

Inclusive education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 PORTUGAL

Timeline



ID number 28701

Background

The Government has prioritised investment in inclusive education, enabling learners, regardless of their personal and social situation, to have equal opportunities. The education system should meet the expectations and needs of all learners, supporting them in reaching their full potential, offering them a sense of belonging and contributing to higher levels of social cohesion.

Objectives

Legislation aims to address the needs of each learner and provide the adequate environment to achieve their goals, promoting equity and equal opportunities throughout compulsory education.

Description

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. It established a flexible learning model, which addresses the unique needs of learners and targets the acquisition of common knowledge throughout their school paths, regardless of the specific education or training programme in which they are enrolled. This legislation offers learners opportunities to achieve educational success. The measures introduced affect all education and double certification (VET) programmes. They aim to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities.

The methodological approaches underlying inclusive education legislation rely on flexible curricular models, and on the systematic monitoring of implemented interventions and the assessment of their effectiveness. They also provide the option for intervention measures tailored to each learner.

Aiming to improve teaching quality, actions were taken to strengthen teachers' and school principals' training and exposure to good practices, through a model of proximity monitoring of schools in each region by teams based centrally at the education ministry. A MOOC (massive open online course) concerning inclusive education took place between February and March 2019 and involved about 3 000 teachers and technicians.

ANQEP is part of a team, coordinated by the Technical and Professional School of Moita, Lisbon, collaborating in a pilot project to design a guide to support the implementation of inclusive education in the double certification programmes. This guide will provide information, training and follow-up actions for school teams.

A range of stakeholders were involved in the initiative: the Portuguese Education Council; the Schools Council; the Association of Private and Cooperative Educational Institutions; the Portuguese Cooperative Confederation; the Confederation of National Institutions for Solidarity; the Union of the Portuguese 'Misericordias'; and the bodies of Autonomous Regions Government (Madeira and Azores).

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Implementation

Between April and May 2019, each central monitoring team held regional network meetings, clarifying and sharing information on common practices with various schools. The Inclusive education seminar: equity-participation-rights-values-progress, took place in May 2019, providing an opportunity for a wide debate and sharing of inclusive education practices among the 700 participants.

On 4 June 2019, the national meeting on autonomy and curricular flexibility was held with schools, teachers, students, specialists and other partners, for the dissemination of practices, reflection on the steps already taken and projection of the work to be carried out.

From the academic year 2019/20, the maximum number of students per class dropped from 30 to 28 in the 10th year, including VET programmes, and this reduction will progressively apply to the remaining years of secondary education.

Also in 2019, legislation introduced the redefinition of the special education teacher role and reinforcement of learners' guardians.

2020 Implementation

From December 2019 to February 2020, intensive proximity monitoring work at public, private and cooperative education institutions and professional schools was carried out. Participating institutions presented their innovation plans and how they promote curricular autonomy and flexibility. These institutions developed more than 25% of the curriculum autonomously to address learner needs better.

Throughout 2020, multidisciplinary technical teams from central and regional services of the education ministry supported public schools nationwide in applying inclusive education principles and practices. In these meetings, schools have shared their strategies in addressing the specific needs of learners regarding the competences that should be included in the curriculum and core curriculum and their socio-emotional well-being. Schools also presented their strategy in facing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In practice, flexible curricular models have provided more autonomy to schools, enabling them to adjust to learner profiles and retain high-quality teachers.

2021 Implementation

Ordinance (Portaria) No. 306/2021, of 17 December, changed the Ordinance No 181/2019, of 11 June, in relation to the autonomy and flexibility of schools.

Recognising the special vulnerability of non-escorted underaged foreigners (MENA), the Portuguese Government responded to the March 2020 Greek Government and EU appeals to relocate 500 children and youngsters from refugee camps in Greece. Up until December 2021, Portugal had welcomed 232 underaged refugees, thus becoming, according to European Commission data from October 2021, the third among Member States in the number of relocations, after France and Germany. These

minors were admitted to shelter housing throughout the country, and then enrolled in the Portuguese education system.

