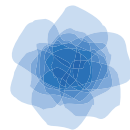




# Education and Training in Portugal



PORTUGAL 2007

*Title:* Education and Training in Portugal  
*Author:* Ministry of Education  
*Publisher:* Ministry of Education

*Printer:* Ministry of Education Editorial  
*Graphic Designer:* WM.Imagem Lda  
*Print run:* 3.000 copies

September 2007

ISBN: 978-972-614-414-4  
Legal deposit: 265 060/07

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## Foreword

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The main strategic challenge behind priorities in educational policy has been improving the level of qualifications and competencies of the Portuguese population. Those priorities are found in the framework defined by the Lisbon Strategy, which recognises the unique role of education and training in economic and technological development, social cohesion, personal fulfilment and active citizenship.

In recent decades, Portugal has made enormous efforts in the area of the population's academic achievement, resulting in substantial educational success. However, the country continues to show structural weakness in terms of the population's training and qualifications, which in turn demands considerable and long-term investment in solving the problems that have kept the country below European Union standards, such as in the areas of school underachievement, school dropouts and the qualifications of the working population as a whole.

It will only be possible to overcome these obstacles via the implementation of measures that place schools at the core of the educational policy, investing in them, improving their day-to-day running and organisation and students' results.

Over the last 20 years, as in other European countries, the length of compulsory education in Portugal has been 9 years and is divided up into three teaching cycles. Despite this objective having been achieved, the government is still combating high levels of underachievement and high numbers of early school leavers. Major efforts are being made to effectively integrate the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, which historically has been the focus of

underachievement and a lack of investment. This has led to problems of adjustment with regard to demographics and the inequality of opportunity in terms of access to schools of the right size and with the right resources to adequately offer academic success.

To this end, priority has been given to the reorganisation and redevelopment of the network of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle schools in close cooperation with the local authorities, identifying those schools in need of closure, those that should be kept open, the refurbishment or construction of educational establishments and the general implementation of daylong school with extended timetables. This new project allows schools to offer extra-curricular activities, including compulsory English classes and study skills support, as well as other activities such as sport or music, making the school timetable compatible with the needs of families.

Another important aspect of this investment in compulsory education is related to improving the running and organisation of schools, with a view to improving teaching and learning conditions and combating academic underachievement. Fully-occupied lesson time is particularly important here, ensuring that students are involved in other activities if there is no teaching; early detection of academic difficulty alongside the implementation of appropriate measures, such as recovery plans or alternative learning paths; using action plans to improve results in Mathematics and the National Reading Plan, creating new habits that lead to improved competencies in reading and writing. These and other measures, namely the concretization of the Technological Plan for Education and the Program of Modernization of the School Buildings are fundamental elements of an integrated policy of quality improvements for state schools.

A second key area of educational policy is the objective of making upper-secondary education the minimum qualification (12 years education) for the population as a whole. This goal is in the process of being achieved via the expansion and diversification of qualifying vocational training provision, with an increase in the number of places on vocational courses within the public and private networks. The aim is for half of all upper-secondary courses to be of this type. Another important factor is the investment being made in improving the qualification levels of the adult population via the expansion of the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies Centres; the extension of the key-competencies framework to the 12<sup>th</sup> year and better information and dissemination regarding what training is available.

However, to achieve these defined objectives, it is necessary that the different measures be developed in conjunction with others and that those measures are an integral part of the normative and legal framework. It is important to highlight the on-going review process of the management mechanisms of the educational system, a review that aims to improve the way in which schools are run and how teachers work. To this end, the rules for the annual selection and recruitment process for teaching staff have been changed in order to create conditions for the teaching staff structure to remain stable for three years. Also, taking advantage of the opportunity created by the Bologna Process, there has been a revision of teaching qualifications and greater emphasis is now placed on the scientific component of teacher training. Another fundamental element of this process is the re-structuring of the teaching profession into two categories, with the more experienced and competent teachers taking on greater responsibility.

There is also greater emphasis on school autonomy, something that is associated with the importance placed upon the creation of a culture of the evaluation of all aspects of the education system. To this end, it is crucial to develop evaluation tools for schools, teachers, schoolbooks and curricula that improve the quality of teaching and learning based on criteria of high standards and rigour. Alongside this, there is a need to consolidate the transfer of responsibilities to individual schools, as well as the signing of contracts of autonomy and development with educational establishments and other local partners. This allows for the creation of different educational projects that better meet the needs and characteristics of the context in which schools find themselves. The main precept of this process is that of a state education service that is guided by principles of equity and equality of opportunity, of the instrumentality regarding students' learning and responsibility and accountability.

