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Education and Training Monitor 2022

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area

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Education and Training Monitor 2022

PORTUGAL



The Education and Training Monitor's country reports present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in EU Member States. They provide the reader with more in-depth insight of the performance of countries with regard to the EU level targets agreed within the EEA. They are based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 focuses on how the Member State has addressed or is addressing one of its education challenges. Section 3 covers early childhood education and care. Section 4 deals with school education policies. Section 5 covers vocational education and training and adult learning. Finally, Section 6 discusses measures in higher education.

The Education and Training Monitor's country reports were prepared by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

The document was completed on 30 September 2022

More background data at:

<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>



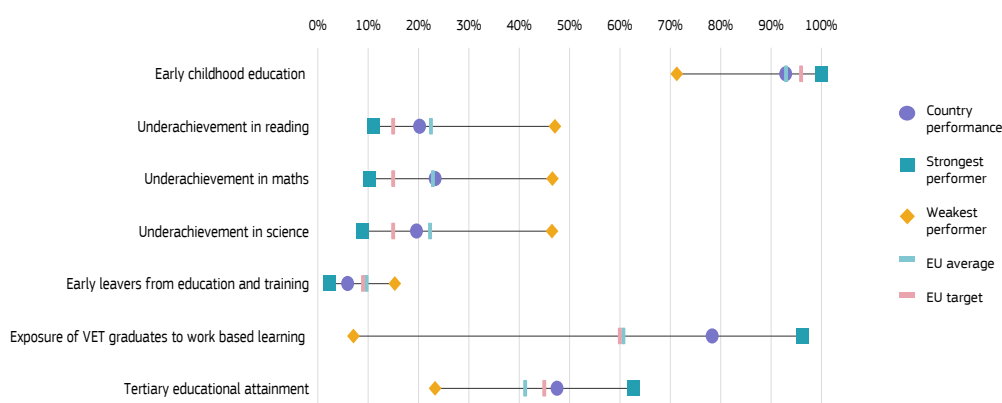
1. Key indicators

Figure 1: Key indicators overview

			Portugal		EU	
			2011	2021	2011	2021
EU-level targets			2030 target			
Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education)			≥ 96 %			
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills			< 15%			
Reading			< 15%			
Maths			< 15%			
Science			< 15%			
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)			< 9 %			
Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning			≥ 60 % (2025)			
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)			≥ 45 %			
Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64)			≥ 47 % (2025)			
Other contextual indicators						
Equity indicator (percentage points)						
Native						
EU-born						
Non EU-born						
Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8)						
Native						
EU-born						
Non EU-born						
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP						
Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure						

Sources: Eurostat (UOE, LFS, COFOG); OECD (PISA). Further information can be found in Annex I and at [Monitor Toolbox](#). Notes: The 2018 EU average on PISA reading performance does not include ES; the indicator used (ECE) refers to early-childhood education and care programmes which are considered by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to be 'educational' and therefore constitute the first level of education in education and training systems – ISCED level 0; the equity indicator shows the gap in the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science (combined) among 15-year-olds between the lowest and highest quarters of socio-economic status; b = break in time series, d = definition differs, p = provisional, u = low reliability, : = not available, † = Nearly met guidelines for sampling participation rates after replacement schools were included, 09 = 2009, 13 = 2013, 18 = 2018, 20 = 2020.

Figure 2: Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers



Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2021, UOE 2020) and OECD (PISA 2018).

2. A focus on equity and inclusiveness

In Portugal, the socio-economic background of students has a significant impact on their academic outcomes. The gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students in the share of underachieving students is just below the EU average (26.6 pps. vs 26.9 pps). Nevertheless, according to the PISA 2018 tests (OECD, 2020), variations in reading performance are highly correlated with the economic, social and cultural background of students. National data indicate that students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background who receive school social assistance (*Ação Social Escolar, ASE*) have more learning difficulties than their peers (CNE, 2019a). The PISA 2018 tests also show that students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background are more than five times more likely to repeat a grade than students from an advantaged background. It indicates also that disadvantaged students are likely to attend schools with students from a similar socio-economic background. Student composition differs significantly between schools across the country, and even within districts of the same city (Oliveira Baptista and Pereira, 2018). Since 2020, the Directorate-General for Statistics in Education and Science (DGEEC) has developed a new indicator that assesses the ability of school clusters and municipalities to foster school success among disadvantaged students. School success is defined as the completion of each school cycle in the expected time and with positive scores in the national exams¹. In 2020/2021, students who received additional learning and inclusion support improved their academic results and achieved the level reached by the overall student population. At secondary level, the success

rate (promotion to the next academic course) was even higher (91.2% vs 90.2%)².

