

Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings

Systems for supporting children's learning and development (0-18 years)

Partner	ARCIL
Country	Portugal
Background info to the educational system (e.g. https://www.european-agency.org/)	<p>In the Portuguese Educational System mandatory Education starts in the 1st grade of the Primary School (age 6) and progresses to the 12th grade (age 18), in the Secondary School.</p> <p>The organization of the educational career is divided in four cycles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Cycle of Basic Education: first 4 years or Primary School; - 2nd Cycle of Basic Education: 5th and 6th grades; - 3rd Cycle of Basic Education: from 7th to 9th grade; - Secondary Education: from 10th to 12th grade. <p>After 12 years of successful formal education, students can progress for Higher Education or Vocational Training, as long as they fulfill the minimum criteria of success. Kindergarten is optional and operates from 3 years old until 6 years old (3 years).</p> <p>Students with Permanent Educational Special Needs (PESN) were included in Mainstream Schools gradually over the years and, from 2007-2008, <i>Decreto-Lei Nº 3/2008 de 7 Janeiro</i> declared that every student with PESN should be included and determined the progressive end of specialized schools for students with special needs.</p> <p>Students with disability should follow the same <i>curricula</i> and be engaged in the same contexts as all the other students, receiving educational support from Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers, individualized support from School Assistants and specialized services from specialists (Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists and/or others) from Centers of Resources for Inclusive Education (CRI) created in the community in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The specialized services from CRI are mainly destined to support students with PESN, mostly those with more intense and less frequent conditions or disabilities with impact in functionality and participation in the school's activities.</p> <p>If a student with PESN is not achieving the minimum goals defined in the <i>curricula</i>, individualized and specialized procedures may be initiated. Some of the main measures include: personalized educational support, curricular and assessment accommodations, assistive technology, learning materials in accessible formats and a highly individualized <i>curricula</i>.</p>



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	<p>Mainstream schools may have available support from specialized units for pupils with more complex PESN (ex: Multiple Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder).</p> <p>By the end of the 12 years of mandatory education or when the student with PESN achieves 18 years of age, he or she will transition to an adult life program, supported by a team of different professionals.</p>
<p>Methodological approach (Please give information about how you got the information provided below)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, Ministry of Education (Lousã School Grouping - AEL) and Municipality of Lousã (CML) 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service 3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants 4. Documentation analysis

GENERAL	
<p>Financial Framework of the services (Who is financing the service?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>Ministry of Education (AEL) – 72 full-time and 7 part time; 14 of these school assistants are working with students with special needs.</p> <p>ARCIL – 1 full-time school assistant and 1 part-time school assistant.</p> <p>Municipality of Lousã (CML) – 58 full-time; 7 of these school assistants are working with students with special needs.</p> <p>The human resources are financed by the Ministry of Education and by the Municipality of Lousã; ARCIL receives funding from the Municipality of Lousã to employ 2 school assistants.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>There is an effective division of roles and responsibilities when it comes to resourcing in this specific field, with specialized support being requested from ARCIL. The school assistants provided by ARCIL are professionals with experience in the fields of Disability and Inclusion and reinforce the resources available in the diverse (mainstream) schools of the Municipality of Lousã.</p>
<p>Organization/Admin of the</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p>



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<p>service (Who is offering the service)</p>	<p>Ministry of Education – manages the service provided by 79 school assistants, in terms of selection, recruiting, integration, organization and evaluation. From the total 79, 14 are working with students with PESN.</p> <p>ARCIL – manages the service provided by 2 school assistants working with students with more complex PESN in specialized units.</p> <p>Municipality of Lousã – manages the service provided by all the others school assistants.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>There is an effective division of roles and responsibilities when it comes to resourcing in this specific field, with specialized support being requested from ARCIL</p>
<p>Cooperation of the supporters with other staff (teachers, parents, therapists etc.)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>According to the SEN services coordinator, the school assistants collaborate with other members of the staff as requested by the teachers and specialists in the school.</p> <p>From the interview with the school assistants it's understandable that there is a positive relationship with teachers and specialists and that the school assistants participate in diverse activities for the students with PESN promoted by the specialists: group activities, individual sessions, group sessions, visits to different contexts, field trips ...</p> <p>The school assistants implement ideas and strategies suggested by the teachers and the specialists. Although there is a positive and effective cooperation, the school assistants recognize that it would be important to have more time to articulate with other professionals and that their opinion should be more considered (ex: being present in team meetings).</p> <p>Some positive aspects identifies in the cooperation relation with other professionals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong relation of confidence and companionship; - motivation and professionalism from most of the professionals. <p>Some aspects to improve in the relation of cooperation with other professionals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more stability in the team of professionals (less turnover); - more time to share information and learn from each other;



