### Portugal

#### Country Basic Data

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area (km²)</strong></td>
<td>91 980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population (2000)</strong></td>
<td>10 016 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official name of the country</strong></td>
<td>The Portuguese Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of economy</strong></td>
<td>High income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Domestic Product per capita (2000)</strong></td>
<td>US$ 10,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of population below the national poverty threshold</strong></td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Development Index, HDI (1999)</strong></td>
<td>0.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HDI rank out of 162 countries (1999)</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of compulsory education</strong></td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-life expectancy (1999)</strong></td>
<td>15.2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illiteracy rate (2000)</strong></td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Gross Enrolment Rate (1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>68.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>122.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>67.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>87.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net Enrolment Rate (1999)


[...] Data not available.

*Updated version, September 2003.*

**Principles and general objectives of education**

The principles and general objectives for education are set out in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and revisited in the Basic Education Act of October 14th 1986. This act sets out the general framework for the education system and echoes the basic principles that are laid down in the Constitution.

The Constitution defines the education system as a means to protect the national identity. Its underlying aim is to contribute to the learner’s individual development and civic education, in addition to developing his or her capacity for work, thus ensuring the individual has a proper place in working life. In order to guarantee the right to education and culture for all of its citizens, the State is promoting the democratisation of education through the effective equality of opportunity with regard to access to education and academic success for both boys and
girls. The law also protects the freedom to learn and teach and the respect of individual choices.

The Act specifies the need for the decentralisation and diversification of educational structures and pedagogical actions so that local conditions can be properly accounted for. Local communities are also keen to participate in the running of the education system.

The education system must also help to redress the imbalances in regional and local development and increase the equality of access to the benefits provided by education, culture and science in all regions of the country. Reference is also made to giving a second chance to people who were unable to benefit from education at a younger age. The system also has a role to play in the fields of professional training or retraining in order to ensure that professional expertise takes account of the developments in scientific and technological knowledge.

**Current educational priorities and concerns**

There are four major principles underpinning education policy in Portugal. The first concerns education for all. The second involves the quality and equity of the education service. The third refers to the responsibilities that education departments have towards the rest of society, and their duty to operate in a rational, efficient and transparent manner. The final major principle concerns the need to involve all of the stakeholders in the reform of the system. With this in mind, changes in the field of education should be gradual, focused on schools and subject to evaluation.

In recent years, the education system has undergone a process of structural reform involving a large number of issues. The changes have affected teachers, who have received salary increases and revised career structures and their in-service training programmes have also been modified. Schools have also been affected by the introduction of a new management model and new structures for primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, technical and industrial education has also been overhauled. However, one of the fundamental components of the reform has been the revision of programmes of study and school curricula. These changes were implemented on an experimental basis in the first cycle of primary education during the 1989–1990 academic year and developed progressively in the following years. 1995-1996 saw the widespread implementation of reforms in secondary education.

There has also been a transfer of power in education to the local authorities. In this context, negotiations have begun with the National Association of Town Councils for the transfer of certain powers concerning pre-primary and primary education to local administrations. Its goal is the transfer of certain competences towards the local authorities in pre-school and primary education.

One of the general aims behind the organisation of educational curricula in both primary and secondary cycles has been to promote the teaching and learning of the Portuguese language and of personal and social education with a view to providing civic and moral education for young people.

A cross-curricular and comprehensive approach has been adopted, especially with the integration of optional extra-curricular activities. These are designed to be entertaining and
cultural in nature with a view to helping pupils derive the maximum creative and educational benefits from their leisure time.

The chosen system of assessment involves two models that are linked to the differentiation of the curricula for primary and secondary education. The aims are to promote academic success for all pupils, develop self-confidence and take account of the different rates of development and progress.

In addition, all primary and secondary education curricula include cross-curricular teaching, promoting personal and social education, the human dimension of work and the importance of the mother tongue.

Another innovation has been the introduction of the School Group: the result of a project involving all pupils, teachers and other members of the educational community in the broadest sense of the term, especially the parents of pupils, the local authorities and social, cultural and economic representatives from the local area. The School Group is a powerful body in the fields of curriculum management, educational activities and the guidance and monitoring of pupils, as well as being a concrete reminder of the pedagogical autonomy of the school.

