



EAC/10/2019 Preparatory Action - Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

PORTUGAL

INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

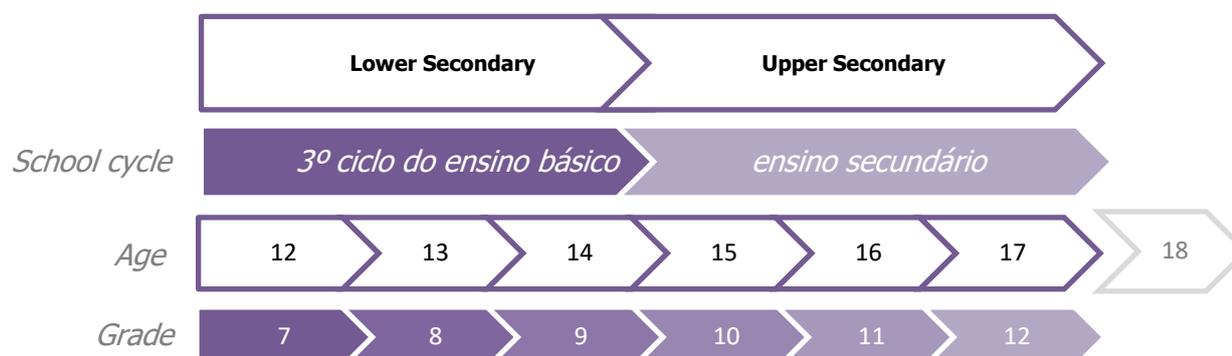
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The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age or until the conclusion of upper secondary education (*ensino secundário*). General upper secondary school comprises four scientific-humanistic courses: Sciences and Technologies, Socio-Economic Sciences, Languages and Humanities, Visual Arts.

Graduation and Certification

Pupils complete general upper secondary education if they have passed every subject of their study programme. Pupils' grades count for 70 % of the final grade (internal assessment); the remaining 30 % is based on the four mandatory national examinations (external assessment). There are two national final exams in grade 11 (two specific biennial subjects based on the scientific-humanistic course chosen) and two national final exams in grade 12 (Portuguese and a specific triennial subject based on their course).

School completion is certified via the award of both a diploma and a certificate: the diploma indicates completion of upper secondary education, the scientific-humanistic course studied, the final grade and the level of qualification; the certificate identifies the subjects taken, final marks and examination results for each subject.

The award of these diplomas and certificates is the responsibility of the schools, in accordance with the model and procedures indicated by the Directorate-General for Education (DGE)².

The diploma and certificate provide access to higher education. The results of national exams are used by universities as entrance exams. Therefore, if pupils wish to apply to a given faculty, they need to make sure they have passed the national exams on the subjects required by the faculty.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

² Directorate-General for Education, Diplomas and Certificates, www.dge.mec.pt/diplomas-e-certificados

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INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM PORTUGAL

Age and grade

Pupils usually go on mobility during grades 10, 11, 12, namely the first, second or third year of general upper secondary education, at the age of 15/16 or 16/17 or 17/18. Although there are final exams in grade 12, the majority of pupils enrol in an exchange in this grade³.

Registration in the sending school

Parents must inform the school principal about the learning period abroad. Since you are not enrolled in your home school while on exchange, readmission on return cannot be guaranteed.

Funding for the sending school

The sending school will not receive funding for you while you are abroad.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Portugal. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁴ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than a full school year. In case of a full school year the procedure described below applies.

Periods of between 2 and 6 months

Learning periods abroad of less than a full school year are not regulated by law. Decisions to re-admit returning pupils are therefore made by schools. For this type of mobility you can interrupt your studies during the first or second trimester and be assessed at the end of the school year. For individual pupil mobility which is shorter than a school year, recognition is carried out through a certificate of attendance issued by the host school and by integrating the marks received into the compulsory subjects. Some of the schools also organise Europass certification⁵.

³ In the school year 2018/2019, 60 pupils out of 72 who have participated in long-term mobility programmes, were in grade 12. Only 37 have applied for recognition of the learning period abroad. Data provided by the Directorate-General for Education on 4 December 2020.

⁴ within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

⁵ Information provided by the Erasmus+ National Agency in Portugal on 23 July 2020.

