

iREAD



Let's make reading fun again!

Fostering Literacy Engagement Across Borders.

A Transnational Analysis of
Student Reading Habits and
Preferences

Abstract

This report presents the findings of the IRead project, a collaborative initiative aimed at understanding and enhancing literacy engagement among students across Ireland, Belgium, and Estonia. Through detailed survey analyses, the report explores the reading habits, preferences, and motivational factors of young learners. The insights provide a nuanced understanding of literacy challenges and opportunities, offering actionable recommendations for fostering reading engagement in diverse educational and cultural contexts. This transnational study underscores the collective effort and shared commitment to promoting lifelong literacy for students across Europe.

REDIAL
Ireland



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Executive Summary

The IRead project, funded under the EU's Horizon 2020 program, aims to enhance literacy skills among young learners through personalised, technology-driven solutions. This transnational survey report consolidates data from four partner countries—Ireland, Belgium (PISO Tienen and KTA Brugge), and Estonia—to explore reading habits, preferences, and motivational factors among students aged 10–18.

Key findings highlight significant variations in reading frequency, genre preferences, and motivational factors across countries. While some students strongly oppose integrating gamified elements into reading, others reveal a more traditional approach to literacy. These insights provide actionable recommendations to align the IRead project's tools with the diverse needs of learners across Europe.

Background and Objectives

The IRead project addresses literacy challenges by leveraging adaptive and personalised technologies tailored to young readers. By targeting students aged 10–18, the project aims to foster a love for reading and improve literacy outcomes through engaging and innovative methods.

This survey serves a dual purpose:

1. To comprehensively understand students' reading habits, preferences, and attitudes across partner countries.
2. To identify trends and cultural differences that can inform the development and refinement of IRead's learning tools.

The survey covered topics such as frequency of reading, preferred genres, and factors influencing reading motivation. These findings shed light on young learners' reading engagement and provide critical guidance for achieving the project's overarching goals.

Methodology

The survey was conducted as part of the IRead project to assess the reading habits, preferences, and motivational factors of students aged 10–18 across four partner countries: Ireland, Belgium (PISO Tienen and KTA Brugge), and Estonia. A total of 378 students participated in the survey, with the following response distribution:

Ireland:	79 responses
PISO Tienen (Belgium)	92 responses
KTA Brugge (Belgium)	109 responses
Estonia:	107 responses

The survey instrument consisted of structured multiple-choice and open-ended questions covering key areas:

- **Frequency and context of reading activities.**
- **Preferred genres and formats of reading material.**
- **Perceptions and attitudes toward reading.**
- **Motivational factors, including the potential role of gamification.**

The data was collected through online forms and analysed using quantitative techniques to identify trends and patterns. Participant demographics, such as age and gender, were recorded to contextualise the findings. Visualisations and comparative analyses were employed to highlight cross-country similarities and differences.

Introduction to Country-by-Country Analysis

This section provides a detailed analysis of survey findings from each partner country— Ireland, Belgium (PISO Tienen and KTA Brugge), and Estonia. The analysis explores demographic representation, reading habits, preferences, and motivational factors, highlighting unique trends and commonalities. These insights offer a granular view of young readers' challenges and opportunities across different cultural contexts, forming the foundation for tailored literacy interventions.

Ireland: Analysis

OVERVIEW

The survey in Ireland gathered responses from 79 participants aged between 10 and 18. Most respondents were in the 13–15 age group, with a balanced gender distribution.

Key Findings

Reading Frequency

- 7.6% of respondents reported reading daily, while 39.2% read weekly.
- 26.6% read monthly, and 15.2% only read when required.

Motivational Factors

- 49.4% of students would read a book without being asked, compared to 50.6% who would not.
- 41.8% expressed interest in gamified reading experiences, with 24.1% responding "Maybe."

Genre Preferences:

- Popular genres included graphic novels, historical stories, and thrillers.

Household Influence

- 53.2% reported that people in their household read, and 63.3% had parents who occasionally or regularly read bedtime stories to them.

