**Legal Framework**

**Integration**

**Portugal**

Portugal has a new Inclusive Education Law since July 2018. The law concerns not only students with special needs but all students as it provides innovative inclusive resources for schools.

The present decree-law provides a continuous and integrated approach to the school path of each student, assuring quality throughout all compulsory schooling.

Following a rigorous evaluation of the past ten years, the legislation has been further strengthened to guarantee truly universal access and inclusion for all. The key features of the new Decree-Law 54/6 July 2018 require schools to provide a multidisciplinary team to support inclusive education.  It is the responsibility of the multidisciplinary team to:

* raise awareness of the educational community towards inclusive education;
* propose the students’ learning support measures be mobilised;
* follow up and monitor the implementation of the learning support measures;
* advise teachers about the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices.

This new Decree-Law creates a new school support structure, the Learning Support Centre (LSC).  It combines human and material resources, knowledge and skills with competencies of the school. The specific objectives of the Learning Support Centre are:

1. to promote the quality of students’ participation in the activities of the class to which they belong and in other learning contexts;
2. to support the teachers of the group or class to which the students belong;
3. to support the creation of learning resources and assessment tools for the various components of the curriculum;
4. to develop interdisciplinary intervention methodologies that facilitate the processes of learning, autonomy and adaptation to the school context;
5. to promote the development of structured environments, rich in communication and interaction, which promote learning;
6. to support the organisation of the transition process to post-school life.

With this new law on inclusive education, together with supportive political measures that are taking place, Portugal takes another big step towards truly inclusive schools. These schools will ensure that each student, regardless of their personal and social situation, will find answers that enable them to acquire a level of education and training which will, in turn, enable them to be fully socially integrated.

The New Law requires that the provision of supports for all students be determined, managed and provided at the regular school level in regular classrooms, with local multidisciplinary teams responsible for determining what support is necessary to ensure **ALL** students (regardless of labels, categorisation or a determination of disability) have access to, and the means to participate effectively, in education with a view to full inclusion in society.

The key features of the New Law, which is based on principles of universal design for learning and a multi-level approach to curriculum access, include:

* Schools being required to develop a documented framework for the creation of an inclusive school culture that values diversity.
* School multi-disciplinary teams being responsible for raising awareness of the need for school cultural and process transformation at a whole-of-school level, while discharging their main function of identifying, evaluating and adjusting specific measures and strategies to support the learning of every student and overcoming barriers (including environmental) to every students’ individualised learning.
* Emphasis on autonomy and responsibility for inclusion at the individual school level – with external specialised support when required.
* Measures are decided on a case-by-case basis according to their specific needs, potential, interests and preferences, through a multi-level graduated approach comprised of:
* universal measures – applicable to all students;
* selective measures – to address deficiencies in universal measures – to be sourced from the school’s resources; and
* additional measures – to address more intense communication, interaction, cognitive or learning difficulties that require specialised resources.

The New Law is a natural further step in Portugal transferring the expertise and resources of its former separate “special education” system for students with significant disability to supporting the inclusion of all students in regular classrooms within mainstream schools.

**Sources:**

Portuguese Decree Law 54/2018 (<http://allmeansall.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DL-54_2018_EN-Version.pdf>)

websites:

<http://allmeansall.org.au/portugals-new-school-inclusion-law-small-country-taking-big-steps-spirit-means/>

<https://www.european-agency.org/news/innovative-new-inclusive-education-law-portugals-schools>