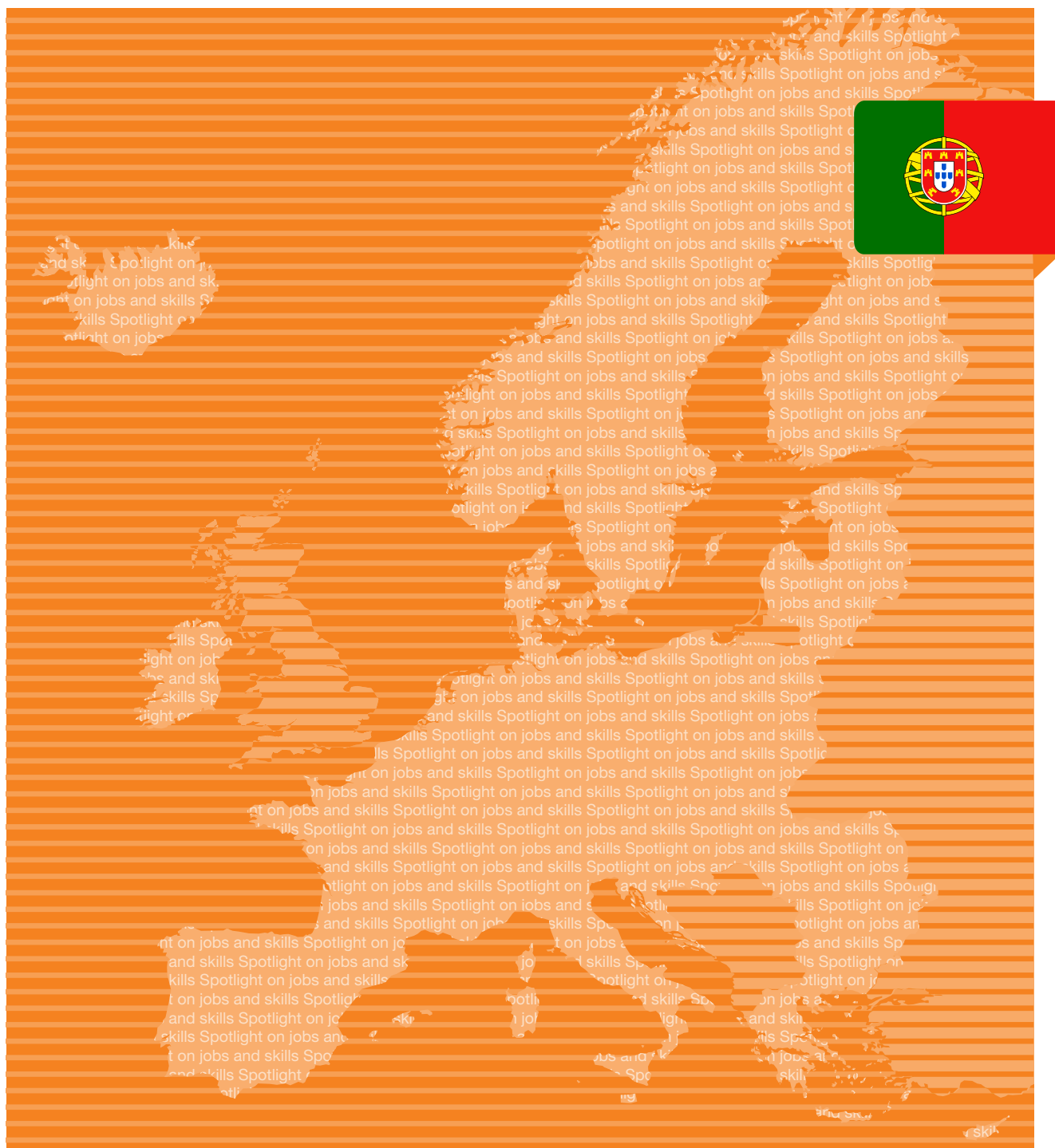




SPOTLIGHT ON JOBS AND SKILLS PORTUGAL

2026

Introduction

Drawing on its rich country-level skills intelligence, Cedefop develops its Spotlights on jobs and skills for EU-27 Member States, Iceland and Norway. The Spotlights provide insights into the current labour market landscape, future trends and skills anticipation in each country. The analysis is based on Cedefop's skills intelligence online tool, its skills forecast, the European Skills Index (ESI), online job advertisements, sectoral and occupational skills intelligence, and country-specific skills anticipation reports.

