

Achieving the Lisbon Goals:

The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

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Country Report: Portugal

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DGFV (General Direction of Vocational Training); IEFP (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training); POEFDS (Operational Programme for Employment, Training and Social Development); PRODEP (Program for the Development of Education); DGIDC (General Direction of Innovation and Curricular Development - former DES); CID (Information and Documentation Center - Ministry for Social Security and Labor); and of course IQF (Institute for the Quality on Training - former INOFOR)

This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.

Theme 1: Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

QUESTION 1 - Strategies and barriers for improving the status, flexibility and attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

What strategies are being used to by government, social partners and providers etc. to achieve these objectives:

- a. Raise the status of IVET?
- b. Improve the attractiveness of IVET?
- c. Increase the flexibility of IVET?
- d. What are the main barriers to achieving these objectives?

The main bodies involved in the administration of VET in Portugal are:

The **Ministry for Social Security and Labour** (*Ministério da Segurança Social e Trabalho*)

The **Ministry of Education** (*Ministerio da Educação*)

Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries and Economy (*Ministerios da Agricultura; Pescas; Economia*)

IGFSE (*Instituto para a Gestão do Fundo Social Europeu* - Institute for the management of the European Social Fund)

IEFP (*Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* - Institute of Employment and Vocational Training)

CNA (*Comissão Nacional de Aprendizagem* - National Apprenticeship Commission)

CIME (*Comissão Interministerial para o Emprego*)

OEFP (*Observatório do Emprego e Formação Profissional*)

INOFOR (*Instituto para a Inovação da Formação* - Institute for Innovation in Training)

Despite the large degree of centralization of the VET system, the administrative structure is organized on a regional basis and most policies are executed on a regional and local basis.

Social partners play an important role on VET system, especially through **IEFP** (*Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* - Institute of Employment and Vocational Training) as they represent half of the positions within the management council of both central and regional levels and also through **OEFP** (*Observatório do Emprego e Formação Profissional*) playing an important role issuing recommendations on indicators and promoting applied research on these subjects.

However, social partners don't have a direct role on the administration of VET funding.

Non profit organizations play an important role in executing some measures/ training programmes focused in promoting social development and social and occupational insertion of the disabled and other disadvantages groups.

Provider structure

Executive bodies and provider organizations (Each provider organization listed below can provide IVT, CVT and UVT, except for schools and vocational schools that only provide IVT)	
Public providers	Private providers
Schools (Ministry of Education)	Private vocational schools
Public vocational schools (Ministry of Education)	Enterprises
Directly and jointly managed vocational training and public employment centers (IEFP under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour)	Private and charitable training institutions (profit and non-profit making)
Technological schools	Private rehabilitation institutions - training for disabled people
Institute of Tourism Training (INFTUR - Ministry of Economy)	Employers associations/trade unions and their confederations
Rehabilitation training centers - training for disabled people (MSSL; Ministry of Health)	Technological centers (industry oriented)

The Comprehensive Law on the Education System (46/86) of 14 October 1986 and the Decree Laws (401/91 and 405/91) of 16 October 1991 constitute the legal framework for vocational training. These statutes distinguish between **vocational training provided within the education system** and coordinated by the Ministry of Education, and **vocational training available within the labour market**, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

The two sources of provision are differentiated by the institutional support given by the respective government departments, the configuration of the training itself, and the target groups.

Initial Vocational Training (IVT) provided by the education system

As a rule, school-based IVT provision is available to young people over 15 who have accomplished **compulsory education (9th grade)**. Both public and private educational institutions provide the following types of IVT courses:

(a) **Initial vocational education and training courses**, jointly run by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Security & Labour, designed for 15 to 18 years old young people in danger of leaving school without academic or vocational skills. Successful completion of one of these courses leads to a primary, lower secondary or upper secondary education diploma plus a Level 1 or 2 vocational qualification certificate. The courses are provided by public and private schools and organised in liaison with Vocational Training Centres, local authorities and/or private enterprises.

(b) **Technological courses**, vocationally oriented provision within secondary education designed for students aged 15 who have completed 9 years of compulsory schooling and want to gain a vocational qualification before entering the labour market. These 3-year courses, provided by public and private secondary schools,

lead to a secondary education diploma plus a Level 3 (middle-level technician) vocational qualification certificate, enabling progression to higher education.

