

Estonia's Education Story: Higher Social Mobility, More Innovation

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Estonia

- + population: 1.3 million
- + language: Estonian
(finno-ugric language group)
- + 45,339 km²
- + EU, NATO member (since 2004)
- + 99% of public services online
- + 157,000 students
- + 16,500 teachers
- + 500 schools



Estonian students rank #1 in Europe (PISA 2018)

4th

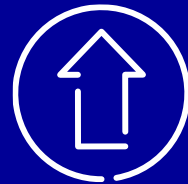
in the world in
science

5th

in the world in
reading

8th

in the world in
math



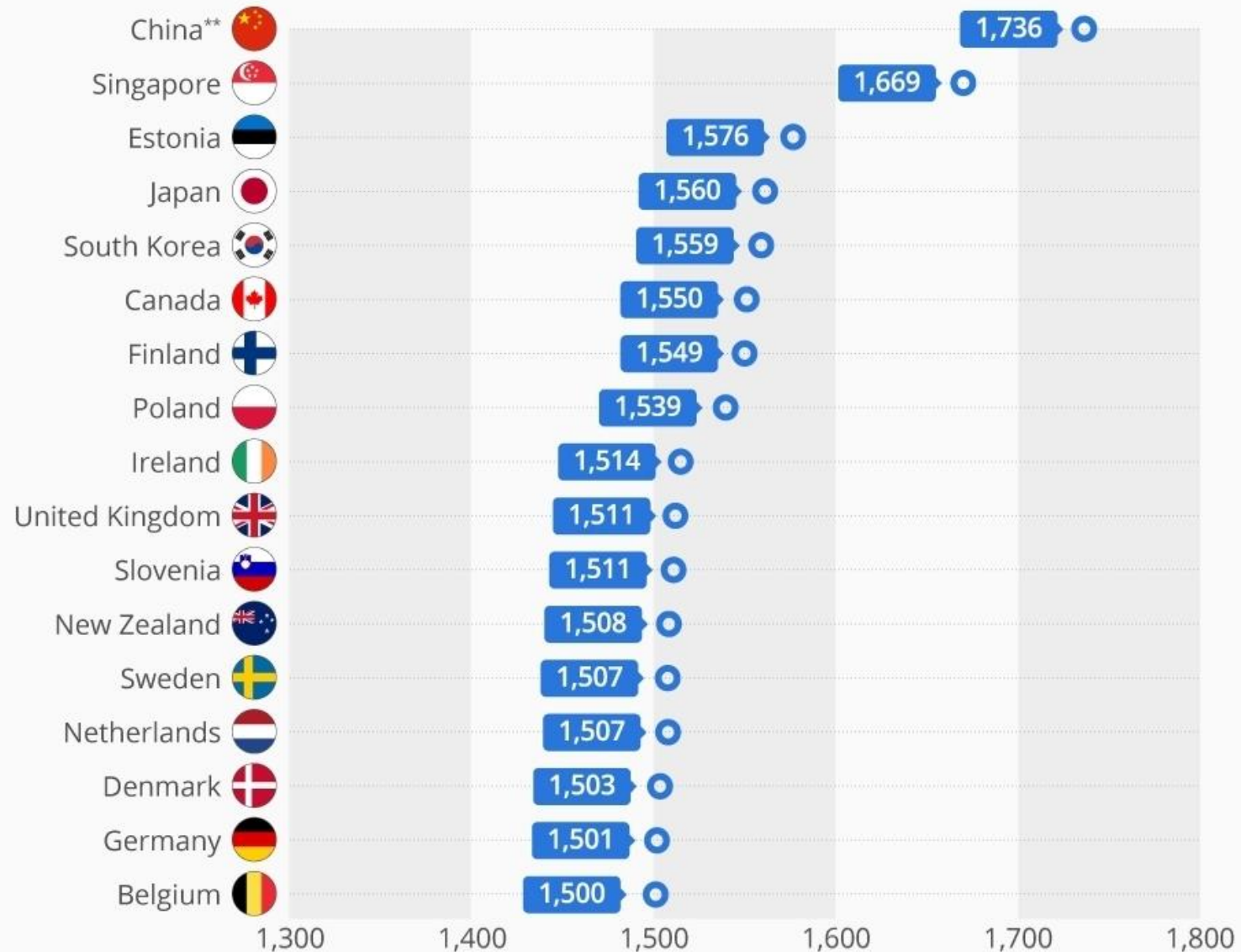
≈ 1.5 times more
top performers
vs OECD average



≈ 2 times less
low performers
vs OECD average

PISA 2018: The Top Rated Countries

Sum of mean science, reading and mathematics scores from the OECD PISA Results 2018*



* PISA=Programme for International Student Assessment

** Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang



@StatistaCharts

Source: OECD

Road to highly ranking education system

Before 1918

Under Danish, Swedish, German, Russian rule

13th c. First monastic schools

17th c. Schools for peasant children

1860-70s Compulsory school

1881 Literacy rate 94%

1918-1940
Estonian Republic

Start of the Estonian national education system. From 1920 compulsory and free education for 6 grades.

1944-1991
Soviet Occupation

Estonia managed to maintain high-quality teaching and learning in Estonian language.

1991
Republic of Estonia

The modernisation of Estonian education begins:

- **1997 Tiger Leap Programme**
- **Targeted investments – digital infrastructure**
- **Changes in the national curricula**

6 Key Qualities of Estonian Education System

+ **MENTALITY:** AIM-HIGH-AND-WORK-HARD MINDSET

+ **AUTONOMY:** AUTONOMY OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

+ **GOVERNANCE:** EVIDENCE-BASED AND EQUITY-PROMOTING GOVERNANCE

+ **DIVERSITY:** DIVERSE AND RESPONSIVE SCHOOL NETWORK

+ **SOCIETAL SUPPORT:** BROAD SOCIETAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

+ **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** 72% OF 2-YEAR-OLDS ARE IN FORMAL EDUCATION

Building a World-Class Learning System. Insights from some top-performing school systems (Kraemer, J., Ed). National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, DC (in press)

Education and Social Mobility

**In Estonia, student's socio-economic background has a low impact on performance
(6.2 % of variation compared to 12% in OECD)**

HOW?

- + Unified 9-year comprehensive school and inclusive education
- + Generational and cultural belief in education
- + Widely accessible pre-school education
- + Role of teachers and their education
- + Special needs support
- + Close cooperation inside the education community and with other institutions

Is This Model transferable?

- + **Any model should first be adjusted to the local context: historical, cultural, social**
- + Don't segregate. Focus on equity.
- + Don't take away power from teachers.
- + Use data, do evidence-based education governance.
- + Invest in early childhood education.

We truly think
that the best thing we can
give to our children is not
land, house or a bank account,
but good education.

T. H. Ilves

Thank you!

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