Foreword
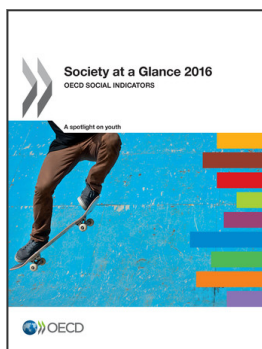
This is the eighth edition of Society at a Glance, the OECD's biennial overview of social indicators. As with its predecessors, this report addresses the growing demand for quantitative evidence on social well-being and its trends across OECD countries. It updates some indicators included in the previous seven editions and introduces several new ones. Data on Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and South Africa are included separately where available.

The Great Recession caused sweeping job losses across the OECD, and young people were hit particularly hard. So far, the recovery has been too weak to bring young people – and notably the low-skilled – back into employment. Eight years after the beginning of the crisis, still about 40 million young people are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET). But the roots of the problem go deeper: many lack the qualifications to find a job, while others struggle with personal or social problems. In the long term, joblessness and inactivity can generate isolation and withdrawal from society and endanger social cohesion. The great challenge for governments in the years to come is therefore to devise policies which equip young people with the professional skills they need and help disengaged youth overcome obstacles to education and employment.

This edition of Society at a Glance portrays at-risk youth and surveys policies designed to promote a smooth transition from school to work. Chapter 1 presents and discusses the most recent data on the situation of youth in OECD countries. It also presents evidence on education, training, employment and social policies which can support NEETs. Chapter 2 provides a guide to help readers understand the structure of OECD social indicators. Chapters 3 to 7 then consider these indicators in more detail. Additional information on indicators can be found on the OECD web pages (http://oe.cd/sag).

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