(c) **Vocational courses**, provided by vocational schools, and designed for young people who have completed 9 years of compulsory schooling or equivalent, these 3-year courses are intended to address local and regional needs. They lead to upper secondary education (12th year of schooling) diploma and a Level 3 vocational qualification, enabling progression to higher education.

Vocational schools sometimes offer Level 2 qualifications, especially in Agriculture-related areas.

(d) **Specialised artistic education courses**, 3-year technological courses in Visual Arts, leading to an upper secondary education diploma and Level 3 vocational qualification, enabling progression to higher education.

(e) **Recurrent/adult education courses**, designed to give a second chance to learn to early school leavers, these courses can provide levels 1, 2 or 3 vocational qualification certificates and lower or upper secondary diplomas.

(f) **10th grade vocational courses** are designed for young people over 15 who have completed the 9th of schooling or equivalent and want to start working life but without the required vocational qualifications. These courses are also aimed at young people who have attended but not completed upper secondary education and who want to replan their training pathway. Successful completion confers a Level 2 vocational qualification, and competencies acquired are credited for the purpose of further studies.

(g) **Technological specialisation courses**, set up by joint the Ministries of Education and Social Security & Labour and the Minister responsible for the respective economic activity sector, are designed for people over 18. They provide post-secondary, non-tertiary training in the same or a related field to that in which a trainee has already gained a Level 3 qualification. They are intended to develop further the knowledge and personal and vocational competencies required for performing a skilled job, and enable progression to further studies. These courses confer a technological specialisation diploma (DET) and a Level 4 vocational qualification.

Initial vocational training within the labour market

IVT within the labour market supplements school-based IVT, and mainly targets the unemployed, particularly young people who left school without qualifications and are looking for work. A very substantial proportion of young people leave mainstream education with no qualifications whatsoever. Reducing the school dropout rate is, therefore, among the major challenges currently facing the education and vocational training systems.

IVT **provision** within the labour market comprises:

(a) **Apprenticeship Courses**, providing skills training to young first time job seekers to facilitate their entry into working life. These alternating training courses combine instruction at a Vocational Training Centre and in-plant training. They lead to Level 2, 3 or 4 qualifications, and lower or upper secondary education diplomas. The trainees with level 3 or 4 qualifications are enabling to progression to further studies.

(b) **Initial skill training courses**, designed to provide Levels 2 and 3 vocational training qualifications. Lasting at least one year, these courses are mainly

aimed at young first time job seekers over 15 and have completed compulsory education. The courses are delivered at Vocational Training Centres.

IVT also encompasses **sector-specific training provision** at different skill levels:

- (a) **Tourism Sector Training:** Hotels & Tourism Training Centres, run by the National Tourism Training Institute (INFT) Ministry of Economy, deliver and support initial skills training schemes for various occupations and skills levels, in an effort to supply tourism industry's skill needs.
- (b) **Agricultural Vocational Training:** the Ministry of Agriculture places high value on initial skills training, especially for young farmers entering farm enterprise management and organisation. Training is delivered through a network of Agriculture Training Centres.
- (c) **Health Sector Training:** the Ministry of Health is responsible for initial vocational training for health care professionals.

Relationship between IVET and General Education

In accordance with its mission to prepare young people to further learning or progression in working life, secondary education is organised around:

General courses, humanities and sciences, designed mainly to lead students to higher education (university or polytechnic);

Vocational training courses, technical and technological, occupational, vocational or arts, largely designed to prepare young people for employment, but also to qualify them for polytechnic courses and post-secondary technological specialisation courses.

With the completion of secondary education general courses, students are awarded with a diploma certifying the level achieved. By completing labour market related training, a Level 3 vocational qualification is awarded, qualifying trainees for the exercise of an occupation.

In 2001/2002, considering a total of 373,607 secondary education students (on general, technological, and vocational courses), 31,159 attended vocational courses, i.e. approximately 8.5% of the total (Preliminary data, 2001/2002, DAPP).

