European Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2013

Portugal

Education and Training

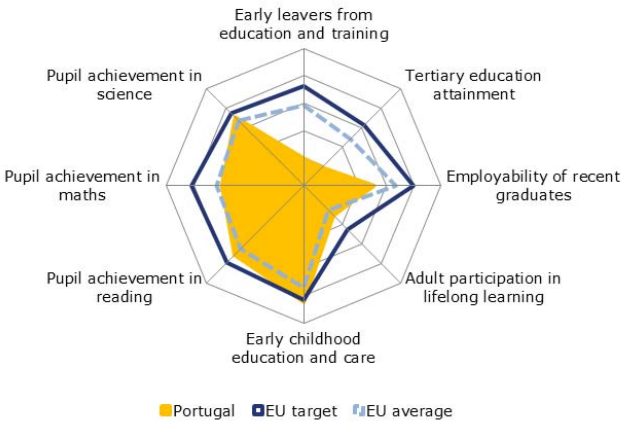
1. Key indicators and benchmarks

Europe 2020 headline targets			Portugal 2009	Portugal 2012	EU average 2009	EU average 2012	Europe 2020 target / Benchmark
1. Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)			31.2%	20.8%	14.2% EU28	12.7% EU28	**EU target: 10%** National target: 10%
2. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)			21.1%	27.2%	32.1% EU28	35.7% EU28	**EU target: 40%** National target: 40%
ET 2020 Benchmarks							
3. Early childhood education and care (4 years old - year before start of compulsory primary)			88.2%	95.4% 11	91.7%	93.2% 11	**95%**
4. Basic skills Low achievers (15 year-olds; Level 1 or lower in PISA study)	Reading		17.6%	:	19.6%	:	**15%**
	Mathematics		23.7%	:	22.2%	:	**15%**
	Science		16.5%	:	17.7%	:	**15%**
5. Learning mobility	Initial vocational training (IVET)	**a.** Students participating in Leonardo da Vinci programs as a share of vocational students at ISCED 3	0.5%	0.5% 11	0.6%	0.7% 11	
	Higher Education	**b.** Erasmus inbound students as % of student population in host country		2.2% 11		1.1% 11	
		c. Inbound degree mobile students as % of student population in the host country		3.4% 11		7.0% 11	
6. Employment rate of graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year			82.6%	67.9%	78.3%	75.7%	**82%**
7. Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)			6.5%	10.6%	9.3%	9.0%	**15%**
Proposed ET 2020 benchmark							
8. Foreign languages skills	**a.** ISCED 2 students at proficiency level B1 or higher in first foreign language[1]		:	30.3% 11	:	43.5% 11	
	b. ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		84.1%	72.6% 11	58.6%	60.8% 10	
Other ET 2020 Indicators							
9. Investment in education and training	**a.** General government expenditure on education (% of GDP)		6.8%	6.3% 11	5.5%	5.3% 11	
	b. Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€ 4,224 08	: 10	€ 5,732 08	€ 6,021 10	
		ISCED 3-4	€ 5,764 08	: 10	€ 6,964 08	€ 7,123 10	
		ISCED 5-6	€ 7,240 08	€ 7,742 10	€ 9,309 08	€ 9,168 10	
10. Digital competences	**a.** Pupils in grade 4 (ISCED 1) using computers at school		:	59.9% 11	60.7% 07	64.7% 11	
	b. Individuals aged 16-74 with high computer skills[2]		27.0%	29.0%	25.0%	26.0%	
11. Entrepreneurial competences	Individuals aged 18-64 who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business		:	47.0%	42.3% a	42.0% a	
12. Vocational education and training	Share of vocational students at ISCED 3		38.4%	42.4% 11	49.6%	50.3% 11	
13. Skills for future labour markets Projected change in employment 2010-2020 in %	High qualification		:	17.2%	:	19.1% EU28	
	Medium qualification		:	39.3%	:	4.6% EU28	
	Low qualification		:	-16.1%	:	-20.2% EU28	
14. Low-skilled adults	Literacy		:	:	:	19.9% EU17	
	Numeracy		:	:	:	23.6% EU17	
	Problem solving in technology rich environments[3]		:	:	:	26.9% EU13	