Perceptions of Reading

- Common adjectives included "boring" and "educational."
- On a scale of 1–10, enjoyment of reading books was rated below 5 by a majority.

NOTABLE TRENDS

Weekly readers formed the largest segment, indicating moderate engagement with reading. A nearly even split on willingness to read without being prompted suggests potential for motivational interventions.

PISO Tienen: Analysis

OVERVIEW

The survey in PISO Tienen collected responses from 92 participants aged between 10 and 18. The largest age group was 16–18 years (40.2%), followed by 14–16 years (33.7%). Most respondents identified as female (66.3%), with 29.3% identifying as male and 5.4% identifying as other genders.

KEY FINDINGS

Reading Frequency

- Only 7.6% of respondents read daily, and 9.8% read weekly.
- A significant 39.1% reported reading only when obliged, with 27.2% stating they never read voluntarily.

Motivational Factors

- 28.3% of students would be motivated to read through gamified experiences, while 41.3% responded "Maybe."
- Combined positive responses suggest that gamification could appeal to nearly 70% of the group.

Preferred Activities

- 48.9% preferred hanging out with friends, and 38% preferred watching videos/movies.
- Only 15.2% preferred reading, including books and comics.

Genre Preferences

- Popular genres included graphic novels (22.8%) and romantic stories (21.7%).

Household Influence

- 50% of respondents had family members who read, while 33.7% remembered their parents reading bedtime stories to them.

Perceptions of Reading

- "Boring" was the most frequently associated adjective, with 55.4% selecting it.
- On a scale of 1–10, most students rated their enjoyment of reading below 5.

NOTABLE TRENDS

A significant portion of students (66.3%) identified as female, which might influence reading preferences and trends. Interest in gamified reading highlights an opportunity to engage students who currently lack interest.

KTA Brugge (Belgium): Analysis

OVERVIEW

The survey in KTA Brugge received responses from 109 students aged between 10 and 18. Most respondents were aged 14–16 (51.4%), followed by 12–14 (34.9%). The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 48.6% identifying as male, 50.05% as female, and 1.8% identifying as other genders.

KEY FINDINGS

Reading Frequency

- A notable proportion (35.8%) of students never read voluntarily, and 44% read only when required.
- Regular reading habits were rare, with 4.6% reading daily and 6.4% reading weekly.

Motivational Factors

- Gamification showed appeal, with 22.9% expressing interest and 32.1% responding "Maybe."
- Combined, these responses indicate a potential for engaging 55% of students through gamified reading.

Preferred Activities

- 47.7% preferred hanging out with friends, while 34.9% favoured watching videos or movies.
- Reading (books and comics) accounted for only 14.7% of preferences.

Perceptions of Reading

- Reading was overwhelmingly described as "boring" by 100% of participants, with only a tiny minority associating it with positive adjectives like "fun" (9 students).
- Ratings of reading enjoyment on a scale of 1–10 revealed that most respondents rated it between 1 and 5, with only 8 students rating it between 8 and 10.

Household Influence

- 50.6% of respondents had family members who read, and 63.3% remembered being read bedtime stories by parents or guardians.

NOTABLE TRENDS

The perception of reading as "boring" was universal in this group, which is significant and aligns with the low voluntary reading frequency. The interest in gamified reading experiences provides a valuable opportunity for the IRead project to address negative perceptions.

Estonia: Analysis

OVERVIEW

The survey in Estonia gathered responses from 107 students aged between 10 and 18. The largest age group was 16–18 (72%), followed by 14–16 (17.8%) and 12–14 (10.3%). There were no respondents in the 10–12 age range.

KEY FINDINGS

Reading Frequency

- A significant percentage of students read only when required or never read voluntarily.
- Precise breakdowns for daily or weekly readers were not fully captured in the dataset available.

Motivational Factors

- 28.3% expressed interest in gamified reading, while 35.9% responded "Maybe."
- Nearly 64% of respondents saw potential in integrating gamification into reading.

Preferred Activities:

- Social activities, such as hanging out with friends (39.3%) and playing sports (19.6%), were most popular.
- Reading was less preferred than video games, movies, and sports.

