

Early Childhood education (0-3 and 3-6) in Portugal

The education of children aged 0-3 is under the supervision of the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Security. The offer can be from private institutions or institutions of social solidarity (non-profit institutions - IPSS). According to the CNE, the supply of institutions and vacancies is still in deficit in Portugal. However, in the last years there has been an increase in the national offer.

In 2019, by reference to December 31, 2631 day care centers were registered in Mainland Portugal, 75% of which were owned by non-profit institutions, namely the solidarity network.

In 2019, the total number of places in day-care centers was estimated at 118,500, approximately 62% of which are shared by the State through cooperation agreements with institutions of the solidarity network. The number of children attending day-care centers has also increased significantly, reaching almost 101.103 children in 2019 (PORDATA & CNE, 2019) (Table 1).

Table 1 Day-care centers offer in Portugal

N.º of Day care Centers	Non-Profit Institutions	Profit Institutions	Nº of children attending
2631	1973	658	101.103

Socio-educational provision geared towards children under three is made up of:

- a) Crèche – socio-educational provision (Ordinance n.º 262/2011, 31st August and Ordinance N.º. 411/2012, 14th December), that cares for children up to the age of three while parents or the person who has custody of them is unable to look after them. Creches' main aims are the following: (i) to facilitate reconciliation of the household's family and professional life; (ii) to ensure the well-being and overall development of children in a safe and loving atmosphere through an individualized care; (iii) to collaborate with families in sharing duties of care and responsibility in child development; (iv) to be involved in the early detection of any maladjustment or disability, ensuring proper referral.
- b) Child-minder – a social service (Decree-Law Nº 115/2015, 22nd June) provided by a person duly licensed person by the Institute for Social Security, I.P. (Instituto da Segurança Social, I. P. - ISS) who is paid to take care of children up to 3 years of age or until they reach preschool age at their place of residence. This can be

done via direct hiring by families in writing, or within an institution, when it is called family crèche. Each child-minder can care for up to 4 children (preferably of different ages), for up to 5 days a week, between 4 and 12 hours a day.

- c) Family crèche – social service/provision (Ordinance Nº 232/2015, 6th August) which consists of a group no fewer than 4 child-minders, who work within an institution (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa or private institutions of social solidarity (instituições particular de solidariedade social - IPSS) or legally equivalent institutions) designed to care for children aged up to three or old enough to attend a preschool establishment, during parents' or guardians' normal working hours or period that they cannot care for their children.
- d) Child-minders and family crèches aim to provide: (i) a safe and familiar environment for children; (ii) the right conditions for the child's whole development, in an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe; (iii) adequate care for the child's needs and well-being. (iv) State nursery schools are part of school clusters together with schools providing basic education (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles) and upper secondary education.
- e) School centers aim to optimize human and material resources and the equipment existing in schools of basic and upper secondary education, allowing preschool pupils to use, for example, a school library, gym, playing fields, sciences lab and school canteen. In these school clusters a common education project is designed for all education levels.

1.2 Early Childhood Education 3-6

The Framework Law of Preschool Education (Lei nº 5/97, 10th February) defines preschool education as the first stage of the Portuguese basic education system in a lifelong learning process, and as a complement of parents' role in their children's education. As such, the school should establish a close relationship with families, favoring child development, in order to assure their full integration in society as an autonomous, free and supportive human beings.

Preschool education is optional, recognizing that family plays the most important part in raising children, while making preschool education universal for children from the age of 4 (Lei nº 65/2015, 3rd July). This educational provision is expected to be extended to children from the age of 3 by the end of this legislature (2019).

Defined as the first stage of basic education in the lifelong learning process. Preschool education covers children from 3 years up to the age of compulsory schooling. Preschool education for children is still optional. It is provided by kindergartens, which are run by a variety of State organizations, charitable institutions, private schools and cooperatives, unions and other organizations.

The public and the private network of preschool education institutions, are complementary. The public network is made up of education institutions under the ME and the MTSSS. The private network is composed of for-profit and not-for-profit education institutions. The former are private and cooperative education institutions, while the later are private institutions for social solidarity (instituições particulares de solidariedade social - IPSS).

In 2017, 5900 preschool centers were registered in Mainland Portugal, 61,25% of which were owned by public institutions, and 38,74% by private institutions most of them from the solidarity network.

