



# HIGHER VOCATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL TERTIARY EDUCATION

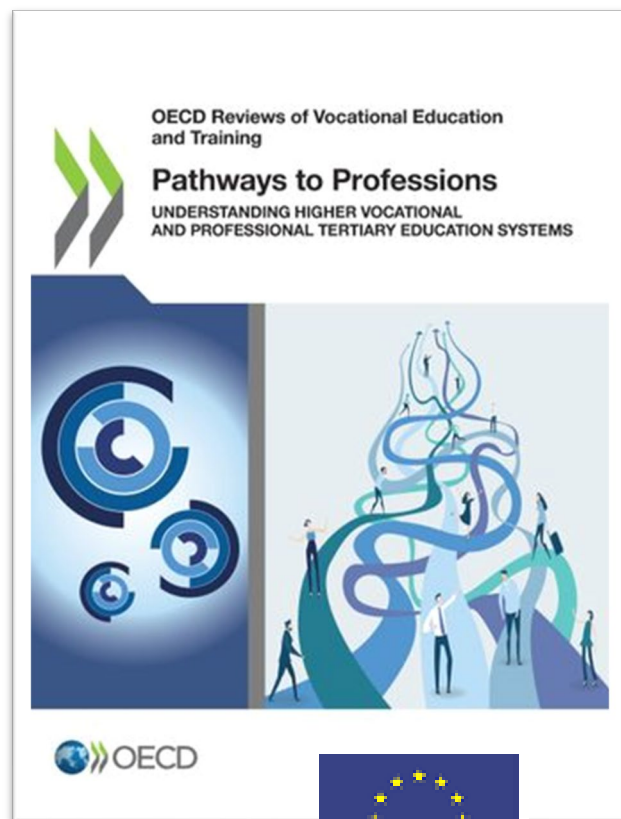
Marieke Vandeweyer  
Senior Policy Analyst - VET  
OECD Centre for Skills



“International collaboration in higher VET”, 27 May 2024



# OECD work on « higher VET »



Co-funded by the  
European Union

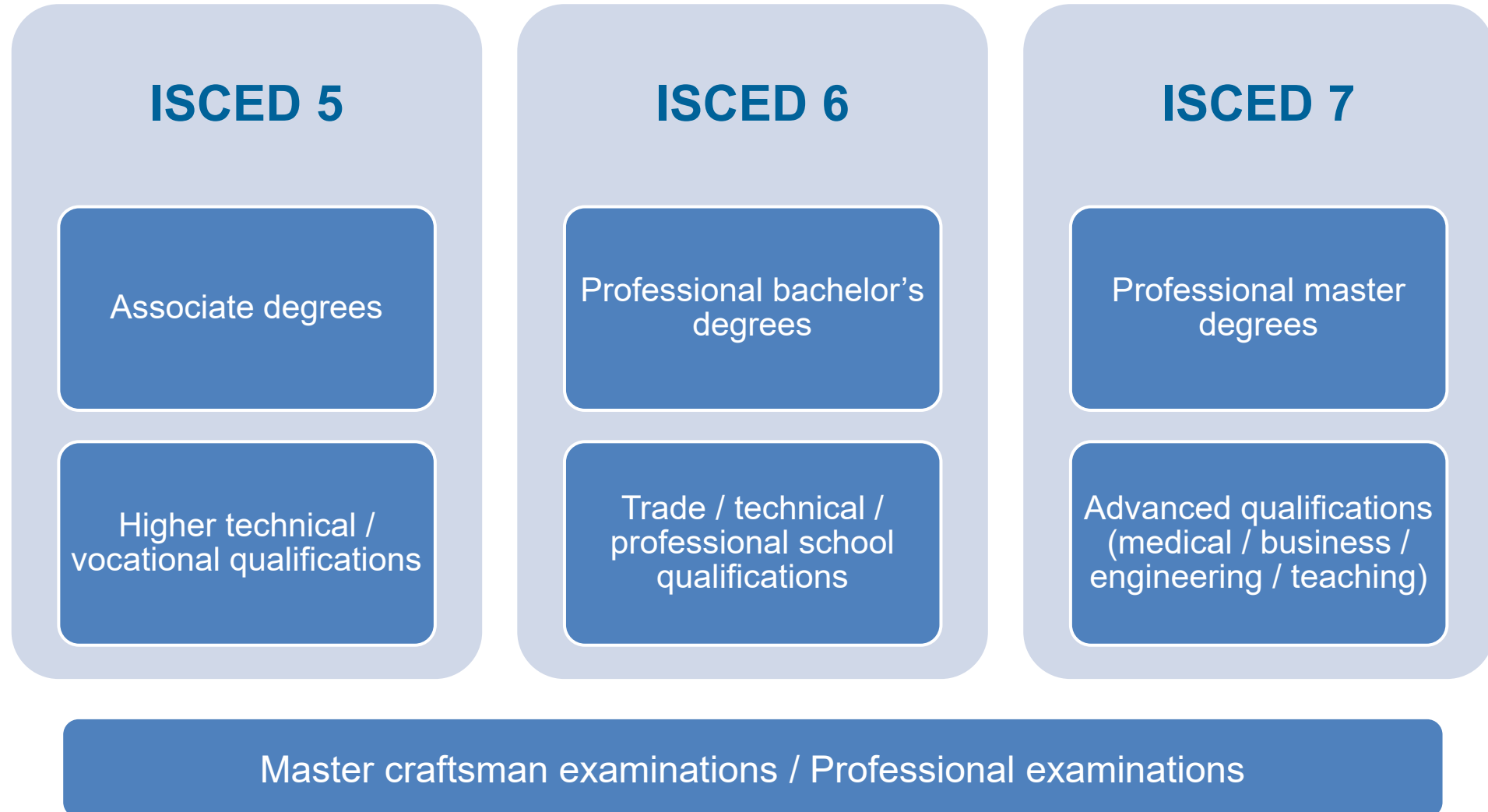
- Measuring professional tertiary education in comparative data
  - With proposals for classification of tertiary programmes by orientation
- Pathways into professional tertiary programmes
  - With a particular focus on opportunities for learners coming from upper-secondary VET
- The profile of learners in professional tertiary programmes
  - Age, gender, socio-economic background
- Ensuring the relevance of professional tertiary programmes
  - With a focus on work-based learning

## Ongoing project on Higher Technical Education in England (UK)

- Focus on coverage, target population, providers, work-based learning, quality assurance, attractiveness
- Insights from Austria, Canada (Ontario), Denmark, France and Sweden



