



GOVERNO DE  
PORTUGAL

MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO  
E CIÊNCIA

**IAVE** INSTITUTO  
DE AVALIAÇÃO  
EDUCATIVA, I.P.

# Setting a standard for social justice in the English language assessment and certification

AEA Conference

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Sandra Pereira and Paula Simões

# Overview

The Portuguese context.



Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL:

- A. The proficiency test;
- B. The certification programme.

Accomplishments and future perspectives.

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# The Portuguese context

The Economic Adjustment Programme for Portugal  
(2011-2014)

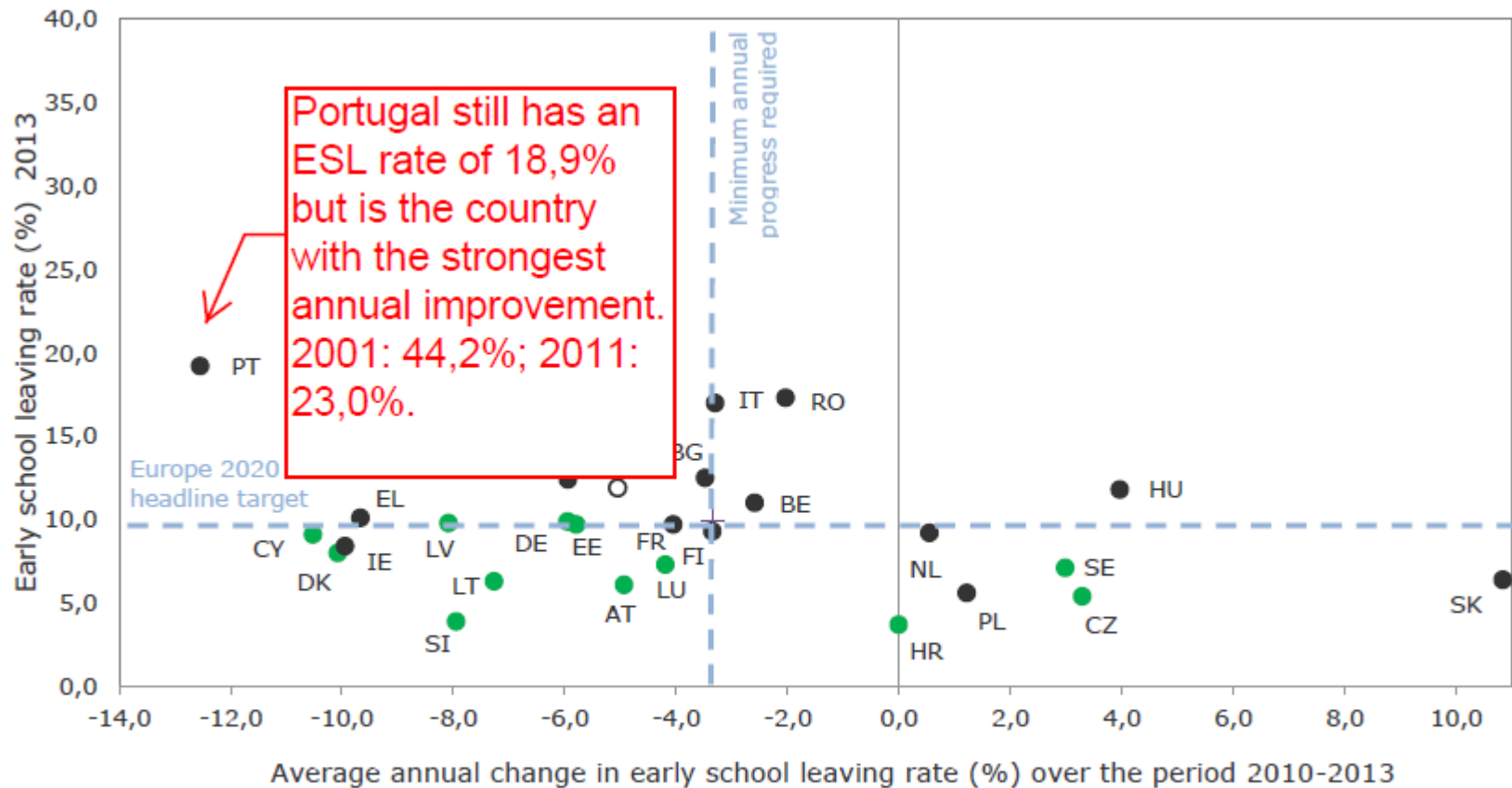
Decline in income and living conditions

In the education domain, the economic crisis was seen as an opportunity to enhance the efficiency of the system, without compromising the quality of standards