According to the CNE, in 2019, 92.5% of children between 4 years old and the beginning of basic education attended preschool education. Data shows a decrease of 2 percentage points since 2012. The data reveal, specifically that the percentage of five-year-old attending preschool education is higher than the percentage of four-year-old children, showing a difference of 2.7 percentage points. However, there are no significantly gender differences (table 1 and)

Table 2 Children attending preschool education by age

3 years old	4 years old	5 years old	6 years old	Total
72 173	79 302	81 544	10 700	243 719

The number of children attending preschool was 243.719 children in 2019 (PORDATA, 2019) (Table 3).

Table 3.

Table 3 Children attending preschool education by kind of institutions

Total of institutions	Public Institutions	Private Institutions (non-profit and profit)	Nº of children attending Total
5792	3540	2252	243.719

			Boys	Girls
			1252.748	117.971

The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring the pedagogical quality of teaching in the preschool education institutions network. Technical supervision is the joint responsibility of the Ministers of Education and Labor, Solidarity and Social Security, which consists of monitoring the organization and operation of preschool education institutions.

The main pedagogical objectives of preschool education are:

- To promote children's personal and social development;
- to foster children's integration into diverse social groups;
- to contribute to equal opportunities;
- to stimulate children's overall development;
- to promote expression and communication development;
- to enhance curiosity and critical thinking;
- to provide children with well-being and security;
- to identify maladjustments, disabilities or giftedness and to encourage families to participate in the educational process.

2.1 Preschool Education

The Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-Escolar - OCEPE), presented to the public on July 2nd, 2016, 19 years after the first version, are the result of the review and update of the guidelines in alignment with the curricular steering documents for the 1st cycle of basic education, promoted by the Ministry of Education.

This new version of the OCEPE (presents an integrated and globalizing approach of the different content areas, introducing the learning processes to be developed, with practical examples and reflection suggestions to the caretakers. In the area of Expression and Communication the domains of Physical Education and Artistic Education are valued in this updated version.

Considering the 0-3 age group in ECEC policies, a document is being organized with guidelines for the Creche, by the Ministry of Education in articulation with the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS).

With the coordinated publishing of the new version of the OCEPE and the Creche Pedagogical Guidelines, the Government takes a very important step in the promotion of the quality of the offers, facilitating the pedagogical work of the staff, as well as the child's transitions between home-creche and kindergarten, seen as decisive for the educational success.

1. Teacher Education: Legal framework

The qualification system for teachers in preschool education (3 to 5 years old), basic education (1st Cycle – 6 to 9 years old; 2nd Cycle – 10 to 12 years old and 3rd Cycle – 13 to 15 years old) and secondary education has its legal framework established in the Basic Law on Education and supplementary legislation, in particular the one that focus on the accreditation system that provide vocational training for teaching.

According to this structure, kindergarten teachers and basic and secondary education teachers must have qualifications that certify them to the specific training, enabled through teacher education that is organized according to the requirements and specificities of each level of education, i.e. according to the specific qualification profiles for teaching.

In this regard the Portuguese Government established a common performance profile to kindergarten teachers and teachers of basic and secondary education. The general performance profile of kindergarten teachers and teachers of basic and secondary education sets out on common benchmarks to the activity of teachers of all levels of education, showing requirements for the organization of their training projects and for the recognition of professional qualifications of teachers. However, conscious of the professional specificities of each level of education, the Government defines the specific profiles of kindergarten teachers and basic education teachers. These profiles define the skills of these professionals considering the following dimensions: i) professional, social and ethical; ii) teaching and learning development; iii) participation in school and community relations; iv) lifelong professional development dimension.

3.1 Initial teacher education

In Portugal, the minimum level of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is the Master's degree. It combines three years of a bachelor of Basic Education (180 ECTS) plus one and half (90ECTS) or two years (120ECTS) of a professional master. The minimum length of ITE is usually between four and a half and five years. Students of Basic Education

(Kindergarten and 1st and 2nd Cycles of Basic Educations) can choose from the following masters:

- Preschool Education;
- Preschool Education and 1st Cycle of Basic Education;
- Education on the 1st Cycle of Basic Education History and Geography of Portugal on the 2nd cycle of Basic Education;
- Education the 1st cycle of Basic Education and of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in the 2nd cycle of Basic Education;
- Musical Education Teaching in Basic Education (Students need a bachelor in Music)
- Portuguese and English teaching on the 2nd cycle of Basic Education (Students need a bachelor in Portuguese and English).