Recent employment developments

In 2023, Portugal's unemployment rate was around 7 %, slightly above the EU average of 6 %. Unemployment among young people aged 15–24 decreased slightly, from 22 % in 2020 to 21 % in 2023. From 2020 to 2023, the unemployment rate remained stable for the core labour force age groups (6 % for 25–49 and 5 % for 50–64), and for women and men (7 % for each in 2020, 6 % for men and 7 % for women in 2023).

The labour market has grown steadily over the past decade, with total employment increasing from 4.6 million in 2015 to 5 million in 2023. Employment growth between 2015 and 2019 was moderate (+2 % per year), slightly exceeding the EU average of +1 %. This was followed by a COVID-19-driven contraction in employment between 2019 and 2020 (-2 % per year compared with -1 % in the EU). Between 2020 and 2023, the economy recovered, and employment increased by just over +1 % annually in line with the EU average trend.

In 2023, the employed population was distributed across a broad range of sectors ⁽¹⁾ (Figure 1). Manufacturing (17 % compared with 16 % in the EU), wholesale and retail trade (15 % versus 14 %), and health and social care (10 % versus 11 %) had the highest employment shares. The lowest shares

were in mining and quarrying, and energy supply services (less than 1 % each for Portugal and the EU). Professionals were the largest occupational group, accounting for over one-fifth (21 %) of total employment in 2023. Service and sales workers accounted for 19 % of employment, and trades workers for 13 %. Associate professionals (11 %), clerks (9 %), and elementary workers (9 %) also made up significant shares of employment.

Portugal's employed population is predominantly low- and medium-qualified. In 2023, 37 % of workers had a low-level qualification. The shares of workers with a medium-level qualification and a high-level qualification were both 32 %. Men accounted for 51 % of the employed population. The workforce was concentrated in the 25–49 age group, which accounted for 57 % of total employment. Workers aged 50–64 represented one-third of employment, while workers aged 5–24 made up 6 %. The share of workers aged 65 and above remained low, at almost 5 %.

In 2023, the share of young people aged 15–24 neither in employment nor education or training (NEET) was about 9 %, on a par with the EU average. The NEET rate was slightly higher among young men (9 %) than among young women (8 %).

Recent skills and learning developments

Analysis of [Cedefop's online job advertisements](#) (OJAs) signals that, in 2023, most job advertisements were for a professional (27 %) or an associate professional job (19 %). OJAs for service and sales workers accounted for 15 % of job advertisements, followed by trades workers (11 %), clerks (11 %), elementary workers (7 %), and managers (7 %). OJAs for professionals predominantly targeted ICT professionals (37 % of OJAs for professionals), office professionals (27 %) and researchers and engineers (19 %). Of the OJAs for ICT professionals, 86 % were for software and applications developers and analysts, and 14 % were for database and network professionals.

According to [Cedefop's European Skills Index](#)

⁽¹⁾ To learn more about the classification of sectors, occupations, and qualification levels discussed in this report, see Annex 2 of [Cedefop skills forecast methodological framework](#) (April 2023).

