Ref.: **2020-01-D-27-en-2**

Orig.:EN

**Interim Report on school failures and repeat rates in the European Schools**

For the information of the Board of Governors – Meeting of 15, 16 and 17 April 2020

# I Introduction

### The mandates given by the JTC to the Working Group (WG)

The original mandate was given by the Joint Teaching Committee on its meeting of on February 12 and 13, 2015 to analyse repeat rates and failures in detail and to provide the boards with recommendations in order to combat failures and repeat cases[[1]](#footnote-2).

In addition, the ‘Analysis of Repeat Rates’ Working Group was mandated by the 8 and 9 October 2015 Joint Teaching Committee to address additional tasks, to relieve the Secondary Assessment WG, which at that time focused on the reform of the assessment system in the secondary cycle, of some or its original tasks,:

1. to address the issue of inconsistencies identified in the document "**Harmonised Assessment and B tests at the end of the 5th year of secondary education**" initially given to the Secondary Assessment Working Group, on the issue of exam terminology and questions related to Examinations and tests leading to official marks in the secondary cycle. With regard to the Harmonized Evaluation, it was requested to identify any inconsistencies in that document and to inform the responsible Inspectors accordingly.
2. with regard to the question of the **inconsistency in the terminology of assessment** throughout in the regulations (in particular the General Rules), to carry out clarification in this field. It was noted that several different terms were used to denote the same concept: e.g. compositions / tests / examinations. There was a need to harmonize the use of this terminology.
3. to propose a clear **definition of the B marks** in order to harmonise different practices experienced in schools.
4. to **harmonise the number of S4 tests** (to have one S4 test/semester in the subjects where currently there are two tests)

As a result of a thorough discussion of the mandates, it was stated that the amendment of the General Rules and the harmonisation and clarification of the terminology (Mandates B, C and D) **did not come within the original scope of this WG’s mandate**, therefore the Secondary Assessment WG was requested to take on the tasks A-D.

### Summary of the activities of the WG

**Phase One: January 2016 – September 2018**

In the first meeting[[2]](#footnote-3), the WG made distinction between **failures** and **repeating,** and decided to pay attention to those pupils who **left the system** after failure/repeating. The usefulness of the practice of repeating would also be investigated. It was agreed that a **comparative study of the policies in the member states** would be desirable.

A proposal was raised to carry out an exercise in one of the European Schools in order to gain insight into the background of failures. An in-depth analysis would focus on historical data that tracks student progress across the different levels (eg S1 to S7). The idea was to develop a tool that identifies potential problems. The analysis would make it possible to build performance indicators to compare: in which year, in which language section and for which subject was the risk abnormally high?

The data analysis would go even further: it would be possible to perform a statistical study of the data by analysing the possible correlations between the results and all kinds of other factors (for example gender, year of arrival of the student in the system etc.).

As regards the harmonisation of the number of S4 tests in order to have one S4 test in each semester in the subjects where currently there are two tests (Mandate D), there was no consensus achieved on the number of S4 examinations.

**Phase Two (September 2018 – December 2019)**

The WG resumed its activities in September 2018 and to date has met four times in the school year 2018-2019[[3]](#footnote-4), and two times in 2019-2020[[4]](#footnote-5)

The WG invited the members of the ICT Unit to better understand what the possibilities and limitations were (using the SMS system). In the light of these initial clarifications, the group started to put together a set of questions that could provide the members / stakeholders with meaningful input and a solid basis for conclusions and recommendations in the final report.

Another important exercise that the WG took on was the initial analysis of the **implementation of the** **New Marking System** in its first year (2018-2019). The WG produced a sampling-like analysis of the first semester B and C marks in the year Secondary 5. This exercise served as a model and exerted influence on the official analysis and presentation of the S5 final marks, which was presented to the BIS and the JTC in October 2019.

It was then decided that the attention of the WG would focus on the **basic questions**, which serve as the basis for the current final report.

### Methodology: possibilities and limitations

The intention of the Working Group was to make observations on the available data and make recommendations for the different boards of the European Schools.