Special needs education also requires a specialization in Special Needs.

3.1.2 The Teaching Practice

The initial teacher education (bachelor and masters) include five training components to ensure the construction of technical, professional, scientific, educational, ethical, deontological and praxeological such as: a) teaching; b) general education; c) specific didactics; d) cultural, social and ethical area; e) teaching practice.

The Teaching Practice is divided in two phases: the first is the Introduction to Professional Practice (IPP) with 15 credits, integrated into the 1st cycle of studies in Basic Education and a second phase, the Supervised Teaching Practice (PES) within the 2nd cycle of studies (master), ranging between 32 and 48, depending on whether the master is 90 and or 120 ECTS, respectively. This component aims the integration of future teachers in practical contexts to observe and collaborate in situations of education and teaching. Supervised Teaching Practice takes place in classroom of childhood education centers and in schools of basic education. The students have the support of teachers and of the supervisors of the School of Education.

3.2 Continuing professional development of teachers

In Portugal, the task of determining what teachers need is delegated to schools, which sometimes perform it with the assistance of teachers themselves. Teacher of Public institutions are required to attend training, but they can choose those courses that they

wish to attend. The offer of training courses is carried out by certificated training centers and conducted by coaches certified by a legal entity.

3.3 Professional Conditions

In Portugal there are 5900 centers of preschool education, namely: 3614 public and 2228 private or Social Solidarity institutions.

In the Bragança District there are 123 establishments of pre-school. Each classroom can accommodate up to 25 children in preschool education. The ratio is two adults per 25 children. Each classroom has a full kindergarten teacher and one assistant, and in case of children with special needs, it also has the support of a teacher with a diploma in special needs. This specialized kindergarten teachers have to have five years of experience in regular education to get the diploma in special needs.

Considering the desertification of this region most of the children of public education, from rural areas, are moved daily to urban centers in county seats.

Most of the schools have very good condition since there was a great investment by the Ministry of Education and Science in recent years.

To get into public teaching career, the Portuguese teachers have to apply to a National Contest in accordance with the existing vacancies in each school region.

The teachers who hold places in school celebrate contract of indefinite period. Contracted teachers placed to fill temporary needs through the recruitment bag or school employment, celebrate labor contract fixed term.

Teachers can also be hired by the stakeholders of private schools dependent on the State. These teachers have a contract of indefinite duration after three years of work.

The pay scale of the public school has 10 levels in which teachers progress according to the length of service. A teacher of the public sector in the early stage has a basic salary of € 1,518.63. With the deductions for the Health System, tax - IRS, the General Pension Fund he will earn a net salary of € 1,082.44. In the last level teachers receive a basic salary of € 3.364,63 and a net salary of €1.806,47.

3.4 Accountability

Teacher appraisal is recent and focuses more on accountability for purposes of career progression than on improvement. School self-evaluations and external evaluations are also new, and not all schools carry out self-evaluations. Schools organize internal

student assessments for all subjects and the Educational Evaluation Institute (Instituto de Avaliação Educativa, IAVE I.P, 2013) carries out external student assessments for mathematics and Portuguese.

3.5 School inspections

In Portugal, the General Inspection of Education and Science (IGEC) is the entity responsible for ensuring the control, audit and supervision of the educational system in the context of preschool education, school education, including basic, secondary and higher (Decree-Law no. 125/2011 - Article 11). Among other, are attributions of the IGEC to

contribute to the quality of the education system in preschool education, basic and secondary education and extracurricular education, in particular through control, monitoring and evaluation measures, proposing measures aimed at improving the education system and participating in the evaluation of primary and secondary schools and related activities (Decree-Law no. 125/2011 - Article 11, paragraph 2c, page 5502).

IGEC is active in the field of preschool education and school education, including its special modalities and extracurricular education, in educational institutions, including public schools' centers and private networks, cooperative and social solidarity.

The IGEC (2018) develops several activities among them the systematic interventions, previously programmed that are the responsibility of a team of inspectors and supported by a script that guides the activity of the inspectors and whose purpose is to promote the quality of learning, and the models and management processes. In addition to these, IGEC (2008) provides occasional interventions that are not foreseen, developed by an inspector.

In accordance with article 12 of Regulatory Decree nº 15/2012, an inspector must hold a bachelor's degree or a higher academic degree. Their integration in the special inspection career depends on the ongoing approval of specific training, which takes place during the experimental period (IGEC, 2008).

References

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