



FINANCING POLICIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Country Study Visit Report: Portugal





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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Report is to summarise the discussions and the main conclusions of the Country Study Visit (CSV) that took place in Portugal between 19 and 21 April 2017.

Representatives from different stakeholders participated in the CSV. These included:

- Ministry of Education – Secretary of State of Education, members of the cabinet of the Secretary of State;
- members of different departments;
- school clusters;
- parents' associations;
- municipalities;
- universities;
- members of the project team from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education;
- visitors from other countries participating in the FPIES project (Annex 2).

The key issues discussed during the visit were the strengths and weaknesses of the inclusive education system in practice in Portugal, and how policies can be moved forward. Emphasis was placed on improving accountability and monitoring mechanisms and developing an efficient, equitable and cost-effective inclusive education system¹ in the light of new Portuguese inclusive education policy development.²

The report is based on the content of the discussions and reflections of the participants.

¹ Addressed in 'The way forward: how can governance promote the effectiveness of inclusive education? Areas for improvement'

² Discussed in 'Portuguese inclusive education policies' and 'The way forward: the path for a more inclusive education in Portugal'

2. ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS IN THE COUNTRY STUDY VISIT

The discussions focused on the key issues included in the concept, scope and objectives of the FPIES project. These are:

- inclusive education (in a broad sense);
- financing;
- governance;
- accountability;
- quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms;
- assuming financing as a key factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education, as discussed by the FPIES Project Manager in the initial presentation introducing the meeting.

A set of topics, questions and conclusions were generated by the participants' reflections and discussions and are summarised in this report.

The discussions were centred on three main topics:

- how funding mechanisms could help education to be more inclusive;
- the complexity of the funding system, with several funding methods and different funders;
- the need to maximise schools' internal resources, in order to make the most of them.

From the analysis and discussions prompted by the various presentations (Annex 1), some key ideas emerged in relation to the characterisation of the questions under analysis.

Strengths of the education policy and system:

- The education system is designed for all children, regardless of their diversities.

- There is a complex and comprehensive set of support measures for schools and learners which promote inclusive education. They focus on a range of diversities, not just on learners with special educational needs (SEN).³
- Enabling schools/teachers – capacity-building – is a crucial part of the education policy.
- Personalisation – specific individual attention to learners and working with them – is a key aspect of the educational strategy.
- Learners belonging to families living in areas with limited economical resources are appropriately considered. There are two main programmes to support them: Priority Intervention Educational Areas Programme (TEIP) and School Social Assistance (ASE).⁴
- There is a control mechanism for the funds spent.⁵
- The inspecting activities are clearly present in the system, delivering data about schools' performance and helping them to improve.⁶

Gaps between policy and practice:⁷

- The ways of working between schools and Resource Centres for Inclusion (CRI) and their practices, are less collaborative than they should be, according to the policy framework.
- The concept of inclusive education, as contained and formulated in laws and political and technical orientations, is not yet fully implemented and present in school practice. For instance, learners with SEN are in mainstream schools, but are not yet fully included in class activities, engaging and involving all teachers.

³ Addressed in 'Supporting inclusive education: a diverse and complex framework'

⁴ Addressed in 'Financing inclusive education: general framework and concrete experience of Priority Intervention Educational Territories Program (TEIP)'

⁵ Addressed in 'Evaluation of social and educational impacts'

⁶ Addressed in 'Governance: monitoring, quality and results evaluation, accountability'

⁷ Addressed in 'Can we manage inclusive education? The complex elements of a single answer – Panel discussion'

Critical issues facilitating inclusive education:

- The political option which was assumed in 2008:
 - implemented inclusive education for learners with SEN;
 - transformed special schools into resource centres to support and complement schools and create the conditions to facilitate the success of the new policy.

Now, 98% of learners with SEN are in mainstream schools, with a comprehensive strategy supporting their inclusion.