The WG agreed that the “traditional” *Report on school failures and repeat rates*, presented to the pedagogical boards in October each year, had not been complete, as the potential functionalities of a report had not been fully used. Nevertheless, the WG decided to amend the traditional report with a more detailed final report, to make it possible to offer the Boards an instant evaluation of the basic findings of the previous school year and of the tendencies that have been evolving in the last decade.

We should note that the annual report should also provide the stakeholders with the background for the possible **analyses that can be/should be carried out in the schools**.

An important distinction is made between data on the system level, and the data that are valid for the schools, where the possible differences and reasons are more directly detectable. A basic principle is that the one must focus on statistically relevant, large enough datasets, i.e. it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the statistical approach.

Some remarks on the statistical approach:

The use of data in education has a long history, dating back to the mid-19th century. It has become more widespread in recent years, partially due to the accountability demands of policy-makers and transparency expectations from the general public, and also due to the improved availability of data through the use of digital systems. Data by themselves are neutral; it is the interaction between data and decision-makers that can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. The term *data-based decision-making* in education is defined as making decisions about students, teaching, school and at system level based on a broad range of evidence, such as scores on students’ assessments and lesson observations.

Sometimes the related term *data-informed decision-making* is used in a similar way. These terms differ from the concept of *data-driven decision-making*, which is applicable in fields where data gives the complete picture and where all data needed to make a decision are available.

In education, many decisions are made based on professional experience rather than data, sometimes for good reasons, whereas at other times due to lack of time or interest in data. For a systematic use of data, the following aspects should be considered.

* 1. Purpose – Questions that data will answer.
	2. Data colleaction – Data relevant to the purpose collected.
	3. Analysis – How data are analysed to answer the questions.
	4. Interpretation – Understanding what the data means and the implications for action.
	5. Action – Analysed and interpreted data used for decision-making.

The successful use of data in an educational context requires some level of data-literacy, including both technical and statistical competences and understanding of possible uses of data. Misuse of data in the decision-making process can lead to undesirable practices such as ”teaching for the test” rather than conceptual understanding or focusing on monitoring rather than improvement.[[5]](#footnote-6)

To compare data different type of statistical measures are used.

The *mean* is a measure to indicate the centre of the data. There are also other measures (median, mode) that give an indication of the centre of the data. Either the notation $\overbar{x}$ or $μ$ is used to denote the mean.

Knowing the centre of some data is interesting, but without knowing anything about the dispersion of the data it is difficult to analyse it. The *standard deviation* ($σ$ or $s$) is calculated by taking the square root of the average quadratic distance to the mean. If the standard deviation is small, it means that a big part of the data is centred around the mean, but when the standard deviation is large it means that the data is dispersed.

The mean and standard deviation also appear when data is normally distributed. In that case 68% data is one standard deviation away from the mean (both ways).

The *correlation coefficient* indicates whether there exists a linear relationship between the two things that are being investigated (variables). The correlation coefficient will have a value from -1 up to and including 1. If the correlation is either -1 or 1, then there exists a perfect linear relationship between the two variables and all the data is exactly on a line in the graph. If the coefficient attains a value of zero, there is no linear relation between the two variables and the data are completely scattered over the diagram.

A positive correlation coefficient indicates that the relation is “going up”. If one variable will increase, so will the other. If the coefficient has a negative value it means that if the value of one variable will increase, the value of the other must decrease.

To identify anything in between a perfect linear relationship and no relationship whatsoever there are some rules of thumb about the values.

If the value of the coefficient is between -1 and -0.8, or in between 0.8 and 1 the correlation is called strong. If the value is in between -0.8 and -0.5 or in between 0.5 and 0.8, then the correlation is called moderate to strong[[6]](#footnote-7). Though other sources[[7]](#footnote-8) state that a coefficient of plus or minus 0.7 could still be considered strong.

Even though the correlation between two variables is high it does not mean that there is *causation*. For example, there will be a lot of umbrellas when it is raining, but the umbrellas do not cause the rain. Or there might be a strong correlation between the number of storks and the birth rate in a certain area, it does not mean that one causes the other.

