

# PORTUGAL

## Key contextual data

*Compiled by*

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## Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

### Please note

In alignment with country-specific usage, the terms used in this report for the main forms of centre-based ECEC provision are: **nursery** (*creche*, 0–2) and **kindergarten** (*jardim de infância*, 3–5)<sup>1</sup>. Any additional forms are described where appropriate.

### Historical milestones in ECEC in Portugal

1882	Opening of the first official kindergarten working according to Froebelian principles
1911	Decree law that establishes the educational function of early childhood education, together with families
1936	Under the dictatorship regime, early childhood education schools were extinct; the education of young children was fully assigned to families – especially to mothers
1950 onwards	The first – mostly Catholic – training institutions are established for staff wishing to work professionally with young children.
Up to the 1970s	Early childhood education continues to be viewed primarily as a private family matter.
1973	Comprehensive reform of the education system
1978	First kindergarten opened under the auspices of the Ministry of Education
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Publication of the Kindergarten Statutes</li> <li>– Publication of the Statutes for the training institutions (public) for early childhood teachers</li> </ul>
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Education Act, integrating the pre-school sector (3–5)</li> <li>– Initial professional education of early childhood teachers is carried out in polytechnic higher education institutions</li> </ul>
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Definition of the legal framework for the development and expansion of the national network of pre-primary education</li> <li>– The Framework Law establishes kindergartens as an official part of the education system.</li> <li>– Publication of the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-primary Education</li> </ul>
2001	Publication of the professional profile of the Early Childhood Teacher
2006	Creation of the PARES programme that allows for the expansion of the national network of ECEC settings for under 3 year-olds
2008	Definition of specialised support (special education) in public and private kindergartens
2009	Legal entitlement to at least one year in kindergarten for 5 year-olds comes into force.
2011	Publication of guidelines by the Ministry of Education on assessment and evaluation in pre-primary education.
2015	Revision of the Framework Plan New legislation on the conditions for becoming a childminder
2016	Publication of the revised version of the Curricular Guidelines for Pre-primary Education
2016/2017	Legal entitlement to a place in kindergarten is extended to 4 year-olds.

<sup>1</sup> **Editors' note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports for countries with a school starting age at 6 (as in Portugal): **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds.

2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Introduction of legal entitlement for 3 year-olds</li> <li>– New legislation on inclusive education</li> </ul>
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Progressive extension of entitlement for the 0–2 sector (<i>creche</i>) is introduced.</li> <li>– A working group is set up to develop national pedagogical guidelines for the 0–2 sector (<i>creche</i>) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security.</li> </ul>

Sources: Oberhuemer et al. 2010; Barros Araújo 2017; Eurydice 2023.

## ECEC system type and auspices<sup>2</sup>

Portugal has a separately organised system of early childhood education and care with two different sectors. ECEC settings for children under 3 (ISCED 01) are the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MLSSS – *Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social*). The Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*) is responsible for pre-primary education in kindergartens for children between the ages of 3 and school entry and for ensuring the quality of education. Pre-primary education is legally considered the first stage of the education system. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour share responsibility for the supervision, monitoring, organisation and operation of ECEC settings.

## General objectives and legislative framework

The Portuguese Constitution establishes the right of every individual to education, regardless of gender, race, language, religious, political, ideological convictions or sexual orientation.

Objectives for ECEC for under 3 year-olds emphasise child well-being and holistic development, as well as support for parents in balancing their work and family life.

Legislative decrees of 2011 (Ordinance 262/2011, 31 August) with amendments introduced in 2012 (Ordinance 411/2012, 14 December) and in 2023 (Ordinance 190-A/2023, 5 July) set out the conditions for the operation of day nurseries.

The main objectives of pre-primary education include promoting children's personal and social development, supporting their integration into different social groups and their communication and critical thinking skills, and ensuring equal opportunities. Also in focus are the well-being and safety of children, the identification of special needs and the support of parents in the educational process. Early childhood education and care is understood as complementary to parental education. A strong emphasis is therefore placed on close cooperation with parents.

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education (*Lei-Quadro da Educação Pré-Escolar*, 1997) (Law 5/1997, 10 February), this is the first stage of the education system in Portugal in close cooperation with families. In addition, the Basic Law on Education (*Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*, 1986) (Law 46/1986, 14 October) with amendments until 2023) defines pre-primary education as being for children between 3 years of age and school entry and should take place in kindergartens.