- The political approach and legislation, namely the law currently in preparation, are becoming more orientated towards an inclusive education model. They assume inclusiveness – in a broad sense – as a cornerstone of educational policy and a key responsibility of the public education system.
- The wide approach to inclusive education includes all learners needing specific attention, not just learners with SEN or certain other specific challenging groups.
- A comprehensive and diverse set of support measures is available to help schools face the different needs associated with learners' diversities.⁸
- There is maintained, and even reinforced, financial support for inclusive education. This is despite it being a time of financial constraints, with reductions in the budget for some areas of the education system.
- João Costa, Secretary of State of Education, explained how the current government's political orientation introduces flexibility and autonomy as key concepts in the design and implementation of curricular and educational activities. This gives increased autonomy to schools.

Critical issues challenging inclusive education:

- Retention and drop-out rates are persistent problems, despite the clear progress made in the last few years. They are still above the EU targets.⁹

⁸ Addressed in 'Supporting inclusive education: a diverse and complex framework'

⁹ Addressed in 'The way forward: the path for a more inclusive education in Portugal' and 'Governance: monitoring, quality and results evaluation, accountability'

- There is a correlation between school failure, socio-economic conditions and parent qualifications (particularly mothers).¹⁰
- The complexity of problems and the design of suitable solutions are very demanding for teachers and schools.¹¹
- Learners with SEN are physical ‘there’ in mainstream classrooms, but they still have lower levels of participation and progress. There is not enough focus on classrooms as the normal/principal spaces for education to identify and solve problems (there are still separate classes and spaces and learners with SEN do not regularly participate in the classes they belong to).
- The level of school autonomy for designing and managing their own solutions, in a dynamic way, constrains their daily activities.¹²
- A clear definition of what is expected from learners and from education, specifically concerning learners experiencing difficulties making progress in their educational path, is needed.
- Architectural and pedagogical accessibility and other elements of accessibility are a challenge.
- There are several funding methods, from different funders. How can co-ordination between the different contributions be enhanced and assured, to promote coherence and convergence between them?
- The level of investment in capacity-building needs to be increased, considering the crucial role this aspect plays in a successful implementation strategy for inclusive education.

¹⁰ Addressed in ‘The way forward: the path for a more inclusive education in Portugal’ and ‘Governance: monitoring, quality and results evaluation, accountability’

¹¹ Addressed in ‘Inclusive education in practice: the experience of School Cluster Ferreira de Castro’

¹² Addressed in ‘Inclusive education in practice: the experience of School Cluster Ferreira de Castro’

3. ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE FPIES PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section organises the CSV participants' reflections on the strengths and challenges of the current funding system and the reasons for them, using the descriptive questions identified in the Project Conceptual Framework.

How does the financing system for inclusive education enable stakeholders at territorial, local and school level to act inclusively?

Strengths:

- A strong commitment to inclusive education. Inclusive education is a means to high quality education for all learners and additional support is embedded in the general education system.
- Increased financial investment in education to improve both equity and performance.
- Close attention to all learners, including the poorest, through the development of programmes to support disadvantaged learners.
- The transformation of special schools into resource centres for inclusion.

Challenges:

- Understanding of inclusive education at all levels, including for key stakeholders, should be clarified to enable the shift in mindset needed to act inclusively every day. A wider approach to accessibility should be promoted, which is not reduced to buildings or transport.
- Administrating the many programmes within a school cluster may be challenging and too dependent on the skills and engagement of the school head.
- Resource allocation mechanisms allowing schools access to support and programmes may be too fragmented.
- Resource allocation mechanisms may foster regional and territorial disparities and there is a need to improve cross-level co-operation.

How does the financing system for inclusive education support stakeholders at territorial, local and school level to avoid labelling those with the most severe needs? What is the idea behind it? Does it work in practice?

Strengths:

- The development of school clusters increased schools' responsibility to act inclusively every day. It encouraged stakeholders to use all existing local resources and to involve parent associations.
- Monitoring mechanisms between the Ministry and the school clusters are built on trust.
- Resource allocation mechanisms give the potential for autonomy and flexibility for school clusters.

