

Evaluation of the Contribution of PT2020 to the Promotion of Educational Success, Reduction of Early School Dropout and Youth Employability

Executive Summary

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Evaluation of the Contribution of PT2020 to the Promotion of Educational Success, Reduction of Early School Dropout and Youth Employability

Evaluation Team

Coordination

Luis Capucha

Catarina Pereira

Rui Godinho

Contract Manager

Filipa Seiceira

Technical team

Ana Rita Capucha

Ana Simões

Gisela Ferreira

João Paulo Henriques

João Sebastião

Susana Martins

Teresa Seabra

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Purpose of the Evaluation Model

The present document is the Executive Summary of the **Final Report of the Evaluation Study on the Contribution of PT2020 to the Promotion of Educational Success, Reduction of Early School Dropout (ESD) and Employability of Young People for the HCOP**, within the Global Evaluation Plan of PT2020 and the Evaluation Plan of the HCOP, which was adjudicated by the General Secretariat for Education and Science - Human Capital Operational Programme (GSES-HCOP) to the Consortium IESE/ ISCTE-IUL/ PPLL Consult. The HCOP has the majority share of the ESF - European Social Fund allocated to the fulfilment of all the items foreseen for the OT10 (except for PI 10.iii. which concerns the intervention in lifelong training, and which is, besides the HCOP (Axis 3), also in the Competitiveness and Internationalisation OP, the Social Inclusion and Employment OP and in the Regional OPs).

This evaluation focused on a set of national educational measures and interventions aimed at promoting educational success, combating early school dropout and youth employability and, in this way, assessing their contribution to this effect. Thus, the report responds to the evaluation questions raised (effectiveness, efficiency, impacts, sustainability and European Added Value), equipping itself with a robust and rich theoretical and methodological framework.

The object of evaluation is organised according to a typology of interventions structured, based on Operational Typologies mobilised by the various Operational Programmes, according to an Operational Typology/Operational Programmes presented in Table 1 below and anchored on five evaluation questions.

Table 1. Operational Typologies and respective Operational Programmes covered by the Evaluation

Interventions - type		Operational Typologies	Operational Programmes
Type 1: Educational offer	Primary level	Vocational Courses	HCOP; POR Lisbon
		Specialised Artistic Education (SAE)	HCOP; POR Lisbon
		Education and Training Courses (ETC)	HCOP; POR Lisbon; POR Algarve; POR Madeira
	Secondary level	PROFIJ	OP AR (Autonomous Region) Azores
		Apprenticeship Courses	HCOP; OP AR Madeira
		Vocational Courses	HCOP; POR Lisbon; OP AR Azores; OP AR Madeira
Post-secondary level	Technological Specialization Courses (TSC)	POR North; POR Center; POR Alentejo; POR Lisbon; OP AR Azores; OP AR Madeira	
Type 2: Capacity Building / Territorial Interventions	National Programme for the Promotion of Educational Success (NPES)		HCOP; POR Algarve
	Integrated and Innovative Plans to Combat School Underachievement (IIPCSU)		POR North; POR Center; POR Alentejo; POR Lisbon
	Educational Priority Intervention Territories (EPIT)		POR North; POR Center; POR Alentejo; POR Algarve; POR Lisbon
Type 3: Transversal Interventions	Ongoing training for teachers, school managers, trainers and other education agents		HCOP
	Psychology and Guidance Services (PGS)		HCOP

Evaluation issues

E11: How effective are the supported interventions in increasing educational attainment, reducing the early school dropout rate, continuing education and increasing employability levels, comparing supported and unsupported young people? (Effectiveness)

E12: Are/were the financial resources, the funding modalities and the operational typologies allocated to the funded activities adequate and sufficient to achieve the defined objectives? Could more outputs and/or results have been achieved with the same resources? (Efficiency)

E13: What are the contributions (general and specific) of PT2020 to the promotion of educational success, the reduction of early school dropout and youth employability, considering its expected and unexpected, direct and indirect effects on the supported participants and the socio-economic context? (Impacts)

E14: Are the results obtained durable over time after the intervention period? (Sustainability)

E15: What is the additional value resulting from the application of the ESF in supporting the interventions evaluated, compared to what would be achieved through other sources of funding? (European Added Value)

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It should be noted that the European Funds have been playing a decisive role in the positive evolution of national educational results, contributing to a convergent trajectory and approaching EU standards, both in terms of qualification of the population, reduction of the early school dropout rate, as well as increasing educational success and improving school performance. Some of the results are more expressive and rapid in some areas - where we highlight the intense decrease of ESD - and others of more gradual achievement, often under structural dynamics more difficult to circumvent, as expressed through the analysis of the evolution of educational success and school performance, or when analysing the dynamics and levels of youth employability. Especially considering the dimension of employability, it is important to clarify that these structural factors are related, on the one hand, to the structure of the national productive fabric, highly marked by the presence of small and medium enterprises, more susceptible to economic fluctuations, many with low qualified labour force and/or in a more precarious condition, and, on the other hand, related to more conjunctural factors, e.g. according to the more general economic situation of the country.