<sup>2</sup> The Eurydice country report on ECEC in Portugal provided orientation on legal and regulatory aspects. All other sources are clearly indicated within the text and in the *chapter References*.

## ECEC entitlement and compulsory attendance

Attending ECEC provision during the early childhood phase up to school entry is not compulsory in Portugal. For under 3 year-olds, there is no legal entitlement to a place in ECEC provision.

From the age of 3 onwards, children have a legal right to a place in a kindergarten for 25 hours a week (Normative Order 6/2018, 12 April, with amendments of Normative Order 10-B/2021, 14 April).

Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 6.

## Main types of provision

### Childcare sector

**Nurseries** (*creches*) offer places for children between 3 months and 3 years. Each setting decides on its own opening hours; the majority are open from 7:00/8:00 to 18:00/20:00. 87% of nurseries are open 10–12 hours a day; 42.4% of children spend 6–8 hours a day at the nursery and 45.8% 8–10 hours a day (MLSSS 2023, 36).

Registered **childminders** (*amas*) provide home-based services for children up to the age of 3. These services are organised and monitored by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. Minimum qualification requirements came into force in 2015 (Decree-Law 115/2015, 22 June). They include a certificate of compulsory education and short-term training units in supporting children and young people.

At least four home-based providers may join together to form a **family childcare service** (*creche familiar*), which operates within the framework of a social or non-profit institution.

### Education sector

**Kindergartens** (*jardins de infância*) for 3 to 6 year-olds usually provide educational activities for approximately five hours daily, and also additional recreational activities and family support. Required opening hours are up to 17:30 for at least eight hours per day. Some have longer opening hours to meet the needs of parents.

In order to reach children in rural or remote areas, in rare cases **mobile early education provision** (*educação pré-escolar itinerante*) may be available for 3 to 5 year-olds, deploying professionals in changing locations (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 188).

## Provider structures

In Portugal, a public and a private network of ECEC settings complement one another. The private sector consists of both non-profit and for-profit provision. In order to ensure that children can attend centre-based settings beyond the 25 free hours, a cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and the Network of Private Institutions for Social Solidarity (*Instituições Particulares de Solidariedade Social*, IPSS) was formed.

### Childcare sector

Most nurseries are under private (non-profit or commercial) ownership, with operating licences approved by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. The national coverage (Portuguese mainland) rate in 2020 was 52,9%, with lower coverage rates in large urban centres like Lisbon and Porto.

In 2021, 77% of nurseries were private-non-profit, while 23% were private-for-profit. 101,191 children attended nurseries (MLSSS 2023, 25f).

### Education sector

In 2022, well over a half (60.3%) of Portuguese kindergartens were public services: of a total of 5,767 settings, 3,475 were publicly run (Pordata 2023). 2,292 kindergartens were privately run. Also, of the children over 3 years enrolled in kindergartens in 2021, more than half (53.9%) attended public settings, 28.9% private non-profit, mostly IPSS-affiliated institutions, and 17.2% private-commercial institutions (Eurostat 2023e).

Table 1

**Portugal: Number and shares of children in kindergartens (3 years to statutory school age) by provider type, 2021**

Provider type	Number of children	Shares, in %
Public	135,372	53.9
Private non-profit	72,618	28.9
Private for-profit	43,070	17.2
Total private	115,688	46.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>251,060</b>	

Source: Eurostat 2023e

### Participation rates in regulated ECEC settings

Over the past 15 years, a significant increase in participation rates can be observed in both age groups (4 months to under 3 years and 3 years to statutory school entry). While in 2005 only 30% of under 3 year-olds and 46% of over 3 year-olds were enrolled in a centre-based setting, in 2022 over half (52.5%) of under 3 year-olds and over 3 year-olds (57.6%) attended ECEC provision (see Table 2).

Overall, children under the age of 6 spend an average of 39 hours a week in an ECEC setting (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 68).

Table 2

**Portugal: Enrolment rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005–2022**

Year	Weekly hours of attendance	Under 3 year-olds, in %	3 years to minimum compulsory school age, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	3.6	18.5
	Over 30 hours	26.3	27.5
	No enrolment in ECEC	70	54
2010	1 to 29 hours	4.5	10.1
	Over 30 hours	27.0	71.0
	No enrolment in ECEC	68.6	19.0
2015	1 to 29 hours	3.9	5.8
	Over 30 hours	39.2	86.5
	No enrolment in ECEC	57.0	7.7
2022	1 to 29 hours	2.3	3.9
	Over 30 hours	50.2	53.7
	No enrolment in ECEC	47.5	42.4

Source: Eurostat 2023b, slight deviations from 100% due to rounding

National statistics reveal that in 2022, a total of 259,030 children attended kindergarten and were cared for by 17,260 professionals, of whom only 1% were men (Pordata 2023).

