



## Country profile: Portugal

A report for the cross-European programme *Working for inclusion: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion*



**Children in Scotland**  
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**This report forms part of *Working for Inclusion: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion*. It is a European Union-wide programme funded by the European Commission and supported by the Scottish Government.**

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### PORTUGAL

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#### The programme

*Working for Inclusion* is examining how improving the qualifications and skills of those working with our youngest children is helping to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion. Taking place from February 2009 - January 2011, the programme encourages and facilitates discussion and debate over the role of the early years workforce. It will enable greater, more extensive and effective dialogue between local and national governments, education and qualification providers, employers, practitioners and policymakers.

#### Programme partners

The programme is led by Children in Scotland in partnership with:

La Bottega Di Geppetto, Italy  
Nordland Research Institute, Norway  
Comenius Foundation for Child Development, Poland

#### Research

The programme encompasses research, which offers a clear picture of early years services and their workforce across the EU and how these relate to levels of poverty and social inclusion. In addition, country profiles of Scotland and the UK, Poland, Norway, Italy, Slovenia, France, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden and Hungary have been produced. This data will contribute towards policy development at EU level as well as Scotland and the rest of the UK. The research is led by Professor Peter Moss and Dr John Bennett.

#### Study visits

Study visits in the four partner countries will address four key themes relating to poverty and social inclusion and the early years workforce. These visits will form the basis of a report on each theme, published by Children in Scotland on the project website ([www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi)), and publicised throughout member states at local and national levels. Each partner country will provide the context for exploring particular key challenges within the early years workforce:

- Working with the child as an active agent in their own learning (Italy)
- Working with diversity, in particular ethnicity, language, disability and gender (Scotland)
- Inclusive workforce models for rural and remote areas (Norway)
- Exploring the role of the pedagogue in working in an inclusive way with children and families, across agencies and age groups (Poland).

## Contents

<b>Glossary of key terms</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The social context of early childhood in Portugal</b>	<b>6</b>
Government	6
Demographic, social and economic context	7
Tax receipts, social expenditure and child poverty levels	8
Leave policies	8
Current cultural attitudes to child-rearing	8
<b>Historical overview of early childhood services in Portugal</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Key concepts and important influences on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)</b>	<b>12</b>
An independent professional culture	12
A new awareness of the educational rights of children 0-3 years	12
<b>The structure of ECEC in Portugal</b>	<b>13</b>
Service organisation and provision	13
Main types of service provision	13
The governance of early childhood services	14
System financing	15
Data collection, monitoring, evaluation and research	16
<b>Access levels and strategies</b>	<b>18</b>
Overall access levels	18
Access levels for different groups	19
Children with special needs and rights	20
Strategies to promote inclusion	21
<b>Conditions for quality improvement and assurance</b>	<b>22</b>
The workforce	22
Other conditions for quality – Licensing, child: staff ratios, family outreach	25
Curricula for children 0-6 years	25
<b>Relationships and transitions between ECEC and school</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Out-of-school services</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Current issues and development</b>	<b>30</b>
Pressures on the professionalism of early educators	30
A confusion of professional roles	30
Assessment	30
Current developments	31
Pedagogical models and perspectives	31
Educational Priority Areas	31
New developments in the training of pre-school teachers	31
Developing quality in partnership	31
<b>References</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>34</b>

## Glossary of key terms

### Main services

*Amas registadas* (childminding) – for children 0-4 years

*Crèches familiares* (family day care) - a group of registered nannies resident in the same geographical area (no fewer than 12 and no more than 20)

*Mini-crèches* (mini-crèches) - small organisations with a family-like atmosphere, including 5-6 children

*Crèches* – for children 0-3 years (various types)

*Jardins de infância* – for children 3-6 years (various types, run by different provider types).

### Main occupations

*Amas* - Registered childminders caring for up to a maximum of four children

*Ajudante de acção educativa* (nursery nurse) or *Auxiliar de educação* (nursery nurse) are the lead professional contact staff in the crèches

*Educadores de infância* or pre-school teachers are the lead professional contact staff in the *jardins de infância*. They also work in crèches (at least one per service is required).

## The social context of early childhood in Portugal

### At a glance (all figures from EU sources):

*Population:* 10.6 million. Population density: 114.9. Total fertility rate: 1.3; Children in lone parent households: 6% (EU25 average 13%)  
*Employment rates (2008):* Men 74%; Women 62.5%. 17% of women and 8% of men were in part-time employment, 2007 (EU average: 31% and 8%). Employment rate of mothers with a child 0-3 years: 78%; with a child 3-6 years: 80%  
*Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Purchasing Power Parities (compared to EU average =100):* 74; Children 'at risk of poverty' 24% (EU average 19%);<sup>1</sup> Gini coefficient: 0.37 (EU average = 0.30); S80/S20, that is, the income of top 20% compared to bottom 20%: 6.8 (EU average 4.8)<sup>2</sup> *Gender Gap Index:* 39<sup>th</sup> (2008)  
*Tax receipts:* 37.6% of GDP (EU average: 40.5%); *Public expenditure on education:* 5.26% of GDP (EU average 4.72%); *Public expenditure on social protection:* 24.7% of GDP (EU average is 27.2%)  
*Period of leave after birth:* 34 months possible, of which 5 months are paid at two-thirds or more of previous earnings.

### Government

Portugal, one of the oldest states in Europe, moved from authoritarian rule to parliamentary democracy following the 1974 military coup against Marcelo Caetano, who embodied a continuation of the long-running dictatorship of Antonio Salazar (1926-68). After a period of instability, Portugal ratified a new Constitution in 1976. Subsequent revisions of the Constitution placed the military under strict civilian control; trimmed the powers of the president; and laid the groundwork for a stable, pluralistic liberal democracy, as well as privatisation of nationalised firms and the government-owned media. Portugal joined the European Union in 1986 and has moved toward greater political and economic integration with Europe ever since.

The four main branches of the national government are the presidency, the prime minister and Council of Ministers (the government), the Assembly of the Republic (the parliament), and the judiciary. The president, elected to a five-year term by direct universal suffrage, is commander in chief of the armed forces. Presidential powers include confirming

the prime minister and Council of Ministers; dismissing the prime minister; dissolving the assembly to call early elections; vetoing legislation, which may be overridden by the assembly; and declaring a state of war or siege. The Council of State, a presidential advisory body, is composed of six senior civilian officers, former presidents elected under the 1976 constitution, five members chosen by the assembly, and five selected by the president.

The government is headed by the prime minister, who is nominated by the assembly for confirmation by the president. The prime minister then names the Council of Ministers. A new government is required to present its governing platform to the assembly for approval. The Assembly of the Republic is a unicameral body composed of 230 deputies. Elected by universal suffrage according to a system of proportional representation, deputies serve terms of office of four years, unless the president dissolves the assembly and calls for new elections. The national Supreme Court is the court of last appeal. Military, administrative, and fiscal courts are designated as separate court categories. A nine-member Constitutional

## The social context of early childhood in Portugal

Tribunal reviews the constitutionality of legislation.