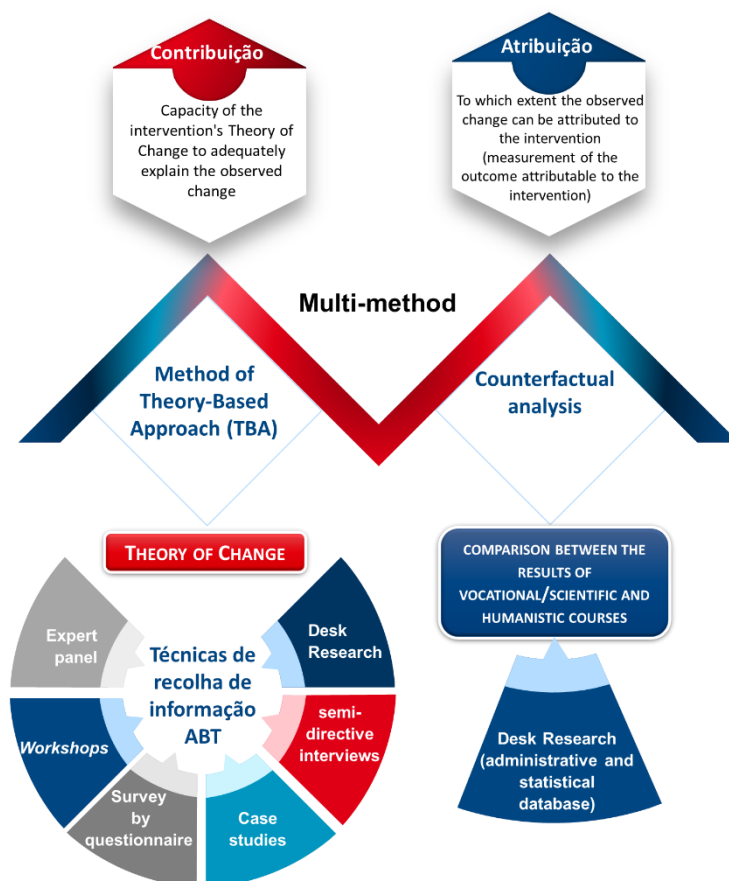
Methodological Approach and Theory of Change

The Evaluation was based on a comprehensive and diversified (multi-method) methodological approach that was built upon a robust theoretical statement. Among others, the main procedures included: 3 extensive surveys of beneficiaries of some of the measures under evaluation (involving a total of 681 valid answers), a counterfactual analysis exercise, the exploitation of social security and education databases and of the information systems of the HCOP and Regional OPs, interviews with key stakeholders (11 in total), a set of Case Studies (11 in total), team discussion periods and a workshop (2) extended to the monitoring bodies.

Figure 1 summarises the methodological path followed, highlighting the Theory-Based Approach using *the Theory of Change (ToC)* as the conceptual guide for the Evaluation and the methodological framework that aimed at data collection and processing.

Thus, on the basis of the accumulated theoretical capital on assessment matters and, above all, on the type of critical factors which conditions the results of the type of operational typology under assessment, it is shown how the problems of the three central dimensions of the Evaluation - school and educational success, ESD and employability - appear related and implicit to each other, e.g.: school retention, the main mechanism for the production of school underachievement, which is socially selective and an endemic problem of the system, is in fact one of the main predictors of early school dropout which, in turn (and together with the overvaluation of the completion of the Secondary Level of Education through the scientific-humanistic paths), contributes to a greater exposure to unemployment, and a higher probability of low qualified integration in the labour market. The still very present trend of rapid absorption of low qualifications by the labour market, accompanied by a greater devaluation of schooling, or the distance from the school context and culture, explains the incidence of ESD in some groups of the school population, which in turn has been contributing to the non-compliance with the 12 years of compulsory education, more evident in some segments of the student population, in some schools and contexts marked by higher rates of selectivity and repeated school underachievement.

Figure 1: Methodological Approach



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The set of critical factors which are identified within this complex ecosystem are then influenced and determined by different protagonists and rationalities, by the dynamics of the field of political decision-making and educational policymaking, and by the conjunctural dynamics of employment/unemployment. These critical factors have an effect at a systemic level and at the level of the practices of educational agents, producing effects which lead to ESD, school underachievement and, in this way, to educational systems which are less prepared for the promotion of equal opportunities and for sustaining the quality of learning. However, given the implications of these phenomena, both for young people (in the present and in the future), for their families, for the economy and for the State (retention and dropout are costly and a waste of invested means), these factors have been the object of continued policy intervention.

Based on the logical operation of the ToC (figure 2) it is argued that each type of measure under evaluation is associated with mechanisms that, once activated, allow reducing, or even eliminating, the dimension and the effects of the critical factors, thus contributing to the maintenance of the effects and desirable results: more school success, less ESD, promotion of youth employment. In this sense, for each set of funded model interventions, a collection and analysis of evidence was carried out to co-opt the understanding of the ways in which each one (and in interaction) is (or is not) activating the mechanisms of change that explain the transformations that occurred in the starting context.

The diversification of the offer that is the main mechanism for adjusting the school offer to the diversity of ambitions, profiles and expectations of students, became an effective reality, being a measure that responds directly to the ESD problem. Thus, associated with Type 1, it was assessed the potentiality for the gearing of four mechanisms (M5, M6, M7, M8) generating change processes, namely

Mechanisms of change associated to the intervention -type: educational offer

- M5. Enhancing the School image and vocational paths
- M6. Better matching of the offer to the needs and expectations of young people and families.
- M7. Greater knowledge and contact between young people and the labour market.
- M8. Ongoing calibration of the educational offer in relation to the needs of the labour market.

The wealth of research developed on underachievement from school contexts and relationship with the environment and surrounding community, gave shape to programmes that promote school success such as **the ETPI - Educational Territories of Priority Intervention**, started in the mid-1990s, which determined an intervention in school territories marked by high levels of school underachievement, absenteeism, indiscipline, and whose school population was at risk of social exclusion. Although the programme has a more preventive logic nowadays, it maintains a good part of its operating philosophy. In addition to this programme, there are two other more recent ones, with a strong territorial component: on the one hand, **the IIPCSUD - Integrated and Innovative Plans to Combat School Underachievement and Dropout**, which is among all those that is most responsive to the challenges of decentralisation of competences, since it directly involves municipalities and intermunicipal communities in school work and educational processes; on the other hand, **the NPPES - National Programme for the Promotion of Educational Success** is a programme that focuses directly on the school space, starting from those that are the resources of origin of schools and the training of school agents to better capitalise and apply them.

Besides the reinforcement of the intervention of such a decisive educational partner as the municipalities, a large part of the actions of these programmes is based on the innovation and transformation of pedagogical models and school organisation processes, and thus to a pedagogy oriented to the students' needs. In theory, the bottom-up process in the definition of the measures taken, as well as the change in educational practices, promotes the solution, or at least the mitigation, of several problems identified in this scope, in a way remarkably close to reality. It should be noted that by reducing school retention, the main predictor of ESD, these measures have a direct effect on school success and the quality of education and an indirect, but particularly important, effect in reducing ESD.

