

Romania

This country note provides an overview of the key characteristics of the education system in Romania based on data from *Education at a Glance 2025*. In line with this year's thematic focus, it emphasises tertiary education while also covering other parts of the education system. The data in this note are provided for the latest available year. Readers interested in the reference years for the data should refer to the corresponding tables in *Education at a Glance 2025*.

Highlights

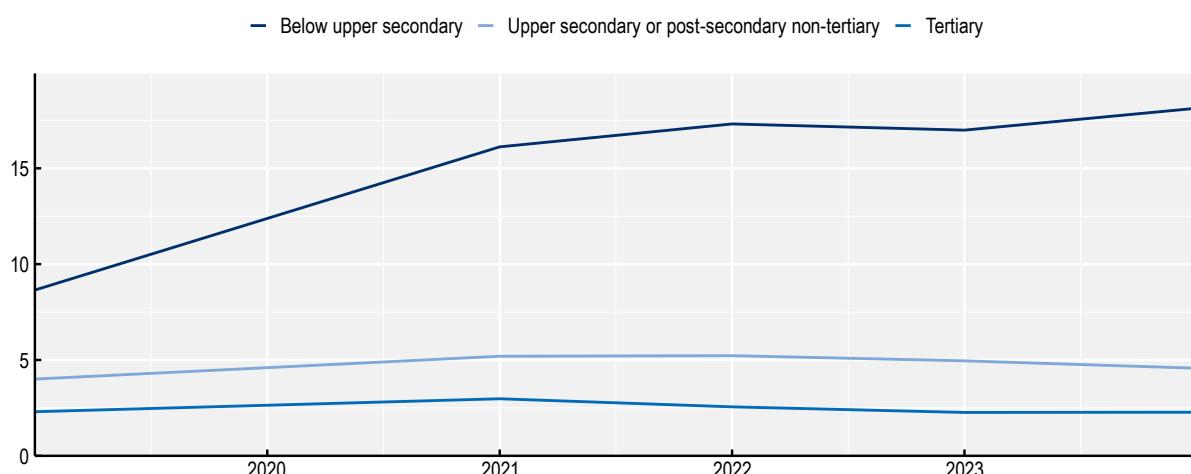
- In Romania, **the share of young adults with below upper secondary educational attainment decreased from 26% in 2019 to 24% in 2024**. Romania is one of the six OECD and partner countries where tertiary educational attainment has decreased in the same period: the share of young adults with a tertiary qualification also dropped from 26% in 2019 to 23% in 2024.
- **Tertiary educational attainment guarantees excellent employment prospects in Romania** (employment rate of 92% compared to 87% on average across the OECD). However, the average earnings advantage for tertiary-educated 25-64 year-old workers relative to workers with upper secondary attainment is 41%, below the OECD average of 54%.
- The share of 18-24 year-olds who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in Romania is above the OECD average (22% compared to 14%). **The risk of being unemployed or inactive is high among 25-34 year-olds**, especially for those with below upper secondary educational attainment (18% are unemployed and 45% are not in the labour force).
- The share of youth who are not enrolled in education in Romania is relatively high among 6-14 and 15-19 year-olds (16% and 32% respectively, compared to the OECD averages of 2% and 16%).
- Education systems must adapt to shifts in the number of children. **Romania recorded a 5% decline in the number of children aged 0–4 between 2013 and 2023** and is projected to face a further 11% drop between 2023 and 2033.
- **In Romania, 62% of new entrants to bachelor's programmes complete their degree within the theoretical duration (above the OECD average of 43%)**, and 65% and 66% do so within one and three additional years (OECD averages: 59% and 70%).
- **Romania is succeeding in attracting an increasing number of foreign students** and recorded an increase from 5.4% in 2018 to 6.7% in 2023 (compared to the OECD average, which also increased from 6% to 7.4% in the same period).
- Relative teacher salaries in Romania are high. **Primary teachers earn 14% more than tertiary-educated workers on average**, while across the OECD, primary teachers typically earn 19% less. In addition, teachers can be awarded additional compensation for teaching more hours, for participating in mentoring programmes or for carrying out additional special tasks.
- Students in Romania receive just over 6 000 hours of compulsory instruction in primary and lower secondary education, (about 1 600 hours less than on average across the OECD), of which 46% and 29% respectively are allocated to mathematics, reading, writing and literature.

