

Education at a Glance 2023

Country note

Romania

This country note provides an overview of the key characteristics of the education system in Romania. It draws on data from *Education at a Glance 2023*. In line with the thematic focus of this year's *Education at a Glance*, it emphasises vocational education and training (VET), while also covering other parts of the education system. Data in this note are provided for the latest available year. Readers interested in the reference years for the data are referred to the corresponding tables in *Education at a Glance 2023*.

Highlights

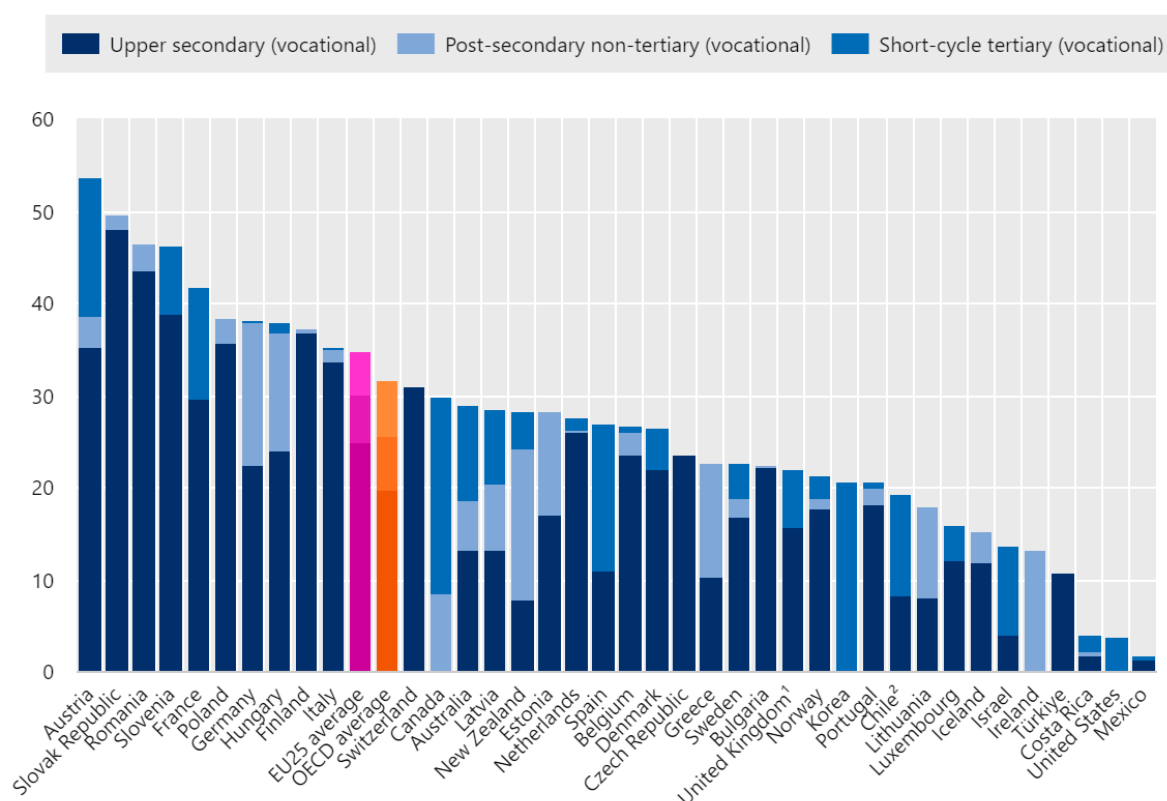
- Vocational programmes are popular in Romania at upper secondary level: 26% of 15-19 year-olds are enrolled in general upper secondary education compared to 32% in vocational upper secondary education. This compares to 37% in general upper secondary programmes and 24% in vocational upper secondary programmes on average across OECD countries.
- The popularity of vocational upper secondary programmes versus general ones in Romania results into greater fundings. 12% of all funding for educational institutions is spent on general upper secondary education and 14% on vocational upper secondary education in Romania.
- Students enrolled in vocational upper secondary education in Romania also benefit from smaller student-teacher ratio and relatively younger teaching staff than in most OECD countries. There are 13 students per teaching staff member in vocational upper secondary programmes in Romania compared to 15 on average across OECD countries. In Romania, 37% of teachers in vocational upper secondary programmes are aged 50 or older, against an OECD average of 43%.
- In Romania, vocational programmes lead to better labour market outcomes than the general ones. 4.9% of 25-34 year-olds with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment are unemployed, against 6.2% of those with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. 25-34 year-olds working full-time with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earn only 7% more than those without an upper secondary qualification compared to 22% on average across OECD countries.
- Despite the importance of having at least upper secondary attainment in the modern society, more than one in five 25-34 year-olds in Romania still don't hold an upper secondary degree. In comparison, the share is 14% on average across OECD countries.
- Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has displaced millions of Ukrainians, many of whom have been received by OECD countries. Enrolment in education is important for refugees not only for their academic performance and future labour-market prospects, but also for their social and emotional well-being. In the school year 2022/2023, 1 700 Ukrainian refugees were integrated in primary schools and 1 500 in secondary schools. Moreover, with the support of local authorities, "educational hubs" have been set up in several schools across the country, allowing Ukrainian displaced children to benefit from educational activities in Ukrainian language, using the platforms provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education. These hubs are opened as a partnership between the local administrations, schools and NGOs.

