

# Estonia's Primus Programme 2008–2015



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(2012-2015)

# The Primus programme

- Aim: to improve the quality of higher education and increase the competitiveness of graduates
- 6 activity fields, including support for students with special needs
- Total budget: **16.4 million €**, 95% from the European Social Fund

# Context

- Many higher education institutions were not inclusive of students with disabilities:
  - Inaccessible infrastructure
  - Lacking study materials and technical tools
  - Limited awareness amongst teaching staff
  - No counsellors for students with special needs
  - No scholarships for students with special needs

# Cooperation

- 21 organisations (all higher education institutions in Estonia, organizations of persons with disabilities, student unions)
- Various working groups created
- Disability-related solutions proposed
  - scholarship conditions
  - technical tools (e.g. CCTV, Braille printer)
  - audio and video files based on study materials
  - mapping the accessibility of buildings

# Actions taken

- Accessible equipment, study materials and handbooks at universities
- Counsellors hired to support students with special needs
- Supporting students – specially trained student volunteers who help students with special needs (only at the Univ. of Tartu)
- Training sessions and seminars arranged for freshmen with special needs

# Raising awareness



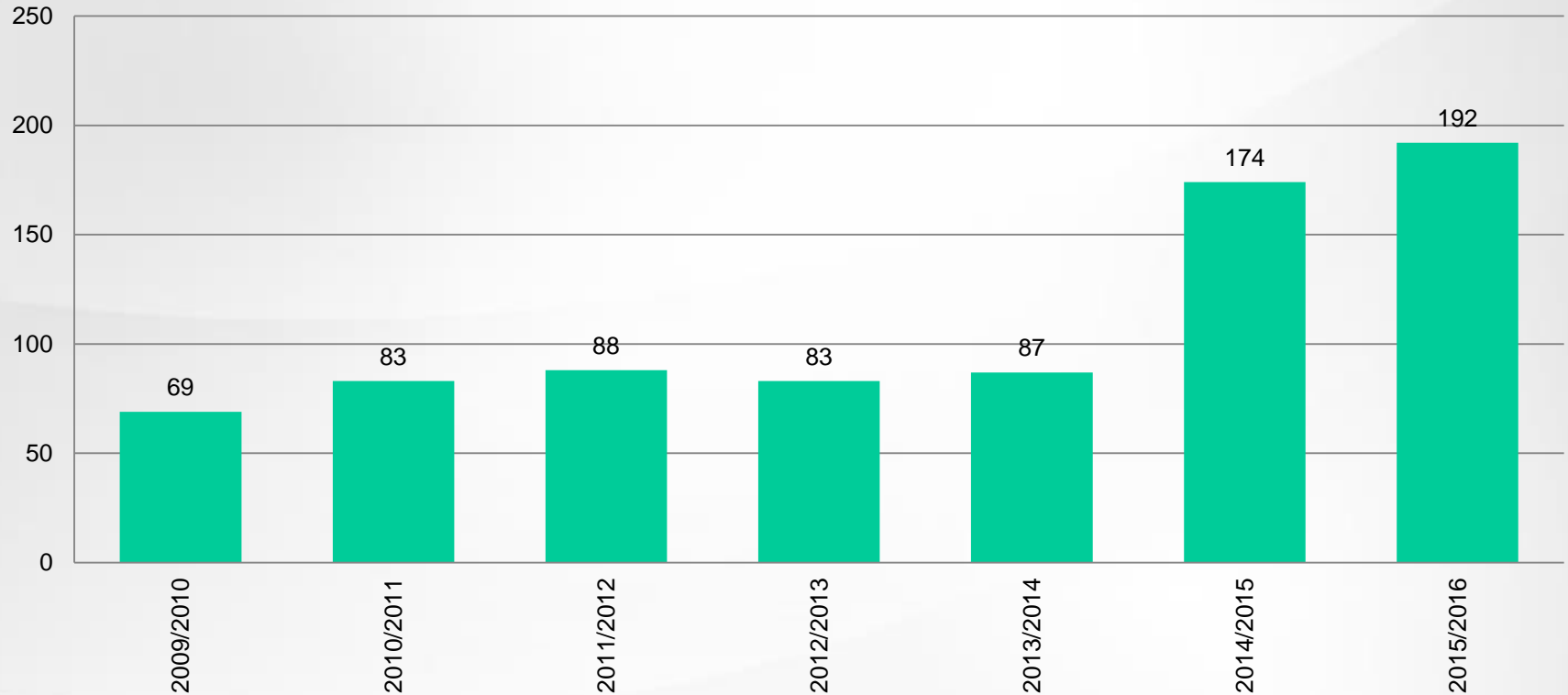
- Awareness raising events organised for students and local citizens
- For instance, people could try using a wheelchair and overcoming obstacles

# Scholarships for students with special needs

- A pilot scholarship system was introduced, leading to a new regulation (Act No. 178 “Types and amounts of scholarships for students and their general award terms“)
- Over 820 thousand euros worth of scholarships were paid out to students with special needs from 2009–2015
- From 2016, scholarships to be paid out of the Ministry’s budget

# Scholarships

The number of funded students per academic years





# Outcomes

- Continued implementation by the Ministry of Education and Research
- Increased number of students with special needs
- Raised awareness about special needs among fellow students and professors
- Counselling available at the biggest universities

# Graduation ceremony at the University of Tartu



