

Press Release

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Government, business & NGOs urged to invest in social progress to ‘unleash economic success’

- *Inclusive growth must be focused on delivering economic + social progress*
- *World earns “a failing grade” on progress say experts*
- *Norway ranks top in this year’s Index, Canada is top of G7; Brazil is the top BRIC nation*

9 April 2015, Moscow - The most effective way to improve people’s quality of life across the world, in both rich and poor countries, is to invest in social progress. This is according to the [Social Progress Index](#) 2015 published today by US-based nonprofit, the Social Progress Imperative, and released at the [2015 Skoll World Forum](#) on Social Entrepreneurship. The Index, ranked 133 countries based on their social and environmental performance and, including countries for which partial data was found, measured the social progress of 99% of the world’s population - using 52 separate indicators to arrive at a ranking for the issues that matter most to people.

The Index found that the world performs strongest in the areas of ‘nutrition’ and ‘basic medical care’ but weakest in ‘access to advanced education’ and ‘ecosystem sustainability’. The findings also show that many aspects of social progress improve with income. Wealthier countries, such as Norway - which achieves the top ranking this year - generally deliver better social outcomes than lower income countries. But researchers say that GDP is far from being the sole determinant of social progress.

Costa Rica (28th ranking) with a GDP per capita of \$13,431 achieves a much higher level of social progress than both Italy and South Korea, which have more than twice Costa Rica’s GDP per capita (\$34,167 and \$32,708 respectively). On the other hand the US, with a GDP per capita of \$51,340, scores relatively poorly across many of the components measured by the Index, including on ‘health and wellness’, finishing behind countries with a lower GDP per capita including Canada (6th) and the UK (11th).

Global Highlights From The 2015 Index:

- This year’s Index finds that the **world shows a markedly strong performance on two** components of the Social Progress Index in particular: **‘nutrition and basic medical care’** which covers measures such as hunger, child mortality, and primary school enrollment and **‘access to basic knowledge’**. It is notable that these components encompass many of the priorities of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals that have been a major focus of aid and development efforts for the past 15 years.
- The components of the Social Progress Index where **the world fares worst are ‘tolerance and inclusion’, ‘personal rights’, ‘access to advanced education’, and**

‘ecosystem sustainability’. These are issues where even the more advanced countries can struggle to score highly. ‘Tolerance and inclusion’ and ‘personal rights’ are also less correlated with GDP per capita and ‘ecosystem sustainability’ scores tend not to rise with GDP per capita.

- **The Social Progress Index shows a broad positive correlation between economic performance**, (measured in GDP per capita) **and social progress**. Countries with higher incomes tend to enjoy greater social progress: Norway (\$62,448 *GDP per capita) ranks highest in the Index while the Central African Republic (\$584* GDP per capita) ranks lowest.

2015 Country Ranking Highlights:

- Norway is this year’s top performing country, followed by Sweden (2nd), Switzerland (3rd), Iceland (4th) and New Zealand (5th). Though these countries’ social progress scores are very similar, their GDP per capita vary widely (Norway \$62,448; New Zealand \$32,808), showing that higher GDP can help generate higher social progress but it is not the whole story.
- Canada (6th) is the best performing G7 country, scoring significantly higher than the U.S. (16th). This is despite the fact that U.S. GDP per capita (\$51,340) is significantly higher than Canada’s (\$41,894). Canada is the only G7 country to show ‘Very High Social Progress’.
- Brazil is the top of the BRICS, followed by South Africa, Russia, China and India. Russia has a much higher GDP per capita than Brazil (42nd) and South Africa (63rd) yet ranks lower on the Social Progress Index in 71st.
- It is possible to calculate a global social progress score, as an average of country scores weighted by population. On this measure the world as a whole scores 61/100 on the Social Progress Index, equivalent to Cuba and Kazakhstan.
- The most significant underperformers relative to GDP are the Gulf States: UAE (39th, \$57,045), Kuwait (47th, \$84,188) and Saudi Arabia (69th, \$52,068).
- In general, the EU+EFTA group of countries perform well, even relative to their high GDPs per capita, with the Nordic countries and other northern European countries performing better than Southern Europe. The strong performance in absolute terms and relative to GDP of the first wave of Eastern European countries that were once part of the Communist Bloc suggests that EU Membership has been strongly beneficial to social progress. Newer member states, such as Bulgaria and Romania, lag behind currently.

The Social Progress Network:

The Social Progress Index revolutionizes the solving of social problems by enabling leaders to systematically identify and prioritize issues. The Social Progress Imperative’s network empowers leaders to convene all the right local actors, global partners, and experts to develop and deploy meaningful solutions. This is already starting to happen through the Social Progress Network and in this year’s report a number of new partnerships and initiatives have been announced:

- The European Commission (DG Regio) is launching a project to create a Social Progress Index for the regions (NUTS-II) of the European Union. A beta version of this Index will launch in October.
- Major cities across Latin America, including Rio de Janeiro and Bogota, are working to create Social Progress Indices to guide urban renewal strategies.
- The State of Michigan is using the Social Progress Index to guide its Urban Development Agenda for cities such as Detroit.

- Coca-Cola and Natura, working in partnership with Ipsos, are releasing a community-level Social Progress Index that will guide their social investments in Brazil.
- What's more, Paraguay recently became the first country in the world to officially adopt the Social Progress Index as a metric of national performance, using Index data to evaluate the social needs of its citizens to inform and monitor investments and spending decisions.

About the Social Progress Index:

The Social Progress Index 2015 is designed as a complement to GDP and other economic indicators to provide a more holistic understanding of countries' overall performance. It is the world's most comprehensive framework developed for measuring social progress, and the first to measure social progress independently of GDP. It provides detailed insight into whether citizens have access to a wide range of progress measures including basic services, opportunities, healthcare, education, housing, decent policing, rights and freedom from discrimination.

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Notes to editors:

2015 Results

The full, interactive dataset from the Index will be available from 02.00am BST, 9th April at: <http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data/spi> Please note that due to a variety of changes made to this year's index including the number of countries covered, the 2014 Social Progress Index is not comparable to the 2015 Social Progress Index.

About the Social Progress Imperative

The Social Progress Imperative's mission is to improve the lives of people around the world, particularly the least well off, by advancing global social progress by: providing a robust, holistic and innovative measurement tool—the Social Progress Index (SPI); fostering research and knowledge-sharing on social progress; and equipping leaders and change-makers in business, government and civil society with new tools to guide policies and programs.

Financial Support

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What is social progress?

Social progress is defined as the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens to improve their lives, and create the conditions for individuals and communities to meet their full potential.

***GDP per capita definition**

The Social Progress Index uses the World Bank definition: "GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP). PPP GDP is gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. An international dollar has the same purchasing power over GDP as the U.S. dollar has in the US. GDP at purchaser's prices is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included

in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. Data are in constant 2011 international dollars.”

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