Having an immigrant or Roma background were also factors influencing student performance. The reading performance in the PISA 2018 tests of students with an immigrant background was 32 score points lower than the performance of non-immigrant students. After accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic background, there is still a difference of 26 score points, equal to a half school year. Second-generation migrant students scored higher than first-generation students, which is a trend observed in most countries. Oliveira (2020) also found that in all years between 2011/2012 and 2018/2019, foreign students repeated courses³ in primary and secondary education more frequently than their peers. A study by Eurydice (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019) estimates that in 2017, slightly more students with an immigrant background left education early (13.9%) than their native-born peers (12.5%). Students with an immigrant background also attend often schools that show a high concentration of migrant students (OECD 2019). According to the DGEEC (2020) report, *School Profile of Roma Communities 2018/2019*, retention and dropout rates are higher among Roma students than for the general population (15.6% in primary education and 12.6% in secondary vs 3.7% and 12.9% for the whole student population)⁴.

Educational inequality in Portugal is less pronounced than in other EU countries, but disparities between regions and high levels

¹ Exams taken in the 9th grade of basic education (Portuguese and Maths) and in the 11th and 12th grades of upper secondary education.

² [https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/527/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1365&fileName=EI2021_BreveSinteseResultados.pdf](https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/527/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1365&fileName=EI2021_BreveSinteseResultados.pdf)

³ The retention and dropout rate refers to students who are in a retention situation '(...) which occurs as a result of the student's unsuccessful use due to non-compliance with the requirements set out in the legislation in force for attendance in the school year following that one. or in a situation of withdrawal '(...) that occurs as a result of the temporary abandonment of a student or trainees from attending the teaching activities of a course, a training period or one or more subjects during the course of one academic year' (DGEEC).

⁴ <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/97/>.

of grade repetition remain key challenges.

Nearly all students are enrolled in schools and diversity in schools is increasing. Portugal has a comprehensive inclusive education framework but inclusion remains mainly geared towards including students with special education needs (SEN). Despite efforts made to collect data and evaluate existing programmes, the country lacks a coherent strategy to monitor and evaluate equity and inclusion in education.

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education policies could help further improve their effectiveness.

The OECD country policy review for Portugal, *Strength through Diversity: Education for inclusive society*,⁵ assessed how the Portuguese education system copes with diversity and inclusiveness. The review suggests, among other policy recommendations, strengthening strategies to monitor and evaluate inclusive education practices at local and school levels. Other short-term recommendations of the review focused on improving governance through better coordination, fostering synergies and accountability mechanisms, sustaining collaboration and sharing best practices between the different administrative levels of the education system. It also suggests expanding continuous professional learning opportunities for teachers to support diversity and inclusion and formulating clear guidance on the use of support resources in schools and communities. The European Commission, supports Portugal, through a multi-country project with Spain and Italy under the Technical Support Instrument, in improving the quality of their inclusive education policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have increased educational inequalities among Portuguese students.

The National Council of Education (CNE, 2021b) reports that 23% of students may not have participated regularly in school activities during distance learning. This mainly affected

children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged environments, who risked being insufficiently involved. The lack of access to digital equipment and enough digital competences may have limited the participation of students in distance learning activities. To address some of these limitations, under the action plan for the digital transition⁶, in the 2020/2021 school year, the government delivered approximately 450 000 computers to schools, mainly benefiting children from low-income households.



Box 1: Inclusive books for students with visual and hearing impairments

The Coimbra Centro school cluster (Coimbra Centre) is a reference school both for bilingual education and for teaching pupils with vision impairments. The school has extra resources and expertise to support the learning and the inclusion of some students with special educational needs through specialised teachers and equipment.

Coimbra Centro school cluster is developing a series of inclusive educational books for primary school students with visual impairments, with the books translated into braille. Most printed images in the books have reliefs made of different materials, which give students a sensory experience through touch.

In addition, the books contain QR codes for students with hearing impairments. When scanned with a smartphone, the codes direct the reader to a Youtube video with a sign language interpreter.

This project is part of a school library network programme (RBE) entitled Todos Juntos Podemos Ler (since 2012). In 2014, Coimbra Centro participated by running a project called Leituras à medida and in 2019 continued with Tem de S(L)er, which was one of ten projects supported and funded at national level in 2020.