Source: Cedefop: 13 / EAC: 10a,b / European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC): 8a / Eurostat (Government finance statistics): 9a / Eurostat (LFS): 1, 2, 6, 7 / Eurostat (ISS): 10b / Eurostat (UOE): 3, 8b, 9b, 10c, 12 / IEA TIMSS: 10a / Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 11 / OECD (PIAAC): 14 / OECD (PISA): 4

Notes: 07 =2007, 08 =2008, 09 =2009, 10 =2010, 11 =2011, e= estimate, a= unweighted average b= break, p= provisional
Number of countries included in EU average: PISA=25, Entrepreneurship=18, Language skills=13, ICT/Computers at school=13, others: EU27
[1]= average of skills tested in reading, listening, writing, [2]= having carried out 5-6 specific computer related activities, [3]= Results cover people with scores below level 1 as well as people who have no computer experience or failed the ICT test

Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)



Source: DG EAC calculations on the basis of data from Eurostat (LFS 2012 and UOE 2011) and OECD (PISA 2009). *Note:* all scores are set between a maximum (the highest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the lowest performers visualised by the centre of the chart).

2. Main challenges

Although Portugal still performs below or close to the EU average in several of the most important indicators, including ESL and tertiary attainment, its progress in recent years has been quite significant and consistent. The country's main challenge is now to sustain its efforts to improve the organisational effectiveness of its educational system and increase its performance in a context of fiscal consolidation that entails stable or reduced funding. It should continue to aim at: reducing early school leaving, restructuring of secondary education including VET, and finally, improving the qualifications levels of the adult population.

3. Investing in skills and qualifications

Investing in education and training in a context of economic crisis

General government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP in Portugal has been above EU 27 level for the last few years, varying from 6.1% vs. 5.1% in 2007, to 7.1% vs. 5.5% in 2010, and to 6.3% vs. 5.3% in 2011. However, given the trend in GDP growth, this has been estimated to correspond to cuts in the education budget of around 5 % in 2011 and 2012 at constant 2010 prices, which is mainly the result of cuts in salaries, as well as through the reorganisation of the schools network with mergers and closures. In 2009, 81.6% of its total expenditure in public educational institutions (ISCED 0 to 6) concerned personnel, one of the highest percentages in the EU. Another estimation points to a reduction of 11.2% from 2010 to 2011 in expenditure by the Ministry of Education (excluding higher education). Like other countries, Portugal anticipates to further reduce spending by 3.5%.

Skills

The PISA test on 15 years' old students has shown the positive evolution of Portugal over the last decade regarding basic skills. While in the PISA 2000 and 2006 surveys the percentage of low achievers was significantly higher than the EU average in all three areas assessed, in 2009 that percentage for reading and science literacy was already lower than the EU average. Only in mathematics did Portugal fail to perform better than the EU average, despite the significant progress achieved.

Preliminary data on 12th grade national exams for 2012 showed that the results were comparable to the previous year, with a slight increase in Portuguese (average mark of 10.4 out of 20) and a stable situation for Mathematics A (10.5), Geography (10.6), Mathematics applied to the Social Sciences (10.6) or Economics A (11.7), while there was a decrease on the national average for Biology, Geology A and Physics and Chemistry A.

The percentage of individuals aged 16-74 who self-report high computer skills has progressed until 2011 and is consistently above EU average, although it has decreased in 2012 like the latter. Nevertheless, schools are relatively well equipped, have fast broadband speeds and above EU average of desktop computers connected to the internet. The present national strategy on the use of ICT in education relies on the infrastructure (high-speed broadband, Internet access in classrooms) and equipment (desktop computers, video projectors and interactive whiteboards) deployed in schools in the last few years. The strategy includes initiatives covering curricula and extra-curricular activities, distance collaboration, digital learning resources, e-safety, curriculum integration, dissemination and continuing professional development. Particularly noteworthy is the Schools Portal educational repository, which holds learning resources uploaded in their majority by teachers and provides a source of information for sharing best practice with regard to the use of blogs as educational tools and services.