The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

- High-quality VET programmes integrate learners into labour markets and open pathways for further personal and professional development. However, the quality and importance of VET programmes differ greatly across countries. In some countries, half of all young adults (25-34 year-olds) have a vocational qualification as their highest level of educational attainment, while the share is in the low single digit in other countries. In Romania, 47% of 25-34 year olds have a VET qualification as their highest level of attainment: 44% at upper secondary level and 3% and post-secondary non-tertiary level. On average across OECD countries, 20% of 25-34 year-olds attainment vocational upper secondary, 6% attained vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education (Figure 1).

Figure A1.1. Share of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of education has a vocational orientation, by level of educational attainment (2022)

In per cent



1. Data for upper secondary attainment include completion of a sufficient volume and standard of programmes that would be classified individually as completion of intermediate upper secondary programmes (9% of adults aged 25-34 are in this group).

2. Year of reference differs from 2022. Refer to the source table for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of 25-34 year-olds who attained vocational upper secondary, vocational post-secondary non-tertiary or vocational short-cycle tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2023), Table A1.3. For more information see *Source* section and [Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) (OECD, 2023_[11]).

- Higher levels of educational attainment associate with lower unemployment rates. In Romania, 17.3% of 25-34 year-olds with below upper secondary are unemployed compared to only 2.6% among tertiary-educated ones. Across the OECD, unemployment rates for young adults with a vocational qualification are lower than for their peers with a general qualification. This is also the case in Romania, where 5.1% of 25-34 year-olds with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment are unemployed, against 6.0% of those with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment.
- Although upper secondary education is commonly seen as the minimum needed for successful labour market participation, a sizeable share of young adults still leave education without having completed it. In Romania, 22% of 25-34 year-olds lack an upper secondary qualification, which is above the OECD average of 14%.
- In Romania, full-time full-year workers aged 25-34 with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earn 7% more than those without an upper secondary qualification. The earning advantage for workers with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is 5%. In almost all OECD countries, tertiary degrees provide a considerably larger earnings advantage. In Romania, 25-34 year-old workers with tertiary attainment earn 45% more than their peers without an upper secondary degree.
- Tertiary attainment continues to increase among the working age population. Across the OECD, tertiary attainment is becoming as common as upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment among 25-64 year-olds (40% for both attainment levels). In Romania, 20% of 25-64 year-olds have a tertiary qualification as their highest level attained, a smaller share than those having upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment (57%).
- Across the OECD, 14.7% of young adults aged 18-24 are not in formal education, or training nor in employment (NEET). In Romania the figure is higher: 22% of 18-24 year-olds are NEET. Reducing NEET rates among young adults is a particularly important, as those who become NEET have particularly poor labour-market prospects later in life.
- In the context of rapidly changing labour market needs, adults need to adapt, re-skill and upskill. Lifelong learning is therefore crucial. In Romania, the share of 25-64 year-olds who participated in non-formal job-related education and training over a four-week reference period is 4% among those with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, similar to their peers with a general qualification, and lower than the number of with tertiary attainment (9%). These figures are below the average for OECD and accession countries for the same categories (7%, 8% and 14%).