Though the low attendance rate, one of the Government Programme's key objectives within secondary education curricular revision that enters into force in 2004-2005, is the "construction of a coherent framework of secondary-level technological training, based on articulated technological and vocational learning provision, and incorporating lifelong learning, with a view to consolidate the balance between general secondary education provision on one hand, and technological and vocational secondary education provision on the other hand, more adequate to modern society needs".

The integration of education and training within the Ministry of Education contributes for achieving this objective, enhancing the diversity and quality of provision and vocational options open to students and, at the same time, creating new opportunities for mobility between different supplies. As a result, students can

reformulate their educational pathway, and move within the various sub-systems available in secondary education.

Qualifications Structure

Initial vocational training is structured to provide training courses for **skilled worker** (Level 2), **Middle-level technician** (Level 3) and **Middle management** (Level 4).

Courses leading to a **Level 2** qualification - **Skilled worker** grade:

- Education & Initial Vocational Training Courses
- Vocational Courses
- 10th grade vocational courses
- Apprenticeship Courses
- Recurrent/Adult Education Courses (when available)
- Initial Skills Courses

All the courses are recognised as having equivalence to 9th grade (completion of compulsory education) and enable progression to further studies, with the exception of Initial Vocational Courses, which are designed for young people over 15 who have already completed compulsory education.

Courses leading to a **Level 3** qualification - **Middle-level technician** grade:

- Technological Courses
- Vocational Courses
- Apprenticeship Courses
- Specialised Artistic Courses
- Recurrent/Adult Education Courses
- Initial Skill Courses

All courses, except for Initial Skill Courses, confer a diploma equivalent to 12th grade (completion of upper secondary education) and enable access to higher education.

Courses leading to a **Level 4** qualification - **Middle management** grade:

- Technological Specialisation Courses
- Apprenticeship Courses

These are post-secondary training courses that enable progression to further studies.

The contribution of **Programas Operacionais da Educação e do Emprego, Formação e Desenvolvimento Sociais (Operational Programmes of Education & Employment, Training and Social Development)** has been significant in order to increase attractiveness and efficiency the processes of education & vocational training particularly in:

- support to the diversification of training offers, specially in the areas of professional specialisation that offer levels of professional qualification.

- Support for the development of innovative pedagogical resources likely to qualify and diversify the processes of teaching and learning promoting the reinforcement of experimental teaching and the use of new information and communication technologies.

Within the frame of the reorganization of the Sistema de Formação Profissional (Professional Training System) as part of the labour market under the wing of the Ministério da Segurança Social e do Trabalho (Ministry for Social Security and Labour) more efforts are being put into promoting a more flexible model in the training offers, adjusted to the characteristics of the targeted group, the diversity of the training contexts and the dynamic of the technological and pedagogical evolution in order to cover situations that might not have been considered within the educational system, specially within VET. This has been registered in two ways:

- the development of different training offers particularly those which contemplate the support for alternative curriculum's to the traditional training and the flexible management of the curriculum.
- the support to the implementation, development and consolidation of the teaching processes and long distance learning likely to complement the present system and add flexibility to the educational path.

Amongst others, there are three main obstacles for the valorisation, attractiveness and flexibility of the initial VET:

1 – The diversity, polarisation and superimposition of training schemes that offer double certification responsible for a context of little global coherence in the developed political strategies in this area from different ministries and operational programmes.

2 – The fact that different training routes from the regular educational path are socially little recognised (even if this attitude is changing) as seen as an alternative to mainstream education and prospects of employment in the market place.

3 – The fact that in many cases there is a tendency for specification of methodologies, approaches and inclusive the conception and running of the curriculum is influenced by the fact that great part of the takers take with them methodologies and approaches from the regular educational path which doesn't favour the perception of these alternative offers by the students as they don't see them as distinct and differentiating enough.

QUESTION 2 - Reducing the number of early school leavers

How does your country relate to other countries in terms of the contribution to increasing or reducing the number of young people:

- Who leave education or training at the earliest opportunity and with few or no recognised qualifications?*

b. Who leave formal education with low levels of basic skills at age of 15?

Structured training systems began to emerge within Portugal's education system in the wake of the **1948 reform of technical education**.

At that time, technical training was an element of social discrimination in Portuguese society, and reflected prevailing inequality in the access to better skilled and more prestigious professions.

