

OECD Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal: Strengths, Challenges and Lessons Learned

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Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal

- **Review team**
 - OECD: Lucie Cerna, Alexandre Rutigliano
 - External experts: Prof. Mel Ainscow, Prof. Emmanuel Acquah
- **Country Background Report:** Self-evaluation regarding key themes of the review
- **Review visit:** Virtual and in-person. 6 in-person school visits, 62 Interviews with 200 policy-makers and stakeholders
- **Final report:** Presentation of the final analysis and policy recommendations (23 March 2022)



Reviews of National Policies for Education

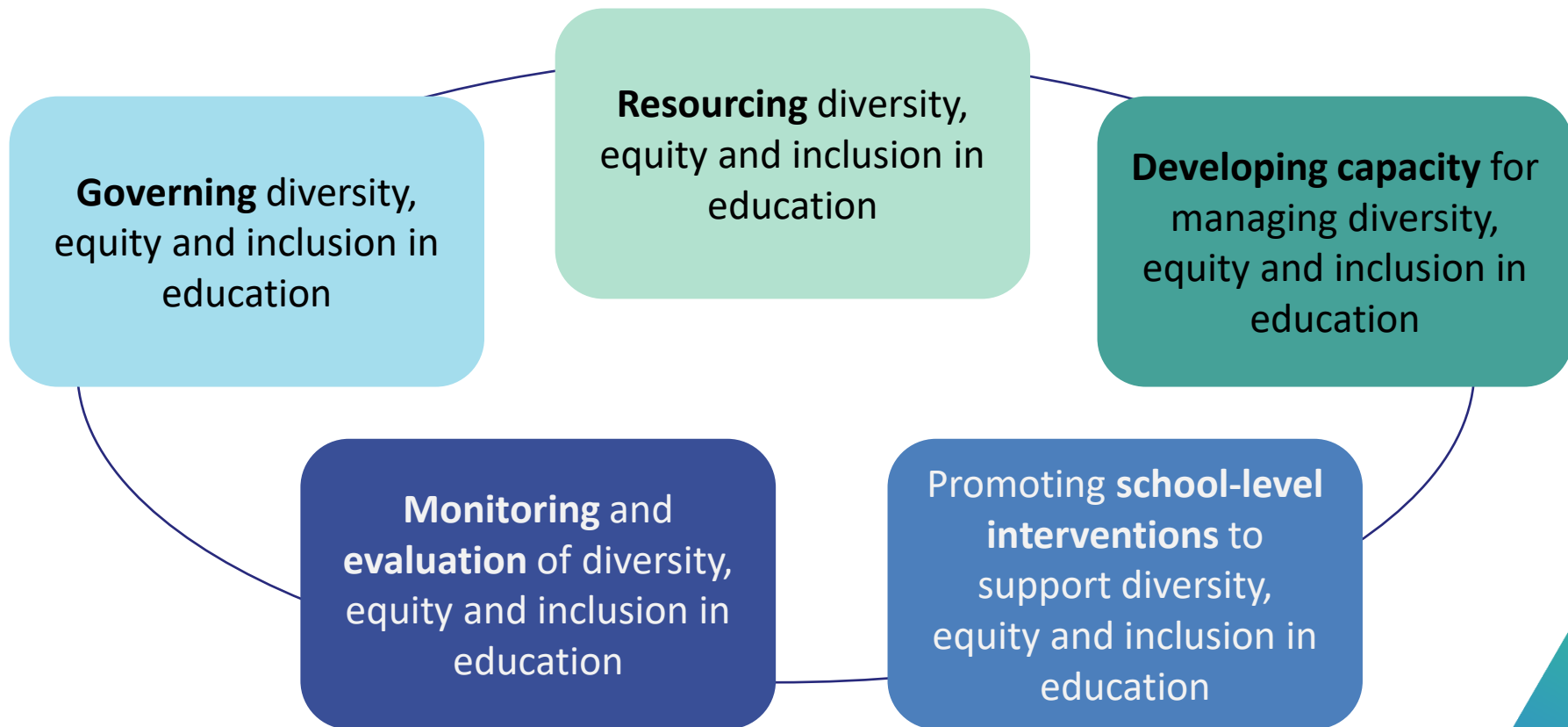
Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal



Co-funded by European Commission



Key policy areas to address diversity, equity and inclusion in education



**Key findings from the OECD Review:
Strengths, Challenges and Recommendations**



Strengths in student academic and well-being outcomes in Portugal

- Nearly all school-aged children are enrolled in compulsory education since the 2009 extension of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age
- Significant improvement in overall student performance in all subjects: reading, mathematics and science
- Above-OECD average well-being outcomes
- Rate of early leavers from education reduced significantly in Portugal (but great variations between regions)



Challenges regarding student academic and well-being outcomes

- Important differences in student learning and well-being outcomes persist for students from:
 - ◆ Disadvantaged and/or diverse backgrounds;
 - ◆ Low-income families;
 - ◆ Immigrant background; and
 - ◆ Roma communities.

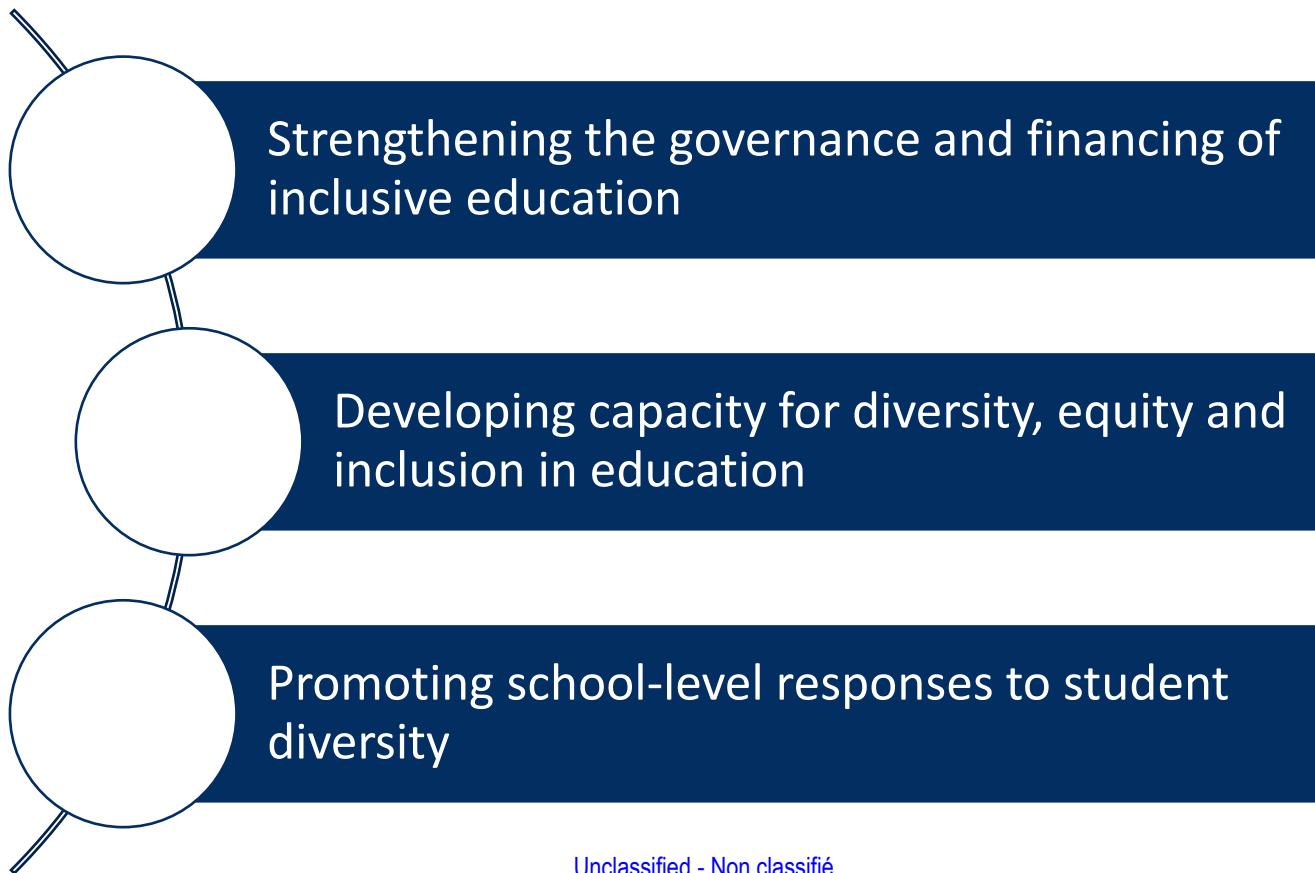


Inclusive education in Portugal

- Long history of promoting the integration of students with SEN into mainstream schools (started in 1970s)
- Decree Law No. 3/2008 defined specialised support for the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools
- Decree Law No. 54/2018 on inclusive education
- Efforts to abandon student labelling and create new categories based on the type of support measures students receive rather than personal characteristics.
- Diversity and inclusion permeate legal and policy documents and education programmes.



Priority areas in inclusive education in Portugal



**Strengthening the governance and financing
of inclusive education**



Strengths

- Comprehensive framework on inclusive education is widely known among stakeholders
- Government conducted a broad consultation process to design the law on inclusive education and regularly consults different education stakeholders
- New curriculum framework reflects broad citizenship and inclusive values, and enables schools to adapt to their local context
- Many programmes, structures and human resources are available to support equity and inclusion



Challenges

- Lack of clarity and coherence regarding the responsibilities for and administration of inclusion in education between different levels of governance;
- Education system mainly orientated towards inclusion of students with SEN (less focus on other students)
- Challenges around management of available resources to support inclusion (esp. human resources and municipalities)



Recommendations for strengthening governance and financing

1. Improve the governance of inclusive education through better synergies and accountability mechanisms between the different levels of the education system.
2. Sustain collaboration and consultation strategies to broaden the understanding of inclusive education.