Access to education, participation and progress

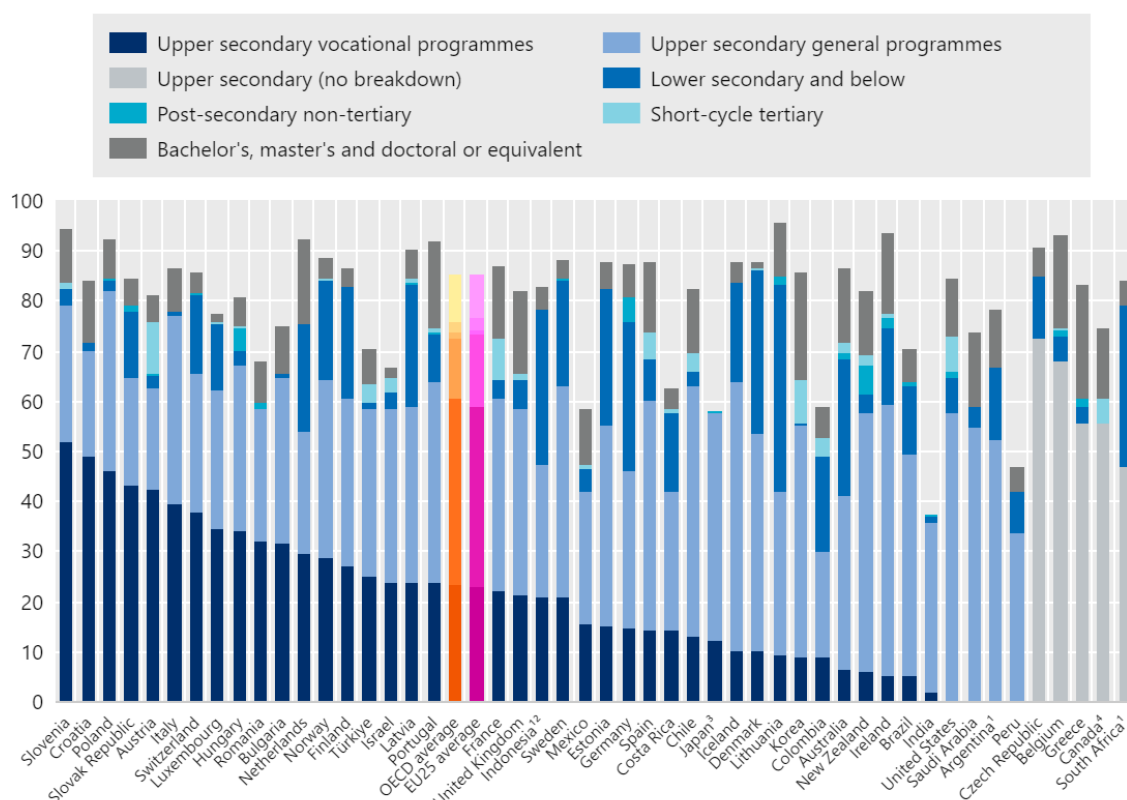
- Participation in high-quality early childhood education (ECE) has a positive effect on children's well-being, learning and development in the first years of their lives. In Romania, 15% of 2-year-olds are enrolled in ECE. This increases to 64% of 3-year-olds, 78% of 4-year-olds and 85% of 5-year-olds. These shares are lower than the OECD average: being 73% among 3-year-olds, 88% among 4-year-olds and 84% among 5-year-olds.
- Since school year 2020-2021, compulsory education in Romania starts at the age of 5 (last year of kindergarten) and includes the two last grades of upper secondary education. Students typically graduate between the ages of 18 and 23 from general upper secondary programmes. The age range for completing vocational programmes is wider, with students typically graduating from vocational upper secondary education between the ages of 18 and 35. However, most ISCED 3 graduates complete their degree at 18/19 years old.