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

- The share of young adults (25-34 year-olds) without upper secondary attainment continues to decline across the OECD, reaching an average of 13%. This trend also continues in Romania, where the share fell from 26% to 24% between 2019 and 2024.
- On average across OECD countries, 42% of 25-64 year-olds hold a tertiary qualification, compared to only 19% in Romania. The share is slightly higher among 25-34 year-olds in Romania (23%) but has decreased since 2019 (26%). Despite a below-average earnings premium for tertiary-educated adults, higher educational attainment still guarantees strong employment prospects: 92% of Romania's young tertiary-educated adults are employed, compared to 87% on average across OECD countries.
- Late teens and early twenties are critical years for completing upper secondary education and transitioning into tertiary education or the labour market. Nonetheless, some young people are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), indicating potential barriers to labour market entry or continued education. In Romania, 22% of 18-24 year-olds are NEETs, above the OECD average of 14%.
- Individuals with greater educational attainment generally face a lower risk of unemployment and earn higher wages. Completing upper secondary education is particularly important in reducing the risk of unemployment. On average across the OECD, 12.9% of economically active young adults (25-34 year-olds) without an upper secondary qualification are unemployed, compared to 6.9% of those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. Those who go on to gain a tertiary qualification see a relatively smaller further reduction in unemployment, with 4.9% of tertiary-educated young adults unemployed on average across the OECD. This pattern is similar in Romania (albeit at a higher level): 18.1% of young adults without an upper secondary qualification are unemployed, compared to 4.6% of those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment and 2.3% of those with tertiary attainment (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Trends in unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds in Romania, by educational attainment (2019 to 2024)

In per cent



For data, see OECD (2025) *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>, Table A3.5.

- The average wage gap between individuals (25-64 year-olds) with and without upper secondary educational attainment is relatively modest across OECD countries. On average across the OECD, workers without upper secondary qualifications earn on average 17% less than those who have completed upper secondary education, while workers with tertiary attainment earn 54% more than those with upper secondary attainment. In Romania, the wage gap between workers with and without upper secondary attainment is smaller than the OECD average, at 9%. The gap between those with upper secondary and tertiary attainment is also smaller than the OECD average, at 41%. This suggests a generally more compressed wage distribution by educational attainment in Romania, which may indicate lower relative returns to education but also a lower level of income inequality compared to the OECD average.

