



INSTYTUT BADAŃ EDUKACYJNYCH

**Common Origin, Different Paths.  
Transformation of Education Systems in the  
Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and  
Poland**

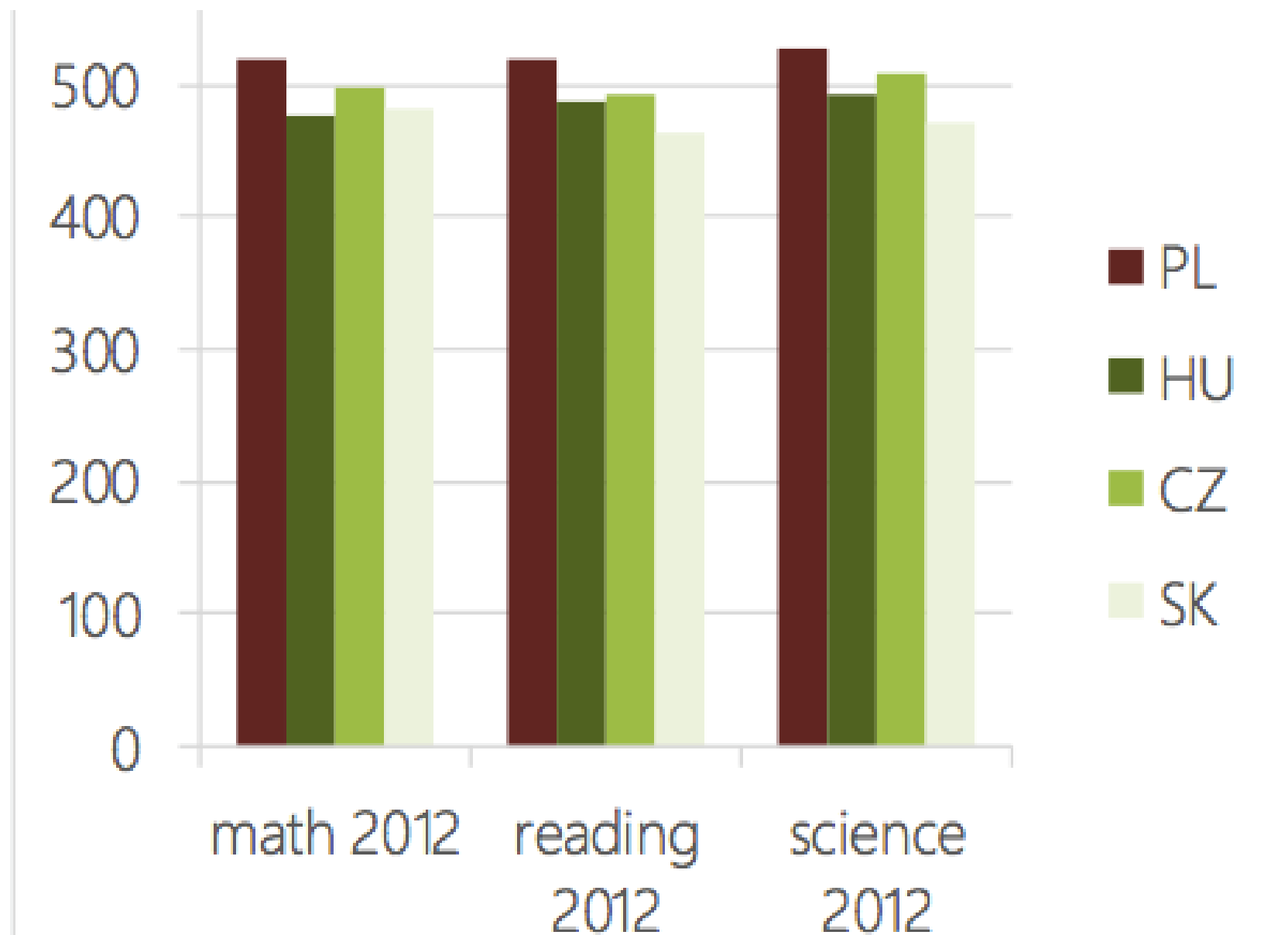
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**CIDE, Mexico City, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

