

REPORT

Protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Portugal

Maria Assunção Flores and Diana Pereira

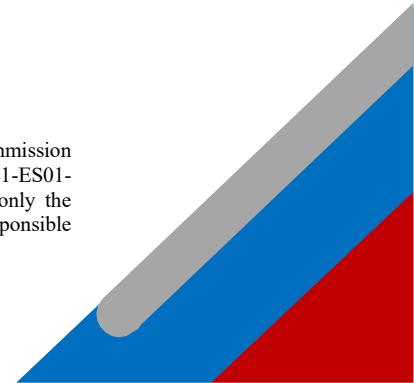


REPORT Protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Portugal © 2025 by Observatory SOS-Attendance is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



CONTENTS

- 1. Impact of school attendance problems**
- 2. Framework and scholar absenteeism in Portugal**
- 3. Method of research, revision and analysis of protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Portugal**
- 4. Characteristics of the protocols of action**
- 5. Limitations and future proposals**
- 6. Conclusions**
- 7. References**
- 8. Annexes**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1. Impact of school attendance problems

School attendance constitutes a decisive factor for educational success and for the promotion of equal opportunities. International research has consistently demonstrated that frequent absences from school can have significant repercussions on students' academic achievement, social integration, and psychological well-being, and may ultimately lead to early school leaving (Brandibas et al., 2004; Kearney, 2008). Although many students attend classes regularly without difficulty, a considerable proportion face attendance problems, including lateness and sporadic or prolonged absences, which are frequently linked to a variety of individual, familial, social, or economic causes (Havik, 2015; Thambirajah et al., 2008). Such absences—whether justified or not—pose an educational challenge with short-, medium-, and long-term implications, both for students' personal development and for the advancement of their communities. School absenteeism can generate self-perpetuating cycles that are difficult to break, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and producing adverse social, psychological, and academic outcomes (Lyon & Cotler, 2007; Reid, 2005). Hence the importance of identifying, analysing, and understanding the multiple reasons behind student absences, ranging from legitimate causes—such as illness or family circumstances—to illegitimate ones, such as refusal to attend school (Kearney & Silverman, 1999). In Portugal, school attendance problems (SAP) are understood as unjustified school absences (absenteeism), partial absences from classes, late arrivals, avoidance behaviours before school, and barriers (structural, economic, health-related) that hinder participation. In distance/online learning, SAP manifest



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

as missed logins, incomplete tasks, lack of interaction, and disengagement. These behaviours affect students' academic performance (learning gaps, grade retention), social integration (peer isolation, reduced belonging), and personal development (mental health, early entry into labour market or inactivity). National and European data highlight that while Portugal has strongly reduced its early school leaving (ESL) rate over the past 15 years, vulnerable groups remain at risk (students in disadvantaged socio-economic contexts, with special educational needs, or in transition years).

2. Framework and scholar absenteeism in Portugal

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic guarantees the right to education as a fundamental right and establishes compulsory schooling up to the age of 18. This legal framework is operationalised through national legislation, strategic plans, and targeted programs designed to ensure access to education while preventing absenteeism and early school leaving (ESL). Promoting student retention and academic success is a national priority, reflecting Portugal's commitment to social inclusion, human capital development, and sustainable economic growth. Since 2010, Portugal has implemented a series of national and intermunicipal initiatives aimed at reducing ESL. These programs combine preventive, supportive, and corrective measures, coordinated across schools, municipalities, and other local stakeholders. Key initiatives include:



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- **National Education Plan (Plano Nacional de Educação, 2014–2020):** Established quantitative and qualitative targets for youth education and inclusion, promoting integrated strategies to reduce early school leaving, improve academic outcomes, and support lifelong learning.
- **National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (Programa Nacional para a Promoção do Sucesso Escolar – PNPSE, 2016–present):** Coordinates interventions between schools and municipalities, providing pedagogical support, socio-educational assistance, and early identification of students at risk of dropping out.
- **Qualifica Programme (2017–present):** Offers second-chance education and vocational pathways, enabling young people and adults who left formal education prematurely to acquire both academic qualifications and professional skills, thus enhancing employability and social integration.
- **Portugal 2020/2030 – Intermunicipal Plans for School Success (Planos Intermunicipais para o Sucesso Escolar – PIPSE):** Funds large-scale local interventions, fostering collaboration between schools, municipalities, and civil society organizations, and ensuring programs are tailored to local social and economic contexts.
- **Municipal protocols and regional plans** in cities such as Lisbon, Porto, Maia, Leiria, and Algarve provide proximity-based and contextually adapted interventions, strengthening community engagement and addressing specific regional challenges.