⁵ [https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://oecdedito day.com/portugal-inclusive-education/_:!!DOxrgLBm!SBuZfk6xf5TnDI7-16-glZqA4Y2w4dT6tj_acJ8d9kZOW623rEuqu6NzXj4D-bvETJi8XINF02jXSg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://oecdedito day.com/portugal-inclusive-education/_:!!DOxrgLBm!SBuZfk6xf5TnDI7-16-glZqA4Y2w4dT6tj_acJ8d9kZOW623rEuqu6NzXj4D-bvETJi8XINF02jXSg$)

⁶ <https://www.poch.portugal2020.pt/pt-pt/Noticias/Paginas/noticia.aspx?nid=971&ano=2018&pag=3&nr=9>

The project was designed for three groups: 1) refugee students; 2) students in institutionalised care; 3) students with hearing, vision, low-vision, autism, multi-disabilities and severe learning difficulties. The project received financial public support (EUR 1 950) and from several private entities, for example Critical Software providing EUR 2 000 and two parish councils (EUR 200 each).

More information available at:
<https://padlet.com/bibliotecaaecc/605az4wctu4a>;
<https://www.aecoiimbracentro.pt/comunicacao/noticia/312/projeto-tem-de-sler>;
<https://www.facebook.com/bibliotecaAecc>.

3. Early childhood education and care

Portugal is taking steps to extend the preschool network and make attendance in early childhood education and care (ECEC) universal. With support from the national recovery and resilience plan (RRP), the Portuguese government plans to expand its preschool network, which aims to provide free access to ECEC to all 3-year old children. ECEC attendance in Portugal (from age 3 to compulsory schooling age) in 2020 was similar to the EU average (92.9% vs 93.0%), but still below the EU-level target (96%). ECEC attendance of children aged 3 is below the EU average (83.2% vs 87.8% in 2020) but above average for children aged 4 and 5. The attendance rate is also much higher than the EU average for children below 3 years old (53% vs 32.3% in 2020)⁷. The rate of enrolment in ECEC tends to be significantly lower for children whose mother has not completed tertiary education and for children from low-income households (OECD, 2021)⁸.

The ECEC sector shrank during the last decade, despite expected higher demand. In 2021, around 251 000 children (aged 3–6) attended ECEC (51.5% boys and 48.5% girls),

⁷ EU-SILC, ilc_caindformal.

⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm/?refcode=20190209ig>

25 000 fewer than ten years earlier⁹. Consequently, the number of ECEC institutions also fell from 6 812 (2011) to 5 774 (2021)¹⁰. In 2021, 46% of children attended private kindergarten (96% of children below 3), which is also a reduction over the last decade¹¹. In 2021, there were 17 064 ECEC teachers, more than one thousand less than in 2011. The decrease was stronger in some regions (Norte, Centro and Madeira)¹². 99.1% of ECEC teachers are women (against the EU-27 average of 95.7%)¹³. The teaching population is also ageing. On average, the ratio of teachers aged over 50 to those under 35 years old is 7 to 1 (3 to 1 in the metropolitan area of Lisbon and 4 to 1 in Algarve)¹⁴.

4. School education

The number of students leaving education without completing upper secondary education is falling. In 2021, the rate of students leaving education and training early (ELET) reached a historic low of 5.9%. However, regional disparities persist, ranging from over 20% in Azores and Algarve to below the national average in the Norte region. The great success in reducing ELET rates (from 23% in 2011, 14% in 2016 to 8.9% in 2020) is linked to the implementation of policies such as the priority intervention educational territories programme (*Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária*,

⁹ <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Alunos+matriculados+no+ensino+pr%C3%A9-escolar+total+e+por+sexo-852>

¹⁰ <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Estabelecimentos+nos+ensinos+pr%C3%A9-escolar++b%C3%A1sico+e+secund%C3%A1rio+por+n%C3%advel+de+ensino-1237-9805>

¹¹ <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Alunos+matriculados+no+ensino+pr%C3%A9-escolar+total+e+por+subsistema+de+ensino-853>

¹² <https://www.pordata.pt/Municípios/Docentes+em+exerc%C3%adcio+nos+ensinos+pr%C3%A9-escolar++b%C3%A1sico+e+secund%C3%A1rio+total+e+por+n%C3%advel+de+ensino-208-1495>

¹³ <https://www.pordata.pt/Europa/Docentes+do+sexo+feminino+em+percentagem+dos+docentes+por+n%C3%advel+de+ensino-1736>

¹⁴ <https://www.pordata.pt/Municípios/%C3%8ndice+de+envelhecimento+dos+docentes+em+exerc%C3%adcio++nos+ensinos+pr%C3%A9-escolar++b%C3%A1sico+e+secund%C3%A1rio+por+n%C3%advel+de+ensino-337>

Figure 3: Pupils from age 3 to the starting age of compulsory primary education, 2013 and 2020 (%)



Source: Eurostat (UOE), [educ_uoe_enra21].