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- The large majority of 15-19 year-olds across the OECD are enrolled in education. In Romania, 26% of this age group are enrolled in general upper secondary education and 32% in vocational upper secondary education. A further 9% pursue tertiary programmes. This compares to an OECD average of 37% enrolled in general upper secondary programmes, 24% in vocational upper secondary programmes and 12% in tertiary programmes (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Enrolment rates of 15-19 year-olds, by level of education (2021)

In per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2021: 2020 for Argentina and South Africa; 2018 for Indonesia.

2. Excludes students enrolled at tertiary levels.

3. Breakdown by age not available after 15 years old.

4. Excludes post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the share of students enrolled in upper secondary vocational education.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2023), Table B1.2. For more information see [Source section](#) and [Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) (OECD, 2023^[1]).

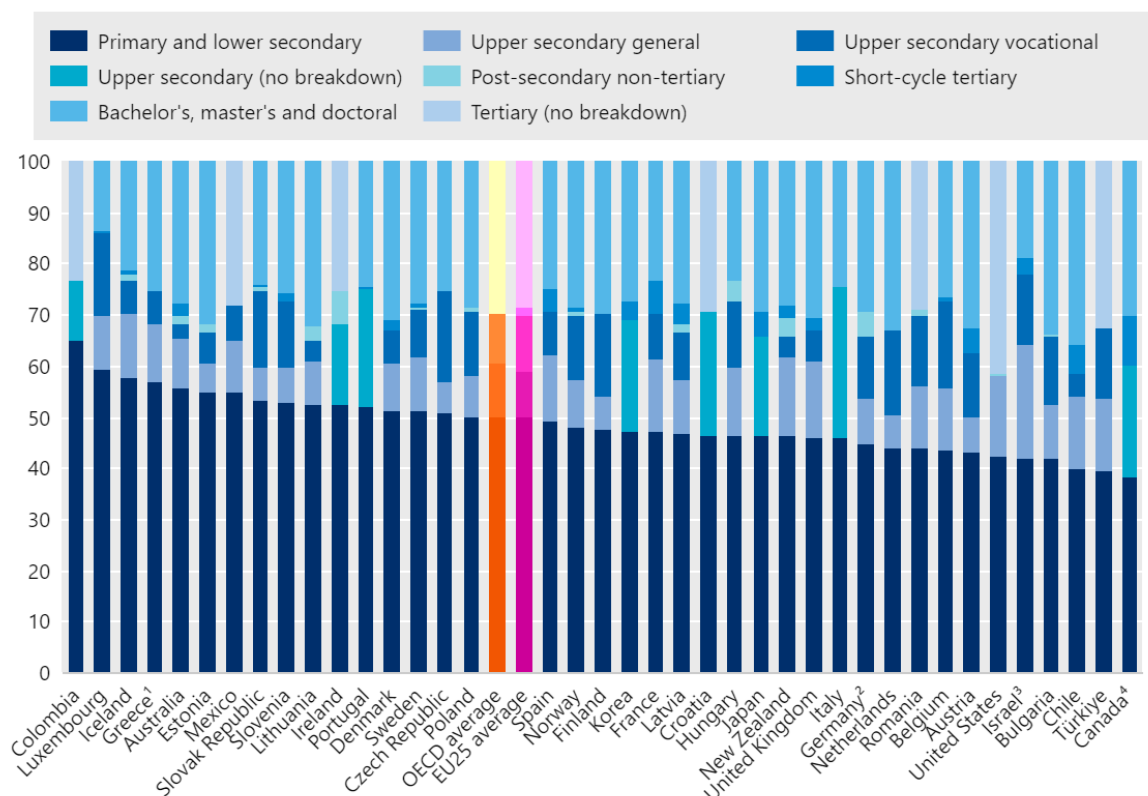
- Bachelor's programmes are the most popular programmes for new entrants to tertiary education. On average across the OECD, they attract 76% of all new students compared to 61% in Romania.