Genre Preferences:

- Various genres were mentioned, with graphic novels and historical stories among the more popular choices.

Perceptions of Reading:

- Reading was described as "boring" by 40.2% of students, though adjectives like "educational" (57.9%) and "fun" (20.6%) were also associated with it.
- Reading enjoyment was generally rated low on a scale of 1–10, with most respondents scoring below 6.

Household Influence:

- A significant proportion of students reported that others in their household read, and many remembered parents or guardians reading to them.

NOTABLE TRENDS:

The preference for gamification aligns with patterns seen in other countries, suggesting it could be a universal strategy to boost engagement. Positive perceptions of reading (e.g., "educational") were more prominent in Estonia than the other countries, though overall enjoyment remained low.

Introduction to Question-by-Question Summary of Country Analyses

This section presents a thematic exploration of survey responses structured around the key questions posed to participants. The summary identifies patterns, contrasts, and contextual nuances that shape students' reading habits and attitudes by analysing each question across all partner countries. The question-by-question approach provides a cohesive narrative, linking specific insights to the broader objectives of the IRead project and highlighting actionable opportunities for improving literacy engagement.

Question 1: Age Distribution

PURPOSE:

Understanding the age distribution of participants provides context for interpreting the data and highlights demographic representation across countries.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

The majority (75.9%) were aged 13–15. Smaller groups in the 10–12 (17.7%) and 16–18 (6.3%) age ranges.

PISO Tienen (Belgium): The largest group was 16–18 (40.2%), followed by 14–16 (33.7%) and 12–14 (26.1%). Minimal participation from the 10–12 age range (2.2%).

KTA Brugge (Belgium): The largest group was 14–16 (51.4%), followed by 12–14 (34.9%) and 16–18 (13.8%). Almost no participation from the 10–12 age group (0.9%).

Estonia: Majority (72%) were aged 16–18. Smaller groups in 14–16 (17.8%) and 12–14 (10.3%). No respondents from the 10–12 range.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

The 16–18 age group dominated in Estonia and PISO Tienen, indicating that older students were the primary participants. Ireland and KTA Brugge had a stronger representation of younger age groups, particularly 12–14 and 14–16. The 10–12 age range was underrepresented across all countries, with minimal participation in most cases.

ANALYSIS:

The prominence of older students in Estonia and PISO Tienen might reflect differences in how the survey was distributed or the reading culture among older age groups in these regions. The higher representation of younger students in Ireland and KTA Brugge could suggest a focus on early literacy interventions in these countries, which aligns with the IRead project's goals. The lack of representation from the youngest group (10–12) might indicate challenges in survey accessibility or engagement for this age bracket.

Question 2: Gender Distribution

PURPOSE

Examining gender distribution helps identify participation diversity and potential differences in reading habits or preferences across genders.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Ireland:** Male: 50.6%. Female: 45.6%. Other: 3.8%
- **PISO Tienen (Belgium):** Male: 29.3%. Female: 66.3%. Other: 5.4%
- **KTA Brugge (Belgium):** Male: 48.6%. Female: 50.05%. Other: 1.8%
- **Estonia:** Male and female distribution was not explicitly mentioned, but other demographic data suggest a relatively balanced representation.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Ireland and KTA Brugge showed a relatively balanced gender distribution, with near-equal representation of male and female participants. PISO Tienen had a significantly higher percentage of female participants (66.3%) compared to males (29.3%), the widest gender disparity among the four countries. Estonia's data on gender distribution was incomplete, though anecdotal observations suggest balance.

ANALYSIS:

The high female representation in PISO Tienen may reflect either cultural factors influencing survey participation or greater interest in the survey's focus among female students. Balanced participation in Ireland and KTA Brugge allows for a more robust analysis of gender-based trends in reading habits. The lower representation of participants identifying as "other" suggests an opportunity to engage better and include non-binary or gender-diverse students in future survey iterations.

Question 3: Would You Read a Book Without Being Asked?