Prejudice against technical education held back its progress and hampered the goals of subsequent reforms, which now set the issue of equal access to higher education – an essential condition for equal opportunities – as a priority goal.

The **traditional learning process**, based on transmission of knowledge and skills at the workplace, continued to be the main form of training.

(here lies the base of the prejudices for the development and acceptance of Vocational and technical training)

The new economic and social conditions of the 1960s, marked by greater demand for industrial labour, rural exodus, emigration, and mobilisation for Portugal's colonial wars, gave rise to a need for government intervention in the domain of vocational training. As a result, the Labour Development Fund and the Institute of Accelerated Vocational Training were set up in **1962**.

Portugal's transition to democracy in **1974** carried out changes to its education and training systems. Technical education was abandoned and a single general education system introduced. Training under the Ministry of Labour was cut back and traditional learning drastically diminished as a result of changes to the collective bargaining system. The inexistence of training offers rise the growing criticism, and a series of measures were introduced in an effort to restore technical education.

1979 saw the foundation of the "Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional" – IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training), which overhauled the Ministry of Labour's training structure. Efforts were made in the early 1980s to re-establish vocational education and initial vocational training. The most important initiatives were the creation of technical vocational courses and the Alternance-based Training System or Apprenticeship System.

Notwithstanding the many schemes set up during those years, there continued to be limited expression of vocational training until Portugal joined the European Community.

In **1986** and the years subsequent to its **entry into the European Community**, Portugal benefited from its access to ESF financing for training, and was able to increase its IVET programmes substantially: vocational school courses, technological courses, revision of the legal regime for Apprenticeships, education and training courses.

Meanwhile, new legislation began to re-shape the training system: the 1986 **Comprehensive Law on the Education System** was passed, extending compulsory education to 9 years (to 15 years of age); diplomas defined the **Legal framework for Vocational Training**, and distinguished school-based training from vocational training within the labour market; the introduction of a legal frame for **Vocational Certification**; the creation of an **Accreditation** process for training providers receiving public funds.

The present Government's commitments to reform the education system led to the restructuring of the Ministry of Education and introduction of Organic Law (**Decree-Law (208/2002)**) of 17 October 2002. The new law provides for structural reforms guided by set of objectives, the 3rd of which is: "(...) integration of education policies and systems with the policies and systems of lifelong learning", for the purpose of "achieving objectives in terms of both initial skills training that equips young people with the vocational skills they need for working life, while safeguarding and encouraging the completion of compulsory education and general, universal educational pathways, and countering the tendency among young people to enter employment too early, and advancing adult learning/development in culture of lifelong learning." The need to "(...) integrate education and training under the Ministry of Education, vocational training" led to the creation of "a new body, capable of operating transversally to achieve the aims of lifelong learning for both young and adult people" – the – Directorate General for Vocational Training – (Direcção-Geral de Formação Vocacional - DGFV).

Point 2 of article 16 of the law specifies that vocational training under the Ministry of Education includes "apprenticeship, initial skill training, education and training provision, including those designed for 15 to 18 year olds, 10th grade vocational courses, technological specialisation, adult education and training, vocational school courses, recurrent/adult education, and the technological and vocational components of school and extra-school education."

The clear trend towards articulating the education and vocational training systems, referred above, is characterised by a tendency to integrate the different supply within the education and training system.

In this respect, the legal framework regulating education and vocational training in Portugal is currently undergoing transition, as a **draft Comprehensive Law on the Education System** and **draft Vocational Training Law** are being debated.

The new legislation provides for:

- compulsory education to be extended to 12 years, until 18 years of age;
- all young people to be offered initial skill training;
- secondary education to have a dual function – progression to further learning or employment;
- integration of Apprenticeship System within the education system;
- Adequate training supply to the real needs of the market, and upskilling the workforce, as part of a national strategy to modernise Portuguese industry and enhance the quality of employment;
- more emphasis on articulation between school-based and labour market based vocational training, in order to define and implement a nationwide human resources strategy;
- definition and implementation of a national human resources strategy, with the elaboration of a Pluriannual Vocational Training Plan.
- development of a learning culture, and recognition and validation of informal and non-formal acquired skills, with the certification and recognition of educational equivalence of those skills.