Financial resources invested in education

- All OECD, partner and/or accession countries devote a substantial share of their domestic output to education. In 2020, OECD countries spent on average 5.1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions (primary to tertiary levels). In Romania, the share of GDP dedicated to education was lower at 2.7%.
- Funding for education in absolute terms is strongly influenced by countries' income levels. Countries with higher per capita GDP tend to spend more per student than those with lower per capita GDP. Across all levels from primary to tertiary education, Romania spends USD 5 956 annually per full-time equivalent student (adjusted for purchasing power), well below the OECD average of USD 12 647. Expenditure per student is equivalent to 18% of per capita GDP, below the OECD average of 27%.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for education systems across the world. On average across the OECD, expenditure per full-time equivalent student grew by 0.4% from 2019 to 2020 (the first year of the pandemic and the latest period with available data). In Romania, it decreased by 3.5% over the same period. This was driven by a 4.0% fall in total expenditure on educational institutions, while the number of full-time equivalent students decreased by 0.6%.
- The distribution of spending between general and vocational programmes depends on a variety of factors, such as the number of VET students, the fields of study within VET programmes and the importance given to VET relative to general programmes. In Romania, 12% of all funding for educational institutions is spent on general upper secondary education and 14% on vocational upper secondary education. In comparison, 11% of funding is dedicated to general upper secondary programmes and 10% to vocational ones on average across the OECD (Figure 3).
- Government sources dominate non-tertiary education funding in all OECD countries, while the private sector contributes 9% of the total expenditure on educational institutions on average. In Romania private funding is limited, accounting for less than 1% of expenditure at primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels.
- On average across OECD countries, more than half of government expenditure on primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education comes from subnational governments. This is not the case in Romania, where 81% of the funding comes from central government, after accounting for transfers between government levels and 19% from local levels.

Figure 3. Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions, by level of education (2020)

In per cent



1. Year of reference differs from 2020. Refer to the source table for more details.

2. Upper secondary vocational programmes include lower secondary vocational programmes.

3. Upper secondary programmes include lower secondary programmes.

4. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Countries are ranked in descending order of total expenditure on primary and lower secondary institutions.

