



# PISA READING LITERACY TRENDS AND LITERACY POLICY: ESTONIA & FINLAND

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# Outline of the presentation

1. Overview of the PISA 2015 results and literacy trend since 2009
2. ELINET Country Report (CR) and links to PISA results
3. Challenges in connecting policy measures and PISA results
4. Recommendations for updating CRs

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# Focus on Estonia and Finland

- Similar language
- Both among top-performing countries in PISA
- Opposite trends in PISA literacy

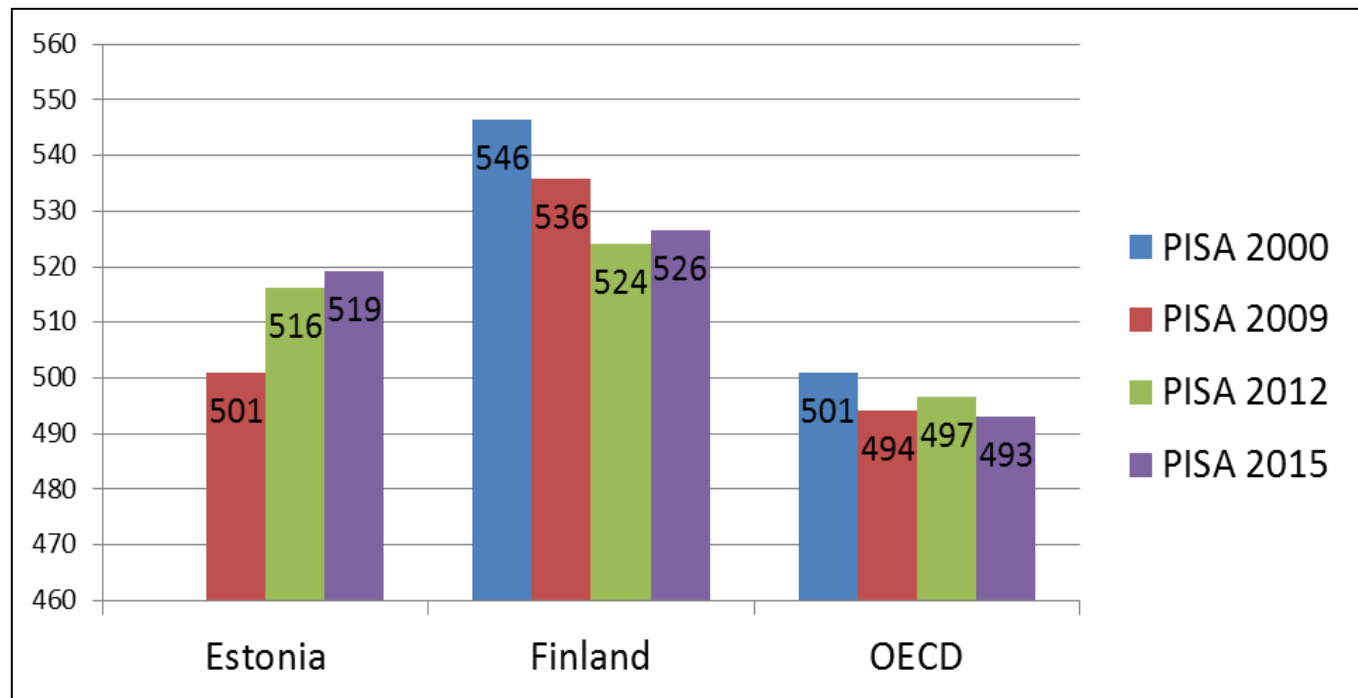
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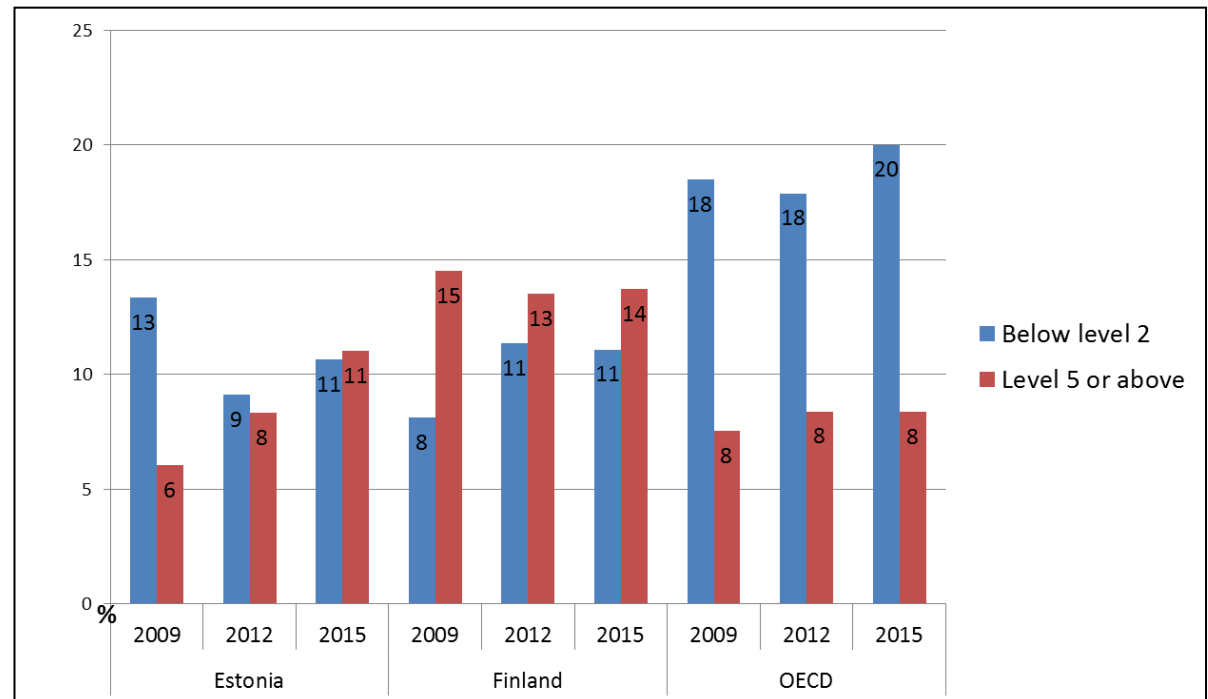
## Average performance in PISA reading

