

From 3 to 6 year old children

- *Jardim de Infância* is the most sought after pre-school educational context for 3, 4 and 5 year children. The activities promoted by the Jardins de Infância are directed at the development and learning skills of the child as well as supporting the family. Jardins de Infância may adopt diverse pedagogical models;
- *Socio-educational activities* provided by the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity to supplement the educational contexts timetable and keep the children safe and occupied until their parents finish work;
- *Community and cultural activities* developed for five year old children who live in highly populated but deprived suburban areas lacking in cultural and educational facilities. Such activities take place in buildings made available for the purpose by the local community;
- *Itinerant child education* is a type of service directed to 3 to 5 year old children who live in rural areas where the number of children do not reach the minimum required for the setting up of a jardim de infância, i.e. fifteen.

In addition to the above types of ECEC provision, the system allows for a great diversity of contexts to promote children's access to pre-school education.

The hours of opening of such contexts are similar but may vary according to the following reasons:

- Pre-school educational contexts provide flexible opening hours in accordance with family needs. Every year parents and guardians must be consulted prior to any decision affecting opening hours is made;
- Under the law, Jardins de infância must dedicate 5 hours/day to educational provision in accordance with set curriculum guidelines (Vd. Section III - C);
- Some Jardins de Infância provide or organise together with other institutions additional periods of socio-educational activities including, in some cases, the provision of midday meals.

10. Institutions responsible for ECEC

From 0 to 3 year old children

Contexts which provide care for this age group are all dependent from the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity and are set up either by the Ministry itself or by other entities such as, private individuals, cooperatives, IPSS - Private Institutions of Social Solidarity or other non-profit institutions.

Pre-school education for 3 to 6 year old children

The public and the private pre-school *networks* together form a national network whose aim is to extend pre-school education provision to all children of this age group.

The *public network* comprises all contexts set up by and working under central and local public administration, i.e. the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity.

The *private network* comprises all other contexts run by private and cooperative schools, IPSS (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity), Misericórdias (Charities), Mutual Trusts and other non-profit institutions providing care and education.

The two Ministries must provide the institutional articulation necessary for the expansion and development of the national network in so far as:

- the child education and the promotion of the pedagogical quality of the provision;
- support to the family, namely the provision of extra curricular socio-educational activities in accordance with family requirements;
- financial support to pre-school educational contexts.

The Ministry of Education ensures the pedagogical quality of and gives financial support to pre-school education provision in full respect of the educational projects each school intends to develop. Support to families i.e. running of extra curricular activities, comes under the financial responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity.

In recent years, particularly since 1995, the two Ministries have tried to work more closely together to achieve better articulation in these matters through the setting up of formal institutional lines to promote dialogue and cooperation. All published legislation is of the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity.

To ensure coordination among all ECEC promoting units, the **Gabinete para a Expansão e Desenvolvimento da Educação Pré-Escolar** (the Bureau for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education) was set up in 1996. The Bureau provides coordination between various services of the two Ministries and the Consulting Council of Representatives of the National Association of Municipalities, the Union of Private and Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS), the Association of Private and Cooperative Education and the Unions of the Misericórdias and Mutual Trusts. Individuals of recognised scientific merit in the field of pre-school education are also co-opted into the Consulting Council. The main aim of the Bureau is to provide a concerted framework to promote in accordance with population needs the expansion of the pre-school network and simultaneously contribute to the improvement of the quality of provision.

Table 15: Types and promoters of ECEC

Promoter	Public Administration			Private Administration			
	Central		Local	IPSS	Non-Profit	Firms	Cooperatives Associations
Offer	ME	MTS	Municipalities				
Creche		•	•	•	•	•	•
Creche e J. Inf.		•		•			
Amas/Nannies			•				
Mini-creche				•			
Family creche		•		•			
Jardim de infância	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Cultural Activities	•						•
Itinerant provision	•						•
Socio-educative activities		•	•	•	•	•	•

Source: Adapted from J. Formosinho, 1994

Through the Ministry of Education, Central Administration is responsible for:

- setting up a public pre-school education network extending provision according to needs;
- supporting the setting up of pre-school education contexts of the initiative of private entities as long as public provision is insufficient;
- defining general norms for pre-school education, covering its organizational, pedagogical and technical aspects, ensuring their observance and application through follow-up, evaluation and monitoring;
- paying special attention to the areas deprived of adequate pre-school education provision.

