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Forever Young? The Access of Younger Workers to the Portuguese Labour Market

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Abstract. Despite the current low rates of unemployment displayed in the Portuguese labour market, youth unemployment still presents concerning figures. Having this in mind, this contribution delves into the array of instruments whose purpose is to facilitate the entry of younger workers into the labour market, such as work by minors, traineeships (namely, student or extracurricular (professional) traineeships), and even economic incentives directed both at workers and employers. This Article explores the main features of these several mechanisms with the intention of ascertaining their adequacy towards that goal.

Keywords: Work by minors; student traineeships; extracurricular traineeships; mandatory traineeships; economic incentives.

Introduction

The access of younger people to the labour market is cause for concern in the Portuguese panorama. In fact, while the country has been, for a while now, displaying low rates of unemployment (between 2020 and 2025, the general unemployment rate has lowered from 7 % to 6 %),¹ the youth (under 25 years of age) unemployment rate, in March 2026, stood at

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¹ Data provided by [Pordata](#) (accessed on 4 May 2026). In March 2026, the general unemployment rate amounted to 5,8 %, according to [Statistics Portugal](#) (accessed on 4 May 2026).

18,1% (against the average rate of 14,9% for the Eurozone).² In addition, between 2020 and 2025, the youth unemployment rate was consistently above 20 % (during this period, the highest rate was 23,1 %, in 2024).³ Also troubling is the number of young people (between 15 and 29) in a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) situation, which, in 2024, consisted of around 140.000 young people.⁴

This scenario, which has already been described as unacceptable by political stakeholders,⁵ leads to obvious negative repercussions, both at the individual and social levels. In fact, the lack of access to decent jobs and to sufficient income hinders the possibilities of young people achieving their independence, transitioning to adulthood, and starting a family. Furthermore, this scenario also gives rise to reduced access to social security protection, which in turn increases young people's dependence on their family and other local support networks.⁶

Given the current scenario and its harmful consequences, this Article intends to examine the main legal measures designed specifically to facilitate young people's entry into the labour market, in order to assess their suitability for this purpose. To this end, it will begin by analyzing the main features of "work by minors" – a legal regime that allows, within certain parameters, minors to engage in employment contracts (often as a way to complement their family's income), providing them, in these instances, with their first employment experience. This will be followed by an overview of several training options (done on a voluntary or mandatory basis, according to the situation), which enable young people to acquire a relevant work experience and to develop important professional skills. And, finally, it will analyse State provided economic incentives towards the celebration of employment contracts with younger workers.

² Data provided by [Eurostat](#) (accessed on 4 May 2026).

³ According to data provided by [Pordata](#) (accessed on 4 May 2026).

⁴ See <https://sicnoticias.pt/economia/2025-05-28-video-nao-estudam-nem-trabalham-ha-140-mil-jovens-nem-nem-em-portugal-3d80fe3b> (accessed on 20 April 2026).

⁵ See <https://eco.sapo.pt/2025/05/08/desemprego-jovem-em-niveis-inadmissiveis-estas-sao-as-solucoes-defendidas-pelos-partidos/> (accessed on 4 May 2026).

⁶ See FÁTIMA SULEMAN/RICARDO BARRADAS, *Mercado de trabalho e bem-estar após a Grande Recessão: Dificuldades e desafios dos jovens* in Renato Miguel do Carmo *et al.*, *Jovens e o Trabalho em Portugal – Desigualdades, (Des)Proteção e Futuro*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2024, p. 16.

1. Work by Minors

Portuguese legislation allows, under certain conditions, minors – that is, children under the age of 18⁷ – to be engaged in employment contracts,⁸ with two distinct sets of rules depending on the minor's age (distinguishing, as will be explained below, between minors that are either under or of 16 years of age and above).⁹

In any case, it should be underscored that, unlike the other mechanisms that will also be addressed in this contribution, the main goal of this regulation is not so much to facilitate the access of young people to the labour market, but rather to ensure that, where this is necessary – for instance, because such income is needed for the household budget or to provide youngsters with some extra pocket money –, there is a proper balance between the work undertaken by the minor (who is still, for all intents and purposes, a child)¹⁰ and their physical and mental development, as well as their academic performance.¹¹

As previously noted, the general framework¹² on this matter distinguishes two main sets of situations: minors that have completed the minimum age of employment (that is, 16 years),¹³ and those have not yet reached that age.