These coordinated efforts have produced significant results. Portugal’s early school leaving rate declined from over 30% in 2000 to below 10% in 2022, achieving the European Union benchmark. This decline reflects the effectiveness of integrated national strategies and localized interventions, as well as the sustained political commitment to education and social inclusion.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Nevertheless, regional and socio-economic disparities persist. Inland regions and certain metropolitan areas continue to experience higher ESL rates. Socio-economic factors—including family income, parental education, unemployment, and access to educational resources—remain critical determinants of school retention. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected, highlighting the need for policies that address both educational and social inequalities. Best practices at the municipal level demonstrate how local interventions can complement national policies. In Lisbon and Porto, for example, mentoring programs, after-school tutoring, and family engagement initiatives have targeted students at risk of early school leaving. In rural areas, intermunicipal cooperation has facilitated transportation support, access to digital learning resources, and community-based educational programs, mitigating geographic and infrastructural barriers. The Qualifica Programme has also provided pathways for adults and youth to re-enter education, combining formal qualifications with vocational skills training to support employment prospects. While Portugal has made remarkable strides in reducing early school leaving, achieving long-term equity requires a dual approach: strong national policies such as the National Education Plan, PNPSE, Qualifica, and PIPSE, combined with locally adapted initiatives through municipal protocols and regional plans. Addressing regional disparities and socio-economic inequalities is essential to ensure that all students—regardless of their background or location—have the opportunity to complete their education and fully participate in society and the labor market. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of policies are crucial to sustaining progress and responding effectively to future educational and social challenges.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

3. Method of research, revision and analysis of protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Spain

In Portugal, while no single national legislative instrument fully consolidates actions against absenteeism and early school leaving, a variety of national, intermunicipal, and municipal programmes and protocols have been implemented over the last two decades. This report aims to analyse and systematise these interventions, focusing on their objectives, target populations, operational procedures, implementing professionals, required resources, and evaluation mechanisms. The research process involved a detailed review of official sources, including publications from the Ministry of Education and the Directorate-General for Education (DGE), reports from national programmes such as the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE, 2016–present), and strategic frameworks like the National Education Plan (PNE, 2014–2020). Funding instruments and initiatives such as the Intermunicipal Plans for School Success (PIPSE, 2016–2025) and the Portugal 2030 Educational Success Projects (2023–2025) were also examined. At the local level, the research included municipal and intermunicipal plans, such as the Municipal Plan for the Prevention of Absenteeism and Dropout in Maia, the Porto Municipal Action Plan against Dropout, the Lisbon Municipal Protocols for Educational Success (2018–2024), and the CIM Região de Leiria PIPSE (2023–2026). In addition, specific projects funded by PNPSE, including “Aluno ao Centro” (2016–2021), “Escola+ Família” (2017–2022), and “Mentorias para o Sucesso” (2018–2022), as well as municipal initiatives such as “Maia Não Desiste” (2015–present) and regional plans like the



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Algarve Regional Action Plans (CCDR Algarve, 2023–2025), were incorporated into the analysis. The Qualifica Programme (IEFP, 2017–present) was also included, reflecting second-chance education and vocational training pathways. Data collection employed targeted searches on official websites and databases using terms including “protocol on absenteeism,” “prevention of absenteeism,” “early school leaving,” “promotion of school success,” “school failure prevention,” “educational inclusion programmes,” and programme-specific keywords such as PNPSE, Qualifica, and PIPSE. Inclusion criteria focused on programmes and protocols explicitly addressing absenteeism or dropout, with clearly stated objectives, operational procedures, and evaluation mechanisms. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive mapping of interventions in Portugal in the last years, combining national strategic frameworks, intermunicipal coordination plans, and local-level projects, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the roles of different actors, the scope of interventions, and the strategies adopted to prevent absenteeism and promote educational success.