The promotion of success and permanence in school so that everyone receives a qualification with professional or school certification, which facilitates the integration in active life, is one of the strategical objectives in the present government's programme ever since the beginning.

Between 1991 and 2001 Portugal registered a considerable fall in the rates of school abandonment¹, early dropout² and anticipated school exit³. However, the difference in relation to the European average or even the Spanish average, continues to be accentuated. **Eg European average for Early Dropout is 19% and in Portugal is 41,1% for 2003.**

Regarding the intervention of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Social Security and Labour: several measures and programmes have been developed through the years with the objective to secure the successful completion of 9 years of the compulsory school and the professional qualification of all of those who don't have the immediate intention of continuing school. Promoting minimum school of 12 years that is to become progressively compulsory by 2010 has also been emphasised.

This is why these two ministries have put a strong belief on the PNAPAE (**Plano Nacional de Prevenção do Abandono Escolar**) – National Plan for the Prevention of School Abandonment which trying to find an articulated answer between Education/ Training and their multiple promoters has as a great objective to reduce for less than half the Rates of School Abandonment and Early Dropout by 2010 having as a reference point the stats for 2001 of 2,7% and 44,6% respectively.

Amongst the recommendations to achieve such objective some of the proposals are:

- The creation of the post 'School Tutor' to support youngsters in the risk of leaving
- The development of a specific programme for Teacher Training
- The creation of a plan of Portuguese as a Foreign Language, a plan for the Promotion of Reading and Writing and a specific plan for the Support for the Learning of Maths as a complement to education.
- The mobilisation of a finance and support programme for extra-curricular activities (Depois das Aulas)
- Creation of the programme 'Country in the School' (Programa Pais na Escola)
- The implementation of methodology and referentials for the recognition, validation and certification of competencies with the equivalence of secondary school.
- The development of a campaign targeting youngsters that abandoned school with the years of end of cycle incomplete (9th & 12th grades).

From the group of measures that have been developed with the objective of fighting the Abandonment and Anticipated School Exit, also contributing for

¹ Rate of School Abandonment (Taxa de abandono escolar precoce): youngsters between 6-15 years old that left school before completing 9th grade (compulsory) and are not attending other offers of education/ Training – 2,7% in 2001.

² Rate of Early Dropout (Taxa de saída precoce): youngsters between 18-24 years old that left school before completing secondary education and are not attending other offers of education/ Training – 44,6% in 2001.

³ Rate of Anticipated School Exit (Taxa de saída antecipada): youngsters between 18-24 years old that left school before completing 9th grade (compulsory) and are not attending other offers of education/ Training – 24,6% in 2001.

the reduction of the accumulated deficit of literacy of the Portuguese population, here are a few that target this particular group:

- Alternative curriculum's (*currículos alternativos*)
- Education and Training course (*cursos de educação e formação*)
- Integrated Programme of Education and Training (*Programa integrado de Educação e Formação*)
- And Professional Qualifying 10th grade (*10º ano profissionalizante*)

These educational offers are at the moment in phase of restructuring to become an unique offer of training and education that still have the same objective: the completion of compulsory education (9th grade) and/or professional certification at Level 2.

1. System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (**Sistema de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências**).
2. Courses of Training and Education for Adults **Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos** (Cursos EFA).

QUESTION 3 - Increasing VET at tertiary level

What steps are being taken to establish or improve technological and vocational qualifications at the tertiary (higher) educational level? Please refer in particular to any attempts to make pathways more flexible, and to introduce shorter post-secondary VET courses.

Vocational Education And Training At Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary) Level Technological specialisation courses (CET) are post-secondary, non-tertiary training courses that may be taken in the same or a related training area in which a trainee has previously obtained a Level 3 vocational qualification.

They are intended to broaden scientific and technological knowledge and skills in trainees' basic vocational training area, develop personal and vocational skills required to perform a skilled occupation, promote training pathways that qualify trainees for employment and/or progression to further studies.