- Estonia and Finland high-performing countries
- Positive trend in Estonia
- Negative but recently stabilized trend in Finland



# Share of low and high performers in PISA

- Positive trend in Estonia: less low-performers than 2009, more high-performers
- Negative trend in Finland: increasing but recently stable number of low-performers since 2009, slightly less high-performers

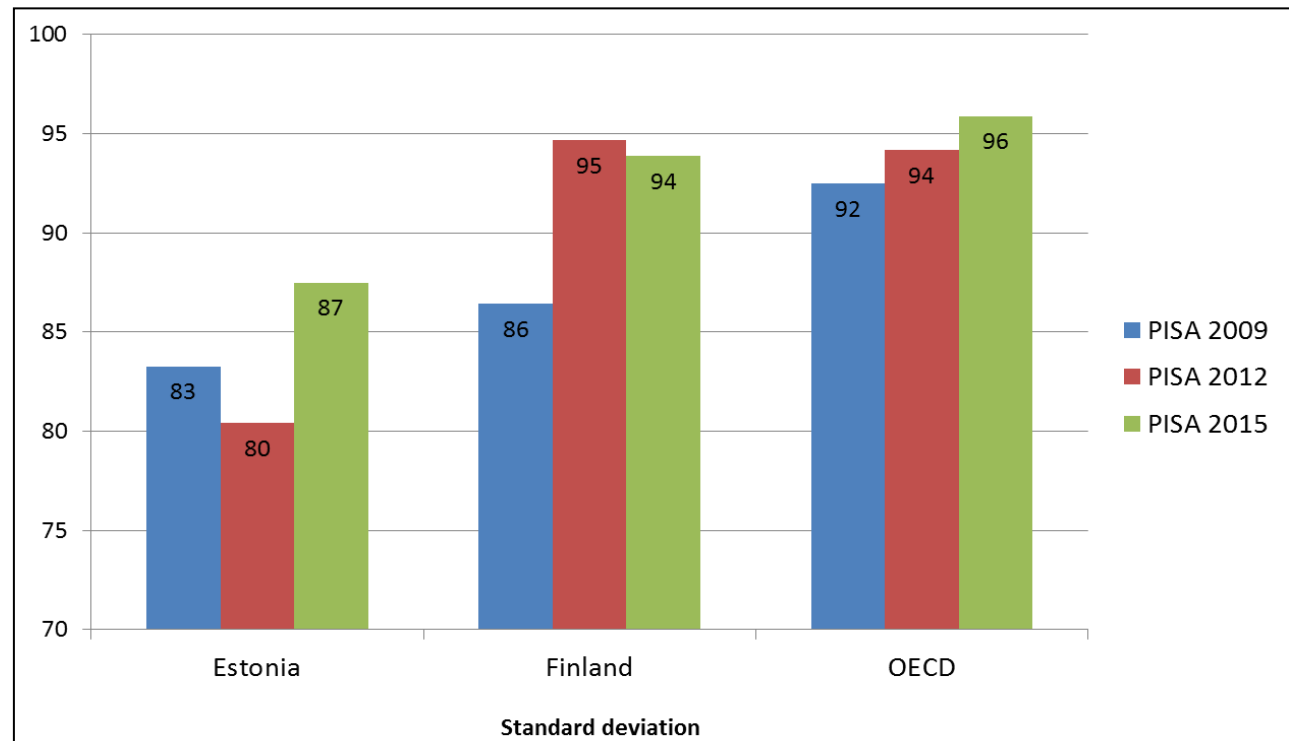


(OECD PISA Database 2015)



# Equity in PISA reading performance

- Widening spread of performance (SD)
- In Finland also slightly stronger association between SES and learning outcomes than before

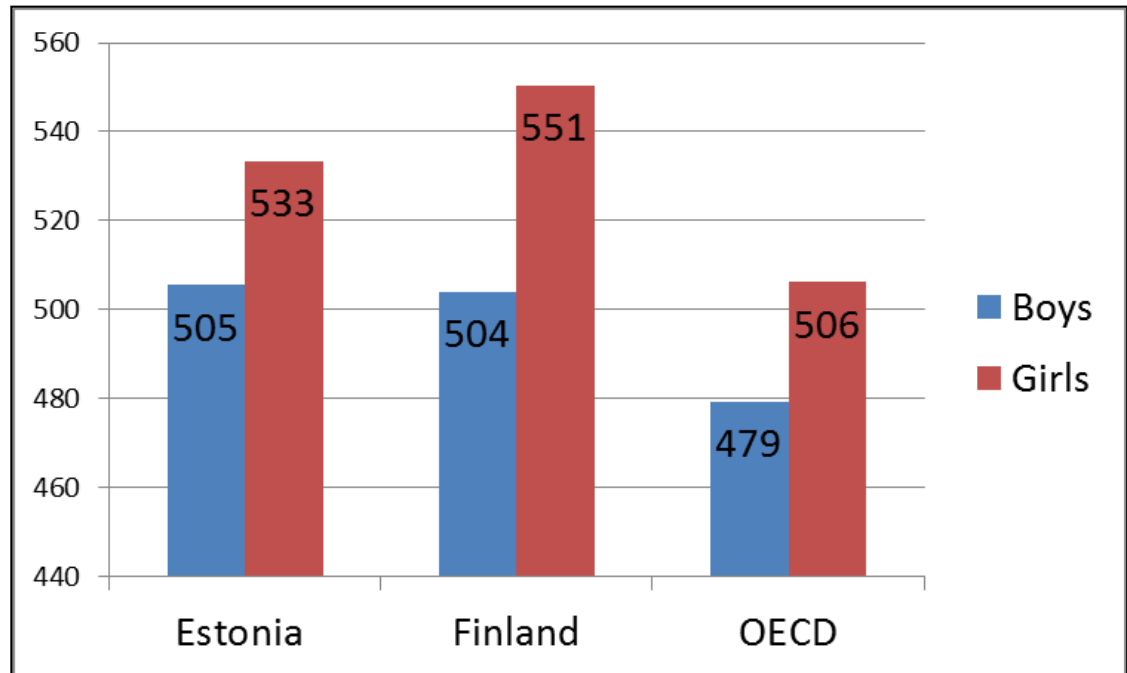


(OECD PISA Database 2015)



# Gender gap in PISA reading in 2015

- In both countries, above-average performance of boys and girls
- Significant gender gap in both
  - Clearly bigger in Finland although in 2015 the gap was smaller than before