A key figure — Portugal has achieved the strongest improvement in Early School Leaving of all EU countries since 2009

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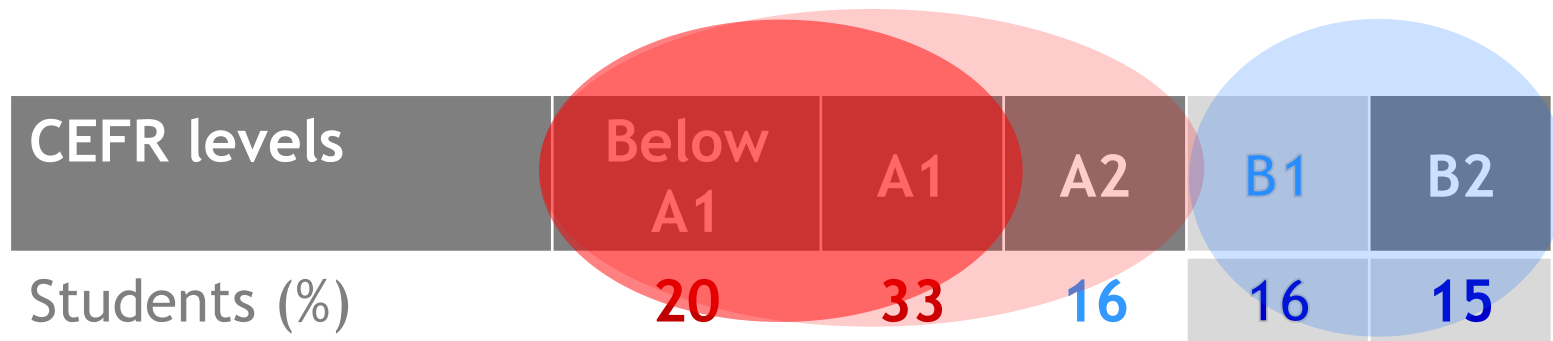
# The Portuguese context



Source: DG EAC calculations based on Eurostat (LFS) data. Note: EU Member States having already reached their national targets are depicted in green.

## The Portuguese context

A major concern: the Portuguese students' performance in the European Survey on Language Competences (2011)



