

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND



Support to Education and Training: 2014-2018

PORTUGAL

SUMMARY

ESF Thematic Objective 10 funding is used to support education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning. Over 4 billion euro has been allocated to such operations in Portugal, with 634 313 participations having taken place by the end of 2018. This factsheet summarises the main actions, outputs, results and lessons learned so far in the use of this funding in Portugal.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Early school leaving (ESL) rate (%)



► **Early school leaving (ESL)** in Portugal continues to be a challenge. The ESL rate decreased considerably from 17.4% in 2014 to 11.8% in 2018 but remains above the EU28 average of 10.6%. The situation is worse for men (14.7%) than for women (8.7%). There are also regional disparities, with a particularly high rate in the regions of the Algarve and the Azores.

Tertiary educational attainment rate (%)
(30-34 year olds)



► **Educational attainment levels remain low.** In 2018, 50.2% of the population aged 25 to 64 had only attained less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2). This is the highest percentage in the EU and more than double the EU28 average.

► The **tertiary educational attainment rate** increased from 31.3% in 2014 to 33.5% in 2018, but is still significantly below the EU28 average (40.7%). This is especially the case for men (24.1%) who register a much lower rate than women (42.5%).

► The **adult participation rate in education and training** increased between 2014 and 2018 from 9.6% to 10.3%, yet still remains below the EU28 average (11.1%).

Participation rate in education and training by adults aged 25-64 (%) (last 4 weeks)



► **Total general government expenditure on education** decreased from 5.7% of GDP in 2014 to 5% in 2017, although it remained higher than the EU28 average of 4.6%. The decrease in spending is across all levels of education, despite the annual growth in GDP since 2014.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

ESF European Social Fund

TO10 Thematic Objective 10

OP Operational Programme

IP Investment Priority

* Figures present the situation for ESF operations under Thematic Objective 10 and its four Investment Priorities (IPs) for the programming period 2014-2020 implemented up to the end of 2018, as reported on 1 October 2019. In many instances, operations are not yet complete at this stage, or have only recently started.

* As one person could participate more than once in ESF operations over time, the number of participations is reported. These figures exclude Technical Assistance.

* Where the breakdown of participants according to employment status, age, and level of education does not add up to 100%, it means that it was not possible to include characteristics of a number of participants in some OPs.

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ESF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS IN PORTUGAL

► There are **10 ESF Operational Programmes (OP)** in Portugal:

- **7 regional OPs** (Alentejo, Algarve, Azores, Centro, Lisboa, Madeira and Norte);
- **3 thematic OPs** covering only Norte, Centro and Alentejo regions (Human Capital, Social Inclusion and Employment and Competitiveness and Internationalisation).

► The OPs have the following priorities relevant to Thematic Objective 10 (TO10):

- Addressing the **challenges at all levels of education**, with measures to reduce school failure and early school leaving, to increase the participation of adults in certified education/training and in lifelong learning and to increase the share of the population in tertiary education;

► Increasing the attractiveness of **higher education**, along with increasing the **labour market relevance** of education, through providing education and training offers better matching labour market needs.

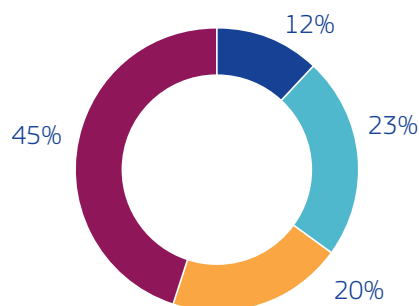
► Support **doctorate degree programmes** aimed at strengthening research, technological development and innovation.

53% of total ESF funding¹...

€4 654 220 397

...is allocated to the following TO10 investment priorities: **early school leaving (12%)**, **access to quality tertiary and equivalent education (23%)**, **enhancing access to lifelong learning (20%)**, and **improving the labour market relevance of education and training (45%)**.

Allocation of ESF TO10 funds



○ Reducing and preventing early school leaving - IP10.i

○ Access to quality tertiary and equivalent education - IP10.ii

○ Enhancing access to lifelong learning - IP10.iii

○ Improving the labour market relevance of education and training - IP10.iv

STATE OF PLAY

80% of planned resources under TO10 had been allocated in 2018, with 45% spent.

Number of overall participations in TO10 operations by the end of 2018:

634 313

► **83 917** participations in operations to reduce and prevent early school leaving

► **187 455** participations in operations to improve the access to, and quality of, tertiary and equivalent education

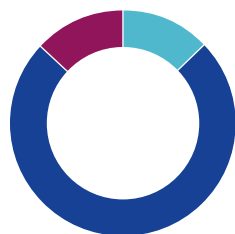
► **122 261** participations in operations to enhance access to lifelong learning

► **240 680** participations in operations to improve the labour market relevance of education and training

¹ This includes EU-only funding and co-financing from the Member State.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES WHEN RECEIVING SUPPORT

Employment status



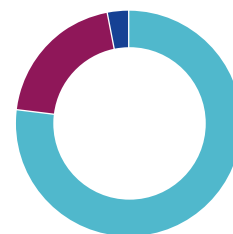
13% (81 705) Unemployed
75% (473 226) Inactive²
13% (79 382) Employed