Access to education, participation and progression

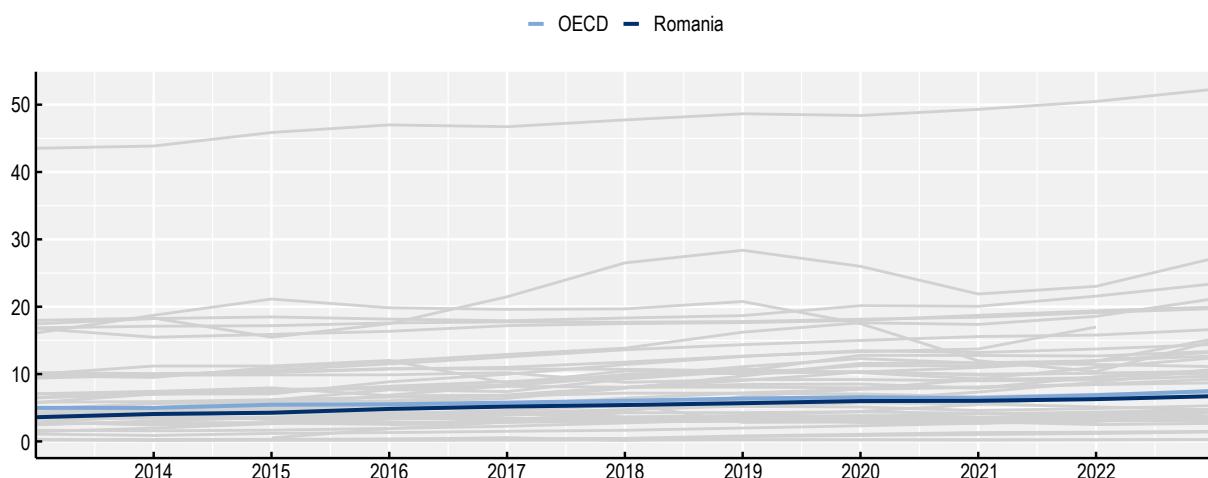
- Education systems must adapt to changes in the number of children by expanding or reducing provision accordingly. In many countries, the population of children aged 0-4 changed significantly between 2013 and 2023 and is projected to change further by 2033. Romania experienced a decline of 5% in the number of 0-4 year-olds, and is projected to see a decline of 11% between 2023 and 2033.
- The share of students in lower secondary education who are at least two years older than the expected age for their grade varies widely across OECD countries, ranging from virtually none in some countries to over 10% in others. In Romania, the share is in the middle of the OECD distribution in 2023, at 4.9%.
- Bachelor's or equivalent programmes are the main entry point into tertiary education in most OECD countries, with an average of 78% of those starting tertiary education for the first time enrolling in such programmes. In Romania, the share is even higher at 91%.
- Women make up the majority of first-time entrants to tertiary education in most OECD countries. In Romania, they accounted for 54% of first-time entrants in 2023, up from 53% in 2013. Across the OECD, women make up 54% of new entrants on average, the same share as in 2013.
- Across the OECD, the two most popular broad fields of study are science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and business, administration, and law, each accounting for 23% of graduates from bachelor's or equivalent programmes. They are closely followed by the broad field of arts and humanities, social sciences, journalism and information, at 22% of graduates. In Romania, 31% of bachelor's degree students graduate from a STEM field, 29% from business, administration and law, and 19% from arts and humanities, social sciences, journalism and information.
- Completion rates reflect the share of new entrants to bachelor's programmes who successfully obtain a tertiary degree within specified timeframes. These rates remain low in most OECD countries. In Romania, 62% of new entrants complete their bachelor's degree within the theoretical duration of the programme. This rises to 65% one year after the expected end date, and to 66% three years after. In comparison, the OECD average completion rate is 43% within the theoretical duration, increasing to 59% after an additional year and 70% after three years.
- In all countries, women starting bachelor's programmes are more likely than their male peers to successfully complete their tertiary studies within the three years after the theoretical end of their programme. In Romania, the gender gap is 13 percentage points (70% for women compared to 57% for men), which is similar to the OECD average of 12 percentage points.
- Completion rates vary by field of study. On average across the OECD, only 58% of new entrants to bachelor's programmes in STEM fields have graduated at that level in the same field within three years after the expected end of their studies. Completion rates in the field of health and welfare

are significantly higher, at 74%. In Romania, STEM completion rates are 66%, lower than those for health and welfare, at 73%.

- Students who do not complete their tertiary education may drop out at various stages. High dropout rates in the first year can signal a mismatch between student expectations and the content or demands of their programmes, possibly reflecting a lack of career guidance for prospective students or insufficient support for new entrants. In Romania, the share of first-time entrants in bachelor's programmes who drop out after the first year is higher than the OECD average, at 21% (compared to 13%).
- On average across the OECD, only 2% of 6-14 year-olds are not enrolled in education, compared to 16% in Romania. This share is higher among older age groups: in Romania, 32% of 15-19 year-olds are not in education, compared to 16% on average across the OECD.
- Romania has a strong vocational system, with 30% of youth in this age group enrolled in upper secondary vocational programmes (OECD average: 23%). These programmes equip students with skills to enter the labour market or continue to tertiary education: in Romania, 75% of upper secondary vocational students are enrolled in programmes that provide access to tertiary education, just 2 percentage points below the OECD average.
- International student mobility in tertiary education continues to rise across the OECD, with some countries experiencing substantial growth in the share of international students between 2018 and 2023. On average, 7.4% of all tertiary students across the OECD were international or foreign students, compared to 6% in 2018. Romania saw a similar increase (at a slightly lower level), with the share rising from 5.4% to 6.7% (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Trends in the share of international or foreign students in tertiary education (2013 to 2023)

In per cent



For data, see OECD (2025) *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>, Table B4.3.