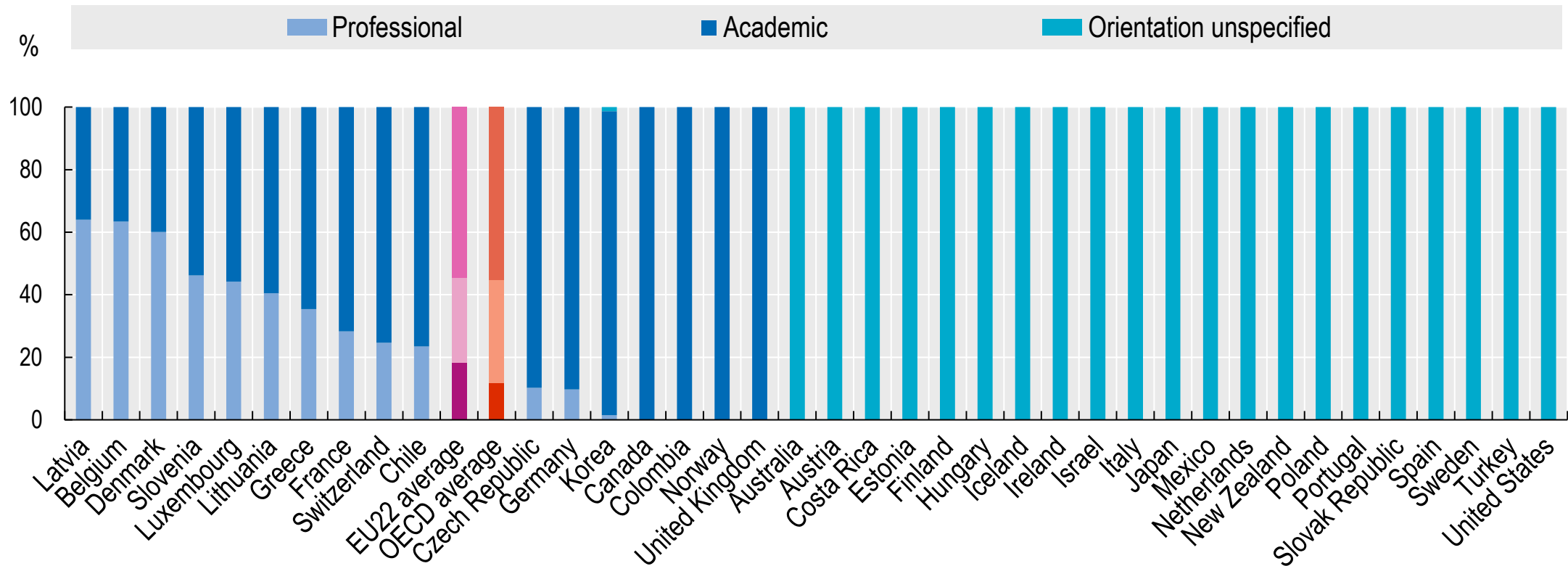
# Common types of professional programmes





# Bachelor's level: patchy data

Distribution of students by programme orientation at bachelor's or equivalent level (2018)



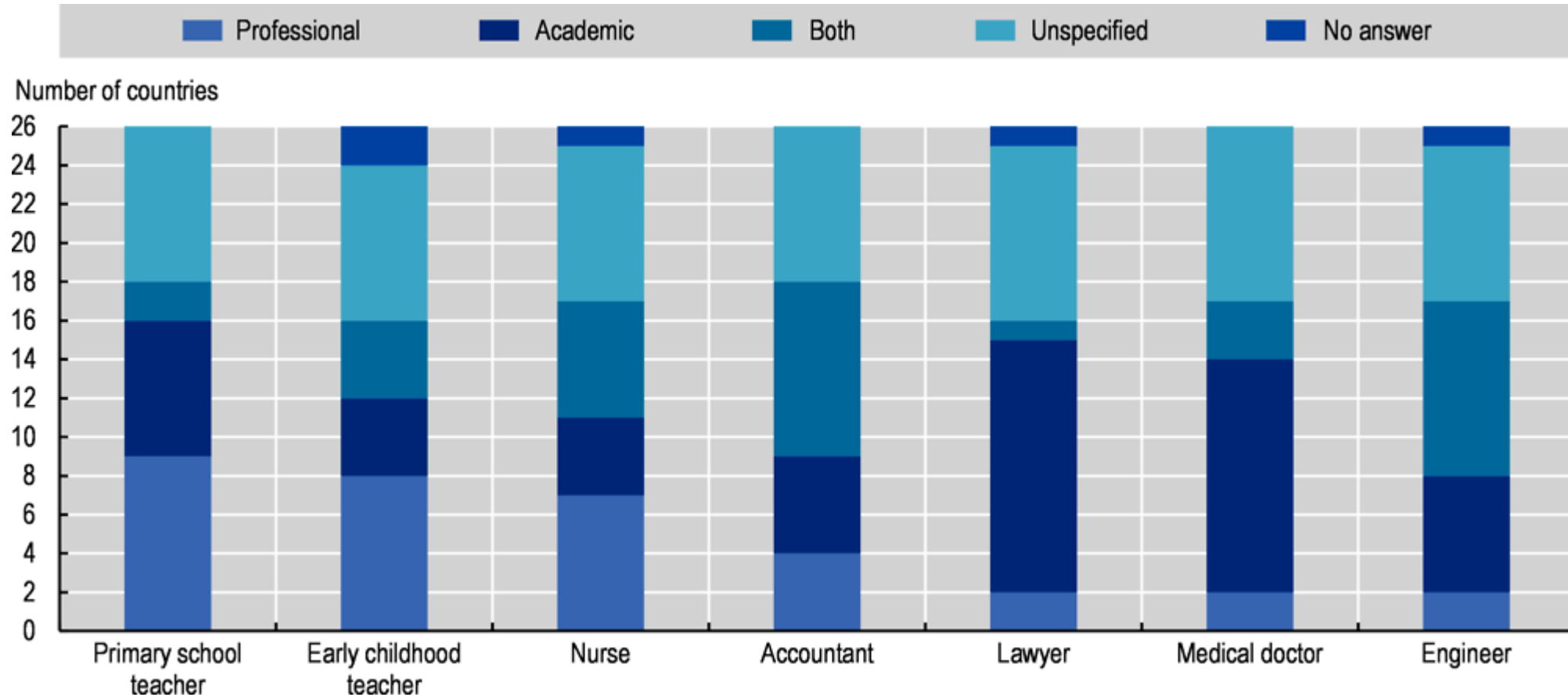
Note: Data are based on national definitions of programme orientation.

Source: OECD calculations based on UOE enrolment data collected for Education at a Glance 2020.