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need to involve more assistants with the students with PESN; - need to involve more mainstream teachers with the students with PESN; - present of school assistants in team meetings; - need of clarification of the best method for team work. <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service 3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>The fact that the school assistants interviewed were selected because of their good performance in their job, reflects the criticism and self-reflection showed during the conversation. One of the interviews is attached illustrate more clearly their contribution.</p>
<p>Target groups of supporters (With whom they are working?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>The school assistants from AEL and CML are placed with the responsibility of working with all children in the Mainstream School. These human resources are not placed specifically to work with children with special educational needs.</p> <p>The school assistants from ARCIL are placed specifically in specialized units, within the Mainstream School, to work with students with PESN, namely Multiple Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders; these resources serve as an extra support for students with more complex needs, because of ARCIL's long time experience working with this population (ex: one of the school assistant has 40 years of experience in this field).</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>Previously ARCIL functioned as a Special Needs School, with specialized staff: teachers, specialists (social workers, psychologists and therapists) and school assistants. In the 90's ARCIL started practicing Inclusive Education in partnership with AEL and part of its human resources (specialists and school assistants) started to work within the local Mainstream Schools. This practice is maintained until the present days, formalized as a Center of Resources for Inclusive Education (CRI) in 2009.</p>



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<p>Qualification requirements (What are the official requirements that someone can work as a supporter?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>Official requirement – Compulsory School Level, according to the age of the individual (4th, 9th or 12th grade).</p> <p>Selection criteria: - curricular analysis; - years of experience; - experience in the field of special needs and inclusion; - specific training in the field of special needs and inclusion.</p> <p>Some criteria are defined in specific legislation and other are specified by the selection jury.</p> <p>Depending if the selection process is conducted by AEL, CML or ARCIL, specific and supplementary criteria may be considered.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>In general, School Assistant is a profession for which the qualification criteria are of low standard and that has little demand in terms of training, experience or specialization. Because of the financial crisis in Portugal, over the years more qualified professionals have entered this profession, namely teachers, kindergarten educators, social workers ...</p>
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<p>Legal status (Which laws are affected?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p><i>Lei Nº 12A/2008 de 27 de Fevereiro</i> – Defines the contractual status, career and remuneration for operational, technical and specialized professionals within the public sector.</p> <p><i>Despacho nº 17460/2006 de 29 de Agosto</i> – Previous legislation regulating the same professionals, revoked in 2006.</p> <p>Within ARCIL, the legislation from the third sector/not for profit organizations/charities is applied, namely the General Labor Law (<i>Código Geral do Trabalho</i>) and collective contractual referentials for different professions.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>School assistants may be professionals hired by CML and AEL or by ARCIL. CML and AEL are part of the public sector, with specific legislation being applied. ARCIL is a charity and, therefore, included in the third sector / not for profit organizations, and different legislation is applied.</p> <p>In both sectors, the General Labor Legislation is applicable and in case of doubt or omission of information on any subject, should be the reference.</p>
TASKS	
<p>Aims and Tasks of supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Principles/ official guidelines (What are they supposed to do?) 	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>The guideline defining the role and tasks of the profession of School/Educational/Pedagogical Assistant are very broad and general, both in the public sector (CML and AEL) and in the private sector (ARCIL).</p> <p>In general, the school/educational/pedagogical assistant is responsible for supporting the teacher and/or specialists planning and implementing educational activities with the students, including students with special needs. By principle, these professionals are responsible for supporting all children in the school and not only the students with special needs.</p> <p>Additional tasks such as cleaning materials and rooms, maintaining spaces and equipment in good conditions, transporting equipment, preparing rooms for different activities, ensuring safety of the students, supporting the students in daily</p>



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	<p>life activities (feeding, toileting, sleeping), assisting on the transportation of students, controlling the arrival/departure of students ...</p> <p>Depending on the professional placement, school assistants may also be supporting teachers and other professionals in administrative tasks (ex: supporting the librarian teacher in the library, supporting with communication in the School reception).</p> <p>This professionals will report directly to the SEN and mainstream teachers, if contracted by the AEL. They will formally report to the coordinator of the Educational Services, if contracted by the CML. If they are workers from ARCIL, they will formally report to the coordinator of the Center of Resources for Inclusive Education.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service 3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>Depending on the organization contracting the person – ARCIL or CML/AEL – and on the current legislation, the professional may be designated school assistant, pedagogical assistant or educational assistant.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practical (What are they really doing?) 	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>According to the school assistants and to the coordinator of the SEN services, the tasks that they perform are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - helping students with arriving to/leaving school (ex: picking up from the bus station); - surveillance of the students; - transportation of materials and equipment; - maintenance of materials and equipment; - supporting students the mainstream classroom; - supporting students in the specialized unit; - supporting students in the recess; - supporting students in daily life activities (ex: feeding, hygiene); - supporting in students in the hygiene; - supporting students with administration of medication (with extension of defined functions, e.g. SOS medication in case of epileptic crisis); - monitoring of specific activities (e.g. therapies, field trips);