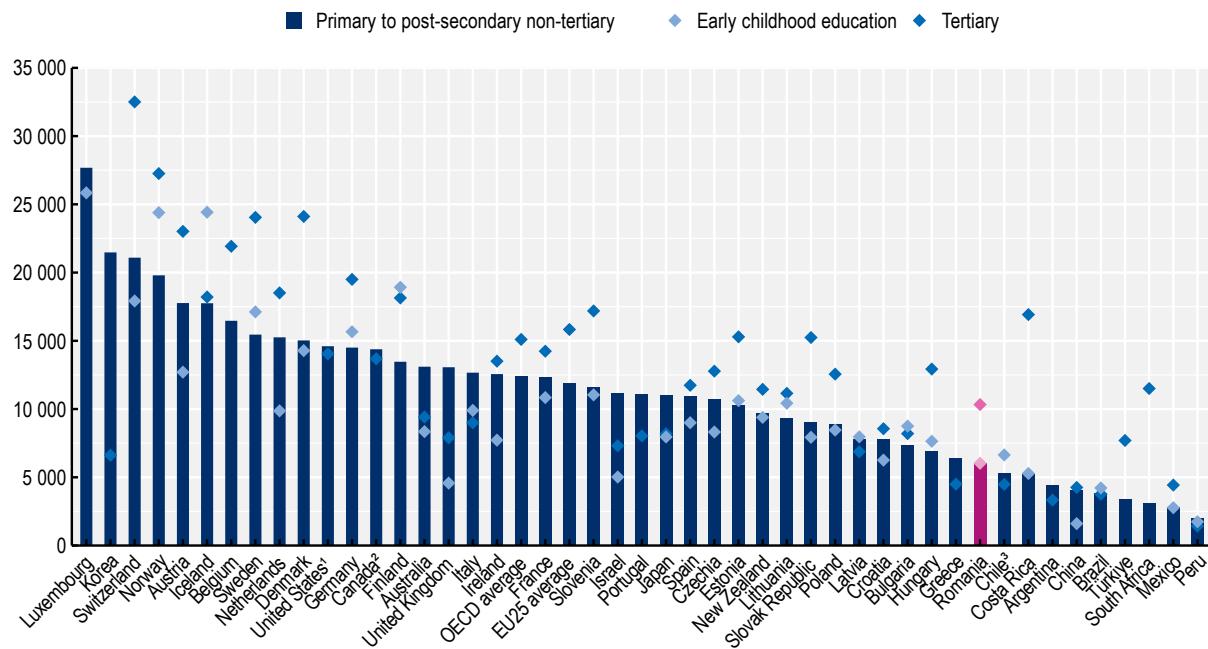
Financial resources invested in education

- There are significant disparities in how much governments spend each year in education across OECD, partner and accession countries. Romania spends USD 6 069 per student from primary to

post-secondary non-tertiary levels, placing it at the lower end of the country range, which spans from less than USD 2 000 to more than USD 27 000 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Government expenditure per full-time equivalent student, by level of education (2022)

In equivalent USD converted using PPPs, expenditure on educational institutions



Note: Expenditure at tertiary level includes R&D. Expenditure per student in early childhood education is based on headcounts rather than full-time equivalent students. Expenditure at tertiary level for Luxembourg (USD 54 384) is not shown in the figure.

1. Year of reference differs from 2022.

2. Primary includes pre-primary education.

3. Includes payments by households outside educational institutions.

For data, see OECD (2025) *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>, Table C1.1 and Table C1.2.