# Lack of common ground for comparative analysis

Current classification of programmes leading to selected occupations in international data collections



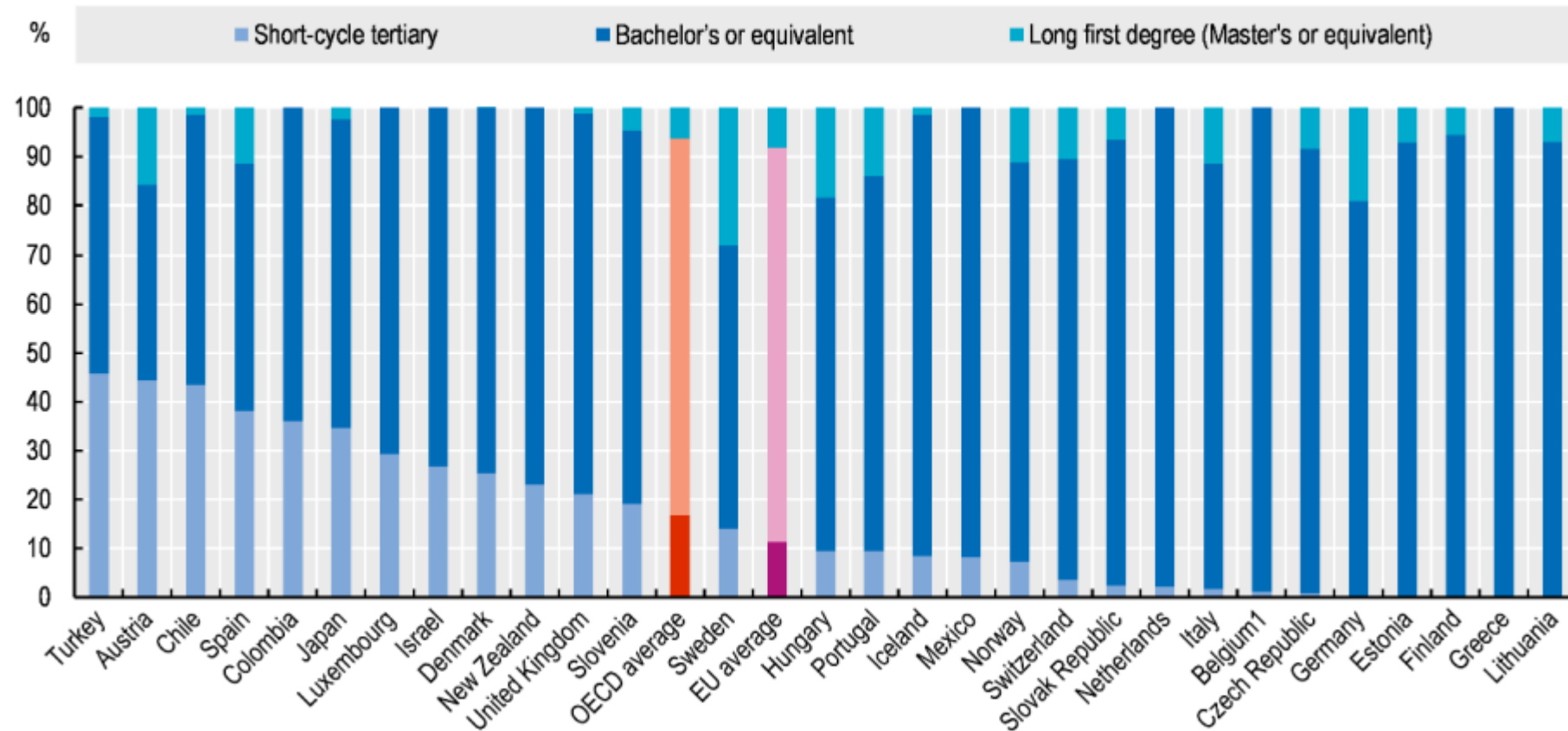


# SHORT-CYCLE TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED 5)



# Short-cycle tertiary programmes are an important part of tertiary education systems in some countries

Distribution of new entrants by tertiary level



1. Data for Belgium for short-cycle tertiary refer to the Flemish Community only.

Source: OECD (2020[1]), Education at a Glance 2020, Figure B4.2, <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>



# Short-cycle tertiary programmes come in many shapes and forms

---

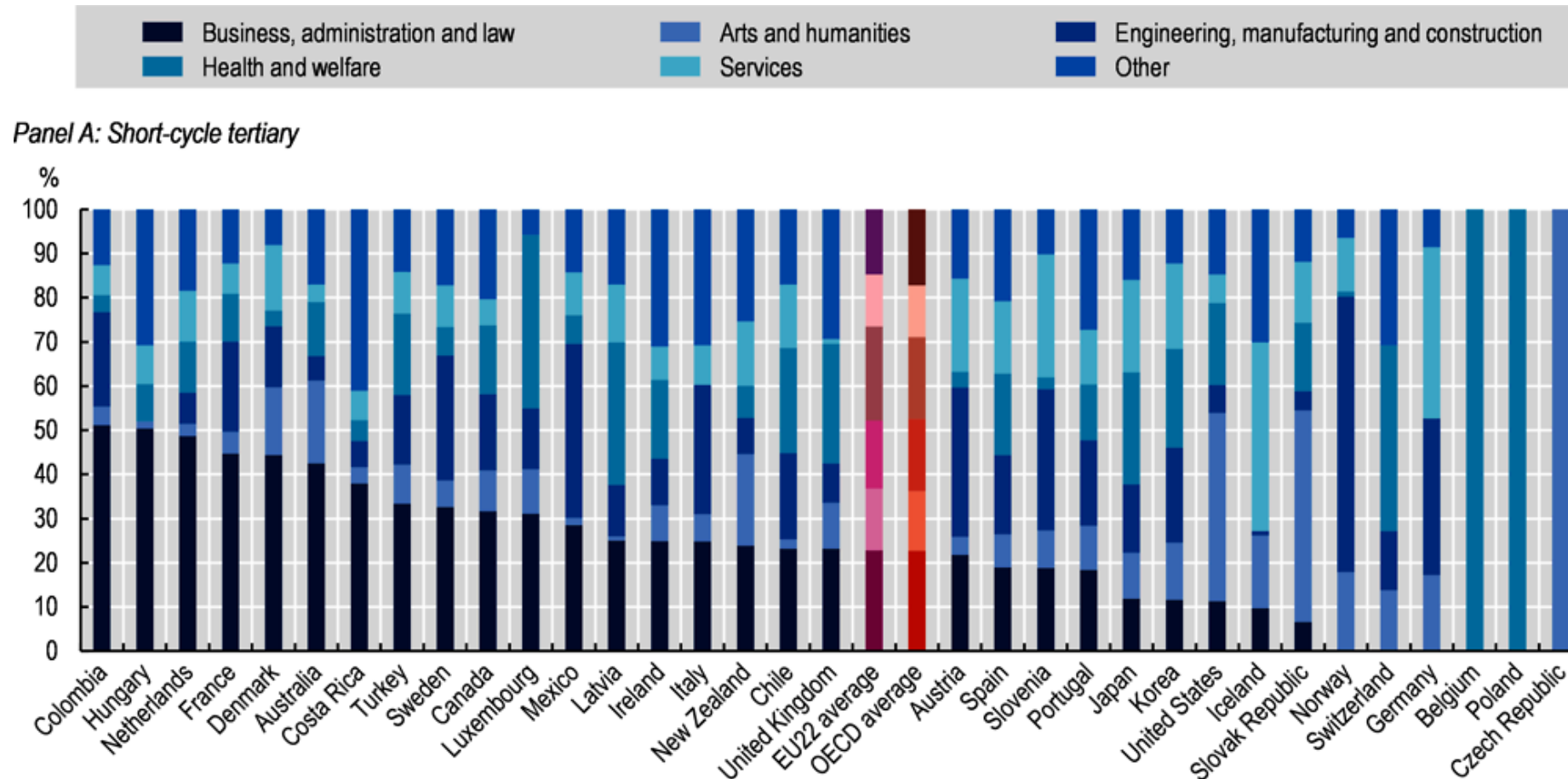
- Typically 2 years (but ranging from 1 to 3 years)
- Provided across different fields
  - But sometimes only available in a narrow set of fields (e.g. performing arts in Czech Republic)
- Delivered in many different types of institutions (and sometimes various institutions in one country can offer ISCED 5 programmes)
  - Upper-secondary schools
  - Colleges/universities of applied sciences
  - Universities
  - Adult learning centres
- Often providing articulation with bachelor programmes, in many cases with shorter duration (sometimes only in the same field or institution)