The branch of education devoted to personal and social development is intended as a replacement for the moral and religious education offered by the Catholic faith or other denominations. The extra-curricular activities designated by the reform aim to promote the personal and collective development of the pupils through personality and character-building activities and the promotion of citizenship, while providing the opportunity for balanced physical development. These activities are of an eminently entertaining and cultural nature, aiming to help pupils make the best creative and educational use of their leisure time. They are optional and take place outside of school hours. School management bodies are responsible for coordinating and implementing these activities and, at the end of each academic year, they must inform the Teaching Committee about the results of all extra-curricular activities in order to evaluate their results and propose any changes that might be necessary.

With regard to pre-school education, a strategic policy document forms the basis of negotiations with the bodies concerned. The aim is to provide pre-school education for 90% of five year-olds, 75% of four year-olds and 60% of three year-olds by using public investment to make 45,000 new places available. This corresponds to the creation of 567 classes per year and will require a 100% increase in public expenditure on pre-school education.

These include the apprenticeship system, technical courses offered by secondary schools, professional schools, technical schools and the professional training that takes place after compulsory schooling.

Following the recently completed general external assessment of professional schools, measures are currently being prepared with a view to improving the image of professional education. This will involve rethinking the current financial model.

Regulations for the support system known as In-service Training for Teachers and Educational Managers (FOCO) have been changed, with a view to helping teachers settle into
their schools and education authorities more quickly and, ultimately, in order to improve the quality of teaching. Another of the aims is to identify the priorities of the training plans in order to allow the training organisations to play a more important role. To make this possible, changes have been made to the rules for financing in-service training for teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools.

An evaluation of the work of teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools has been carried out, taking account of the teaching and learning processes that are developed by the teachers. It highlighted the specially adapted activities in schools and the educational community, especially those of a pedagogical or socio-cultural nature. It was performed in conjunction with in-service training for the professional development of teachers and as a means to improve the professional standing of teachers, schools and educational communities. Furthermore, seniority was taken into consideration when assessing the performance of teachers or similar staff.

The legal framework relating to professional groups and the qualifications required by teachers has been revised. The career status of teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools has also been ratified (Decree-Law n° 1/98 of January 2nd 1998). Various aspects have been taken into consideration such as working conditions, incentives for teacher postings in difficult areas, recruitment, the selection of senior managers, mobility, performance assessment and the consequences for in-service training and teachers’ careers.

In 1997, measures to help universities achieve autonomous status were implemented. Their administrative, financial and academic management was analysed and evaluated, along with their management of assets and human resources, with a view to rationalising university administration and building in greater flexibility. With this in mind, research into the creation of a new system for the financing of higher education is currently underway. This includes redefining the system for enrolment fees and educational social policy.

In April 1996, the transitional system for access to higher education was made law. This was an urgent measure designed to simplify the existing system and adapt it to the new curricula and assessment systems that were operating in secondary education. The transitional system makes it a requirement for applicants to public or private higher education institutions to have the secondary school leaving certificate, or a similar qualification. All forms of secondary education give access to higher education. In addition, applicants must take national examinations in subjects chosen by higher education institutions in order to prove their ability to undertake their chosen studies. The examinations in specific subjects consist of the national secondary education examinations. Higher education institutions may set the minimum pass marks that candidates must achieve in the secondary examinations or entrance tests before they can be considered for admission to their chosen course of study. The Decree-Law n° 296-A/98 of September 25th 1998 sets out the admissions conditions for courses leading to bachelor’s and master’s degree courses in higher education institutions. It also created the National Committee for Access to Higher Education, which has the role of defining the criteria for the ranking and selection of applicants.

Numerous measures have been taken with a view to consolidating and strengthening the credibility of the private and cooperative system of higher education. In particular, these involve the regulation and application of the statutes for this system, technical standards, inspection, the statutes of the institutions, administrative procedures and the official licences to operate, as well as the available positions. The Decree-Law n°205/98 of July 11th 1998
created the National Assessment Committee for Higher Education and sets out the general conditions and principles for the establishment of a general assessment system.