4.1. Nomenclature and terms used

In Portuguese educational policy documents, expressions such as “prevention of absenteeism,” “early school leaving,” “promotion of school success,” “dropout prevention,” and “intervention plans” are commonly employed to describe measures aimed at improving student retention and academic achievement. Since 2016, the concept of “promotion of success” has become dominant, framing absenteeism not as an isolated problem but as part of a broader strategy to enhance educational outcomes, ensure inclusion, and support students at risk of disengagement. This shift reflects a more holistic approach, moving from a reactive focus on punitive measures to a preventative and supportive framework, in line with national priorities for inclusive education and social equity.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

4.2. Origin and time evolution of protocols

Regarding the approval and implementation dates of protocols and programmes aimed at preventing absenteeism and promoting school success in Portugal, there is a noticeable temporal dispersion, with nearly two decades separating the earliest and the most recent initiatives. The oldest intervention included in this study is the Municipal Plan for the Prevention of Absenteeism and Dropout in Maia, originally designed in 2004 and subsequently updated throughout the 2010s and 2020s. Between 2010 and 2014, additional programmes emerged, including the Porto Municipal Action Plan against Dropout and the National Education Plan (PNE, 2014–2020). From 2015 to 2017, a series of national and local interventions were introduced, including the “Maia Não Desiste” Municipal Project (2015–present), the PNPSE (2016–present) and its related projects “Aluno ao Centro” (2016–2021) and “Escola+ Família” (2017–2022), as well as the Qualifica Programme (IEFP, 2017–present). The most recent wave of initiatives, launched from 2018 to the present, includes the PNPSE Project “Mentorias para o Sucesso” (2018–2022), the Lisbon Municipal Protocols for Educational Success (2018–2024), the Intermunicipal PIPSE for the Região de Leiria (2023–2026), the Algarve Regional Action Plans (CCDR Algarve, 2023–2025), and the Portugal 2030 Educational Success Projects (2023–2025). Figure 1 presents a bar chart illustrating the distribution of the design and publication dates of these programmes and protocols. This visual representation highlights the concentration of initiatives in recent years, reflecting a growing strategic focus on the promotion of school success and the prevention of absenteeism at both national and local levels in Portugal.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Distribution of Design and Publication Dates of Protocols in Portugal (2010–2025)

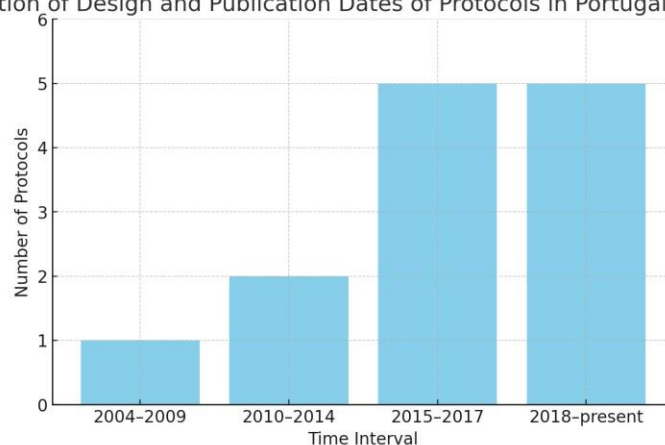


Figure 1. Distribution of design and publication dates of protocols in Portugal

4.3. Objectives of the action protocols

Regarding the objectives established by the main Portuguese action protocols aimed at preventing absenteeism and school dropout, the primary focus is on ensuring full school enrolment and promoting regular attendance throughout the compulsory education stages (ages 6–18). In addition, several protocols also target preschool and alternative education pathways, reflecting a comprehensive approach to educational inclusion. Out of the protocols analysed,



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

some specifically address remedial actions for students already showing irregular attendance or academic underperformance.