Continental Portugal is divided into 18 districts, each headed by a governor appointed by the Minister of Internal Administration. The Azores and Madeira Islands also form part of Portugal. A regional autonomy statute promulgated in 1980 established the Government of the Autonomous Region of the Azores; this statute was revised in 1987, 1998 and 2009. The Government of the Autonomous Region of Madeira operates under a statute approved in 1991, revised in 1999 and 2000.

Current administration: After the centre-right (PSD) Prime Minister, Jose Manuel Durao Barroso resigned in 1995 to accept the nomination as President of the European Commission, parliamentary elections on February 20 2005 gave the Socialist Party a comfortable majority. The government under the new Prime Minister, Jose Socrates, formally assumed power on March 12 2005. The following year, the centre-right Social Democrat candidate and former Prime Minister, Anibal Cavaco Silva, won the Portuguese presidential election with 50.6% of the vote. He was sworn in on March 9, 2006, replacing outgoing Socialist President Sampaio. Parliamentary elections on September 27 2009 gave the Socialist Party a relative majority; a new government under the Prime Minister, Jose Socrates, formally assumed power on October 26, 2009.

### Demographic, social and economic context

The population of Portugal is 10.6 million, with a land area of 92,391 sq km, including the Azores and Madeira. The population density is 114.9 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The fertility rate is low at 1.3 births. Portugal has been largely homogeneous - ethnically, religiously and linguistically - with small minority groups from Africa (Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea), South America (Brazil) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Romania, Moldavia). Recent developments in the immigration flux show that in 2008 Brazilian immigration is the

most important - one in four immigrants is Brazilian. Ukrainians are now the second ethnic minority (12 per cent), Cape Verde the third (12 per cent), Romania the fourth (six per cent), Angola the fifth (six per cent), Guinea-Bissau the sixth (six per cent) and Moldavia the seventh (five per cent). The country also has a resident Roma (gypsy) population of approximately 40,000. The foreign population grew one per cent from 435,736 in 2007 to 440,277 in 2008.

To combat the decline in the native Portuguese population, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity has developed a number of policies to stimulate the birth rate and support families with several children through:

- prenatal and family allowances (in function of incomes and number of children) to support women who have reached the 13th week of pregnancy;
- an additional family allowance after the birth of a second child and for large families with many children;
- promoting the birth registration of children in health clinics immediately after birth and through identifying families at risk;
- promoting the reconciliation of professional and family life through the projected creation of an additional 24,500 places in day-care centers in Private Institutions of Social Solidarity in disadvantaged areas.

### Employment of women

The overall employment rates in 2008 for men and women in Portugal are as follows: 74 per cent male employment and 62.5 per cent female, compared to the EU average of 71.7 per cent and 58.3 per cent. The majority of Portuguese women employed work full time, but 17 per cent work part-time, compared to eight per cent of men (EU average: 31 per cent and eight per cent). The employment rate for women with a child under three is 78 per cent and with a child from three to six 80 per cent (EU averages are: 57 per cent and 67 per cent). According to Organisation for Economic

# The social context of early childhood in Portugal

Cooperation and Development (OECD) sources, lone mother employment in 2007 was 78 per cent, well above the average employment rate for women. In fact, the percentage of women in full-time employment is at odds with enrolments in child care, which shows a 25 per cent enrolment rate for children aged zero to three. One conclusion may be that informal child-minding is widespread.

### **Tax receipts, social expenditure and child poverty levels**

Portugal has a GDP per capita of three-quarters (76 per cent) of the EU average (\$32,400 per capita), and according to some forecasts, may drop to 19th place in purchasing power parity behind Greece and the Czech Republic. The service sector, comprised of public services, retail, tourism, and recreation, is now Portugal's largest employer, having overtaken the traditionally predominant manufacturing and agriculture sectors since the country joined the EU in 1986. Recent EU expansion into Eastern Europe has erased Portugal's historic competitive advantage of low labour costs, particularly in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The government is working to change Portugal's economic development model from one based on public consumption and public investment to one focused on exports, private investment, and development of the high-tech sector.

In terms of income inequality, Portugal's performance is weak with a Gini coefficient of 0.32 (EU average = 0.30) and an *S80/S20* ratio, (that is, the income of the top 20 per cent compared to the bottom 20 per cent) of 5.6 (EU average 4.8)<sup>3</sup>. Fully a fifth of households with young children live in poverty. Women are most affected by family poverty and in terms of gender equality, Portugal takes 39<sup>th</sup> place from the top in the world. The country spends more on education (5.26 per cent of GDP) and less on social expenditure (24.7 per cent of GDP), compared to the EU averages of 4.7 per cent and 27.2 per cent respectively. Tax receipts account for 37.6 per cent of GDP compared to

the EU average of 40.5 per cent.

### *Child and family poverty*

Social analyses from across the world concur that children in workless families, sole parent families, and large families are most likely to be poor. Although only six per cent of Portuguese children live in lone parent families, child and family poverty rates are high, and 21 per cent of Portuguese children live in poor households compared to the EU average of 17.2 per cent. Apart from some of the newer Eastern European and Baltic States, child poverty in Portugal, at 24 per cent, is the highest (along with Italy) in Western Europe. Expenditure on families with children is low at 1.7 per cent of GDP, significantly less than the OECD average of 2.3 per cent.

### **Leave policies**

Parental leave in Portugal is organised as follows: 120 calendar days (four months) maternity leave, of which 90 must be taken following the birth; the remaining 30 days may be taken before or after. These days are paid at 100 per cent of earnings, with no ceiling on payments. Five working days of paternity leave, paid at 100 per cent of earnings, are also made available to fathers, if taken in the first month after birth. In addition, three months each per parent of parental leave are allowed, but without payment, except for 15 days of 'daddy leave' if taken immediately after paternity or maternity leave. In total, this gives about five months leave paid at two-thirds or more of earnings. Flexibility of leave is good, with prolonged leave available for maternity and parental leave, paid on a pro-rata basis. Additional leave entitlements are also taken into account, eg 30 days annual leave from work are allowed per family to look after a sick child.

### **Current cultural attitudes to child-rearing**

Current cultural attitudes to child rearing depend very much on the education and socio-economic

## The social context of early childhood in Portugal

status of parents. Educated parents tend to be more liberal in their parental style. Due to the high employment rate of both parents, lack of time for family life may become a cultural issue in the middle class. Children in at-risk situations (adoption issues, conflicts between foster parents and biological parents, child abuse incidents both with children within families and with institutionalised children) have been reported in the press much more frequently, which means a growing public awareness of the importance of these issues.

If one can judge from government expenditure on childcare (not even, according to OECD figures, 0.1 per cent of GDP), and the relatively low enrolment in childcare services, there seems to be a powerful expectation in Portugal that families/women will have responsibility for young children.

# Historical overview of early childhood services in Portugal

During the early part of the 20th century, the First Republic in Portugal showed an interest in early education. Early education classes became part of basic education under the Ministry of Education. Under Salazar (1926-68), the new State, with its values of family and nation, considered early childhood care and education a private affair. It abolished preschool classes and opposed professional care and early education on the grounds that it did not justify the expense.

