

Professional programmes

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** **PORTUGAL**

Timeline

2022 Implementation**2023 Implementation****2024 Implementation****ID number 43328**

Background

In order to improve the qualification levels of the Portuguese population, it is necessary to strengthen the education and training system; this will leverage the productive potential of the economy and contribute to reducing socio-economic and geographic inequalities. The VET Agreement foresees the political design of an integrated and consistent strategy to boost VET supply, valuing the role of vocational training as a mechanism to promote social, professional and academic mobility. Considering lifelong learning as a strategic priority for the next decade, Portugal has defined a set of reforms, investments and measures to increase the participation of the population in initial and continuing training.

Objectives

- (a) Enabling young people to complete compulsory education.
- (b) Preparing for integration into the labour market.

Description

Professional programmes (*cursos profissionais*) are IVET upper secondary education programmes leading to EQF level 4 (academic and professional certification); they are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system. They target graduates of basic education aged between 15 and 18, including NEETs and learners at risk of early leaving, who would like to attend a practical programme linked to the labour market. They last three years (from 3 100 to 3 440 hours). Depending on the programme, successful graduates are awarded a minimum of 180 credits.

They have strong links to the labour market, developing social, scientific and vocational competences to exercise a profession, in conjunction with the business sector, as well as allowing students to continue their studies (in post-secondary or higher education).

Professional programmes include four components:

- (a) sociocultural, to contribute to the construction of the students' personal, social and cultural identity;
- (b) scientific training, to provide scientific training related to the qualification to be acquired;
- (c) technological training, organised in short duration training units (UFCD), aiming at the acquisition and development of a set of technical competences needed for

- professional practice;
- (d) work-based learning (WBL) (19%-24% of the programme) takes place in-company and is covered by an agreement between the school and the enterprise; it lasts from 600 to 840 hours.

The learner work plan is an integral part of the training contract (different from a labour contract). WBL is provided in the form of a traineeship carried out in an enterprise or a public organisation.

Professional courses are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (ME) and Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (*Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social, MTSSS*). They are provided by vocational schools (public or private) and public general education secondary schools. ANESPO, brings together more than 200 vocational private schools working closely with the largest stakeholders in more than 45 professional sectors.

2022 Implementation

This measure is part of the NIP under the package Skilling and reskilling. In the school year 2022/23, 1 700 new groups began, of which 1 000 were in public schools and 700 in private schools. The number of new trainees enrolled in professional programmes in the 2022/23 academic year was 41 759 students, 24 646 (59.0%) of which were in public schools.

2023 Implementation

A set of new legislation on professional programmes was published in 2023:

- (a) Dispatch No 702/2023, of 13 January, on the definition of Essential Learning for the new subject of Mathematics.
- (b) Dispatch No 9417-A/2023, of 13 September, defines the annual subsidy amounts per class and course for courses at private vocational schools.
- (c) Resolution of the Council of Ministers No 173/2023, of 12 December, creates a temporary funding measure in the NUTS II regions of the North, Centre and Alentejo.

In the 2023-24 school year, 127 565 students attended professional courses, corresponding to about 32% of the total upper secondary education students, mostly in the areas of personal services (28.87%), IT (16.32%), arts (11.80%), and business sciences (10.23%).

2024 Implementation

The essential learning for mathematics in the 10th grade came into force in the 2024/25 school year.

A pilot project for pedagogical innovation was launched in 7 schools. It aims to promote the success and quality of learning for all students and foster the alignment of educational practices with the dynamics of today's society. Schools have more autonomy in designing and adopting their own educational projects, which may involve organisational and pedagogical changes in teaching and curriculum management.

The PESSOAS-2024-23 call for applications, with a total allocation of around EUR 241.2 million, including EUR 205 million from ESF+, is intended to support professional courses taught in public, private, and cooperative schools.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education (Until April 2024)

- Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS)
- National Association of Professional Schools (ANESPO)
- Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MECI)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
 Young people (15-29 years old)
 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
 Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
 Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences
 Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Ordinance \(Portaria\) No 235-A/2018 of 23 August 2018](#)

[Decree Law \(Decreto-Lei\) No 92/2014 of 20 June 2014](#)

[Dispatch No. 702/2023, of 13 January 2023](#)

[Dispatch No. 9417-A/2023, of 13 September 2023](#)

[Resolution of the Council of Ministers No.173/2023, of 12 December 2023](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

VET agreement

The VET agreement is to be a common ground of a tripartite understanding, between the government and the social partners, in the following areas of intervention:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

Combating youth unemployment

The government promoted a set of active employment measures, including vocational training, associated with the creation of self-employment and youth entrepreneurship, which stand out for their impact on this target group:

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Inclusive education

The legislation introduced in 2018 and amended in 2019, aims to promote inclusive education and enable schools to recognise and respond to learners' diversity, individual needs and capabilities.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

**Cite as**

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