⁷ Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁸ Most statistics focus the broader 15-24 years of age group, making it difficult to ascertain the specific impact of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, most workers (70,4 %, as of March 2026, are over 25 years of age) – see [Statistics Portugal](#) (accessed 5 May 2026). Furthermore, it should be stressed that, naturally, national regulation does not allow for child labour, which is strictly prohibited and considered a crime – see Article 82.º of the Portuguese Labour Code (PLC), which enshrines the crime of “unduly use of work by minor”.

⁹ In addition, regarding the 16 years of age and above segment, there are also different regimes, depending on the minor's level of schooling, as will be explained below.

¹⁰ The Portuguese Constitution enshrines the value of childhood and the right of children to being protected by society and the State, to ensure their full development (Article 69.º, No. 1, of the Portuguese Constitution). It also bans child labour (Article 69.º, No. 3, of the Portuguese Constitution).

¹¹ Pursuant to Article 66.º, No. 1, of the PLC, this regime intends to ensure that the working conditions match the minor's age and stage of development, and to protect their health, mental, and moral development, as well as their education and training.

¹² Enshrined in Articles 66.º and ff. of the PLC. There are, however, specific regulations for special cases, such as the participation of minors in the performing arts or the provision of autonomous work by minors, respectively Articles 2.º and ff. of Act No. 105/2009 and Article 3.º of Act No. 7/2009.

¹³ Article 68.º, No. 2, of the PLC.

In the first scenario, minors will be able to celebrate an employment contract when, in addition, they also possess the compulsory level of education (or are enrolled in and attending secondary school),¹⁴ as well as the physical and mental abilities appropriate for the job.¹⁵

Whereas in the second situation – that is, minors who have not yet reached 16 years of age – they may also celebrate an employment contract, as long as they have completed compulsory education (or are enrolled in and attending secondary school), and if the contract only entails the performance of light work consisting of simple, well-defined tasks.¹⁶ Since the Portuguese legislation does not clarify the minimum age limit for this second category, one must take into account the relevant international standards in this setting, according to which children should not, in principle, provide work before reaching the age of 15.¹⁷ Therefore, that limit must also apply in this case.¹⁸

Irrespective of the specific scenario, the employment contract is always concluded by the minors, along with, depending on the circumstances, an eventual “assistance” by their legal guardians.¹⁹ More precisely, minors who have reached the age of 16 and have completed compulsory

¹⁴ The compulsory level of education is the conclusion of the 12th grade (i.e., of the secondary education), pursuant to Article 2.º, Nos. 1 and 4, a), of Act No. 85/2009. This circumstance makes it unlikely (albeit not impossible) that minors will reach the age of 16 and have already concluded compulsory education. The alternative category (“enrolled in and attending secondary school”) is the most likely. When minors do not fulfil this requirement, they are still allowed to conclude employment contracts, provided that they observe the conditions mentioned in Article 69.º, No. 1, of the PLC (see fn. 16).

¹⁵ Article 68.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of the PLC. The minor’s physical and mental abilities shall be attested by a health exam – Article 72.º of the PLC.

¹⁶ Article 68.º, No. 3, of the PLC. In addition, according to Article 69.º, No. 1, of the PLC, minors under the age of 16 who have completed compulsory education or are enrolled in and attending secondary school but do not hold a vocational qualification, or minors who are at least 16 years of age but have not completed compulsory education, are not enrolled in and attending secondary education, or do not possess a professional qualification, may only be admitted to work provided they are enrolled in a form of education or training that provides, as the case may be, compulsory schooling, a professional qualification, or both. This demand does not apply to work merely performed during school holidays (Article 69.º, No. 2, of the PLC).

¹⁷ See Article 2, No. 3, of ILO Convention No. 138; Article 7, No. 1, of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers; and Article 1, No. 1, of Directive 94/33/EC, on the protection of young people at work.

¹⁸ See JOANA VICENTE, *Formação do contrato de trabalho* in Leal Amado *et al.*, *Direito do Trabalho. Relação Individual*, 2nd ed., Coimbra, Almedina, p. 382, fn. 10.