From then until the 70s, two types of response were developed, with the charity organisations playing a large role. It was only in the late 60s that – as a result of social change due to industrialisation – the Ministry of Health and Assistance created crèches and kindergartens in poor urban areas. These coexisted with the far more widespread informal arrangements adopted by families where mothers had to go out to work: childminding through grandparents and other relatives, neighbours, domestic employees, non-registered crèches, child care rooms and baby-sitters. The other response was educational, again led by private initiatives, often of a religious/charitable nature and supervised by the General Inspectorate for Private Teaching. Private pre-school teacher education colleges were set up, such as that of the Pedagogical Association João de Deus in 1954.

In 1973, on the eve of the overthrow of the authoritarian regime, a very comprehensive reform of the educational system was approved. This reform recognised pre-school education as an integral part of education, and created the first two public colleges of higher education for the training of early childhood educators. In the same year the General-Directorate of Compulsory Education (Direcção-Geral do Ensino Básico, also known as the Compulsory Education Department - Departamento da Educação Básica) was given responsibility for supervising the organisation, creation and running of state pre-school establishments dependent on the Ministry of Education, as well as for providing

guidance to private schools, in collaboration with the General Inspectorate for Private Teaching.

The revolutionary period that followed the overthrow of the authoritarian regime (1974-76) gave enormous visibility to social issues and created great public expectations. Accordingly, the demand for pre-school education increased; the proliferation of early childhood care and education centres, both of public and private nature, was the response to this new demand. In 1978 the first official *Jardins-de-infância* were opened under the Ministry of Education. From 1978 to 1989 the State expanded its pre-school public education network particularly in rural areas, and in the 1980s created a network of higher education teacher education colleges (early childhood, primary and lower secondary school teachers) to replace the Normal Schools, which had not higher education status.

With the 1986 National Framework Law, pre-school education became definitively an integral part of the national education system, although a large part of the sector is given over to private initiatives. A National Advisory Board for Education (Conselho Nacional de Educação) was created as a consulting body of the Ministry of Education, where all stakeholders who have an interest in education were represented. In 1994 this Board produced an influential report – *The National Advisory Board of Education Report on*

### *Early Childhood Education*

In 1996, a new government launched a Pre-school Education Expansion and Development Plan and in 1997 published a National Framework Law for Pre-School Education, defining this level of education as the first step of basic education. A national pre-school education network was created, integrating public and private, for profit and not-for-profit networks; establishing the right of families to participate in the creation of educational projects; defining instruments of institutional cooperation between various governmental departments involved in the Pre-school

## Historical overview of early childhood services in Portugal

Education Expansion and Development Plan; and determining the organising conditions of pre-school educational establishments, as well as the appropriate conditions for financial support. This is the basic law governing early childhood centres in Portugal.

Recent developments include the grouping of the first levels of education (pre and primary school)

in one single organisational unit, putting all basic education – from three to 15 years of age – under the same organisational management; the setting up of a programme designed to increase early childhood provision for the under-threes; and the reform of all teachers' initial training (pre-school, primary and secondary), integrated in the Bologna process.

## Key concepts and important influences on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

### **An independent professional culture**

An autonomous early childhood professional culture was built up in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as a separate culture from primary school teaching. The terminology adopted was designed to convey this difference – *educação de infância* (early childhood education) *educador(a) de infância* (early childhood educator), *jardim-de-infância* (kindergarten). This terminology is still used both in practice and in law; even the state pre-school teachers within the state teaching career are not called teachers but early childhood educators.

### **A new awareness of the educational rights of children aged zero to three**

In this decade, a growing awareness of the importance of providing babies and toddlers with good services and sound educational practice has developed. A Government programme (PARES) was launched in 2006 to increase this provision rate towards 33 per cent in 2010. The professional association of early childhood educators (APEI) is engaged in advocacy for the rights of young babies to quality education.

## The structure of ECEC in Portugal

### Service organisation and provision

In Portugal, the administration and provision of children's services are non-integrated or separated. The overall picture is that services are divided between those run for children under three and services provided to children aged three to six. The former are mostly provided by private (non-profit and for-profit) organisations and by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity; the latter are mainly provided by the State (Ministry of Education) taking the form of

*jardins-de-infancia*. In services provided to children aged three to six there are two main providers: the state-run *jardim* network, funded and administered by the Ministry of Education and accounting for over 51 per cent of total provision; and a large non-state pre-school network, composed of both non-profit associations (*rede solidária* or solidarity network) accounting for 31 per cent of provision and for-profit providers, accounting for 17 per cent.

### Main types of service provision

*Child care and education services for children aged 0-6 years in Portugal*

Form of service 0 to 3 years		Opening hours	Administrative Auspices
<i>Amas</i> - Registered childminders caring up to a maximum of four children;	Combined, national coverage is 30.2% of the age group.	Flexible hours 9 hours daily average, minimum of 24 hours weekly	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare
<i>Crèches familiares</i> - a group of <i>amas</i> (12-20) working together in the same area	Far more available in urban than in rural areas		
<i>Mini-crèches</i> - small <i>crèches</i> of up to 6 children			
<i>Crèches</i> - larger formal centres for children 4 months to 3 years			

## The structure of ECEC in Portugal

Form of service 0 to 3 years		Opening hours	Administrative Auspices
<b>Jardins-de-infância</b>  An education oriented model run by MOE and confessional or private bodies	68% of the services Centres generally included in public or private schools	MOE 5 hrs + daily (minimal) school holidays ... implanted in rural areas  Private, in urban areas: Longer day, varied offers - foreign language, music, dance, physical education ...	Ministry of Education State 51% Private: 17% (confessional and for-profit)
A care-oriented model, run by Ministry LSS and private charitable bodies.	32-33% of the services. Centres often large, in urban areas and in deprived areas. No formal connection with primary school education	Open 10-12 hrs daily, 11 months a year	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare

### Providers

For children aged zero to three, the main type of service is a crèche. The number of crèches increased by 39 per cent from 1998 to 2007. The percentage of children cared by *amas* (registered childminders) in 2007 exceeded 10 per cent of the total number of children in services in only four of the 18 districts of Portugal. For children aged zero to six (compulsory education begins at six), the main type of service is state pre-school, which covers 51 per cent of children in that age range (2006-07) followed by private solidarity kindergartens, which cover 31 per cent.

### The governance of early childhood services

Under the 1997 Framework Law for Pre-School Education, all early childhood care and education networks - public and private, for profit and not for-profit - constitute a single national network, subject to the same rules, with the aim of making pre-school education universal. The State is responsible for the definition of general norms and will seek to ensure the application of these principles through follow-up, evaluation and inspection.

Overall policy responsibility for this unified network is shared by the Ministry of Education

## The structure of ECEC in Portugal

and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare. Different partners work with the Ministries, each having defined statutory roles. The Ministry of Education defines the normative aspects of pre-school education (hours of operation; organisation; pedagogical directions; evaluation and monitoring), and funds kindergartens. The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare has responsibility for the regulation and funding of early childhood care and education focused on zero to three year olds, and is responsible for its quality. It is also responsible for providing support to low income families to enable children to attend kindergarten education, eg through the provision of free meals, subsidies, etc. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare should ensure the institutional co-ordination required for the expansion and development of the national network. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure the pedagogical quality of the centres and finance the respective costs of the educational component. Since 1998 a cooperation protocol has existed between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare and the Union of Private Charities, whereby the State makes the commitment to financially support the running of the pre-school centres of these non-profit organisations, guaranteeing the total payment of the costs of the educational component.