(ESI), Portugal ranked 24th out of 31 countries in 2024, retaining its 2017 position. The country performed best on the ESI skills activation pillar (ranking 17th) ([Figure 2](#)). Performance was lower on the ESI skills matching pillar (25th) and the ESI skills development pillar (27th). The highest-ranking indicators were the activity rate for the 25–54 age group (ranking third) and the share of early leavers from education and training (2 %, ranking fourth). Performance was weakest for upper secondary (and above) attainment (31st) and qualification mismatch (29th), which warrant attention from policymakers. Between 2017 and 2024, the most notable improvements were the reduction in the share of long-term unemployment (from 8 % to 3 %), and in early leaving from education and training (from 6 % to 3 %). Reading, maths and science scores for 15-year-olds (from 497 in 2017 to 477.6 in 2024) and the activity rate for young people aged 20–24 (from 57 % in 2017 to 52 % in 2024) were the ESI indicators that declined the most and signal a need for policy action.

In 2023, 30 % of the Portuguese population had above-basic digital skills, surpassing the EU average of 27 %. Digital skills were more common in the age group 15–34 (52 % above-basic digital skills versus 39 % in the EU) and among employed people (37 % compared with 33 % in the EU).

In 2023, 15 % of the employed population participated in learning (EU average at 14 %). Participation was slightly higher among women (16 %) than among men (14 %). While 17 % of people aged 25–49 participated in learning, only 11 % of those aged 50–64 did so. This signals a need to boost learning participation among older workers.

tate, professional, scientific and technical activities (+17 %); and arts, recreation and other services (+13 %). Employment declines are forecast in agriculture, forestry and fishing (-25 %), construction (-17 %), and education (-2 %).

Employment for professionals is projected to grow steadily up to 2035. Jobs for professionals will account for the largest share of job openings (28 %), and employment in 2035 will be 24 % higher than in 2022. Employment growth is also projected for service workers (+15 %), technicians and associate professionals (+32 %), and plant and machine operators (+6 %). Employment is projected to shrink for skilled agricultural and fishery workers (-35 %), craft and related trades workers (-22 %), and elementary occupations (-24 %).

The employed labour force is expected to become increasingly highly qualified over the 2022–2035 period. The number of workers with a higher qualification is projected to grow by +3 % annually, surpassing the EU average growth of +2 %. The number of medium-qualified workers is forecast to increase by +2 %, significantly outpacing the EU rate of +0.2 %. The number of workers with no or low qualifications is projected to decline sharply, by -8 % annually, much faster than the EU average annual employment decline of -3 %. Due to population ageing, the strongest annual labour force growth until 2035 is expected in the 65+ (+5 % compared with +6 % in the EU) and 60–64 (2 %, equal to the EU average) age groups. At the same time, the number of 15- to 19-year-olds in the labour force is expected to grow by +3 % per year, surpassing the EU-27 growth of +0.4 %. Meanwhile, declines are projected for the 45–49 (-2 % compared with 0 % in the EU) and 40–44 (-2 % compared with -0.2 % in the EU) age groups.

Future employment trends

[Cedefop's Skills Forecast](#) projections show that, between 2022 and 2035, employment in Portugal is expected to grow fastest in information and communication (+35 %), administrative and support service activities (+23 %), and electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (+19 %). Notable employment growth is also projected in water supply, sewerage, waste and remediation activities (+17 %); real es-

Future skills and learning trends

Between 2022 and 2035, the labour market is projected to undergo notable skills upgrading. By 2035, high-skilled non-manual occupations are expected to account for 44 % of total employment, an increase of +22 % since 2022. Employment of health associate professionals and information and com-

munications technology professionals is expected to grow by +4 % per year. Over the same projection period, jobs in skilled non-manual occupations will represent 28 % of employment, an increase of +9 % since 2022. This will be driven mainly by strong annual growth in occupations such as personal care workers (3 %). Employment in skilled manual occupations is projected to decline by 14 %, and by 2035 these occupations will account for 21 % of the workforce. The skilled manual occupations with the fastest annual employment decline are food processing, woodworking, garment and other craft and related trades (-5 %). Jobs in elementary occupations will account for 6 % of employment in 2035. Employment in these occupations will fall by -24 %, with the sharpest annual declines forecast for agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers (-13 %) and street and related sales and service workers (-6 %).