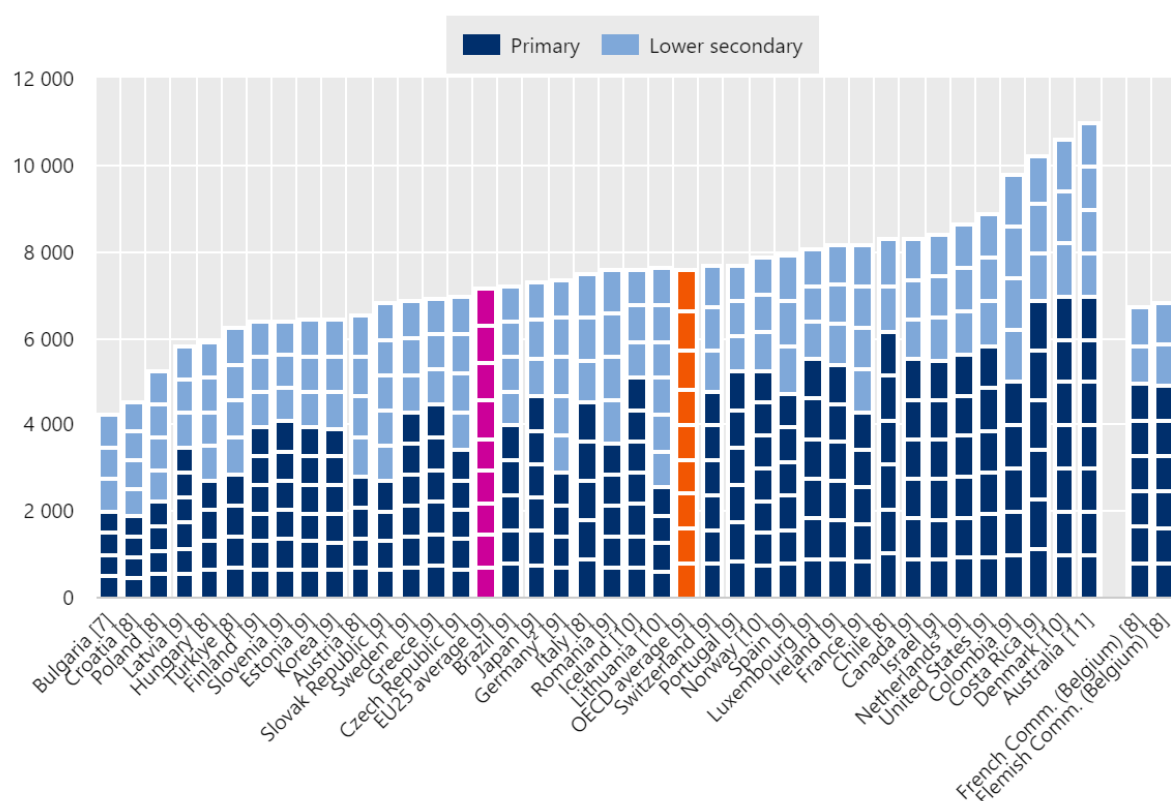
Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2023), Table C2.1. For more information see [Source](#) section and [Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) (OECD, 2023^[1]).

Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools

- The total compulsory instruction time throughout primary and lower secondary education varies widely from country to country (Figure 4). Across the OECD, over the course of primary and lower secondary education, compulsory instruction time totals an average of 7 634 hours, distributed over nine grades. In Romania, the total number of compulsory instruction hours is slightly lower, at 7 602 hours, over nine grades, too.
- On average across OECD countries, 25% of the compulsory instruction time in primary education is devoted to reading, writing and literature and 16% to mathematics. In Romania, more time is devoted to each of these two areas at primary level: 28% of time is devoted to reading, writing and literature and 18% to mathematics. In lower secondary education, on average across OECD countries 15% of compulsory instruction time is dedicated to reading, writing and literature and 13% to mathematics. In Romania, the figures are close to the OECD average: 14% of time is devoted to reading, writing and literature and 14% to mathematics at lower secondary level.

Figure 4. Compulsory instruction time in general education (2023)

In hours, in primary and lower secondary education, in public institutions



Note: Instruction hours for each grade refer to average hours per grade for the level of education. Numbers in square brackets refer to the total number of years for primary and lower secondary education.

1. Estimated number of hours by level of education based on the average number of hours per year, as for some subjects, the allocation of instruction time across multiple levels is flexible.

2. Year of reference 2022.

3. The number of grades in lower secondary education is three or four, depending on the track. The fourth year of pre-vocational secondary education was excluded from the calculation.

Countries and other participants are ranked in ascending order of the total number of compulsory instruction hours.

Source: OECD (2023), Table D1.1. For more information see [Source section](#) and [Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes](#) (OECD, 2023^[11]).

- Teachers' salaries are an important determinant of the attractiveness of the teaching profession, but they also represent the single largest expenditure category in formal education. In most OECD countries, the salaries of teachers in public educational institutions increase with the level of education they teach, and also with experience. On average, statutory salaries for upper secondary teachers in general programmes with the most prevalent qualification and 15 years of experience are USD 53 456 across the OECD. In Romania, the corresponding salary adjusted for purchasing power is USD 29 969, which is equivalent to RON 59 316.
- On average across OECD countries, there are 14 students for every teaching staff member in general upper secondary programmes. This number is 15 in Romania, slightly higher than the OECD average. In contrast, there are fewer students in vocational upper secondary programmes per teaching staff member in Romania than the OECD average (13 and 15 students, respectively).