Access Requirements

CET courses are available to:

- holders of secondary education course certificate or holders of a legally equivalent qualification, who also hold a Level 3 vocational qualification certificate in an area related to that of the CET;
- individuals who, to fulfil the above requirements, need to complete/pass no more than two subjects, as long as the latter are not considered to be fundamental to any part of the curriculum of the respective course;
- holders of a secondary education course certificate or legally equivalent qualification, who also hold a Level 3 vocational qualification in a field that is not related to that of the CET. They've got to undertake a training course (300 to 850 hours) prior to the beginning of the CET;
- holders of a secondary education course certificate or legally equivalent qualification, who do not hold a Level 3 vocational qualification. They've got to undertake a training course (with a duration of 1,000 hours to 1,200 hours) prior to the beginning of the CET;
- individuals aged 25 years or over, who have three or more years of work experience in the respective CET area or in a related field, who obtain recognition based on professional experience, abilities, skills and competencies that qualify them for admission to a CET;
- individuals who have successfully completed at least one curricular unit of a higher education course study programme. If agreed by the training organisation providing the CET, such individuals may be excused from taking one or more subjects in the CET programme.

Curricula

CETs contain socio-cultural, scientific & technological, and workplace training components.

Socio-cultural training includes areas intended to broaden knowledge and skills in general training and competencies that facilitate adaptation to labour market.

Scientific & technological training includes scientific and technological domains and aims to improve job performance.

Practical workplace training is intended to develop practices that complement and consolidate knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through the other training components.

Each course lasts for a minimum of 1,200 hours and a maximum of 1,560 hours. The training hours for socio-cultural and scientific & technological training components vary from 840 to 1,100 hours. Each of these components, however, must take up 25% and 75% of the established total number of training hours. The duration of on-the-job training must be between 360 and 960 hours.

Learning Outcomes

The assessment system consists of systematic and continuous formative assessment on all components, and summative assessment, grading trainees on a scale 0 to 20.

Successful completion of a CET requires a minimum of 10 in all subjects, and confers a Technological Specialisation Diploma (DET) and a Level 4 vocational qualification.

CET graduates can access to higher education, as long as they have a period of work experience following the completion of specialisation training.

In the period of 2000-2004 103 courses involving 1900 trainee were financed through Operational Programme of Employment Training and Social Development (Programa Operacional do Emprego Formação e Desenvolvimento Social) using 11,179,005 Euros of public financing.

Regarding PRODEP III and for the same period 217 were financed involving 2783 trainees and a public fund of 7,365,780 Euros.

QUESTION 4 - Incentives for updating knowledge & skills

What initiatives and measures are the following taking to motivate employees to update knowledge and skills?

- a. Government*
- b. Employers*

- c. *Other stakeholders*
- d. *Please provide examples (if any) of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion*

In this field we must underline some important initiatives, namely the Programme - Consulting, Training and Management Support Services to Small Enterprises provides services support to small enterprises, with less than 50 employees, and is managed by different entities, such as IEFP (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training), AIP (Associação Industrial Portuguesa), AEP (Associação Empresarial de Portugal), CAP (Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal), IAPMEI (Instituto de Apoio às Pequenas e Médias Empresas), INFTUR (Instituto de Formação Turística). This Programme has been selected in 1999 as one of 10 Best Practices by the European Commission in the scope of the National Employment Plans. It consists of an integrated approach, oriented to the strengthening of the enterprise's competitiveness, mainly supporting problems solution (consultancy) and continuous investment in new competencies and necessary knowledge to entrepreneurial development (vocational training). The support services are designed on tailor made solutions and to run at the work place. Based on a Strategic Analysis and a short-term Action Plan, elaborated with the entrepreneur, the Consultant-Trainer supports the accomplishment using pedagogic material prepared to small enterprises. The Consultant-Trainer also trains the entrepreneur and collaborators in the procurement of other external service providers needed to perform the Action Plan. Small and medium sized entities can also use the "Individual Participation in Training" to access public funding, which is an application at the incentive of, precisely, small and medium sized beneficiary entities to finance the participation of their workers in training actions not financed by ESF and promoted by national or foreign training entities. The restrictions are: maximum of 20% of total number of workers of each beneficiary entity, for entities with more than 50 workers, and maximum of 15 participants/ year for entities with 50 workers or less (priority will be given to these applications). In some cases, Integrated Training Plans (structured set of actions, promoted and co-ordinated by the Social Partners to support one and/or a number of applications for financing) are oriented to SME's managers and workers, as it is the case of the Commerce Sector. There is also the possibility of the workers individual financement thought thr ESF, helping them to acced to the acquisition of quality training programmes promoted by private or public entities (Individual Access to Training)