The training and skills updating of technicians is an element that promotes equal opportunities:

- (a) 59 participants took part in a 50-hour training of trainers workshop (25 synchronous distance hours and 25 hours of autonomous work);
- (b) 60 school psychologists took part in 60-hour specialised training;
- (c) three MOOC training actions:
 - (i) Technologies for inclusion and accessibility, (1 255 participants);
 - (ii) Inclusive education (1 493 participants);
 - (iii) Learning and school communities (1 619 participants).

106 textbooks from Grade 1 to 12 (general and vocational education) were adapted and transcribed into Braille.

2022 Implementation

The measure is part of the NIP under the packages Equal opportunities and Flexibility and diversification.

In 2022, OECD conducted a review of inclusive education in Portugal that concluded that the Portuguese education system has achieved historic improvements in access and results over the last 25 years and shows significant improvement in students' overall performance. It is one of the few countries with a positive trajectory of improvement in all subjects - reading, mathematics and science - assessed by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The early school leaving rate has decreased significantly, despite large variations between regions. However, Portugal still faces some challenges in achieving an inclusive education system and important differences persist in the learning outcomes and well-being of students from disadvantaged groups and/or from diverse backgrounds, from low-income families, from immigrant families and from Roma community.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the Directorate General of Education (DGE) published five e-books: Inclusive Education Management, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Universal Design for Learning, Inclusion in the Classroom, and Inclusive Learning Environments. Training actions were developed for teachers and other educational agents on the aforementioned topics.

In order to reinforce the learning of the Portuguese language, from an inclusive education perspective, guidelines were published regarding the operationalisation of VET attended by migrant students. These guidelines cover issues relating to the curriculum and assessment. The schools could, together with parents, provide educational responses facilitating access to the curriculum, through selected teaching activities, based on the sociolinguistic profile and educational trajectory of migrant students.

Decree-Law No 62/2023, of 25 July changes the rules for adapting the assessment process under the legal framework of inclusive education and the rules on the external assessment of learning. It is established that all students will take three national exams. The Portuguese exam remains compulsory for all students. Students could choose two other exams according to their individual path and choice of further studies.

2024 Implementation

The monitoring system designed specifically for Portugal by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education has come into force. The monitoring system allows each school and the services of the Ministry of Education to apply and evaluate the effectiveness of the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Framework (Decree-Law 54/2018, as amended by Law 116/2019 of 13 September). The methodology used,

based on standards, allows each school to compare existing educational practices with the standards. The indicators defined for each standard allow for measurement by providing questions that gather the necessary information for analysis.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education (Until April 2024)
- Directorate General for Education (DGE)
- National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)
- Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MECI)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders
Guidance practitioners

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

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers
Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Lifelong guidance
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

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

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

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

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Decree-Law \[Decreto-Lei\] No 54/2018, of 6 July 2018](#)

[Promoting equal opportunities for VET learners](#)

[Education Law \[Lei\] No 46/86, of 1 October 1986 , in its current wording.](#)

[Constitution of the Portuguese Republic article 74, in its current wording.](#)

[Law \[Lei\] No 116/2019, of 13 September 2019](#)

[Ordinance \[Portaria\] No 181/2019, of 11 June 2019](#)

[Ordinance \(Portaria\) No 306/2021, of 17 December 2021](#)

[OECD \(2022\). Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal](#)

[Country Background Report](#)

[Decree-Law \(Decreto-Lei\) No 62/2023, of 25 July 2023](#)

[Monitoring System of the Legal Framework of Inclusive Education - Guidelines for Schools](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Portuguese host language programme

The PLA programme, targeting migrants aged 16 or over, is organised according to training standards included in the national catalogue of qualifications, at levels A1 to B2 of the common European framework of reference for languages.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

Professional programmes

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.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 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

2024 Implementation

Class-sharing pilot project

The project is based around a strategy for sharing classes between schools (a class, in some subjects, may have students from different schools), under a pedagogical experience regime, aimed at promoting the diversification of the educational and training offer in low-density areas.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Specialised artistic programmes

The ministry of education has approved the creation of a working group which will analyse the specialised artistic programmes. The main tasks of this working group are to:

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Embedding key competences in VET programmes

In 2018, a new law introduced the subject Citizenship and development to implement the National strategy for citizenship education. This subject is included in the curricula of primary, lower and upper secondary education, including VET.

 PORTUGAL

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

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