#

# II Overview

### 2010-2019

The following table gives an overview of the number of repeaters and their percentage in relation to the total student population and the number of those pupils who left the system after the Class Council’s decision to repeat the year.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 |
| **Total Number of pupils** | 19 615 | 20 439 | 20 548 | 23 836 | 24 635 | 25 385 | 25 981 | 26 706 | 26 971 | 27 263 |
| **% of pupils who repeat** | 2.7% | 2.27 | 2.2% | 1.2% | 1.7% | 1.6% | 1.4% | 1.1% | 1.0% | 0.6% |
| **Number** | 529 | 463 | 454 | 282 | 423 | 413 | 354 | 293 | 274 | 153 |
| **Fail and leave Number** | 142 | 132 | 116 | 86 | 106 | 42 | 87 | 93 | 65 | 46 |

A tendency of decrease has been stretching over the years (from 2.7% in 2010 to 0.6% in 2019), with a stagnation between 2013 and 2018, followed by a drop to 0.6% in 2019. The possible reasons for this falling trend are the pedagogical and administrative measures taken during this period, as discussed later in this document.

The obvious drop of failure figures in 2013 can be most probably explained by the decision of the Board of Governors[[8]](#footnote-9), which could have an immediate effect on the repeat rates. The decision was made with an immediate effect, therefore applied already at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year. The drop is visible in the percentages (from 2.2% in 2012 to 1.2% in 2013), as the total pupil population raised by more than 3000 from 2012.

It is to be noted that 2018-2019 is the first school year of the implementation of the New Marking System, which is likely to have an influence on the results, but for statistical constraints, at this stage, it is premature to justify the situation regarding this major pedagogical change. More cohorts need to be observed to make valid conclusions.

### Observations and recommendations of the 2009 analysis

In its meeting of 2-4 December 2009, the Board of Governors approved the report (2009-D-199-en-2) on the *Analysis of repeat rates and unsatisfactory marks in 2009.* This document gave an overview of the data broken down into individual schools, language sections, primary and secondary schools, and the data for SWALS. The main findings of the 2009 report can be summarized as follows:

* It was agreed that **grade retention was a rare phenomenon** in 2009.
* The European Schools aim to promote the **integration and reintegration of pupils** of all levels from EU member states in a way that the **transition** in both directions is as smooth as possible.
* The ES was a **synthesis of EU educational systems,** wheretwo approaches prevailed: some Member States give priority for children to remain with their class of their age group, which means repeating a year is exceptional, and needs parents’ consent. Others prefer homogenous classes, where every pupil has a chance to achieve the objectives even if he/she was in the year behind. Some systems grant several school-leaving options (certificates) for pupils who would be more confident in a less academic educational institution. In order to make a synthesis of these approaches, **the ES offers the possibility to repeat the year to promote access to the European Baccalaureate by allowing pupils to continue in the system and completing an academic educational pathway.**
* The **psychological**, **budgetary** **and pragmatic** (e.g. the difficulty of placing pupils in the lower classes) impactsof repeating were also mentioned in the 2009 document.
* Already in 2009, the repeat decision was based on the **deliberation of the Class Council**, and several rules were introduced to safeguard and ensure that the case of each child would be scrutinised before any decision.
* Attention was given to years **S4 and S5**, when integrated subjects split into different disciplines (Integrated Science into Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Human Science into Geography and History), and where already in 2009, the number of unsuccessful grades was significantly high in a wide range of subjects.
* The difficulties of cost calculation were discussed in the previous report, e.g. the cost of repeating vs the cost of educational support for prevention; and the effect of unplanned congestion in the already crowded schools.
* The document proposed that *“In the light of this international comparison, consideration should also be given in the discussion on pedagogical measures to be taken to the question of whether* ***in nursery and primary school even more attention should not be paid to the introduction of testing of academic maturity*** *and to the consolidation of basic academic competences in order to defuse the problems of transition from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary school and to reduce the number of pupils having to repeat years in secondary school.”*
* The authors found that the Secondary school in the ES system showed some of the **differences between language sections**, but **to a lesser extent than between the Member States**.
* The report stated that the **Mathematics 6-period pathway** remained an academically prestigious option, which was appealing for pupils, even at the higher risk of failure.
* There were major **differences in assessment determined by the nationality** of the section. The study referred to L2, L3 and L4, and the subjects taught in L2. Notable differences were spotted regarding L2 of the pupils in the DE, EN and FR sections. In some cases, the requirement of L1 + 2 languages was at risk, according to the analysis.
* It was found that the fewer years pupils had spent in the ES, the more challenging it became to cope with the difficulties.