General Objectives

- **Ensure enrolment and consistent attendance:** All protocols aim to guarantee that children and adolescents remain enrolled in school and attend regularly, reducing early school leaving and long-term absenteeism. Key initiatives include the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE), the National Education Plan (PNE), and Municipal Action Plans in cities such as Porto and Maia.
- **Promote educational success and inclusion:** These protocols focus on preventing social exclusion and improving educational outcomes for vulnerable populations, ensuring that students have equal access to learning opportunities. Programs such as Intermunicipal Plans for School Success (PIPSE) and the Lisbon Municipal Protocols for Educational Success exemplify this preventive and inclusive approach.

Specific Objectives

- **Early detection of students at risk:** Protocols prioritise the identification of students at risk of absenteeism or early dropout through monitoring systems and early warning indicators. Examples include the PNPSE-funded projects “Aluno ao Centro” and “Mentorias para o Sucesso”.
- **Preventive and remedial support:** Students identified as at risk receive targeted interventions, including tutoring, mentoring, social support, and educational guidance.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- Municipal initiatives like “Maia Não Desiste” provide concrete models for combining school, family, and community support.
- **Individualised monitoring during critical transitions:** Particular attention is given to students transitioning between educational stages (e.g., from primary to secondary education or from lower secondary to upper secondary), with plans for those demonstrating difficulties.
- **Engagement of families and local communities:** Protocols consistently involve parents, caregivers, and the wider community in preventive and supportive measures. Programs such as “Escola+ Família” exemplify efforts to strengthen the role of families in educational success.
- **Alternative educational pathways:** Some initiatives, particularly the Qualifica Programme (IEFP), provide options for vocational training and alternative qualification routes, ensuring that students who face difficulties in mainstream education can continue to develop skills and achieve certifications.
- **Strengthen intersectoral coordination:** Protocols emphasise collaboration across education, social services, employment, and municipal authorities to provide a holistic support network for students. Regional plans, such as the Algarve Regional Action Plans (CCDR Algarve), illustrate coordinated approaches that involve multiple stakeholders.

Many protocols adopt a collaborative approach that integrates schools, families, social services, and local authorities. Projects like Portugal 2030 Educational Success Projects (2023–2025) reflect a systemic strategy, combining preventive and remedial measures while promoting social inclusion and community involvement.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

4.4. Design and characteristics of the protocols for action

Portuguese action protocols for preventing absenteeism and school dropout are inherently interdisciplinary, reflecting the need to address educational, social, and family-related factors in a coordinated manner. The composition of professional teams varies by protocol but typically includes the following actors:

Composition of Interdisciplinary Teams

- **Educational staff:** All protocols include school personnel such as headteachers, teachers, tutors, educational psychologists, and counsellors. Educational staff play a central role in monitoring attendance, detecting early-risk students, and implementing both preventive and remedial measures.
- **Social services:** Municipal social services, including Commissions for the Protection of Children and Youth (CPCJ), are regularly involved, providing support for students at social risk and facilitating family engagement.
- **Health services and vocational/employment centres:** Protocols often involve Public Health services and Qualifica/IEFP centres to support students' health, well-being, and alternative educational or vocational pathways.
- **Local authorities and NGOs:** Municipalities and local non-governmental organisations participate in implementation, community outreach, and coordination with educational institutions.
- **Legal and security entities:** In some cases, security forces or judicial entities may be involved to enforce legal measures in extreme cases of absenteeism or school dropout.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- **Families:** The active participation of students' families is encouraged in many protocols, including PNPSE projects such as “Escola+ Família” and “Aluno ao Centro,” ensuring a holistic approach to the child’s educational environment.

Intervention Procedures and Coordination

The main procedures conducted by these professional teams include:

- **Prevention:** Actions aimed at promoting school attendance, engagement, and educational inclusion.
- **Early detection:** Identification of students at risk through attendance monitoring, school performance data, and social indicators.
- **Targeted intervention:** Remedial actions to students’ academic and socio-emotional needs, often involving tutoring, mentoring, or counselling.
- **Follow-up and monitoring:** Continuous assessment of students’ attendance, academic progress, and family engagement, with regular reporting to the relevant authorities.