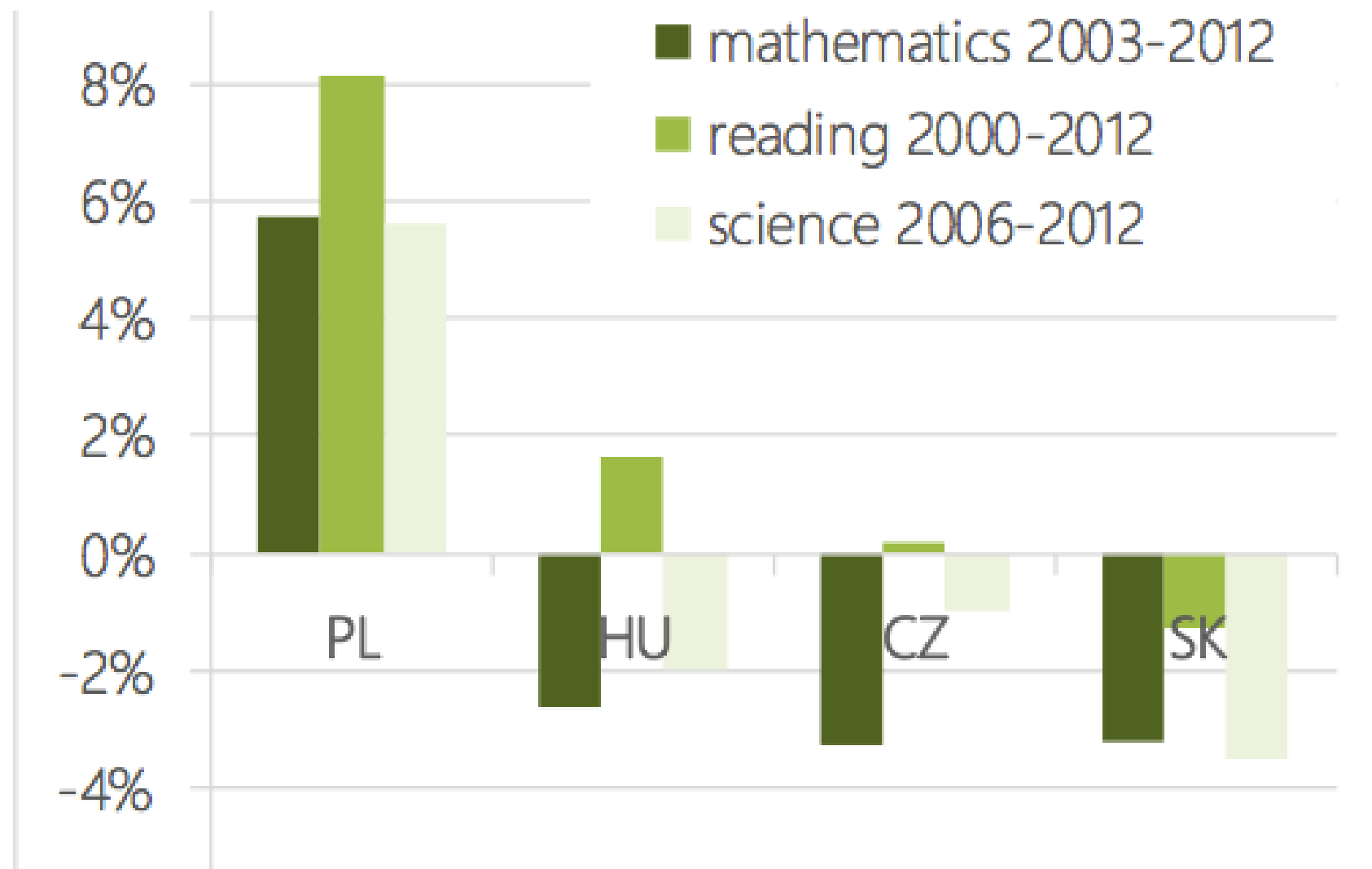
## Why Poland outperforms Czech Rep., Hungary and Slovakia in PISA tests?