- The average age of teachers varies across OECD countries, with a difference between vocational and general programmes in some countries. An ageing teacher workforce is a challenge in some countries. In Romania, 34% of teachers in general upper secondary programmes are aged 50 or older, against an OECD average of 39%. Teachers in vocational programmes are older, with 37% aged 50 or above in Romania, but still below the OECD average of 43%.
- National/central assessments (standardised tests with no consequence on students' progression through school or certification) are more common at primary and lower secondary levels than at upper secondary level, while most OECD countries conduct national/central examinations (standardised tests with formal consequence) in the final years of upper secondary education. These national/central assessments and examinations take place at different grades and can have different periodicities, their contents may vary over years and/or across students and are not necessarily compulsory for students. In Romania, there are at least two national/central assessments at primary level, and one at lower secondary level. At upper secondary level, there is one national/central examination that each student may be expected to take.

References

- OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-en>. [1]
- OECD (2023), Education at a Glance Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/>. [2]
- OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>. [3]

More information

For more information on *Education at a Glance 2023* and to access the full set of indicators, see: <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-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 2023 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/d7f76adc-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://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en> and by following the *StatLinks 2* under the tables and charts in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using the Education GPS:

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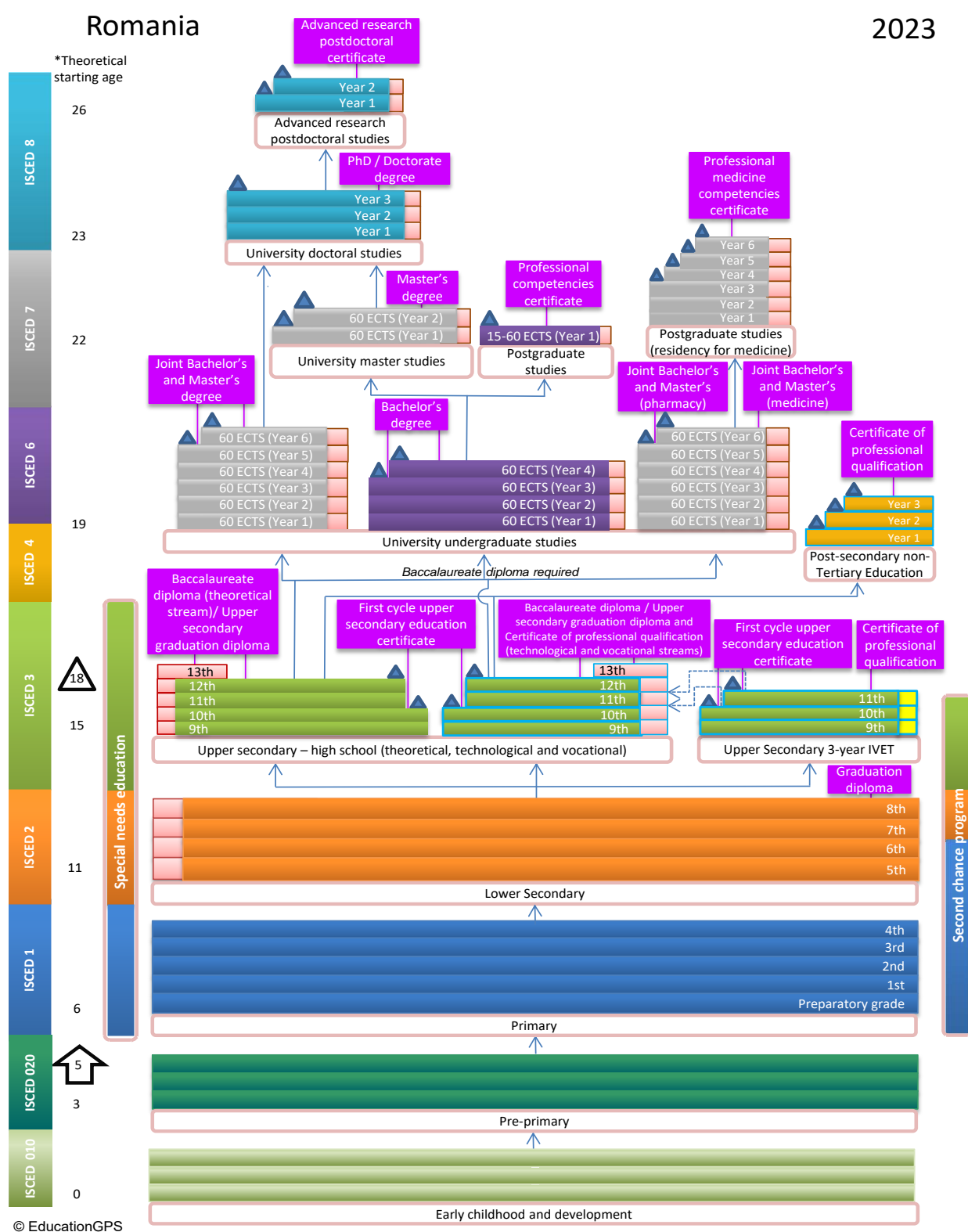
Key facts for Romania in *Education at a Glance 2023*