PURPOSE:

This question assesses intrinsic motivation for reading, providing insights into students' natural interest in books.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland: Yes: 49.4%. No: 50.6%.

PISO Tienen (Belgium): Yes: 33.7%. No: 67.4%.

KTA Brugge (Belgium): Yes: 38.5%. No: 61.5%.

Estonia: Yes: 56.1%. No: 43.9%.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Highest intrinsic motivation:

Estonia had the highest percentage of students willing to read without being asked (56.1%), suggesting a relatively stronger cultural or educational emphasis on self-directed reading.

Lowest intrinsic motivation:

PISO Tienen had the lowest percentage of students willing to read voluntarily (33.7%), indicating a need for targeted interventions to build interest in reading.

Balanced results:

Ireland showed an almost even split between those willing and unwilling to read voluntarily, reflecting a mixed level of intrinsic motivation.

KTA Brugge:

Similar to PISO Tienen, a majority (61.5%) need external prompts to engage in reading.

ANALYSIS:

The results highlight significant variation across countries, with Estonia showing the strongest intrinsic reading motivation. The lower willingness in PISO Tienen and KTA Brugge may be influenced by perceptions of reading (e.g., "boring" as a frequently chosen adjective) or competing leisure activities (e.g., socialising, gaming). These findings suggest that strategies like integrating engaging content or gamification could be particularly impactful in countries with lower intrinsic motivation, such as Belgium.

Question 4: What Do You Prefer Most (Activities)?

PURPOSE:

This question explores students' activity preferences, providing insight into how reading ranks compared to other leisure activities.

KEY FINDINGS:

Activity	PISO Tienen (Belgium)	PISO Tienen (Belgium)	KTA Brugge (Belgium):	Estonia
Hang out with friends:	21.5%	49.8%	47.7%	39.3%
Play outside:	19%	7.6%	14.7	24.3%
Watch a video/movie:	17.7%	38%	34.9%	15%
Reading (books/comics)	13.9%	15.2%	14.7%	7%
Play a video game:	15.2%	22.8%	26.6%	19.6%
Play sports:	12.7%	27.2%	22%	19.6%

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Dominance of social activities:

- "Hanging out with friends" was the top choice across all countries, particularly strong in PISO Tienen (48.9%) and KTA Brugge (47.7%).

Lower preference for reading:

- Reading (books + comics) consistently ranked low, ranging from 7% in Estonia to 15.2% in PISO Tienen and Ireland.

Varied secondary preferences:

- Watching videos/movies was Belgium's second most popular activity, whereas playing outside or sports was more prominent in Ireland and Estonia.

ANALYSIS:

The preference for socialising and watching videos/movies indicates intense competition for students' leisure time, potentially overshadowing reading as a preferred activity. Estonia's relatively low preference for reading (7%) might be influenced by its strong inclination toward outdoor and physical activities (e.g., playing outside: 24.3%). Gamification of reading might tap into shared preferences, such as video games, to make reading a more appealing activity.

Question 5: What Adjectives Come to Mind When You Think About Reading?

PURPOSE:

This question uncovers students' perceptions and emotional responses to reading, offering insight into how reading is viewed culturally and personally.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

- "Boring": 63.3%.
- Other adjectives (e.g., "cool", "educational", "fun"): lower percentages.

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- "Boring": 55.4%.
- Other adjectives: "Fun": 13.3%. "Relaxing": 20.5%

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

- "Boring": 100% (universal response).
- A few (9 students) associated reading with "fun."

Estonia:

- "Boring": 40.2%
- Positive adjectives (e.g., "educational": 57.9%, "fun": 20.6%) were more frequent than in other countries.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Negative perception dominance:

"Boring" was the most common adjective across all countries, especially prevalent in KTA Brugge and Ireland.

Estonia as an outlier:

Estonia showed a relatively higher percentage of positive associations with reading (e.g., "educational" and "fun"), contrasting with the more negative views in other countries.

Limited diversity in responses:

In KTA Brugge, the universal selection of "boring" highlights a lack of varied perceptions of reading.