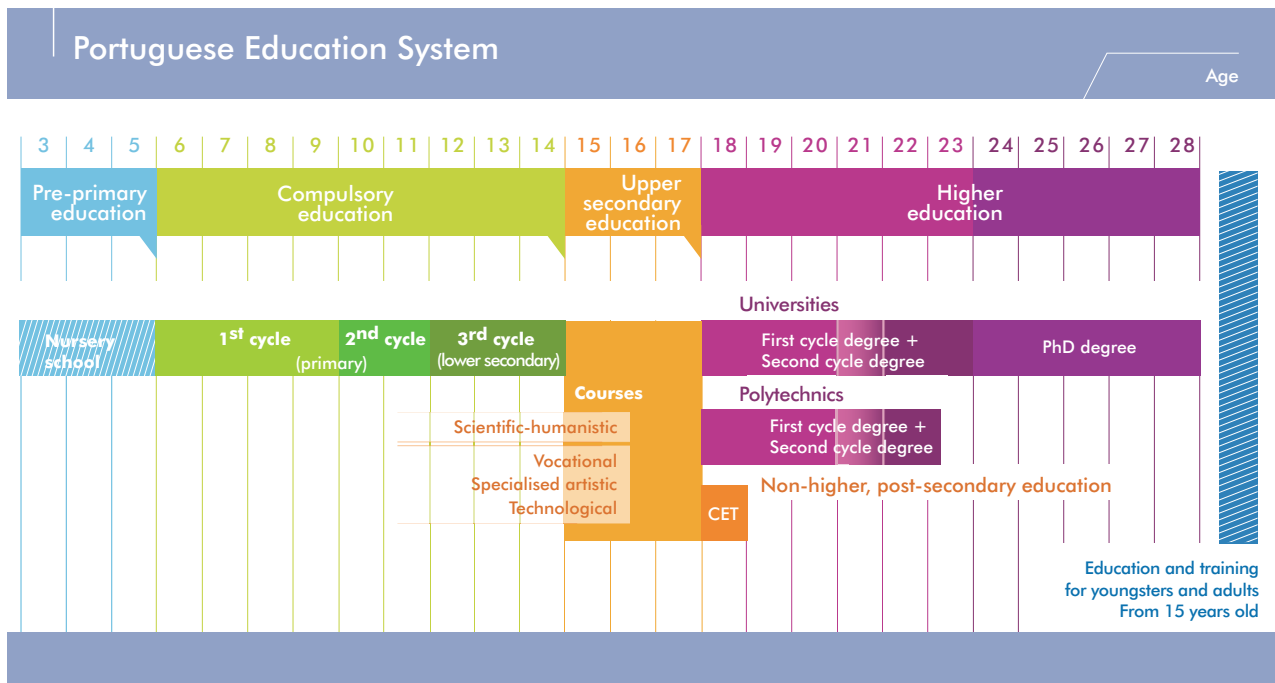
Minister of Education  
Maria de Lurdes Rodrigues







# 1. The Education System



The Portuguese Education System is made up of pre-school, compulsory, upper-secondary and higher education.

Pre-school education is optional and is designed for children between 3 and school starting age.

Compulsory schooling lasts for 9 years, from 6 to 15 years old. It is divided into three successive cycles that last 4, 2 and 3 years respectively.

Upper-secondary is structured into 3 academic years and is organised according to differentiated forms with permeability between courses, which are designed for further study or the job market.

Non-higher post upper-secondary is organised into specialised technology courses, which aim to qualify students for the job market and confer a level 4 vocational training.

The education and training of young people and adults provides a new opportunity to those with low level qualifications. A wide range of courses guarantee double school and vocational education (which corresponds to compulsory and upper-secondary education and a level 1, 2 or 3 vocational qualification).



## 2. Pre-school Education

The XVII Constitutional Government's Programme recognises pre-school education as the basis of successful schooling and the first step in the process of lifelong education.

Within this framework, the following objectives have been defined:

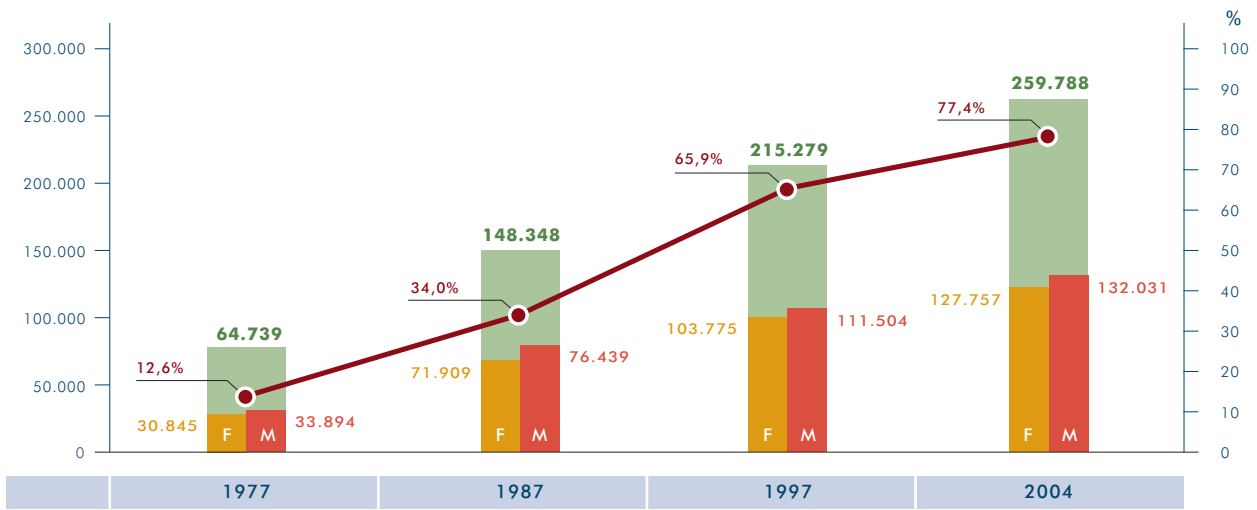
- Extend access to pre-school education to all children, continuing the investment in the expansion of the public network of educational provision;
- Create the conditions so that 100% of 5 year-old children attend pre-school education by the end of 2009;
- Adapt the ways and times schools function to the needs of families;

- Extend the timetable of establishments to a minimum of 8 hours a day;
- Promote cultural and socio-educational support activities in coordination with families and local authorities.

Pre-school education is provided by the state, by private and cooperative bodies, by private social solidarity institutions and not-for-profit institutions.

The public network is fully financed by the state, which also covers the costs of the educational component provided by the private social and not-for-profit networks.

Pre-schooling rates, number of children, total and by gender



F: Female; M : Male

Source: Office for Education Statistics and Planning, 2007



### 3. Compulsory Education

The Government set the following objectives for compulsory education:

- To significantly reduce school underachievement;
- To promote inclusion;
- To improve teaching and learning conditions.

To achieve these objectives, a number of intervention areas have been identified, namely:

- Improvement of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of compulsory education;
- Daylong school, involving students in educational activities when teachers are absent;
- Making experimental science teaching obligatory throughout compulsory education;
- Investing in the teaching of Portuguese Language and Mathematics;
- Widespread access and use of ICT as an essential tool for integration into the knowledge society;

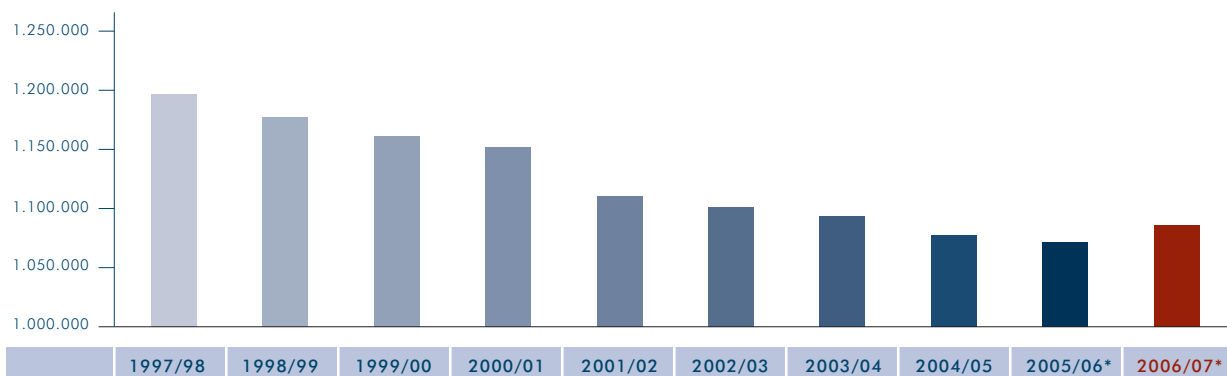
- Altering the system of student assessment;
- Application of support programmes for students with learning difficulties;
- Participation of families in school activities and parents accompanying their children's situation at school;
- Stabilisation of the teaching staff, improving the rules for the teachers' placement system to reduce mobility levels.

For the first time in ten years, the number of students in compulsory education has risen.

The extra 8 500 students in compulsory education are a testament to the Government's efforts to significantly reduce the number of early school leavers and the investment in compulsory education, the basis of success at all education levels.