Special measures to support training for enterprises in specific economic sectors

The Community Support Framework for Portugal for 2000 to 2006 (CSF III) is structured into Operational Interventions and Regional-based Programmes. Some Operational Interventions like Education or Employment, Training and Social Development, includes a set of measures in the field of training development that can be applied to all activities sectors. Nevertheless, there are other Operational Interventions or Programmes oriented to specific sectors like Health, Agriculture or Tourism that include some measures aimed

to stimulate enterprise-based training. In general, firms can apply for public support for internal training, when training actions are part of a broader project for the firm development, but it depends on the Operational Interventions specific framework and regulations.

QUESTION 5 - Meeting the challenges of an aging population

Please identify any innovations and initiatives in VET that are being introduced to encourage older people (55+) to remain at work longer and to participate in training and other forms of lifelong learning.

Regarding Training and Lifelong Training there has been an encouragement for the active population to remain in the exercise of professional activities. This has taken two forms: the recognition and validation of competencies and the development of training processes.

The courses EFA (*Educação e Formação de Adultos*) usually of long duration and S@ber + of a shorter duration are the two that fall in this category.

Concerning the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies in the period of 2000-2003, 56 Centres of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) have been created out of which 1,848 professionals received training with a total of 60,513 enrolled adults. This meant an investment of 18,872 735 Euros.

The new Code of Labour (Código do Trabalho - Lei n.º 99/2003, 27 de Agosto, em vigor desde 01/12/2003) alters labour legislation reflecting a better adaptability to the new necessities of the labour organisation and the reinforcement of the productivity and economical competition.

QUESTION 6 - Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

- a. *In the current the national debate, how effective is the system of VET perceived to be? (Is the VET route effective in fostering individual careers, self-confidence and personal identity? Benefits of training for employers? Is the VET route effective in combating youth unemployment?)*
- b. *In the current national debate, is the VET system seen as offering efficiency/ good value for money? (These questions are given as examples and need not all be answered: Who is investing in VET - the state, the employers, and individuals – and what are their benefits? How can we make the best use of existing resources: Better balance between practical and theoretical training, accreditation of prior learning, raising completion rates, etc.? Improving management and organisation of VET?)*
- c. *What are the main trends in terms of investment in VET (Public investment? Incentives to employers as well as to individuals to invest more? Public-private partnerships?)*

From a political perspective, the last 15 years in Portugal have represented a very important period for the development of VET activities. Portugal became a member of the European Union in 1986, providing access to an important source of funding for VET activities through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), enabling development of a targeted VET system (Financial Portrait – Portugal, Cedefop).

The emergence of extensive VET activities has represented a wholesome change to the Portuguese system of education and vocational training, allowing its growth to a level never experienced before, and the possibility to start an effective and convergent system of innovation.

It must be emphasized that historically Portugal had based its technological and economic development on a deep-rooted belief in on-the-job learning (learning by doing). Vocational training was mainly developed within the education system through the Technical Education (Ensino Técnico) (which was extinct between 1976 and 1986) and non-formal learning at workplace.

The political stability experienced since 1987, has created an environment whereby coherent policies can be introduced and implemented taking into account the available policy choices and financial resources.

All economic policies developed during this period have emphasized the need to use VET as a key instrument in the economic and social catching-up process that Portugal has had to undertake to converge towards its European partners. Successive governments have focused on investment strategies for VET within development policy. This emphasis has also led to an increasing societal commitment towards VET. The significantly lower levels of educational qualifications within Portugal compared to its partners in the EU, is given central importance in contemporary public policies.

The training policies have been developed within the National Employment Development Plan, which has been focused in the following Objectives: (1) promoting youths' adequate transition to working life; (2) Promoting social-

professional inclusion and combating long-term unemployment and exclusion; (3) Improving manpower's basic and professional qualifications in the perspective of lifelong learning; (4) promoting the quality of employment (National Action Plan for Employment, 2002).