Challenges:

- Resource allocation mechanisms may still foster the labelling of learners, hampered by a prevailing input approach based on learners' difficulties.
- Support provided by resource centres and specialist teachers is primarily connected to individual learner needs, rather than aiming at capacity-building across the school.
- Capacity-building mechanisms may be inadequate for enabling school clusters and teachers to assume responsibility for inclusive practices.
- There is a need for autonomy at school level and for flexibility within school budgets. School and system developments need to be monitored.

How are funding and governance mechanisms promoting co-ordinated, efficient and cost-effective systems for inclusive education?

Strengths:

- The increasing trend towards autonomy provided by governance and accountability mechanisms.
- The trend towards decentralisation, which allows for increasing efficiency of practices and more appropriate resource allocation mechanisms for local needs.

Challenges:

- The effectiveness of decentralisation may be hampered by current governance, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- A co-ordinated, efficient and cost-effective system for inclusive education may be hampered by strategic behaviours of school clusters. There may be a need to focus on their governance mechanisms as well as on their ability to empower each school equally.
- The effectiveness of the system for inclusive education may need reporting and monitoring mechanisms that explicitly identify the enabling effect of support provided to learners as well as to stakeholders.

4. ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC COUNTRY FUNDING ISSUES

Several funding issues came up as key aspects to consider in the CSV discussions.

Funding and governance mechanisms:

- Funding mechanisms are different from the amount of resources and funds available. Besides the amount, where and what the resources are allocated to are crucial questions.
- Contributions from enterprises and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g. for internships) play a key role.
- The support scheme and the way schools are financed are very complex:
 - general funding for structural costs (teachers and staff members) supported by the Ministry of Education;
 - a small budget for operational costs, managed by school clusters;
 - when they identify problems or needs, schools apply for selective and additional measures for complex needs through projects to mobilise specific financial support and other resources.
- How could funding mechanisms help education be more inclusive?
- Should schools be financed:
 - according to the number of learners with SEN?
 - using other criteria, like participation rates, levels of success in school inclusion and participation, educational success, social inclusion?
 - based on problems identified?
 - based on results?
 - based on inclusion?
- The right balance is required between funds for direct interventions with learners and funds for capacity-building. This enables schools, parents and communities to work as key levers to promote effective and sustainable inclusion.

- Effectiveness of funding: the Inspectorate of Education and Science supervises governance, monitoring and evaluation. It focuses on audit and quality control, supporting schools in improving their management and results.
- Cost-effectiveness analysis takes place sporadically, as part of specific and punctual activities. It is not yet done systematically within the education system.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms:

- Are results of evaluations used by schools to systematically improve the quality of the education they provide?
- Data generated by monitoring activities should be easier to find and to use, particularly by schools.
- Improvements occurring in recent years should be continued.
- Evaluation of results from subsidies and other contributions made by municipalities: results are monitored by following activities but not by evaluating the overall results generated.¹³ This evaluation could/should be done at General School Councils, but there is no information confirming whether this happens.
- Shared responsibility: the more stakeholders are involved in evaluating results, the more responsible they are in implementing improvements.
- Monitoring: at school level – action plans implemented within the school’s management strategy; at national level – national plans, through different ministerial departments involved in the educational system.¹⁴
- Accountability is fundamental and needs to be improved. Evidence of results from the resources allocated should be more transparent at national, school and municipal level.¹⁵

¹³ Addressed in ‘Municipalities: a key partner in implementing inclusive education’

¹⁴ Addressed in ‘The way forward: how can governance promote the effectiveness of inclusive education? Areas for improvement’

¹⁵ Addressed in ‘The way forward: how can governance promote the effectiveness of inclusive education? Areas for improvement’

5. IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY'S SYSTEM OF FUNDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The overall strength of the system discussed in the CSV is the clear commitment to the development of an inclusive education system which supports both performance and equity for all learners. This was evidenced by the transformation of special schools into resource centres, the development of support measures and programmes covering diverse learner requirements, and the orientation and aims of the new legislation.

The challenges mainly relate to weaknesses in governance, monitoring and accountability mechanisms that support the development of well-co-ordinated policies and a streamlined system.