Through the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity the State is responsible for:

- ensuring the provision of the family support component, namely through socio-educational activities, in accordance with families' needs;
- contributing to the achievement of pre-school objectives as defined in the Framework Law, minimising the effects related to the absence of the family;
- ensuring the provision of meals whenever necessary;
- ensuring the provision of extra periods of care beyond the normal timetable of pre-school educational contexts;
- guaranteeing that family support services are an integral part of the pre-school educational projects of the contexts;
- ensuring that properly qualified staff are available to develop the family support component and for contributing to the staff in-service training.

Central Administration should also extend support to Society's initiatives in the field of pre-school education, i.e.

- Private and cooperative educational provision;
- IPSSs - Private Institutions of Social Solidarity;
- other non-profit institutions which develop activities in the field of education and tuition.

Prior to 1997, ministerial responsibilities for pre-school educational contexts were divided according to the main character of the provision i.e. educational or social welfare. Thus the Ministry of Education was primarily responsible for educational contexts and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity for social support contexts.

Definition and coordination of educational policy are attributions of the Ministry of Education who ensures integrated action and efficacy of procedures. The structure of ministerial departments now favours decentralised action (Law of the Bases of the Education System). In this framework, the attributions of the Direcções Regionais de Educação (Regional Directorates for Education) of the Ministry of Education and the

Social Security Regional Centres of the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity have been strengthened to enable the implementation of national education policies in their regions through the provision of guidance, coordination and support services to pre-school educational contexts.

Portugal appears to have a centralised approach in the conception, regulation, evaluation and global coordination of pre-school education. However, in practice, there exists great decentralisation and regionalisation in pedagogical action and support provided to the management of human, material and financial resources.

Table 16: Administration of ECEC, levels of intervention and functions

Levels	Functions
Central	- Conception, definition of norms, planning, global coordination and evaluation.
Regional Autonomous (Açores — Madeira)	- Adaptation of national education policies and management of resources: human, material and financial.
Regional (Continent) (Regional Directorates for Educacion) Social Security Regional Center	- Coordination, support to educational contexts management of resources: human, material and financial. School social action and support to the child; pedagogical action. - Coordination, technical support and funding to IPSS's
Local Government (Municipalities)	- Organization and financial responsibilities towards social/family activities, namely: - meals, extra curricular hours of opening, school transport. - Management of equipment/materials resources (up to and inclusive of 1st. cycle of Basic Education) insofar as school buildings and equipment are concerned.

Source: DEP/GEF (1991), p.111

- The Ministry of Education achieves decentralisation through the Direcções Regionais de Educação (DREs) (Regional Education Directorates) which integrate the Centros de Área Educativa (CAEs) (the Educational Area Centres) at the municipal level;
- The Ministry of Labour and Solidarity achieves decentralization through the Centros Regionais de Segurança Social (CRSSs) (The Social Security Regional Centres) and the Sub-Regional Services;
- The Ministry of Health through the Direcções Regionais de Saúde (Regional Health Directorates) and the Centros de Saúde (Health Centres).

11. Other public institutions

The Associação Nacional dos Municípios Portugueses (National Association of Municipalities), the Private Solidarity Institutions (IPSSs), the Misericórdia and Mutualities are privileged partners of the two Ministries, promoters of ECEC through specific protocols of cooperation signed under the umbrella of the Programme for the Expansion and Development of Pre-School Education.