¹⁹ See JOANA VICENTE, *Formação do contrato de trabalho*, cit., p. 384. As noted by the Author, the legal regime requires the minor to celebrate the contract directly and without representation since this is a contract that requires their direct and active involvement.

education or are enrolled in and attending secondary school, may enter into an employment contract, unless their legal guardians object in writing.²⁰ Whereas minors who have not yet reached the age of 16, or those who are of 16 years of age but have not completed compulsory education (or are not enrolled in and attending secondary school) may do so only with the written authorization of legal guardians.²¹

Finally, although, in principle, remuneration should be directly paid to the working minors, it is possible for their legal guardians to object, demanding instead to receive these amounts themselves.²² Such a possibility draws criticism from scholarship,²³ since while it might have the understandable aim of preventing minors from putting their remuneration towards unsavory ends, it does create the risk of misappropriation by the minors' legal guardians (aside from configuring a deviation from civil law rules).²⁴ In addition, as noted by JÚLIO GOMES, it is rather conservative to consider that the minor is mature enough to work, but not to enjoy the fruits of their labour.²⁵ The legal regime should, therefore, be amended, and legal guardians should, instead, intervene pedagogically, helping the minor manage their income and advising them on the best way to spend/invest it.²⁶

2. Traineeships

Aside from the celebration of an employment contract – which might occur, as previously explained while they are youngsters, or, naturally,

²⁰ Article 70.º, No. 1, of the PLC.

²¹ Article 70.º, No. 2, of the PLC. It is possible for the minor's legal guardians to, at any time, present an objection to the conclusion of the contract, or to withdraw the previously given authorization (depending on the case), without having to pay any compensation to the employer for their change of heart on the subject (which is quite important to ensure that the minor's wellbeing is being prioritized at all times) – Article 70.º, No. 3, of the PLC.

²² Article 70.º, No. 2, of the PLC.

²³ LEAL AMADO, *Contrato de trabalho – noções básicas*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2019, p. 143; MENEZES CORDEIRO, *Direito do trabalho, II, Direito Individual*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2019, p. 229.

²⁴ JOANA VICENTE, *Formação do contrato de trabalho*, cit., p. 386.

²⁵ JÚLIO GOMES, *Direito do trabalho, Volume I – Relações individuais de trabalho*, Coimbra, Coimbra Editora, 2007, p. 460.

²⁶ MARTA ROSAS, *Capacidade negocial dos menores e exercício de atividade profissional*, in Lourdes Mella Mendes and Francisco Tapia (dir.), *La protección del trabajo frente a las crisis y transiciones actuales: perspectivas internacionales e internacionales (Brasil, Chile, Cuba, España, Italia, México, Portugal, Uruguay)*, Aranzadi, Madrid, 2024, p. 711.

already as adults –, the first steps of younger people in the labour market may take place through traineeships.

Traineeships can be taken at different stages of the trainee’s educational and professional paths, and with distinct purposes, such as making up for their youth or lack of experience;²⁷ ensuring a hands-on experience and the practical knowledge that will deepen their theoretical knowledge; retraining of currently unemployed people, increasing their employability; or they might even be a legally mandatory step in order to access a certain regulated profession. And as will be explained below, since traineeships can take place at different contexts and instances, their regulation is not unified.

2.1. Student Traineeships

Student traineeships intend to ensure that the trainee acquires the practical skills that are required by the academic degree at stake and may occur when such a knowledge is considered necessary or convenient. These traineeships usually take the shape of a curricular unit of the course and, when mandatory,²⁸ the trainee must achieve a positive evaluation to conclude the cycle of studies.²⁹

Conversely, in this context, when voluntary, traineeships may replace one of the elective subjects of the course or be credited as an extracurricular subject (and, in this instance, a positive evaluation will not be required for the conclusion of the degree). Even when not compulsory, such traineeships are often very sought out by students, since they will allow them the opportunity not only to experience a professional setting (getting an anticipated preview of what awaits them after the conclusion of their degree), but also to do some networking, and to get a first assessment of the skills most valued by future employers.

²⁷ ANA LAMBELHO, *O contrato de aprendizagem e o(s) contrato(s) de estágio*, in *Questões laborais*, 2013, Special Number 42, p. 322 and DIOGO MARECOS, *Uma nova ferramenta de gestão: o contrato de estágio. Entre particulares e sem recurso a financiamento público*, Coimbra, Coimbra Editora, 2013, p. 7-8.