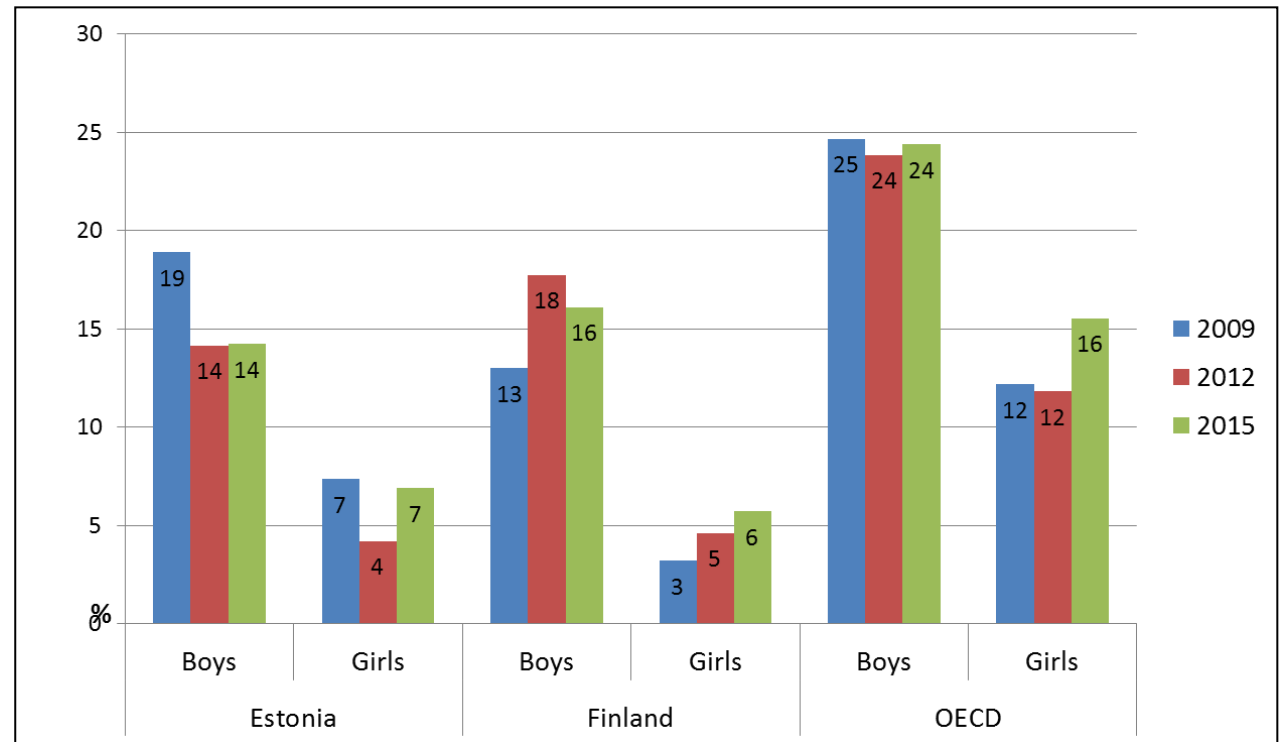
(OECD PISA Database 2015)

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# Share of low performers in PISA by gender

- In both countries, less low-performing