### System financing

Public expenditure on pre-primary educational institutions as a percentage of GDP is 0.4 per cent of GDP, 0.39 per cent being spent on pre-school education and, according to latest OECD figures, less than 0.1 per cent on childcare services. The part allocated to pre-school education represents about 7.4 per cent of total expenditure on educational institutions in Portugal, but this expenditure covers approximately 14 per cent of total educational enrolments. OECD (Education at a Glance, 2007) provides a figure of USD \$4.461 (PPPs) as the

unit cost per child in pre-primary education. Public provision is mainly indirect, serviced by accredited agencies (government independents) subsidised by government. The subsidies are supplied directly to the service providers. Private provision is mainly non-profit, as only non-profit providers can receive public funds.

In the private for-profit sector, fees are predominately determined by supply and demand and parental contributions may account for 95 per cent of costs. In the private (non-profit) solidarity network, parental fees cover about 38 per cent of costs. In the public childcare sector, subsidies are available and fees may be waived for some families. Here and in the private solidarity sector, the State, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare, heavily subsidises the family support component of early childhood provision programmes - meals, medical supervision, socio-cultural activities. Families also receive tax exemption for various educational expenses.

In the pre-school sector for three to six year olds, the legal framework provision distinguishes clearly between a five-hour educational component, free for all children in State or private charity pre-school centres (but not in for-profit centres) and the care component which is paid by families in all types of service. These costs are set by the Ministry of Education, which also establishes contracts for the development of a family support component. Financial assistance is organised as follows:

In each jardim de infancia (Ministry of Education and private solidarity), the State attributes per child/month a sum to be used solely for paying the services of the educational component, which includes payment of the staff (pre-school teachers and auxiliary staff) and assistance for acquiring teaching material;

The family assistance component is a monthly subsidy for all children involved; it includes food services and social and educational activities,

# The structure of ECEC in Portugal

with parental contributions according to family income;

In the private solidarity network, a Social-Economic Compensation Fund has also been set up to complement the share of families in very deprived areas.

### Data collection, monitoring, evaluation and research

In Portugal, data is collected on a regular and official basis on:

- The supply and distribution of early childhood services across the country
- Enrolments and profiles of children enrolled, eg age, gender, disability
- Care arrangements for the zero to 12 cage group, ie who cares for them during the day, including out-of-school care
- The workforce - numbers, qualifications, pay and profile, eg age, gender
- Structural standards, eg ratios and group sizes. (This information is collected by the Ministry of Education).

#### Monitoring

Monitoring, evaluation and research are normally the responsibility of the line ministries, Education and Labour/Social Solidarity. According to the 2000 OECD report on Portugal, quality control in all parts of the system needs to be strengthened. Not enough inspectors specialised in ECEC are assigned to quality evaluation and support of the *jardins*. Although the State gives substantial grants to voluntary and charitable organisations, it does not always contractually require in return verifiable evidence of target achievement or outcome measures (OECD, 2005).

However, more recent reports affirm that the Ministry of Education is developing a system to monitor and supervise curriculum development in pre-school education. The General Inspectorate of Education (Inspeção-Geral de

Educação – IGE) conducted an assessment programme of about 600 pre-schools between 1999 and 2002, with the aim of encouraging improvement in these centres. The fields of observation covered the following teaching and process indicators: planning learning, curricular guidelines, educational aids, learning resources, assessment of learning and progress made, inter-personal relationships, co-operation among teachers, and forms of communication adopted, as well as the interaction of the centre with the surrounding community. Currently, the Inspection has developed a project to assess the quality of teaching processes; monitoring will focus on pedagogical achievement, the work of the educator and community integration. As yet, it the scope and impact of the initiative is unclear.

For children aged zero to three, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare is responsible for quality. In practice, however, there exists significant decentralisation to the regions with regard to pedagogical action and the management of human, material and financial resources. Thus, the geographically decentralised District Centres of Social Security are the units responsible for guaranteeing, in the respective area where they act, the management of social security schemes, the recognition of rights and fulfillment of duties in social security schemes, and the implementation of social measures. Crèches (zero to three years of age) and solidarity kindergartens (three to six years) are under the control of these centres.

#### Evaluation

In 2005 and 2006, an evaluation of the effectiveness of education work in the early years (pre-school and primary education) was implemented, following closely the ESSE (Effective School Self-Evaluation) project. This programme focuses on four key quality indicators: vision and strategy; educational resources; educational process; and outcomes. For each indicator, the teacher is questioned about his/her own practices and evidence of

## The structure of ECEC in Portugal

their work is collected, as well as evidence of the pupil's progress. This activity has been implemented in 79 "Agrupamentos" and the inspectors observed approximately 365 pre-school classrooms. When the inspection is over, a report with recommendations for improvement is sent to the "Agrupamento".

In 2005 the Inspectorate of Education, in partnership with the Inspectorate of Social Security, developed a control activity in 212 kindergartens of the private network, named IPSS (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity), Misericórdias (Charities) and Mutual Trusts. The main goals of this programme were:

- To control the execution of the Cooperation Agreement celebrated between the State and the Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, for the year 2004/2005, in the scope of the Programme for the Expansion and Development of Pre-School Education;
- To observe the fulfillment of the minimum requirements related to the quality and the safety of spaces.

The final report was sent to the regional authorities of education and services of social affairs as well as to the Ministers responsible for both areas.

### *Research*

The state sponsors research through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher education. Some foundations also sponsor research and intervention in early childhood education (Calouste Gulbenkian, Aga Khan and Bissaya Barreto foundations). Research groups are concentrated in two universities (Minho, Aveiro) and teacher education colleges (Lisbon, Santarém). Some pedagogical associations also produce research on early childhood, such as the Modern School Movement and Childhood Association.

## Access levels and strategies

### Overall access levels

Over the last 16 years data on education has highlighted three factors: the extent of pre-schooling, which in the early 1990s covered half the children aged three to five, and in the 2006-2007 school year included approximately four fifths of the population in that age group; a decline in school population at basic and primary education level; and an increase in the population enrolled in tertiary education in the total period under review, although with a reversal of that upward trend in the most recent years.

In the period from the 1990-1991 to the 2006-

2007 school years, population enrolled in pre-schooling education increased by 53.8 per cent. That increase was to a large extent due to public education: over 16 years enrolment rose by more than 63,100 children from the age of three to school age. The number of children enrolled in public pre-school establishments in the period under review grew in annual average terms by 3.9 per cent, compared to 1.7 per cent in private schools. The extent of pre-school education may be clearly observed in the increase in the pre-schooling rate in the 1990-1991 to 2006-2007 period, moving from 50.7 per cent to 78.5 per cent.

