



# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

## A CASEBOOK FOR GOOD PRACTICES

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Universidade de Évora  
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CENTRO ZA KOMUNIKACIJO,  
SLUH IN GOVOR PORTOROŽ  
CENTRO PER LA COMUNICAZIONE,  
UOVRIO E LA PERSUNANCA PORTOROSE



Karin dom





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# A NEW VICTORY EACH DAY: THE RUNNER BOY RUI

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## SUMMARY OF THE CASE

Rui is a 12-year-old Portuguese boy living with his mother and father. Rui's communication development, despite his autism diagnosis, is a significant aspect of his progress. Through different therapies and methods of support Rui developed his language skills. He articulated his first words at 23 months and formed simple sentences by three. This progress allowed him to engage in activities with peers and participate in inclusive education. Collaboration between parents, therapists, and educators played a vital role in fostering Rui's communication abilities. Early intervention and ongoing support were key in overcoming communication challenges for individuals with autism.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Rui is a 12-year-old Portuguese boy that lives with his mother and father. His parents warmly welcomed him when his mother was 36 years old, and his father was 37 years old.

Around the age of seven months, Rui's parents noticed distinctive behaviours in him compared to other children. He exhibited a lack of response to different environmental stimuli, such as not paying attention to pictures or turning his head to look. Instead, he displayed a hyper-focus on music and a repetitive behaviour of frequently opening and closing doors. When Rui reached 12-13 months old, his parents shared their concerns with a paediatrician, particularly because they noticed that their son's primary problem was his difficulty in understanding them. Following that, Rui's parents sought a developmental

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medical appointment to explore the possibility of an autism diagnosis. This initial medical appointment marked the beginning of their journey. In their own words “(...) it was our first iceberg. It was not an ice cube but an iceberg. It was a very different day, a very complicated day, we couldn’t see a light at the end of the tunnel (...)”. On that day, Rui was referred to the Developmental Consultation at the Espírito Santo Hospital in Évora, where he received an evaluation for Early Intervention (IP – Intervenção Precoce) and subsequent intervention. Additionally, his parents sought a consultation at a private clinic. The neuro-paediatrician at the private clinic confirmed the diagnosis of "mild" autism spectrum disorder. This diagnosis provided clarity and guided further steps in Rui's treatment and support.

At the age of 2, Rui began receiving care and support from the child psychiatry department at the Unidade de Primeira Infância (UPI) - D. Estefânia Hospital in Lisbon, Portugal. During this period, he underwent a comprehensive evaluation, leading to the prescription of occupational therapy, speech therapy, and psychological follow-up as part of his intervention plan. In addition to the prescribed therapies, Rui's parents decided to supplement his intervention by opting for private speech therapy starting at the age of four and occupational-sensory therapy from the age of two. These private interventions continued up until the present time, although with occasional appointments becoming less frequent starting from the age of eight. During Rui's preschool years, the Early Intervention team worked collaboratively with his parents to develop the Technical Pedagogical Report (RTP – Relatório Técnico Pedagógico) and the Individual Educational Plan (PEI - Plano Educativo Individualizado). These documents were prepared in close coordination with the parents, ensuring their active involvement in the process.

As per his parents' decision, Rui attended a private kindergarten with early intervention support provided by the public system until the age of seven. Subsequently, he transitioned to primary school, where he was integrated into a mainstream first-grade class. To ensure his inclusive education, Rui received assistance from the Multidisciplinary Team of Support for Inclusive Education (EMAEI – Equipa Multidisciplinar de Apoio à Educação Inclusiva) and benefited from the resources available at the Resource Centre for Inclusion (CRI – Centro de Recursos para a Inclusão). In addition to the mentioned support, Rui had the guidance of a special education teacher who accompanied him both within the classroom setting and in



## CASE STUDY 6

individual sessions. At school, he also received speech therapy services. Alongside this, Rui received occupational therapy from the Resource Centre for Inclusion (CRI). Furthermore, Rui began attending the Learning Support Centre (CAA – Centro de Apoio à Aprendizagem) within his school cluster. In this setting, he participated in activities designed to stimulate academic learning. Unfortunately, these activities were temporarily halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to health reasons related to experimental autism medication, Rui experienced physical and behavioral regression, resulting in him falling behind academically and repeating two school years. However, at present, Rui, who is currently in the 4th grade, has made significant progress in his academic skills, language abilities, autonomy, and overall functionality. He has successfully regained his previous levels of achievement and is now preparing to transition to the 5th grade.

### PROGRESS AND EVENTS

1. Rui achieved the milestone of sitting independently for the first time at around 7-8 months old.
2. With the assistance of his mother and father, Rui began crawling at 9 months old.
3. Rui took his first steps and started walking independently at 14-15 months old.
4. Rui articulated his initial words, "hello" and "water," at 23 months old, and at 2 years and 1 month, he began saying "mum" and "dad."
5. Rui started uttering his first simple sentences at the age of 3.
6. From the age of 3 until 7 years old, Rui developed his language skills using the Makaton pictorial system.
7. Between the ages of 2 and 5, Rui attended in hippotherapy.
8. During the period of 4 to 6 years old, Rui engaged in swimming lessons with the support of occupational therapists.
9. Starting at the age of 8, Rui engaged in sports, particularly running, and resumed swimming at the age of 12.
10. Rui developed his social skills by participating in activities with peers, including reading small group texts with classmates, engaging in music and dance, and joining school visits.

11. In July 2022, Rui began participating in the 1st free time activities (ATL – Atividades de Tempo Livre; a Pilot Project).
12. Currently, Rui is preparing for the transition to the 5th grade.
13. Rui's life project, tailored to his unique characteristics, is currently under construction as part of his ongoing development and planning.

## CONCLUSION AND THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

Rui's case serves as a clear demonstration of the intricacies involved in the process of inclusion. It highlights the presence of anxiety, concerns, and challenges, demanding unwavering perseverance from both parents and the professionals involved in supporting a young individual with special educational needs. Effective collaboration between these parties, along with the involvement of relevant institutions providing essential services, is crucial for the genuine inclusion of children and young people. Additionally, it is imperative to possess the necessary knowledge to establish an appropriate intervention model that caters to their specific requirements.

Within this context, both the immediate and extended family play a crucial role as a vital network of instrumental and emotional support. While the support from different institutions is valuable, enhanced coordination between the Learning Support Centre (CAA) and community organizations would foster closer integration between the school and the broader living environment. By strengthening this collaboration, a more comprehensive and cohesive support system can be established, further benefiting the child's educational journey.

Rui's example serves as a testament to the transformative power of inclusive education when supported by a dedicated network of individuals, institutions, and the continuous pursuit of knowledge. From the early interventions in preschool to his current preparations for the transition to the 5th grade, Rui's progress demonstrates the positive impact of inclusive practices and tailored interventions.

Rui's family emerged as an essential pillar, offering unwavering support, advocacy, and engagement throughout his journey. Their collaboration with professionals and active participation in decision-making processes contributed significantly to his overall progress.

## CASE STUDY 6

## CASE STUDY VIDEOS



**Video** - A new victory each day, the runner boy Rui

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIFgKnFytA>

or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rszz2qTPfQ>



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