- As in most other countries, government expenditure in Romania is higher at tertiary level, including research and development (R&D), than at primary to post-secondary non-tertiary levels. Government expenditure in Romania amounts to USD 10 329 per tertiary student compared to the OECD average of USD 15 102.
- A large part of the disparity in expenditure per student across OECD, partner and accession countries reflects differences in national income levels. When expenditure is measured as a share of GDP, cross-country differences tend to be smaller, ranging from 2.5% of GDP to 6.9%. In Romania, education investment in primary to tertiary education stands at 2.5% of GDP, which is below the OECD average of 4.7% by this measure.
- Governments are the primary source of education funding in all OECD countries, especially for the levels covered by compulsory education. In Romania, governments provide 96.5% of total funding for primary, secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary education (before transfers to the private sector), which is above the OECD average of 90.1%. At the pre-primary and tertiary levels, private funding often plays a larger role. In Romania, 98.7% of pre-primary education funding (after transfers) and 90% of tertiary education funding (before transfers) come from public sources, compared to OECD averages of 85.6% and 71.9%, respectively.

- Although expenditure per student from primary to tertiary levels increased on average across OECD countries between 2015 and 2022 in real terms (from USD 11 955 to USD 13 210), government spending on education declined in relative terms from 10.9% of public budgets to 10.1%. This suggests the relative priority given to education in overall public spending has fallen across the OECD. In Romania, expenditure per student increased from USD 4 761 to USD 6 220, while the share devoted to education decreased from 6.6% of public budgets to 6.3% over this period.
- At pre-primary level, government expenditure in Romania increased substantially by 36.7% between 2015 and 2022. This is despite a decrease of 2.9% in the number of children enrolled. As a result, government expenditure per child has increased, by 40.8%, compared to an average increase of 24% across the OECD since 2015.
- Some countries impose significantly higher tuition fees on foreign students at master's level in public institutions, including Romania. In Romania, average annual tuition fees for foreign students¹ at master's level are USD 8 150 on average, which is well above the fees charged to national students (USD 2 098).

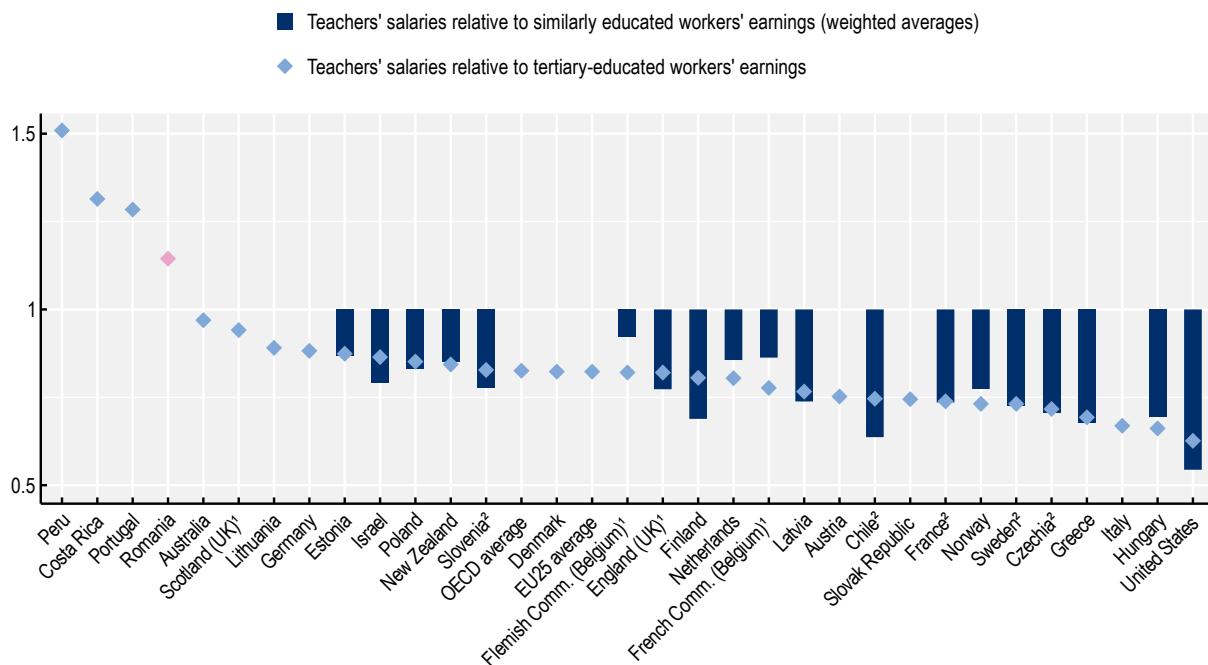
Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- Many countries are experiencing teacher shortages, reflected not just in the number of unfilled teaching positions, but also in other indicators such as the share of non-fully qualified teachers in the teaching workforce. In the 14 countries and economies with data available, 1.6% of teaching positions are unfilled on average, and 4.9% of teachers are not fully qualified. In Romania, the share of unfilled teaching positions is 1.9%, and the share of non-fully qualified teachers is 2%. However, cross-country comparisons of these data should be made with even greater caution than in other areas, as teacher recruitment processes vary significantly, ranging from centralised systems with competitive national exams to fully decentralised hiring at the school level, making comparisons of vacancy levels difficult.
- Attracting second-career teachers can help alleviate teacher shortages while bringing individuals with a broader range of experience into the profession. To support this, 16 out of 28 countries with available data offer dedicated alternative pathways into teaching for individuals changing careers. In contrast, Romania does not offer dedicated pathways for second career teachers.
- Competitive salaries can make the teaching profession more attractive, particularly since teachers in many countries earn less than other tertiary-educated workers. In Romania, the actual salaries of primary teachers are 14% higher than those of tertiary-educated full-time full year workers, compared to an average of 17% lower across the OECD. However, increasing teacher salaries can be financially challenging, as staff costs make up the largest share of education expenditure (Figure 4).
- Teachers who participate in school or other management activities in addition to their teaching duties receive extra financial compensation in the majority of countries and economies with available information. In Romania, teachers can be awarded additional compensation for teaching more hours than required, for participating in mentoring programmes for new teachers or for carrying out additional special tasks. Furthermore, they can receive a residence allowance or additional compensation for teaching to special needs students or in a disadvantaged, remote, or high-cost area.