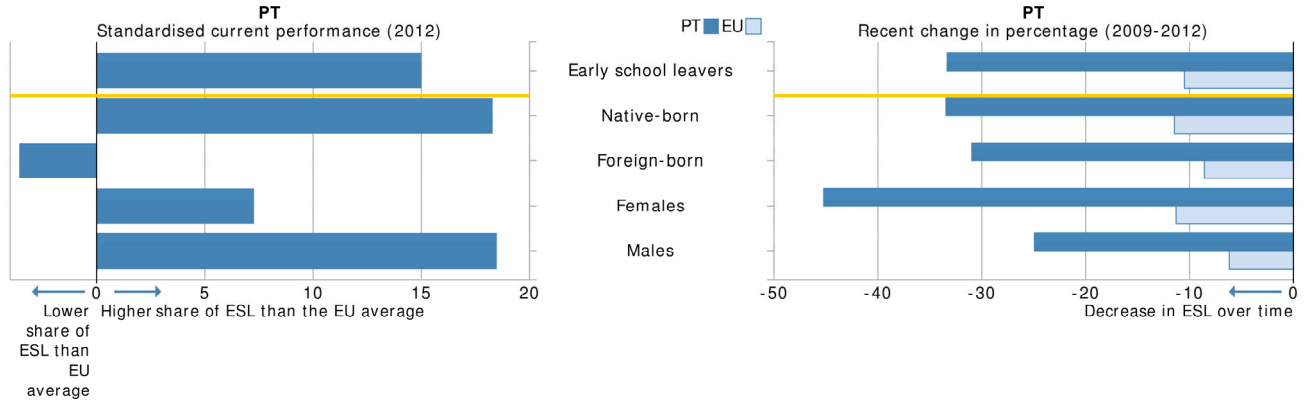
The perception of entrepreneurship skills among the 18-64 years old population has declined since 2007 but in the last two years remained stable (47%) and slightly higher than the EU average (42% in 2012). Although the average number of foreign languages learned per pupil at ISCED 2 has decreased from 2006 (1.9) to 2011 (1.6), it remains at the same level as the EU in 2010. However, Portugal performs below the EU average in percentage of students reaching B1 level or higher in the first foreign language at the end of lower secondary education (30.3% vs. 43.5%).

Portugal has successfully completed the referencing of the Portuguese Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), in force since October 2010, and will now proceed with the inclusion of the EQF levels in diplomas and certificates awarded for qualifications.

4. Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education

Portugal performs worse than the EU average in the area of early school leaving (ESL) (20.8% vs. 12.8% in 2012) although its performance has improved significantly during the period 2006-2012 (39.1% in 2006). Portugal has defined a very ambitious national target (10% by 2020) which will be difficult to achieve.

Figure 2. Early leavers from education and training: sub-groups

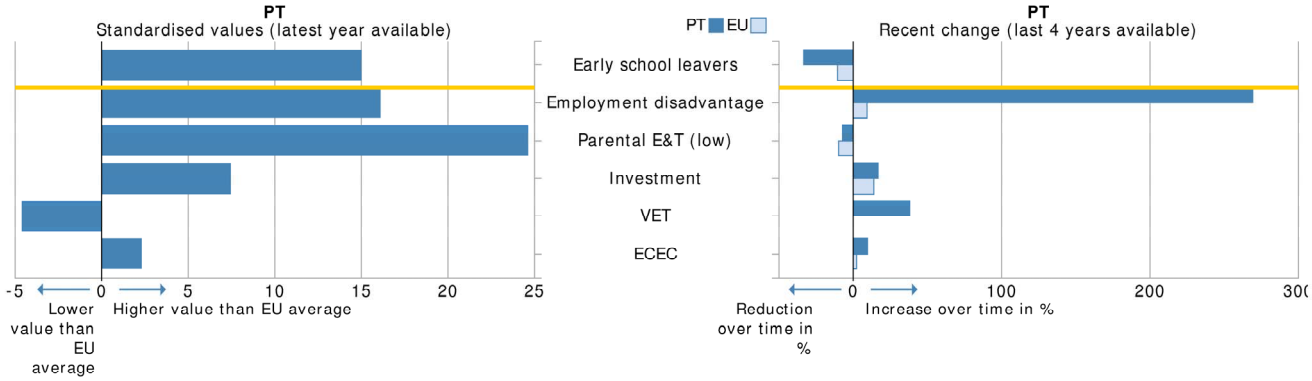


Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* ESL = early school leaving. See Annex 2 for further information.

