

Education at a Glance 2023

Country note

Switzerland

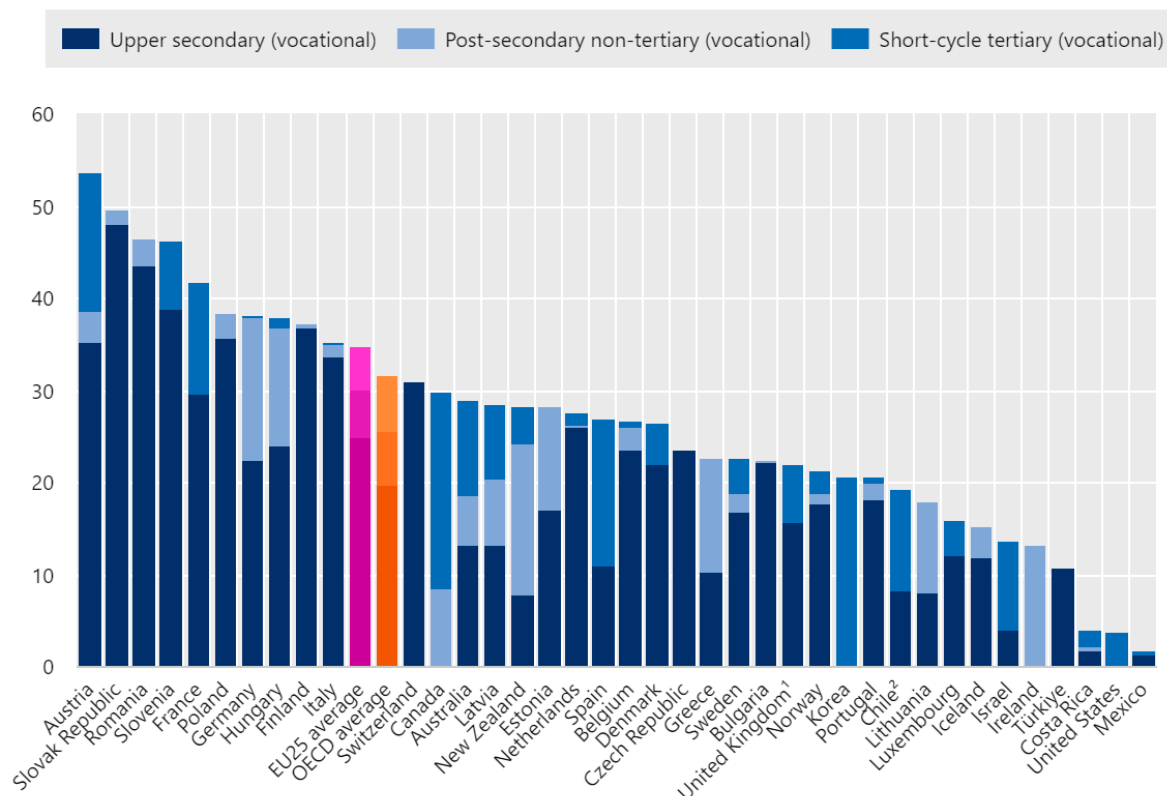
This country note provides an overview of the key characteristics of the education system in Switzerland. It draws on data from *Education at a Glance 2023*. In line with the thematic focus of this year's *Education at a Glance*, it emphasises vocational education and training (VET), while also covering 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*.

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 digits in other countries. In Switzerland, 31% of 25-34 year-olds have a VET qualification at upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary level as their highest level of attainment (Figure 1).
- Across the OECD, unemployment rates for 25-34 year-olds with vocational upper secondary attainment are lower than for their peers with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment. This is also the case in Switzerland, where 4.1% of young adults with vocational upper secondary attainment are unemployed, compared to 5.5% of those with general upper secondary attainment.
- Although an upper secondary qualification is often the minimum attainment needed for successful labour-market participation, some 25-34 year-olds still leave education without such a qualification. On average across the OECD, 14% of young adults have not attained an upper secondary qualification. In Switzerland, the share is lower than the OECD average (9%).
- Workers in Switzerland aged 25-34 with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment earn 20% more than those without upper secondary attainment, whereas the earning advantage for workers with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment is 20%. However, in almost all OECD countries, tertiary degrees provide a significantly larger earnings advantage. In Switzerland, 25-34 year-old workers with bachelor's attainment (or equivalent) earn 49% more than their peers without upper secondary attainment, while those with master's or doctoral attainment (or equivalent) earn 70% more.
- Tertiary attainment continues to increase among the working age population. On average across the OECD, tertiary attainment is becoming as common as upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment among 25-64 year-olds. In Switzerland, 45% of 25-64 year-olds have tertiary attainment, a larger share than those that have upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment (41%).