- All four are **post-communist** countries
- Started **transformation in 1989** and their systems were similar at that time, highly centralized, with a strict control over curriculum, compulsory schooling consisted of two tiers, one national examination at the end of secondary school, generally dominated by vocational path
- MSSD – **Most Similar Systems Design** framework of analysis can be applied

# Average PISA 2012 scores in 2012 (Fig. 4)

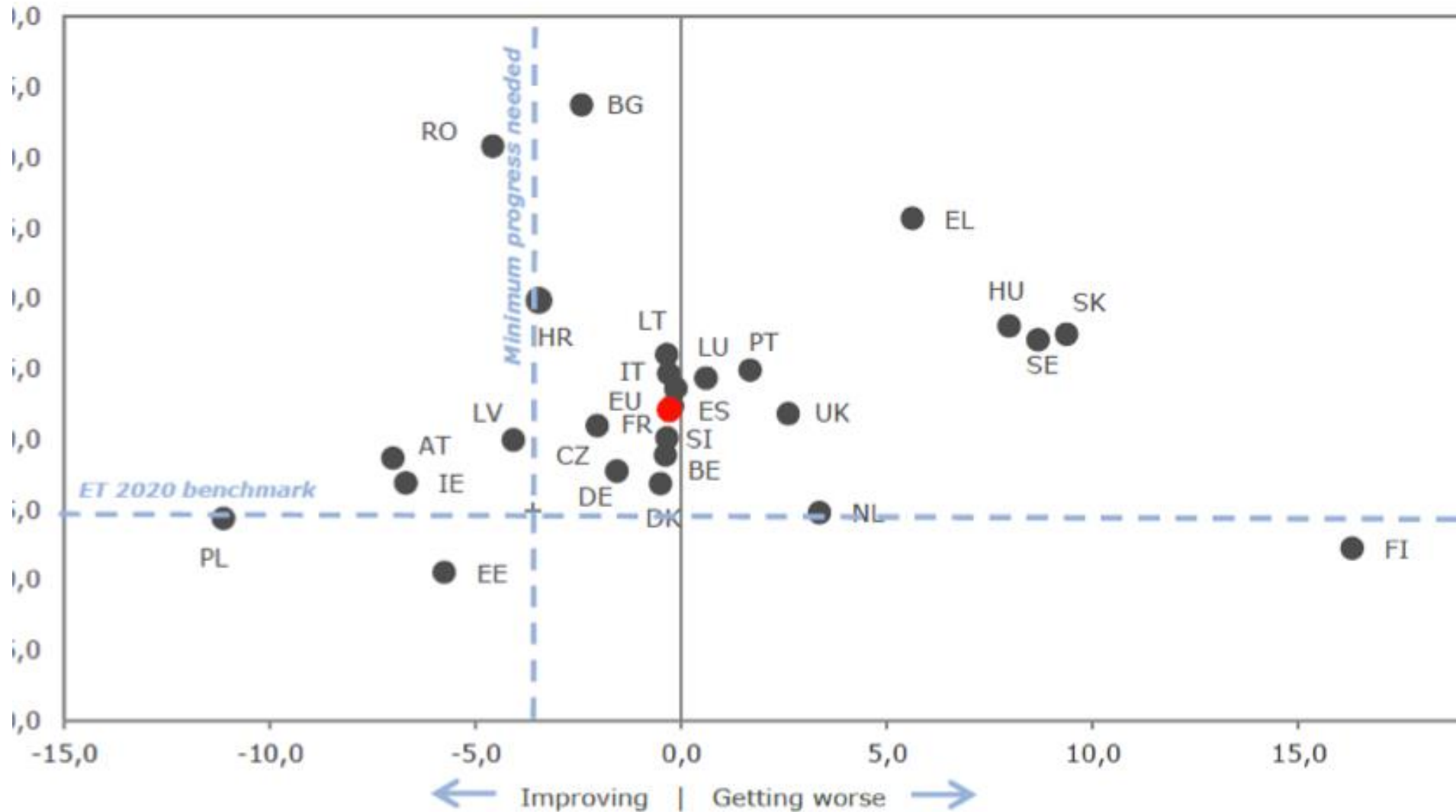


# The % change in average score over 2000-2012 (reading), 2003-2012 (mathematics), and science (2006-2012)



# Low achievers in maths

Figure 5. Percentage of low achieving students (mathematics): level and annual change