boys than on earlier cycles, in Finland only recently
- In Finland, a slight increase in number of low-performing girls



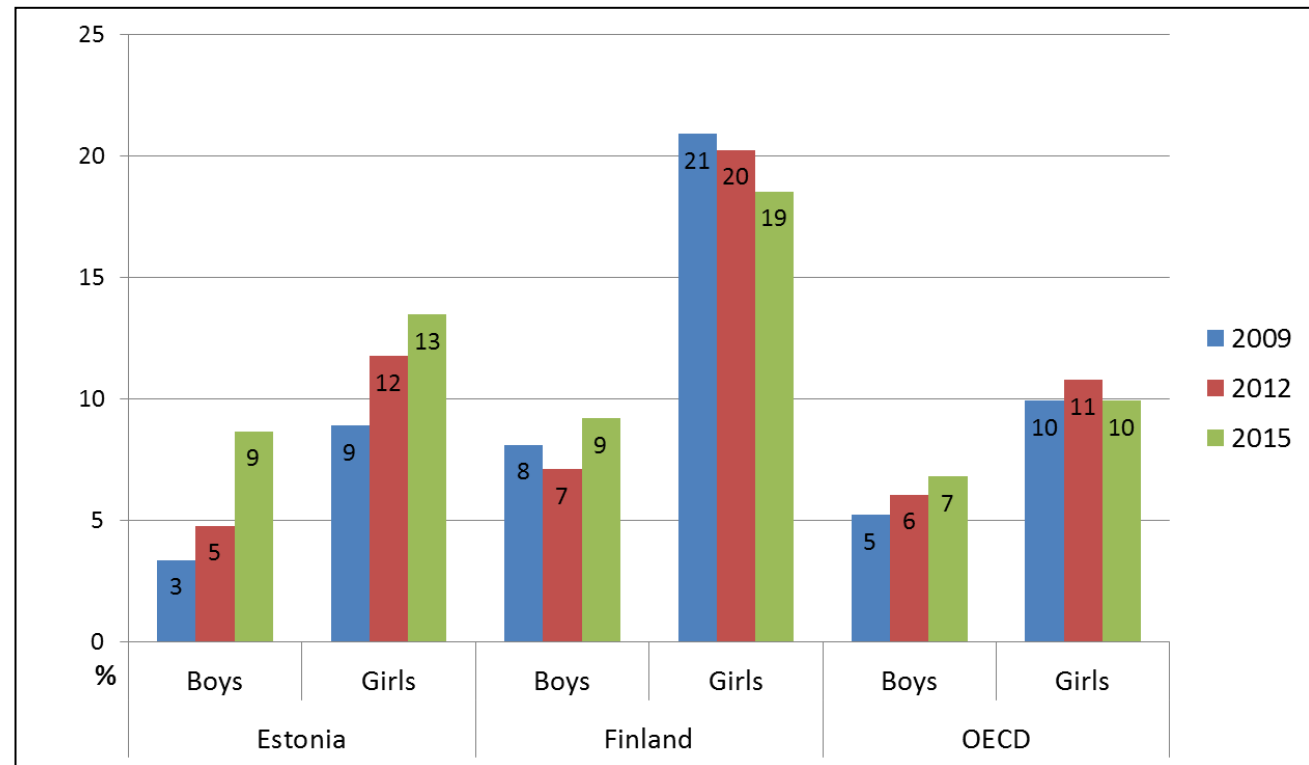
(OECD PISA Database 2015)