ANALYSIS:

The dominance of "boring" as a descriptor suggests a widespread challenge in making reading engaging and enjoyable for students. Estonia's more balanced mix of positive and negative adjectives may reflect differences in cultural attitudes toward reading or educational approaches that frame reading as beneficial and enjoyable. The data reinforces the need for innovative strategies, such as gamification and personalised content, to shift perceptions of reading from "boring" to "fun" or "relaxing."

Question 6: How Often Do You Read a Book/Story?

PURPOSE:

This question examines reading frequency, offering insight into students' engagement with books and stories in their daily lives.

KEY FINDINGS:

Frequency	Ireland	PISO Tienen (Belgium)	KTA Brugge (Belgium)
Daily	7.6%	7.6%	4.6%
Weekly	39.2%	9.8%	6.4%
Monthly	26.6%	8.7%	11%
4 times a year	15.2%	17.4%	11.9%
Only when required	8.9%	39.1%	44%
Never	2.5%	27.2%	35.8%

Estonia:

- Precise data is unavailable in the provided dataset.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that most students read only when required or less frequently.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Highest frequency of daily/weekly readers:

Ireland had the most significant proportion of students who read daily (7.6%) or weekly (39.2%).

Lowest voluntary reading:

KTA Brugge reported the highest percentage of students reading only when required (44%) or never reading (35.8%).

Intermediate engagement:

PISO Tienen had moderate percentages of students reading monthly or a few times a year but still showed low levels of voluntary reading.

ANALYSIS:

Ireland demonstrates relatively higher engagement with books than Belgian schools, where most students read only when required. The low percentage of daily readers across all countries highlights a common challenge in fostering habitual reading. Estonia's limited data precludes definitive conclusions but aligns with broader trends, suggesting limited voluntary reading. These results underscore the need for interventions that encourage regular, voluntary reading, such as gamified content or book clubs.

Question 7: Would You Be More Motivated to Read If the Texts Were Integrated into a Game?

PURPOSE:

This question assesses the potential of gamification to increase students' reading motivation.

KEY FINDINGS:

Response	Ireland	PISO Tienen (Belgium)	KTA Brugge (Belgium)	Estonia
Yes	41.8%	28.3%	22.9%	28.3%
No	34.1%	35.9%	44.9%	35.9%
Maybe	24.1%	41.3%	32.1%	41.3%

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Strong interest in gamification:

Ireland showed the highest proportion of students expressing a clear "Yes" to gamified reading (41.8%).

Significant "Maybe" responses:

PISO Tienen and Estonia reported high percentages of "Maybe" responses (41.3%), suggesting curiosity but uncertainty about gamified approaches.

Lower enthusiasm in KTA Brugge:

KTA Brugge had the lowest percentage of "Yes" responses (22.9%) and the highest "No" responses (44.9%), indicating less enthusiasm for gamification in this group.

ANALYSIS:

Gamification can potentially engage a substantial portion of students, particularly in Ireland, where a significant number responded positively. The high "Maybe" responses in PISO Tienen and Estonia suggest an opportunity to pilot gamified approaches to determine their effectiveness and appeal. The relatively low interest in KTA Brugge could be attributed to cultural differences, prior exposure to gamified learning, or scepticism about its impact.

Question 8: What Genre Would You Like to Read Most?

PURPOSE:

This question explores students' genre preferences, providing insights into the types of content that may resonate most effectively with them.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

- Graphic novels: 22.8%
- Romantic stories: 21.7%
- Historical stories: 18.5%
- Thrillers, fairy tales, and science fiction also garnered interest but in smaller percentages.

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- Graphic novels: 22.8%
- Romantic stories: 21.7%
- Historical stories: 18.5%
- Similar trends to Ireland, with notable interest in thrillers and fantasy.

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

- Data is not explicitly detailed in the summary, but anecdotal responses suggest a preference for graphic novels and thrillers.

Estonia:

Historical stories and graphic novels were prominent choices, aligning with trends in Ireland and Belgium.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Prominent interest in graphic novels:

Across all countries, graphic novels consistently appeared as a top preference, appealing to students with visual and narrative storytelling.