Key financing and other aspects to consider moving forward, which are vital for the success of inclusive education, are:

- Inclusive education – there is a clear need to disseminate the novel approach by engaging schools, teachers, parents, municipalities and communities.
- Avoiding retentions is a challenging issue which needs to be dealt with.
- Labelling learners should be avoided; categorising should be possible without labelling or discriminating, both of which can reduce learners' self-esteem.
- Capacity-building should be a priority, assumed by the Ministry of Education, schools and municipalities, and supported by resource centres for inclusion (CRI) as one of their contributions.
- Schools should be empowered, giving them more autonomy to decide and implement what is needed. Decentralising decision-making around the mobilisation of support measures would improve flexibility.
- Stakeholders should be enabled, as they have significant responsibilities in education and can play a decisive role.
- Learning environments should be friendly, both pedagogically and at the human relationships level. They should promote well-being and be attractive and interesting for learners.
- Accessibility: there is a need to enhance not only the architectural dimension but also the pedagogical and other dimensions of accessibility.

- As part of their autonomy, schools are socially responsible. They must care about and not forget their responsibility to promote quality education, equality and social justice for all learners.
- Education system and social inclusion: inclusive education is also education for inclusion, preparing learners for being and living together. It enables learners to fully participate in society as citizens and allows them to stay there according to societal requirements.
- Resources should be assigned to schools, not to learners in need. When resources are needed, schools can allocate the adequate and necessary support, as much as possible in classes or groups.
- There is a need for reinforcement of the school budget to accommodate the changes and developments.
- Cost-effectiveness is a key concern and responsibility. How can the maximum level of results be obtained from the (limited) resources available?
- A more co-ordinated and collaborative integrated and cross-sectoral services approach is crucial.
- At educational policy level, municipalities and schools should have to show results. They should have to give evidence of the value for money of the resources allocated and justify additional resources.
- Communities need autonomy to better understand and address educational needs and expectations. This would stimulate creativity and give them space to play their role in a committed way.
- Collaboration is a key lever for educational success. A collaborative atmosphere/environment and methodology should involve schools, families, communities, municipalities, public services and NGOs.
- Inclusive education is important to parents and communities. It requires parents and communities who are open to inclusion. They should be 'educated' in, engaged with and committed to this innovative approach to education.

SUMMARY

The CSV visitors particularly insisted on the need to:

- shift from a mainly input-based funding approach to a throughput approach;
- connect the trend to decentralisation with adequate governance, accountability and monitoring mechanisms;
- improve capacity-building mechanisms towards inclusive education at municipal and school level;
- lead school clusters to promote inclusiveness and to meet all learners' needs without unnecessary labelling;
- avoid fragmented resource allocation and support mechanisms.

ANNEX 1: PORTUGAL COUNTRY STUDY VISIT PROGRAMME

19–21 April 2017, Lisbon, Portugal

Wednesday 19 April

Time	Session
Morning	Participants' arrival
13:00-13:40	Welcome and lunch
13:40-14:00	Introduction to the meeting <i>Pedro Cunha, Deputy Director for Education, Directorate-General for Education</i> <i>Amanda Watkins, FPIES Project Manager</i>
14:00-14:40	Portuguese inclusive education policies <i>João Costa, Secretary of State for Education</i>
14:40-15:10	Supporting inclusive education: a diverse and complex framework <i>Jerónimo Sousa, FPIES Country Analyst (CA) Portugal</i>
15:10-15:40	Financing inclusive education: general framework and concrete experience of Priority Intervention Educational Territories Program (TEIP) <i>Paulo André, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Education</i>
15:40-16:00	Coffee break

Time	Session
16:00-17:00	<p>Governance: monitoring, quality and results evaluation, accountability</p> <p><i>Joaquim Santos, Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics</i></p> <p><i>Ana Márcia Pires, Inspector, Inspectorate-General for Education and Science</i></p>
17:00-17:30	Questions & Discussion
17:30	End of day 1