Average annual change in low achievers in maths (%) over the period 2009-2012

## BETWEEN SCHOOL VARIATION

- important indication for the equity of the system
- PISA 2012 results in mathematics show high between-school variation in three countries: **Hungary has 4<sup>th</sup>** among the OECD countries, **Slovakia has the 7<sup>th</sup> highest**, the **Czech Republic holds 15<sup>th</sup> place**
- **Poland has one of the lowest between-school variations** among the OECD countries, with **only 10 countries outperforming it**

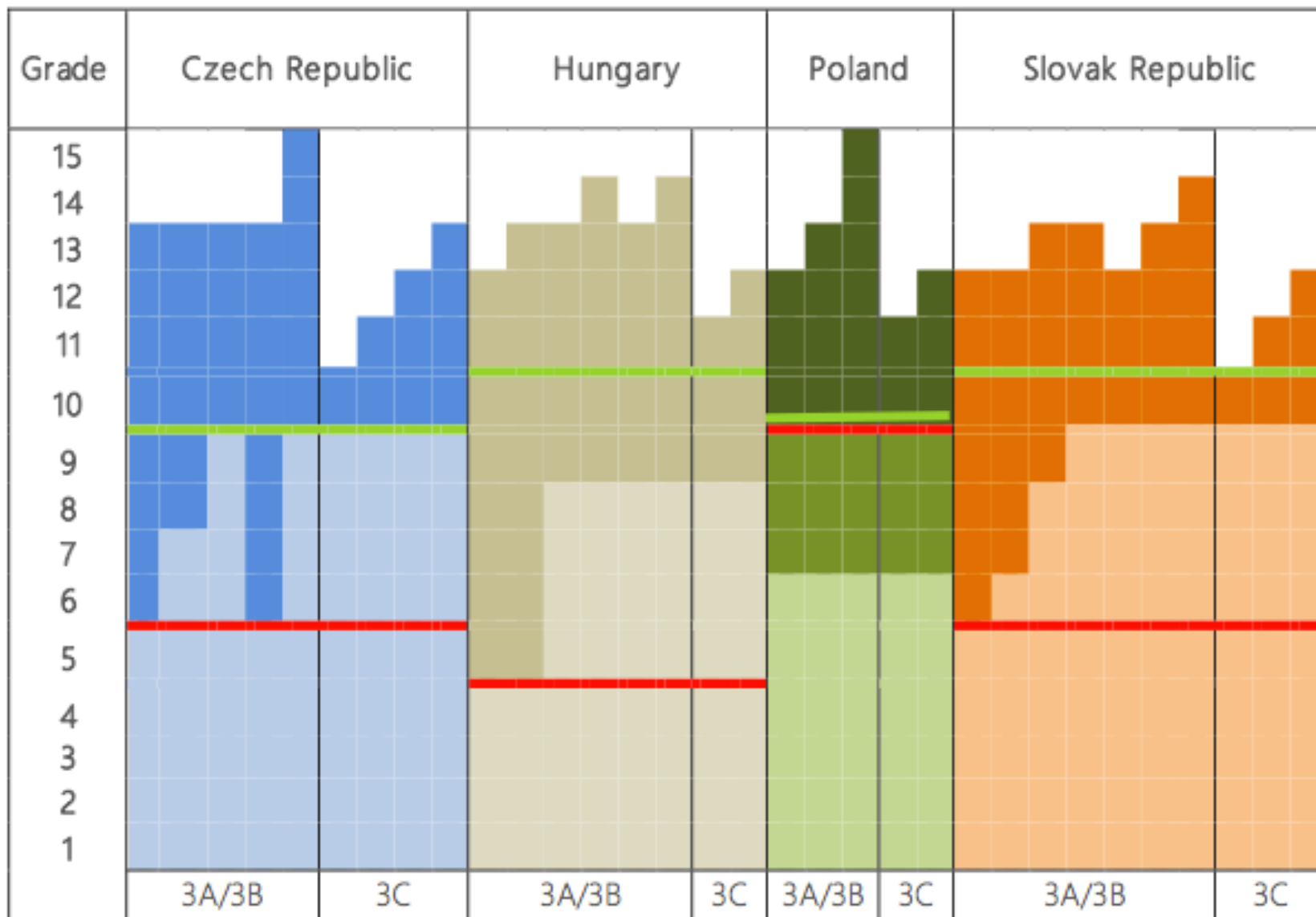
# Poland and Hungary have relatively smaller classes