Some protocols, such as the Municipal Plan for the Prevention of Absenteeism and Dropout in Maia or the Porto Municipal Action Plan, specify intervention steps distributed across professional categories and institutions, ensuring clear responsibilities at each stage. Coordination among educational staff, social services, public health, vocational centres, and local authorities is emphasised as a critical component of the protocols’ effectiveness.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Materials and Tools Provided

Protocols provide a variety of materials to support professionals in implementing interventions:

- Templates for letters or notifications to families and relevant services.
- Attendance monitoring records and follow-up forms for inter-institutional tracking.
- Referral forms for additional services or initiation of specific interventions.
- Guidelines and instructions for conducting assessments, interviews, and interventions, including criteria for identifying unjustified absences or academic risk.

Together, these elements reflect a structured, interdisciplinary, and collaborative approach to preventing absenteeism and school dropout in Portugal, ensuring that interventions are both systematic and responsive to the needs of each student.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

4.5. Evaluation and monitoring of action protocols

Evaluation and monitoring are central components of Portuguese action protocols designed to prevent absenteeism and school dropout, though their implementation and visibility vary significantly across different programmes and municipalities. While national initiatives such as the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE) and the National Education Plan (PNE) provide systematic monitoring and produce aggregated national reports, many municipal and regional programmes do not include a clearly defined evaluation framework, and publicly accessible data on their effectiveness is limited. In protocols that incorporate evaluation, responsibility typically lies with the coordinating bodies of each programme. At the municipal and intermunicipal level, commissions overseeing absenteeism and educational success are tasked with monitoring attendance, analysing intervention outcomes, and preparing annual reports. These reports are often shared with schools, local authorities, and the relevant technical units for guidance on diversity and educational support. For instance, intermunicipal initiatives such as PIPSE and municipal protocols in Lisbon establish structured mechanisms for collecting attendance data, tracking student progress, and assessing the impact of preventive and remedial measures. At the national level, the CNE (National Education Council) consolidates information from these programmes, providing broader indicators such as enrolment rates, daily attendance, grade progression, and dropout reduction. Furthermore, evaluation procedures typically involve systematic recording of student attendance and performance, regular meetings of interdisciplinary teams to review cases, and the production of reports summarising actions taken and their outcomes. Some



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

programmes, particularly those funded by EU initiatives such as Portugal 2020/2030 projects, require the use of specific quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess effectiveness and inform potential improvements. Despite these mechanisms, transparency and consistency in reporting remain uneven. While some municipal protocols provide detailed annual documentation, others limit dissemination to internal reports, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the overall effectiveness of all interventions across Portugal. Thus, Portuguese action protocols include evaluation and monitoring as essential components of their design, with structured procedures at both national and municipal levels. However, the extent of their implementation and the accessibility of evaluation results vary, highlighting the need for more harmonised and systematic evaluation practices to strengthen the evidence base and inform future policy and practice.

5. Limitations and future proposals

Despite the significant advances achieved through Portuguese action protocols, several limitations have been identified. One of the main challenges is the lack of a unified operational definition of absenteeism across protocols, which complicates data collection, comparison, and the assessment of intervention effectiveness. Additionally, the availability and transparency of evaluation data vary considerably between programmes, with some municipal and regional initiatives providing detailed reports while others have limited or no publicly accessible documentation. Regional disparities in access to financial, human, and technical resources further hinder the equitable implementation of protocols, and socio-economic barriers affecting students' attendance persist, often beyond the immediate control of schools and educational



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

authorities. To address these challenges, several proposals for future action have been suggested. Establishing a national, unified absenteeism indicator would enable more consistent monitoring and comparison across regions and programmes. Strengthening independent evaluations of intermunicipal and municipal plans would improve transparency and provide a more reliable evidence base for policy development. Continued financial support for early intervention programmes is essential to prevent absenteeism before it becomes entrenched. Enhancing cooperation between education, social services, and health sectors would ensure a more holistic and coordinated approach to supporting at-risk students. Finally, targeted training for teachers and other professionals involved in these protocols is crucial to improve early detection of absenteeism and provide tailored support that responds to the specific needs of each student.

