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# Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

# VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

# PORTUGAL

## School year 2007/08

Basic education *(Ensino Básico)* in Portugal is compulsory, universal, free and comprises 9 years of schooling, for students between 6 and 15 years old ([1]). It is organised into three cycles: a 1st cycle with four years; a 2nd cycle with two and a 3rd cycle with three years. Students must take national tests in Portuguese language and Maths at the end of the 3rd cycle, and those who succeed have access to general or vocational upper secondary education. Basic education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity provides alternative pathways for students (more than 15 years old) who did not complete compulsory education. These pathways comprise the 3rd cycle of Basic Education, which confers dual certification (educational and vocational) and allows the pursuit of further studies, namely education and training courses *(cursos de educação formação)* and apprenticeship courses *(cursos de aprendizagem)*.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The legislative framework of vocational education and training is based on the Basic Law on the Education System, Law No 46/86, of 14 October *(Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo)*, which established the general framework governing the entire system in 1986.

In 2001, the scope of the legal framework changed: guiding principles were established for the organisation and management of basic educational curricula ([2]), and for the assessment of learning. This revision of the legislation governing basic education reflected one of the Government's strategic objectives in that this level of education is seen as the beginning of lifelong education and training.

In 2004, under the reform of secondary education ([3]), guiding principles were established for the organisation and management of curricula and for the assessment and certification of courses at secondary education level.

The legislative framework governing vocational education and training, in force since 1991, is being completely revised. This revision was rooted in the Agreement for Vocational Training Reform *(Acordo para a Reforma da Formação Profissional)*, signed by the Government and the majority of the social partners, in March 2007.

([1]) Basic Law on the Education System legislative framework.
([2]) Decree-Law No 6/2001, of 18 January.
([3]) Decree-Law No 74/2004 of 26 March, together with its respective changes and amendments: Amendment No 44/2004 of 25 May; Decree-Law No 24/2006 of 6 February; Amendment No 23/2006 of 7 April; Decree-Law No 272/2007 of 26 July.

The new regulatory framework ([4]), approved by the Government in October 2007, created a National Qualifications System ([5]) *(Sistema Nacional de Qualificações)*. Under a new institutional framework, this system links vocational training, taking place in the world of work, and the educational system, providing them with shared objectives and instruments.

With specific respect to vocational guidance, Article 26 of the Basic Law on the Education System makes provision for guidance services to be present in schools' regional structures to support the psychological development of students, to provide educational and vocational guidance as well as psycho-pedagogical support in educational activities. The services also support school / community relations.

This framework is still based on the following legislation: Decree-Law No 190/91, of 17 May, creating the Psychology and Guidance Services (*Serviços de Psicologia e Orientação* – SPO) which sets out the frames of reference of these services; Decree-Law No 300/97, of 31 October, establishing careers in psychology under the Ministry of Education; Dispatch No 9022/99, of 6 May, establishing the national SPO network.

The new National Qualifications System, with respect to vocational guidance, aims at increasing the educational level of people in work and the improving their employability. Special importance is given to information and guidance as a means of facilitating the link between educational and vocational guidance, promoting learning and working pathways and contributing to the investment in efficiency in education and vocational training.

These goals are also recognized in the New Opportunities Initiative. It should also be pointed out that the national policy for information and guidance takes into consideration European and international recommendations.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Information and vocational counselling services are mainly organised under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity.

The National Qualifications Agency *(Agência Nacional para a Qualificação)*, a body that is answerable to both Ministries, is responsible for the following information and guidance activities for qualification and employment, namely:

- ensuring the functioning of an integrated system of vocational training offers;
- promoting the sharing of the technical instruments produced in the respective services;
- boosting joint training actions for guidance professionals;
- providing the dissemination of territorial and sectoral diagnoses, related to the labour market.

The psychology and guidance services in schools, the new opportunities centres, the public employment services and other entities accredited by the competent authorities develop

([4]) Resolution of the Council of Ministers No 173/2007 of 7 November.
([5]) Decree-Law No 396/2007, of 31 December.

information and guidance activities for qualification and employment. These actions should be coherent, integrated, systematic, continuous and complementary, in accordance with the competencies of each service, taking into account their users' profiles and needs.

## VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Vocational guidance education is not part of the compulsory education curriculum. Students in lower secondary education and mainly in the last year (9th year, third cycle of basic education) may nevertheless take extracurricular vocational guidance programmes organised by the school psychology and counselling services. Access to these programmes of 15 to 25 hours is voluntary and is also open to other students.

The psychology and guidance services of the Ministry of Education provide access to specialised educational support services that ensure an individualised or group pedagogic support to young people in their choices throughout their school careers, facilitating the development of their identities and the construction of their own life-projects.