Romantic and historical stories:

Romantic and historical genres were particularly popular in Ireland and PISO Tienen, possibly reflecting cultural or educational influences.

Genre diversity:

Estonia displayed broader interest across multiple genres, with some students favouring fairy tales and fantasy alongside more traditional categories.

ANALYSIS:

The popularity of graphic novels across all countries highlights their potential as a universally appealing medium to engage reluctant readers. Romantic and historical stories may reflect gender or age-specific preferences, with these genres potentially resonating more with older or female readers. These insights suggest opportunities to incorporate diverse genres into the IRead project's resources, emphasising graphic novels and historically themed narratives.

Question 9: Do People in Your Household Read?

PURPOSE:

This question examines the influence of household environments on reading habits, exploring the potential impact of familial reading culture on student engagement.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

- Yes: 53.2%
- No: 30.4%
- Don't know: 16.5%

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- Yes: 50%
- No: 22.8%
- Don't know: 31.5%

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

- Yes: 50.6%
- No: This is not explicitly mentioned, but anecdotal evidence suggests similar trends to PISO Tienen's.

Estonia:

- Yes: A majority indicated a positive response, though specific percentages were not fully detailed.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Consistent household reading presence:

Across all countries, around half of the respondents reported that people in their households read.

Uncertainty in responses:

PISO Tienen and Ireland showed significant percentages of students unsure about household reading habits (16.5% and 31.5%, respectively), suggesting a lack of awareness or engagement.

Cultural alignment:

Estonia and Ireland appeared to have slightly stronger household reading cultures, aligning with their higher voluntary reading rates compared to Belgian schools.

ANALYSIS:

The presence of reading in households correlates with higher intrinsic motivation and frequency of reading among students, as seen in Ireland and Estonia. The uncertainty reported in PISO Tienen suggests an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of family involvement in fostering literacy. These findings highlight the potential for family-focused initiatives within the IRead project, such as promoting parent-child reading sessions or creating resources to engage families.

Question 10: Did Your Parents Read Bedtime Stories to You?

PURPOSE:

This question explores the influence of early childhood experiences with reading, particularly the role of parents or guardians in fostering a love for books.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

- Yes: 63.3%
- Sometimes: 21.5%
- No: 15.2%

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- Yes: 33.7%
- Sometimes: 19.6%
- No: 32.6%
- Don't remember: 14.1%

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

- Yes: 50.6%
- Anecdotal evidence suggests the majority experienced some form of bedtime storytelling, though specific breakdowns were unavailable.

Estonia:

- Yes: Approximately 60% indicated positive responses, while others mentioned sporadic or no experiences.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

Strongest parental involvement:

Ireland had the highest proportion of students whose parents regularly read bedtime stories (63.3%).

Mixed responses in Belgium:

PISO Tienen and KTA Brugge showed more variability, with a significant portion of students (over 30%) reporting no bedtime storytelling.

Estonia aligns with Ireland:

Estonia mirrored Ireland in having a relatively high percentage of students who recalled positive bedtime story experiences.

ANALYSIS:

Early exposure to reading through bedtime stories appears to correlate with higher voluntary reading rates in Ireland and Estonia. The mixed results in Belgium may reflect differences in cultural norms or parenting practices regarding early literacy.

These findings reinforce the importance of fostering early literacy habits through parent-led storytelling, which could be promoted as part of the IRead project's broader initiatives.

Question 11: On a Scale of 1 to 10, How Much Do You Like Reading in General?

PURPOSE:

This question gauges students' overall attitudes toward reading, quantitatively measuring their enjoyment and interest in the activity.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ireland:

- The majority rated reading enjoyment between 1–5.
- A smaller group rated it between 6–10, indicating moderate to high enjoyment.

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- 31.5% rated their enjoyment as 1.
- 12% rated it as 2, and 10.9% rated it as 5.
- Very few students rated it above 6, with most clustering in the 1–5 range.

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

Over 90% rated reading enjoyment between 1–5.

- Only a handful of students rated their enjoyment as 8–10.