Figure 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]).

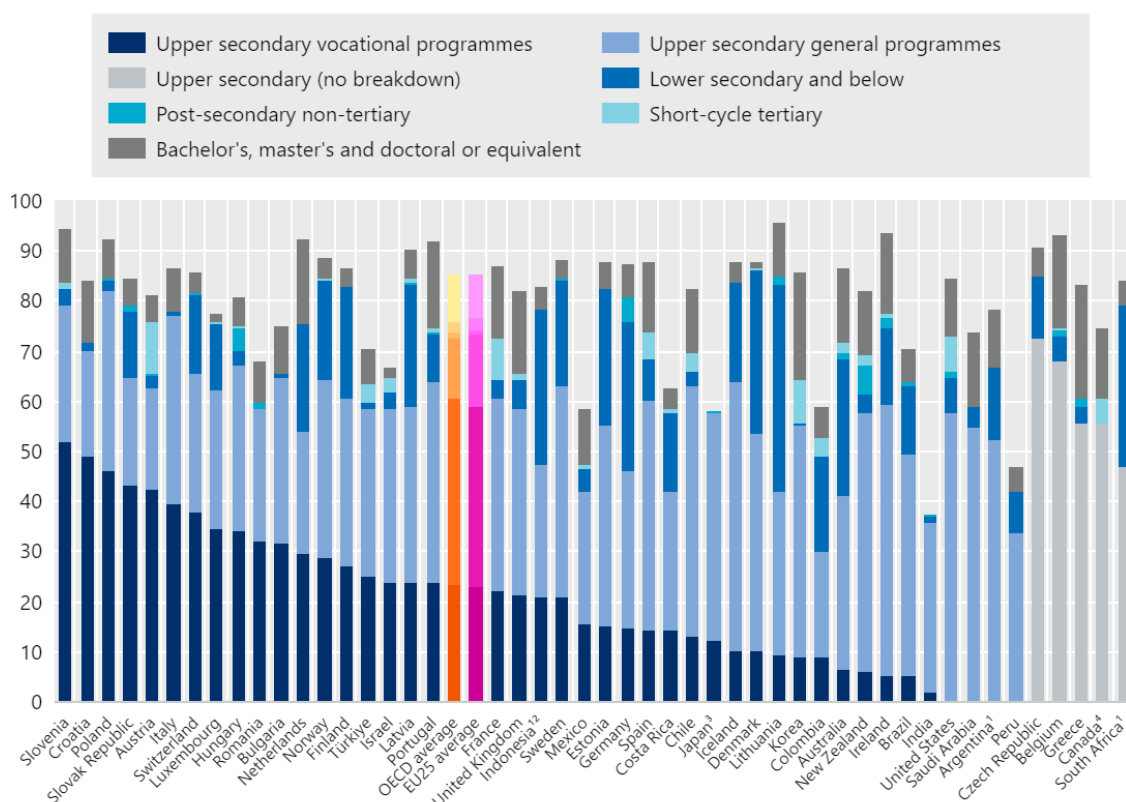
- On average across OECD countries, 14.7% of young adults aged 18-24 are not in education, employment or training (NEET), while in Switzerland the corresponding figure is 12.4%. Reducing NEET rates among young adults is a particularly important challenge in all countries because those who become NEET face worse labour-market outcomes later in life than their peers who remained in education or training at this age.
- As the demand for skills in the workplace changes ever more quickly, the importance of lifelong learning continues to grow. In Switzerland, the share of adults who participated in non-formal job-related education over a four-week reference period is 11% among 25-64 year-olds with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, 15% among those with general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment and 24% among those with tertiary attainment. This compares to average shares of 7% (vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment), 7% (general upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment) and 14% (tertiary) across the OECD.