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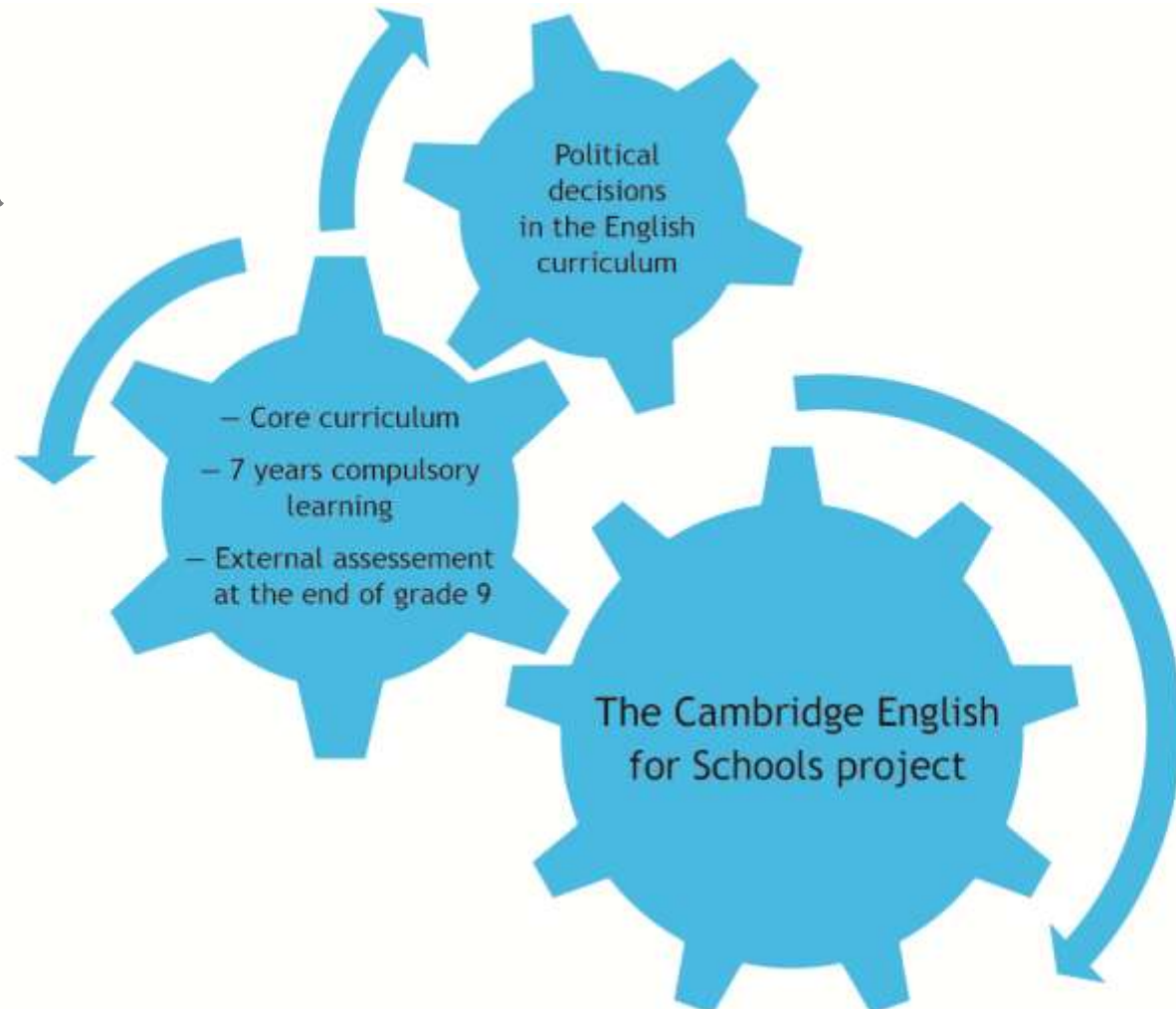
## The Portuguese context

Political awareness of the social and economic importance of learning English in Portugal

- 7 years of compulsory English (2014; grades 3 to 9)
  - Massive training of teachers of English for young learners (nationwide; all teacher training institutions involved)
  - Setting of English language “core curriculum” (learning outcomes); B1 as target level for the end of grade 9, progressing to B1+ in 2022
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# The Portuguese context

## The EFL gearwheel



# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

- Aiming at a diagnosis of the full cohort of grade 9 students (end of lower secondary)

A new project

2013/2014

*Key for Schools*

Focus on A2

A smooth approach

2014/2015

2015/2016



# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

- Creating an opportunity to include Speaking in a large external assessment context for the first time in more than 40 years
  - Aiming at «communication» rather than «perfection»
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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