Broken down by age group, Eurostat reports that more than three quarters of 3 year-olds attend a kindergarten, 93.9% of 4 year-olds and almost all 5 year-olds (see *Table 3*).

*Table 3*

**Portugal: Number and enrolment rates of children in nurseries and kindergartens, by age, 2021**

Age	Number of children in kindergartens (ISCED 02 settings)	Enrolment rates in kindergartens, in %
Under 2 years	n.d.	
2 year-olds	n.d.	
3 year-olds	68,533	78.3
4 year-olds	83,253	93.9
5 year-olds	86,534	99.0
6 year-olds	12,740	15.1

Source: Eurostat 2023g, j

The enrolment rate for children under 3 years of age was 48.8% in 2021. Of the overall percentage of children attending nurseries, 17% were infants (up to 1 year of age) and nearly 81% were toddlers (1–2 year-olds) (MLSSS 2023, 37). However, the enrolment rate varies widely across the country: for example, demand is significantly higher than supply in Lisbon and Porto, while in rural areas supply often exceeds demand.

## Financing and costs for parents

National data indicate a projected share of 4.6% of GDP for ‘education’ in Portugal for 2021 (Pordata 2023). In 2019, 0.34% was allocated to the early education sector (OECD 2023).

The financing of pre-primary education is the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and the municipalities. The educational programme of the public pre-primary network is completely financed by the state. For ECEC settings in the private solidarity network (IPSS), the state covers the costs of educational units and ensuring pedagogical quality. Childcare beyond the state-funded 25 hours and other private facilities are financed by parents through income-related fees. Low-income families can receive financial support under certain circumstances (European Commission 2020, 51).

In 2022, a new legal framework (DRE 2022) came into force stipulating the progressive extension of free access to childcare until 2024. 25 hours in kindergartens are free of charge for parents, beyond which they also pay income-related fees regulated by law.

For children under the age of 3 who attend non-profit nurseries with a cooperation agreement with the MLSSS, there is a fixed annual state contribution of €304.23 (2022). In addition, it is regulated by law (Law 2/2022) that from 1 September 2022, the first year in nurseries will be free of charge for all children, followed by the second year in 2023 and the third year in 2024. Furthermore, in September 2023, the *Creche Feliz* (Happy Nursery) programme was launched, which offers free access to all nurseries for children born after 1 September 2021. This applies to low-income parents nurseries which are part of the pool of participating nurseries in the social and solidarity network.

In 2022, a couple with two children spent about 6% of net household income on childcare costs<sup>3</sup> (OECD.Stat 2023).

## Staff to child ratios and group size

In **childcare settings** for under 3 year-olds children are usually divided into same-age groups. The maximum number per group is 10 children if they cannot walk, 14 children who can walk or are under 24 months old, or 18 children between 24 and 36 months. If there are too few children for this type of grouping, mixed-age groups with a maximum of 16 children can also be formed. Two assistants are responsible for ten children at most under 1 year, one core pedagogue and one assistant for 14 children between 1 and 2 years, and one core pedagogue and one assistant for 18 children over 2 years.

Groups in **kindergartens** consist of a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 25 children. If there are children with special educational needs in the group (maximum two per group), the maximum number is 20, with one core pedagogue and one assistant per group. The ratio in groups with 1 year-olds is 14 children maximum per core pedagogue or assistant, with 2 year-olds 18 children and with 3, 4 or 5 year-olds 25 children.

In special education facilities the maximum group size is 15 children.

In 2022, one member of teaching staff was responsible for an average of 15 children in kindergarten (Pordata 2023).

## Curricular frameworks

### *Childcare sector*

There is no pedagogical framework for **nursery settings**, although the Directorate General of Education and the Institute of Social Security are currently working on pedagogical guidelines for this age group. However, the Curriculum for Pre-primary Education, updated in 2016, indicates that the general pedagogical approaches and principles should apply to the whole period before compulsory schooling (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 95). According to legal regulations of 2011 and 2012, each nursery setting is obliged to implement its own pedagogical projects in each group, which serve to plan and accompany activities that are geared to individual children's needs and include fostering motor, cognitive, personal, emotional and social skills. In addition, there is a focus on nutrition, hygiene and safety aspects.