#### Mainland

#### Number of students enrolled in compulsory education, 1997-2007

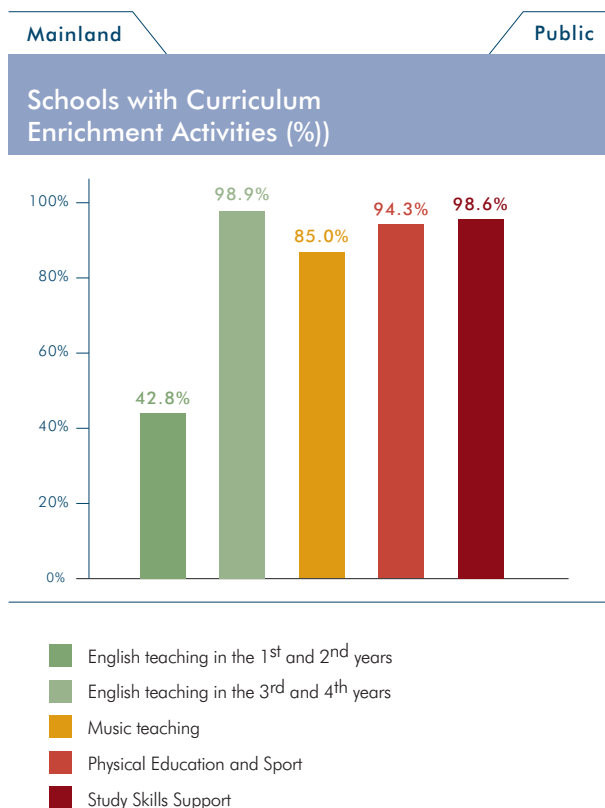


\*Preliminary data - Census 2005/2006 and 2006/2007  
Source: Office for Education Statistics and Planning, 2007

The educational policy measures in compulsory education are mainly focused on investing in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, the goal being the creation of the foundations for school success that is based on real equal opportunities.

From this perspective, the Ministry of Education (ME) has been implementing a set of measures, which include:

- Promoting daylong schooling, via the extension of the school timetable. This project aims to support families and allow the development of curriculum enrichment activities;



Source : Office for Education Statistics and Planning, 2007

### Curriculum Enrichment Activities

#### A Major Change

##### *Widespread teaching of English*

Launched in the school year 2005/2006, the Curriculum Enrichment Activities (CEA) programme corresponds to two of the Government's major objectives for the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of compulsory education:

- To give new learning opportunities to students;
- To adapt school timetables to the needs of families.

The CEA are a decisive step in preparing compulsory education for the challenges of competitiveness and quality education.

The Government defined the following objectives:

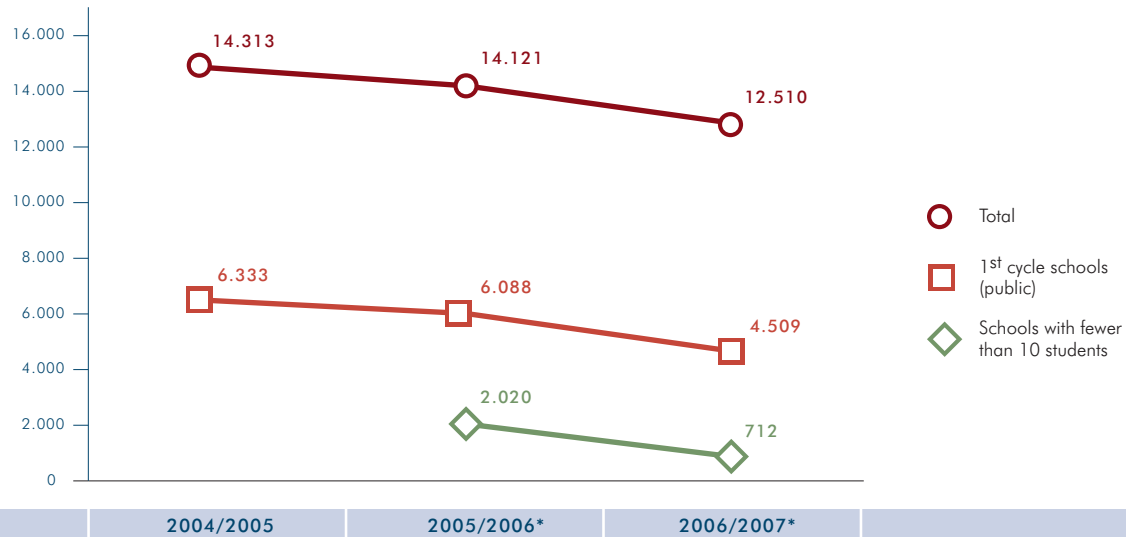
- To make the teaching of English compulsory in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle;
- To make Study Skills Support compulsory, with the aim of consolidating student learning and allowing them to benefit from teacher support;
- To facilitate the development of other optional activities in the areas of arts, sport and other foreign languages.

The programme has been an outstanding success: 99% of portuguese schools now have Curriculum Enrichment Activities. This programme is being implemented in conjunction with the local authorities, parents' associations, welfare institutions and school clusters.