Access to education, participation and progress

- The large majority of 15-19 year-olds across the OECD are enrolled in education. In Switzerland, 27% of this age group are enrolled in general upper secondary education and 38% in vocational upper secondary education. A further 16% are enrolled in lower secondary programmes and 4% in tertiary programmes. This compares to an OECD average of 37% enrolled in general upper secondary programmes, 23% in vocational upper secondary programmes, 12% in lower 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]).

- On average across countries and other participants with comparable data, 77% of entrants into general upper secondary education successfully complete their upper secondary studies (either in general or in vocational programmes) within the theoretical duration of the programme. The completion rate increases by an average 10 percentage points within two years after the end of the theoretical duration. In Switzerland, 72% of entrants into general upper secondary education

complete their programme within the theoretical duration, but this share increases to 93% after allowing an additional two years.

- In most countries with available data, completion rates in vocational upper secondary programmes are lower than in general upper secondary programmes. In Switzerland, 75% of vocational students complete upper secondary education (either general or vocational programmes) within the expected duration and 90% complete their programme after an additional two years. On average across countries and other participants with available data, 62% of vocational entrants complete their studies on time and 73% within an additional two years.
- In some countries, most students enrol in another education programme shortly after completing their upper secondary education. In other countries, it is common for upper secondary graduates to enter the labour market or take a gap year and return to education later. Consequently, the share of general upper secondary graduates in education one year after their graduation ranges from less than 40% in Sweden to more than 90% in Slovenia. In all countries, general upper secondary graduates are more likely to be enrolled in formal education one year after their graduation than those who graduated from a VET programme. In Switzerland, 74% of general upper secondary graduates are in education one year after their graduation compared to 24% of vocational graduates.
- 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 86% in Switzerland. Short-cycle tertiary programmes are the second most common level of education for new entrants into tertiary education, but their importance differs widely across countries. In Switzerland there are hardly any short cycle tertiary programmes, they are chosen by only 2% of all new entrants.
- Perhaps surprisingly, the share of international students at tertiary level has not been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in many OECD countries. However, a few countries experienced double digit declines in the share of international students. Switzerland is not one of them, as the share of international students remained stable between 2019 and 2021 (18% of all tertiary students).

Financial resources invested in education

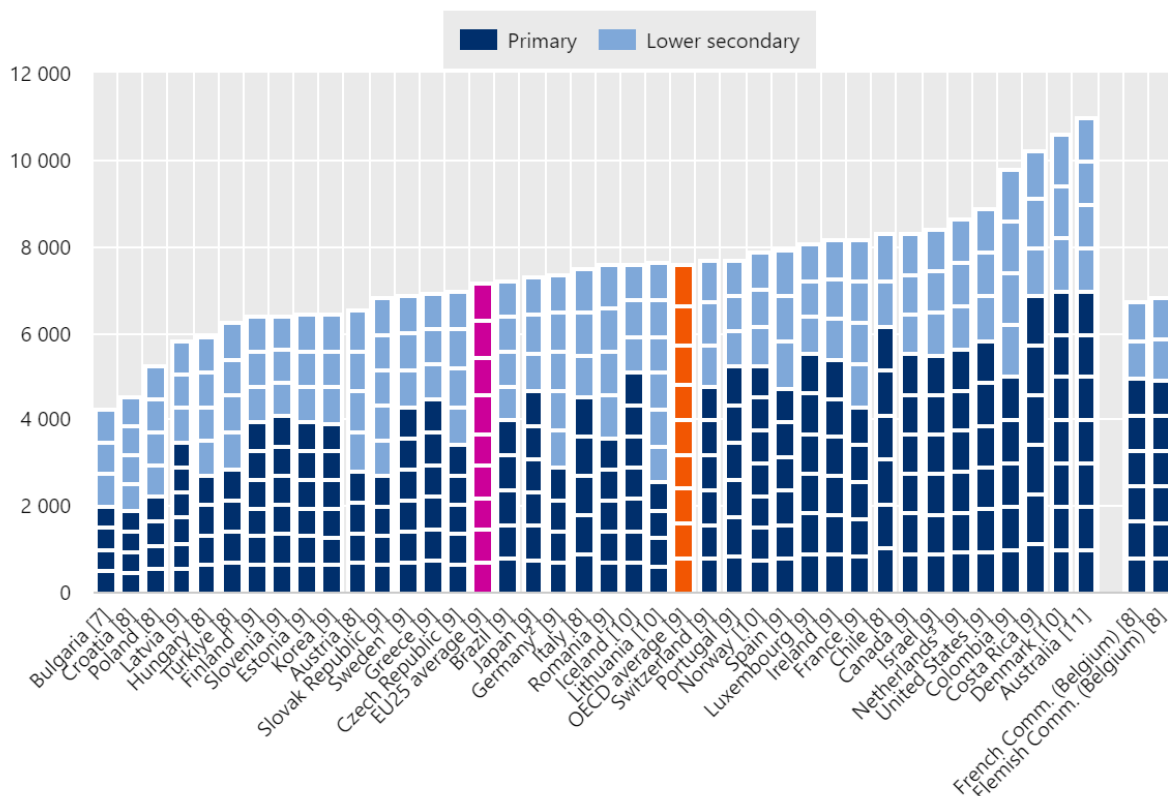
- All OECD and partner countries devote a substantial share of their national resources to education. In 2020, Switzerland's government spent USD 20 075 per full-time equivalent student on public institutions (above the OECD average of USD 11 560) and USD 18 011 on private ones (OECD average: USD 6 707) in primary to tertiary education. Total government expenditure on education amounted to 12% of total government expenditure on all services in 2020, compared to 10% on average across the OECD.
- On average across the OECD, total government expenditure on education grew by 2.1% between 2019 and 2020, at a slower pace than total government expenditure on all services (9.5%), which may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Switzerland, total government expenditure on education increased by 3%, while the one on all services increased by 12.9%.
- On average across OECD countries, more than half of government expenditure on primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education comes from subnational governments. In Switzerland, 1% of the funding comes from the central government, after transfers between government levels, 60% from the regional level and 39% from the local level.