### *Education sector*

The reference framework for work in **kindergartens** is the Curricular Framework for Pre-primary Education (*Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-Escolar*, OCEPE), updated in 2016, which sets out pedagogical principles and organisational aspects. Three content areas are particularly emphasised: (1) social and personal aspects, including the development of attitudes and values; (2) expression and communication, including artistic expression, spoken language, introduction to writing, as well as mathematics and physical activity; and (3) knowledge of the world, including learning about different sciences by practising how to search for information in a systematic way.

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<sup>3</sup> The calculation is based on the following fictitious model: two parents working full-time (average income); two 2 and 3 year-old children in full-time care; relevant care allowances included.

Professionals can choose the methods they think best suit the children's interests and needs. To support professionals, the Ministry of Education provides various booklets on working with the curricular framework. To facilitate the transition to primary school, the learning areas of the curriculum are aligned with those of primary school.

## Digital education

In the Curricular Framework for Pre-primary Education, the section on "knowledge of the world" also mentions the technological world. The use of technology in kindergarten is seen as a learning tool that makes it possible to gather information, to communicate with others or to organise. As digital media have a strong appeal to children and play an important role in their daily lives, it is important that they are supported from an early age to look critically at this influence, to understand the potential and risks and to know how to protect themselves. Media education is linked to other content areas and implies that the child is not only a consumer but also a producer, thus broadening their knowledge and perspective on reality. Professionals are required to start from children's existing knowledge and introduce them to new areas in a playful way. Children should therefore be supported in recognising technological resources in their environment, in explaining their functions and uses, and in using various technical media carefully and safely in their everyday lives.

## Monitoring – evaluation

In general, evaluation procedures in the education system are the responsibility of the General Inspectorate of Education and Science (*Inspecção-Geral da Educação e Ciência*, IGEC), the Directorate of General Education and Scientific Statistics (*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência*, DGEEC) and the Institute of Educational Evaluation (*Instituto de Avaliação Educativa*, IAVE). IGEC provides supervision, audits and technical oversight throughout the education system and also proposes quality improvement measures. The DGEEC ensures the analysis of statistical data, supports strategic planning and evaluates the results; IAVE creates and coordinates evaluation instruments.

### Child-related assessment

No specific assessment measures are required for children **under 3 years** of age. However, professionals observe each child and discuss these observations with parents.

Current curricular guidelines reinforce the formative assessment of children in **kindergartens**. It is seen as an integral part of education and an ongoing process. It is neither about grading children's learning according to standards nor about making a value judgement about the child. The instruments used (e.g. conversations, learning histories, portfolios) should make it possible to observe, record and assess the children's learning and developmental progress based on the areas defined in the curricular framework. In this way, the educator can take measures, if necessary, to better adapt the educational processes to the needs of the children. These assessments take place at different points in time and the perspectives of the children themselves and the parents are also taken into account.

### Centre-based internal evaluation

In ECEC settings for **under 3 year-olds**, self-evaluation is recommended but not compulsory (EECEA/Eurydice 2019, 126).

Self-evaluation measures in **kindergartens** are mandatory and cover, among other things, the results of educational projects and the implementation of curricular strategies. Centre leaders are responsible for preparing a report at the end of each kindergarten year. Self-evaluation procedures follow set criteria such as staff satisfaction with working conditions, teamwork or availability of materials. The results are included in the external evaluation of ECEC settings.

#### *External evaluation*

Quality assurance measures in both sectors include, for example: overall quality, quality of staff, implementation of the curriculum (only in kindergartens), equipment, compliance with safety rules and children's performance. For this purpose, checklists are mainly used in nurseries, in kindergartens also questionnaires or self-reflection reports.

**ECEC settings for under 3 year-olds** are externally evaluated by the Institute for Social Security (*Instituto da Segurança Social*) through on-site visits (a minimum of one visit every two years) and an analysis of relevant information (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 125).

External evaluations of kindergartens are conducted by IGEC in cycles; each institution is evaluated once every five years. Two IGEC inspectors and two external experts look beyond aspects of self-evaluation to examine leadership and management, child development, educational planning and outcomes. They use different methods such as document analysis, statistics, questionnaires, observations, interviews and on-site visits. Each area is assessed using a 5-point scale. In kindergartens, the opinions of children and parents are also included. A manual on inspection suggests that the children's views should be taken into account, especially with regard to their preferred activities, their freedom in choosing these activities and their interactions with professionals (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 132). The evaluation reports are published and the institutions have the opportunity to comment on them.