The Ministries of Health and Justice should also be mentioned in this context. In view of the specificity of their objectives, the action of these two Ministries complements that of the two main ministerial promoters of ECEC and is directed at specific cases detected in follow-up and monitoring activities concerning the physical and psychological development of children. The Ministry of Justice at its own initiative, has set up Creches, Jardins de Infância and support programmes for children of convicted mothers and children at risk.

12. Private non-profit institutions

The statutory obligations on the part of some institutions involved in childhood education justifies their inclusion in this report:

- IPSS's (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity) - they are private non-profit institutions of social solidarity who promote solidarity and justice in society. They also promote, among other activities, the organization and running of Creches and Jardins de Infância. IPSS's may group themselves into Unions, Federations and Confederations;
- NGOs working in Portugal who are mainly involved in the development of programmes in support of equal rights for women. There are some, though, who pay particular attention to the education of children from birth to 6 years of age;
- Cooperatives and Foundations - non-profit organizations who develop activities within the educational field;
- The role of institutions such as the IAC (Instituto de Apoio à Criança - Child Support Institute), the SOS Child Programme, services provided to children in hospital, and the promotion of recreational activities in deprived areas;
- Voluntary work - recently introduced through legislation, i.e. Law 71/98 of 3 November.

Section II

Definition of policies

A — Quality

1. Responsibility for quality criteria

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education through the Department of Basic Education is responsible for the definition of pre-school education quality criteria. Privileged partners at this level of education are: the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, parents, guardians, local government, directors of pre-school educational contexts, pre-school teachers in employment, professional and employers' associations. Legislation and norms are always prepared through dialogue with representatives of all partners.

2. Policies and quality criteria guiding educational provision

Law 5/97 of 10 February, Framework Law of Pre-School Education, pays special attention to the definition of quality provision, taking into account the objectives of childhood education and the organization of pre-school educational contexts. Quality criteria apply to all Regions and to all educational contexts belonging both to the public and the private networks. They also apply equally to all groups of pupils. Some of the general principles already described in Section I are highlighted hereunder as follows:

- the *objectives* of pre-school education are (1) the promotion of personal and social development; (2) individualized global development; (3) socialization and learning of attitudes, language, expression and understanding of the world;
- *pre-school educational contexts* are all those structures who provide services dedicated to the care of the child, including educational activities, social support to the family and socio-

educational activities. Such structures can be autonomous or associated to basic education schools;

- *common rules* apply to all pre-school contexts on matters relating to their structure, organization, pedagogical aspects and financial aspects. These principles are described in the Framework Law in article 5 (strategic role of the State), article 8 (Pedagogical and Technical Responsibilities), article 11 (Pedagogical Directives), article 18 (Staff), article 19 (Training and Provision of Cultural Activities), articles 20 and 21 (Evaluation and Inspection).

Structural aspects are linked to the general framework of norms, discharge of responsibilities and articulation with basic education.

Discharge of responsibilities - the Ministry of Education as the institution in charge of pre-school education wants to ensure that all educational contexts are responsible for developing and providing quality education and social services.

Articulation with the first phase of basic education

Within the Education System pre-school education is acknowledged as (1) the first step of basic education, motivating families and children towards compulsory education; (2) fostering dialogue and collaboration between pre-school and first phase basic education teachers thus facilitating mobility between educational levels; (3) promoting the development of joint projects between pre-school and first phase teachers and children as a means to increasing collaboration and mutual knowledge;

Organizational aspects of pedagogical nature including pedagogical direction and activities and opening hours.

Pedagogical direction

All types of pre-school educational contexts must have a pedagogical director. The director must be a qualified pre-school teacher or hold qualifications recognised by the Ministry of Education as suitable for

the post. The director is responsible for the coordination of pre-school teachers working in the context and/or for the context itself. The post holder ensures that pre-school teachers enjoy technical and professional autonomy, especially in pre-school educational contexts operating within larger school environments providing for example first phase basic education or crèches and other contexts where the provision of social care is predominant.

Opening hours

Jardins de Infância must remain open daily for five hours and provide curricular activities during this period. They may or not provide extra curricular activities in support of working families. The private network offers a great variety of opening hours to try and meet demand patterns.