¹ Non-EU/EEA students.

Figure 4. Actual salaries of primary teachers relative to earnings of tertiary-educated workers (2024)

Ratio of salaries to the earnings of full-time, full-year workers aged 25-64



Note: Data refer to the ratio of annual average salaries (including bonuses and allowances) of teachers and school heads in public institutions relative to the earnings of workers with similar educational attainment (weighted average) and to the earnings of full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education. Earnings of workers with similar educational attainment to teachers are weighted by the distribution of teachers (or school heads) by qualification level (see Tables X2.10 and X2.11). As values close to one may be difficult to identify in the figure, please refer to the source table.

1. Data on earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education refer to the whole country.

2. Year of reference for salaries of teachers differs from 2024.

For data, see OECD (2025) *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>, Table D3.2.

- The amount of compulsory instruction time affects teacher salary costs as it influences the number of teachers needed, combined with other factors such as class size and teaching time of teachers. In Romania, students receive 540 hours of compulsory instruction per year in primary education and 834 hours in lower secondary education. This is below the OECD average of 804 hours in primary and 909 hours in lower secondary education.
- School holidays in primary education last 16.6 weeks per year in Romania (all breaks combined), compared to 13.5 weeks across the OECD.
- In Romania, 46% of instruction time in primary education is allocated to mathematics and reading, writing and literature, falling to 29% in lower secondary education. In comparison, the OECD average is for 41% of instruction time in primary education and 27% in lower secondary education to be devoted to these core subjects.
- Countries use a range of admission systems to tertiary public education institutions. These vary as to whether admission is open or selective, and whether applications are submitted directly to institutions or to a central body. In Romania, admission is selective. Applicants submit their applications directly to institutions.

More information

For more information on Education at a Glance 2025 and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en>.

For more information on the methodology used during the data collection for each indicator, the references to the sources and the specific notes for each country, see Education at a Glance 2025: Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fcfaf2d1-en>.

For general information on the methodology, please refer to the OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304444-en>.

Updated data can be found on line at <http://data-explorer.oecd.org/> and by following the StatLinks in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

Questions can be directed to the Education at a Glance team at the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills: EDU.EAG@oecd.org.

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