

Distance learning in basic and secondary education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 PORTUGAL

Timeline



ID number 29217

Background

The Decree-Law (Decreto-Lei) No 55/2018 that defined basic and secondary education programmes, also described the way distance learning is carried out (individual home schooling with necessary adaptations).

Objectives

Distance learning targets learners in the second and third cycles of general basic education, and in general and professional secondary education programmes, who are unable to be present at school.

Description

Ordinance (Portaria) No 359/2019 regulated distance learning by setting up the rules and procedures relating to programme organisation, delivery and attendance. It is an alternative for learners of basic and secondary education who are unable to attend an education programme in person.

The distance learning methodology is based on the use of ICT in teaching and learning. This methodology is supported by new pedagogical approaches, as well as by innovations in the organisation of programmes and curriculum management, which meet the specific needs of learners and guarantee the necessary security. The flexibility of time and place provided by distance learning allows each learner to develop their education and training path at the pace that best fits their personal, family and school life.

2019 Approved/Agreed

The Ordinance (Portaria) No 359/2019 was approved in 2019.

2020 Implementation

In April 2020, the Decree-Law on temporary measures regarding education and training during the COVID-19 pandemic was issued, including distance learning.

As a result of the suspension of classroom activities, but aiming to ensure that students continue to learn, the education ministry issued several guidelines and instruments to implement a distance learning strategy (*ensino a distância* - E@D). Each school, according to local needs and specificities, developed its own E@D plan, finding the most suitable answers to support students.

The government created the School support website (*Apoio às Escolas*) for basic and secondary education, including vocational education and training (VET). It includes resources and tools, as well as suggestions for methodologies and activities to support distance learning for all education and training programmes, including VET. In addition, to support the most vulnerable or disadvantaged learners, an alternative education method Telescola, a renewed tool transmitted through a television channel, was developed (*#EstudoEmCasa*). It did not aim to replace teachers, but it is rather a resource to be included in the distance learning plan of each school.

Schools made several adjustments to respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of work-based learning (WBL), this was particularly challenging. As it was almost impossible to guarantee real work experiences to learners, alternatives were explored, including simulation practices carried out synchronously or asynchronously; they were duly planned and evaluated by schools and, whenever possible, articulated with the host entities. They contributed to the achievement of the objectives of VET programmes.

2021 Implementation

The *#EstudoEmCasa* 2020/21 presented some new features for the previous model. A coordination team and a specific team for its development, with more than 40 teachers, specialised technicians and five Portuguese sign language interpreters, were created.

The project *#EstudoEmCasa Apoia*, ran in 2021/22, in the continuity of *#EstudoEmCasa* 2020/21. It consisted of an open access platform providing: support tools with frequently asked questions answered for students; support for autonomous study methods; expert explanations given in different areas; forums and webinars for discussion around recurring questions; guidelines to support the follow-up from parents/families. The platform contents are structured in priority areas of intervention, with the creation of learning communities, in an e-learning regime, with the support of a multidisciplinary team.

A new legislation Decree-Law (Decreto-Lei) No 78-A/2021, of 29 September was published changing the temporary measures concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and revoking the Decree-Law (Decreto-Lei) No 14G/2020 of 13 April.

2022 Implementation

Project *#EstudoEmCasa Apoia* 21|23

The Project, launched in February 2022, is an integral part of the Plano Escola + 21|23. It aims to continuing the recovery of learning, missing during the COVID-19 pandemic and develop transversal skills. It also aims to stimulate students' autonomous work through the exploration of activities and challenges to be carried out at their own pace, wherever and whenever they want. The project, supported by a free-access digital platform, has an optimised navigation from the user's perspective and an optimised search engine. Support tools are made available for students, teachers, parents and the educational community. It provides resources, webinars, podcasts, videos and soon, online courses.

It targets learners in the second and third cycles of general basic education, and in general and professional secondary education programmes, who are unable to attend school. Students with serious illnesses or hospital stays, high-performance sports

students and students whose parents have itinerant professions can benefit from this scheme too.

2023 Implementation

The programme was operational and ran as regular practice.

2024 Implementation

The Ebook 'Self-study... Believe me, you can do it! Paths, Goals and Horizons' (*Estudo Autónomo... Acredita, és capaz! Percursos, Metas e Horizontes*) was launched in June by the Directorate General of Statistics on Education and Science. The e-book presents a series of studies carried out by the #EstudoEmCasa Apoia project team, as well as indicators and outputs resulting from three years of work, pointing to future horizons. It is a publication that reflects on the importance of networking and multidisciplinary work, with the inspiring slogan of cross-pollinating knowledge. It is available on webpages of different bodies of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation.

The Directorate General of Education (DGE) launched an educational video platform, #EstudoEmCasa Apoia, on YouTube in July. The videos available were organised into playlists and related to a wide variety of subjects. They are aimed at the upper secondary level, including professional training courses.

2025 Implementation

No progress or developments on this policy were reported by October 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Directorate General for Education (DGE) (until August 2025)
- Institute for Education, Quality and Assessment (EduQA) (since August 2025)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Thematic categories

Modernising VET infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

Ordinance [Portaria] No 359/2019, of 8 October 2019

Decree-Law [Decreto-Lei] No 55/2018, of 6 July 2018

Decree-Law [Decreto-Lei] No 14-G/2020, of 13 April 2020

School support website

ReferNet Portugal; Cedefop (2020). Portugal: responses to the COVID-19 outbreak. National news on VET

Decree-Law (Decreto-Lei) No 78-A/2021, of 29 September 2021

Ebook Self-study... Believe me, you can do it! Paths, Goals and Horizons (Estudo Autonomo... Acredita, es capaz! Percursos, Metas e Horizontes)

YouTube #EstudoEmCasa Apoia

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

21|23 ESCOLA+ plan

The plan is addressed to the basic and secondary level students, with a focus on three structural elements:

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Distance learning in basic and secondary education: 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/29217>