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Access to Education

Are all foreign students entitled to be integrated into the Portuguese education system?

Yes. The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic sets out that "everyone has the right to education and culture" (Article 73 (1)). Indeed, in Portugal, according to the postulate in Law no. 85/2009, of the 27th August, schooling is compulsory for all children and young people between six and eighteen years of age.

Are there specific measures for students whose mother tongue is not Portuguese?

Yes. In general primary and lower secondary education courses, specialised art courses and upper secondary education courses, curricular matrices can integrate the Portuguese as Second Language (PLNM) subject, aimed at students whose mother tongue is not Portuguese or who have not had Portuguese as the language of schooling.

How is the placement in linguistic proficiency level done?

When a student whose mother tongue is not Portuguese is integrated in the education system, his /her school should draw his sociolinguistic profile and apply a PLNM diagnostic test to assess his/her knowledge of the Portuguese language. Depending on both the information collected and the results obtained in this test, the student is placed at a PLNM linguistic proficiency level.

What are the PLNM linguistic proficiency levels?

There are three linguistic proficiency levels:

- a) Initiation (A1, A2);
- b) Intermediate (B1);
- c) Advanced (B2, C1).

What educational measures are planned for students placed at initiation (A1 / A2) or intermediate (B1) levels?

When schools can group at least 10 students placed at A1, A2 or B1 linguistic proficiency levels, they attend PLNM subject instead of Portuguese subject.

When the students cannot be gathered in these groups, they benefit from additional support language classes, according to the schools' human resources, and they follow the PLNM curriculum.

Are there additional measures for students placed at initiation level (A1, A2)?

Aiming to promote equity and equal opportunities, the school (in articulation with the parents/legal guardians), can provide, to newly arrived students placed at initiation level (A1, A2), educational responses that facilitate access to the curriculum, through learning support measures.

What educational measures are planned for students placed at the advanced levels (B2, C1)?

These students follow the Portuguese subject national curriculum and they may benefit from language support classes.

Who can take the PLNM subject national final exam instead of the Portuguese subject national final exam?

Students who are enrolled in the initiation (A1 / A2) or intermediate (B1) language proficiency levels may take the PLNM subject national final exam, instead of the Portuguese subject national final exam.

Students enrolled in the advanced level (B2 / C1) take the Portuguese subject national final exam.

The Regulation of the Examinations of Basic and Secondary Education issued annually should be checked for further information.

Does the PLNM subject national final exam allow the access to higher education courses?

Yes, this exam is for completion of secondary education and allows access to higher education courses. However, in case the course / institution of higher education requires Portuguese as proof of admission, the PLNM subject national final exam does not serve this purpose.



Legal framework:

- Decree-Law no. 55/2018, of the 6th July
- Decree-Law no. 54/2018, of the 6th July
- Ministerial Implementing Order no. 223-A/2018, of the 3rd August
- Ministerial Implementing Order no. 226-A/2018, of the 7th August

For additional information, consult the PLNM page, available at: <http://www.dge.mec.pt/portugues-lingua-nao-materna>

Useful link: <http://www.dge.mec.pt/>