²⁸ Usually, mandatory traineeships take place at Master’s level or within vocational higher education courses (“cursos técnicos superiores profissionais”), according to Articles 18.º, 40.º-J, and 40.º-M of Decree-Law No. 74/2006.

²⁹ ANA LAMBELHO, *O contrato de aprendizagem e o(s) contrato(s) de estágio*, cit., p. 330.

2.2. Extracurricular (Professional) Traineeships

Extracurricular (professional) traineeships can be either privately offered or through the Public Employment Service (“Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional”).

In the first scenario, such traineeships are regulated by Decree-Law No. 66/2011 and consist of practical training in a work context intended to complement and improve the trainees’ skills, aiming at their insertion or retraining into working life in a quicker and easier way, or at obtaining a technical, professional, and deontological training legally required to access a specific profession.³⁰

In addition, they require the signing of a written contract between both parties (the trainee and the promotor)³¹ and their duration cannot exceed 12 months.³² During this period, the trainee enjoys from the legal regime applicable to the promoter’s workers, regarding matters such as the normal working period, the daily and weekly resting periods, public holidays, absences, and safety and health at work.³³ Trainees shall also benefit from the same social security regime applicable to employees and the promoter must provide insurance against accidents at work.³⁴ These traineeships shall also be remunerated (except for very short traineeships, whose duration does not exceed three months),³⁵ in an amount of at least 80 % of the national minimum wage (in addition to meal allowance).³⁶

In turn, the traineeships organized by the Public Employment Service are not regulated by the aforementioned Decree-Law No. 66/2011, but rather by specific legal instruments. They benefit from public funding and there are currently three programs in place: “Estágios INICIAR”,³⁷ “Estágios +Talentos”³⁸ and “Estágios de inserção”.³⁹

³⁰ Article 2.º, No. 2, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³¹ Article 3.º, No. 2, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³² Article and 4.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³³ See Article 6.º of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³⁴ See Articles 10.º and 9.º, No. 4, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³⁵ See Article 5.º, Nos. 1 and 5, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

³⁶ See Articles 8.º, No. 1, and 9.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011. Currently, the minimum wage in Portugal, in the private sector, stands at 920 euros, according to Decree-Law No. 139/2025.

³⁷ For further information, see <https://iefponline.iefp.pt/IEFP/medida/estagios-iniciar/overview.jsp> (accessed on 4 May 2026).

³⁸ For further information, see <https://iefponline.iefp.pt/IEFP/medida/estagios-mais-talento/overview.jsp> (accessed on 4 May 2026).

Although all these programs are aimed at unemployed people, their targeted audience varies. In fact, “Estágios INICIAR” is designed particularly, but not exclusively, for young unemployed adults and it intends to promote their professional integration, through the development of a practical experience in the workplace; to better the transition from school to jobs; and to promote their employability.⁴⁰ In turn, “Estágios +Talentos” is aimed at unemployed young people aged 35 or under, with, at least, a bachelor’s degree.⁴¹ And, finally, “Estágios de inserção” intends to support the integration or reintegration into the labour market of unemployed or first-time job seekers with disabilities, through practical training in a work context, which complements and improves their skills, in order to facilitate their recruitment and integration and enhance their professional performance.⁴²

Irrespective of the program, the traineeship contract shall be put in writing and have a duration of six months, except in the case of persons with disabilities, where it goes up to 12 months.⁴³ During this period, trainees shall benefit from the regime applicable to promoter’s employees regarding normal working hours, daily and weekly rest periods, public holidays, absences, and occupational health and safety.⁴⁴

The trainee shall also receive a monthly stipend (whose amount varies according to the trainee’s qualifications)⁴⁵, meal allowance, insurance for accidents at work, and, in the case of trainees with disabilities, transportation or transportation allowance.⁴⁶

Public funding covers between 65 % and 80 % of the monthly stipend, depending on the situation⁴⁷ – for instance, 80 % of the monthly stipend

³⁹ For further information, see <https://iefponline.iefp.pt/IEFP/medida/estagioemprego/descEstagiosInsercao.jsp> (accessed on 4 May 2026).

⁴⁰ See Article 2.º of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1.