In 1996, the General Inspectorate received a more complete definition of its powers and was given adequate means to carry out its inspection activities, in terms of the structure of the organisation and the status of its staff. The reorganisation focused on the monitoring functions and basic duties of an organisation that is responsible for regulating the quality of education.

The Educational Pact for the Future, presented to the country for discussion and negotiation in May 1996, encapsulated the fundamental choices with a view to formulating an agreement on the political and social actions required to tackle the major problems affecting education and training. The pact was designed to help achieve the following strategic aims:

- Promote social participation in the development of the education system
- Modernise, regionalise and decentralise the administration of the system
- Develop strategic information processes and broaden communication networks
- Make schools the priority target for education policy
- Promote education and training as lifelong processes
- The legal consecration of the system for the autonomous administration and management of schools was preceded by the establishment of Priority Education Zones (PEZ) in socially and geographically disadvantaged areas in the 1996-1997 academic year. The PEZ are groups of schools in the three cycles of basic and preschool education. Comprehensive joint plans are drawn up for each of these zones, preferably in consultation with the local community. These plans aim to improve the quality of education, prevent academic failure and promote innovation. These groupings lead to the improved coordination of education and more profitable returns on the local resources. Schools belonging to these zones benefit from special conditions to help them implement their plans, especially in the following areas:
  - The pupil-teacher ratio, which must be 15 to 20 pupils per teacher in the first and second stages of basic education and 20 to 25 pupils per teacher in the third stage
  - The appointment of one or more teachers in specific areas to set up additional educational or extra-curricular activities
  - The appointment of a psychologist
  - The opportunity to call on the services of moderators/mediators
  - The establishment of Teaching Council for the zone, made up of representatives of the different groups involved in education (e.g. local authorities, parent associations, cultural and recreational associations).

Although nine years of schooling are guaranteed for all pupils, the dispersion of the school network, the difficulty of finding teachers who are willing to stay in geographically or socially disadvantaged areas, and the poor conditions in many schools explain why the primary cycle often falls short of providing all children with the level of education that such an important requirement for the successful completion of the following stages of education. Because of this, and confronted with the need to make better use of the resources that are devoted to improving conditions in the first stage of basic education, and also because “a good start lasts a lifetime”, the government set up a special programme, the Alfa Programme, in 1999. It had the following objectives:

- Improve learning in all subjects, especially the Portuguese language, mathematics, experimental teaching in science and artistic education
- Encourage the sharing of good practice in these areas
Contribute to the implementation of specific projects, the coordination of resources and the production of appropriate teaching resources

Encourage local partners, especially the town councils, to increase investments in the primary cycle. (Ministry of National Education, 1999).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Basic Education Act** (Law n°46/86 of October 14th 1986) sets out the general framework and principles that apply to most of the legislative arrangements for the reorganisation of the Portuguese education system. In fact, the majority of the current legislation for education was published after 1986.

The **Decree-Law n° 286/89** of August 29th 1989 marks an important stage in educational reform, as it establishes the general principles for the restructuring of curricula in primary and secondary education in accordance with the Basic Education Act while endeavouring to respond to the demands that are made of the Portuguese education system at the national and international levels.

The systems for the autonomy and for the management and leadership of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools were established in 1989 and 1991. The **Decree-Law n° 43/89** of February 3rd 1989 established an autonomous legal system in the form of a new model of leadership, administration and management for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. Autonomy for schools means they can develop their own educational plans, which are developed and implemented collaboratively, with a view to giving greater responsibility to the various bodies that contribute to life in schools. It also ensures that school plans reflect the characteristics and resources of the school and take account of the needs and support of the local community.

**Decree-Law n° 172/91** of May 10th 1991, which establishes the system for the leadership, administration and management of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, embodies the principles of representativeness, democracy and community integration. The autonomous legal system relating to the administration and management of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools was laid down in **Decree-Law n°115-A/98** of May 4th 1998.