TEIP)¹⁵ and the national programme for school success promotion (*Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar*, PNPSE)¹⁶. The impact of parents' education background on ELET is the lowest in the EU, which shows that the school system is better at supporting inter-generational mobility than in other countries¹⁷.

Portugal launched a comprehensive plan to compensate for the loss of learning. In June 2021, the government presented the plan 21|23 *Escola*¹⁸, with a duration of two academic years and with an allocation of over EUR 900 million.

The plan aims to remedy students' learning losses during the pandemic in primary and secondary education, make curricular development more flexible and provide schools with resources to develop special measures, such as weeks or days with specific learning activities in priority subjects or domains¹⁹. Indicators and instruments for monitoring the plan are in progress²⁰. The plan contains three pillars: 'Teaching and Learning', 'Supporting the Educational Communities' and 'Knowing and Assess'. In particular, it includes boosting staffing levels in schools, training teaching and non-teaching staff, increasing digital resources and providing schools with more equipment and infrastructure. The Institute for evaluation of education (IAVE) published in March 2022 guidelines with suggestions on how to assess student performance²¹. Initial monitoring

¹⁵ The TEIP programme, implemented since the 1996/1997 school year, involves schools in areas with high levels of poverty and social exclusion, as identified by educational indicators (e.g. school failure) and socio-economic indicators (e.g. the ASE). <https://www.dge.mec.pt/teip>

¹⁶ Created in 2016, its mission is to prevent school failure by reducing grade repetition rates through a bottom-up approach. Each school can implement its own strategic action plan to promote educational practices and improve learning. <https://pnpse.min-educ.pt/programa>

¹⁷ See footnote 3.

¹⁸ <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/noticia?i=governo-apresenta-plano-2123-escola>.

¹⁹ Order No 6726-A/2021).

²⁰ Resolution of the Council of Ministers No 90/2021 (Approves 21|23 School + Plan).

²¹ https://iave.pt/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/GPS_Completo_VersaoFinal.pdf.

data²² indicates that Portugal had already developed and implemented over 80% of the actions planned²³.

New live science clubs and digital laboratories in schools foster STEM subjects.

The Directorate-General for Education (DGE) and the National Agency for Scientific and Technological Culture *Ciência Viva*²⁴ approved the creation of new science clubs, increasing from 237 to 699 clubs across the country. The national RRP supports this measure. The *Ciência Viva* school network aims to expand experimental teaching of sciences and strengthen the sciences in primary and secondary education. The network runs partnerships with universities, research centres, museums and science centres, companies, associations and NGOs. The RRP will also support the creation of digital education laboratories²⁵ at schools in the second and third cycles of basic education and secondary education. Schools can opt to run different activities such as programming and robotics, STEM subjects or arts and multimedia.

The ageing of the teacher workforce and teacher shortages in certain fields are becoming major educational challenges.

National statistics indicate that over the last 15 years, the number of teachers decreased from more than 185 000 to just over 147 000. The National Council of Education (CNE, 2019b)²⁶ highlighted that the number of teachers who will retire by 2028 is increasing progressively. 20% of today's teachers will retire within the next five years and 58% within 10 years (Nunes, 2021). There is already a lack of qualified teachers for several subjects (e.g. Portuguese, geography, history, biology and IT). Teacher shortages are especially pronounced in the metropolitan area of

Lisbon, Setubal and Algarve, as stated by the unions. DGEEC estimates that by 2030/2031, Portugal will need around 34 500 new teachers to avoid a shortage of qualified teachers²⁷. To aggravate the situation, fewer young people are starting teacher training courses. The number of graduates in master's courses that provide a professional qualification for teaching is falling.

Portugal has revised the professional qualification requirements for teachers.

A proposal to modify the Legal Regime of Professional Qualification for Teaching in PreSchool, Primary and Secondary Education is being prepared by the Ministry of Education²⁸. With this, the government is seeking to remedy teacher shortages, for example by creating scope to recruit professionals with a relevant academic background. The teachers unions consider this a serious setback in terms of teacher quality, jeopardising the quality of education.