The examination of sub-indicators reveals that the parents' education of the 18-24 years old cohorts is particularly unfavourable. Therefore, tackling school dropout has been a permanent concern of governments in the last few years. Measures which have contributed to secure a positive trend include: diversification of supply in secondary education, especially regarding VET offers; intervention initiatives to fight low achievement; rationalisation of the schools network; compensation measures under the ESF- supported New Opportunities initiative; specific intervention programmes to raise basic skills in Mathematics and Portuguese; curricula review and reorganisation. Work is on-going regarding teaching quality, school autonomy and management, assessment of schools and strengthening and modernising VET.

Also noteworthy in this respect is the steady increase in the percentage of participants in early childhood education from 78.9% in 2000 to 95.1% in 2011. In its assessment of progress under Europe 2020, the government has announced the development of a pre-school assessment and monitoring system contributing to support the new guidelines regarding better coordination with the first cycle of basic education, as well as the widening of the network in the Lisbon and Oporto metropolitan areas.

Figure 3. Early leavers from education and training: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

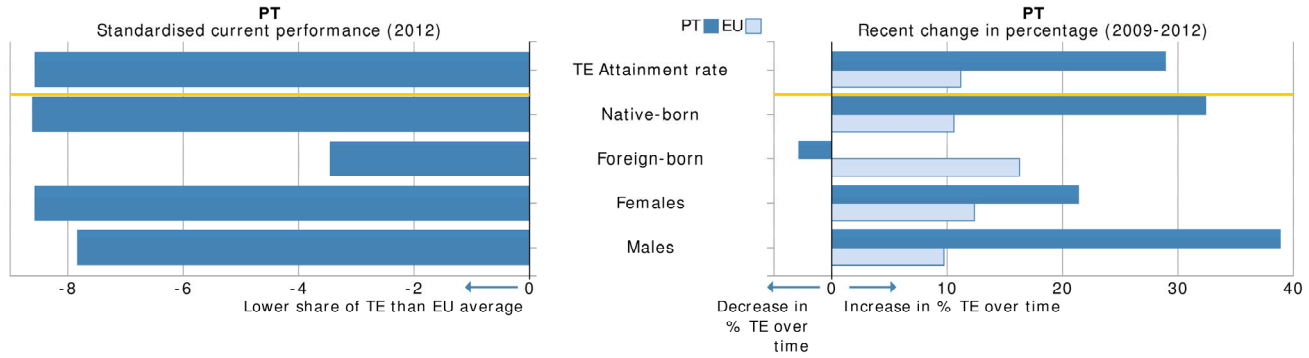
In this same context, while the legal regime for teachers' continuous professional development is on-going, the government has also announced the review of basic and secondary education teachers' initial education. Both actions should contribute to significantly improve the quality of teaching.

In order to prevent school failure and early dropout the government is developing an early action system resulting from the implementation of the following measures: consolidation of the Psychology and Guidance Services extending their action to basic and pre-primary education; continuous training of teachers focusing on the didactics of Portuguese and mathematics; creation at school level of an entity responsible for remedial action and cooperation with families and community; finally, the improvement of the monitoring capacity through the implementation of the student electronic registration number.

5. Encouraging participation in tertiary education and modernising higher education

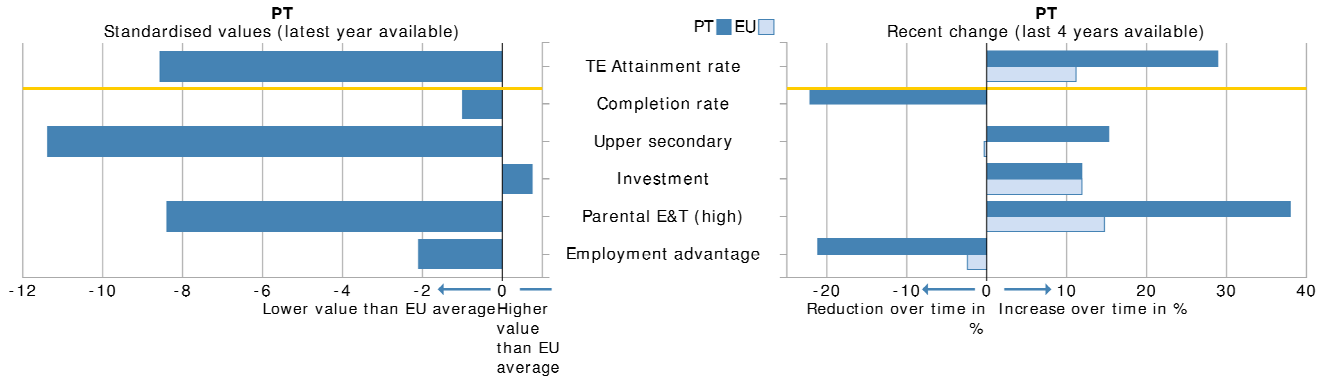
Portugal has made significant progress in tertiary educational attainment in the last few years, although the share of tertiary graduates is still below the EU average (27.2% vs. 35.7% in 2012). Between 2006 and 2012, the number of higher education graduates increased by about 8 percentage points. Portugal has defined a very ambitious national target (40% by 2020) that will be difficult to achieve.