⁴¹ See Article 2.º, No. 2, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1.

⁴² See Article 40.º of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴³ See Article 8.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 9.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁴ See Article 6.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 7.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁵ See Article 11.º of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 12.º of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁶ See Article 10.º, No. 1, of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 11.º, No. 1, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁷ See Article 14.º of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 15.º of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009. The meal allowance, the insurance for accidents at work, and the transportation/transportation allowance,

shall be covered when a permanent, full-time employment contract is signed with the trainee within 20 working days after the end of the traineeship.⁴⁸

2.3. Mandatory Traineeships to Access a Profession

Finally, there are instances where traineeships are a previous and mandatory step to access certain regulated professions, as is the case with attorneys, architects, psychologists, among others.

For quite a while there was controversy as to whether these traineeships had to be remunerated, namely concerning attorneys in training. In fact, even though the previously mentioned Decree-Law No. 66/2011 states that it is applicable to traineeships mandatory to access a profession⁴⁹, it adds that it is not applicable to those involving autonomous work.⁵⁰ Following this, some associations (notably the Portuguese Bar Association – “Ordem dos Advogados”), invoking not only the autonomous nature of the work provided by trainees, but also the fact that professional associations had not been heard during the process of approval of this legal instrument, denied its applicability to their traineeships⁵¹. Consequently, the latter were to be merely ruled by bylaws and regulations of these associations,⁵² which did not require, in many instances, their remuneration. For this reason, many trainees were not entitled to payment.

This state of affairs changed in 2023, due to the commitments made by Portugal in its National Plan of Recovery and Resilience,⁵³ where it pledged to reduce restrictions in the access to highly regulated

when due, are also covered by public funding – see Article 14.º, No. 4, of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 15.º, No. 5, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁸ See Article 14.º, No. 2, subp. d), of Ordinance No. 219/2024/1; Article 15.º, No. 2, subp. d), of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1; and Article 41.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 290/2009.

⁴⁹ See Article 1.º, No. 1, of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

⁵⁰ See Article 1.º, No. 2, subp. e), of Decree-Law No. 66/2011.

⁵¹ For further developments, see LEAL AMADO and MARGARIDA PORTO, *Primeiras notas sobre o regime jurídico dos estágios profissionais*, in *Revista de Legislação e Jurisprudência*, 2012, No. 3975, p. 350-353 and ANA LAMBELHO, *O contrato de aprendizagem e o(s) contrato(s) de estágio*, cit., p. 331-334.

⁵² See Parecer da OA sobre a aplicação do Decreto-Lei n.º 66/2011, de 1 de Junho - Ordem dos Advogados (accessed on 19 April 2026).

⁵³ Available at PRR - Recovery and Resilience Plan - Recovering Portugal (accessed on 19 April 2026).

professions.⁵⁴ Subsequently, Act No. 2/2013 (the legal instrument that contains the framework for the creation, organization, and functioning of public professional associations) was amended. Following this change, the duration of traineeships required to access professions subject to these associations shall now not go beyond 12 months⁵⁵ and, in addition, trainees shall be remunerated under the terms defined in the bylaws of each professional association.⁵⁶ Among others, and pursuant to this amendment, the bylaws of the Portuguese Bar Association were modified to ensure that, whenever the traineeship involves the performance of work, the trainee is guaranteed a remuneration corresponding to the duties performed (in an amount that shall be of at least the minimum wage plus 25% of that amount).⁵⁷

This change has, however, sparked some uneasiness.⁵⁸ Despite its clear aim at improving the dignity of this work and a more democratic and ample access to these professions (namely for young people whose economic and family background does not allow them to work for an extended period without income), there are concerns that the mandatory payment of trainees will instead become an added obstacle to these professions. In fact, the payment of trainees may be an unwelcome and unsustainable burden to mentors with lesser means and prevent them from providing such traineeships. In addition, the monitoring and availability required by mentoring might be perceived by some as a cost

⁵⁴ See C6 – Qualifications and competences, of the Portuguese NPRR.

⁵⁵ Before this reform, the traineeship of attorneys in training used to have a duration of 18 months. For further elements, see Novo Estatuto: o que muda no Estágio - CRLisboa - Pod Informar (accessed on 19 April 2026). This reform also introduced new rules regarding the beginning period of traineeships, the subjects under evaluation, the final evaluation jury, among others.