## Mainland

## Number of teaching establishments



\*Preliminary data - Census 2005/2006 and 2006/2007  
Source: Office for Education Statistics and Planning, 2007

- Reorganisation and improvement of the network, closing small and isolated schools with a high rate of underachievement;
- Developing reading habits, establishing one compulsory hour a day dedicated to this activity, included in Portuguese Language lessons as part of the National Reading Plan (NRP);
- Definition of curriculum guidelines, consolidating the time spent on acquiring basic competencies in areas such as Portuguese Language, Maths and Environmental Studies;
- 1<sup>st</sup> cycle teacher training, via a programme of in-service training in Portuguese Language, Maths, Experimental Teaching and ICT.

### National Reading Plan

#### *A policy priority, a national goal*

The National Reading Plan aims to raise the literacy levels of the Portuguese, through a clear investment on the development of competencies in the fields of reading and writing, as well as to implement and deepen habits of reading, namely among the student population.

The main target are children in pre-school education and pupils of compulsory education, particularly in the first six years of schooling.

Reading is promoted on a daily basis in nursery schools and classrooms of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles and is encouraged in familiar environment and other contexts, so as to develop competencies for the pupils' entire educational and professional path.



## 4. Upper-Secondary Education

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Raising the levels of qualification of the Portuguese population was defined as a political priority.

Within this context, the Government gives priority to:

- Encouraging students to attend school until they reach the age of 18;
- Valuing the identity and importance of upper-secondary education;
- Making the 12<sup>th</sup> grade a national educational minimum for all;
- Consolidating vocational-type training provision;
- Bringing upper-secondary schools, professional schools and vocational training centres together in order to optimise resources.

Upper-secondary education is structured according to differentiated forms, both for further study or working life, including:

- Scientific-humanistic courses, essentially directed at further study at higher education level;
- Technological courses, designed for students that wish to join the job market;
- Specialised artistic courses, organised in order to ensure artistic training in the areas of visual and audiovisual arts, dance and music;
- Vocational courses are designed for students that wish to join the job market.

Technological, specialised artistic and vocational courses allow students to continue studying at non-higher post upper-secondary and higher education levels.

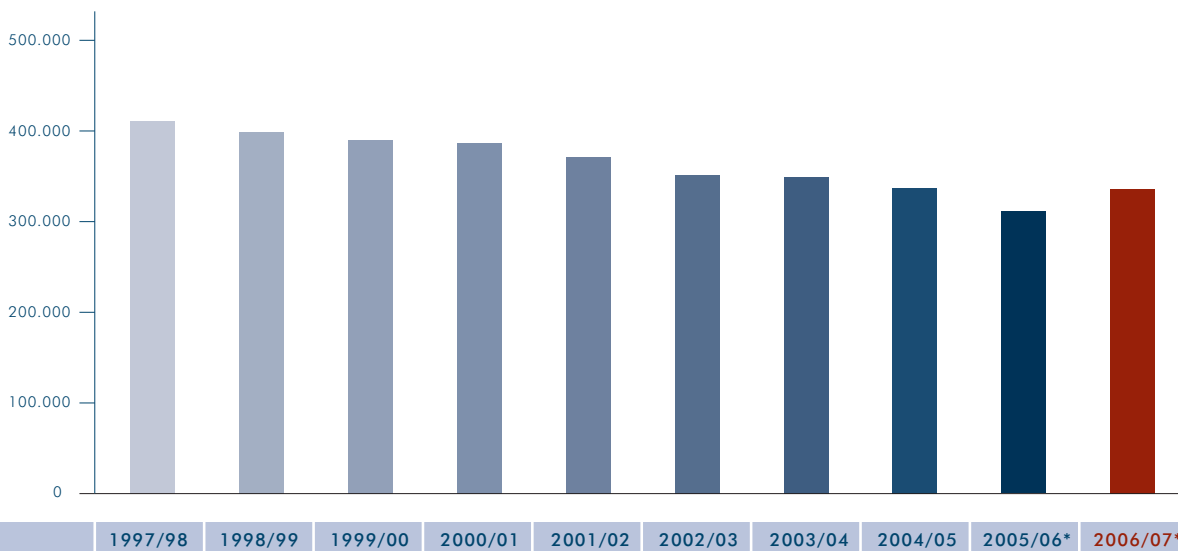
All students who complete this level are given a diploma of upper-secondary studies. Technological, specialised artistic and professional courses also confer level 3 vocational qualification certificate.

The psychology and guidance services provide vocational and academic guidance to young people and establish educational support measures for students with learning difficulties.

The daylong school is one of the measures adopted to improve the learning environment in upper-secondary education. Schools should ensure a variety of educational activities when teachers are absent.

Mainland

Number of students enrolled in upper-secondary education, 1997-2007



\*Preliminary data - Census 2005/2006 and 2006/2007  
 Source: Office for Education Statistics and Planning, 2007

For the first time in ten years the number of students in upper-secondary education has risen: 13 000 more students attended this level of education.