3. Improve the management of resources for inclusive education and continue efforts to build a coherent funding system to support equity and inclusion.
4. Strengthen the management of system-level monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education.

**Developing capacity for diversity, equity and
inclusion**



Strengths

- Portugal has implemented progressive measures aimed at addressing diversity among students and providing support for teachers and broader school personnel to develop and improve their professional practice.
- Teachers in Portugal are highly qualified and value inclusive education
- Various structures and offers for continuing professional learning



Challenges

- Inadequate initial teacher preparation and continuing professional learning for diversity, equity and inclusion;
- Centralised teacher recruitment and allocation system, and teacher evaluation strategies lead to insecurity;
- Narrow view of diversity, largely focused on students with SEN



Recommendations for developing capacity

1. Identify and build on good practices to promote collaboration and capacity building to address all dimensions of diversity.
2. Expand continuing professional learning opportunities for teachers to support diversity and inclusion.
3. Implement multicultural teacher education to mainstream diversity, equity and inclusion courses.
4. Improve the recruitment, retention, and attractiveness of the teaching profession to strengthen inclusive education.
5. Promote the recruitment of teachers from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Promoting school-level responses to diversity



Strengths

- Widespread commitment to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion across the education system
- Significant human resources can be mobilised to support developments
- Well-established school clusters offer possibilities for supporting the development of more inclusive arrangements



Challenges

- Unequal implementation of inclusive education framework at school and local levels;
- Use of resources in schools encourage separate arrangements;
- Limited professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders;
- Lack of local area coordination;
- Limited strategies for monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices



Recommendations for promoting school-level responses

1. Introduce a programme of professional learning that is focused on the promotion of inclusive classroom practices.
2. Formulate clear guidance on the use of support resources within schools and communities.
3. Ensure that there is a coordinated structure of local support to schools and school clusters in promoting equity and inclusion.
4. Strengthen strategies for monitoring and evaluating inclusive education practices at the local and school levels.