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	<p>- monitoring in moments of relaxation; - implementation of specific therapeutic/educational activities in the routine (e.g.: mobility training, potty training).</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service 3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Access to information (Which information they get?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>The school assistants have access to operational information for the daily activities with children with special needs (ex: daily schedule, Individual Educational Plan, dietary information). Within the Internal Regulation of the School, only teachers and technical staff have access to the Individual Folder of the students.</p> <p>The school assistants provided by ARCIL are obliged to follow ARCIL's Code of Ethics and confidentiality guidelines, which defines the type of information they should have access to. Each of them signed a confidentiality agreement regarding the exercise of their job. These professionals will have access to the information provided by the teachers and the specialists in the Mainstream School. If, for any reason, it is justifiable that these professionals access confidential information (ex: escorting the student to a medical consultation), there are guidelines defining which information they should access and informing about the importance of ensuring the confidentiality of specific information.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Hierarchy (Who is the boss?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>Municipality of Lousã – Coordinator of the Education Sector</p>



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	<p>(reporting to the President of the Municipality)</p> <p>Ministry of Education – Responsible for the School Assistants (reporting to the Director of School Grouping)</p> <p>ARCIL – coordinator of the Center of Resources for Inclusive Education (reporting to the Director of Rehabilitation)</p> <p>The School Assistants that work directly with children with PESN in specialized units (Autism Spectrum Disorders, Multiple Disability and Learning Mediation Room) report, informally, to the SEN or Mainstream teachers responsible for the students.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
JOB SITUATION	
<p>Status and Responsibilities in educational systems</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Formal</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> Explored in the section <i>Aims and Tasks of Supporters</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p><input type="radio"/> Informal</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> Explored in the section <i>Aims and Tasks of Supporters</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Continuing professional development</p> <p><input type="radio"/> What are the chances for career development?</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> School assistants with a contractual situation as service providers (<i>locum</i>) or with a contract with a defined term have no career progression.</p>



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	<p>School assistants with a contract as permanent workers have career progression; presently, career progression is “frozen” due to the financial situation of the country and employer organizations.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service 3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>○ How are supporters supported to deal with the challenges of the job?</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>In challenging situations in which the school assistant requires support, they can ask for help from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the SEN teacher responsible for the student; - the specialists visiting the school and working with the student (psychologists and therapists); - the mainstream teacher responsible for the student (ex: if the student is attending one of the mainstream classes). <p>Over the time, the work of the school assistants is controlled/managed by the SEN teacher. Most of the times, the transmission of relevant information about the students takes place (ex: new student arriving to the school); sometimes, there is not enough time for this sharing of information to be rich and more effective.</p> <p>There are few opportunities for professional training for school assistants. Most of the times, the professional himself identifies interesting training/courses and requests permission to participate from ARCIL, CML or AEL. Regularly, ARCIL’s team of specialists from the CRI organize free professional training within the Mainstream School, for the school assistants, teachers and other relevant agents in the school (ex: training for feeding care, training for transfer and handling students with motor impairment). There is a public training center serving the Mainstream School which provides specific training on the topic of Disability and Inclusion, occasionally.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Individual interview with teacher coordinating the SEN service



	<p>3. Individual interviews with mainstream school assistants</p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Job security and career progressive description/profile of workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality profile (gender, impairment, age, ethnicity, migrant status) 	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>Both, in private and public sectors, there is specific legislation demanding for equity and equality of opportunities and rights regarding employment, independent of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability ... (ex: <i>Decreto-Lei 29/2001, 3 de fevereiro</i>).</p> <p>Regarding career progression, in most of the situations, progression of careers within the public and private organizations is “frozen” due to the financial crisis of the country and to financial difficulties of the employer organizations; this is applicable to most of the professionals, not only to the school assistants.</p> <p>In terms of job security, the General Labor Legislation (<i>Código Geral do Trabalho</i>) regulates the conditions in which contractual situations should be with/without a term or service provider, as well as the appropriate conditions to renew/end a contract within or before the defined term.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>In general, the legislation applicable to all other professions, in the public and private sector, is regulating the profession of School Assistant.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contractual situation 	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <p>ARCIL: 1 school assistant has a contract and is a permanent worker for ARCIL + 1 school assistant has a contract as a service provider (<i>locum</i>).</p> <p>AEL: 28 school assistants have a contract as permanent workers for the Ministry of Education + 26 school assistants have a contract without a defined term + 18 school assistants have a contract with a defined term.</p> <p>CML: 32 school assistants have a contract as permanent workers</p>

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	<p>for the Municipality + 1 school assistant has a contract with a defined term + 25 have labor market integration special contracts (specific contractual situation to integrate temporarily unemployed professionals in the labor market)</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group with representatives from ARCIL, AEL and CML 4. Documentation analysis <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
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