6. Conclusions

Portugal's trajectory in addressing absenteeism and early school leaving (ESL) has been largely positive over the past decades. National efforts, supported by intermunicipal and municipal initiatives, have contributed to a significant reduction in ESL rates, bringing them below the European Union target. This success reflects a coordinated policy framework that integrates preventive and supportive measures, combining educational, social, and health interventions. A portion of these initiatives has been financed through EU structural funds, which have enabled innovative programmes and pilot projects targeting the most vulnerable students. International research has consistently highlighted that frequent absences can have significant repercussions on students' academic achievement, social integration, and psychological well-



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

being (Brandibas et al., 2004; Kearney, 2008), emphasizing the importance of these coordinated interventions. Despite these achievements, significant challenges remain. Consolidating the gains requires ensuring that all regions, particularly those with historically higher ESL rates, benefit equally from policy interventions and resources. A key priority is the establishment of common monitoring criteria, including standardised indicators of absenteeism and early warning systems, to allow more systematic evaluation of programme effectiveness and facilitate the sharing of best practices. Additionally, school-based interventions alone cannot fully address the underlying causes of absenteeism and dropout. Broader social determinants such as poverty, health vulnerabilities, family instability, and socio-economic inequalities must be considered and integrated into a comprehensive response. Research has shown that absenteeism often generates self-perpetuating cycles that exacerbate vulnerabilities and produce adverse social, psychological, and academic outcomes (Lyon & Cotler, 2007; Reid, 2005), underscoring the need for early detection and targeted support. Sustaining progress therefore requires a multidimensional, tiered, and individualised approach that combines universal prevention with targeted support for at-risk students. This approach should continue to strengthen collaboration across education, social services, health, and local communities, ensuring early identification of students in difficulty and tailored interventions that address both educational and non-educational barriers. Ultimately, the continued success of Portugal's efforts depends on the ability to balance efficiency with equity, safeguarding every student's right to education and promoting meaningful inclusion throughout the school system.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

REFERENCES

- Brandibas, G., Jeunier, B., Clanet, C., & Fourasté, R. (2004). Truancy, School Refusal and Anxiety. *School Psychology International*, 25(1), 117–126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034304036299>
- Constituição da República Portuguesa (Constitution of the Portuguese Republic), Seventh Revision (2005). Assembleia da República. Available at: <https://dre.pt/dre/legislacao-consolidada/constituicao-da-republica-portuguesa>
- Kearney, C. A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. In *Clinical Psychology Review* (Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 451–471). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2007.07.012>
- Kearney, C. A., & Silverman, W. K. (1999). Functionally based prescriptive and nonprescriptive treatment for children and adolescents with school refusal behavior. *Behavior Therapy*, 30(4), 673–695. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7894\(99\)80032-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7894(99)80032-X)
- Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvåg, S. K. (2015). School factors associated with school refusal- and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 18(2), 221–240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-015-9293-y>
- Intermunicipal Plans for School Success (PIPSE / Programas Intermunicipais de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar). Available at: https://portugal2030.pt/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/04/CENTRO_PIPSE_2024_4.pdf



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Lyon, A. R., & Cotler, S. (2007). Toward reduced bias and increased utility in the assessment of school refusal behavior: The case for diverse samples and evaluations of context. In *Psychology in the Schools* (Vol. 44, Issue 6, pp. 551–565). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20247>

Municipal Plan for the Prevention of Absenteeism and Dropout (Maia) / Plano Municipal de Prevenção do Absentismo e Abandono Escolar da Maia. Available at: https://www.cm-maia.pt/uploads/writer_file/document/1920/pmpaaecm.pdf [Câmara Municipal da Maia](#)

Municipal Plan / “Maia Não Desiste”. Plano Municipal de Prevenção do Absentismo e Abandono Escolar da Maia. Available at: https://www.cm-maia.pt/uploads/writer_file/document/1920/pmpaaecm.pdf [Câmara Municipal da Maia](#)