In this way, it was ascertained whether the implementation of programmes with rationales inspired by territorialisation policies and the empowerment of actors (execution model) would be able to promote the following change-generating mechanisms:

Mechanisms of change associated with the standard interventions: capacity-building / territorialised interventions

- M1. Multi-level governance models created that make territorial actors responsible and involve them.
- M2. Integrated strategic action plans created (bottom up) aimed at preventing and combating underachievement.
- M3. HR prepared to diversify /innovate pedagogical and curricular strategies and approaches.
- M4. Strategies of proximity created towards the community and families.

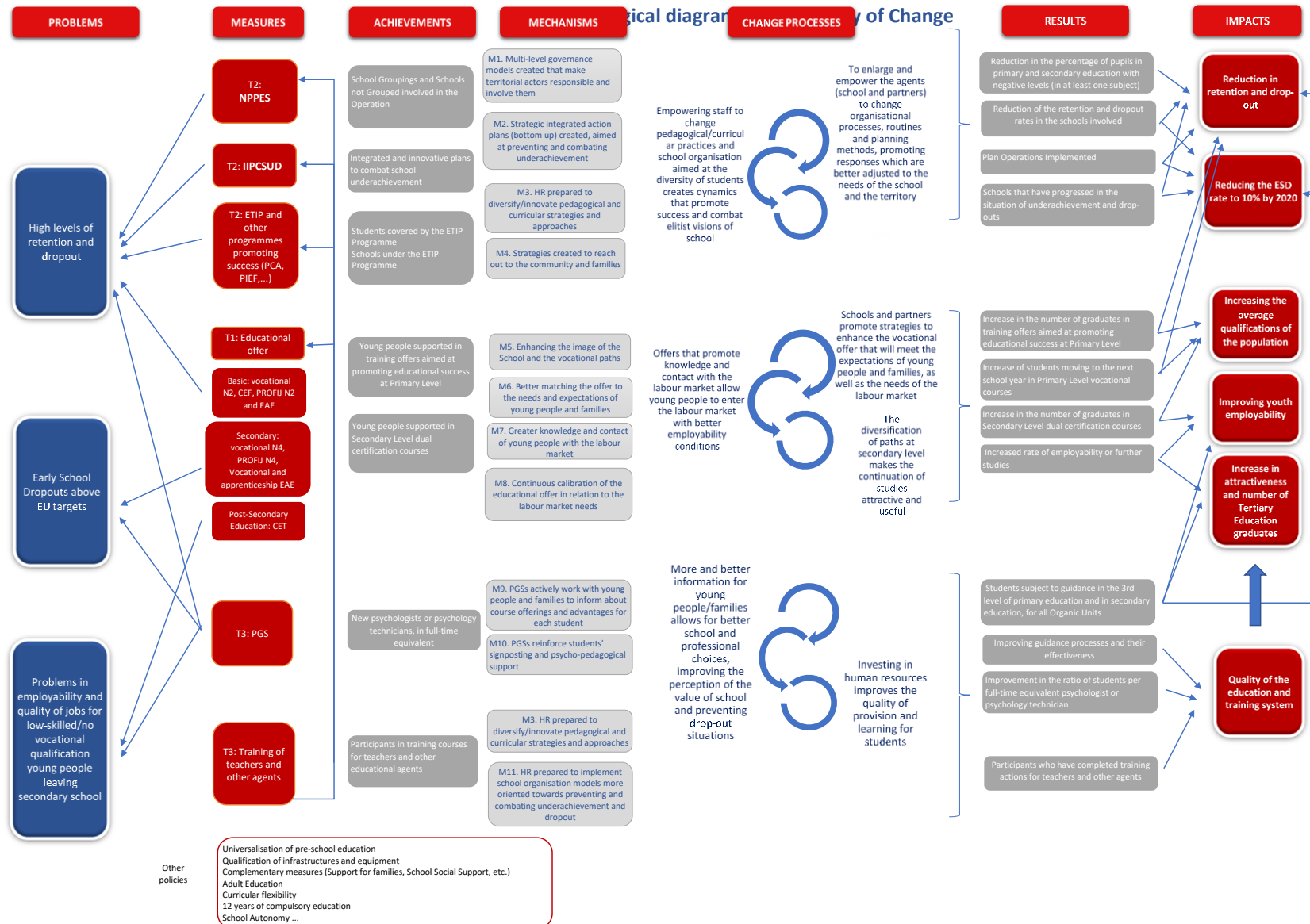
The diversification of the paths, especially betting on dual certification courses (which strongly expanded in the public network), brought new challenges for the role of the PGS which, among other things, should contribute to an informed career guidance adapted to the aspirations and capabilities of the students. In this respect, it was evaluated if the implementation of the supports for the reinforcement of this measure (implementation model) contributed to the production of the mechanisms (M9 and M10) that drive changes in this scope, but also taking into consideration the plan to reinforce the psycho-pedagogical support to the students, with visible effects on the promotion of academic success.

Also included within intervention typology 3 is **ongoing training for teachers** and other educational agents, whose importance is revealed within the framework of profound changes in teaching/learning practices. All the proposed measures imply changes, requiring new skills and new attitudes, and training/qualification is one of the ways to achieve them. Thus, the support directed to this measure (implementation model) and its capacity to influence the mechanisms (M3 and M11) driving change processes was tested.

Mechanisms of change associated to the intervention-type: Transversal - PGS and Continuous Training

- M9. PGSs actively work with young people and families to inform about course offerings and advantages for each student.
- M10. PGSs reinforce students' signalling and psycho-pedagogical support.
- M3. HRs prepared to diversify /innovate pedagogical and curricular strategies and approaches.
- M11. HRs prepared to implement school organisation models more oriented towards preventing and combating underachievement and dropout.