⁵⁶ See Article 8.º, No. 2, subp. a), and the newly added Article 8.º-A of Act No. 2/2013. According to the latter, insofar the traineeship implies the provision of work, the trainee shall be guaranteed remuneration corresponding to the performed tasks, which shall be determined in accordance with constitutional and legal criteria, such as the principle of equal working conditions.

⁵⁷ See Article 195.º, No. 7, of Act No. 145/2015.

⁵⁸ Despite acknowledging the fairness in paying trainees, some lawyers attest to the fact that the imposed stipend amounts may deter the establishment of these traineeships and, therefore, become hurdles in the access to the profession – see Entre a intenção de democratização e a realidade de elitização - reformas no estágio para advogado - CNN Portugal and Os insuportáveis paradoxos dos novos estágios na advocacia - ECO (both accessed on 22 December 2025). The same apprehension was already present in previous Literature – see LEAL AMADO and MARGARIDA PORTO, *Primeiras notas sobre o regime jurídico dos estágios profissionais*, cit., p. 352-353 and ANA LAMBELHO, *O contrato de aprendizagem e o(s) contrato(s) de estágio*, cit., p. 333.

that will benefit future competitors. And while there might be additional factors explaining this phenomenon, since this amendment, the available data displays a low number of law firms available to provide traineeships, as well as a decrease in the number of attorneys in training,⁵⁹ which is rather concerning since, without taking this step, prospective trainees are effectively barred from this profession.⁶⁰

3. Economic Incentives towards the Celebration of Employment Contracts

As previously noted, the celebration of permanent, full-time employment contracts within 20 working days after the end of traineeships offered through the Public Employment Service leads to an increase in the public funding of the monthly stipend due to the trainee.

However, there are other instances where either the young worker or the employer also receive economic incentives towards the celebration of an employment contract.

In October 2025, the Government enacted Ordinance No. 336/2025/1, creating an “exceptional measure of incentive towards the return to work of young unemployed people”.⁶¹ This measure targets unemployed workers under 30 years of age, currently receiving unemployment benefits and registered in the Public Employment Service. If they celebrate an employment contract to work full-time, these workers will be entitled to receive 35 % of the monthly amount of unemployment benefits, in the case of an open-ended employment contract; or 25 % of the amount of the unemployment benefits, in the case of a fixed-term employment contract.⁶² This payment will take place until the end of the period during which the worker would have been otherwise entitled to receive unemployment benefits (or until the end of the contract, if it ends before that time).⁶³

⁵⁹ See Para já, apenas 42 advogados aceitam receber estagiários nos escritórios - Ordem dos Advogados and Número de advogados em Portugal desce em 2024 para 38.581 - Ordem dos Advogados (accessed on 19 April 2026).

⁶⁰ LEAL AMADO and MARGARIDA PORTO, *Primeiras notas sobre o regime jurídico dos estágios profissionais*, cit., p. 352-353.

⁶¹ Applicable until 30 June 2026, pursuant to Article 13.º, No. 2, of Ordinance No. 336/2025/1.

⁶² Articles 3.º, No. 1, and 4.º, No. 1, subps. a) and b) of Ordinance No. 336/2025/1.

⁶³ Article 4.º, No. 2, subps. a) and b), of Ordinance No. 336/2025/1.

In addition, there is also the program “Emprego + Talento”.⁶⁴ It aims at supporting employers in hiring unemployed, permanently and full time, people aged 35 or younger who are registered with the Public Employment Service and hold, at least, a bachelor’s degree.⁶⁵ In 2026, the base amount of this public grant is € 9.668,34, but it may be increased in certain situations.⁶⁶

While the first (and exceptional) measure intends to encourage the active search for a new job and a faster return to the labour market, the second aims mostly at attracting and retaining qualified young talent; supporting the transition between the qualifications system and the labour market; promoting the entry into the workforce of young people with adequate levels of qualification; fighting youth unemployment, among others.

Conclusions

Statistics show that there is still room for improvement in the Portuguese panorama in what concerns the integration of younger people in the labour market.

While most legal tools explored in this Article contribute (some more than others) positively towards this end – particularly, the ones anchored on public funding might provide an important push towards the right direction, but it is still too early to tell –, some tuning and further reflection is nevertheless required.