### Percentage of children 0-6 years in different types of ECEC - 2008

% of children 0-3 years in different types of ECEC – 2008	
<b>The informal sector</b>	<b>% cared for informally = 69.8%</b>
Parental care	69.8%
Grand-parents, family care	
Domestic care	
Unlicensed <i>amas</i>	
<b>The licensed sector</b>	<b>% 0-3 year olds in services = 30.2%</b>
Licensed <i>amas</i>	30.2%
State and state-subsidised crèches	
Private for-profit crèches	

## Access levels and strategies

% of children 3-6 years in different types of ECEC – 2007	
<b>Jardins de infancia - Preschool services 3-6 years</b>	<b>% 3-6 year olds in services = 78,5%</b>
State educational	51%
State care	1-2%
Private Educational	17%
Private Solidarity	31%

Source: Formosinho & Oliveira Formosinho, 2009

### Access levels for different groups

The current access figures are as follows: *zero to three years*: 70 per cent of children are cared for by their families or within informal care arrangements; 30 per cent of children attend some form of crèche or family day-care. In 1996 almost 88 per cent of children aged zero to three were cared for by their families or within informal care arrangements; less than 80 per cent in 2003; 70 per cent in 2008. Since 2006, there has been a determined effort to improve early childhood provision for younger children. A Government program (PARES) was launched in 2006 to increase this provision rate towards 33 per cent in 2010. The rate of enrolment in formal care contexts (crèches and registered nannies) was 12.5 per cent in 1996; 21.5 per cent in 2003; 23.5 per cent in 2006, 28.1 per cent in 2007, 30.2 per cent in 2008. The number of crèches increased by 39 per cent from 1998 to 2007. The percentage of children cared for by *amas* (registered childminders) in 2007 exceeds 10 per cent of the total children in services in only four of the 18 districts of Portugal.

Three to six years: for this age group, enrolment rates relative to child age cohort in *jardins de*

*infância* are: *three to four years*: 60 per cent enrolled; *four to five years*: 75 per cent; and from *five to six years*: almost 90 per cent enrolled. Community centres and itinerant provision are also available on a small scale in areas where it is difficult to maintain a *jardim de infância*. Access to the "learning period" (the education component) of the public *jardins de infância* is free, and since 2000-01, has also become free for children aged three, four and five in the non-profit institutions of the private network (IPSS).

Most children are enrolled in the free State educational pre-school network under the authority of the Ministry of Education – 51 per cent in 2006-07. The second type of network is the private solidarity network with 31 per cent of enrolled children in 2006-07. The third type is the private educational network under the authority of the Ministry of Education with 17 per cent of children enrolled in 2006-07. There is also a residual network – the State care network under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare – with less than two per cent of enrolled children in 2006-07.

Pre-schooling in the early 1990s covered half the

# Access levels and strategies

children aged three to five, and in the 2006-2007 school year included approximately four fifths of the population in that age group; in the period from the 1990-1991 to 2006-2007 school years, population enrolled in pre-schooling education increased by 53.8 per cent. A particular influence on this change was the expansion of the public network.

### *Admission criteria and procedures*

The following priority criteria are observed in enrolling children in public *Jardins-de-infância*:

- First: children who attended in the previous year the educational establishment in which they wish to enrol;
- Second: children who are in the year before the first year of compulsory schooling, in order to encourage school success (Decree-Law No. 286/89, 29th of August);
- Third: children with additional support needs (Decree-Law No. 319/91, 23rd of August) regardless of area of residence of the pupil and age limits;
- Fourth: children whose parents are underage students, until they are five years old (Law No. 90/01, 20th of August);
- Fifth: children with brothers and sisters already enrolled in the educational establishment;
- Sixth: children whose parents and guardians are resident in the same parish as the said educational establishment, (Decree-Law No. 542/79, 31st of December);
- Seventh: children whose parents and guardians work in the same parish as the said educational establishment, (Decree-Law No. 542/79, 31st of December).

The enrolment of children who are three between 15th September and 31st December is accepted, conditionally, and ordered according to the priorities defined above, attendance being guaranteed if there is a place available at the beginning of the academic year.

### **Children with additional support needs and rights**

#### *Children from low-income families*

According to EU figures, 21 per cent of Portuguese children live in poor households compared to the EU average of 17.2 per cent. Apart from some of the newer Eastern European and Baltic States, child poverty in Portugal, at 24 per cent, is the highest (along with Italy) in Western Europe. Expenditure on families with children is low at 1.7 per cent of GDP, significantly less than the OECD average of 2.3 per cent. In public network establishments and governmentally subsidised private establishments, admission criteria are socially based in accordance with family needs, taking into consideration children at risk, those with absent parents or children belonging to families with only one parent or with many siblings.

However, it has been suggested that identification and health intervention strategies for these children often fail as access is not appropriate, mainly with respect to gypsy children. There is a question too about identifying and tracking properly the progress of these children through the school system and ensuring that the preschool programmes they follow are effective in supporting their learning. Further analysis of the figures presented in this profile suggests that the unequal division of wealth within Portuguese society and insufficient redistribution towards poorer families may be hampering the efforts made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare and by the non-profit solidarity organisations on behalf of poor children.

#### *Children with additional support needs and rights*

In Portugal, there is growing inclusion of children with disabilities in all branches of education. The place of children with additional support needs within the pre-school system is protected in law. The policy goal is inclusion within regular kindergartens whenever possible, and in many settings, children with additional support needs

## Access levels and strategies

are well integrated. However, referral rates for children aged six to 10 are significantly higher than for the birth to six age group, which suggests that many children are having their needs identified too late.

### *Ethnic and bilingual children*

Ethnic children from African backgrounds are concentrated mainly in the Great Lisbon area, whereas children with Slav or Brazilian backgrounds are spread all over the country. For ethnic children, especially those at risk, several social integration programmes with an educational component have been sponsored by the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities, government ministries and municipalities. The post of socio-cultural mediator (*mediador cultural*) has been created; their remit is to collaborate with the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in order to strengthen inter-cultural dialogue and social cohesion. The High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities also makes it possible for all non-Portuguese speaking immigrants to have free Portuguese classes.

### **Strategies to promote inclusion**

The PARES (Programa de Alargamento da Rede de Equipamentos Sociais) programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare seeks to increase the number of crèches and other social establishments to reach the Barcelona target of 33 per cent enrolment by 2010.

To promote inclusion there are early intervention programmes targeted at high-risk children and children with additional support needs (birth to six, with a particular focus on zero to three) and their families. Since the early 1990s a wide array of programmes and services for "early intervention" have developed across the country. Conceptual frameworks, delivery models, target populations and level of parental involvement were extremely variable. In 1994, an interdepartmental working party was created in

order to develop the legislation regarding early intervention in Portugal.

In 1999, this process resulted in the publication of legislation defining early intervention as a community-based service involving health, education and social welfare state services, as well as private institutions and informal resources, based on interdisciplinary teamwork; the family as well as the child is identified as the locus for planning and delivering early intervention services, rather than only the child. Three ministries - Education, Health and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare - have financial and political responsibilities for the services.

## Conditions for quality improvement and assurance

### The workforce

Type of provision	Title of lead staff & assistant (with literal translation)	Qualification name	Qualifications level
	Coordenador	Licenciatura	Tertiary A
	Educadores de	Licenciatura	Tertiary A
<b>Crèches</b>	Educador social or	Licenciatura	Tertiary A
	Auxiliar de	Upper	Level 3
	Ajudante de acção	None	Level 1 or Level 2
	Coordenador	Licenciatura	Tertiary A
<b>Jardins de infancia</b>	Educadores de	Licenciatura	Tertiary A
	Auxiliar de	Upper	Level 3
	Ajudante de acção	None	Level 1 or Level 2

Most of the staff in early childhood contexts are female. For example, in 2006-2007 there was just 478 male pre-school teachers in pre-schools (private and public), representing 2.9 per cent of the teaching staff.