# Considerable variation in the breadth of the fields covered by short-cycle tertiary programmes

## Distribution of short-cycle tertiary graduates by field of study (2018)

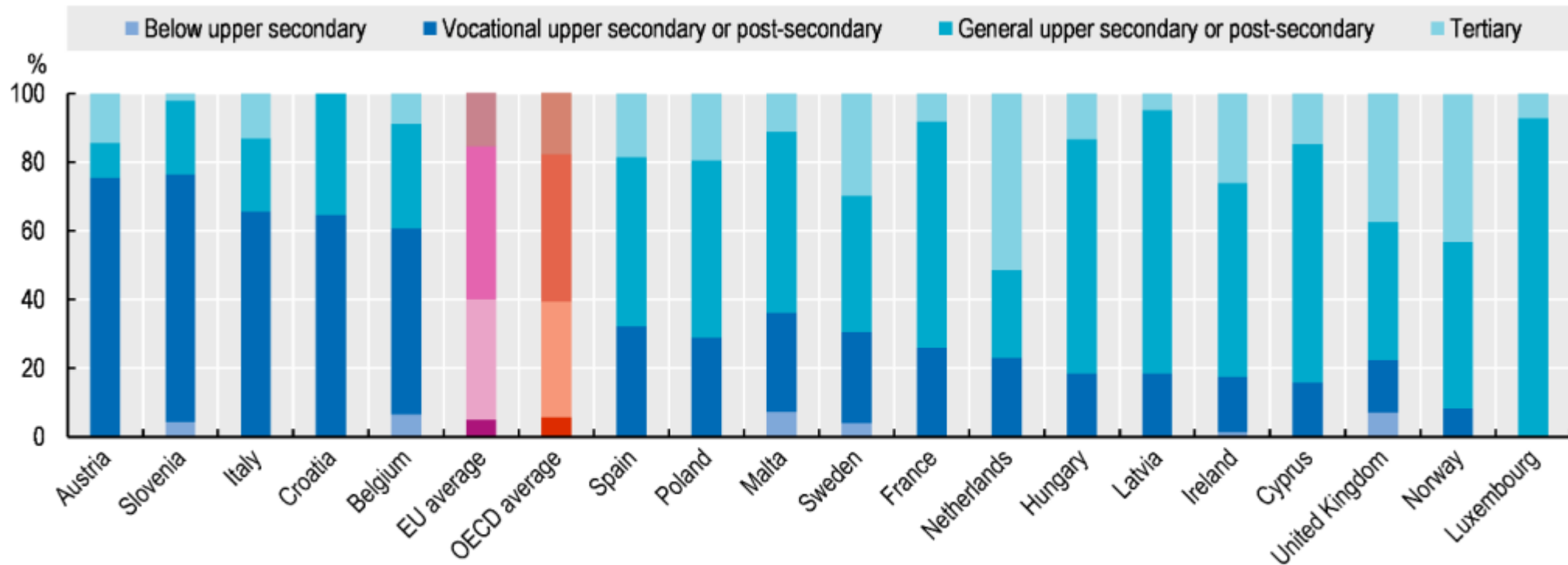


Source: OECD (2020[10]) "Education at a Glance", Education and Training – Education at a Glance (database), <https://stats.oecd.org/>.



# Short-cycle tertiary programmes welcome learners from diverse education backgrounds

Distribution of educational attainment of students in short-cycle tertiary programmes (2017-2019 pooled)



Note: Data include only students aged 34 or less or who obtained their highest qualification up to 15 years prior to the survey. Averages refer to unweighted averages of available countries. Refers to programmes at ISCED level 5.


Source: OECD calculations based on the European Union Labour Force Survey.

\* 1. Note by Türkiye: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

2. Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.