Table 4. Ratio of students to teaching staff (2011)

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
Czech Republic	18.7	11.1	11.7
Hungary	10.7	10.5	12.4
Poland	11.0	10.0	11.1
Slovak Republic	16.9	13.1	14.3
OECD average	15.4	13.3	13.9



# TRACKING



The green line represents the end of compulsory education. The red line represents the stage when initial tracking



# TRACKING

- general organization of the schooling systems between countries may seem similar, **but the attitude towards tracking makes Poland very distinct from the remaining three countries**
- **Hungary, Czech Rep. and Slovakia** are much more **selective** – early opportunities for tracking, elitist *gymnasia* and schools with reduced program for lower achieving students
- a lot of research from Czech Rep. and Hungary showing that **SES of parents has a high impact on students' outcomes**
- **Poland applies a restrictive approach to tracking**, increasingly Poland is experiencing different forms of **sorting, especially in large cities**

## DECENTRALISATION

- all four countries decentralised their systems as a part of broader attempt to change the structure of governance
- increased school autonomy
- self-governing municipalities created and given some responsibilities
- non-state schools established

## DECENTRALISATION – CZECH REP.

- ✓ went very far in decentralisation, only 1% competencies still held by central government, extreme case within OECD
- ✓ a lot of responsibilities given to the school principals (67%) and self governing municipalities (28%)
- ✓ decentralisation of curricula
- ✓ lack of central monitoring over the performance of the system, no feedback tools



## DECENTRALISATION – HUNGARY

- similar distribution of competencies as in the Czech Rep.
- municipalities responsible for the quality of instruction
- vast autonomy over curricula given to schools (lack of adequate capacities) – growing between school variation
- since 2011 reforms reversing decentralisation, Hungary is back to central steering over schools, curricula and hiring policies

# DECENTRALISATION – POLAND



- more balanced approach, 50% decisions taken by school principal, 25% municipalities and 25% central government
- although the Polish education system is more centralized in terms of decision making than the Czech, Slovakian, and pre 2012 Hungarian systems, **it still leaves more power to local governments and school principals than is the case in the average OECD country.**
- **the degree of decentralization in CEE countries is very high**

Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education (2011)