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Counterfactual data analysis

The evaluation of the **impacts of participation in a vocational course (VC)** was tested through a quasi-experimental, synchronic analysis, comparing the situation of beneficiaries of vocational education (treated group) and non-beneficiaries (control or untreated group), using a **Counterfactual Impact Assessment (CIA)** exercise, through the *Coarsened Exact Matching* method. According to the ESF authorities, "these evaluations seek to highlight whether interventions actually improve the situation of programme participants", e.g., they provide an "account of the net effect" and/or the impact of an intervention (European Commission, 2013).

The exercise was carried out for the set of students in the North, Centre and Alentejo regions, aggregating the 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts. The cohort corresponds to the 10th curricular year, the first year of the treatment, which corresponds to the pathway of the Secondary Level of Education. The treatment period considered was three years, referring to the 10th, 11th and 12th curricular years, corresponding to moments t , $t+1$, and $t+2$, respectively (each moment is a year).

Additionally, the target group is characterised by students who: a) in the 9th grade of Primary Education, and throughout their Secondary Education pathway, attended an educational establishment in Portugal; b) in the 9th grade of Primary Education attended regular education; c) in the 9th grade of Primary Education attended public education; d) started the 10th curricular year for the first time in t and at that time were aged between 14 and 18; e) without nationality restrictions; f) born in Portugal or abroad, so it includes natives and 1st and 2nd generation immigrants.

To characterise the factors influencing school performance and labour market performance, the selection of the control variables considered five dimensions: a) sociographic profile of the student; b) family background and material conditions of existence; c) previous schooling pathway and context; d) characterisation of school performance prior to entering Secondary Education; and e) general context during treatment (cohort and region).

The outcome variables mobilized for the treatment of academic performance were the following: percentage of students that moved from grade 10/11th to grade 11/12th, at t ; percentage of students that moved from grade 11/12th to grade 12/13th, at $t+1$; percentage of students that finished grade 12/13th at $t+2$; enrolment in Tertiary Education at $t+3$.

Labour market performance was analysed for the set of students who completed Secondary Education, distinguishing students who did not pursue Tertiary Education studies but entered the labour market (workers), from those who accumulate studies with work (working-students). The following outcome variables, calculated from data from the SSII? (Social Security Integration Institute) database, were used: % of individuals who found work up to 6 to 9 months after completing Secondary Education, e.g. have at least one registration of earnings during that period (between July of the calendar year that finished Secondary Education and March of the following year); % of individuals whose first registration of work in $t+3$ (15 months, July to September), is full-time; % of individuals whose first registration of work in $t+3$ (15 months, July to September), is indefinite; average n° of months with registration, for individuals that have at least one registration in $t+3$ (12 months, October to September); average n° of months with 30 days of registration, for individuals that have at least one registration in $t+3$ (12 months, October to September); total n° of days worked, for individuals that have at least one registration in $t+3$ (12 months, October to September); average daily pay, for individuals that have at least one registration in $t+3$ (12 months, October to September).

In the data processing phase, just over 31 thousand cases of students from vocational courses belonging to the target group were validated. After pairing these cases with students from the control group, and by means of a sensitivity analysis, it is found that the final group of students from the vocational courses under study represents about one third of the total number of students funded by the HCOP in that period, and about 30% of the total number of students in vocational courses.

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Evaluation Results/Conclusions

Effectiveness of the supported interventions in increasing school success, reducing the early school dropout rate, continuing studies and increasing employability levels, comparing supported and unsupported young people.

- The counterfactual analysis aimed at comparing the results in terms of school success and dropout, employability and the continuation of studies after Secondary Education, between the graduates of funded vocational courses and the graduates of humanistic scientific courses.
- It allowed the conclusion that there is a net effect of attending vocational courses for an improvement in academic success. In a specific segment of students from the VC receiving HCOP funding, the estimate of the global impact of attending those courses is positive with regard to the transition from the 10th grade (for each 100 students, 74 of the SHC (Scientific and Humanistic Courses) and 99 of the VC pass) and 11th grade (for each 100 students, 67 of the SHC and 98 of the VC pass) curricular years and the conclusion of the 12th grade (for each 100 students, 45 of the SHC and 87 of the VC complete the education).
- Conversely, the results suggest a negative overall average impact on enrolment in Tertiary Education, which is also related to the prevalent orientation of these courses towards immediate insertion in the labour market.
- The net effect of VC attendance is equally strong in several sub-groups analysed, with a greater balance of academic performance results observed among the group of HCOP-funded VC students, compared to the group of SHC students.
- Other results point to the effectiveness of these offers in reducing social inequalities, since the analysis carried out by subgroups shows that certain segments of students who are more exposed to school underachievement and ESD benefit from attending a vocational course, increasing their chances of achieving academic success.
- That is to say, that VCs level up more in Secondary School performance than SHCs, regardless of the Primary School context that marked the previous pathway.
- In overall average terms, the impact of attending a vocational course on the insertion in the labour market and on the labour market pathway up to 15 months after the end of secondary education is positive. In any case, the specificities of the impact differ according to whether we analyse the group of students that after completing secondary education is only working, or the group of students that is working-student (in Tertiary Education).
- It should be noted that considering the variable "gender", the study shows an alignment with some trends observed at the level of inequality in the labour market, thus showing the weight of the structural effect of these dynamics between men and women. On the one hand, VC has a positive impact on the results in both groups, although it tends to be greater for men when the labour path is involved (number of months and days of work and average daily pay); this contributes to the increase of some of the inequalities already very present in the set of SHC. On the other hand, this effect is attenuated when the variables consider the immediate entry into the labour market (finding a job up to 6 to 9 months after finishing the 12th grade, and full-time employment), e.g., the inequality between men and women is less visible.

Efficiency: Adequacy and capacity of financial resources, financing modalities and Operational Typologies to achieve the defined objectives.

- - The analysis of the profile of the support granted shows that they are mainly concentrated in the Type 1-educational offer, where the vocational courses stand out (Type 1 absorbs 90% of the ESF allocation of the IPs covered in the Evaluation and the vocational courses 63% of that allocation 1). The vocational courses, combined with other modalities aimed at more specific publics/needs, have allowed a diversification and qualification of the offer, which, throughout the Evaluation, has been presented as one of the determinant aspects for the reduction of ESD and for the promotion of educational success.
- - The support integrated in the remaining types (classified, in the framework of the Evaluation, as Type 2 and Type 3), also reveal high levels of effectiveness, justifying the levels of funding and their adequacy.