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 3). 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 Switzerland, the total compulsory instruction time is higher, at 7 681 hours, over nine grades.

Figure 3. 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^[1]).

- 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 lower secondary education, the share is 15% for reading, writing and literature and 13% for mathematics. Switzerland is one of

the few countries where there is no fixed share of instruction time spent on reading, writing and literature or mathematics at one or both of these levels at the national level.

- On average across OECD countries, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 14 students for every teaching staff member in general upper secondary programmes and 15 students per staff member in vocational upper secondary programmes. In Switzerland, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 12 students per staff member in general upper secondary programmes, lower than the OECD average. In vocational upper secondary programmes, in full-time equivalent terms, there are 13 students for every teaching staff member (slightly below the OECD average).
- The average age of teachers varies across OECD countries. In some countries, the teaching workforce is much younger than the labour force in general, whereas in others, teachers tend to be older. In Switzerland, 38% of teachers in general upper secondary programmes are aged 50 or older, compared to the OECD average of 39%. Teachers in vocational programmes are older than their general programme peers, with 45% aged 50 or above (43% on average across the OECD).
- 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 Switzerland, there is one national/central assessment at primary level, and one at lower secondary level. At upper secondary level, there is no national/central examination.

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:

<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

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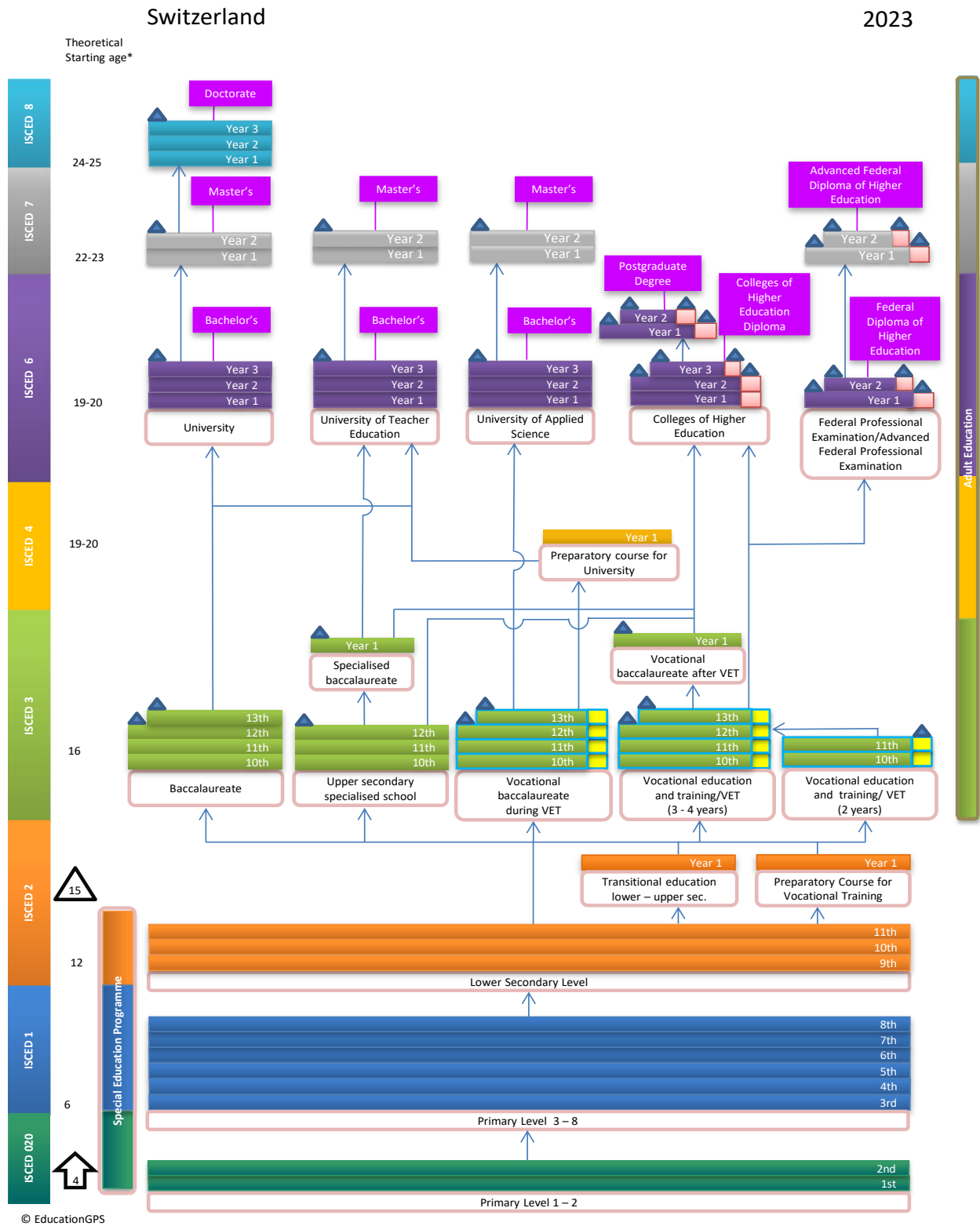
Key facts for Switzerland in *Education at a Glance 2023*