Educational contexts should not open for more than 40 hours/week; exceptions need to be approved.

Opening hours for each pre-school educational context must be decided every year in consultation with parents and guardians.

Adult/children ratio

Each classroom should not hold less than 20 or more than 25 children. Under exceptional circumstances, namely in thinly populated areas, the context may be authorized to enrol less than 20 children/classroom or adopt alternative types of pre-school provision such as itinerant education, cultural child and community activities or other types.

Pedagogical aspects

Which cover curriculum guidance and staff qualification and training.

Curriculum guidance

Curriculum guidelines were prepared in order to promote the quality of pre-school education provision. Curriculum guidance consists of a set of principles drawn up to support teachers in their decisions concerning the development of the educational

component and pedagogical practice. The proposed guidelines must be followed by all pre-school education teachers working within the National Network and are based on principles set to assist teachers in decision making related to their practices, i.e. to guide the educational process developed with the children.

Staff qualifications

Educational provision must be carried out by childhood professional teachers who have completed their degree in childhood teaching. Given the importance and specificity of the quality work that should be carried out with children of this age group, the time dedicated to pedagogical activities has to be assured, in each classroom, by professionals. The aim of the activities which take place during extra curricular hours is not of a pedagogical nature. Staff in charge of extra curricular activities need not hold teaching qualifications although they should have qualifications higher than compulsory school levels. The professional profile of non-teaching staff is currently being prepared.

Staff Training

In Portugal, investment in staff training is viewed as having two functions: (1) training for updating and sharing of professional experiences, (2) training directed at the promotion of quality pedagogical practices by higher qualified teaching staff. There is also an on-going training programme for educational auxiliary staff.

Quality of buildings, equipment and materials

Pedagogical and technical requirements for buildings and operation of pre-school contexts have already been defined. The following aspects are considered for Jardins de Infância:

- location of the building;
- sanitary conditions of the buildings and classrooms;
- safety conditions;

- adjustment of the characteristics of the buildings to allow for the balanced development of all children including disabled;
- area of classrooms where activities take place should be about 50 sq.m., i.e. 2 to 2.5 sq.m. per child;
- the availability of one multi-purpose room which should always be larger than the classroom;
- compulsory availability of outdoor space with covered area;
- a given number of sanitary units for each group of 10 children;
- kitchens must conform to existing specifications.

Financial aspects

Which support the promotion of access to and quality of pre-school education.

Financial support consists of:

- a) attribution of non-repayable subsidies and granting of credit facilities at reduced interest rates for the installation of schools in areas where available offer is low, in accordance with Joint Ministerial Decision 291/97 of 4 September and Decree-Law 89/A/98 of 7 April;
- b) promotion and availability of training opportunities for pre-school teaching and non-teaching staff working in both the public and private networks at the initiative of the Ministry of Education.

Financial support for the acquisition of didactic and pedagogical materials is available subject to pedagogical and technical requirements such as:

- 1) being adequate for the age of the children and favouring their balanced development;
- 2) being of good pedagogic and aesthetic quality;
- 3) being safe and having multi-purpose functions.

There are regulations introduced jointly by the Ministries of Education and of Labour and Solidarity on the quality criteria applying

to installations, didactic materials and equipment necessary to the operation of pre-school educational contexts, as well as definitions of the technical and pedagogical requirements for installations and the good running of the contexts. (Joint Ministerial Decision ME/MTSS 258/97 of 21 August and Joint Despatch 268/97 of 25 August).

3. Inspection, quality criteria and control

Creches under the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity are supervised and inspected by the Ministry's Inspector General, the Social Security Regional Centres and the Sub-Regional Services.