In fact, since it is important not only to tackle youth unemployment, but also the segmentation of the Portuguese labour market, which is also especially harmful towards young workers,⁶⁷ the previously mentioned “Exceptional measure of incentive towards the return to work of young unemployed people” should not be extended to fixed-term employment

⁶⁴ Created by the aforementioned Ordinance No. 221/2024/1.

⁶⁵ Article 1.º, No. 5, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1.

⁶⁶ Article 25.º, Nos. 1 and 2, of Ordinance No. 221/2024/1.

⁶⁷ According to Pordata, in 2025, 15,2 % of workers had temporary contracts (i.e. fixed-term contracts of employment or jobs that will end when certain objective criteria are met), against the EU 12,6 % average rate. And currently, Portugal stands as the fourth country in the EU with the highest level of precarious employment among young people, with four out of every ten workers under the age of 30 on temporary contracts – see <https://www.publico.pt/2026/05/01/sociedade/noticia/portugal-4-pais-uniao-europeia-trabalho-precario-jovens-2173152> (accessed on 4 May 2026). Furthermore, in 2022, 75,7 % of workers between 15 and 29 that had non-permanent employment contracts were in that situation involuntarily (against 36,6 %, in the EU) – see Jovens no Mercado de Trabalho em Portuga 1_02_2022.pdf (accessed on 4 May 2026).

contracts, in order to discourage the celebration of this kind of agreement (which, aside from placing workers in a precarious situation, in many cases, may, later on, lead to a new situation of unemployment).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to ensure that the payment of mandatory traineeships does not become an added obstacle to the access to regulated professions. In fact, even though it should be ensured that these traineeships operate under decent conditions, the access to these professions should not be hindered. For this reason, there should be specific public incentives to guarantee a sufficient offer of these traineeships (such as fiscal benefits, grants, among others).

Finally, as stressed RENATO DO CARMO,⁶⁸ in the last fifty years, there has been significant public investment in social, educational, and health structures, which has been crucial in bringing about a notable and widespread improvement in the living conditions and opportunities of young people. Nevertheless, this has not been enough to completely counteract the effects of structural factors that contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities. In effect, studies show that social background is still a determining factor in the life trajectories and labour market participation of a substantial amount of young people. And the same is true concerning workers' qualifications (those with fewer ones tend to earn lower salaries and are usually in more precarious employment situations).⁶⁹

The permanent (and increased) investment in the public school system and the creation of incentives towards the achievement of higher education degrees is, therefore, vital, since this is the privileged ground to fight social inequality and disparity and it will, in the long run, provide younger people with a more favourable position in the labour market.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ RENATO MIGUEL DO CARMO, *Jovens e os persistentes dualismos da sociedade portuguesa*, in Renato Miguel do Carmo *et al*, *Jovens e o Trabalho em Portugal – Desigualdades, (Des)Proteção e Futuro*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2024, p. 179-180.