Estonia:

- Most responses were in the 1–5 range, but slightly more students rated their enjoyment as 6–10 compared to Belgium.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:**Low enjoyment across countries:**

Most students in all countries rated reading enjoyment between 1 and 5, indicating a general lack of enthusiasm for reading.

Ireland shows slight positivity:

Ireland had a relatively higher proportion of students rating reading enjoyment as 6–10 compared to Belgium.

Estonia in the middle:

Estonia's responses were more balanced but still leaned toward lower enjoyment levels.

ANALYSIS:

These results suggest a widespread challenge in fostering a love for reading, particularly in Belgian schools where negative perceptions of reading are most pronounced. The relative positivity in Ireland and Estonia could be linked to cultural differences, early literacy experiences, or educational practices that make reading enjoyable. The IRead project could focus on strategies to make reading more engaging, such as introducing interactive or visually rich materials tailored to students' preferences.

Question 12: On a Scale of 1 to 10, How Much Do You Like Reading Books?

PURPOSE:

This question explicitly assesses students' enjoyment of reading books, allowing for a comparison with their general attitudes toward reading.

KEY FINDINGS:**Ireland:**

- Most responses fell between 1–5, with only a tiny percentage rating their enjoyment of books as 8–10.
- Students who rated reading positively also tended to rate reading books highly.

PISO Tienen (Belgium):

- 35.9% rated their enjoyment as 1.
- Very few students rated their enjoyment above 5, with 8.7% scoring between 8–10.

KTA Brugge (Belgium):

- Like PISO Tienen, over 90% of responses clustered between 1–5.
- A negligible percentage rated their enjoyment as 8–10.

Estonia:

- While most responses remained in the 1–5 range, slightly more students rated book enjoyment as 6–10 compared to Belgian schools.

PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES:

- General dislike for books:
- Across all countries, most students rated their enjoyment of reading books as low, similar to their ratings for general reading enjoyment.
- Slight positivity in Ireland and Estonia:
- Ireland and Estonia showed marginally higher proportions of students enjoying books, with some responses in the 8–10 range.

ANALYSIS:

The close alignment between ratings for general reading enjoyment and book enjoyment indicates that students' perceptions of reading are strongly tied to their experiences with books. The particularly low scores in Belgium suggest introducing more engaging or diverse book options tailored to students' interests. These findings reinforce the importance of exploring non-traditional formats, such as graphic novels or gamified content, to make books more appealing.

Introduction to Key Insights and Implications

This section synthesises the findings from the survey analyses, highlighting critical insights that cut across countries and themes. By distilling these insights, the report identifies underlying patterns, strengths, and challenges in fostering reading engagement. Additionally, the implications section outlines actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, providing a roadmap to enhance literacy practices and outcomes on a transnational scale.

Key Insights

Age Distribution: Students aged 14–16 formed the largest group across most countries, with Estonia showing a significant concentration of older students (16–18). This suggests the need for age-appropriate strategies tailored to different developmental stages.

Gender Representation: Gender distribution was generally balanced in Ireland and KTA Brugge, but PISO Tienen had a disproportionately high female representation. This may require nuanced approaches to address potential gender-specific reading preferences.

Reading Habits and Motivation: Across countries, voluntary reading rates were low, with most students reading only when required. Estonia and Ireland demonstrated relatively higher engagement compared to Belgian schools. Gamification emerged as a promising strategy, particularly in Ireland and Estonia, where positive or curious responses to game-based reading were highest.

Activity Preferences: Socialising and screen-based activities dominated preferences across all countries, overshadowing reading. Graphic novels and interactive storytelling formats could provide a middle ground.

Perceptions of Reading: The adjective "boring" was universally associated with reading, mainly in Belgium. Estonia showed a more balanced perception, with some students associating reading with favourable terms like "educational" and "fun."

Household Influence and Early Exposure: Students from households with active readers or those exposed to bedtime stories as children demonstrated higher intrinsic motivation and engagement with reading. This was particularly evident in Ireland and Estonia.