With regard to higher education, the main thrust of recent years concerns the administrative, financial, scientific and pedagogical autonomy of the institutions. The autonomous systems are a consequence of **Law n°108/88** of September 24th 1988, which defines autonomy at the university level and **Law n°54/90** of September 5th 1990, which defines the status and autonomy of Institutes of Technology. The Decree-Law n° 296-A/98 of September 25th 1998 sets out the admissions conditions for courses leading to bachelor’s and master’s degree courses in higher education institutions. It also created the National Committee for Access to Higher Education, which has the role of defining the criteria for the ranking and selection of applicants. The **Decree-Law n°205/98** of July 11th 1998 created the National Assessment Committee for Higher Education and sets out the general conditions and principles for the establishment of a general assessment system.

Of equal importance for this level of education is the emergence of private and cooperative higher education whose legal status was recognised by **Decree-Law n° 16/94** of January 22nd 1994.
At the level of central administration, a new organic law from the Ministry of Education was ratified by Decree-Law n°133/93 of April 26th 1993. The major principle behind the organic restructuring of the central and regional departments, as well as those operating under the authority of the Ministry of Education, was the desire to bridge the gap between providers and users of the services. With this aim in mind, the executive powers of the regional education departments were strengthened. The central departments retain the responsibility for the creation and promotion of education and teaching policies.

As required by the Organic Law for the General Inspectorate, published in 1995 and modified by Law n° 18/96 of 20th June 1996, the regional delegations are responsible for monitoring the technical, pedagogical and administrative performance of the education systems in their areas, in addition to overseeing their management of finances and assets.

Article 74 of the Constitution guarantees free, universal education to all of its citizens for a duration of nine years. It lasts for nine years and must be attended by all children and adolescents between the ages of six and fifteen.

Administration and management of the education system

The Ministry of Education is the leading national organisation, with the responsibility for defining national education policy. Its administrative structure includes central and regional departments, as well as educational establishments at the different levels of the education system.

The General Secretariat designs, coordinates and provides technical and administrative assistance in the following fields: management and training for Ministry staff, organisational improvement, the modernisation and rationalisation of administrative methods and asset management. This department also provides a central public relations office and gives technical support for staff employed by the Minister and Secretaries of State. Pedagogical design, guidance and coordination in primary, secondary and higher education are provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBA), the Department of Secondary Education (DSE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE), respectively. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has overall responsibility for Higher Education.

The General Inspectorate for Education is responsible for the pedagogical and technical assessment and monitoring of all educational and teaching establishments, as well as for monitoring the overall effectiveness of the system’s administrative, financial and asset management structures. In public higher education, it must also verify that the enrolment fee system and educational social policy are operating in accordance with the law.

In the framework of the administrative devolution of the system, an intermediate level has been set up between central administration and the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in the form of five Regional Education Authorities (REA) throughout the entire country.

The REA are decentralised departments with the same powers as the Ministry of Education with respect to guidance, coordination and support for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. Their remit also includes the management of human, financial and material resources, as well as social welfare and physical education in schools. In conjunction with the Department of Higher Education, these authorities are responsible for coordinating and
implementing the arrangements for admission to higher education. The General Inspectorate for Education operates through its regional delegations whose geographical jurisdictions generally coincide with the boundaries of the Regional Education Authorities.

Within each REA, at the municipal or inter-municipal level, coordination, guidance and support for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools is provided by the competent Education Area Centre (EAC).

Educational administration for the autonomous areas of the Azores and Madeira is carried out by the Regional Educational Secretariats, regional government authorities that are endowed with specific powers.

The **School Group** is the name given to a consortium of schools which, for specific reasons (e.g. number of pupils, number of teaching staff and geographical dispersion) do not merit individual management teams for each school. The term **centre** is used to refer to each school within a School Group.

The **School Council** (or School Group Council) is responsible for planning activities with a view to the overall, balanced development of pupils in accordance with the principles set out in the Basic Education Act (1986).

Universities enjoy scientific, pedagogical, administrative, financial and disciplinary autonomy. In the traditional model, universities are organised into schools, faculties or institutes, with each of these units being autonomously responsible for the education provided in one or more courses of study.

The administrative bodies of the public universities are: the university assembly, which elects the Rector and approves the statutes; the university Senate, which makes the final decisions relating to the structures, development plans and budgets for the university and the Rector, who is responsible for supervising the academic as well as the administrative and financial management. The university Senate and Assembly are made up of equal numbers of representatives from the teaching staff and students, in addition to representatives from the research body and non-teaching staff. In their own statutes, the universities have also created Consultative Councils, which maintain links with the community and include personalities from the economic, social and cultural sectors.