# Short-cycle tertiary programmes as an entry point for VET graduates and a bridge into other tertiary programmes

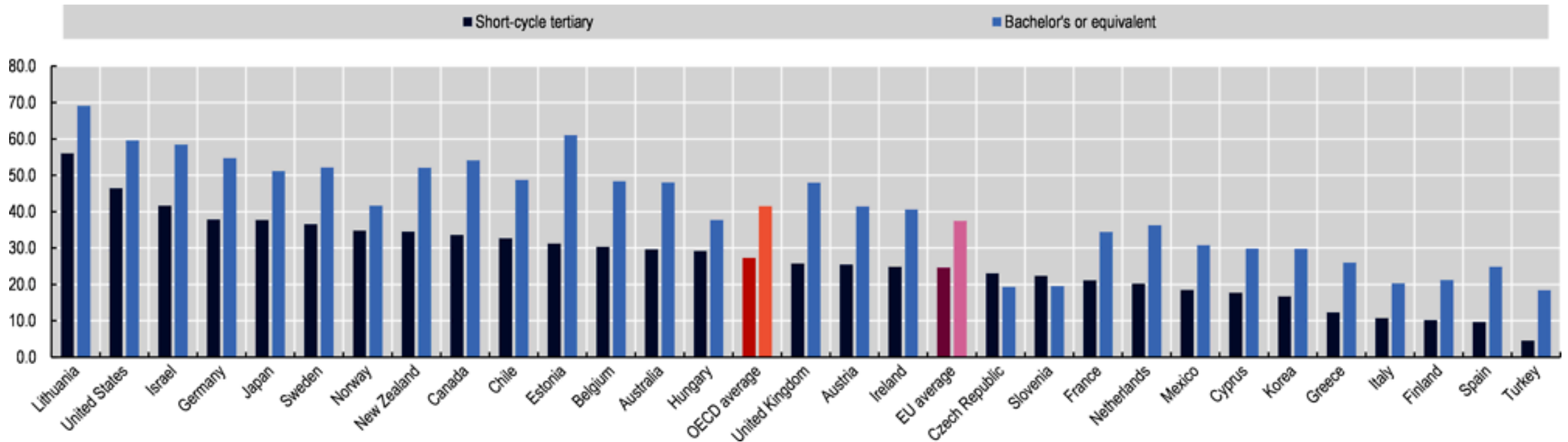


Country	Upper secondary vocational programme	Tertiary programme(s) directly accessible	Progression options into other tertiary programmes
Austria	BHS years 1-3	BHS years 4-5 (ISCED 5)	University; university of applied science.
Belgium (Flanders)	BSO (6 years)	Associate degree (ISCED 5)	All bachelor's programmes.
Denmark	Vocational upper secondary	Academy profession (ISCED 5) Some professional bachelor's.	Bachelor's programmes within the same field. Master's programmes.



# Short-cycle tertiary programmes contribute to widening participation in higher education

**Share of tertiary graduates with at least one tertiary-educated parent**  
Adults aged 25-64 with tertiary attainment, by type of tertiary qualification



Note: Data refer to 2015 for Chile, Greece, Israel, Lithuania, New Zealand, Slovenia and Türkiye. Data refer to 2017 for Hungary and the United States. All other countries refer to 2012. The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) is based on ISCED-97. The labels in this chart have been adapted so that they refer to the closest equivalents: Short-cycle tertiary education = ISCED-97 5B, Bachelor's or equivalent = ISCED-97 5A.

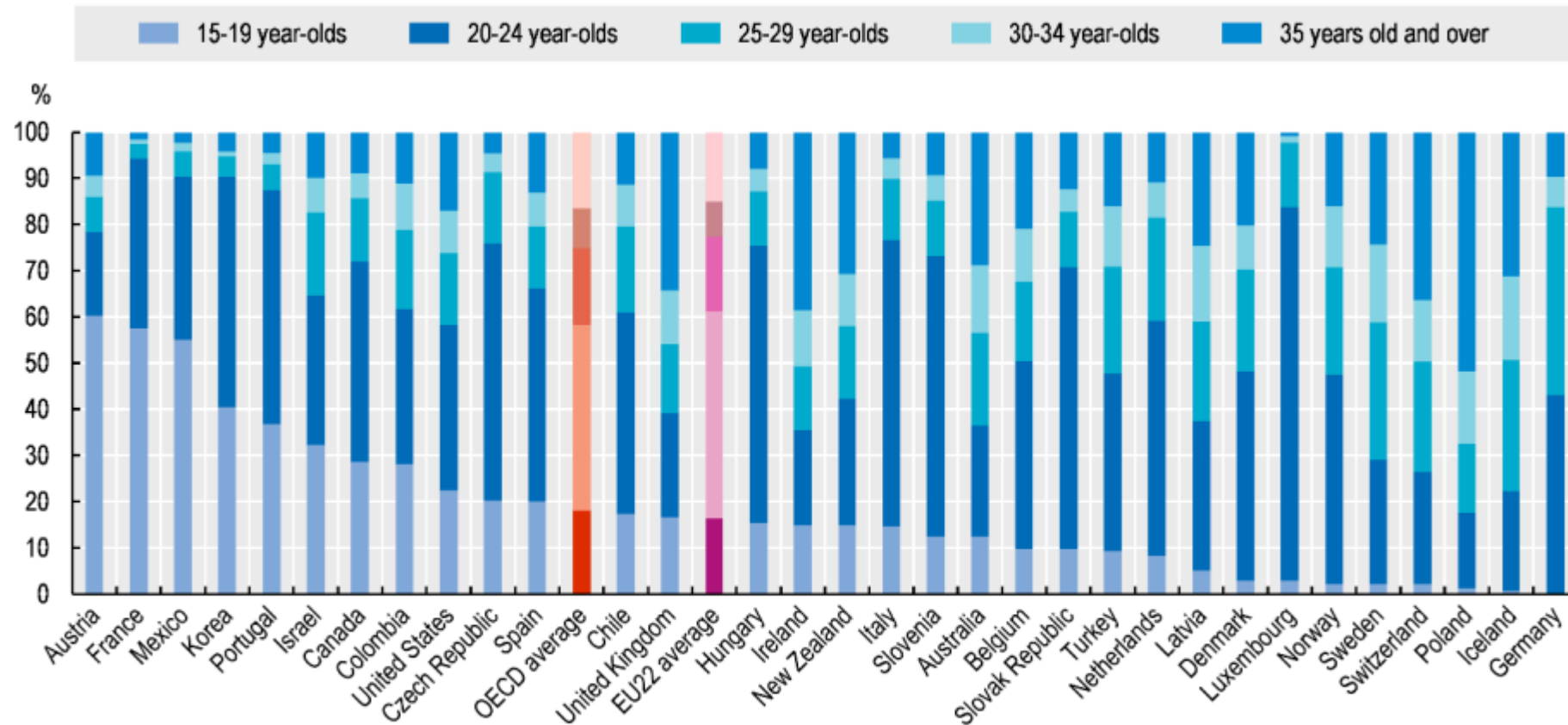
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>.

\* 1. Note by Türkiye: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.  
2. Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.



# The age profile of learners in short-cycle programmes reflects the role of these programmes in the tertiary education system

Age distribution of short-cycle tertiary students (2018)



