

What is grade repetition?

According to PISA 2012, 12% of 15 year olds have already repeated a year during their studies on OECD average, 7% in primary school, 6% on lower secondary education and 2% already on high school level despite the fact that, they have just started the later.

The practice of grade repetition seems to be problematic and contradictory. It is actually a punishment for the underperformance of a student instead of a specific support to catch up with the others. For this reason many professionals believe it is not the proper answer for this problem.

A European analysis proved that grade repetition obviously increases the chance of dropping out. It causes a high level of stress and a negative effect on self-esteem for the student. It can many times reflected in classroom behaviour problems. For this reason, lowering the rate of grade repetition considers as a preventive action. Grade repetition has a very different practice and rate in each country and there is a lowering trend since 2003 all over the OECD countries. Some of them however still have an extensive rate of it, like Germany or France with 20 or higher percentage. On the contrary Poland, Slovenia or Sweden has about 4-5% of all students with a year repetition history. Norway had 0% in 2012.

Further literature in English:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014): *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*. Eurydice and CEDEFOP Report. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf p. 43.

PISA in Focus (2014/09): *Are disadvantaged students more likely to repeat grades?*
<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/pisa-in-focus-n43-%28eng%29-final.pdf>

Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. V.
http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

What are the pay-offs?

Grade repetition is a costly way of dealing with under achievement: involved students stay longer in education with a higher possibility of finally not getting a degree, and a later entering on the labour market is as well a loss for the economy. If they ever enter it. It is as well proved that unemployment rate is higher among them.

Knowing the consequences many countries lowered the rate of this practice, replaced with supportive methods at an early time.

Grade repetition has no clear benefit for the school system as a whole either. On the contrary, it intensifies the lag of disadvantaged groups: again PISA data showed that, 20% of the mostly disadvantaged students repeat a year while only 7% of their peers living in better social conditions. In this sense grade repetition is another device that strengthens social inequalities.

Further literature in English:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014): *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*. Eurydice and CEDEFOP Report. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf p. 43.

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Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. V. http://oktataskesztes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

Suggestion to avoid grade repetition

Experts claim that, students could be more successfully strengthened by well-targeted support and their skills can be better developed compared with a repetition of a whole school year with a focus on all the other subjects as well, once more. Beyond The negative consequences on the individual's self-esteem it is not at all efficient in its dedicated aim: strengthening missing skills. It means that the deficits in knowledge remain while the motivation of the student disappears.

In Belgium e.g. there is a transition period between lower and upper secondary level, to have enough time only to strengthen base competencies and skills. In Portugal the current educational government aims to decrease the rate of grade repetition. For this purpose they provide some additional time to improve at the end of 4th and 6th grade in case of a low performance on the national tests. During this period they are supported and at the end they can repeat the test. Individual learning plans are as well provided, involving parents and school psychologist, besides teachers. There is another way to avoid grade repetition: the student can claim for an alternative course instead of general schooling.

Resource Pool EN #5



Further literature in English:

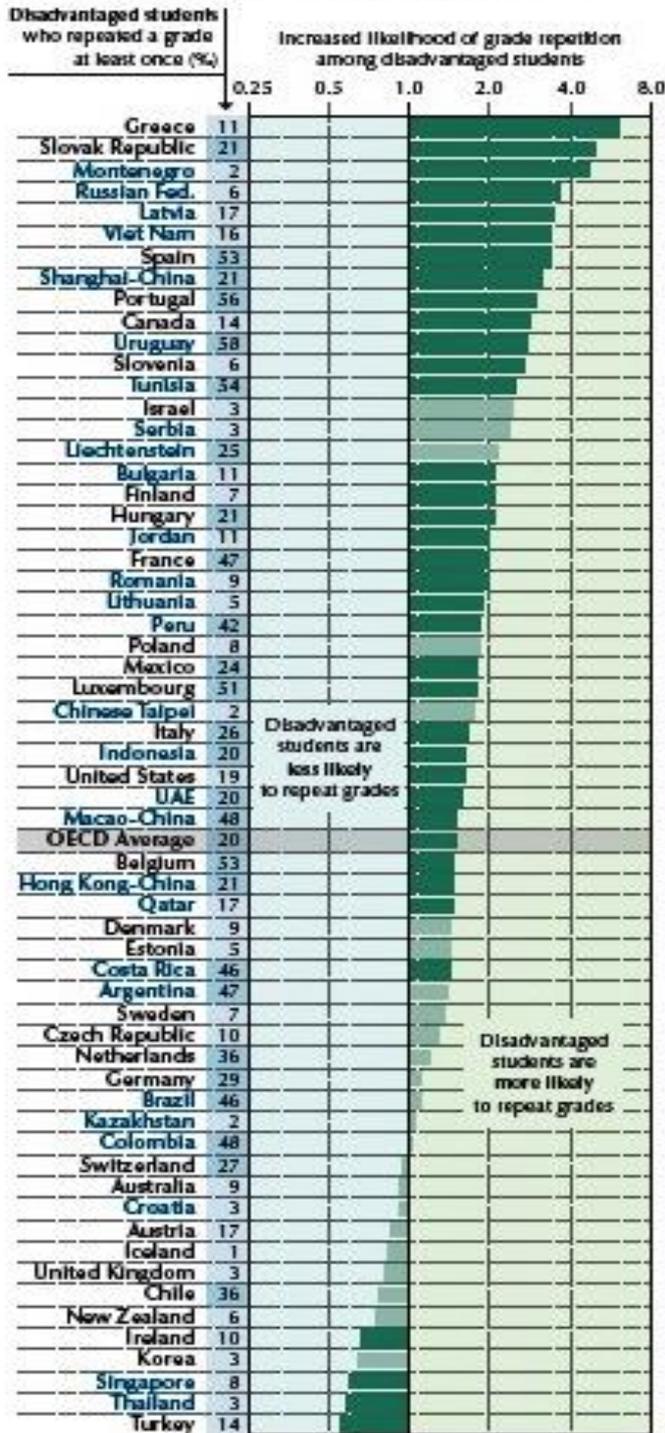
Jelena Joksimovic, Juhász Judit, Mihályi Krisztina, Tomcsik Dóra (2014): *Early warning systems in six European countries*. Desk research report on study visit countries in the framework of CROCOOS– Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project. Interim report. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest

http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Early%20warning%20systems%20in%20six%20European%20countries_interim%20report.pdf

tags: distress signals, support at risk student, reasons behind dropout, grade repetition

Disadvantaged students are more likely to repeat grades

Increased likelihood of grade repetition among students of similar performance in mathematics, reading and science



Source: PISA in Focus 2014/09

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