Today, there is a clear diversification of educational provision. Schools allow students to complete upper-secondary education, learning a profession.

### **Non-higher post upper-secondary education**

One of the objectives of non-higher post upper-secondary education is based on the expansion of technological specialisation courses, facilitating technical training of a very high standard.

Technological Specialisation Courses (CET) facilitate specialised training paths in different technological areas, developing professional capacities and competencies.

This allows students to enter the job market or further study at a higher level. The training received on these courses can be credited on any higher education course that successful students may be admitted to.

Passing a technological specialisation course confers a technological specialisation diploma and a level 4 vocational qualification. It can also give access to a Certificate of Professional Aptitude, awarded within the scope of the National Professional Certification System.

Technological specialisation courses are taught at a variety of training institutions, such as upper-secondary establishments, vocational training centres and higher education establishments.



## 5. Education and Training of Young People and Adults

The main strategic challenge behind priorities in educational policy is the improvement of the level of qualifications and competencies of the Portuguese population.

It is within this framework that the government's project "New Opportunities" was presented.

### **New Opportunities**

Combining education and training, giving due value to the Portuguese

To raise the levels of education, training and qualification of the Portuguese is the objective of the "New Opportunities" Initiative.

This project is based in two main pillars:

- ◉ To make upper-secondary vocational education a real and realistic option;
- ◉ To increase the education levels of the working population, giving a new opportunity to the Portuguese to restart and complete their studies.

1 million young people and adults will complete upper-secondary qualifications by 2010.

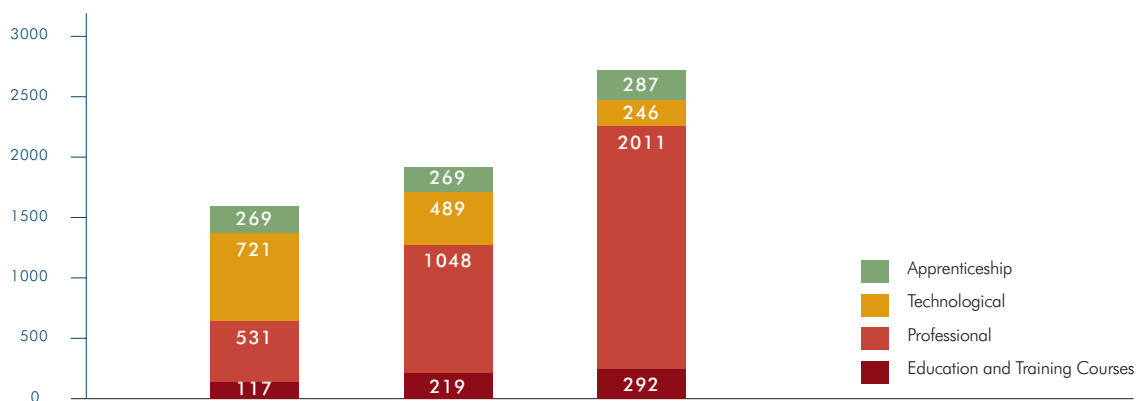
The first area of intervention of the "New Opportunities" Initiative focuses on young people.

The main objective is to ensure that, by 2010, 650 000 young people are involved in some modality of education and training, and that at least 50% of courses offered are for professional purposes.

The project focuses on a number of areas, such as:

- ◉ Implementation of recovery and monitoring plans as a first line of intervention to combat educational failure of pupils in compulsory education, preventing the number of early school leavers and increasing the chances of students going on to study at upper-secondary level;
- ◉ Setting up educational guidance mechanisms for alternative learning paths and education and training courses for those students in compulsory education that are at risk of repeated failure and leaving school;
- ◉ Development of qualifications designed for young people over 15, who have not completed upper-secondary education, and guiding towards paths that confer academic and/or professional certification;
- ◉ Extension of the network of vocational, education and training and apprenticeship courses;
- ◉ Discouraging those young people under the age of 23 that have not completed upper-secondary education from entering the job market, guaranteeing the chance of dual certification.

Provision of courses with dual certification (upper-secondary)

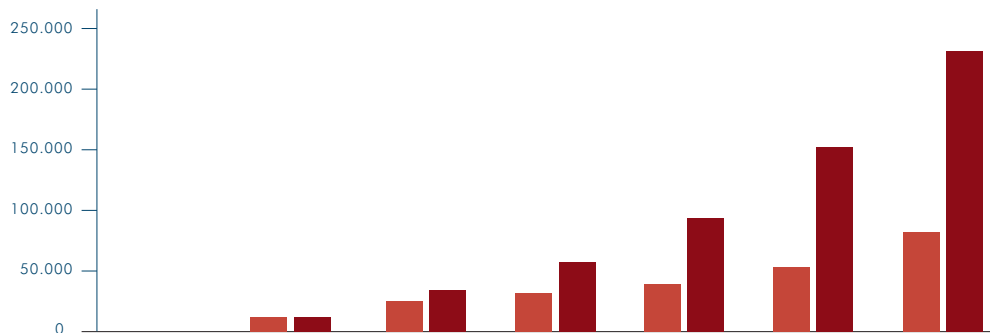


\*Preliminary data  
Source: SIGO, June, 2007

The main aim of the second area of intervention is the raising of the basic qualification level of the adult population that have not completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of compulsory or upper-secondary education.