School buildings require renovation. Most schools in Portugal were built during the 1970/80s, and about 50% have not yet been renewed. In addition, current changes in the curriculum, new competences for students to acquire by the end of compulsory education and schools' autonomy to implement different teaching methods require different ways of organising the school space and highlight the need to modernise school premises.

Integrating displaced Ukrainian children is a challenge for Portugal's education system.

By May 2022, Portugal had welcomed more than 35 000 people fleeing the war: two out of three are women and about one third are children under 14. Displaced children are being integrated into the education system. However, in May only one third of minors who had arrived in Portugal had enrolled in school (around one thousand in pre-primary, three thousand in primary and several hundred in secondary). Children can continue their studies in the Ukrainian education system through

²² [https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1348&fileName=Relat_rio_Plano_21_23_Escola__1a_Monito.pdf](https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1348&fileName=Relat_rio_Plano_21_23_Escola__1a_Monito.pdf).

²³ <https://escolamais.dge.mec.pt/noticias/implementacao-do-plano-de-recuperacao-das-aprendizagens-superior-80>.

²⁴ <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/noticia?i=rede-de-clubes-ciencia-viva-na-escola-triplica>

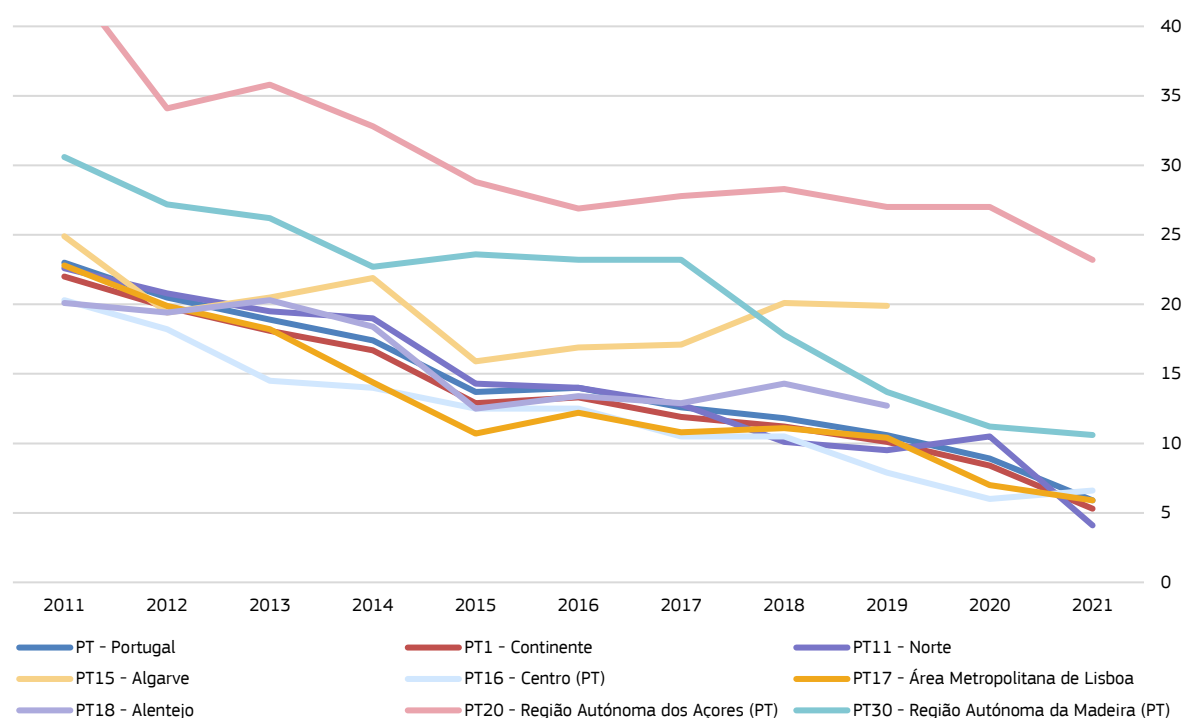
²⁵ https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/informacoes_escolas/laboratorios_de_educacao_digital.pdf

²⁶ CNE - teacher recruitment study July 2019

²⁷ [https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1304&fileName=DGEEC_Estudo_Diagnostico_de_Necessidade_.pdf](https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=1304&fileName=DGEEC_Estudo_Diagnostico_de_Necessidade_.pdf)

