

# Foreword from the OECD

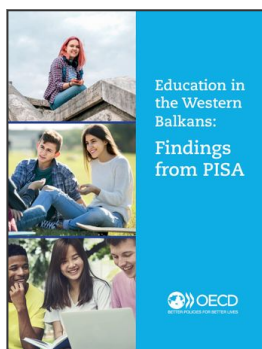
The Western Balkans region has clear aspirations to improve its economic competitiveness and increase the wealth of its citizens. Achieving these aspirations will position it for further integration into Europe, as outlined by the European Commission's Strategy for the Western Balkans. A highly skilled population is integral to creating the dynamic, productive economies that the region desires. This makes developing high quality and equitable education systems, as recognised by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda, critical to the future success of the Western Balkans.

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) helps countries understand where they stand in terms of their educational outcomes. Results from Western Balkan economies on PISA show that the quality of education in the region has improved over time, though progress can still be made compared to countries in the European Union. Moreover, student outcomes vary greatly between and within education systems in the region; some students are performing very well while others are being left further behind.

Together with the European Commission and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the OECD is committed to supporting Western Balkan education systems and helping the region achieve its development goals. This comparative study builds upon the long-standing participation of Western Balkan education systems in PISA and the numerous education country reviews conducted by the OECD and UNICEF in the region. We analyse PISA data in detail to identify what the unique features of education in the Western Balkans are and how they might shape student outcomes. Drawing upon our knowledge of education policy and practice in the region, we make recommendations that policy makers can consider when developing future educational reforms.

We hope that this study will not only be a useful resource for education systems in the Western Balkans, but will also further strengthen OECD's ties to the region and its partnership with the European Commission and UNICEF.

Andreas Schleicher  
Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General  
Director for Education and Skills



**From:**  
**Education in the Western Balkans**  
Findings from PISA

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/764847ff-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2020), "Foreword from the OECD", in *Education in the Western Balkans: Findings from PISA*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d2d41b1-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.