

A CONFIDENCE AGREEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF PORTUGAL

In the Government Programme we state our aim to develop Higher Education and Science as fundamental tools for the future of the country and we define priorities and goals for that purpose. To guarantee more training to more students, to reinforce social opportunities to new sections of the population of younger students and to the active population, providing the necessary social support, to reinforce the quality and the relevance of the courses, employability, and a more intimate connection between Higher Education and the social, economic and cultural life of the country, to internationalize the institutions and to reinforce the role of scientific activity in the strategic leadership are the main goals for the development of Higher Education in Portugal. To attain these goals, the Government solemnly undertook to sign with the Higher Education System a true Confidence Agreement. It is that Confidence Agreement, a historical instrument for the development of Higher Education in Portugal, that is signed today. The recently accomplished success of the deep reforms of the Higher Education System enhances today a reinforced confidence in the institutions.

This confidence is founded on their confirmed capacity to open up to more students and to new social sectors, on the broadening of their scientific capacities, on the reinforcement of post-graduate courses and of internationalization, on the full accomplishment of the Bologna Process, increased by the qualification of teaching and research staff, on the reinforced management and governance capacity and the relevant contribution to the scientific development of the country. The Portuguese Higher Education is in the forefront of one of the most critical challenges of the country: the higher-level qualification of its human resources and its scientific and technological preparation. The international competition for training and for stabilization of qualified human resources reaches, all over the world, a new stage of requirement to which we want to answer with courage and ambition. Higher Education in Portugal has reached levels of educational achievement equivalent to those of the OECD. In Portugal today, out of all the twenty-year olds, 35% are enrolled as Higher Education students. Between 2005 and 2009 the number of students enrolled in State Higher Education increased from 227 thousand to 228 thousand, and the number of graduates increased from 51 thousand to 66 thousand per year.

These are decisive factors of trust for the establishment of a Confidence Agreement which guarantees a prompt and sustainable answer to the needs of the country and to its new challenges in terms of employment and competitiveness. In fact, and because of past circumstances, the percentage of active population in Portugal who hold higher-level qualifications is still low compared to the international context, as low is the attendance of higher education by actives, either to obtain higher qualifications, or a professional and scientific refreshment of the graduates. Thus, it is urgent to overcome these delaying factors and to answer to the increasing youth demand caused by the reduction in the drop-out rates in primary and secondary education and by the enlargement to 12 years of compulsory education. In order to reinforce higher-level qualifications of the active population, we have developed intervention instruments whose success is

today undeniable: Technological Specialization Courses (Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica -CET), mainly at the Polytechnic Higher Education, the open up of Higher Education to mature students under appropriate conditions, e-learning, and organization in credits and cycles of study. Our aim is to widespread these instruments at large so as to quickly expand Higher Education in Portugal. The Government Programme quantifies this expansion: it aims to triple the number of students enrolled in CET and to multiply by four the number of students enrolled in e-learning.

It is also important to launch a wide span action aimed at active graduates, either employed or unemployed.

Higher Education Institutions and the Government commit hereafter not only to enhance the conditions to attract and to welcome graduates in Master's especially designed with a professional content, opening opportunities to 30 thousand more new students in 4 years, but they also commit to encourage the participation of employers in the development of such a programme. Both the Universities and the Polytechnic Institutes hold collective responsibility to further proceed the already started effort of internal reform and, together with the Government, to implement the quick restructuring of the network and of the training supply at national and regional scale, in order to promote quality and to make the use of public resources at their disposal more efficient. The Higher Education Institutions solemnly undertake the promotion of academic success and better integration of students and, together with other entities, the support and stimulation of the practice of social responsibility of students in society, through the promotion of volunteering and social and cultural intervention, through training to entrepreneurship and through the participation of teachers and students in actions which aim to increase of qualifications of Portuguese society. This is not a mere Confidence Agreement between the Government and the Higher Education Institutions – it is mostly a testimony of the reinforced confidence that the country should have in its higher education system and of the answer that we can legitimately demand from it. Thus, the Government and the authorities of the Portuguese State Polytechnics and Universities agreed to solemnly undersign this Confidence Agreement, which comprises the Bases of the Higher Education Development Programme for 2010-2013.

The Universities, the Polytechnic Institutes and the Government commit to translate this Confidence Agreement into detailed, institution by institution, Development Programmes. Each institution's development programme shall include specific indexes corresponding to the described goals and shall show the way the institution commits to contribute to their coming into force. These programmes and their coming into force shall undergo an annual external evaluation.

Globally, Higher Education institutions commit to an additional effort of training supply during this period which shall lead within the next four years to the qualification, at high level, of more than 100 thousand actives. For that purpose, the budget appropriation of the State Budget to the functioning of the Higher Education institutions shall be significantly increased in the 2010 State Budget proposal. Thus, in 2010 State Higher Education institutions shall have 100 million Euros more than in 2009 to function, a net amount which does not include the additional mandatory expenditure with Social Security, so that the institutions render concrete the goals mentioned. All the other appropriations for social action scholarships and other resulting from the measures of top-up mechanisms of social

support to the students are entered separately. Subject to the financial situation of the country, in the following years of the current parliamentary term, the appropriation of the State Budget shall be identical at least to the values established for 2010, as we reaffirm the goal to promote medium-term convergence of global resources for the Portuguese Higher Education in a European scale of reference values. We guarantee thus a framework of multiannual stability for the development of Higher Education in order to contribute to a thorough fulfilment of the demanding goals of the qualification of the Portuguese which the Institutions now solemnly undertake before the country. This is a historical moment when we all, Government and Higher Education Institutions alike, are united in a decisive common goal to our collective future: the qualification of the Portuguese.

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Lisbon, 11 January 2010**