## **Inclusion agenda**

### *Children with special education needs and disabilities*

Law 54/2018 newly regulates the inclusion of children with special educational needs. The main aim is to provide all children with the support they need and to place them in mainstream settings whenever possible (European Commission 2020, 104). In addition, the support of children under 6 with special needs has been regulated by law since 2009 through the National Intervention System in Early Childhood Education (*Sistema Nacional de Intervenção Precoce na Infância – SNIPI*). This law focuses primarily on the individualised support of all children with special care needs and also their families. The corresponding training of the professionals is also discussed. This system, coordinated jointly by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education in cooperation with families and municipalities, provides facilities for children from birth to 6 years of age through local resource centres, as well as in cooperation with families and experts working in nursery centres or in kindergartens. For children with disabilities, Individual Education Plans (*Plano Educativo Individual*, IEP) are drawn up, which include both the necessary measures and evaluation aspects. As a rule, these children have priority in the allocation of places in kindergartens. Each ECEC setting is required to establish a multidisciplinary team that supports inclusive education and provides appropriate measures.

The majority of children with disabilities attend regular institutions, only about 1% of the children who cannot be adequately supported there attend special institutions.



### *Children with a background of migration – Children from Roma Communities*

In 2022, only 6.8% of the population had a non-Portuguese citizenship. Of these, three quarters (745.8%) came from countries outside the EU27(2020). In the age group up to 5 years, these proportions were 3.2% and 79.6% respectively (Eurostat 2023c).

In 2021, 29.2% of the group with a non-Portuguese background were persons from Brazil who held the status of right of residence, followed by 6% persons from the United Kingdom, 4.9% from Cape Verde, 4.1% from Romania and 3.9% from Ukraine (INE 2023, 7).

Guidelines for Portuguese as a second language in pre-primary education for children over 3 years of age have recently been introduced. There is an agreement with Romania to provide Romanian language and culture services to help children better understand their cultural identity (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 114f).

The RISE (Roma inclusive school experience) project, which has been implemented in kindergartens and other settings since 2019, aims to develop innovative strategies for the inclusion of Roma children in educational institutions. Within the framework of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (*Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Comunidades Ciganas*, ENICC – 2018-2022), professionals in kindergartens receive guidelines and training to facilitate their work with Roma children. However, in 2020, attendance rates of Roma children were still well below average (European Commission 2020, 133, 136).

### **Parental leave arrangements<sup>4</sup>**

There are two options for **Maternity leave**, called "Initial Parental leave" (*licença parental inicial*) since 2009, of which 42 days are compulsory for the mother after giving birth: (1) either 120 days with full pay or (2) 150 days with 80% of pay. If each parent takes at least 30 (or twice 15) consecutive days, the time is extended to 150 days (with 100% payment) or 180 days (with 83% payment). If the father takes at least 60 consecutive days, the percentage increases to 90%.

The basis is the average income of the first six months before the Maternity leave and the payment into a social security scheme. 15 days during the fifth month can be taken by both parents at the same time. After the first 120 days, parental leave can also be combined with part-time work.

Fathers receive 35 days of fully (without upper limit) paid **Paternity leave** (*licença parental exclusiva do pai*), of which 28 days are compulsory and seven must be taken immediately after the birth. The remaining 21 days must be taken consecutively or in periods of at least seven days each.

The so-called **Supplementary Parental leave** (*licença parental complementar*) amounts to three (non-transferable) months per parent and is usually unpaid. It can be taken until the child's 6th birthday and also in different time blocks. Only unpaid Parental leave can be taken by both parents at the same time. It can also be taken part-time and combined with part-time work (three months each per parent, non-transferable) until the child is 12 months old.

In 2022, 45.9% of fathers shared the "Initial Parental leave" with the mother. 69.5% of couples chose the option with six months paid at 83%. In 2022, 68.3% of fathers took the non-compulsory days of Paternity leave. Only 13.6% of parents took Supplementary Parental leave directly following Maternity leave in 2022; this proportion decreased significantly since 2020.

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<sup>4</sup> The brief overview in this chapter is based mainly on the country note for Portugal by Mafalda Leitão and colleagues in the *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023* (see References).