Both school guidance specialists and teachers/heads of classes play a fundamental role in following up pupils, in clarifying possible paths for them, in cooperating with other socio-educational support services, in the proposal and signing of protocols between schools and different services, enterprises and other community actors at local level.

The psychology and guidance services also have a role to play in the identification and monitoring of problem situations in the learning process; the development of trainees' self-esteem via psychological support and study orientation; the implementation of transition strategies for working life, encouraging students in basic, upper secondary and further education; in the training of trainers and in the development of "lifelong learning" competences and attitudes.

### Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

At the level of basic education, only dual certification courses include practical and on-the-job training, for example:

1) At levels 1 and 2 of educational and training courses, the practical training component takes between 10 to 20 % of the total length of the courses.

This component is structured individually and activity takes place in a working environment. Traineeships are supervised by a training facilitator, and are aimed at the acquisition and development of technical, social, organizational skills and skills relevant for career management, for vocational qualification and consequent placement in the labour market.

The training entity is responsible for the traineeship organisation and the execution of its programme, in close coordination with the entity responsible for the traineeship.

The activities to be undertaken by trainees during on-the-job training are covered by a protocol agreed between the training entity, the trainee and the entity responsible for the traineeship.

Technical and pedagogical monitoring and assessment of trainees, properly developed in conjunction with guidance professionals, is provided by:

- The person responsible for the traineeship, appointed from amongst technological component teachers, in close relation with the entity responsible for the traineeship - in educational establishments of Ministry of Education;
- The course coordinator, in close relation with the tutor of the entity responsible for the traineeship - in direct and joint-management vocational training centres and other training organizations accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity.

2) At levels 1 and 2 of apprenticeship courses, the practical training component cannot exceed 50 % of the total length of the training. The work environment traineeship takes at least 30 % of the total length of the training, being complemented by simulated practical training.

This training component includes professional activities performed by the trainee, framed in structured training pathways and under the guidance of a tutor, in a real work environment and conducted in enterprises engaged in commerce.

The practical training component in a working environment is a professional experience in which trainees deal with technologies and techniques that go beyond simulated situations and represents an opportunity for the implementation and consolidation of the knowledge they have acquired (in plant training), for the development of working practices, entrepreneurial spirit and a sense of professional responsibility. These are inherent experiences with regard to labour relations.

These courses qualify students to enter the labour market but also allow them to continue their studies.

In 2007, the education and training courses were extended to upper secondary education, conferring a level 3 vocational qualification certificate.

## OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

### Contacts with the professional world

The school subject ‘Environment Study’, in the 1st cycle of basic education, integrates issues connected with working occupations and the labour world. At the end of the 3rd cycle of basic education (lower secondary education), seminars, visits to enterprises and vocational guidance fairs are included in the ‘School Project’ subject of the curriculum.

Other contacts with the professional world by basic education schools are made in the form of extracurricular activities, by organising visits to enterprises, vocational guidance fairs and other subject-related events.

In addition, the Ministry of Education regularly organises and participates in education and training fairs and events aiming to provide wider information to youngsters about employment and the labour market. Enterprises and enterprises associations are also invited to present their sector of activity and their experience in the promotion of employment.

## Guidance services at school

The Psychology and Guidance Services are part of the Technical and Pedagogical Services of the school and are represented in the Schools' Pedagogical Councils *(Conselhos Pedagógicos das escolas)*.

Each Psychology and Guidance Service is located in basic or secondary schools and can comprise only one school or several nearby. Students, parents or guardians, class directors, teaching and non-teaching staff can access these services.

The Psychology and Guidance Services develop their activities in 3 areas:

- psycho-pedagogical support to students and teachers;
- support to the development of interpersonal relationships inside the school and between schools and the community;
- educational and vocational guidance.

The Psychology and Guidance Services adopt two models of organisation, determined by educational level:

- a predominantly psycho-pedagogical approach, in view of the global nature of the 1st and 2nd cycles of basic education;
- an approach that includes school and vocational guidance, in the 3rd cycle of basic education (lower secondary education) and secondary education (upper secondary education).

Different types of activities are legally defined, according to a student's aims and demands:

- educational and vocational guidance programmes;
- school and vocational information measures, geared mainly to 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade students;
- individual/group sessions (interviews and psychological assessment tests);
- activities aimed to raise awareness of the labour market (study visits, on-the-job training periods, professional contacts);
- training courses for teachers and other school staff;
- monitoring on-the-job training in technological courses and vocational courses that are part of the education system;
- psycho-pedagogical support measures.

The education and training courses, which have been held in schools since 1997, are included in the activities of these services.

### Guidance services outside school

The guidance services provided by the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity aim to help individuals, young people or adults, to develop their careers by encouraging them to acquire the skills they need to gain access to employment or remain in the labour market. Access to vocational guidance services is voluntary and free.