According to its own Organic Law, the objectives of the Inspectorate-General are to supervise and inspect the following operational aspects of all the Ministry's services and institutions:

- abidance to the Law and the rules leading to the good operation of the services and institutions;
- efficient management and administration, legality of processes and decisions adopted as well as the frequency of financial transactions;
- adaptation of norms to requirements and eventual need for new strategies.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the supervision and inspection of the pre-school education system (3 to 6 year olds). The Inspeção Geral de Educação (Inspector General for Education) is responsible for the regulation and coordination of the system, through monitoring and control of pre-school educational contexts. It is the responsibility of the Inspector General to use the legal, administrative, financial and eventually, disciplinary mechanisms at their disposal to correct any situation found to be inadequate.

The Centros Regionais de Segurança Social - CRSS/SSR (Social Security Regional Centres) are responsible for developing cooperation ties with private institutions of social solidarity; for the supervision and

inspection of the aforementioned Social Solidarity institutions and all other similar private institutions together with the General-Inspectorate for Social Work; for the licenseeing of social support institutions; for promoting the quality of provision of institutions through technical support programmes; for collaborating in the preparation and updating of technical and legal regulations; and also for promoting technical training programmes for staff.

The evaluation criteria for pre-school educational contexts are directed at the following aspects:

- a) the efficacy of educational and socio-educational provision to support the children's balanced development;
- b) the pedagogical quality of pre-school educational contexts, namely and insofar as curriculum guidelines are concerned.

4. Gathering and sharing of information

The Departamento de Avaliação, Prospectiva e Planeamento (DAPP) (Department for Evaluation, Propection and Planning) is the central service within the Ministry of Education that assists with the formulation and evaluation of educational policy. DAPP is particularly suited to carry out the studies and prospective analysis necessary for the strategic planning and development of the educational system. The Department is also responsible for gathering, producing and releasing official statistical information in the field of Education, having been duly authorised to perform these tasks by the National Statistics Institute. The release of statistical information is done annually after the end of the school year and is published in "Estatísticas da Educação" (Education Statistics). However, given the need for a quick release of statistical information and the fact that final figures published in "Estatísticas da Educação" take often some time to be fully gathered and treated, preliminary figures are released through an interim publication "Ano Escolar - Estatísticas Preliminares" (School Year - Preliminary Statistics).

Such preliminary figures serve as useful guides for analysis, planning and evaluation of the educational system's performance and for defining educational policies.

Statistical information on the pre-school sector is obtained by means of an exhaustive written questionnaire which must be completed and returned by each educational context. Information is gathered on Children, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff.

Statistical information is normally treated on a geographical basis in accordance with the official Nomenclature for Territorial Units used for statistical purposes (NUTS - levels I, II and III) for Continental Portugal, but it can be made available in accordance with other geographical parameters.

The volumes of "Estatísticas da Educação" and of "Ano Escolar - Estatísticas Preliminares" can be consulted or aquired at DAPP. The contents of these publications are available on the Internet, at www.dapp.min-edu.pt

Apart from the above-mentioned information other types of information can be made available by DAPP on paper or diskette.

Special reference should be made to the collaboration of Schools/Jardins de Infância and other educational contexts as well as the Regional Education Directorates, who by gathering the information and replying to the questionnaires enable the preparation of statistical data.

B — Access

1. Conditions and criteria for access

All children from the age of 3 months to the start of compulsory schooling (6 years of age) residing in Portuguese territory have **access** to early childhood care and education. Since ECEC is not part of compulsory education attendance is optional and enrolment rests entirely upon parental decision.

The State has the responsibility of contributing actively to universal entitlement to pre-school education. In recent years, important efforts have been made to increase the rates of access to Jardins de infância. In spite of such efforts this objective has not been fully attained yet and regional asymmetries are still found. The main reasons for the delay in achieving the desired goals are as follows:

- often contradictory political decisions;
- weak commitment on the part of the State in pre-school education for long periods of time due to ruling ideologies which link young children's education to the role of mothers, to the activities of the Roman Catholic Church, social solidarity institutions or private initiative, arguments usually put forward to justify poor commitment;
- definition of priorities favouring compulsory schooling instead;
- dispersion of responsibilities for ECEC among a great number and variety of public and private entities and agents; lack of coherence and coordination in the activities provided by such institutions;
- the low educational level of large strata of the population among whom pre-school education viewed as a first phase for lifelong educational success is undervalued;
- social exclusion factors among very deprived groups who are alienated from the system;
- ongoing economic difficulties of the country.