²⁸ <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/noticia?i=governo-quer-tornar-profissao-docente-mais-atrativa>

Figure 4: Early leavers from education and training by NUTS 2 regions in Portugal, 2011-2021(%)



Source: Eurostat (LFS), [edat_lfse_16].

the National Online School²⁹ or via Ukrainian television whilst being supervised at Portuguese schools, with the learning of Portuguese being mandatory. The DGE has identified and sent to schools a set of guidelines on integrating refugee children in preschool education³⁰ and on welcoming, integrating and including Ukrainian children and young people³¹. The Ministry of Education also provides a collection of documents online³². Action on integration is monitored by a working group including the Ministry of Education

and other bodies such as the High Commissioner for Migration³³. A multidisciplinary team supporting inclusive education supports strategic teaching measures and accompanying students during teaching activities. The Ukrainian Refugees Association regrets the lack of places in day-care centres and kindergartens for their children. This makes it difficult for them to help parents integrate in the country as they cannot attend training courses, job interviews or accept jobs.

²⁹ <https://lms.e-school.net.ua/guide>

³⁰ https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Projetos/Criancas_jovens_refugiados/integracao_de_criancas_refugiadas_na_educacao_pre-escolar.pdf

³¹ http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Projetos/Criancas_jovens_refugiados/orientacoes_para_o_acolhimento_a_integracao_e_a_inclusao_de_criancas_e_jovens_ucranianos_refugiados.pdf

³² https://dge-mec-pt.translate.google.com/ciencas-e-jovens-refugiados-medidas-educativas?_x_tr_sch=http&_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=wapp



Box 2: Supporting technological projects carried out by VET students – Vision helper

Since 2014, the Vocational School of Technology and Electronics (ESTEL) supports technological projects run by their trainees

³³ <https://www.acm.gov.pt/>

(secondary VET students with double certification). ESTEL has had over 800 VET trainees and received over EUR 3.5 million in funding from the European Social Fund for the period 2014-2021.

The project VisionHelper was developed by a trainee attending the IT Equipment Management Technician Vocational Course. It consists of a cane with several features designed to help people with visual impairments move about more easily. The cane, programmed in Arduino, contains informative LEDs, vibration sensors, proximity sensors, audio sensors, and a lithium battery. Proximity sensors detect obstacles and alert the user through vibrating pulses and an audio speaker. As obstacles get closer to the user, the vibrating pulses and audio sounds are intensified. VisionHelper gives people with this disability more autonomy when walking on the street, thus improving their quality of life and safety.

<https://e-volui.pt/estel-videos/?dc=VideoEstel112>

5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

In July 2021, the Portuguese government and the social partners signed a tripartite agreement to improve the VET system. In 2020, 38.7% of upper secondary pupils were enrolled in VET programmes (below the EU average of 48.7%)³⁴. In 2021, 65.4% of recent VET graduates were employed (below the EU average of 76.4%)³⁵. The agreement comprises: (i) regulation and governance of the VET system; (ii) improving the tools and responsiveness of the system; (iii) raising the skills base in the *Qualifica* programme; (iv) improving post-secondary education and intermediate levels of qualification; (v) applying innovation and flexibility in training methods and responses; (vi) fostering digital methods and distance learning. The agreement envisages putting in place a legal framework for VET, particularly for continuous training and its specificities. It also includes the creation of an

Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee for Education and the VET system (legally established since December 2021) and streamlining VET measures (namely initial and continuous training) into a single programme under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework.

The agreement also aims to improve quality, notably by improving the certification system of training bodies (for instance by stepping up regular monitoring of these entities) and by strengthening links with EQAVET. The agreement envisages bringing in an integrated strategy to boost post-secondary courses that are part of the higher education admission process for VET students.

VET reform and the investments included in Portugal's RRP will produce tangible results as from 2023. The reform of the VET system modernises the supply of VET courses regulated by the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ) based on forecast needs for qualifications. By the end of 2025, at least 20 000 new vacancies will be created. To complement the reform, the RRP will fund the creation of 365 specialised technology centres for professional courses by 2025, and invest in the upgrading of VET offices in the public employment service network. These investments are expected to improve and increase the supply of VET significantly, in line with labour market needs and emerging and new skills/professions.

ESIF funding will complement VET reform and investment under the RRP. The ESIF programmes are expected to be adopted by the end of 2022, notably those related to the European Social Fund+. Most VET actions will be carried out under the proposed *Demography, Qualifications and Inclusion Programme*, an ESF+ single-fund programme that will mobilise around EUR 6 700 million to support employment, training, education and social inclusion types of action.