¹ According to figures in OP programming documents, reprogramming 2018

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- - In the case of vocational education offers, the analysis also shows that they tend to have a lower cost per student (the cost per student enrolled in vocational education offers is 300.7 € while the cost per student in other offers of the 2nd and 3rd level of Primary Education and Secondary Education is 479.2 €), thus allowing not only to increase completion levels, but also to reduce the costs associated with school retention, which translates into better efficiency levels.
- - Considering the dynamics of approval and financial execution and the levels of achievement and results identified, the available resources generally appear adequate to ensure the ambition of the results defined.
- - Supported by the range of evidence gathered, namely considering the interviews and case studies conducted, it is considered that the reduction or absence of ESIF funding would seriously jeopardise the results achieved in terms of promoting the reduction of early school dropout and improving educational success. Therefore, the Evaluation concludes that the results and impacts achieved justify the financial resources of the ESIF mobilised.

Impact: Contributions (general and specific) of PT2020 to the promotion of educational success, the reduction of early school dropout and the employability of young people.

Educational Offer (Type 1)

- - The VCs are the main response to the reception of students with school trajectories marked by school retention and academic underachievement.
- - It is also a way out for pupils coming from alternative pathways in Primary Education.
- - Because of their value as an educational option, namely by allowing both the completion of Secondary Education and the achievement of a professional qualification recognised on the market, vocational and apprenticeship courses are the main factor explaining the reduction of early school dropout.
- - There is a chain of effects, which explains the reduction of school dropouts, through the reduction of retention, and the subsequent reduction of early school dropout (e.g., without completing Secondary Education), generated to a certain extent by the diversification of education modalities at this educational level.
- - The Contrafactual exercise confirms the positive effect and impact of VC in the promotion of academic success, but also regarding the employability dimension.
- - VCs allow students from families with fewer resources and with other predictors of underachievement (e.g., lacking computer equipment, less educated, immigrant, older, male, who generally have worse school results) to meet the goal of compulsory education after all.
- - The evidence gathered shows, in a general way, good results, so several actions are identified that frame the volume of the mechanisms associated to this measure (in particular M6 and M7).
- - However, the results suggest some weaknesses in the issues involving the valorisation of the school and the offers, despite the register of several actions that try to counter this trend; and in the issues of the calibration of the educational offer in response to the labour market needs, much because of the governance model of vocational courses that leaves little margin for a local network intervention, involving schools, training centres, municipalities and companies, in order to respond to the different needs, namely the completion of Secondary Education by young people and fuelling the labour market with the necessary qualifications in the present and in the future.

Capacity Building / Territorialised Interventions (Type 2) - EPIT/NPPES/IIPCSUD

- - The programmes highlighted in the evaluation have contributed to better educational results and better performance in the schools where they operate. Overall, it is considered that they have had a relevant impact on reversing school underachievement and retracting early school dropout (see Table 2, ETIP Measures, NPPES and IIPCSUD).
- - At this point, the EPIT programme clearly stands out for the fundamental role it has played in recent years in combating school underachievement, being currently considered one of the main factors explaining the reversal observed in the national school underachievement rates and, consequently, in the fight against school dropout and absenteeism.

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- - Due to their bottom-up nature and the fact that they seek to be better adjusted to the territories and their school audiences, these measures have, above all, introduced a set of resources and tools in schools that have triggered important changes in teachers' practices and school actions in general.
- - At this point, the NPPES works from those that are the source resources of the schools, investing in the capacity building of school agents and fostering more innovative and flexible teaching/learning contexts. In any case, by the end of 2018, the schools in the PNPSE network benefited from an increased allocation of resources with the support of the HCOP, fundamentally human, for the implementation of their plans.
- - The IIPCSUD represents a relevant step in the decentralisation process of educational policy, enabling and mediating the very intervention of municipalities in the school system. They represent essentially an important contribution in the reinforcement of resources for schools, but also in the diversification of the type of educational intervention, since many of the actions take place outside the classroom and outside the school, involving other educational actors.
- - Compared to the NPPES and EPIT, however, the IIPCSUD reveals greater dispersion at the level of proposed interventions.
- - The evaluation also showed that these programmes work very closely together, and it is recurrent to encounter bridges between them, especially between IIPCSUD and NPPES.
- - Overall, the assessment allows concluding that most of the mechanisms considered are activated, with results seen in the general indicators of school success. However, greater weaknesses are, for example, seen in relation to the mechanisms that should enhance greater involvement of families and the community in school activities and in the educational students' life.

Transversal Interventions (Type 3) - PGS and Teacher Training

- - The PGSs are an important resource for schools in the context of strategies to combat school underachievement and dropout, particularly considering the levels of Primary Education.
- - They have a capacity to promote an informed dynamic on aspects concerning transition to working life, on professions and on opportunities for further studies.
- - The evidence gathered points to work on the psycho-pedagogical monitoring of students, particularly through preventive actions implemented at Primary School Level.
- - Regarding career guidance, employability and further studies, the effects of the PGSs are less evident. This is mainly because the vocational guidance activities do not have the desirable scope among the target public, namely among the young people who choose the vocational pathways (despite the increase in the number of technicians allocated to schools).
- - In part, the problem is systemic, as it can be verified: that the national strategy itself, which aims at the implementation of this orientation, is poorly calibrated and adapted to a school system which is more and more diversified in terms of offers and student population; that in many contexts the ratio of students/psychologist does not allow the development of an adequate work; or even, that the competition between school establishments regarding the offers, does not allow the creation of a real network of offers which contributes to robust and adjusted school guidance dynamics.
- - In terms of Continuous Teacher Training, the evidence points, in general, to visible contributions to the improvement of educational results. Especially considering the classroom contexts, through the promotion of more appropriate pedagogical and curricular strategies, or collaborative work practices.
- - The major constraints often come in the post-training phase, with several gaps being reported in schools (in terms of resources, equipment and educational projects) that make it impossible for teachers to apply the volume of knowledge and skills acquired.
- - It should be noted the relevant role of Teacher Training in the context of the building of the NPPES and its implementation in schools in the country.