The report suggested several **remedial measures**, such as

* Introducing an **alternative school-leaving certificate** for under-performers;
* *Recommending that “transition to the local vocational education and training system should be facilitated by means of the* ***introduction of the language of the host country****”;*
* Introduction of **centralised examinations** in L1, L2 and mathematics **at the end of year 5** in order to ensure a common standard of attainment before entry into year 6;
* Introduction of a modular system for certain subjects in years 4 and 5 (SCI subjects)
* Smoothening the transition from S3 to S4 in line with an **assessment reform**
* Foreseeing more Learning **Support** (using the then widely used terminology for Educational Support)
* **Revision of the science syllabuses**, making it possible to warn pupils in due course of time that they are facing a possible failure.
* Resitting the subject tests (a practice in some Member States) was dismissed as an option;
* In general, improved harmonisation was proposed;
* It was recommended to improve general and individual information about the education system and its special features, its support possibilities, its specific ‘European’ demands and requirements and the option possibilities, in order to generate understanding of and motivation for an educational project amongst pupils and parents;
* Educational Support should also focus on transition from (sub-) cycle to (sub-)cycle.
* As a preventive administrative step, **pupils should be informed about the risk** of having to repeat the year in due course of time.

Since 2009, **there has been a significant progress** in the areas above, especially the ones highlighted **in bold**.

Here, we can say that the European Schools as a system has successfully tackled the challenges defined by the 2009 document by adopting a series of administrative and pedagogical measures, which resulted in the present situation. Grade retention/repetition as a phenomenon has further diminished, and by 2019 it seems to have reached as low as 0.6%.

The following section gives an overview of the concrete steps taken during the last decade.

### Actions during the period between 2010 and 2019

As stated before, several of the **recommendations have been realised in the past ten years**, which could have contributed to the decrease of the number of failures. Below is a non-exhaustive list of actions that have been completed or started in the context of the pedagogical reform of the system:

* All S5 B2 examinations have been harmonised (and steps have been taken to harmonise the S6 examinations);
* New mathematics and science syllabuses have been developed and are about to be gradually implemented, with attention to the transition between the cycles, and to the competence-based approach;
* A new, competence-based assessment system has been implemented since September 2018;
* The Educational Support Policy has been developed and put in the focus of attention;
* Administrative steps have been made to take pupils’ best interest into account during the meeting of the Class Council[[9]](#footnote-10).
* The question of an alternative school leaving certificate have been raised, though no in-depth discussion for a possible decision have been made yet.

# III. Observations on the data of the 2018-2019 academic year[[10]](#footnote-11)

The report was presented to the Joint Board of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee on their meetings of 9, 10 and 11 October 2019.

The document comprised the following data set in the same way as the reports in the previous years, i.e. publishing some data, but not making conclusions or remarks.

* I. School by school data on pupils repeating a year in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 andthe number of pupils who were supposed to repeat the year in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 but who left the school.
* II. School by school data on pupils repeating the year in 2019 andthe number of pupils who were supposed to repeat the year in 2019 but who left the school.
* III. School by school data for the 2018-2019 school year by year group, from primary class 1 to secondary year 7.
* IV. School by school data for the 2018-2019 school year by section.
* V. Data on the number and percentage of fail marks in relation to the total marks awarded at the end of the 2018-2019 school year by section – by subject, in S4, S5 and in S6.