National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE / Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar). Available at: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/programa-nacional-de-promocao-do-sucesso-escolar> [Direção-Geral da Educação+2Direção-Geral da Educação+2](#)

Portugal 2030. Available at: https://portugal2030.pt/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/09/1Q_1237_CENTRO2030_4.k_PIPSE.pdf [Portugal 2030](#)
e documento “Dos PIICIE aos PIPSE – continuidade e mudança” [CCDR-N](#)

Programme Qualifica (IEFP). Available at: <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/>

Reid, K. (2005). The Implications of Every Child Matters and the Children Act for Schools. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 23(1), 12–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0264-3944.2005.00317.x>



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Reid, K. (2008). The causes of non-attendance: An empirical study. *Educational Review*, 60(4), 345–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910802393381>

Thambirajah, M. S., Grandison, K. J., & De-Hayes, Louise. (2008). *Understanding school refusal: a handbook for professionals in education, health and social care*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ANNEXES

Table 1.

Characteristics of the Protocols for Addressing School Absenteeism in Portugal

Name and date of the protocol	Authors	Objective/s	Target population	Terms and definitions	Personnel/ Professionals involved	Procedure	Materials	Assessment System
National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE) – 2016–present	Ministry of Education	Reduce absenteeism, prevent early school leaving, promote academic success, support at-risk students, strengthen family-school cooperation	Students aged 6–18 in compulsory education	Absenteeism: unjustified or repeated absences; Early School Leaving: leaving education before completing secondary education; at-risk students	Teachers, headmasters, educational psychologists, social services, health services	Early identification of at-risk students, preventive actions, mentoring, family engagement, individualized support	Attendance records, case files, letters to families, intervention guidelines, monitoring forms	Monitored by Ministry of Education; annual aggregated reports available. No detailed evaluation of effectiveness publicly accessible
National Education Plan (PNE) – 2014–2020	Ministry of Education	Improve overall educational outcomes, increase enrolment and attendance, prevent ESL, integrate social and	Students in compulsory education	Absenteeism, educational failure, ESL	Educational authorities, school staff	Strategic planning, coordination with municipalities, monitoring attendance, supporting	Statistical reports, strategic guidelines, attendance monitoring tools	Aggregated national reports; evaluation of individual interventions not consistently available



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

		educational support					schools with high-risk students		
Intermunicipal Plans for School Success (PIPSE) – 2016–2025	Intermunicipal consortia	Prevent dropout, support at-risk students, improve school retention, coordinate municipal and school interventions	Students aged 6–18; focus on vulnerable groups	Absenteeism, school success metrics, early warning indicators	Teachers, school psychologists, municipal services, authorities	school social local	Identification of at-risk students, preventive interventions, remedial programs, mentoring	Case records, letters, intervention protocols, checklists	Periodic evaluations by intermunicipal commissions; detailed outcome data not always accessible.
Municipal Plan for the Prevention of Absenteeism and Dropout (Maia) – 2004–updated 2010s–2020s	Maia Municipality	Prevent absenteeism and dropout at local level, engage families, monitor	Students 6–18	Absenteeism: frequent or prolonged absence; dropout risk: students at risk of	School municipal services, (Child Protection Commissions), psychologists	staff, social CPCJ	Monitoring student attendance, early intervention, family engagement, remedial	Attendance sheets, intervention forms, notification letters	Local evaluation reports exist, but detailed results not publicly available.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

			student progress, support at-risk students		leaving school		measures engagement, remedial actions		intervention forms	
Porto Municipal Action Plan against Dropout – 2010–present	Porto Municipality	Prevent dropout, monitor attendance, provide support to students at risk, strengthen school-family-community links	Students 6–18	Absenteeism: irregular attendance; dropout risk: indicators of disengagement	Teachers, school counselors, psychologists, municipal social services, NGOs	Case monitoring, mentoring, remedial education, family engagement	Letters to families, case reports, intervention plans	Municipal monitoring system; evaluation of interventions not systematically published.		
Qualifica Programme (IEFP) – 2017–present	IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training)	Promote adult education, re-engage early school leavers, provide vocational training and qualifications	Young adults who left school early or need requalification	Early school leaving, qualification levels, adult learning	IEFP staff, vocational trainers, social services, mentors	Individualized training plans, mentoring, skills assessment, certification courses	Training materials, case documentation, progress tracking sheets	Programme monitoring; success rates measured, but detailed individual assessment not publicly disclosed.		
CIM Região de Leiria PIPSE – 2023–2026	CIM Região de Leiria	Prevent absenteeism, coordinate municipal and school interventions,	Students 6–18 in the region, focus on high-risk groups	Absenteeism, early school leaving, risk factors	School staff, social workers, municipal authorities, psychologists	Preventive and remedial interventions, mentoring, family engagement	Attendance records, letters, intervention guides	Periodic monitoring by CIM; no detailed public evaluation of impact		