Crèches are staffed by *educadores de infância* (early childhood educators), *educadores sociais* (social educators) and *técnicos de serviço social* (social workers), all of whom have tertiary-level professional qualifications. Each context with one to three-year-old children should have at least one qualified early childhood educator. They are assisted by *ajudantes da acção educativa* (auxiliary workers) who are not required to have a particular qualification, and *auxiliares de educação* (educational assistants, nursery nurses) with upper secondary vocational training (level three qualification). Data about the proportion of trained staff in crèches is not

available.

In the kindergartens – the *educadores de infância* – early childhood teachers are the lead staff. Early childhood educators/teachers have the same pay conditions as primary and secondary school teachers, but their pay levels and conditions of work may be considerably reduced when they work in the social child care sector. All settings should have a pedagogical director, and each class a qualified early childhood teacher (*educador de infância*), assisted by a non-qualified auxiliary worker (*ajudante de acção educativa*) who is not required to have a particular qualification, and / or a vocationally qualified auxiliary worker (*auxiliar de educação*) who provides care support (safety, hygiene, meals, sleep); assistance in reception and delivery of children to parents; and supervision of playgrounds. Only

## Conditions for quality improvement and assurance

in a few experimental settings does the auxiliary staff work as part of the educational team with the pre-school teacher. In state pre-schools the equivalent category to *auxiliar de educação* is *assistente de acção educativa*. Existing staff can be promoted once they have attended adequate training, lasting 80 hours. To begin the career of education assistant the minimum qualification is now the completion of Grade 12 of secondary education or equivalent, with a specific training course lasting for 180 hours provided by professional schools.

### *Pedagogical coordinator*

Each pre-school education centre in state, non-profit and private solidarity networks is coordinated by a pedagogical coordinator, who must be a duly qualified preschool teacher or educationalist. The director has the responsibility to coordinate educational activity and to direct the curriculum orientation and socio-educational activities.

### *The initial training of early childhood staff*

Early childhood educators are trained concurrently in teacher training colleges (integrated into higher education polytechnic institutes), private teacher training colleges and universities. Entrance requirements, number of credits, academic and professional qualifications, and minimum credits per subject are determined by the Government. The qualification required for the profession was, until 1998, a bachelor's degree (three years); after 1998, a four-year "*licenciatura*" degree, that is, the same qualification as primary and secondary school teachers.

Since 2007, under the Bologna process, the professional qualification for the teaching profession is the Master's degree. All pre-school teachers have to complete a three-year course ("*licenciatura em educação básica*" – 180 European credits) followed by a one-year (60 European credits) or one-and-a-half year (90 European credits) course leading to the Master's

degree. Minimum credits per subject are determined by the Government. The qualification for pre-school education is obtained after four years of higher education, the qualification for pre-school and primary school education ("*1º ciclo do ensino básico*") is obtained after four-and-a-half years, both conferring the Masters' degree.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare has been investing recently in improving the qualifications of auxiliary staff and has decided to change the name of the profession to *ajudantes da acção educativa* (auxiliary workers who are not required to have a particular qualification), *auxiliares de educação* (nursery nurses with upper secondary vocational training). Notwithstanding, almost all rooms in crèches are staffed by auxiliary staff who are not required to have a particular qualification. However, each crèche should have a qualified early childhood educator to coordinate and supervise the work of the auxiliary staff who work directly with the children. The following areas of training for non-teaching staff employed in education and schools were established in 1998 by the FOCO Programme (Programme for Ongoing Teacher Training): teaching and human relations; organisational development; school management and administration; specific areas of teaching; information and communication technologies.

### *Pre-school teachers' working conditions and career*

Pre-school teachers in State schools are expected to work 35 hours a week during term time. The weekly timetable includes 25 hours teaching plus a non-teaching component, spread over five days a week. The in-service training requirements for pre-school teachers are the same as those for teachers in primary and secondary education. Access and progress in the teaching profession, and performance evaluation, as well as the rights and responsibilities of all teachers (including State pre-school ones) are stipulated in the Teachers

# Conditions for quality improvement and assurance

career Statute.

*Salary, work conditions, career and professional status* vary considerably across networks, being much better in the educational oriented contexts than in the care oriented ones. In fact, due to differences in status and salaries between early childhood educators working in crèches and kindergartens (even within the same organisation), most of the staff in crèches in direct contact with young children are non-qualified auxiliary workers. These workers are less expensive than qualified educational workers. In State pre-schools, the teachers are considered civil servants and equal to teachers in basic education. In educational private pre-schools, educators are also considered to be teachers but are not civil servants; in private solidarity centres they were not considered teachers before 1997 but since then there has been a move towards some equivalence of status and salary.

### *Pre-school teachers' in service training and professional development*

State pre-school teachers are obliged to attend on-going training for a minimum of 50 hours each two years. This training is co-funded by the State and the European Social Fund and is provided mainly in the training centres of the Schools' Associations. Although access to in-service training is only compulsory for state pre-school teachers, those teaching on the private networks may also attend. Unfortunately only a few of these in-service sessions are specifically designed for pre-school education needs. Specific programmes for the professional development of early childhood educators are offered by pedagogical organisations, mainly the Modern School Movement and early childhood pedagogical or professional associations.

### *New developments in the training of pre-school teachers*

Due to the need to adapt Portuguese higher education courses to the European Bologna Process, there was a reform of all teachers'

initial training (pre-school, primary and secondary). The reform went far beyond a mere adjustment. The training of pre-school, primary and basic secondary education was amalgamated and the type and number of credits in the first cycle (three years) training course (*licenciatura em educação básica*) was changed to 120 credits: 30 credits for Language (Portuguese); 30 for Mathematics; 30 for Experimental Sciences and Social Studies; and 30 for Artistic Expression. The training of pre-school teachers and teachers of the first and second cycles of basic education have the same format, which means that the number of credits for child psychology, the history and sociology of education, curriculum and childhood pedagogy has decreased. The time allocated to student practicals (teaching in schools) has also decreased to about one eighth of the total training time. This reform may well consolidate the tendency to bring a more academic approach into preschool teacher training (Formosinho, 2001, 2002).

There is no shortage of candidates either for early childhood teacher education courses, nor for the vocational educational assistant (*auxiliares de educação*) or teaching assistant (*assistentes de acção educativa*) courses.

There is no data available regarding the ethnic origin of staff. There have been no affirmative action policies to recruit staff with ethnic and immigrant backgrounds, but there are programmes to train and recruit cultural mediators.

### *Trade unions and other workforce organisations*

Trade unions have always been active and influential in Portuguese education public policy. There is no official data on teacher-union membership, but it is generally believed that it does not exceed 50 per cent of the number of teachers. There is an important professional association of early childhood professionals – the APEI (Associação dos Profissionais de Educação de Infância), which covers two thirds of early childhood educators and has contributed much

## Conditions for quality improvement and assurance

to the professionalisation of the field.