The **Institute of Educational Innovation** (IEI) is a public corporation, which operates under the authority of the Ministry of Education and is autonomous in its administration and management of assets. This institute has the following missions: to promote scientific and technical research into the development of curricula and the organisation of the education system, encourage educational innovation and design and coordinate plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning. It is also involved with developing the assessment of the education system.

The **National Education Council** is one of the Ministry’s leading consultative committees. It is independent and enjoys administrative and financial autonomy. It has a broadly based membership, with representatives from the different organisations that are directly involved in education, as well as having members from the political and social sectors. Independently, or at the request of other bodies, the National Education Council issues reports, evaluations and
judgements about all matters relating to education, in particular the application and
development of the measures contained within the Basic Education Act of 1986.

The public sector also contains other educational establishments that operate under the
authority of the Ministry of Education and other Ministries, especially the Ministry of
Defence, the Department of Welfare and Social Security and the Department of Justice.

Through its regional centres, the **Department of Welfare and Social Security** manages a
network of pre-primary schools. This network includes nursery schools that are directly run
by private welfare organisations, cooperatives and companies. Most of the establishments run
by the Department of Welfare and Social Security include crèches for children up to the age
of three.

In the field of basic continuing education (second-opportunity education) and extra-curricular
education, the Ministry of Education’s Basic Education Department is working with the
Department of Qualifications and Employment, the Department of Justice and other public
and private bodies to adapt the education service to the needs of the target populations.

Professional training within the job market is coordinated by the Department of Qualifications
and Employment, with the involvement of other ministries. The Department of Qualifications
and Employment, through the Institute of Employment and Professional Training, is
responsible for monitoring the training capacities of each company and for calculating the
number of apprentices. The structure of the organisation is governed by the National
Apprenticeship Committee (NAC) and the regional apprenticeship committees.
Pre-primary Education

Pre-school education is aimed at children between the ages of three and six, i.e. before they are eligible to enter primary education. It is not compulsory, as both natural and constitutional law recognise the essential role of the family in the process of pre-primary education.

Primary Education

The first level of school education consists of basic education, which is universal, compulsory and free. It lasts for nine years and must be attended by all children and adolescents between the ages of six and fifteen. It is divided into three cycles lasting four, two and three years respectively.
Secondary Education

The following level involves secondary education, which is optional. It lasts three years and admission depends on pupils obtaining the basic education certificate. Pupils in secondary education are aged between fifteen and seventeen and attend the tenth, eleventh and twelfth school years. In the normal education system, they follow courses that, depending on how they are tailored to the curriculum, either focus on assisting the pupils’ passage into the world of work - technological courses - or prepare them for further studies - general courses.

The third level of the education system consists of higher education, either at universities or institutes of technology. Admission is dependent on applicants having a certificate of secondary education or a similar qualification, passing an aptitude test or, for students over the age of 25, taking a specially adapted aptitude test. Students in higher education are usually aged between 18 and 25 and the duration of the studies varies considerably, depending on whether or not the courses lead up to a university qualification. A bachelor’s degree lasts three years; a Diploma of Specialised Studies may require two additional years of study after the bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree lasts from four to six years.

Each year, the Minister of Education fixes the school calendar by decree. The schools set the exact date for the start of the school year, in accordance with the calendar drawn up by the minister. In the pre-primary schools, the head teachers draw up the calendar, after consultation with the local authority and the pupils’ families. In primary and secondary schools, academic activities are organised over three terms. The academic year consists of at least 180 days in primary schools and thirty-three weeks in secondary schools.

The academic year for higher education officially begins on October 1st and finishes on July 31st. This includes the enrolment period, sessions exclusively reserved for teaching staff and the examination period. In practice, each institution sets the dates for their terms, within the framework of the official calendar. In the majority of cases, higher education courses start in the second half of October and finish in the second half of June. The academic year is divided into two terms of fifteen to sixteen weeks each. The first of these takes place between October 16th and February 28th and the second between March 1st and June 20th.