Employment growth in high-tech occupations is projected to grow by +6 % between 2030 and 2035, just below the EU average growth rate of 7 %. The strongest growth in high-tech employment is projected for arts and recreation and other services (+15 %), accommodation and food and administrative services (+13 %), and education and ICT services (+10 % each). At the other end of the spectrum, contraction is expected in high-tech occupations in water and waste treatment (-20 %), agriculture, forestry and fishing (-6 %), public sector and defence (-5 %), and health and social care (-3 %).

Employment in Portugal's broad high-tech economy is likely to grow by +6 % between 2030 and 2035, surpassing the EU average of 5 %. Employment growth will be particularly strong in knowledge-intensive services (+7 % compared with +9 % in the EU), while employment in high-technology manufacturing is expected to grow by +3 % (+2 % in the EU on average).

ances. High shortages are also expected for technicians and associate professionals, and for plant and machine operators and assemblers. The latter are expected to be affected more strongly by supply-demand imbalances, but less by replacement demand. High labour shortages are also forecast for health associate professionals, business and administration associate professionals, and legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals, owing to strong employment growth and high replacement demand. Shortages are expected to be less pressing for employers recruiting craft and related trade workers, people in elementary occupations, or clerks ([Figure 3](#)).

Expected skill shortages

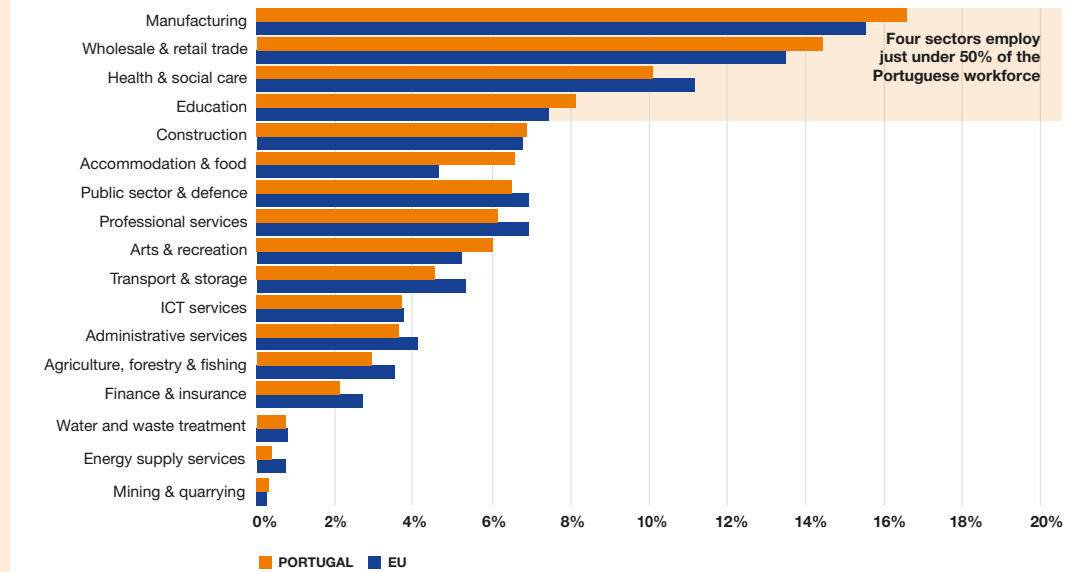
According to [Cedefop's Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#), employers will face the highest shortages in service workers and shop and market sales workers, driven equally by occupation growth, high replacement needs, and supply-demand imbalances.



