

The Information, Guidance and Counselling System in Portugal

Brief description of how the information, guidance and counselling services are organised. Ministers in charge/Umbrella Organisations. Networks for different target groups

In Portugal, the information, guidance and counselling services are provided by the Ministry of Education at basic and upper secondary education:

- Psychology and Guidance Services working within the network of basic education schools, upper secondary education schools and vocational schools. These services are coordinated by the Regional Education Offices. They are hierarchically dependent on the School's Board of Directors but technically and scientifically autonomous.

Portuguese higher education institutions, under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education are autonomous. It is therefore their responsibility to provide students with information and/or guidance and counselling services.

Under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, through the Regional Offices, coordinates the national network of Employment Centres and Training Centres. Target groups attending these centers may be provided information, guidance and counselling from vocational guidance counsellors.

Professional associations in the field

Portuguese Association of School and Vocational Guidance Counsellors; Portuguese Association of Psychologists.

Evolution of the information, guidance and counselling and counselling services

The educational support units (Psychology and Guidance Services) of the Ministry of Education were created in 1991 (Decreto-Lei 190/91) although they had first appeared in 1983. Since then, the number of schools covered by these services has increased. Yet, not every school is covered full time. In 1997, Decreto-Lei 300 approves the legal framework of Educational Psychologists.

Legal Framework – Role and status of the guidance counsellors

In the Ministry of Education, the educational psychologists have their own legal framework and career. The educational support specialists and the guidance counsellors fall under the provisions of the teacher's status. They all share the following responsibilities:

- develop school and vocational guidance through specific programmes/initiatives meant to provide information concerning educational and training opportunities and the approach to working life;
- provide psycho pedagogical support/interventions;

- contribute for a system of relationships within the school and between schools and social partners, schools and the community, parents and the teaching staff, etc.

Communication between the practitioners

The Regional Education Offices monitor the work of each Psychology and Guidance Team individually providing them with continuous technical and scientific support. Moreover, practitioners' representatives meet with the regional coordination on a regular basis, in order to exchange, evaluate and improve their methodologies and practices. Corresponding representatives convey all the information to the Psychology and Guidance Services. Recurrent teamwork and cooperation is put forward between psychologists and guidance professionals of the Ministry of Education and those of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Guidance.

Qualification of the school counsellors

Educational psychologists have a degree on Psychology. The educational support specialists and the guidance counsellors under the ministry of education are teachers (various degrees) with a specialisation course, respectively, in educational support and in educational and vocational guidance. In-service training is compulsory to teacher's status educational and guidance professionals. Optional further qualifications, such as master or doctorate degrees are available to everyone.

Extension of the counselling services in your country

In Portugal there are 464 Psychology and Guidance Services which cover 1085 basic and upper secondary schools.