A full school year

Recognition of exchange periods during a full school year is regulated by law in Portugal⁶, and is the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Education (DGE).

In order to be eligible for the recognition procedure, you must be enrolled in the equivalent grade abroad as in your home school and bring back an official certificate (with apostille⁷ or diplomatic or consular legalisation) issued by the host school with reference to the grade of general upper secondary school attended, the subjects studied, and a transcript of your results. The documents must be translated into Portuguese by a certified translator and both the certified copy of the original and the translation have to be submitted. No learning agreement is drafted with the sending school.

Either you or the pupil exchange organisation (e.g. Intercultura-AFS Portugal or Multiway) must present the official documents to the DGE. If the documents fulfil all the necessary requirements established by law, namely that you have successfully attended a school grade abroad equivalent to the same grade in Portugal, the DGE converts the marks according to a standard table for the conversion of the different grading systems.

The DGE recognises and certifies the equivalence of the year abroad by attributing an average mark, based on the transcript of results received. The recognition system is not based on the matching of home and host country school subjects, and acknowledges that school curricula are different across countries.

The DGE has 30 days to reply, but by law you can enrol in the next school year while the papers are still being analysed.

If you spend grade 12 abroad, you need an answer from the DGE about recognition of the year abroad and completion of upper secondary school by mid/end July, as the deadline for applying to higher education is at that time. For this reason, requests for recognition are given priority by the DGE.

If recognition is obtained, and if you spend grades 11 or 12 abroad, you do not need to sit the two national final exams of your grade in order to qualify for the upper secondary school diploma. You might have to take the national exams if you had failed certain subjects before leaving for the learning period abroad, or if you need to pass the national exam in a given subject to apply to university later. Private universities might also look at the subjects taken abroad during the exchange.

In general, it is not recommended to go on exchange if your marks in given subjects are not satisfactory as this means that you will have to take additional exams to successfully conclude those subjects on your return. Passing every subject of your study programme is a requirement to be awarded both the diploma and the certificate.

⁶ Decree-Law no. 227/2005, issued on 28 December 2005

⁷ Apostille is still needed to legalize school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN PORTUGAL

Registration in the host school

There is no legal framework that regulates the enrolment of hosted pupils. It might happen that you are not enrolled in a complete study plan, and therefore you are not obliged to take all the tests as the other pupils. In general, Portuguese host schools take into account your grade in your home school in the previous school year and place you in an equivalent class. Moreover, you can be hosted in the last year of upper secondary school. You usually have access to 'Portuguese as a Second or Foreign Language' which is taught at school.

Funding for the host school

The host school does not receive any funding for hosted exchange pupils during their stay in Portugal.

Certification for hosted pupils

Usually, the host school delivers a certificate of attendance and/or a transcript of results with the subjects followed and the marks obtained. It is up to the host school, and even to each teacher, to decide which type of assessment will be used: qualitative or quantitative.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

If you are hosted in grade 12, you can decide during the hosting period whether you wish to take the examinations and therefore apply for recognition of your previous studies in your home country. Then you need to pass every subject of your study plan and take the two national exams foreseen for grade 12 at the end of the school year to be awarded the diploma.

TESTIMONIAL

Francisco from Portugal: a full school year in Germany

"In your exchange period you will have many ups and downs and yet it will be one of the best times of your life."

I wanted to live a different year, get to know a new country and learn a new language. When I arrived, I had almost zero knowledge of German, however, after three months I was able to speak it. My best advice for future exchange students is to focus on enjoying every single day of your experience! It is normal to go through downs during the stay abroad, and for me the best way to deal with any problem is just to focus on the good things.

The funniest things I remember have all to do with language. I remember once a friend of mine from Finland asked for directions saying he was at the "Einbahnstrasse". It actually means that the street only goes one way, but he thought it was the street's name.

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Issues with enrolment in the host school

In Germany I had to repeat the year I had previously done in Portugal because the school system is different and exchange pupils cannot be hosted in the two final years of upper secondary school. As a result, in Portugal they did not recognise the school year I spent in Germany since it was not equivalent to the grade I was supposed to be in. So, my only problem with school was "losing a year".

Overall, it's an experience worth for a lifetime. This experience opens up your mind to new cultures, new ways of living and new parts of yourself. Seeing new things gives you a new point of view of your own reality and life.

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