Universal access to pre-school education is a constitutional right but, given the mismatch between available provision and the number of children of ECEC age, some regional areas show a deficit in provision. In 1997 in Continental Portugal, provision covered 64.5% of children. Insufficient provision causes a high percentage of existing educational contexts to apply selection enrolment criteria as follows:

The Pre-School Education Expansion and Development Plan is committed to, until 1999, extend provision to 90% of 5 year olds, 75% of 4 year olds and 60% of 3 year olds. This objective involves the building and reconversion of a substantial number of activity rooms.

Children from 0 to 3 years of age

The main *criterion* for access into services and equipment under the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity is the degree of family deprivation. Other situations are also taken into account, such as:

- children at risk;
- absence or non-availability of parents to ensure provision of care;
- children from single-parent or large families;
- children whose parents work in the same area where the context is located;
- children from low-income families.

Children from 3 to 6 years of age

The main *criterion* for access into public-funded pre-school contexts, i.e. the Jardins de Infância run by the Ministry of Education, is the children's age: if selection procedures are found necessary, preference is given to older children, i.e. five year olds, followed by four year olds and last by three year olds. Particular attention is given to the following points:

- a) *Age*: if selection procedures are found necessary preference is given to children older than five thus recognising the importance of pre-school education as a facilitator to balanced development and adaptation to compulsory schooling;
- b) *Families residing in certain geographical areas*: although there is no specific guideline concerning enrolment of children residing in low-density population areas, some measures are being considered to extend pre-school provision to the highest possible number of children, such as:
 - the Ministry of Education may authorise the operation of educational contexts with less than the minimum number of 20 at present stipulated by Law;
 - promotion of types of contexts other than Jardins de Infância, namely, itinerant cultural child and community activity programmes and other types;
 - transport of children to be assured by local government services;
- c) *Children with special education needs*: Measures adopted by Portugal directed at children with special education needs aim at ensuring that school environments are able to care for these children and fulfil the fundamental objectives of basic education i.e. to educate, to integrate and to train for citizenship. It is therefore necessary to make structural and planning adjustments to the educational projects proposed by educational contexts.

Legislative measures have been introduced (Joint Ministerial Decision 105/97 of 1 July) to define the organizational, methodological and managements conditions under which the *Educational Supports* for children with special education needs can operate. The guiding action principles for the all-inclusive school are:

- the educational context, teachers and support staff as well as all other agents with responsibilities to the education of the children are privileged partners in the implementation of Educational Supports;

- the Educational Project of the School is approved if and while it serves as guiding instrument for building up an all-inclusive school and society;
- *Educational Supports* are an integral part of the Educational Project of the School and have a double function: to contribute to improving educational provision and to try to develop projects which call for the commitment of all involved in the educational process;
- *Educational Support Coordination Teams* are appointed to make the Educational Supports work for children with special education needs. The duties of teams are (a) to provide articulation between central and regional services of the Ministry of Education as well as community services; (b) to manage the required resources; (c) to collaborate with schools management and pedagogical units; (d) to provide technical and scientific guidance to teachers;
- support teaching staff should be engaged in the provision of educational support to the school as a whole, to teachers, pupils and family, as well as in the organization and management of resources and in the implementation of adequate and differentiated pedagogical policies;
- the teacher/ pupil ratio cannot exceed 20 pupils/teacher/classroom;
- in addition, existing legislation foresees the need to adapt school buildings to the requirements of disabled children.

The roles of the family and the community are recognised as decisive factors in the children's overall development and preparation for active life.

Educators and teachers allocated to schools to provide educational support are, on the whole, qualified and have undergone specialized training in areas such as special education, pedagogical supervision, educational guidance, socio-cultural development or in other areas targetted to the type of support they are required to give;