PORTUGAL

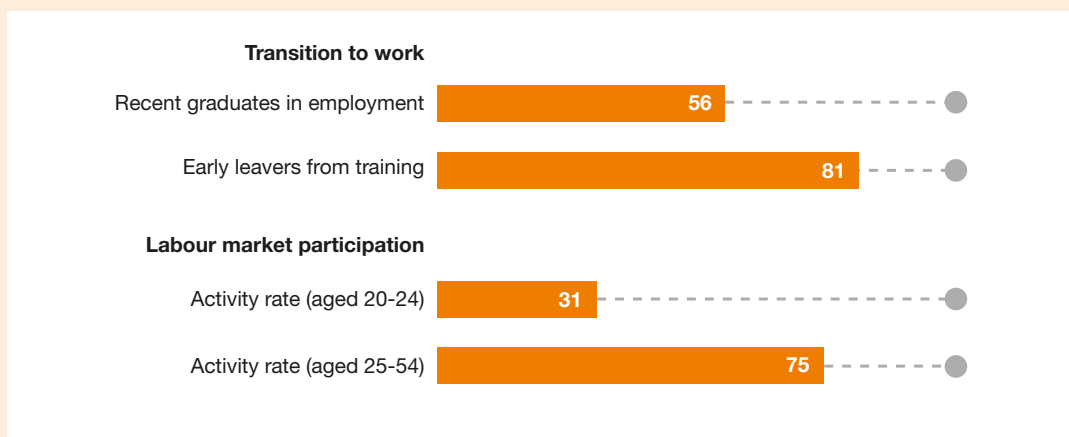
Jobs and skills in figures

Distribution of employment across sectors in Portugal and the EU, 2023 (%)



Source: [Cedefop Skills Intelligence tool](#).

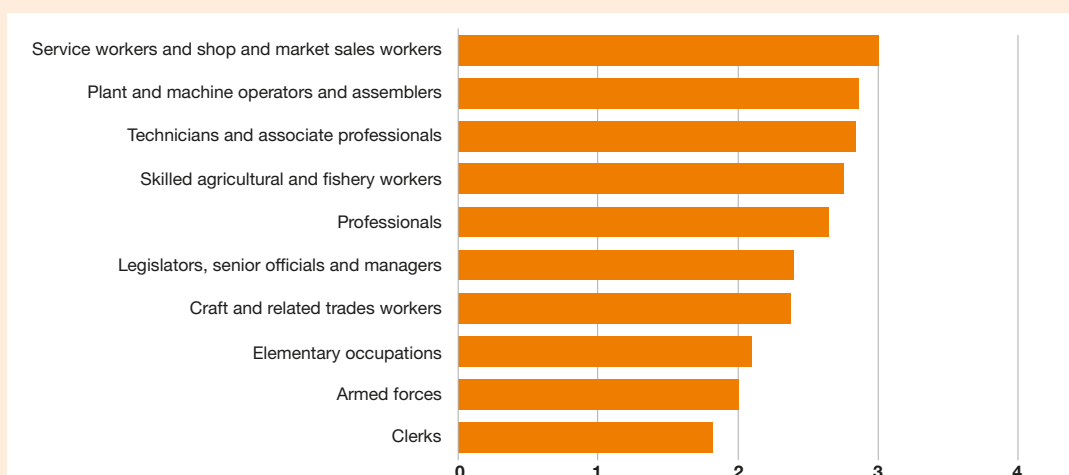
ESI skills activation pillar in Portugal, 2024



NB: The ESI measures countries' 'distance to the ideal' performance, i.e. the highest achieved by any country over a period of seven years. The ideal performance is scaled to 100, with national scores computed and compared to that. Example: a score of 65 suggests that the country has reached 65 % of the ideal performance, with 35 % (100-65) room for improvement.

Source: [Cedefop European Skills Index \(ESI\)](#).

Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index, 2022-35, Portugal



NB: The Labour and Skills Shortage Index is the simple average of the quartiles in each of the three pillars: (1) employment growth; (2) replacement demand; (3) supply/demand imbalance (IFOD). A score of 4 indicates a higher level of shortage, and 1 no shortage. The outcome of the pillars is based on the relative evaluation in quartiles of the occupation (here for all EU-27).

Source: [Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#).



Further information

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[Cedefop Skills intelligence tool](#)

[Cedefop Skills forecast](#)

[Cedefop Skills OVATE](#)

[Cedefop European Skills Index](#)

[Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#)

This Spotlight was drafted by Cedefop's Skills intelligence and foresight team.

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