## Current challenges for the ECEC system in Portugal

*Country expert assessment by Sara Barros Araújo*

### Providing access to and professionalising the 0–2 sector

Despite public investment in the expansion of services for infants and toddlers, access to these services remains a challenge. In 2021, the coverage rate in Portugal (mainland) was 52,9%, with identified disparities among regions (from 86,9% in the district of Guarda to 37,1% in the second largest Portuguese urban centre, Porto) (MLSSS 2023, 30). The need to increase access, particularly in large urban centres, persists as a critical challenge. At the level of public policies, the integration of the 0–2 sector into the education system, resulting in an integrated system of early childhood education and care (0–6) under the governance of the Ministry of Education, continues to be identified as a high priority. The professionalisation of this sector should encompass measures in order to improve the working conditions, the professional preparation and, overall, the status of the professionals working with infants and toddlers. Two recent positive initiatives related to this topic should be highlighted: the current process of creation of national pedagogical guidelines under the coordinated efforts of the ME and MLSSS and the implementation of the national programme “Happy Nursery” (*Creche Feliz*), with the aim of a progressive extension of entitlement for the 0–2 sector. Concerning the latter, monitoring mechanisms are advised in order to identify its strengths and needed adjustments.

### Improving the working conditions of Early Childhood Teachers

Over the last months, the country has witnessed several public manifestations of dissatisfaction from teachers (strikes, demonstrations, interventions in the media), led by teachers’ unions and demanding the urgent improvement of their working conditions. Among others, main demands are being made over the need to revise the recruitment and mobility model, to provide fair wages and to revise the retirement conditions for Early Childhood Teachers and Primary Teachers. Meetings have been held in order to find the most adequate and feasible solutions to improve the professionals’ working conditions, the overall social status of the profession and its attractiveness for future teachers.

### Reinforcing the specific professionalism and identity of ECEC

This remains a challenge in the Portuguese context and is related to the struggle against a colonisation through methodologies of a transmissive nature that are particularly used in primary education, resulting in a process of pervasive ‘schoolification’ that can be observed very early in children’s experiences. This brings with it the need to rethink several aspects at the level of educational policies, particularly those that regulate the initial professional education/training of Early Childhood Teachers. Indeed, critiques have emerged regarding the sequential model introduced by the Bologna Process at the level of Early Childhood Teachers’ pre-service education, characterised tendentiously by a disciplinary logic and a lack of units of pedagogical practice (*practica*) throughout the first three years of studies, two aspects that are likely to compromise professional learning and the specific identity of ECEC professionalism.



## Demographic data

*Please note: For reasons of comparability, data on children are always reported up to 6 years of age, even if compulsory schooling starts earlier or later in some countries.*

### Total population

In 2022, the total population in Portugal was 10,352,042. It increased slightly from 2000 to 2010, decreased between 2010 and 2019 and increased again slightly from 2020 onwards (2000: 10,249,022; 2010: 10,573,479; 2020: 10,295,909) (Eurostat 2023a).

### Total fertility rate

In 2021, the average total fertility rate in the EU27 (as of 2020) was 1.53. The highest total fertility rate among the 33 SEEPRO-3 countries was in France (1.84), and the lowest in Malta (1.13). At 1.35, Portugal was well below the EU27 average (Eurostat 2023d)<sup>5</sup>.

### Children under age 6

Table 4

**Portugal: Number of under 6 year-olds in the total population, 2022**

Age	Number of children
Under 1 year-olds	79,911
1 year-olds	78,254
2 year-olds	81,207
3 year-olds	83,354
4 year-olds	84,634
5 year-olds	87,335
<b>Total 0 to under 6 year-olds</b>	<b>494,695</b>

Source: Eurostat 2023a

In 2022, 2.3% of the total population were children under 3 years of age, and 4.8% were children under 6 years of age. These proportions are now well below the EU27 average, whereas before 2015 they were around the same level as these.