Impact: Sustainability of results after the intervention period

- The contribution of the measures under evaluation was decisive at two different levels: school and professional qualifications in the labour market and in society, and the overall improvement of the performance of the education system, measured in the indicators of improvement of the educational success of students, the rise in qualification levels, the sharp reduction of Early School Dropout and the transition to the labour market.
- Thus, an increasing number of young people complete Secondary Education every year, and a large proportion do so through paths that confer a double certification. The field of qualifications, but also of training actions, being embedded in people, persists over time, contributing to results that positively affect the socio-economic and cultural structure of society.
- The co-funded policies are related to each other and operate in a synergic framework with other non-co-funded policy measures; therefore, they have a systemic character, and the failure of one measure may determine relevant losses in the effectiveness of others.
- Even though some of the measures present reasonable sustainability mechanisms, mainly seen through the effects produced by the result indicators - as is the case of the educational supply, or with the capacity building measures of the PNPSE - we conclude that the maintenance of the policies supported by the ESIF, which include "regular" policy measures of the education system, would not have been possible, or would have been residual, in the absence of co-financing.
- The profile of the results achieved will tend to be maintained, given the centrality that the measures occupy in the system and the contribution they make to its performance. This centrality justifies the need for continued funding.
- The positive effects of PT2020 will continue to manifest themselves through increased schooling, broadening knowledge, skills and qualifications, benefiting from a higher quality and more equitable system that offers more opportunities for educational success and qualified integration into the labour market; families can see in schooling a future for their children and young people; at school level, pedagogical innovation, diversification of the offer, new curricular contents, teacher training with long-term implications, openness to the environment, etc., should be highlighted; the labour market will have more qualified workers at the entrance, and more prepared for lifelong learning and adaptation to change; and at education system level, preparation for a more in-depth intervention by the municipalities and with an increased image and credibility due to better global results.

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Table 2: Illustrative results and impacts of the measures under evaluation

Measure	Implementation	Mechanisms with integral confirmation	Mechanisms with partial confirmation	Illustrative results	Impact on academic success	Impact on ESD	Impact on youth employment
EPIT Programme	121 schools	M1 M2 M3	M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EPIT Evaluation Data 2012-18: Period 2014/15-2017/18 ✓ Retention rates 1st level: -3,2 p.p. ✓ Retention rates 2nd level: -5,1 p.p. ✓ Retention rates 3rd level: -4,2 p.p. ✓ Drop-out and absenteeism rates 3rd level: around 2% to 5%. ✓ Secondary Level of Education retention rates CCH: -3,2 p.p. ✓ VC Secondary Level retention rates: -2.5 p.p. ✓ Secondary Level dropout and absenteeism rates in the order of 2%. ✓ 55% less retention in Secondary Level of Education, considering the period 2012-2018 ✓ Less 46% of school retention in 3rd level, considering the period 2012-2018. ✓ 89% of students achieving positive classification in Portuguese and 78% in Mathematics in the 6th grade (2017/18). ✓ 87% of students with positive classification in Portuguese and 62% in Mathematics in the 9th grade (2017/18). ✓ 91% of students with positive answers in Portuguese and 82% in Mathematics in the 12th grade (2017/18). 	+++	+++	+
NPPES	513 schools	M1 M2 M3	M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mission structure data: ✓ 16% in the % of students with at least one negative classification. ✓ 29% school retention in Primary Level of Education (2016-18). ✓ 70 mil teachers involved in training (2016-18). HCOP data ✓ Reduction in the rate of 1st, 2nd, 3rd level and Secondary Level students with negative classification (in at least one subject) in the curricular years covered, proposed for approval: North 9.20%; Centre 7.3%; Alentejo 6.3%. ✓ Decrease in the retention and dropout rate in the curricular years covered, proposed for approval: North 27.0%; Centre 20.2%; Alentejo 18.7%. 	+++	++	+

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Measure	Implementation	Fully confirmed mechanisms	Partially confirmed mechanisms	Illustrative results	Impact on academic success	Impact on ESD	Impact on youth employment
IIPCSUD	206 operations	M1 M2 M3	M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More than 80% of the actions aimed at improving school results in Primary Education ✓ More than 80% enabled the creation of multidisciplinary teams that provide a multi-level response <p>Between 70% and 80% of actions aimed at supporting the diversification of learning strategies/environments and curricular enrichment activities; + initiatives to promote the involvement of families and/or parental training.</p>	+++	++	+
Educational Offer	37.529 students in Primary Education 220.912 students in Secondary Education	M6 M7	M5 M8	<p>Counterfactual data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Out of 100 students, 87 from VC and 45 from SHC complete Secondary Education. ✓ On average, success in VC is less associated with various school backgrounds. ✓ Out of 100 students, 54 from VC and 36 from SHC found their first job between 6 to 9 months. <p>HCOP data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 77% of graduates in Primary Level training offers in 2018. ✓ 85% of students moved on to the next year of schooling in ISCED 2 level courses in 2017. ✓ 69% graduates in Secondary Level courses in 2018. ✓ 72% of students who successfully completed the Vocational Courses offer. ✓ are employed or in further education, 6 months after completion. 	+++	+++	++
Teacher training	61.081 teachers	M11 M3		97% of teachers have completed the training	++	++	+
SPO	467 psychologists	M10	M9	1005 students per psychologist	++	++	++

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European Added Value (EAV) resulting from the implementation of the ESF.

