

## Foreword

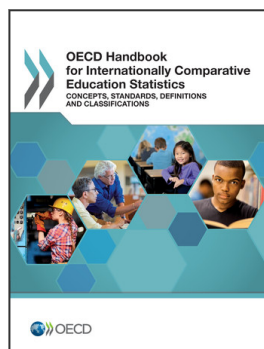
International comparative analysis has increasingly become a key pillar in governments' education policy development. Through co-operation within the OECD framework, and other international bodies, countries are seeking to learn from each other about how to secure the benefits of education for all, how to foster competencies for the knowledge society, and how to manage teaching and learning in order to promote learning throughout life.

This attention has resulted in a major effort by the OECD to strengthen the collection and reporting of comparative statistics and indicators in the field of education. Over the past 25 years, the OECD has developed and published a broad range of comparative indicators that provide insights into the functioning of education systems, in particular through its flagship annual publication, *Education at a Glance*. These indicators reflect both the resources invested in education and their returns to individuals and societies. The OECD education indicators provide information on many important features of the operation, evolution and impact of education, from early childhood through formal education to learning and training throughout life. They provide an opportunity for each country to see its education system in the light of other countries' performance and view themselves compared with other countries' practices and resources.

Over the years, various methodologies and data collection instruments have been developed to facilitate international comparisons in the different educational areas. This handbook draws these methodologies together and so provides a single reference source for the international standards, concepts, classifications and conventions being used by the OECD in the area of education.

This handbook's target audience includes users of OECD statistics and education indicators from the research community or national ministries involved in the compilation of international statistical comparisons of education. It provides the definitions and conventions used in the underlying data collections as well as the methodologies used to compile the published statistics and indicators derived from them. By also providing advice on data-quality issues, the handbook provides an essential aid to the effective use of the statistics and indicators on education that the OECD produces. Secondly, this handbook offers a unique reference source of standards and conventions for others to adopt in their own compilation of international statistics and indicators on education.

The handbook is the product of a long-standing collaborative effort between OECD member governments, the experts and institutions working within the framework of OECD's Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Programme, and the OECD Secretariat. It was prepared by the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division (IMEP) of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. Much of the material contained in it is adapted from data collection documentation developed over the years, and in co-operation with the INES team at the OECD: Dirk Van Damme (Head of Division), Marie-Hélène Doumet (Head of the INES programme), Étienne Albiser, Éric Charbonnier, Manon Costinot, Camila De Moraes, Laetitia Dehelle, Corinne Heckmann, Michael Jacobs, Sandrine Kergroach, Karinne Logez, Simon Normandeau, Joris Ranchin, Gara Rojas González, Martha Rozsi, Daniel Sánchez Serra, Markus Schwabe and Giovanni Maria Semeraro.



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