**Main observations for 2018-2019**

1. **Reduction in the total number and percentage of repeaters**
2. **Most repeating happens in S4, S5, S6, but there is a visible drop in the repeat rates in these years**
3. **Drop in the fail rates of the subjects where a high fail rate was traditionally experienced**

Some remarks on the observations above:

### Reduction in the total number and percentage of repeaters

|  |
| --- |
| The years S4, S5 and S6 are traditionally exposed to a high failure rate in certain subjects, therefore, for the sake of comparison, the following table focuses on these years. The table shows the fail rate of the three consecutive years 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2018-2019** |  | TOTAL |
| (2017-2018) (2016-2017) |  | All | Fail. | % Fail. | Fail. & leav. | % leav./ fail. |
| **P** | **P1** | 1784 | 15 | 0,84% | 4 | 26,67% |
|  | **P2** | 1927 | 12 | 0,62% | 1 | 8,33% |
|  | **P3** | 2112 | 4 | 0,19% |   |   |
|  | **P4** | 2128 | 13 | 0,61% | 1 | 7,69% |
|  | **P5** | 2097 | 10 | 0,48% | 3 | 30,00% |
| **P** | **Total** | 10048 | 54 | 0,54% | 9 | 16,67% |
|  |  |   |   |   |   |   |
| **S** | **S1** | 2273 | 4 | 0,18% | 3 | 75,00% |
|  | **S2** | 2225 | 7 | 0,31% | 2 | 28,57% |
|  | **S3** | 2160 | 8 | 0,37% | 3 | 37,50% |
|  | **S4** | 2034 | 16 | 0,79%  | 8 | 50,00% |
|  | **S5** | 1928 | 24 | 1,24% | 10 | 41,67% |
|  | **S6** | 1879 | 18 | 0,96%  | 9 | 50,00% |
|  | **S7** | 1815 | 22 | 1,21% | 2 | 9,09% |
| **S** | **Total** | 14314 | 99 | 0,69% | 37 | 37,37% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **TOTAL** | **24362** | **153** | **0,63%** | **46** | **30,07%** |

The following table gives an overview of the percentage of repeaters in the last ten years (for the more complete table see the earlier section “II. Overview 2010-2019”)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2009** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
| Percentage of pupils who repeat | 2.7% | 1.2% | 1.4% | 1,6% | 1,4% | 1,1% | 1,0% | 0,6% |
| NumberFail and leave  | 529142 | 28286 | 423106 | 41342 | 35487 | 293 93  | 27465 | 15346 |

### Repeating in S4, S5 and S6

 The years S4, S5 and S6 are traditionally exposed to a high failure rate in certain subjects, therefore, for the sake of comparison, the following table focuses on these years. The table shows the fail rate of the three consecutive years.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016-2017** | **2017-2018** | **2018-2019** |
| **S4** | 3,2%65 repeat out of 2001 | 3,0%58 repeatout of 1965 | 0,79% 16 repeat out of 2034 |
| **S5** | 2,8%54 repeat out of 1940 | 1,9%35 repeatout of 1853 | 1,24% 24 repeat out of 1928 |
| **S6** | 0,8%15 repeatout of 1856 | 1,2%23 repeatout of 1861 | 0,96% 18 repeat out of 1879 |

Even though the number of pupils is statistically low in every year, the WG considered the drop between 2018 and 2019 remarkable, especially in the light of the following data.