- The assessment of the added value of ESIF support involved identifying the main dimensions of effect (volume, scope, function and process), gathering evidence to determine the extent to which ESIF operations produced effects that would not otherwise have occurred. It is concluded that, through the broadening of the profile of financed interventions, added value was generated in all dimensions covered.
- There were important investments that led to volume effects in terms of the participation of target groups (teachers and students), the number of actions and the widening of the geographical scope and scale of implementation of key programmes such as NPPES and IIPCSUD.
- The PT2020 investment has allowed a greater concentration of measures targeting the early years of Primary Education, acting preventively and actively in mitigating retention rates and school underachievement.
- Important role effects are registered, either in supporting the transfer of ideas, the introduction of innovations and structural reforms, such as the development of local or regional educational strategies, or the implementation of new educational approaches and strategies at national level. Evidence was also found of role effects of innovation processes in educational practices and creation of decentralised responses leading to results in educational success (and retention and drop-out rates).
- PT2020 funding has led to structural changes, including: the development of local and regional educational strategies, the implementation of new educational approaches and strategies at national level and a greater appreciation of the key role of sharing good practices and testing action models that can become mainstreaming activities and practices.
- Finally, the process effects include, at a first level, the institutional and administrative change and the new territorial governance models created. Such effects include the decentralization process from the implementation of IIPCSUD and the strategies of rapprochement between educational agents and educational communities in the different territories. At a second level, the ESIF induced the development of new tools and processes for project management and monitoring. In this context, the support of the ESIF leads to sustainable improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the operations carried out, through the logic (and requirement) of results-oriented, and by the perceived need for a higher level of strategic monitoring practices, evaluation and demonstration of results of the various school projects (especially those under the IIPCSUD and NPPES).

Recommendations of the Evaluation, ways of making them operational and main parties responsible for their implementation

Recommendation 1: focus on the continuity of funding for the diversification of training courses, especially vocational ones

Operationalisation:

- Need to strengthen measures that induce change in the mindset about vocational offers. These occur via the social devaluation of the image and by negative social representations, in the community in general, but especially among the students themselves (see Operational REC 8). Representative evidence of these factors was observed during the evaluation process.

- Improvement of the adjustment process of the offers to the labour market needs and to the students' demand, through the quick operationalization of the anticipation process of the qualifications needs in the different sectors and territories (SAQN - *System for Anticipating Qualification Needs* – NAQVE - *National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education*), namely through quick updates of the first studies before the beginning of the preparation of the school years, as well as the realization of regional in-depth studies for a better planning of the educational/training offer at an inter-municipal scale. In any case, it is considered that this process cannot play against situations in which the authorisation for the opening of vocational courses is justified more for reasons of fighting dropouts than to respond to the labour market needs. In other words, if a school or grouping of schools needs to open a course for reasons related to the conclusion of Secondary Education by a group of young people for whom this course is the most appropriate solution, this should not be prevented only by reasons of mismatch in relation to the relevance of that course from the point of view of the labour market.

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Nor does it exempt a more micro, networked and more frequent work, through the involvement of educational partners (schools, training centres, municipalities, associations and companies) in the monitoring and planning of the offer. The scale of the IMC (Intermunicipal Community) is adequate for planning, allowing the supply network to be planned in an efficient way, but it does not exempt a more disaggregated work at the municipality level, not only at the level of the plan, but also at the level of the evaluation of the results and the contributions of the different partners.

- Consider the creation of an external structure to the school (even though the PGS function is internal to the schools) to carry out sessions and activities with the students, aiming at their vocational orientation, for example, at municipal level.

- To extend support (even if only national) to all educational territories, including territories not eligible for European funding, which demonstrate high levels of outdated equipment for PC, lower levels of pedagogical innovation, absence of multi-level articulated planning, among other characteristics.
- Revision of the bond and professional status of teachers of vocational courses (recognized as trainers and not teachers by the system).
- Conducting in-depth study(s) on the employability of graduates of vocational training offers, including dimensions such as the quality of employment and the matching between the training areas and the profile of activities performed in the professional pathway.

Responsibles for Operationalisation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Thematic and Regional OP Managing Authorities. | ✓ Madeira Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ Ministry of Education | ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ NAQVE | |

Recommendation 2: Invest in the continuity of funding and interventions with a territorial basis in terms of expression and design.

Operationalisation:

- Extend the life cycle of co-financed educational projects, namely the territorially based interventions (in the case of IIPCSUD, 3 years of project are considered scarce for the production and consolidation of results, in a framework in which intermittency disfavours educational efficiency).
- Orientation towards more structuring initiatives from the point of view of the connection to the permanent needs of the territories, in order to counteract the territorial asymmetries that still exist in the implementation.
- To reinforce the synergies of IIPCSUD actions with the action and resources of schools/school groupings.
- Access to consultancy regarding funding sources in order to be able to continue the actions/activities implemented in IIPCSUD.
- External evaluation or "external" monitoring of the ongoing projects of the IIPCSUD programme and of the NPPES, in order to understand what restructuring is needed, as well as the implementation priorities and the distribution of resources.

Responsibles for Operationalisation:

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|--|---|
| ✓ Thematic and Regional OP Managing Authorities. | ✓ Madeira Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ Ministry of Education | ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ CRCDD (Commission for Regional Coordination and Development) North, Centre, LVT, Alentejo, Algarve | |

Recommendation 3. Proceed with the revision of the ETPI Programme, in articulation with the NPPES.

Operationalisation:

- Conducting a study of the characteristics of the Groupings and schools of the Continent, in order to generate a debate and to determine eligibility criteria for the ETPI Programme from the social composition of the classes. The study should aim at a better targeting of the ETPI's goals and a fairer distribution of resources among Groupings with equal context conditions.
- Creating mechanisms for contracting the ETPI results, with reference to the needs of schools (individually considered) and not the clusters.
- To ensure that the ETPIs have a logic of school intervention in the territory and of the agents of the territory in the schools.

Responsible for Operationalisation:

- ✓ ME - Ministry of Education

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Recommendation 4. Exploration and mainstreaming of activities and practices aimed at preventing and combating school underachievement.