A new project

2013/2014

*Key for Schools*

A new challenge

2014/2015

*Preliminary English Test  
for schools*

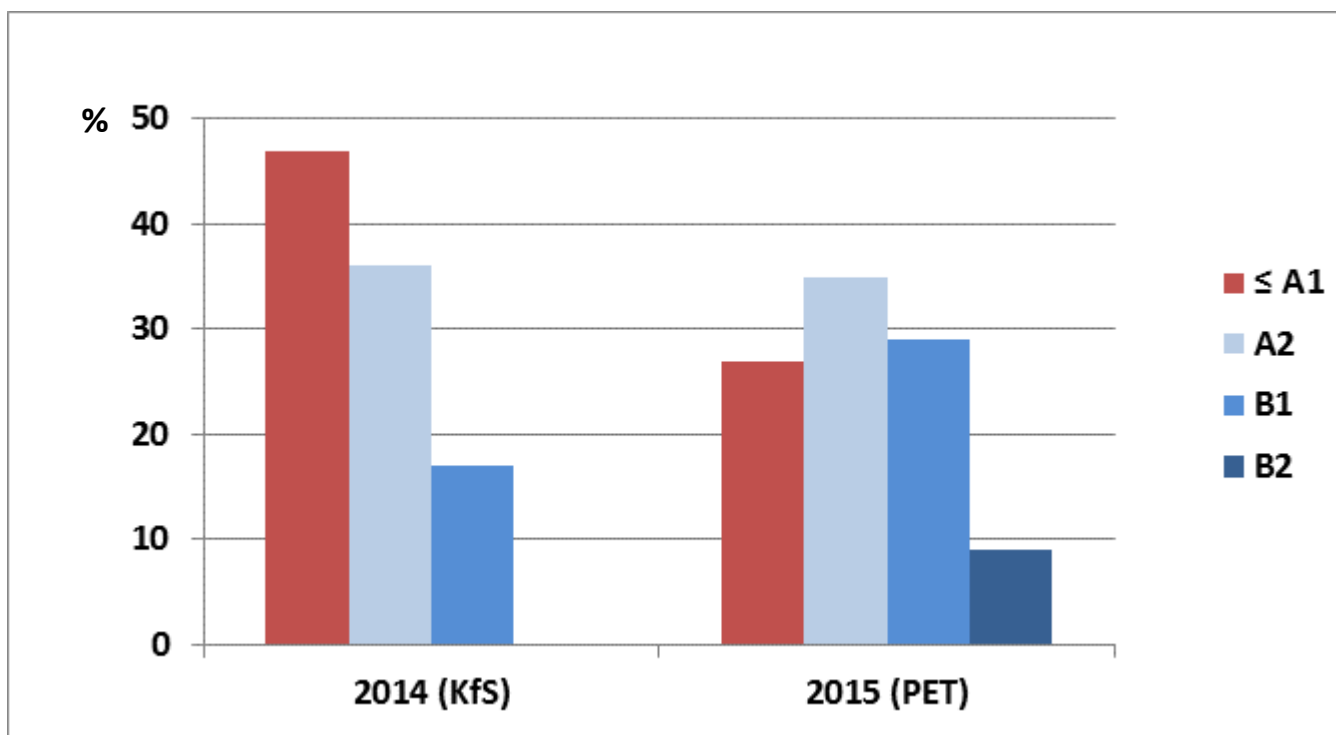
Focus on B1

A challenging approach, but with diagnosis purposes

2015/2016

# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

## Grade 9 students' results: from Key to PET



Scores by level in 2014 (Kfs) and 2015 (PET for schools)

# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

The certification programme:  
a step towards social justice

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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

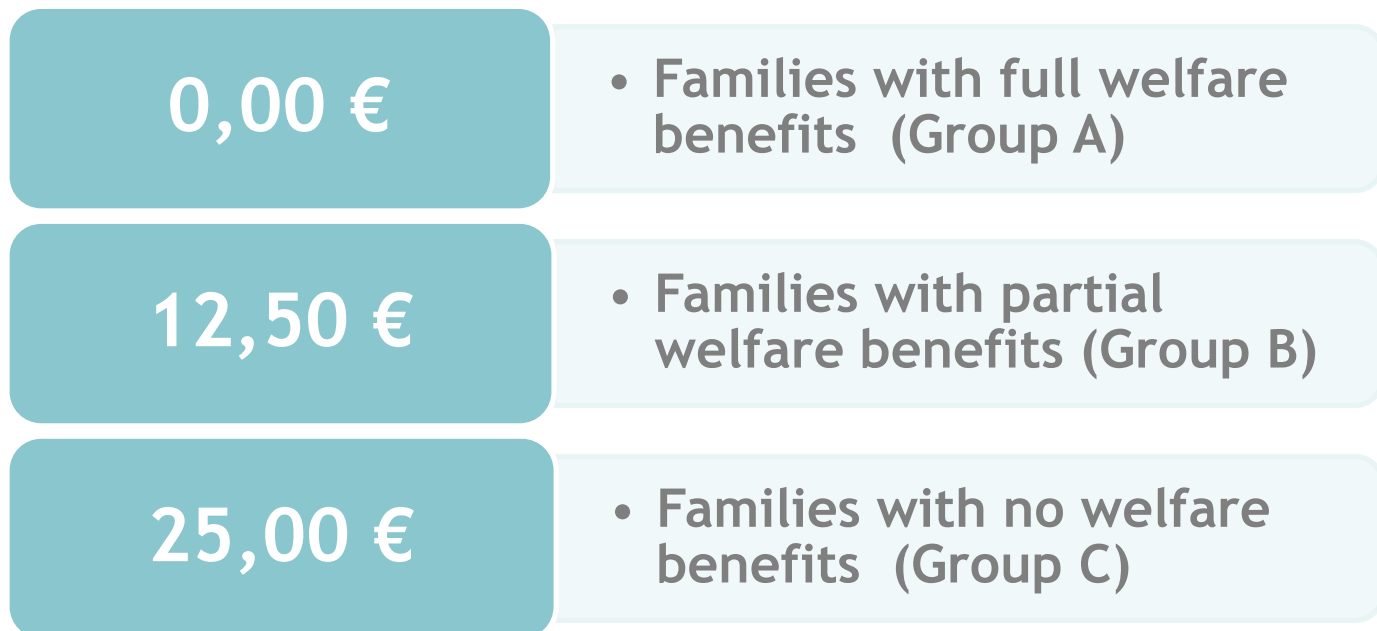
Giving Portuguese students the opportunity to have an internationally acknowledged certification, regardless of their social or economic background, or place of living



# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

## Optional enrollment for certification:

### A. Economic and social inequalities

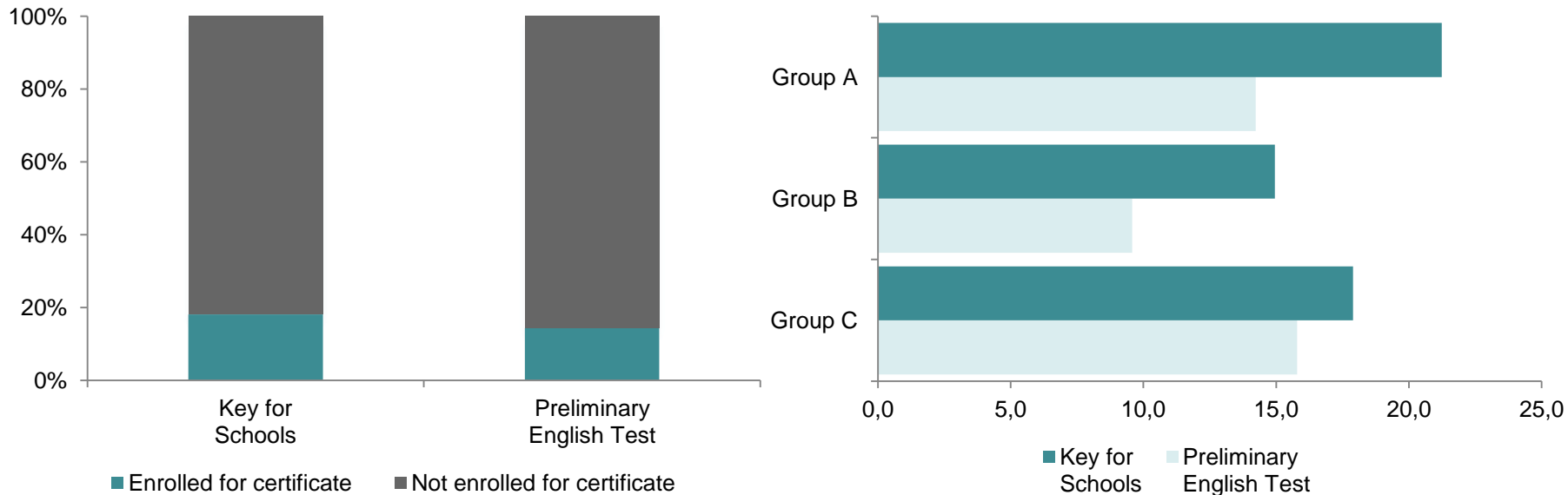


### B. Geographical differences – in some regions there are no private language centres that provide certification

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Despite the advertising efforts, parents lacked “enthusiasm” for the certificate, which compromised the project funding