Figure 4. Tertiary education attainment: sub-groups



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

Figure 5. Tertiary education attainment: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

On-going measures contributing to increasing tertiary attainment include the extension of compulsory education until the age of 18, the Confidence Contract signed in 2010 by the government and all public universities, polytechnics and higher education institutions, the increase in the number of students enrolled in technical specialisation courses, the extension of the distance learning supply network, and the increased diversification of 3rd cycle courses in cooperation with the private sector.

Furthermore, the Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education has continued to work in quality certification. New guidelines were adopted in 2012 with a view to rationalise and adapt certification to labour market needs, which established the number of vacancies available per course for students enrolled for the first time in public higher education institutions. A new training offer of ISCED 5, 120 ECTS courses (Cursos Superiores Especializados) to be provided in polytechnics is being developed and should optimise the use of resources as well as hep increasing the number of students in higher education. The on-going review of the legal regime of higher education aims at increasing quality and contributes to the internationalisation of higher education institutions through more flexible management rules and streamlined conditions for access by foreign students.

The modernisation agenda is further pursued through the development of a programme supporting technology transfer between higher education institutions and business and the creation of start-ups with a science and technology focus.

6. Facilitating the transition from education to work

Youth unemployment is particularly high in Portugal: at 42.5% in April 2013, it is the third worst rate in the EU 27. As employment rate of graduates has been decreasing since 2005, the trend has accentuated in the last three years to well below the EU average (67.9 vs. 75.7). In order to fight youth unemployment, the programme 'Youth Impulse' (Impulso Jovem) was launched in 2012 to support a number of on the job training activities such as the 'Passport for jobs', which provides six-month internships in companies, nationally or internationally, in social-economy institutions, in youth and sports associations, in agricultural exploitations and in public sector bodies. Moreover, the programme 'Stimulus 2012' (Estímulo 2012) aims at promoting the return to the labour market of the unemployed through supporting companies that hire and provide adequate training to people with higher employability difficulties.

The government has also been working on a major restructuring of the VET system, which accounts for about 40% of secondary education students, including: a review of current VET offers and curricula to eliminate overlaps and to adapt them to future labour market needs, in particular by increasing learning and training in a work based context; the creation of professional schools of reference in economic sectors relevant to employment creation and in partnership with private stakeholders; the development of incentives for companies to create openings for on the job training and apprenticeships; the implementation of a network of vocational centres aimed at providing education and training guidance to both youngsters and adults and at liaising with companies at local level.

7. Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

In 2012, adult participation in lifelong learning (10.6%) although slightly lower than in 2011 (11.6%) was still above EU average (9.0%). However, Portugal still has a low qualified workforce. In 2011, 59% of the employed population between 15-64 years old had only attained ISCED 2 or below, while only 19.7 completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-6). This is relevant as employment in high qualified jobs in Portugal up to 2020 is forecast to increase somewhat less than the EU average, while in medium qualified jobs a stronger increase is expected.

The need to invest in raising the skills levels of the population is strengthened by the extremely difficult financial and economic situation leading to the loss of low qualified jobs and their expected replacement in the near future by medium qualified ones.

The recently created network of Centres for Qualification and Vocational Training (Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional) will support the recognition, validation and certification of non-formal and informal competences and will provide guidance on school, professional or double certification training, as well as labour market integration.