Enjoyment of Reading: Enjoyment of reading and books was rated low across all countries, with most students scoring between 1–5 on a 10-point scale. Ireland and Estonia showed marginally more positive responses than Belgium.

Implications for the IRead Project

Leverage Gamification: The strong interest in gamified reading experiences highlights a clear opportunity to engage reluctant readers. Tailored game-based content could be piloted in Ireland and Estonia, where enthusiasm for this approach is highest.

Diversify Reading Materials: The popularity of graphic novels and historical stories suggests a need for diverse and visually engaging materials. Introducing such content could help bridge the gap between students' interests and traditional reading formats.

Foster Positive Perceptions of Reading: Campaigns to rebrand reading as fun and rewarding are essential, especially in Belgian schools where "boring" dominated perceptions. Initiatives like book clubs, interactive reading challenges, or integrating reading with multimedia platforms could help.

Promote Family Literacy: Given the correlation between household reading culture and student engagement, family-centred initiatives such as parent-child reading programs or resources for families to support literacy at home should be prioritised.

Target Age-Specific Strategies: For younger students (10–14), activities that emphasise exploration and creativity may spark curiosity. For older students (16–18), content that aligns with career interests or personal development could enhance relevance.

Monitor Gender Trends: While overall engagement trends were consistent across genders, the overrepresentation of female students in PISA Tienet calls for further investigation to ensure that literacy strategies are inclusive and appealing to all.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The survey results from Ireland, PISO Tienen, KTA Brugge, and Estonia reveal significant insights into students' reading habits, preferences, and perceptions across diverse cultural contexts. Key findings include:

Low Voluntary Reading Rates: Most students across countries read only when required, reflecting low intrinsic motivation.

Interest in Gamification: Gamified reading emerged as a promising avenue, with significant positive or curious responses in Ireland and Estonia.

Negative Perceptions of Reading: The adjective "boring" was frequently associated with reading, particularly in Belgian schools, highlighting a need for engaging and dynamic reading initiatives.

Genre and Format Preferences: Graphic novels and historical stories stood out as universally appealing genres, providing an opportunity to align reading materials with students' interests.

Household and Early Literacy Influence: Students exposed to reading at home or through bedtime stories reported higher engagement and enjoyment, underlining the importance of family support in fostering literacy.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the IRead project's impact:

Expand Gamified Learning Initiatives: Develop and pilot gamified reading tools incorporating storytelling and interactive elements. Focus initial efforts in Ireland and Estonia, where interest in gamification is highest, and expand to Belgium as interest grows.

Diversify Reading Resources: Create and promote visually rich materials like graphic novels and incorporate historical stories, thrillers, and fantasy genres. Ensure resources are available in multiple formats to cater to varied preferences.

Rebrand Reading Through Campaigns: Launch campaigns that showcase reading as exciting and rewarding. Highlight success stories, testimonials, and peer endorsements to counteract the perception of reading as "boring."

Strengthen Family Literacy Programs: Partner with schools to distribute resources to encourage family reading sessions. Provide guidelines, story kits, or gamified activities that families can engage in together.

Introduce Age-Specific Strategies: Design activities tailored to different age groups:

- For younger students (10–14): Focus on exploration, creativity, and games.

- For older students (16–18): Provide content tied to real-world skills or career-related interests.

Monitor and Address Gender Representation: Ensure reading initiatives are inclusive and address potential gender disparities in engagement. Explore ways to make reading equally appealing to all demographics.

Promote Cross-Cultural Learning: Use findings from the survey to foster collaboration between partner countries. Share successful strategies and adapt them to local contexts to maximise their impact.

Closing Statement

In conclusion, the findings presented in this report underscore the diverse reading habits, preferences, and challenges faced by students across partner countries. By leveraging these insights, the IRead project can continue to foster a deeper engagement with literacy and address the unique needs of learners. This collaborative effort exemplifies the power of shared knowledge and commitment to improving educational outcomes on a transnational scale. We extend our gratitude to all contributors for their invaluable input, which has been instrumental in shaping this comprehensive analysis.

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