Operationalisation:

- Strengthen the multidisciplinary Team structure and ensure the continuity of the multidisciplinary teams already created to intervene in risk factors and respond to the needs of students, in order to model and disseminate good practices.
- To encourage integrated strategic action plans (bottom up) throughout the national territory (including territories not covered by European funding).
- Practices of experimentation and transfer of actions/projects previously tested and with proven results
- Promotion of seminars and workshops to share projects and their results, especially the dissemination of new pedagogical resources and practices

Responsible for Operationalisation:

- ✓ Ministry of Education
- ✓ NPPES Mission Structure
- ✓ Madeira Regional Directorate of Education
- ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education
- ✓ CRCD North, Centre, LVT, Alentejo, Algarve
- ✓ IMC/Municipalities

Recommendation 5: Strengthen and extend the investment of the Digital Transition Plan to meet the needs of incorporating digital tools in education processes

Operationalisation:

- Continuity and reinforcement of technological equipment projects in schools and for students
- Support for students and families in need of access to equipment and WIFI network
- Teacher training for the use of technological resources and innovative teaching practices
- Plans to train and raise the awareness of parents and guardians in order to guarantee conditions and procedures to support distance learning.

Responsible for Operationalisation:

- ✓ Thematic and Regional OP Managing Authorities
- ✓ Ministry of Education
- ✓ Madeira Regional Directorate of Education
- ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education
- ✓ IMC/MA (Metropolitan Area)

Recommendation 6: Strengthening the functions of the SPO.

Operationalisation:

- Creation of Working Groups in the regional context of PGS services and the creation of a digital database of resources or materials for evaluation and inter-municipal/district intervention.
- Continuity of support for the hiring of PGS and respective optimization of the student/SPO ratio based on the study of the effectiveness of student/PGS ratios. - Improved articulation between school technicians and the network of municipal teams, enhancing successful experiences.
- To reinforce the importance of the PGSs regarding their intervention with young people who end up choosing vocational and professional paths
- To invest in the multidisciplinary of the PGS teams, ensuring a diversification of technicians with different areas of expertise
- To consider the creation of structures outside the school that would work at local level with students in terms of school and career guidance, considering the school network and not only each grouping.
- Improving the effectiveness of information strategies and vocational guidance, disseminating information on the network of offers and extending the activities to students and families
- Improving the articulation between school technicians and the network of municipal teams, enhancing successful experiences.
- To guide Schools towards the creation of information and vocational guidance programmes with more intentionality and scope (preferably the universe of students at a certain point in their school career (for example, in the 8th and 9th grades), and not only in response to students seeking the services)
- Investing in the production and, above all, updating and use of resources to support guidance, and also media campaigns aimed at enhancing the different offers among the school public, but also among the general public.
- Reduce the administrative burden and reduce paperwork associated with ESIF requirements in the case of contracted PGSs (daily activity logs, among others).

Responsible for Operationalisation:

- ✓ DGSE (Directorate-General for School Establishments)/DGE (Directorate-General for Education)/ NAQVE
- ✓ Regional Directorate of Education of Azores
- ✓ Regional Directorate of Education of Madeira

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Recommendation 7: Invest in HR investment in schools and reinforce the Training of Teachers and other educational agents.

Operationalisation:

- Strengthening of training programmes and training offers for the training of teachers in primary and secondary levels of education.
- Creation of continuous training offers for the continuous qualification of professionals teaching in vocational education, in technical areas of the respective courses and in pedagogical matters.
- Creation of training offers for other educational professionals, such as auxiliary staff of educational action.
- Widening the range of available offers and diversifying the profile of recipients

Responsible for Operationalisation:

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| ✓ Directorate-General for School Establishments | ✓ Madeira's Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ DGSA - Directorate-General for School Administration | ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education |

Recommendation 8: Enhancing the image of the School and of the vocational paths and combating prejudice and negative social representations associated with vocational offers.

Operationalisation:

- Broad promotion of information and dissemination initiatives among parents, carers and students (such as the national professions championship).
- Important contributions to fighting social stigma: dissemination of success stories, Erasmus +, use of the media.
- Targeted campaigns for parents and students, TV, radio, Internet, billboards, public transport, social networks, influencers, etc....
- Greater orientation of the SPOs to combat the social stigma associated with vocational paths.
- Launch of a programme to re-qualify infrastructures and equipment.
- Continuously promote participative processes in the socio-educational community.
- Revision of the professional bond and status of teachers of professional education (recognized as teachers and not as trainers by the system).

Responsible for Operationalisation:

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| ✓ Regional Directorates of Education (Mainland, ARA - Autonomous Region of the Azores and ARM - Autonomous Region Of Madeira) | ✓ NAQVE |
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Recommendation 9: Creation of Community and Family Outreach Strategies.

Operationalisation:

- Develop effective teamwork, in cooperation between students, parents and guardians, teachers/assistants/educators, Schools/groups, Municipalities and other entities linked to the area of Education.
- Encourage the articulation between the Municipality and the different community agents, increasing and building a constant networking and introducing changes in the educational community.
- Continuously promote participative processes in the socio-educational community.
- Creation of Student and Family Support Offices.
- Creation of multidisciplinary groups in schools and that include, among others, elements from Social Security and the Ministry of Justice, to reinforce the connection with families.

Responsible for Operationalisation:

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| ✓ Ministry of Education | ✓ Azores Regional Directorate of Education |
| ✓ NPPES Mission Structure | ✓ CRCD North, Centre, LVT, Alentejo, Algarve |
| ✓ Madeira Regional Directorate of Education | ✓ IMC/MA |

Recommendation 10: Enhance and institutionalise strategic monitoring, evaluation and results demonstration practices.

Operationalisation:

- Conducting an external evaluation of NPPES.
- Ensuring scientific and technical support inherent to the planning of socio-educational policies.
- Basing the projects or measures on a culture of impact measurement.
- Ensuring continued access to a strategic guidance document base - Municipal Observatories.
- Formative approaches/sharing of experiences focused on improving the monitoring and evaluation processes of the Strategic Action Plans, with evidence in the creation of quality observatories.
- To provide the technical structures of the Managing Authorities with clear guidelines about the calculation procedures of the result indicators, anticipating difficulties and ensuring the adoption of adequate calculation methods.

Responsible for Operationalisation:

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| ✓ Thematic and Regional OP Managing Authorities | ✓ Ministry of Education |
| ✓ Agency for Development and Cohesion (ADC) | ✓ CRCD North, Centre, LVT, Alentejo, Algarve |