### Drop in the fail rates of the subjects where a high fail rate was traditionally experienced

The following table presents the averages of all subjects, number and percentages of unsuccessful marks in 2018-2019:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **TOTAL** |
| **S4** | **Avg** | **All** | **Fail** | **%** |
| **ART** | 7,8 | 652 | 2 | 0,3% |
| **BIO** | 7,1 | 2065 | 57 | 2,8% |
| **CHI** | 7,0 | 2066 | 93 | 4,5% |
| **ECO** | 7,6 | 878 | 12 | 1,4% |
| **EP (gr.)** | 7,7 | 2063 | 6 | 0,3% |
| **GEO** | 7,2 | 2060 | 30 | 1,5% |
| **GRE** | 8,5 | 13 |   |   |
| **GRO** | 8,5 | 27 |   |   |
| **HIS** | 6,9 | 2060 | 70 | 3,4% |
| **ICT** | 7,5 | 693 | 10 | 1,4% |
| **L1-** | 7,4 | 2060 | 30 | 1,5% |
| **L2-** | 7,3 | 2059 | 45 | 2,2% |
| **L3-** | 7,0 | 2060 | 93 | 4,5% |
| **L4-** | 7,4 | 829 | 21 | 2,5% |
| **LAT** | 8,1 | 216 |   |   |
| **MA4** | 6,6 | 590 | 49 | 8,3% |
| **MA6** | 7,1 | 1479 | 59 | 4,0% |
| **MUS** | 8,1 | 159 | 1 | 0,6% |
| **ONL** | 8,3 | 13 |   |   |
| **PHY** | 6,7 | 2065 | 122 | 5,9% |
| **Total** | **7,2** | **24117** | **700** | **2,9%** |

For comparison, the following tables give an overview of the results of 7 subjects in the last 3 academic years, proportion of pupils who failed in the given subject (average)

|  |
| --- |
| Subject fail rates S4  |
| **S4** | **2018-2019** | **2017-2018** | **2016-2017** |
| **MA4** | 8,3% (6,6) | 12,8% (6,9) | 16,1% (6,9) |
| **PHY** | 5,9% (6,7) | 11,6% (6,9) | 10,4% (7,0) |
| **CHI** | 4,5% (7,0) | 8,5% (7,0) | 8,3% (7,2) |
| **MA6** | 4,0% (7,1) | 8,1% (7,4)  | 7,0% (7,5) |
| **L3** | 4,5% (7,0) | 7,8% (6,9) | 7,5% (6,9) |
| **BIO** | 2,8% (7,1) | 7,9% (7,1) | 6,4% (7,3) |
| **L1** | 1,5% (7,4) | 6,7% (7,5) | 4,7% (7,5) |

|  |
| --- |
| Subject fail rates S5 |
|  | **2018-2019** | **2017-2018** | **2016-2017** |
| **MA4** | 13,18% (6,5) | 18,4% (6,7) | 19.5% (6.5) |
| **PHY** | 11,13% (6,6) | 13.1% (6.9) | 15.7% (6.7) |
| **CHI** | 9,36% (6,7) | 13.2% (6.8) | 18.5% (6.5) |
| **MA6** | 6,68% (6,9) | 10.5% (7.2) | 12.1% (7.2) |
| **L3** | 4,75% (6,7) | 6.5% (7.1) | 8.6% (6.9) |
| **BIO** | 4,2% (7,0) | 6.4% (7.3) | 8.1% (7.2) |
| **L1** | 3.19% (7.1) | 4.2% (7.3) | 4.4%% (7.4) |

A drop is visible in the case of the subjects where the fail rate is considered traditionally higher than most of other subjects: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Language. The drop is spectacular between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Although the reason of this phenomenon is not possible to detect as yet, the hypothesis is that this could be a consequence of the introduction of the New Marking System, as some other statistical figures seem to underlie this explanation.

# Other observations

The WG would like to continue the activity to further deplore the following areas.

### The situation of school leavers

The Working Group has conducted a survey among those schools, where at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, at least one pupil failed and left the school. The aim of the survey was to gather information on the background of each leaver, to better understand their individual history and background, and to make an attempt to learn about their academic career after leaving the European School.

In total, 12 schools were requested to answer the questions (50 pupils concerned on system level), and some schools have not fully completed the survey, therefore the WG is not in the position of completing the work in this area.

The WG was interested in the profile of those who failed and left the system:

* Personal history of pupils: age, joining the ES
* Year failed
* Subjects failed
* First/second fail?
* Justification of the Class Council
* Received educational support?
* Next schools? Did the pupil drop out of schooling?