Sex

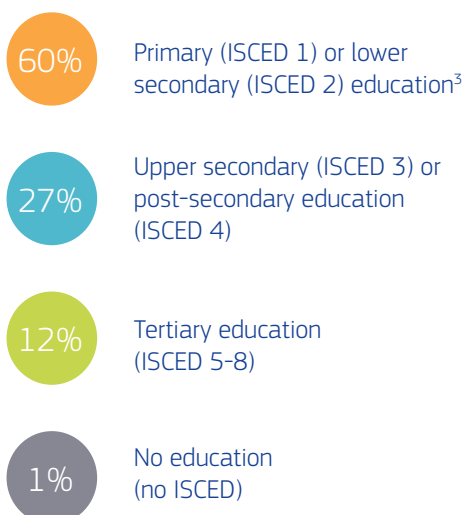
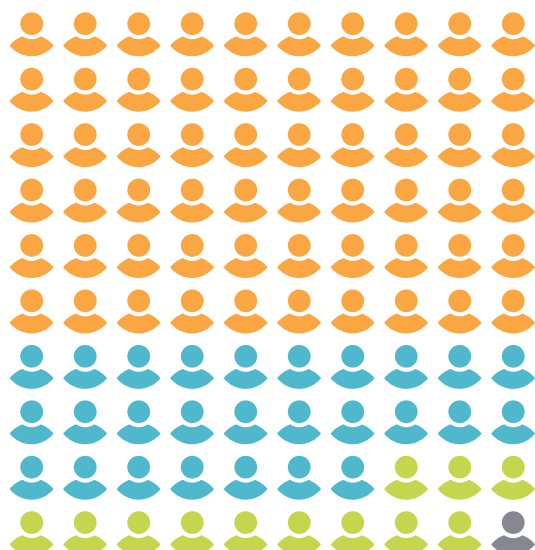


53% Women
47% Men

Age



3% (42 507) <25 years
83% (1 386 841) 25-54 years
14% (241 329) >54 years



0
Migrants

3 638
Other disadvantaged

0
Participants with disabilities

0
Homeless

Key achievements to date of ESF T010 activities in Portugal include⁴:

- ▶ **193 174** successful results have been achieved to date following participation in an activity funded by ESF T010, of which:
 - ▶ **32 072** inactive participants went on to engage in job searching
 - ▶ **33 572** participants went into education or training
 - ▶ **90 807** participants gained a qualification
 - ▶ **36 723** participants moved into employment upon leaving
- ▶ 83% of participants in operations to increase school success (at ISCED2 level) graduated, which is already above the 2023 target of 80%.
- ▶ 116 526 higher education students (ISCED5, ISCED6 and ISCED7) were supported by social action scholarships, exceeding the target set for both 2018 and 2023.

² The inactive population can include pre-school children, school children, students, pensioners and housewives or -men, for example, provided that they are not working and not available or looking for work.

³ ISCED is the UN reference classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields.

⁴ Participants' data are collected when starting an operation. Data on results are collected at the end of an operation or even later. Because of this time lag the two sets of data (participations and results) should not be directly compared.

LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR

► Impact of an improving economic context

With the decrease in the unemployment rate in Portugal, it has become more challenging to reach key target groups for education and training as they have been absorbed into the labour market. Participants in ESF operations are more likely to drop out from education-oriented operations and especially from training.

► Monitoring ESF operations

The ESF monitoring system has been a challenge for many stakeholders. Challenges relate to combining the specificities of ERDF with those of ESF, and the complexity of requirements regarding data protection, which limit access to some useful information, especially on result indicators. Stakeholders have called for a more agile and flexible system to better support implementation.

► Strong consistency with national strategies

T010 operations address the issues and challenges identified in national strategies and policies. Operations were chosen and adjusted according to priorities on the national level, as shown in the reprogramming exercise of 2018. This moved ESF funds to a new government priority – adult education and qualification – to ensure coherence in policy and funding.

► Effective communication

The visibility of ESF operations in Portugal is very high. A communication campaign involving social networks and national and regional newspapers to present results reached over one million people. In a survey on cohesion funds in Portugal, 85% of respondents consider that EU funds have contributed to the country's development.

► Local cooperation is key

ESF operations to reduce early school leaving have increased formal and informal cooperation between schools and local stakeholders in Portugal. This is having a sustainable impact as municipalities and inter-municipal communities involved in these operations have taken on costs that were previously financed by EU funds, as a result of the increased cooperation.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

► Professional courses

Professional courses are upper secondary education and training courses providing both educational and professional certification. The measure has been in place since the beginning of the OP and, by the end of 2018, 170-103 participants had taken part, most of whom were males. Around two out of three participants graduated in the time foreseen.

► Centres 'Qualifica'

This network of centres provides adults and young NEETs with counselling, guidance and referral to learning pathways. Such pathways are based on actual needs identified by the economic sectors in the territory of influence of the centre. Activities include the recognition, validation and certification of existing skills (RVCC) acquired throughout life, as well as the acquisition and development of skills through certified vocational training. By the end of 2018, nearly 183-000 people registered in the centres, 80% of whom were referred to RVCC or training.

► National programme for the promotion of school success (PNPSE)

This programme develops measures to target students at risk of school failure, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has been in place in 800 groups of schools since the start of the OP. Results show that the percentage of students with a positive grade in all disciplines was much higher than four years ago. During the same period, the percentage of schools with a failure rate lower than 2% in the first four years of schooling increased from 10% to 50%, whilst the time needed for completing different education levels also decreased.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pereira, C., Duarte, N. (coord.) (2018b), Evaluation of the Contribution of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) for Doctoral and PostDoctoral Training - Executive Summary, https://www.poch.portugal2020.pt/pt-pt/Documents/Executive%20Summary_final_20190307.pdf

European Commission, Study supporting the evaluation of ESF support to education and training (Thematic Objective 10)

The ESF in Portugal: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=394&langId=en>

Website of the ESF in Portugal: <https://www.portugal2020.pt/content/programas-operacionais>