Indicator	Country		OECD average		Source	
Educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		Table A1.2	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women		
	Below upper secondary	9%	9%	16%		12%
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	41%	38%	44%		35%
	Tertiary	50%	53%	41%	54%	
NEET rates of 18-24 year-olds by gender	2022		2022		OECD (2023 ^[2])	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women		
	14.7%	10.1%	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	73%	60%	70%		48%
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	86%	79%	84%		69%
	Tertiary	92%	85%	90%	83%	
Enrolment rate of children aged 3 in ECEC	2021		2021		Table B2.1	
	2%		73%			
Enrolment rate of 15-19 year-olds	2021		2021		Table B1.1	
	86%		84%			
Share of upper secondary students enrolled in VET programmes	2021		2021		Table B1.3	
	62%		44%			
Upper secondary completion rates by programme orientation	2021		2021		Table B3.1	
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational		
	By the end of the programme duration	72%	75%	77%		62%
	Two years after the end of the programme duration	93%	90%	87%	73%	
Expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student by level of education (in USD PPP)	2020		2020		Table C1.1	
	Primary	m	USD 10 658			
	Lower secondary	m	USD 11 941			
	Upper secondary	USD 19 973	USD 12 312			
	Tertiary	m	USD 18 105			
Total expenditure on primary to tertiary educational institutions as % of GDP	2020		2020		Table C2.1	
	m		5.1%			
Share of total education expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions by programme orientation	2020		2020		Figure C2.2	
	General	Vocational	General	Vocational		
	m	m	11%	10%		
Total compulsory instruction time in primary and lower secondary education	2023		2023		Table D1.1	
	7 681 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.	
	m		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.	
	38%		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), "Switzerland: Diagram of education system", OECD Education GPS, http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/CHE/CHE_2011_EN.pdf
 Please refer to "Switzerland: Diagram of education system" for information on the keys.