### Languages of tuition and sections

Here, the main focus of the investigation would be to analyse the failures up to S5 by year group and languages (sections). Also, the proportion of newly enrolled pupils would be analysed and reflections would be made on enrolment practices.

Special focus on subjects taught in L2 (HIS, GEO, ECO)

### Integrated science, mathematics and science subjects

Three cohorts of students have been studied to analyse the results of those who have failed Integrated Science in S3 and their progression into S4 and S5. Furthermore, a retrospective analysis of the performances of the students in S5 who failed at least one of the science subjects has been carried out.

As regards mathematics, three cohorts of students have been studied to analyse the results of those who have failed mathematics in S3 and their progression into S4 and S5. Furthermore, a retrospective analysis of the mathematics path and grades of the students in S5 who failed mathematics has been performed.

The working group would finalise the analysis, and would come up with a summary in the final report.

### Marks and marking

The group plans to discover the correlation between A and B marks, C marks on system level.

### Educational support

It is planned to make observations to help the inspectors working in the field of educational support.

### Pupils in primary school

To investigate the background of failures and repeats in primary school, also considering the age when the unsuccessful pupil started the school.

### Analysis of grades in the New Marking System

The analysis of the first cohort of pupils who were assessed with the New Marking System was made and the outcome was communicated to the Boards of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee. A communication to the Member States was made and sent to the Heads of Delegations to give information on the roll-out of the new system.

The following analysis was made and presented:

* The comparison of averages of final marks of three cohorts (S4 1516 – S5 1617; S4 1718 - S5 1819 and S4 16-17 and S5 18-19)
* Share/distribution of positive final marks in S5 for three school years (16-17; 17-18; 18-19)
* Share of failure/success final marks three years (16-17; 17-18; 18-19)

Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn:

The next analysis is expected after the first semester grades have been put into SMS, that is not before the beginning of the second semester of 2020-2021. The exercise will be repeated for the S6 first semester grades to compare with the previous years, and some more past years would be included.

# Proposal

The Joint Board of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee are invited to take note of the interim report.

The Working Group is planning to present the final report to the pedagogical boards in October 2020.

# Joint Board of Inspectors and Joint Teaching Committee

The Joint Board of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee took note of the Interim Report on school failures and repeat rates in the European Schools.

1. Composition of the WG: Head of the Pedagogical Development Unit, 2 scientific Inspectors, 1 Director, 1 Deputy Director for the secondary cycle, 1 Teachers’ representative, 1 representative of Interparents, 1 representative of the European Commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Meeting on 21 January 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Meetings on 20 September 2018, 20 November 2018 and 16 January 2019, 2 May 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Meetings on 19 September and 8 November 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Schildkamp, Kim., Lai, Mei Kuin. & Earl, Lorna M. (red.) (2013). *Data-based decision making in education: challenges and opportunities*. Dordrecht: Springer

Lawn, Martin (red.) (2013). *The rise of data in education systems: collection, visualization and use*. Oxford: Symposium Books

 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Bogaert, Ph. et al.(2007*) Van basis tot limiet leerboek statistiek uitgebreide versie 56*,Brugge: Die Keure [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Rusmey, D.J., *How to interpret a correlation coefficient r*, Retrieved 6/1/2020, from <https://www.dummies.com/education/math/statistics/how-to-interpret-a-correlation-coefficient-r/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. In 2013, at its meeting on 16, 17 and 18 April 2013, the Board of Governors reviewed Article 61 of the General Rules. The decision of having to repeat the year is only possible if the pupil has not reached the standard in a certain number of subjects AND has not reached a certain average in all the promotion subjects. Also, the Class Council has to consider the case of each pupil, and decide if the Article 61.B.5 of the General Rules is applicable or not, i.e. the pupil can be promoted if the failure is due to his/her personal circumstances AND if the teachers are convinced that he/she would be able to follow the courses in the year above. Another change in the administrative procedure was that the pupils in danger of having to repeat the year must receive a letter of warning from the school well before the end of the school year. All these measures led to the decrease in the fail/repeat rate. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. 2019-09-D-25-en-1 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)