Next steps for Portugal





Action Plan after OECD's recommendations on Inclusive Education

1. Production of resources for training different educational actors (leaders, teachers and technicians) – *ongoing process*
2. Training of trainers, support and monitoring teams and local disseminating agents – *ongoing process*
3. National programme for training teachers and technicians – *ongoing process*
4. Monitoring and proximity support to schools and communities – *ongoing process*
5. Research in the field of inclusive educational practices – *in short term*
6. Dissemination and communication – *ongoing process*



Short-term policy measures (1)

- **Formulate clear guidance on the use of support resources within schools and communities**
 - ◆ Still in process of shifting from traditional perspectives on special education towards multilevel approach established in DL 54/2018
 - ◆ Strengthen capacities and work of the local multidisciplinary teams
 - ◆ Encourage collaborative problem solving
 - ◆ Draw on the support of other actors in the wider community (families, researchers, among others)



Short-term policy measures (2)

- **Strengthen strategies for monitoring and evaluating inclusive education practices at the local and school levels**
 - ◆ Encourage self-evaluation with the use of the monitoring system for inclusive education;
 - ◆ Encourage data collection and analysis;
 - ◆ Deepen the schools' knowledge of the inspection framework;
 - ◆ Encourage municipality staff to play a key role in coordinating local support and local monitoring strategies;
 - ◆ Improve accountability

Lessons from Portugal





Lessons from Portugal

- Regulatory framework on inclusive education
- Leadership and consultation
- Teacher professional training
- Curriculum and assessment
- Complex needs
- Multidisciplinary teams in clusters

Regulatory framework on inclusive education



Law on Inclusive Education (DL/2018)

- Ensures that all students have equity and equal access to mainstream education, regardless of the education and training modalities and courses they attend.
- Defines a set of support measures which must be adapted to the social context, the characteristics of children and families and the learning process.
- Abandons a categorisation system, including the “special education needs” category.
- Establishes a continuum of provision for all students according to the Universal Design for Learning and multi-level approach to access the curriculum.
- Defines mobilisation of resources as a complement, whenever necessary and appropriate in the areas of health, employment, vocational training and social security.

Leadership and Consultation





Political and school leadership

- Strong political leadership by João Costa (Secretary of State for Education, then Minister of Education)
 - ◆ Conducted consultations and had many meetings with stakeholders, including teachers and parents
 - ◆ One year between draft proposal and law on inclusive education
- Strong leadership by school leaders
 - ◆ Set the tone and school climate
 - ◆ Worked with teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and students



Consultation process

- Law on Inclusive Education followed rigorous evaluation process of past ten years' policies and practices and broad national consultation
- Working group established and composed of State Secretaries and representatives from various organisations (e.g. Education, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Health, Social Security, Employment, Schools Council, National Institute for Rehabilitation)
- Working group engaged with many stakeholders including academics, teachers and teacher unions, parents' associations, organisations for disabled persons and general public
- Public consultations on draft law both in writing and through several open talks organised across Portugal

Teacher professional learning





Resources for teachers' continuing professional learning: Ebooks

- 1. Management of Inclusive Education
- 2. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- 3. Universal Design for Learning
- 4. Inclusion in the Classroom
- 5. Inclusive Learning Environments



Source:

<https://plataforma.dge.mec.pt/course/view.php?id=363>



Continuing professional learning

- Programme for professional learning focused on management of inclusive education and on promotion of inclusive classroom practices:
 - ◆ Develop inclusive practices (e.g. cooperative learning, differentiated pedagogies)
 - ◆ Strengthen collaboration (e.g. between teachers, between clusters, between school staff and students such as by strengthening student participation in school decisions)
 - ◆ Develop a language of practice
 - ◆ Engage with evidence (collaborate with universities, share experiences across schools)



Programme for continuing professional learning

- Course (25h): Leadership in promoting inclusive educational environments
- Course (25h): Inclusive pedagogical practices in the classroom
- Course (50h): Creating inclusive and innovative learning environments

Target:

School leaders and teachers of pre-school, primary and secondary education

Curriculum and assessment





Decree Law 55/2018 on Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility

- Schools are provided with up to 25% of curriculum autonomy to meet their specific needs by:
 - ◆ Fostering pedagogical differentiation in the classroom;
 - ◆ Fostering interdisciplinary work and project-based methodologies;
 - ◆ Creating new subjects; and
 - ◆ Allowing upper secondary students to choose their own course format by being able to swap and replace subjects within the scientific component of each course.
- Ordinance No. 181/2019 allows public and private schools to manage more than 25% of curriculum by designing innovation plans.