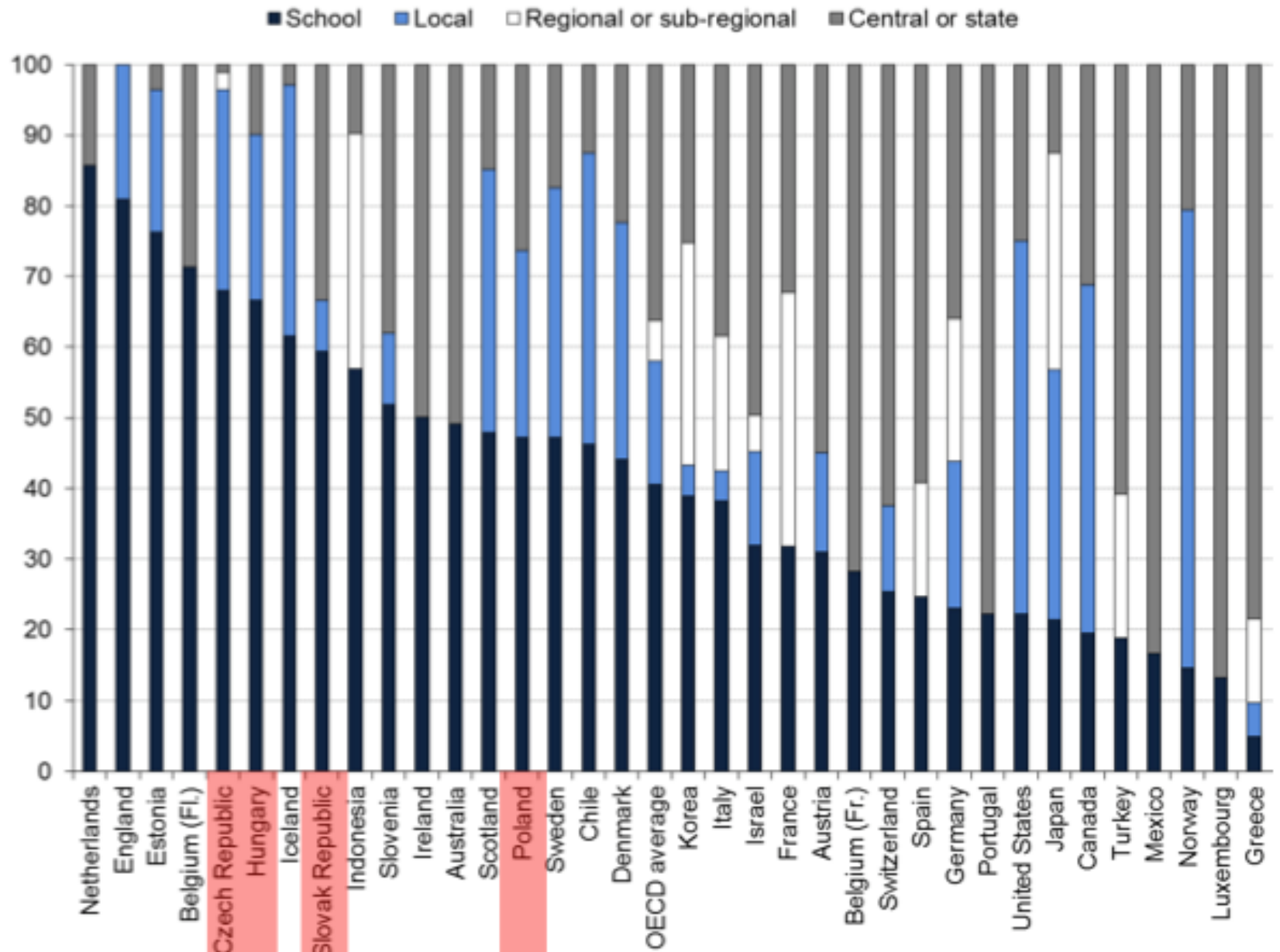


Table 5. Indicators of fragmentation and decentralization in schooling and administration

	Average primary school size	Average municipality population	Sub-central government spending as % of total government spending (2011)	Average number of primary schools per municipality
Czech Republic	111	1682	26.32%	0.78
Hungary	141	3141	23.07%	1.14
Slovak Republic	132	1872	17.46%	0.86
Poland	159	15 500	32.09%	4.5

\*OECD Government at a Glance 2013, OECD Education at a Glance 2013, national statistics