The recognition of lifelong competencies acquired in different learning contexts is particularly important here and makes it possible to structure complementary training paths that are adapted to each individual.

New Opportunities Centres: number of adults registered and accumulated total



	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number registered	16	7.019	24.459	30.102	37.500	54.952	77.246
Number registered (accumulated figures)	16	7.035	31.494	61.596	99.096	154.048	231.294

Source: National Agency for Qualification, 2007



With regard to education and professional qualifications for adults with little schooling, the strategy is to capture the interest not only of unemployed adults but also those who are working in precarious situations due to their poor levels of qualification.

The achievement of these generic objectives presupposes measures regarding:

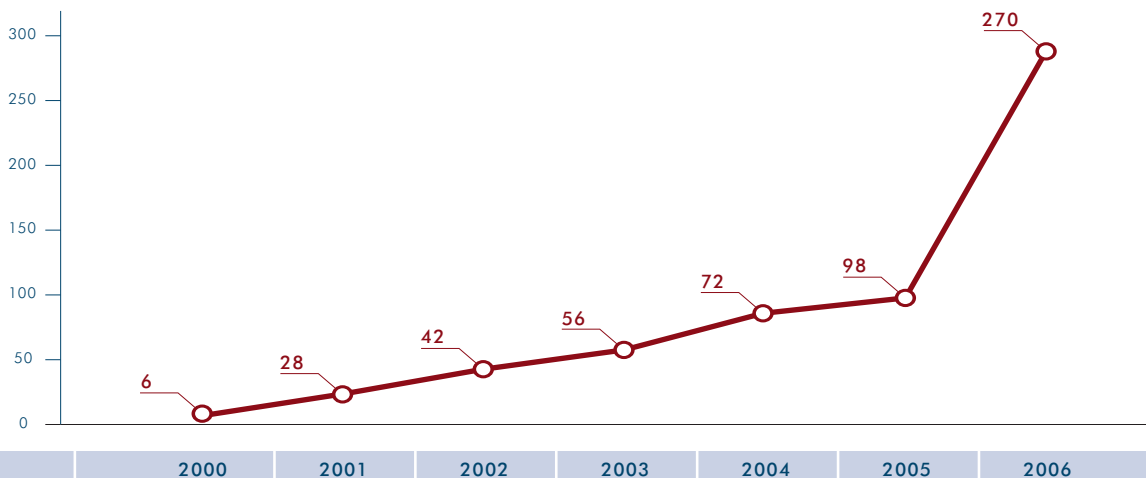
- Increasing the number of Adult Education and Training courses to those adults with little schooling;
- Expansion of the network of Centres for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies, under the name “New Opportunities Centres”;
- Extending the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies System to the 12<sup>th</sup> year of schooling;

- Reorganisation of the current model of recurrent education with more flexible and quicker training paths;
- Giving greater access to training for working adults.

The mentioned forms of education and training for young people and adults:

- Confer degrees of schooling and diplomas or certificates that are equivalent to regular education, as well as the respective vocational qualification;
- Allow the candidate to go on to non-higher post upper-secondary education or to higher education.

Number of New Opportunities Centres



Source: National Agency for Qualification, 2007



## 6. Higher Education

Higher education includes universities and polytechnics administered by public, non-public or cooperative institutions.

Universities award first degrees, master's degrees and doctorates. Polytechnic institutions award first degrees and master's degrees.