Improving adult learning is also part of the agreement with social partners. The main tool remains the *Qualifica* programme, a flagship initiative to raise qualifications and facilitate tailored training pathways, which has been central to adult learning since 2017. The main goal of these improvements relates to the need to

³⁴ educ_uoe_enrs05.

³⁵ edat_lfse_24.

simplify and improve the autonomy of all operational phases under the *Qualifica* programme, with the aim of improving adult access to qualifications. To promote the effectiveness of the programme, Portugal plans to: (i) step up the recognition of competences; (ii) expand the geographical coverage of the *Qualifica* centres; (iii) develop the *Qualifica AP*; (iv) explore implementing an *Employer Qualifica* programme, specifically targeting employers of micro, small and medium enterprises with low educational attainment. Portugal's target for 2030 is the same as the EU target, to have 60% of adults in training each year.

Adults will be eligible for support to develop digital skills. The agreement with social partners includes deepening a 'Digital Guarantee' strategy, notably for unemployed adults, to ensure that all unemployed adults have access to digital skills training in line with their competences and, simultaneously, expanding the provision of digital training for employed adults.

The RRP will provide funding to help upskill 145 000 adults by 2025. The initiative is a part of a wider strategy to upskill the population, which overall has a low educational attainment, and respond to the 2019 country-specific recommendation. Measures under the RRP include: (i) basic education and training courses for adults in levels B1/B2/B3 run by local projects benefiting from the scaled-up national plan for adult literacy. The goal is to reach 226 projects by 2025 and involve 22 500 adults, (ii) 100 000 adults with skills recognition, validation and certification of competencies (RVCC) by the end of 2025; (iii) converting and updating the skills of active adults with short-term training in higher education, initial and postgraduate level, as well as life-long learning. Here, the objective is to reach 23 000 participants by 2025.

Portugal is already rolling out features to support skills validation, such as the *Qualifica Accelerator*. This financial support for adults uses the RVCC process to help adults complete an incomplete qualification or upgrade their schooling or professional qualification. This incentive is designed to encourage adults who have left school without concluding the 12th grade or without a professional qualification to return and invest in their qualifications. Portugal is

on the right track to meet the 30 000 adults' milestone set for 2022.

6. Higher education

Enrolment in higher education reached a record high. 2021 was the year with the second highest number of students competing for a place at higher education institutions since 1989. Demand increased as more students with low grades applied. In addition, since 2020, higher education institutions can run special entrance competitions for VET and specialised artistic education students³⁶.

Portugal is increasing the share of tertiary graduates, notably in ICT. The tertiary education attainment rate (25-34 years-old - TEA) in 2021 was 5.6 pps. higher than in 2020 and exceeded the EU average (47.5% vs 41.2%), being already above the EU-level target (45%). At regional level, the rate ranges from 53.8% in the metropolitan area of Lisbon to 24.2% in the Azores. There is also a rural/urban divide in the TEA (17.8 pps. difference), but lower than the EU average (21.8%). The rates also differ according to the people's country of origin: in 2021 the highest rate for people born in another EU country (56.3%), followed by Portuguese-born people (47.6%), and those born in another foreign country (41.1%). In Portugal, the TEA gender gap in favour of women is above the EU average (14.4% vs 10.8%). The percentage of STEM graduates of all graduates in 2020 was 27.8% (almost same than in 2015). The share of ICT graduates (2.6%) has doubled since 2015 however (1.2%), while the share of graduates in natural science, mathematics and statistics (6.2%) remained at the 2015 level.

Greater involvement of higher education institutions in upskilling/reskilling young people and adults. The *Adult Impulse Programme* and the *Impulso Jovem STEAM programme*, both supported by the RRP, have been designed for initial and postgraduate higher education. They help respond to the 2019 country-

³⁶ Decree-Law 11/2020, 2/4.

specific recommendation³⁷ to improve the digital skills of the population and to increase the number of graduates in ICT.

Digital skills are at the EU average. In 2022, Portugal ranks 14th out of the 27 EU countries in the human capital dimension of the Digital Economy and Society Index, at the EU average³⁸. 55% of Portugal's population has basic or above basic digital skills (EU average 54%). The proportion of ICT specialists in employment (4.7%) is similar to the EU average (4.5%), while the level of ICT graduates is below average (2.6% vs 3.9%). The share of female ICT specialists is 21%, the same as last year, above the EU average of 19%.