# Share of high performers in PISA by gender

- In Estonia, positive trend for boys and girls
- In Finland, signs of positive development for boys, a slight negative trend for girls



# ELINET CRs on Estonia & Finland

- Schools regulated on national level but organized at local level (funded by the state subsidy)
  - 9-year basic education
- ECEC curricula emphasize emergent literacy
  - Every child has opportunity or right to ECEC (Fin: possibly limited in 2016)
  - In Finland, a compulsory free pre-primary year for all children
- Early identification and specialist support for struggling learners – a legal right
- In school curricula, no specific reading curriculum (part of language and literature)
  - Both countries emphasize context-specific disciplinary literacy, multiliteracy & reading for pleasure
  - Both stress digital literacy and have good resources for this but Estonian schools are more advanced in pedagogical ICT use
  - In Finland, multiliteracy and ICT more prominent in the new curricula (2014, 2015)
  - Implementation at classroom level?



- Strong tradition on supporting a literate home environment
  - Both countries show literate home environments (appreciation of reading, frequent bedtime stories)
  - Both CRs emphasize raising parents awareness of the importance and ways they can support their children's reading development
- Literate school environment also important
  - Estonia has clearly more classroom libraries while Finland prioritizes extensive network of public libraries and collaboration with them
  - In Finland, Joy of reading programme and campaigns by Reading centre
  - In Estonia, projects such as Reading Nest by EstRA



- In Finland, children's development monitored regularly
  - Physical, neuro-cognitive and psychosocial development
- High-level initial education for teachers, also in ECEC
  - In Estonia, teaching profession less popular than in Finland
  - In Estonia, more CPD, requirement also for ECEC teachers, incentives in the form of higher professional level
  - In Finland, increasing need and offer for CPD along the new curriculum
  - CPD needs are similar in both countries: literacy across curriculum / disciplinary literacy and ICT use in education



# Links between the CR and PISA?

## ■ Finland

- Why has the average reading performance decreased from 2000 to 2012 and why has the average performance been stable from 2012 to 2015?
- Why has boys' average performance improved?
- Why has the variation in student performance increased?

## ■ Estonia

- Why the positive outcome in average reading performance as well as in share of low and high performers?
- Why has the variation in student performance increased?

## ■ No obvious explanations for the differing trends in the CRs



# Challenges in linking policy measures and PISA results

- No simple causal relationships
- Time aspect
  - Students in PISA 2015 were born in 1999–2000
  - Students started their school in 2006–2007 and moved on to lower secondary school in 2012–2013
  - Curricula described in CRs more recent, in Estonia from 2011, in Finland 2004 and 2014/15
  - Changes in school systems take time to show in learning outcomes (Gustafsson 2017; Sulkunen & Malin 2017)
- Different scopes in PISA and national policies
  - Wider concept of texts and literacy in the national curricula than in PISA



# Recommendations for updating CRs

- Accumulating knowledge base
  - Documenting changes, e.g. change in support system in Finnish schools (2011)
  - Resource challenges: is this what we want to do in future Elinet
- Data gaps on national level
  - General development in the society: equity of citizens (including gender norms), family welfare
  - Governmental decisions: economic issues, values and unintended consequences (e.g. right to ECEC in Fin)
  - No PIRLS data e.g. in Estonia
- Data gaps on institutional level
  - Data on classroom practices needed, also on L2 students
  - Educational budgets on municipality and school level, allocation of funds
  - Literacy activities at home during (primary) school years



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# Thank you!

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