### Other conditions for quality – licensing, child: staff ratios, family outreach

#### *Licensing and regulatory framework*

The State is responsible for the definition of general norms concerning the organisational, pedagogical and technical components of pre-school education. It seeks to ensure their application through follow-up, evaluation and inspection by an independent inspection body. For children aged zero to three, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare is responsible for quality. In practice, however, there exists significant decentralisation to the regions with regard to pedagogical action and the management of the human, material and financial resources. For example, the geographically decentralised District Centres of Social Security are the units responsible for guaranteeing, in the respective area where they act, the management of social security schemes, the recognition of rights and fulfilment of duties in social security schemes and the implementation of social measures. The crèches (zero to three) and kindergartens or jardins (three to six years) are under the control of these Centres. The licensing process for family day care services involves formal registration and the implementation of annual health and safety checks. In crèche, kindergarten and accredited out-of-school care programmes, there is an additional requirement to follow a curriculum.

#### *Child:staff ratios and group sizes*

The maximum group size for kindergarten classes is 25 with the staff/child ratio being in general 25:1, and in some cases 25:2. The legislation requires one assistant worker (*ajudante de acção educativa, auxiliar de educação* or *assistente de acção educativa*, in state pre-schools) for every two classrooms, with 25 children in each. When a kindergartens or preschool in the public network has only one

classroom, it is assigned one early childhood teacher and one assistant worker. This is more common in rural areas. In regulated family day care services, the maximum group size is four, and the child-staff ratio 4:1. In the crèches, group sizes are 12 (solidarity network centres) or 10 (private centres) with ratios of 12:2 or 10:2. Accredited out-of-school care provision operates with maximum group sizes of 20 and child-staff ratios of 20:2.

After-educational hours in-centre care - "family support component" (*componente de apoio à família*) - depends generally on the municipality in state public pre-schools; in the other types of provision, it depends on the policy of the early childhood centre. Generally one auxiliary worker is present for each group of 15-25 children.

#### *Family and community involvement*

The law concerning the autonomy, administration and management of schools includes the participation of parents in various school bodies and in the preparation and approval of the school's internal rules of procedure. Where kindergartens are concerned participation in the activities of the pre-school is reinforced by the work of Parent Associations. There are also Municipal Education Councils ("bodies for co-ordination and consultation that promote within the municipality the co-ordination of education policy") where parents associations and those responsible for education are represented. Parental involvement is present at various levels, being part of common practice in early childhood centres through parental meetings and informal contacts. In many centres there are parents' associations. There is an influential national federation of parents' associations - *Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais (CONFAP)*.

### Curricula for children aged zero to six

Curriculum guidelines are seen in most countries' child care sectors as a necessary step to avoid the danger of early childhood programmes slipping unwittingly into mere child

# Conditions for quality improvement and assurance

minding (“so that there is real educational work and not just babysitting”, to use the words of a consulted pre-school teacher). In Portugal, the advantages of formulating a curriculum are seen by the educational partners to be:

- Closing the gap between care and educational contexts;
- Clarifying the role of the pre-school teachers in relation to auxiliary staff;
- Providing a better understanding to parents of what is going on in pre-school classrooms.

The Ministry of Education introduced *Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Education* in 1997 as a group of principles to support pre-school educators in decisions regarding classroom practice and as a common reference for all teachers in the national pre-school network. These guidelines indicate recognition of the importance of quality early childhood settings, both for children’s early development and learning and as a support to working parents. The Guidelines included both developmental and

social aims:

- To provide each child with the conditions of well-being and safety;
- To encourage the personal and social development of the child;
- To encourage the holistic development of each child, respecting individual characteristics and promoting diversified learning;
- To provoke curiosity and critical thought; and more socially:
- To promote the inclusion of children in a variety of social groups, with respect for different cultures, encouraging an awareness of their role as members of society;
- To contribute towards equality of opportunity in gaining access to schools and towards learning success;
- To encourage the personal and social development of the child based on experiences of democratic living, with a view to education for citizenship.

## Relationships and transitions between ECEC and school

Regarding the relationship between pre-school and primary school education, the National Advisory Board for Education Report on Pre-School Education (1994) characterised the situation as one of “divorce”. There was little physical contact and administrative sharing, often due – particularly in rural areas – to the scattered pattern of pre-schools and schools; this had important negative implications for pedagogical and administrative reforms. During the late 90s and into the present century, efforts have been made to address the issue and to remove the administrative and pedagogical discontinuities between early education and the basic school through forming school clusters (Formosinho, 1996).

A first move was made at rural level where the greatest dispersion of schools was evident. Local projects to integrate public pre-school and primary education units under the same administrative authority, the same leadership and, gradually, under the same physical facilities, were put in place. These initiatives solved many of the problems related to insufficient organisational co-ordination - lack of school meal facilities, insufficient funds and no space for audiovisual equipment, lack of offices for administrative personnel, etc. So successful were these initiatives in promoting better co-ordination between early childhood and basic education that, from 2000 onwards, the same idea was applied to grouping state schools, from pre-school to all compulsory education (“ensino básico”), thus putting all basic education – from three to 15 years of age - under the same organisational management. This vertical process begun in 2002 was completed five years later in 2007.

The school cluster represents an organisational unit, with their own bodies, with common and coordinated pedagogical projects and integrated educational paths. This new unit, being bigger and encompassing a broader vision of education, is seen by the educational administration as a more adequate organisational unit. Various rationales have been advanced to explain the

success of the project:

- School network reasons - restructuring of the educational network, elimination of examples of isolation and scattering of small schools, expansion of pre-school education;
- Organisational reasons - the creation of larger administrative units, meaning access to more resources and better management and leadership;
- Pedagogical reasons - better pedagogical continuity across the different educational levels, promotion of common pedagogical projects across cycles, interaction across educational levels and cycles;
- Social reasons - better integration of pupil’s school routes, better opportunities for early school leavers.

Although very supportive of the efforts made by the Ministry of Education in regard to school structuring and other initiatives, Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho (2009) point out that certain school factors have had an enormous impact on pre-school pedagogy and practice, more so even than curriculum and teacher education. In particular, they point to:

- The establishment of school clusters from 1997 onwards;
- The consequent integration of pre-schools into the normative bureaucratic pattern of State schools;
- The development of materials for pre-schools (activity books, workbooks, worksheets, and other materials) by the publishing houses since 1996;
- New patterns of school inspection;
- A new system of teaching performance evaluation in state schools in 2008.

In summary:

“Mainstream pedagogical practice in State pre-schools is becoming each time more influenced by the combined convergent impact of all these factors. They promote a new pedagogical,

## Relationships and transitions between ECEC and school

professional and organisational culture in state pre-schools; encouraging the consolidation of a transmissive pedagogy and a bureaucratic practice influenced by primary school practice. As there is not a pedagogical supervision of classroom practice, mainstream practice is even more influenced by the administrative bureaucratic environment." (See Formosinho & Machado, 2005, Oliveira-Formosinho, 2007).

## Out-of-school services

To solve the problem of restricted opening times in state pre-schools, the legal framework distinguishes clearly between a five hour educational component, free for all children either in public or private school centres, and the care component ("wrap up care" before nine and after 15.30 hours) which should be paid by families. The creation of a "family support component" (*componente de apoio à família*) in these centres since 1996 has transferred responsibility for solving this problem to the management of each centre.