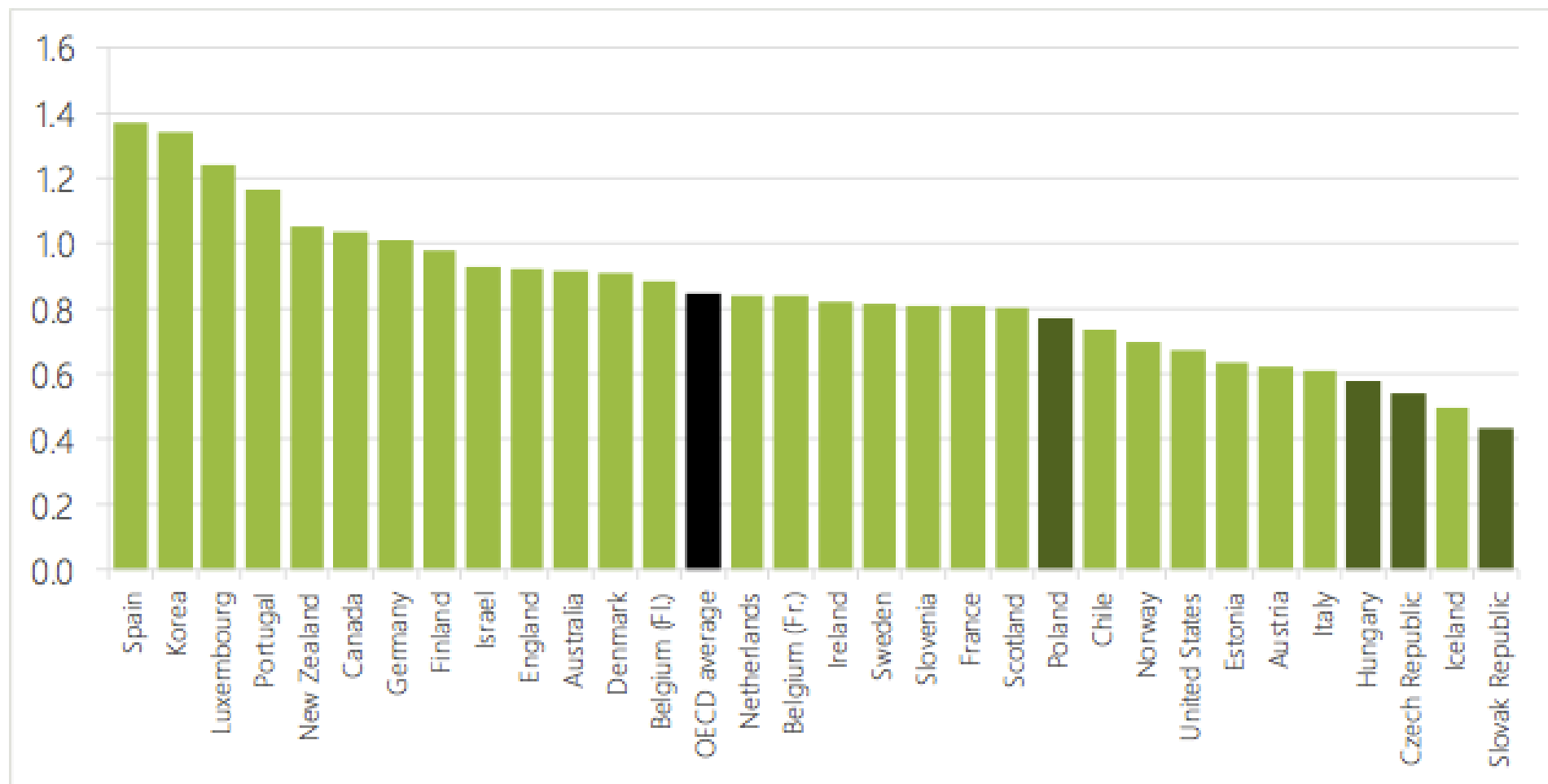
## Control over quality

- ✓ **Poland and Slovakia kept most control over curriculum**
- ✓ Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland (but not the Czech Republic) perform **standardized tests at school**. Slovakia administers only one test (grade 9), while **Hungary and Poland measure student skills several times during the school career**
- ✓ **only in Poland and Hungary results may also be used for school accountability apart from being a diagnostic tool**
- ✓ Hungary and Poland the average outcomes of every school are made available, in Poland publicly, in Hungary for experts.
- ✓ **Poland is the only one in which standardized tests have effectively replaced the entrance examinations to the next education tier.**



# TEACHERS SALARIES

Figure 8. Ratio of teacher salaries to average earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education aged 25 to 64



Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2013 and MEN (for Poland)

## CONCLUSION

- ✓ Poland seems to have the **most balanced division of competencies** between various levels of educational governance, combining the managerial capabilities of **central agencies, local governments and school principals.**
- ✓ **Delayed student tracking** (by introducing lower secondary schools) and the implementation **of standardized examinations at three different stages** of the student career has kept the Polish **education system more uniform and based on common standards**, even though most managerial responsibilities have been transferred to the local level
- ✓ Polish government addressed the problem of the unattractiveness of the teaching profession (common to all four systems) relatively early on. Although systematically **increasing teachers' wages and keeping statutory teaching time at a low level** probably had little impact on PISA outcomes in the period 2000-2012, it may yield some positive effects in the near future.