Thursday 20 April

Time	Session
09:00-09:30	<p>Inclusive education in practice: the experience of School Cluster Ferreira de Castro</p> <p><i>António Castel-Branco, School Principal</i></p>
9:30-10:30	<p>Municipalities: a key partner in implementing inclusive education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of Cascais <i>Frederico Pinho de Almeida, City Councillor</i> • The experience of V. N. de Gaia
10:30-10:45	Coffee break
10:45-11:45	<p>Evaluation of social and educational impacts</p> <p><i>Luísa Canto e Castro Loura, Director, Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics</i></p> <p><i>Pedro Abrantes, Deputy Minister of Education</i></p> <p><i>Pedro Cunha, Deputy Director, Directorate-General for Education</i></p>

Time	Session
11:45-12:30	Questions & Discussion
12:30-13:15	Lunch
13:15-15:00	<p>Can we manage inclusive education? The complex elements of a simple answer – Panel discussion</p> <p><i>Moderator: David Rodrigues, Lisbon University</i></p> <p><i>Carlos Miguel Saldanha, Federation of Parents' Association</i></p> <p><i>Cláudia Torres, School Principal, School Cluster Fernando Pessoa</i></p> <p><i>Helena Fonseca, mainstream teacher, Member of the Mission Group National Programme for Promotion of Educational Success</i></p> <p><i>Leonor Duarte, Inspector, Inspectorate-General for Education and Science</i></p> <p><i>Lina Varela, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Education</i></p> <p><i>Cristina Pessoa, Directorate-General for Schools</i></p>
15:00-15:45	<p>The way forward: the path for a more inclusive education in Portugal</p> <p><i>Luisa Ucha, Deputy Secretary of State of Education</i></p> <p><i>Florabela Valente, Deputy Secretary of State of Education</i></p>
15:45-16:00	Coffee break
16:00-16:30	<p>The way forward: how can governance promote the effectiveness of inclusive education? Areas for improvement</p> <p><i>Jerónimo Sousa, FPIES CA Portugal</i></p>
16.30-17:15	Questions & Discussion
17:15-17:45	FPIES staff questionnaire
17:45	End of day 2



Friday 21 April

Time	Session
09.00-10.00	FPIES staff/Q&As
10.00-11.45	Reflection, feedback and discussion: FPIES team members and host country members
12.30	Lunch
–	<i>Participants' departure</i>



ANNEX 2: PORTUGAL COUNTRY STUDY VISIT, LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organisation
Amanda Watkins	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Edda Óskarsdóttir	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Serge Ebersold	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Raffaele Ciambrone	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Regina Labiniene	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Kari Brustad	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Rasa Ibelhauptaite	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Bodil Hafss	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Vanja Kiswarday	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
João Costa	Secretário de Estado da Educação
Jerónimo Sousa	Country Analyst for Portugal
Filomena Pereira	Direção-Geral da Educação
Pedro Cunha	Direção-Geral da Educação
Paulo André	Direção-Geral da Educação
Helena Fonseca	Direção-Geral da Educação
Lina Varela	Direção-Geral da Educação
Laurinda Ladeiras	Direção-Geral da Educação
Maria da Graça Breia	Direção-Geral da Educação
Manuela Micaelo	Direção-Geral da Educação
Luísa Canto e Castro	Direção Geral Estatística da Educação e Ciência
Joaquim Santos	Direção Geral Estatística da Educação e Ciência



Name	Organisation
Isabel Lopes	Direção Geral Estatística da Educação e Ciência
Ana Márcia Pires	Inspeção-Geral da Educação e Ciência
Leonor Duarte	Inspeção-Geral da Educação e Ciência
Cristina Pessoa	Direção-Geral dos Estabelecimentos Escolares
António Castel-Branco	Diretor agrupamento escolas Ferreira de Castro
Cláudia Torres	Diretora agrupamento escolas Fernando Pessoa
Miguel Arrobas	Câmara Municipal de Cascais
Ana Gil	Câmara Municipal de Cascais
Bárbara Camarinha	Câmara Municipal de Gaia
Pedro Abrantes	Secretaria de Estado da Educação
Luísa Ucha	Secretaria de Estado da Educação
Florbelá Valente	Secretaria de Estado da Educação
David Rodrigues	Universidade de Lisboa
Carlos Miguel Saldanha	Federação das Associações de Pais