Pedagogical model and curriculum

- Pedagogical model: built around the notion that all students have learning potential that can be harnessed when students receive adequate support.
- Methodological options based around the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model and multilevel approach to access the curriculum.



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Tool that can be used to support teachers and education stakeholders in designing and implementing inclusive teaching through pedagogies, curricula and assessments.

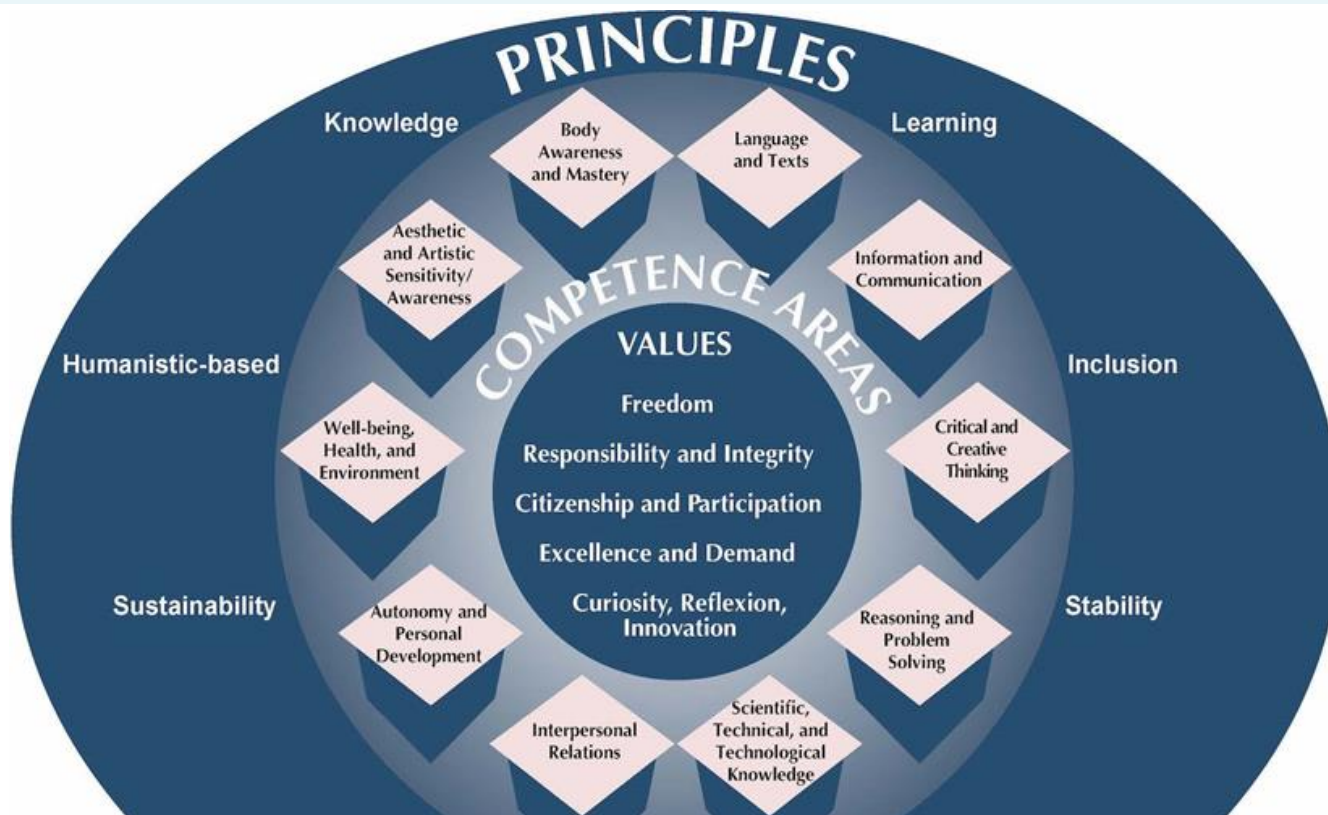
- Provides **3 guiding principles**:
 - 1. Multiple means of representation:** addresses the “what” of learning
 - 2. Multiple means of action and expression:** addresses the “how” of learning
 - 3. Multiple means of engagement:** targets the “why” of learning