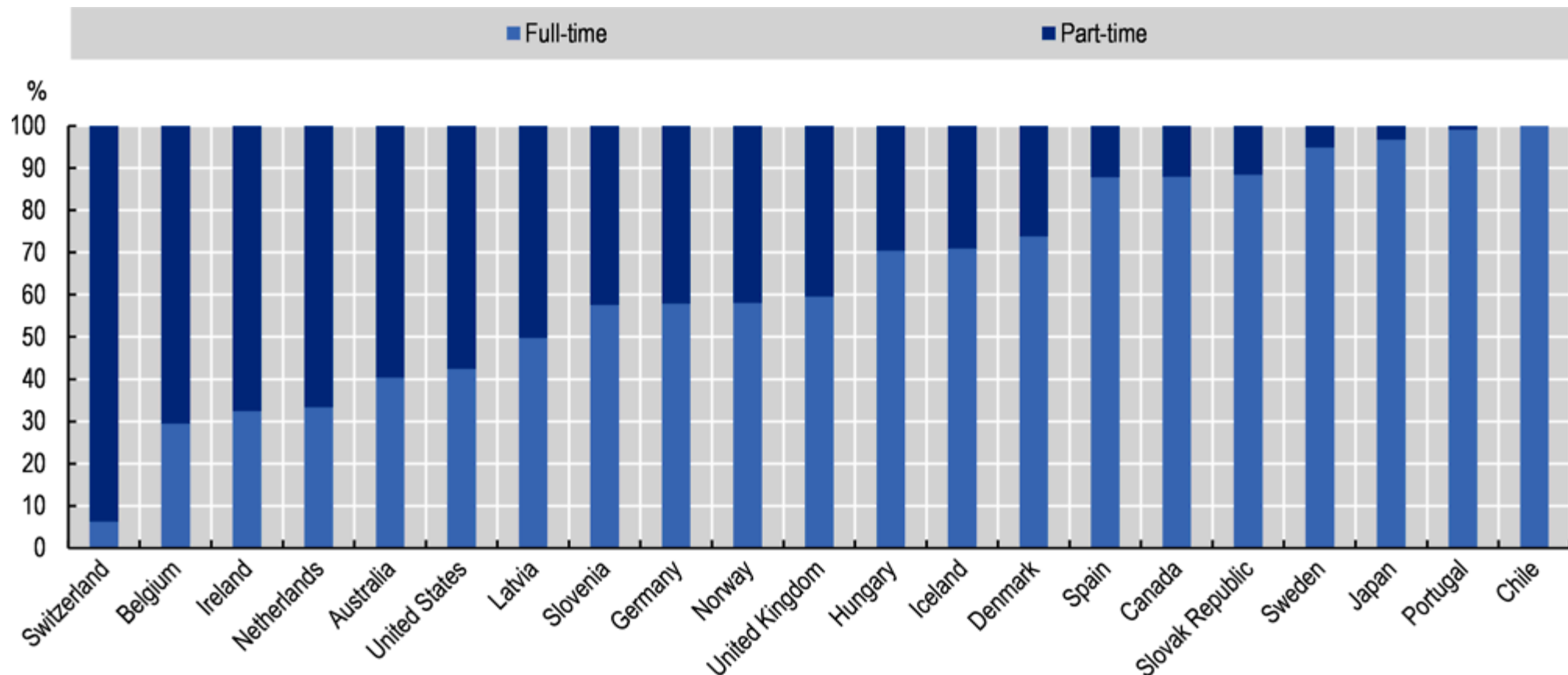
Note: Data for Belgium (French Community) exclude participants in adult higher education.

Source: OECD calculations based on UOE enrolment data collected for *Education at a Glance 2020*.



# Part-time learning is common in some countries

## Share of full-time and part-time students in short-cycle tertiary programmes (2018)



Source: OECD (2020[4]), "Education at a Glance", Education and Training – Education at a Glance (database), <https://stats.oecd.org/>.



# In short-cycle tertiary education work-based learning is very common

---

- Mandatory (with specific minimum duration)
  - In all programmes
    - BTS and DUT programmes in France: 16-week internship or apprenticeship track
    - Higher technical institutes in Italy: 30% of programme duration
  - Only in some programmes/providers or for some students
    - New Zealand: use of work-based learning differs by programme and provider
    - Higher VET in Spain: 3 month internship in school-based track or 34% in dual VET – exemptions for those with work experience possible
- Optional (e.g. Chile)
- None or insignificant (<25%)
  - Japan: About one-third of graduation credits are obtained through practical training, half of which must take place in companies.
  - Latvia: Practical training is compulsory, but work-based learning options are not offered at ISCED level 5 (yet).



# BACHELOR LEVEL PROGRAMMES (ISCED 6)





# Institutional landscape

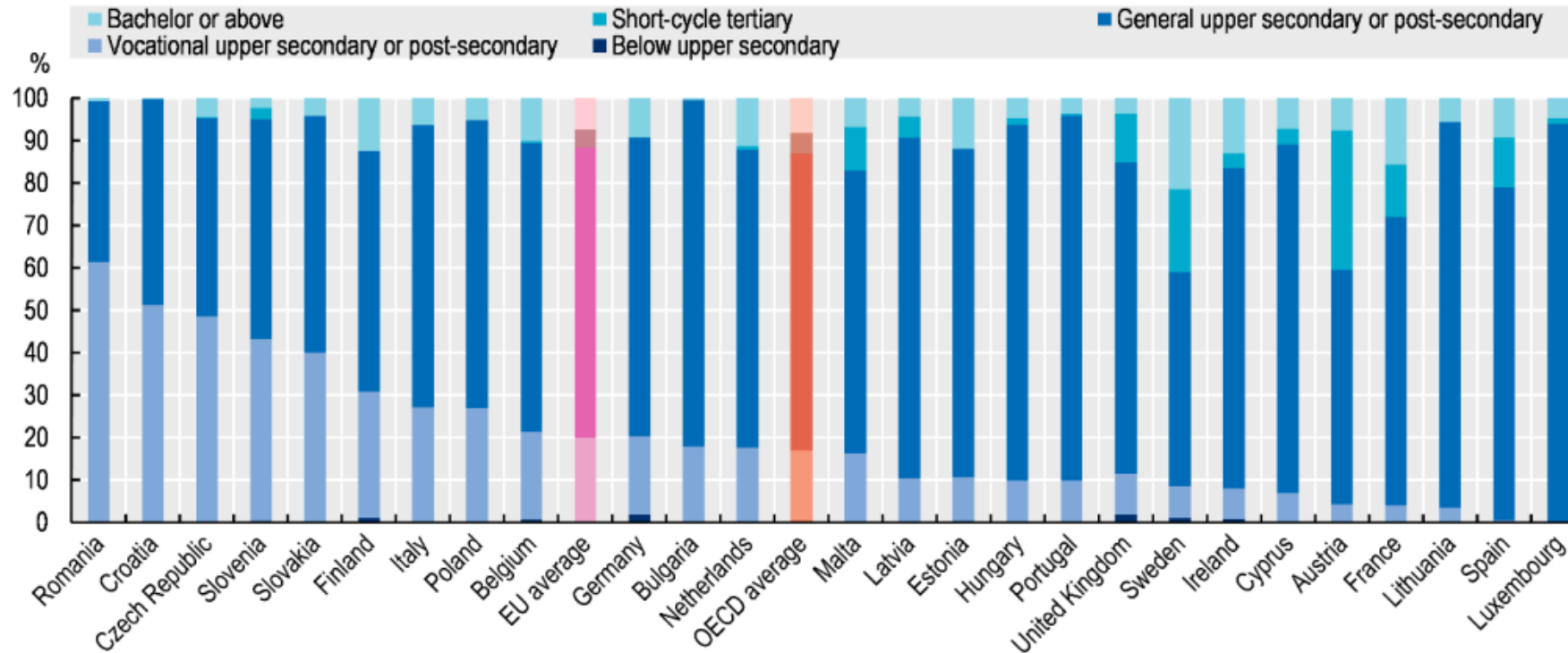
---

- When a distinction is made between academic and professional bachelor's programmes:
  - these can be provided in different institutions:
    - Universities vs. colleges/universities of applied sciences
      - E.g. Flanders (BEL), Netherlands
    - However, often universities also deliver (some) professional programmes
      - E.g. Denmark, Lithuania
  - or the same institutions provide both types of programmes
    - E.g. Brazil, Chile, Latvia, Korea, Slovenia, Poland



# Bachelor students mostly have a general education background

Distribution of educational attainment of students in bachelor-level programmes (2017-2019 pooled)



Note: Data include only students aged 34 or less or who obtained their highest qualification up to 15 years prior to the survey. Averages refer to unweighted averages of available countries. Refers to programmes at ISCED level 6.