Before the implementation of this family support component the problem was solved with an add-on to the educational hours based on after-education hours (*Actividades de Animação Socioeducativa*) overseen by the Ministry of

Labour and Social Solidarity/Social Welfare. This initiative offers activities to children in pre-school and primary education that supplement the school timetable, compensating for any differences between school hours and the work schedule of parents. These activities are in decline due to the progressive implementation in state pre- and primary schools of the family support component.

*Animação Infantil e Comunitária* – or community and children's activities – targets five-year-old children in outlying, over-populated and disadvantaged urban areas where there are no proper facilities, and aims to offer activities that are appropriate for their development. This is done in premises lent out by the community.

# Current issues and development

### **Pressures on the professionalism of early educators**

An early childhood professional culture built up in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as a separate culture from primary school teachers. As such the terminology adopted was designed to convey this difference – *educação de infância* (early childhood education) *educador(a) de infância* (early childhood educator), *jardim-de-infância* (kindergarten). This terminology is still used both in practice and in law; even pre-school teachers interested in taking forward their teaching careers are not called teachers but educators. However, early childhood educators working in state school clusters are becoming more influenced by primary school culture and its reliance on a transmissive pedagogy. This has been threatening the specific professional culture based on constructivist pedagogies and can have a negative impact in early childhood education professional identity. At the same time, the degree of autonomy and respect for professional competencies seems to be greater in the educationally oriented contexts than in those still marked by a strong care orientation, for example in the private solidarity sector. A stronger educational orientation seems to provide a better basis for the professional development of early childhood educators and represents generally more satisfying employment.

### **A confusion of professional roles**

#### *Blurred boundaries between early childhood education and primary school teaching*

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the relationship between Portuguese pre-school and primary school teachers had been uneasy due to different perspectives about the role of schooling and the role of teachers and pupils. The role of early years practitioners is obviously similar to that of other teachers in various aspects, but it also differs in many others. These differing aspects make the professional nature of the work of early years practitioners very specific. The teachers themselves have ambivalent

feelings as to how similar they are to other teachers, specifically primary teachers. Early years practitioners, unlike primary teachers, identify the relations and interactions with their auxiliary staff in the classroom, interactions with psychologists and social workers, and interaction with mothers and fathers as a specific characteristic of their profession.

#### *Confusion of roles within early education itself*

There is also some confusion about roles within the early childhood educator profession itself. Educators work in very diverse settings – in pre-school education contexts (kindergartens) attending three to five-year-old children; in early childhood care and education contexts (typically crèches) attending children aged four months to three years; in after school activities (family support component in pre-school contexts, curriculum enrichment activities in primary education); and in other settings - hospitals, municipalities, associations, companies, etc. Even within the pre-school itself, working conditions and contexts can differ widely in different settings – state pre-schools, educational private pre-schools (of religious affiliation or for-profit companies) and private solidarity centres. These different contexts also differ in ownership, legal status, mission and vision, organisation and leadership. Pre-school teachers' working situations differ in working hours, working conditions, salaries, professional status, career, in-service training and professional development, but not in initial training and professional qualification.

### **Assessment**

According to the curriculum guidelines of 1996, assessment should take on a formative character, through a continuous and interpretive process that is more interested in the processes than the results and seeks to make the child more active in their own learning. However, in 2002, the Ministry of Education initiated a project to define the skills and learning required by preschool children. Pilot work in the 2004-05 school year was undertaken in preparation for

## Current issues and development

the implementation of the new curriculum. A survey of experts in pre-school education and curriculum development was made, covering the pertinence of defining competences to be developed in pre-school education. Many advised that the evidence from both policies and practices of children's assessment in other countries remains unclear. As there is a danger that unfriendly child assessment practices may lead to early labelling of children, the project did not continue. A discussion about alternatives is urgently required.

### Current developments

#### *Pedagogical models and perspectives*

Despite a tendency towards the 'academisation' of early childhood, some socio-constructivist alternative practices exist, generally promoted and supported by pedagogical associations, eg the Modern School Movement and the Childhood Association model.

The Modern School model was developed, promoted and supported by the Modern School Movement (Nisa, 1995, 2007). It is inspired by Freinet and Vygotsky and it is based on a cooperative organisation of the class. It is used in individual classrooms in State and private pre-schools.

The Childhood Association socio-constructivist pedagogical approach is promoted and supported by the Childhood Association<sup>4</sup> under the designation of Pedagogy-in-Participation (Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008). This perspective has been used since 1996 in early childhood centres through the context-based intervention approach of the Childhood Association.

#### *Educational priority areas*

Over the past decade there has been growing awareness that schools in deprived suburban areas have different problems that demand different solutions. This has been answered through the creation of educational priority areas

- *Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária* (TEIP) - where there is more autonomy and greater mobilisation of resources. There is not as yet sufficient awareness of the need to recruit early childhood educators from minority groups for more embedded and equitable work in deprived areas.

#### *New developments in the training of pre-school teachers*

Due to the need to adapt Portuguese higher education courses to the European Bologna Process, there was a reform of all teachers' initial training (pre-school, primary and secondary). The reform went far beyond a mere adjustment and introduced a transformative "back to basics" educational philosophy in teacher education courses. The number of credits for child psychology, sociology of education, history of education, curriculum and childhood pedagogy has diminished. In terms of the time allocated to student teaching in schools, practical placements now account for about one eighth of the professional training time. This reform may consolidate an 'academisation' effect in teacher education (Formosinho, 2001, 2002).

#### *Developing quality in partnership*

The Effective Early Learning (EEL) project, developed by Christine Pascal and Tony Bertram, has been influential in Portugal since its early days. Initiatives by the Ministry of Education for a contextualised use of the project were developed during 2007-2009 with the name *Developing Quality in Partnership*. Throughout 2007-2008, a research group of educationalists and members of teacher education institutions (Universities and Colleges) delivered the following products: adaptation of the EEL manual for wide use; publication of a series of booklets sharing good Portuguese classroom practices; and publication of case studies of quality development in partnership. Through this process it was possible to identify contextualised guidelines for quality meaning-making and development.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>. The definition of 'children at-risk of poverty' used here follows the EU definition, that is, children living in households with less than 60% of the national equivalised median household income for a couple with two children.

<sup>2</sup>. *The Gini co-efficient* measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. Perfect equality has the value of 0 and perfect inequality the value of 1. The higher the decimal number assigned to a country, the greater the inequality that exists in a country. The EU average is 0.31. *S80/S20* is the ratio of the total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income compared to the income received by the 20% with the lowest income; the higher the ratio, the greater the income inequality between the rich and poor in a country. The EU average is 4.8.

<sup>3</sup>. *The Gini co-efficient* measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. Perfect equality has the value of 0 and perfect inequality the value of 1. The higher the decimal number assigned to a country, the greater the inequality that exists in a country. The EU average is 0.31. *S80/S20* is the ratio of the total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income compared to the income received by the 20% with the lowest income. The higher the ratio, the greater the income inequality between the rich and poor in a country. The EU average is 4.8.

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