Co-funded by
the European Union

Observatory SOS-Attendance is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2022-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000088733. The contents of this publication reflect only the views of the authors and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

			support students at risk						
Lisbon Municipal Protocols for Educational Success – 2018–2024	Lisbon Municipality	Promote school success, reduce absenteeism, enhance student engagement, support at-risk students	Students 6–18 in Lisbon.	Absenteeism, ESL, disengagement	Teachers, psychologists, municipal social services.	Case identification, preventive interventions, mentoring, family engagement, coordination with municipal services	Letters, monitoring forms, intervention guides	Municipal evaluation reports; no comprehensive public data on effectiveness	
PNPSE-funded Project “Aluno ao Centro” – 2016–2021	Ministry of Education / PNPSE	Individualized student support, engagement, prevent dropout, promote inclusion	Students 6–18	Absenteeism, school engagement, at-risk students	Teachers, psychologists, social workers, mentors	Mentoring sessions, individualized plans, monitoring of attendance	Case files, attendance records, intervention plans	Project reports available; detailed evaluation data not accessible	
PNPSE Project “Escola+ Família” – 2017–2022	Ministry of Education / PNPSE	Strengthen collaboration between families and schools, support at-risk students	Students 6–18 and their families.	Absenteeism, family engagement, student well-being	Teachers, family liaison officers, psychologists, social services	Family workshops, counseling, case follow-up	Workshop materials, guides, letters	Monitoring reports exist; specific evaluation outcomes not publicly available.	
PNPSE Project “Mentorias para o Sucesso” – 2018–2022	Ministry of Education / PNPSE	Mentoring at-risk students, prevent dropout, promote	Students 6–18	Absenteeism, mentoring, school engagement	Teachers, mentors, psychologists, social workers	Mentoring sessions, individual follow-up, attendance monitoring	Mentor guides, case reports	Project evaluation forms exist; detailed effectiveness results not	



			academic success							publicly disclosed.
Algarve Action (CCDR Algarve) – 2023–2025	Regional Plans	CCDR Algarve	Regional coordination to prevent absenteeism and dropout, promote educational inclusion	Students 6–18 in Algarve, focus on high-risk groups.	Absenteeism, school success indicators	School staff, regional authorities, social services, psychologists	Identification of at-risk students, preventive interventions, coordination among schools and authorities	Attendance records, letters, intervention guides	Regional monitoring reports exist; no publicly available evaluation of outcomes.	
“Maia Não Desiste” Municipal Project – 2015–present		Maia Municipality	Provide support to students at risk of dropout, promote attendance and engagement	Students 6–18	Absenteeism, dropout risk, at-risk students	Teachers, psychologists, social workers, municipal authorities	Case monitoring, mentoring, remedial education, family engagement	Case files, monitoring sheets, letters	Local evaluation reports exist; detailed evaluation results not publicly accessible.	
Portugal Educational Success Projects – 2023–2025	2030	Ministry of Education / EU funds	Promote school success, target vulnerable populations, reduce absenteeism and ESL	Students 6–18, particularly at-risk groups	Absenteeism, ESL, risk indicators	School staff, social services, municipal authorities, NGOs	Preventive and remedial programmes, mentoring, coordination	Attendance records, intervention forms, case documentation	EU project reporting with indicators (attendance, progression, dropout reduction); detailed evaluation data limited or not publicly available.	