Curriculum management measures

Measures	Definition
Curriculum accommodation	Measures that support access to the curriculum and learning activities in classroom (e.g. diversification, combination of various teaching methods and strategies, use of different methods and evaluation tools, adaptation of materials and resources, removal of barriers of space and equipment)
Non-significant curriculum adjustments	Measures that do not compromise the learning foreseen in curriculum documents (e.g. Adaptations to objectives and content to develop competences foreseen in the Profile of The Students at the End Of Compulsory Schooling)
Significant curriculum adjustments	Measures which have an impact on the learning foreseen in curricular documents (e.g. introduction of alternative learning objectives, establish overall goals in terms of knowledge to be acquired and competences to be developed)

Students' Profile by the end of Compulsory Schooling (2017)



Source: https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/students_profile_en.pdf

Unclassified - Non classifié

Dispatch n.º 6478/2017, 26th July

Complex needs





Inclusive education in Portugal

- Exceptionally high rate of students with SEN attend mainstream schools
 - ◆ In 2017/2018, 98.9% of students with SEN in mainstream schools (86.5% in public schools and 12.4% in mainstream private schools)
 - ◆ Remaining 1.1% of students enrolled in private special schools
- Most special schools converted into Resource Centres for Inclusion
- Special education teachers now considered specialist resources for schools, teachers and students
- Notion of “student in need of support measures” replaces notion of “special education needs”



Support measures for the inclusion of all students in Portuguese mainstream schools

Type of support measures	Definition	Examples of measures
Universal measures	Support measures schools use to support participation and learning improvement of all students	Differentiated instruction, curricular accommodations and/or enrichment, promotion of pro-social behaviour
Selective measures	Support measures aimed to support students' more specific needs not addressed by universal measures	Differentiated curricular pathways, psycho-pedagogical support, tutorial support
Additional measures	Support measures aimed to respond to persistent needs related to communication, integration, cognition or learning that require specialised resources to support inclusion in education	Significant curricular adaptations, individual transition plans, adapted teaching methodologies and strategies, development of personal and social autonomy competences



Resource Centres for Inclusion

- Provide specialised support assistance to mainstream schools
- Key intervention areas:
 - ◆ Specialised support units for the education of students with multiple disabilities and congenital deaf blindness;
 - ◆ Support for the specialised evaluation of children and young people with SEN;
 - ◆ Support for the implementation of curricular enrichment activities (specific programmes, adapted sport practice, etc.);
 - ◆ Support in the development, implementation and monitoring of Individual Education Programmes.

Multidisciplinary teams in clusters





Multidisciplinary teams

- Decree Law No. 54/2018 requires each school cluster to have a multidisciplinary team to support inclusion
- Multidisciplinary teams bring together professionals from within and beyond the school, including:
 - ◆ Teachers;
 - ◆ Psychologists;
 - ◆ Social workers; and
 - ◆ Health professionals.
- Work together to identify and meet needs of students with physical impairments or other health-related issues



Multidisciplinary team's composition

- Permanent members:
 - ◆ Assistant of school director;
 - ◆ Special education teachers;
 - ◆ Three members of pedagogical council;
 - ◆ School psychologist.

- Variable members (chosen in relation to student):
 - ◆ Parents;
 - ◆ Multidisciplinary team coordinator;
 - ◆ Coordinator of the school; and/or
 - ◆ Mainstream teacher of student.



Multidisciplinary team's responsibilities

- Multidisciplinary team is responsible for:
 - ◆ Identification of students in need of support measures;
 - ◆ Implementation and monitoring of these measures;
 - ◆ If necessary, preparing Individual Education Plans and Individual Transition Plans for students



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OECD (2022), “Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal”,
<https://doi.org/10.1787/a9c95902-en>

OECD Report **Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity** is available at
<https://doi.org/10.1787/e9072e21-en>
Abridged summaries are available in [English](#) and [French](#).

[OECD Education equity dashboard](#)

For more information on the topic:
<https://www.oecd.org/en/about/projects/education-for-inclusive-societies.html>