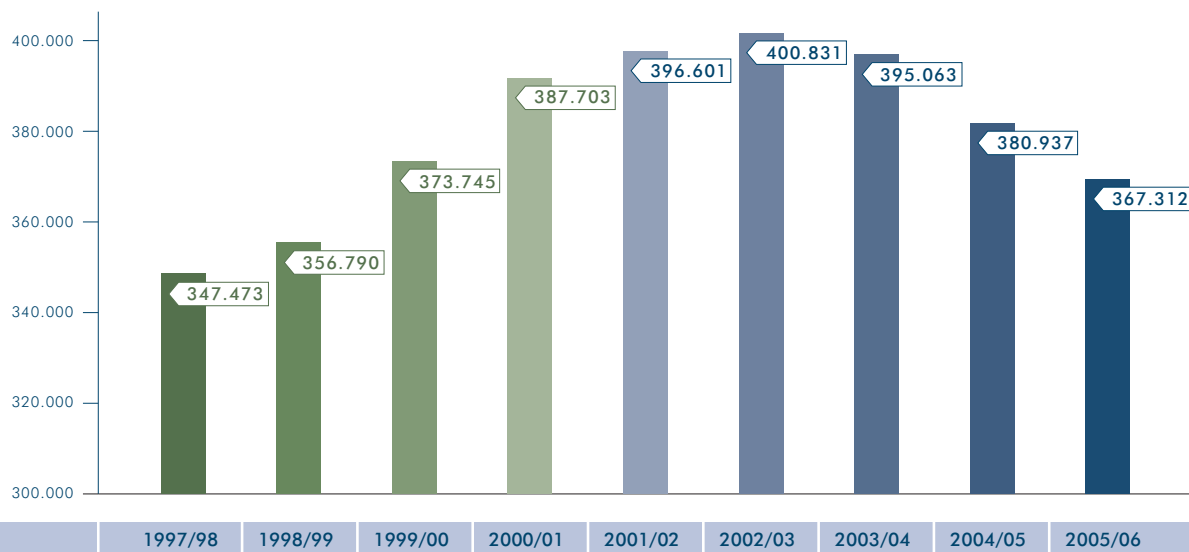
The XVII Government established the qualification of the Portuguese in Europe as one of the policy objectives for higher education, thus implementing the Bologna Declaration.

To do this, the principal mains are:

- ◉ To improve the quality and the relevance of educational provision;
- ◉ To encourage student mobility;
- ◉ To promote the internationalisation of training;
- ◉ To make institutions more open to society and the economy.

Higher education reform is part of the European movement of modernisation of universities and polytechnics for the development of the knowledge society.

Number of students registered in Higher Education (1997/98 – 2005/06)



Source: Science and Higher Education Observatory (OCES)

### Higher education policy priorities were defined as:

- ◉ Guaranteeing the qualification of the Portuguese in Europe, implementing the Bologna Process;
- ◉ Consolidating the higher education system with autonomous institutions, facilitating the reform of the system and the governance of institutions;
- ◉ Encouraging an internationally recognised national quality assurance system;
- ◉ Promoting access and equal opportunities.

This process aims to extend higher education access to a wider public and stimulate the development of scientific and technical activities, promoting equity and reducing the numbers of early school-leavers.

Within the scope of the Bologna Declaration, higher education has been organised into three cycles.

This change is paradigmatic of the transition from an educational system based on the idea of knowledge transmission to a system based on the development of competencies and the adoption of the ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

The current Government passed the Decree-Law that instituted Assessment and Accreditation Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and approves its Statutes.

Such a measure represents a decisive step towards the construction of an internationally recognised quality assurance system, in line with principles created by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and adopted by the ministries of the Member States that signed up to the Bologna Declaration.

The main objective of the Agency is the promotion of quality in higher education. In the execution of its duties it should:

- ◉ Assess and accredit higher education institutions and courses;
- ◉ Ensure the integration of Portugal in the European system of higher education quality assurance.

The XVII Government has taken other steps that are equally crucial to the implementation of the policy objectives for higher education.

To this end, a new system has been set up to encourage the creation of technology specialisation courses, particularly in polytechnics, with the aim of increasing level 4 vocational training provision and extending access to this training to a wide range of people, opening up new ways of entering higher education.

A new system that makes access to higher education simpler and more flexible for people over 23 with appropriate training and experience has also been approved, promoting equal opportunities, improving attendance and completion of courses, attracting new students and diversifying training provision.

The access conditions to higher education have also been defined thus:

- ◉ Passing an upper-secondary education course or legally equivalent qualification;
- ◉ Taking the necessary entrance exams for the course that a student wishes to attend with a minimum mark of 95 points;
- ◉ Satisfying the necessary pre-requisites (if applicable) of the course they are applying to.

Lastly, the “Commitment to Science” promoted a new phase of investment in science with impact on the position of higher education and the consolidation of the institutional role of research institutions.

To this end, a programme of international partnerships was initiated (MIT, CMU, Austin) at a national level, ensuring the consolidation of institutions and the mobility of students, teachers and researchers.

These partnerships boost the provision of teaching programmes at an international level and aim to stimulate economic development via science-based innovation.

Thus, the two-tier system is unequivocally consolidated:

- ⦿ Polytechnic education focuses on advanced 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, professionally oriented, vocational and technical training;
- ⦿ Universities should consolidate solid scientific education provision, especially post-graduate courses, bringing together the efforts and competences of teaching and research units.

The XVII Government is currently preparing the review of the Autonomy Law, thus responding to the challenges of modernising higher education institutions.

The issue at hand is how higher education institutions adapt to the new economic and social needs and the opportunities afforded by the economy and scientific development.

Teaching Profession and Research Statutes will also be revised in order to stimulate the mobility of professors and researchers and promote collaboration with the economic sector.





