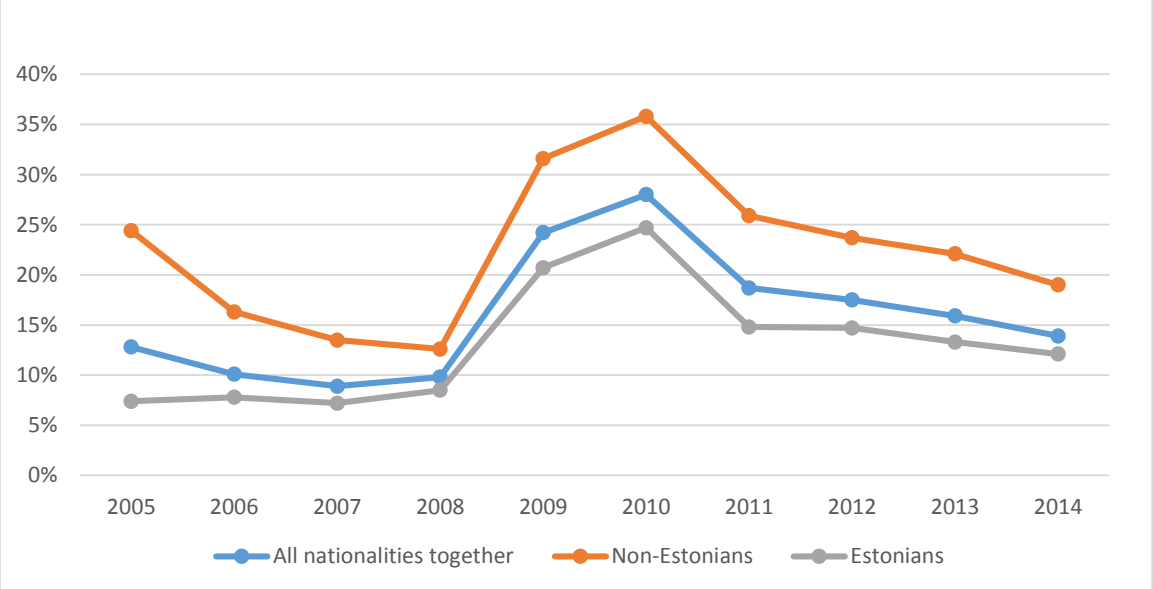
APPENDICES

Figure 6: Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate in Estonia based on gender (%)



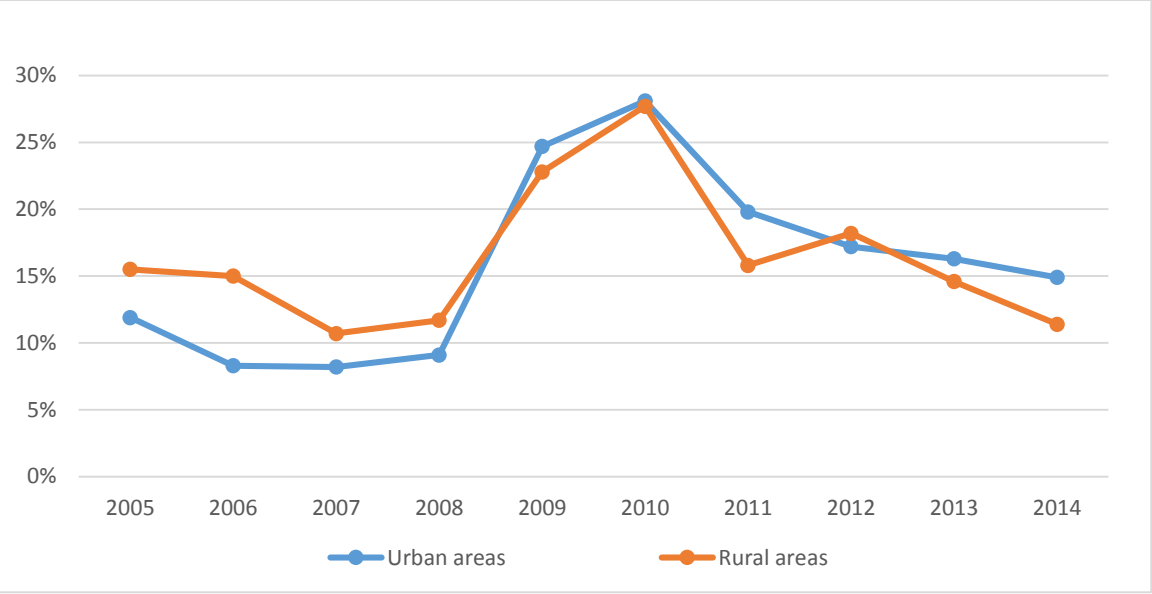
Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 7: Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate in Estonia based on nationality (%)



Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 8: Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate in Estonia based on regions (%)



Source: Statistics Estonia