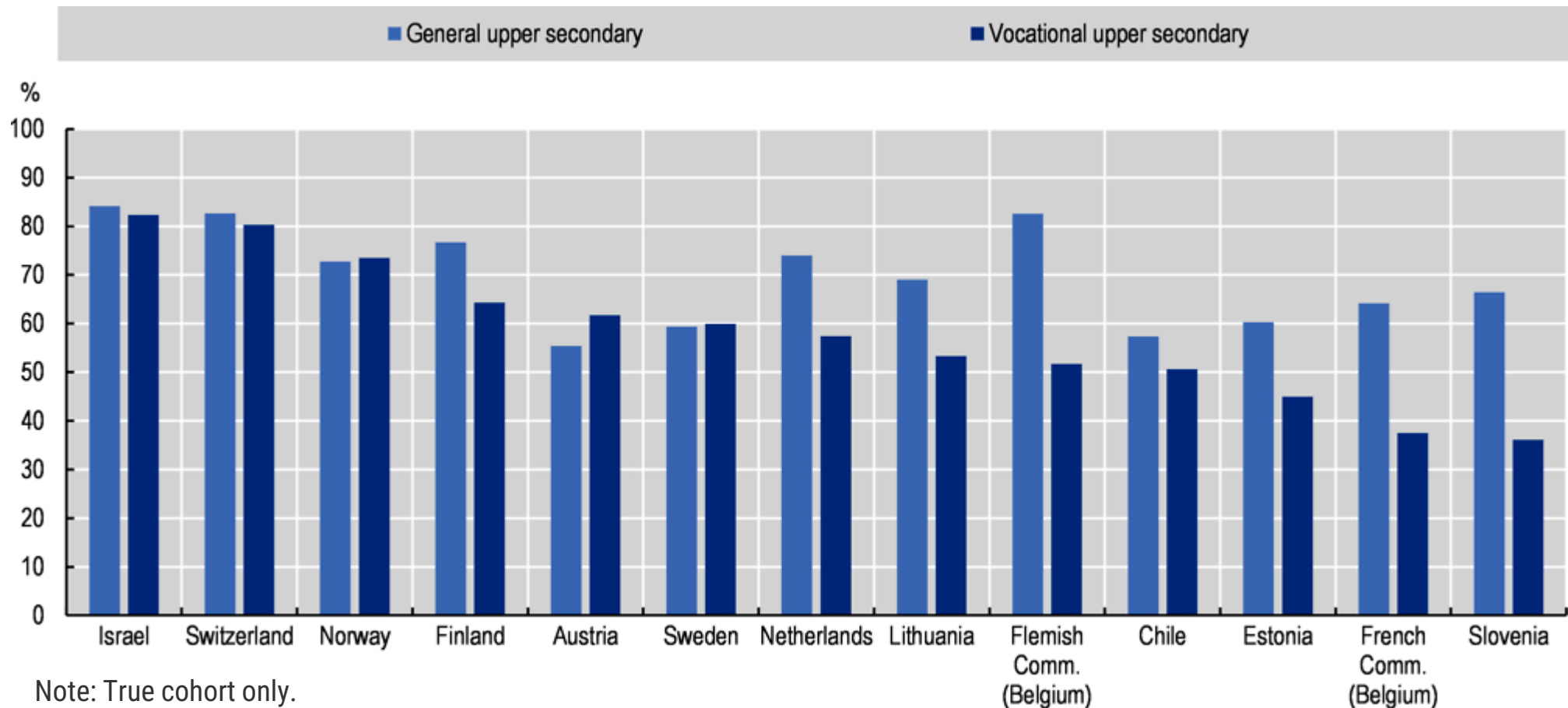
Source: OECD calculations based on the European Union Labour Force Survey.

\* 1. Note by Türkiye: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.  
2. Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.



# Completion rates are often lower for those with a vocational background

Completion within 3 years after the theoretical duration of the programme by orientation of upper secondary qualification.



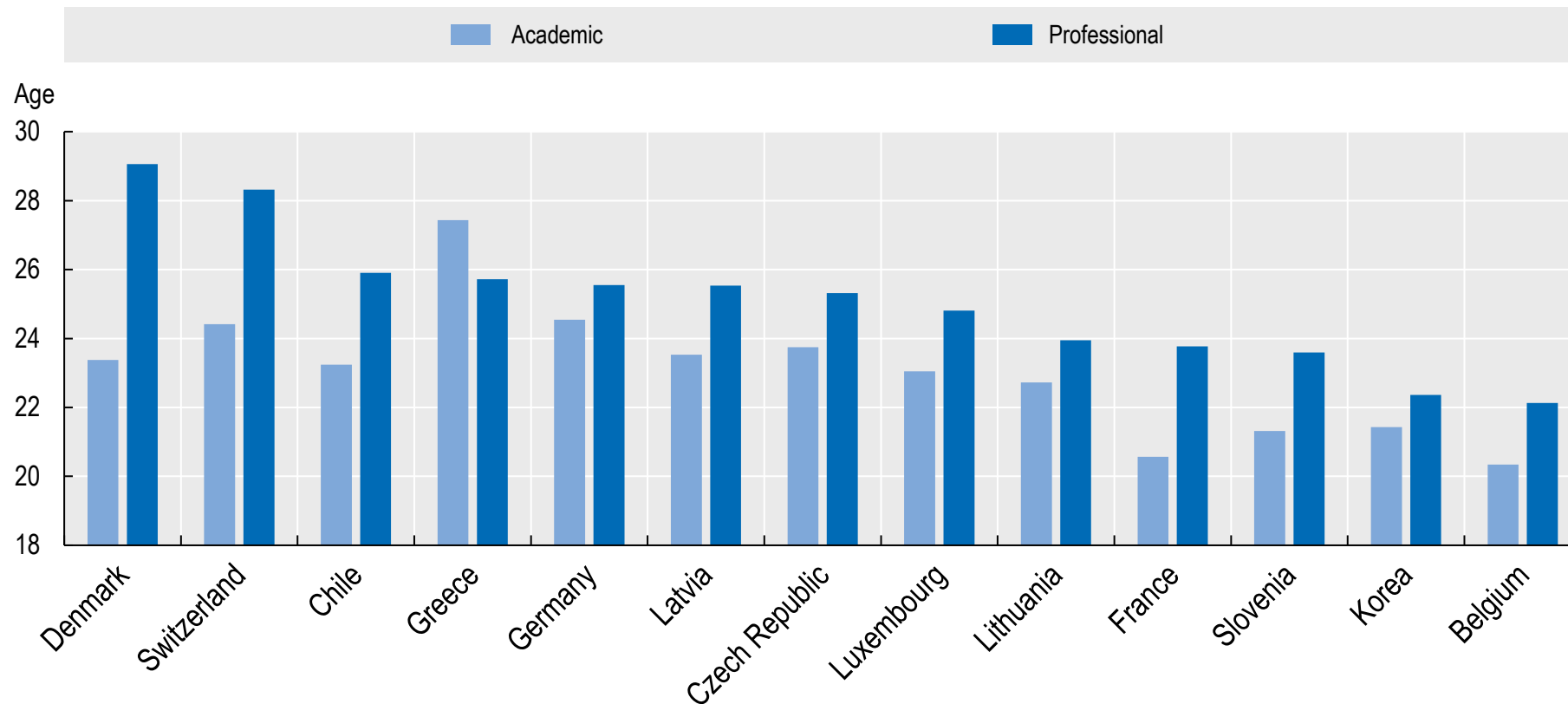
Note: True cohort only.