PET enrollment rates are worse than KfS’



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Notwithstanding, parents who enrolled for the certificate considered this initiative:

- was ‘Very Important’ – A:66%; B: 46%; C: 42%;
  - has had a positive impact on their children’s interest on learning English – A:32%; B:29%; C:21%;
  - has had a positive impact on the importance that they, as parents, give to English learning – A:34%; B:26%; C:17%.
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## Parents' opinion on enrollment if they had to pay

- 57% of the parents of the Group A said that they would not enroll
  - 47% of the parents of the Group B said that they would not enroll
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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

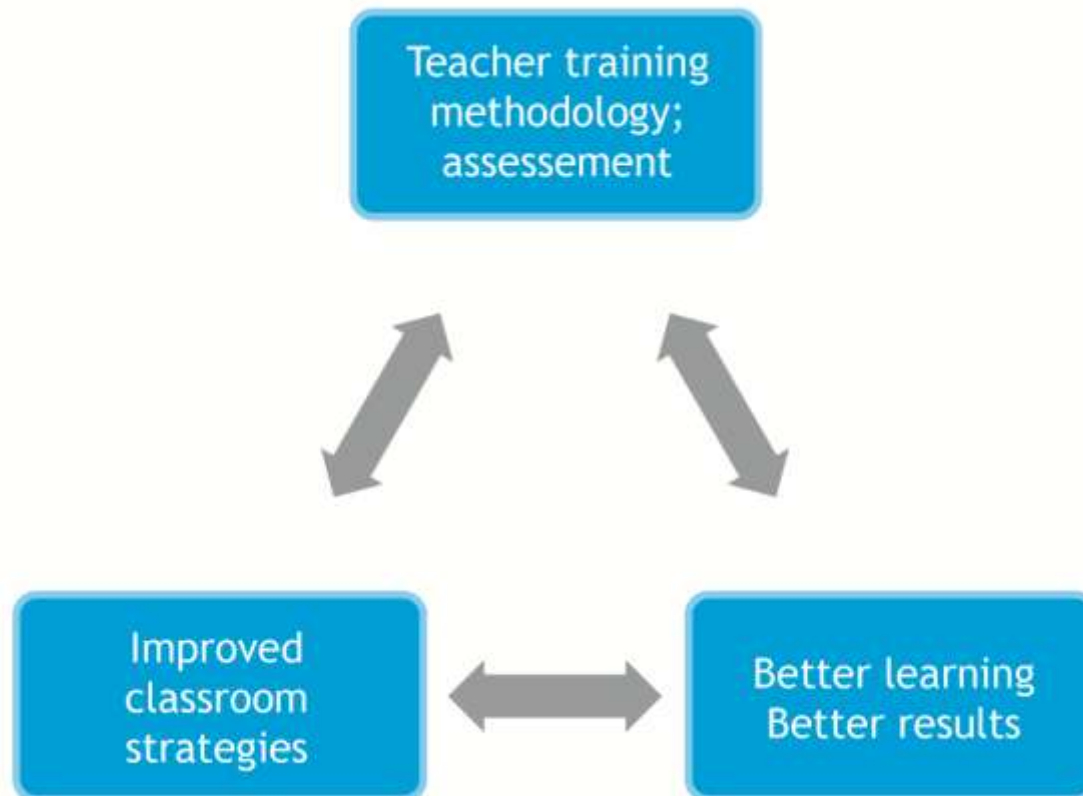
Accomplishments and  
future perspectives

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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

An integrated approach

Improving EFL teaching and learning standards



# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

## Teacher training:

2014

- 954 Key for Schools examiners trained and certificated

2015

- 1622 PET for Schools examiners trained and certificated
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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

Expected impacts on social justice and economic growth

- Widespread English language proficiency certification in the short run (by improving communication with parents)
  - Language certification as a plus to the enhancement of working skills and access to the job market
  - Evidence of economic improvement and GDP growth in the long run
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# Cambridge English for Schools PORTUGAL

A new project

2013/2014

*Key for Schools*

A new challenge

2014/2015

*Preliminary English Test  
for schools*

A new model

2015/2016

*Preliminary English Test  
for schools*

With impact on the final mark  
Positive washback effect?

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