<sup>5</sup> Data for **Ukraine** and the **UK** (2021) are from Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/296567/fertility-rate-in-ukraine/> and <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284042/fertility-rate-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>). Data for the **Russian Federation** (2021) are from WorldBankData (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=RU>)



Table 5

**Portugal: Distribution of under 6 year-olds in population by age compared with EU averages, 2000 to 2022, in %\***

Year	Comparison Portugal/EU	Under 3 year-olds	3 to under 6 year-olds	0 to under 6 year-olds
2000	Portugal	3.3	3.1	6.4
	Ø EU15 <sup>6</sup>	3.2	3.2	6.4
2005	Portugal	3.2	3.2	6.4
	Ø EU25	3.1	3.1	6.2
2015	Portugal	2.5	2.8	5.3
	Ø EU28	3.0	3.2	6.2
2022	Portugal	2.3	2.5	4.8
	Ø EU27(2020)	2.7	2.9	5.7

Source: Eurostat 2023a, \* Own calculations, slight deviations due to rounding

### Single households with children under age 6

Almost two thirds (65.6%) of all households with children under 6 in Portugal in 2022 were couple households. Single-parent households accounted for 4.4% – almost exclusively single mothers (4.3%).

Table 6

**Portugal: Households with children under age 6, 2022**

Household type	Total households	Share of all households, in % <sup>+</sup>
Total households	962,500	
Couple households	631,800	65.6
Other types of households	288,000	29.9
Total single households	42,700	4.4
Single households, women	41,100	4.3
Single households, men	1,600**	0.1

Source: Eurostat 2023k, \* Own calculations, \*\* data calculated

### Employment rates of parents with children under 6 years of age

In Portugal, in 2022, the overall employment rate for men (15-64 years) was 78.6% and for women 74.4% (Eurostat 2023l).

In 2022, 75.4% of women and 86.0% of men (18-64 years) with children under 6 were employed. Among the 27 EU-countries (2020), the shares of employed fathers were slightly above the EU-average (87.2%) and those of mothers well above EU-average (63.6%) (Eurostat 2023f).

<sup>6</sup> The data for 2000 include the EU15-Länder at that time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK). The 2005 data (EU25) include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2015 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR. Data for EU27 (from 2020) comprise the countries of the EU28 without the UK.



Table 7a

**Portugal: Employment rates of parents with children under 6 compared with other EU countries, 2010 und 2022**

	2010	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
<b>Portugal</b>	69.6	86.7
Highest rate of employment in 27 EU countries <sup>7</sup>	Denmark: 82.7	Netherlands: 93.4
Lowest rate of employment in 27 EU countries	Hungary: 31.7	Latvia: 72.7
	2022	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
<b>Portugal</b>	75.4	86.0
Highest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries <sup>8</sup>	Luxembourg: 81.9	Sweden: 95.1
Lowest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries	Czech Republic: 42.5	Romania: 78.5

Source: Eurostat 2023f

For the SEEPRO-3 countries that were not part of the EU27(2020) in 2021/2022, data are displayed in *Table 10b*:

Table 10b

**Employment rates in non-EU SEEPRO-3 countries, 2021/2022/2023**

Countries	Parents with children under 6 years		Overall employment rate	
	Mothers in %	Fathers in %	Women in %	Men in %
*Norway (2022)	82.9	94.3	75.4	80.1
***Russia (2021/2022)	67.1 (2021)	k.A.	55.6 (2022)	70.4 (2022)
*Serbia (2022)	64.4	78.3	57.9	71.0
**Switzerland (2022/2023)	46.9	95.3	60.0 61.1 (2023)	83.5 84.2 (2023)
+Ukraine (2021)	n.d.	n.d.	60.7	69.9
+++United Kingdom (2021/2023)	75.6	92.1	++72.3 ++72.1 (2023)	++79.2 ++79.4 (2023)
with dependent children	72.4	93.1		
with children under 2 years	70.7	95.0		

\*Eurostat 2023f, 2023l

\*\*[BFS] Bundesamt für Statistik. 2023. *Erwerbsquoten in Vollzeitäquivalenten nach Geschlecht, Nationalität, Altersgruppen, Familientyp* [Full-time equivalent employment rates by gender, nationality, age groups, family type]. <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/je-d-03.02.00.01.03>

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<sup>7</sup> AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK

<sup>8</sup> AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HR, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK

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## Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>9</sup>

In 2022, 17.6% of children under 6 in Portugal were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion was slightly lower than the EU27 average (23.3%) for this age group. The share of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 20.1% (EU: 21.6%). In 2020, 8.2% of children under 6 suffered from severe material deprivation – also higher than the EU27 average of 6.1%. For the total population, it was 3.9% (EU: 4.3%) (Eurostat 2023h, i).

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<sup>9</sup> ‘At risk of poverty or social exclusion’ refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material\\_deprivation](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation) )

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