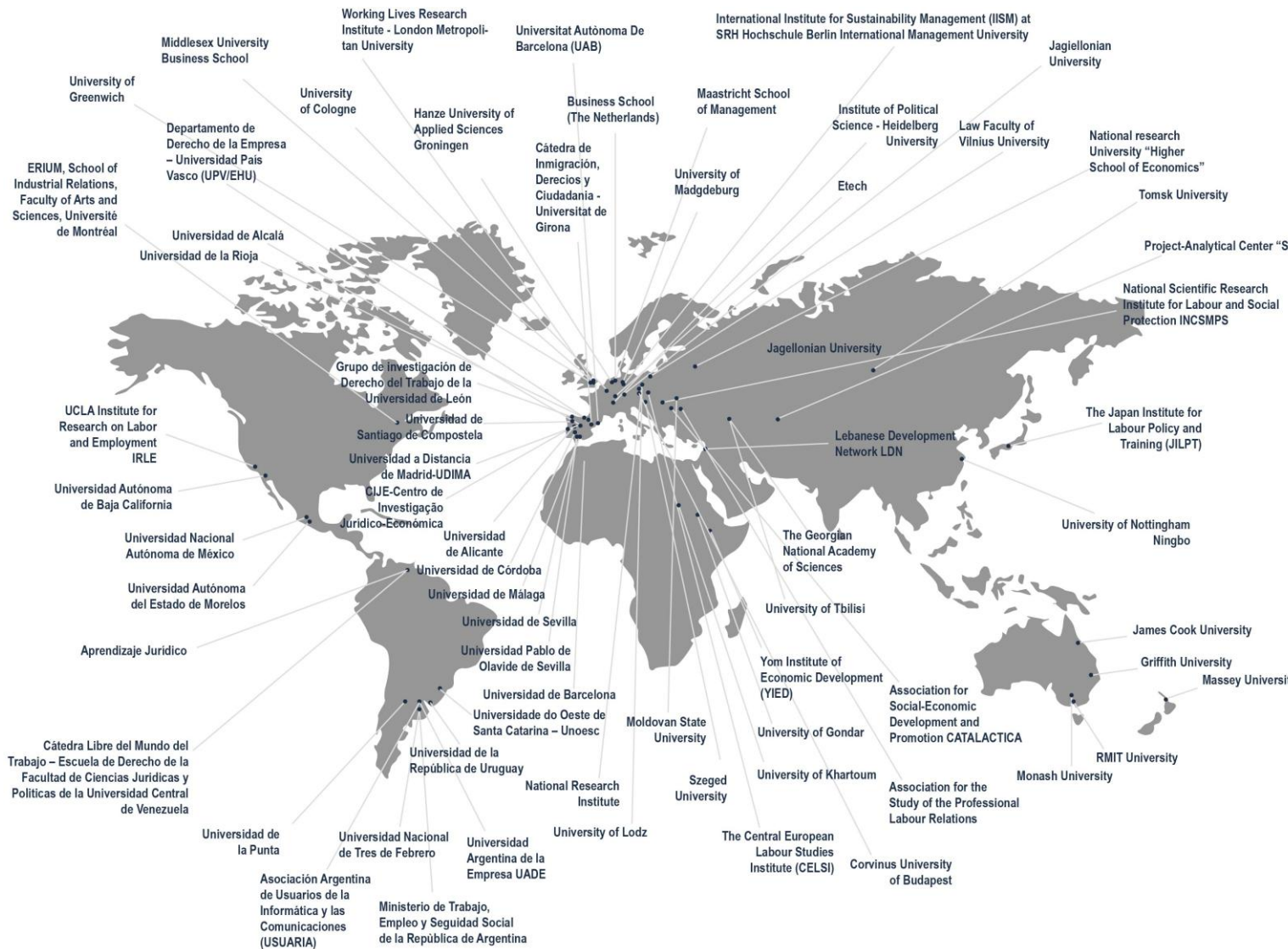
⁶⁹ RENATO MIGUEL DO CARMO, *Jovens e os persistentes dualismos da sociedade portuguesa*, cit., p. 181. As noted by the Author (*ibidem*), the divide between young people with higher education qualifications and those without is particularly striking, with the former not only finding themselves in slightly more stable contractual situations, but also tending to earn relatively higher wages and to live and work in more central and dynamic areas in socio-economic and socio-cultural terms.

⁷⁰ PAULO MARQUES, MARIA DO CARMO BOTELHO, MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO FIGUEIREDO and RITA GUIMARÃES (*Quem são os jovens desempregados? Diagnóstico e recomendações*, 2023, p. 52-53, available at: <https://obsempregojovem.com/p/6603195627aac956d53d0f3a#-recomendacoes>), given the low levels of formal education of many young workers (in 2022, 29,6 % of young unemployed workers, between 15 and 29 years of age had only concluded the 9th year of education – *ibidem*, p. 2), suggest several measures both to

Therefore, youth unemployment is a problem that requires a multifaceted answer, with contributions from several areas, of which labour law is only one.

increase the qualifications, as well as the reskilling of younger workers, such as the promotion of paid training and apprenticeship schemes, under which participating companies would also receive financial support, particularly aiming at workers with no more than the 9th grade; the creation of incentives towards the achievement of a higher education degree (regarding workers who have already finished secondary education); the increase of the attractiveness of vocational courses; the increase in the investment in workers' reskilling, particularly regarding those who possess higher education degrees in low employability areas; the creation of incentives for part-time work of student-workers, to allow them a better conciliation of work and studies, among others.

ADAPT International Network



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