

Adult education and training courses

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 PORTUGAL

Timeline

2022 Approved/Agreed

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 43297

Background

To improve the qualification levels of the Portuguese population, it is necessary to strengthen the education and training system, which 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 offers, valuing the role of vocational training as a mechanism to promote social, professional and academic mobility. With Portugal's lifelong learning as a strategic plan for the next decade, and reinforcing the goal of convergence with Europe, a set of reforms, investments and measures that contribute to increasing the participation of the Portuguese population in initial and continuing training was defined.

Objectives

- (a) To raise the educational and professional qualification levels of the adult population through an integrated offer of education and training;
- (b) To improve adult employability conditions and to certify the skills acquired throughout life.

Description

Adult Education and Training courses (EFA) are a flexible training pathway of variable duration, according to the certification level. They enable the development of social, scientific and professional skills needed for the exercise of a professional activity and simultaneously obtain a basic school level certificate (fourth, sixth or ninth grades) or an upper secondary level certification (12th grade).

EFA courses are addressed to adults, employed or unemployed, with low and very low qualifications: without basic education, illiterate or with insufficient literacy levels, or from other groups at risk of exclusion who are 18 years old or over and have an education level between level 1 and level 4 from NQF/EQF.

The curriculum may integrate the following training components:

- (a) basic training: organised in areas of key competences according to the two key-competences standards for adult education and training, basic level and upper-secondary level (transversal competences, such as those associated with digital, culture, language and communication, mathematics, science and technology, citizenship and employability);
- (b) technological training: organised in short duration training units (25 to 50 hours) and/or competence units and aimed at the acquisition and development of knowledge, skills and attitudes defined in the professional profile and in the standard of competences associated with the respective qualification;
- (c) workplace training: aimed at the application and consolidation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired, through the implementation of activities in a company.

ANQEP has the responsibility for coordinating the implementation. The providers may be public or private schools of basic and secondary education; vocational training centres of IEFP; other entities such as municipalities, companies or business associations, trade unions and ONG, as long as they are part of the network of training entities of the national qualifications system.

2022 Approved/Agreed

This measure is part of the NIP under the package Inclusion and equal opportunities.

Ordinance No 86/2022 establishes the new regulation on adult education and training courses (EFA). The most significant changes are extending access to differentiated typologies of basic level EFA courses depending on the level of education already held by the adult, allowing them to shorten the qualification path. Another change is the compulsory development of competence units from the key competences area of the new basic level reference tool, Personal, social and learning competences. It also extends access to EFA courses of upper secondary level (level 3 of EQF if it is only school certification, level 4 of EQF if it is school and professional certification) to persons who are 18 years old or more.

A further change is the implementation of protocols with companies or other entities and organisations, which suit the specificity of the training area, as well as the characteristics of the labour market, with a view to developing training in a work setting.

2023 Implementation

During 2023, 9 712 adults were certified in EFA courses, upper secondary, EQF level 3.

2024 Implementation

From January to December 2024, 7 464 trainees were certified (totally and partially) in EFA upper secondary level EFA courses. Of these, 4 407 obtained full certification, with 57.4% achieving an EQF Level 3 qualification and 42.5% achieving an EQF Level 4 qualification.

2025 Implementation

Until September 2025, more than 4 100 new trainees were certified in upper secondary EFA courses, of which 2 602 obtained an EQF level 3 qualification, and 1 553 an EQF level 4 qualification.

Bodies responsible

- Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)
- National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)

Target group

Learners

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Decree-Law \(Decreto -Lei\) No 396/2007 of 31 December 2007](#)

[Ordinance \(Portaria\) No 86/2022 of 4 February 2022](#)

Related policy developments

2025 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:

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Qualifica programme

The *Qualifica* programme is based on:

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Qualifica passport

The *Qualifica* passport is a guidance instrument and personalised register of all qualifications, achieved learning outcomes and competences acquired or developed by an individual.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC)

Ordinance No 232/2016 consolidated the rules of RVCC, introduced *Qualifica* centres, described a simple process of creating and authorising them, strengthened the teams of professionals in these centres and expanded the network.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ … ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Adult education and training courses: Portugal. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/43297>