Higher education institutions require investment in digital skills and capacities.

There is a clear need for pedagogical training for higher education teachers to make higher education more attractive to students and prevent drop out. A number of researchers (Alarcão, 2015; Xavier & Leite, 2019) corroborated this need. Some state that higher education teachers should modernise their teaching methods³⁹. The CNE⁴⁰ highlights that Portugal's RRP does not mention action to integrate technological skills and digital resources in the teaching and learning processes of higher education institutions.

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³⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88718>

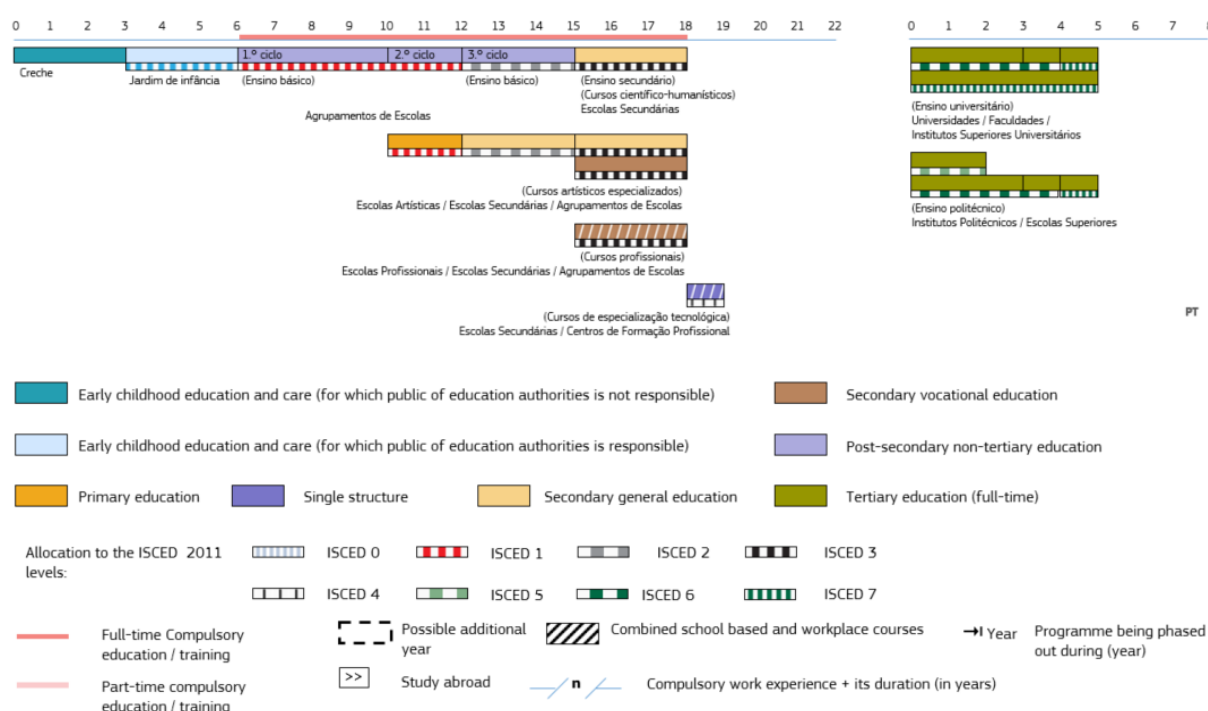
³⁹ <https://www.dn.pt/educacao-do-dia/06-jul-2020/ensino-remoto-veio-para-ficar-mas-so-como-complemento-12389539.html>

⁴⁰ Opinion No 4/2021.

Annex I: Key indicators sources

Indicator	Source
Participation in early childhood education	Eurostat (UOE), educ_uoe_enra21
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	IEA, ICILS
Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science	OECD (PISA)
Early leavers from education and training	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_14 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_02
Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfs_9919
Tertiary educational attainment	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_9912
Participation of adults in learning	Data for this EU-level target is not available. Data collection starts in 2022. Source: EU LFS.
Equity indicator	European Commission (Joint Research Centre) calculations based on OECD's PISA 2018 data
Upper secondary level attainment	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp
Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp

Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/2023: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Notes: Agrupamentos de Escolas (School Clusters) are organisational units that can encompass several schools and learning cycles, from kindergarten to upper secondary education. The institutions in the diagram are examples of some of the learning spaces where each type of education is offered; the diagram does not indicate all educational institutions existing in the Portuguese system.

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