The Institute of Employment and Vocational Training's Information, Guidance and Counselling Service targets the following groups:

- young people and unemployed adults, registered in the Employment Centres, or those who are seeking training;
- employees on retraining;
- employers and human resources managers;
- young people who are still at school.

Institute of Employment and Vocational Training vocational guidance as part of vocational training comprises the following activities:

- providing information about qualification requirements; training offers; occupations; labour market needs and prospects; retraining courses; workers' mobility and Community education, training and employment programmes;
- counselling to help potential trainees formulate their own personal and career plans and to develop strategies to put them into effect. To this end, training candidates are put through psychological evaluation tests; the results are afterwards analysed jointly by vocational counsellors and the candidates concerned. This aims to help candidates to clarify their personal attributes;
- monitoring: psycho-pedagogical support for trainees during training courses and individual support in the transition to the labour market. This monitoring can include the development of personal and social, acting without supervision, responsibility, decision-making ability, initiative, interpersonal skills; the development of learning abilities; the promotion of self-esteem and techniques for job search.

The methods used are matched to the target groups depending on their age, level of studies and personal characteristics. These activities may be organised individually or in groups.

Private organisations provide information on education and careers and help people construct a life plan. These organisations also provide support for young people who are having difficulties in adjusting to school or society.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

### In the schools

The specialist team of the Psychology and Guidance Services includes psychologists and guidance counsellors who work in collaboration with school authorities. They offer

assistance to pupils, parents and teachers in the area of educational psychology and counselling related to school activities, career planning strategies and life, as well as interpersonal relations.

The counsellors employed by the psychology and counselling services must have a master's degree in an area which is not necessarily related to guidance, or teaching qualifications (primary or secondary), or a degree in applied psychology with a specialisation in guidance (4 /5 years of studies including a traineeship). Moreover, all of them must take ongoing training courses organised by the training centre of the Portuguese Association of Educational and Vocational Counsellors. In addition, they must demonstrate communication skills, become familiar with the education and training system, the labour market, etc.

### In other guidance services

Under the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, and within the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, vocational guidance is provided by Vocational Guidance Counsellors *(Conselheiros de Orientação Profissional)*. These counsellors must hold a degree (five years of university study), preferably in psychology or sociology. Under the terms of their employment, they are required to attend six months' post-recruitment training, comprising a combination of study and work in central services and local units. They must also have skills and personal characteristics such as maturity and self-confidence, the necessary sensitivity and theoretical and practical knowledge.

## COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The central services of the Ministry of Education promote the creation of technical and scientific materials and the vocational informational guidance needed for the development of educational activities.

There are partnerships for the development of national and international projects. For example, the Academia of European Exchange Program for Vocational Guidance Counsellors *(Programa Academia Europeia de Orientação)*, which maintains a partnership with the Regional Education Directorate of Lisbon *(Direcção Regional de Educação de Lisboa)*. This Program is directed at the exchange of guidance professionals, granting traineeships of two weeks in the guidance services of the United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden and the Czech Republic.

The Psychology and Social Services of several national universities also have agreements for the development of joint activities with the Psychology and Guidance Services of the Ministry of Education.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

One thing that the reform of vocational training is attempting to do is to develop a more integrated system of information and guidance (academic and professional) involving the New Opportunities Centres, the Psychology and Guidance Services, the Information and Guidance Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and the Units for the Integration into an Active Life *(Unidades de Inserção na Vida Activa)*. In this context, it

should be pointed out that the development of the Information and Management System for Educational and Training Supply *(Sistema de Informação e Gestão da Oferta Educativa e Formativa)* is a fundamental tool in support of youth and adult reorientation and providing guidance to training offers that allow the development of certified competencies.

Working under the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for Vocational Guidance Resources ([6]) (*Centro Nacional de Recursos para a Orientação Vocacional* – CENOR), participates in the European Euroguidance network ([7]), a Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

The mission of CENOR is to develop with several countries the European dimension in the national system of education, training and guidance, by sharing working methods and disseminating innovative practices.

As member of Euroguidance, CENOR, through its website, directed at students, professionals and organisations, is responsible for:

- the creation of information and training material, leaflets, CD-ROMs, etc.;
- the dissemination and management of information about education and training opportunities; qualification and certification levels and also academic and professional paths at national and European level; clarifying questions about guidance resources and transnational mobility; European policies and resources in the context of lifelong guidance.

To update innovative trends in guidance, CENOR participates in conferences, seminars and workshops, at national and at European level.

Certain offices of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training have 'Self-Service' spaces for the search for employment and information. They are freely accessible.

Information on careers, employment offers and training programmes is also accessible on websites, for example the new website, NetEmprego, launched in 2006 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity.

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([6]) http://cenor.dgidc.min-edu.pt/
([7]) www.euroguidance.net/index.htm; http://cenor.dgidc.min-edu.pt/content.asp?startAt=2&categoryID=12

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