Source: OECD (2019[10]), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.



# Students in professional programmes tend to be older than those in academic programmes

Average age of students in ISCED 6 programmes (2018)



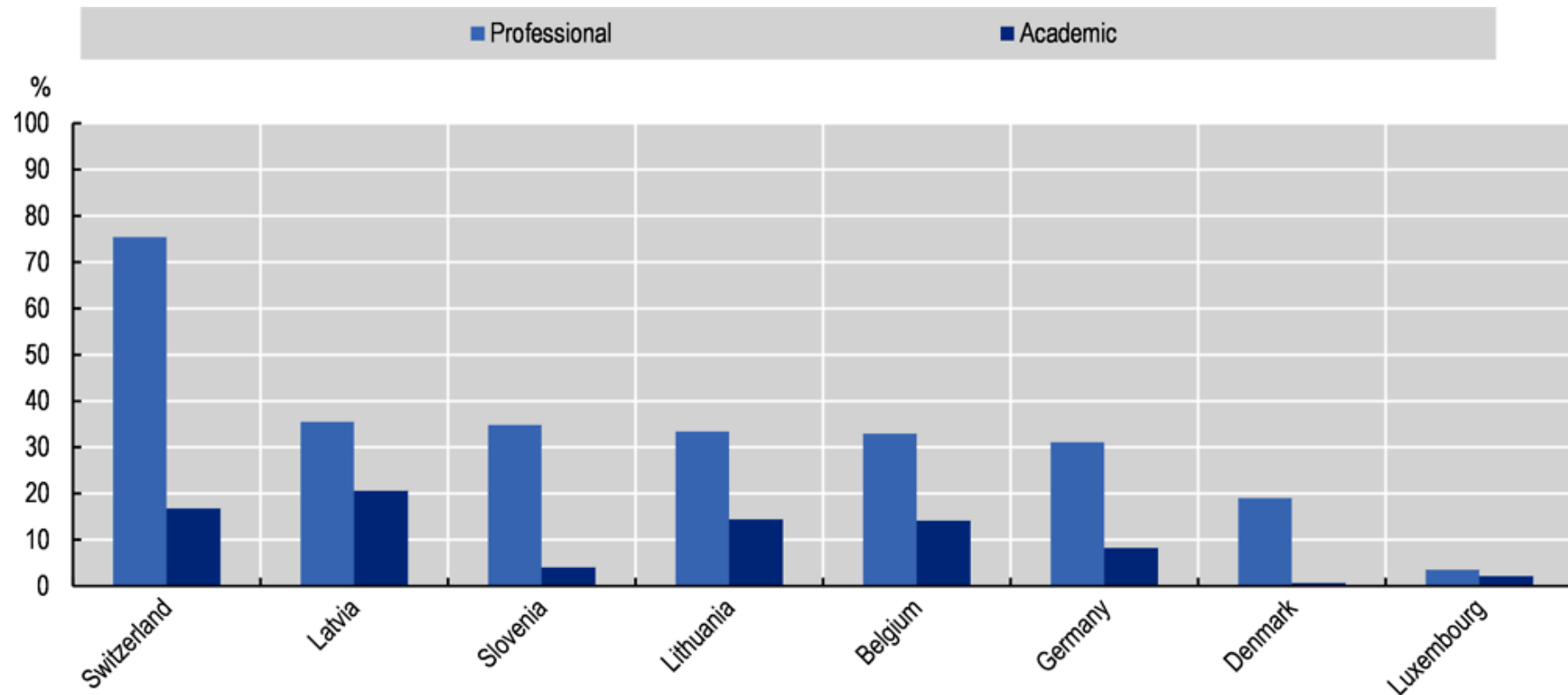
*Note: Data are based on national definitions of programme orientation.*

*Source: OECD calculations based on UOE enrolment data collected for Education at a Glance 2020.*



# Part-time learning is more common in professional programmes

## Share of part-time students in bachelor's or equivalent level, by programme orientation (2018)



Note: Data are based on national definitions of programme orientation.

Source: OECD (2020[4]), "Education at a Glance", Education and Training – Education at a Glance (database), <https://stats.oecd.org/>.



# Mandatory work-based learning is less common in professional bachelor's than in short-cycle tertiary programmes

---

- Mandatory (with specific minimum duration)
  - In all programmes
    - Denmark: Approximately 25% of the duration of the programme consists of internships.
    - France: Bachelor of technology include a compulsory internship (22 to 26 weeks over 3 years), as do professional bachelor's programmes (12 to 16 weeks over one year)
- Depending on provider and/or programme
  - Canada: Variation depending on professional requirements and the design of individual programmes.
  - Flanders (BEL): The institutions of higher education are free to choose their teaching methods and tools.
  - Chile: It is mandatory only if the study plan for the provider institution stipulates it.
- None or insignificant (<25%)
  - Mandatory (in some programmes), but accounting for less than 25% in Slovenia and the French Community of Belgium



## OECD Centre for Skills

Vocational education and  
training and adult learning



Contact: [Marieke.Vandeweyer@oecd.org](mailto:Marieke.Vandeweyer@oecd.org)

- <https://www.oecd.org/skills/vet.htm>
- <https://www.oecd.org/publications/pathways-to-professions-a81152f4-en.htm>