Indicator	Country		OECD average		Source
Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		Table A1.2
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	
	22%	21%	16%	12%	
	57%	50%	44%	35%	
Tertiary	21%	28%	41%	54%	
NEET rates of 18-24 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		OECD (2023 ^[2])
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	
	17.8%	26.4%	14%	15.5%	
Employment rates of 25-64 year-olds by educational attainment and gender	2022		2022		OECD (2023 ^[2])
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	
Below upper secondary	66%	32%	70%	48%	
Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	83%	65%	84%	69%	
Tertiary	93%	89%	90%	83%	
Enrolment rate of children aged 3 in ECEC	2021		2021		Table B2.1
	64%		73%		
Enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds	2021		2021		Table B1.1
	m		84%		
Share of upper secondary students enrolled in VET programmes	2021		2021		Table B1.3
	57%		44%		
Upper secondary completion rates by programme orientation	2021		2021		Table B3.1
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational	
By the end of the programme duration	m	m	77%	62%	
Two years after the end of the programme duration	m	m	87%	73%	
Expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student by level of education (in USD PPP)	2020		2020		Table C1.1
	Primary		USD 3 188		
	Lower secondary		USD 6 817		
	Upper secondary		USD 6 382		
	Tertiary		USD 9 602		
Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions as % of GDP	2020		2020		Table C2.1
	2.7%		5.1%		
Share of total education expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions by programme orientation	2020		2020		Figure C2.2
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational	
	12%	14%	11%	10%	
Total compulsory instruction time in primary and lower secondary education	2023		2023		Table D1.1
	7 602 hours		7 634 hours		
Statutory salaries of upper secondary teachers in general programmes with the most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (in USD PPP)	2022		2022		Table D3.1.
	USD 29 969		USD 53 456		
Change in statutory salaries of upper secondary teachers in general programmes with the most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience (in real terms)	2015-2022		2015-2022		Table D3.7
	m		4%		
Share of teachers in general upper secondary programmes aged 50 or older	2021		2021		Table D7.2.
	34%		39%		

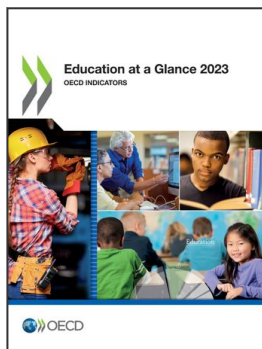
Note: The OECD average for completion rates reflects a different country coverage (see Indicator B3).

Source: OECD (2023^[2])

Diagram of the education system



Source: OECD (2023), "Romania: Diagram of education system", OECD Education GPS, http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/ROU/ROU_2011_EN.pdf
 Please refer to "Romania: Diagram of education system" for information on the keys.



From:

Education at a Glance 2023

OECD Indicators

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2023), "Romania", in *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/4b21c36d-en>

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