

# **Guide through the Croatian education system**

Ministry of science, education and sports, Republic of Croatia



## FIRST STEPS OF EDUCATION

The education system in the Republic of Croatia starts in **kindergartens or preschool** institutions, which are implementing preschool programmes. In kindergarten, children are incorporated into full-day or shorter programme of education, health care, nutrition and social welfare, from the age of six months until going to school.

## ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

**Elementary education** begins with enrolment into the first grade. It is compulsory for all children, in general it lasts from age six to fifteen and for students with multiple disabilities it lasts longer but not longer than the age of 21. Elementary education lasts eight years and there are regular and special educational programmes. Elementary education provides knowledge and skills for continuing education.



In the Croatian education system there is possibility of **parallel elementary education in the form of basic art education**. Basic art education can be **music** and **dancing**, and the possibility of enrolment into the first grade of basic art education have children who are usually **seven** or **nine** years old and have fulfilled all the criteria prescribed by the curriculum of artistic education. Elementary music education is carried out according to the elementary art curriculum, in duration of six years, while the basic dance education is carried out according to the elementary art curriculum, in duration of four years. Students can finish art education in a shorter period of time than required, depending on the level of progress in acquiring knowledge, developing skills and abilities in the manner prescribed by the curriculum of artistic education.

For children who are older than 15 and have not completed elementary education which is compulsory by law, there is a system of **basic adult education**.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

After completing elementary education, students have the opportunity to continue their education in secondary schools that are not mandatory. The right of enrolment into the first year of secondary education have all students on equal terms, but within the number of places established by the decision on enrolment for each school year, which has been passed by the Minister of Education annually. Enrolment of candidates into the first year of secondary education is conducted by the **National Information System of Application and Enrolment into Secondary Schools (NISAESS)**. Secondary education starts with the enrolment into secondary school and with secondary education a student acquires knowledge and skills for work and further education.

Secondary education institutions are, depending on the type of educational programme, divided into **high schools, vocational** and **artistic** secondary schools. The high school curriculum lasts four years, and the education is completed by passing the **state graduation**. Education in vocational and art schools can last from one to five years, and ends with the **final exam**. Students who have completed vocational programmes can take the state graduation exams, in order to gain higher level of qualifications for continuing education.

High schools are preparing their students for continuing education, vocational schools qualify them for inclusion into the labour market, and also provide opportunities for continuing education and art schools have the aim to acquire knowledge, develop skills, abilities and creativity in different artistic fields.

**Education of students with disabilities** is organised as an **individualized procedure** in regular or special classes and educational groups, and **students with severe disabilities are educated in special institutions**.



## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Duration of vocational education in secondary schools depends primarily on the type of curriculum and can last from one to five years. After finishing secondary vocational schools, depending on the completion of the programme, a student can be included into the labour market or fulfil certain conditions in order to continue his education at secondary or tertiary level. Vocational education provides knowledge, skills and competences required for the labour market with the aim of the professional recognition of qualifications, which also offers the possibility of progress in future education.

### Programmes of secondary vocational education can be:



**FOUR- OR FIVE-YEAR PROGRAMMES** which end with final exam. After completing this form of education a student can get a job or continue education at higher level, provided that he has passed the state graduation exams;



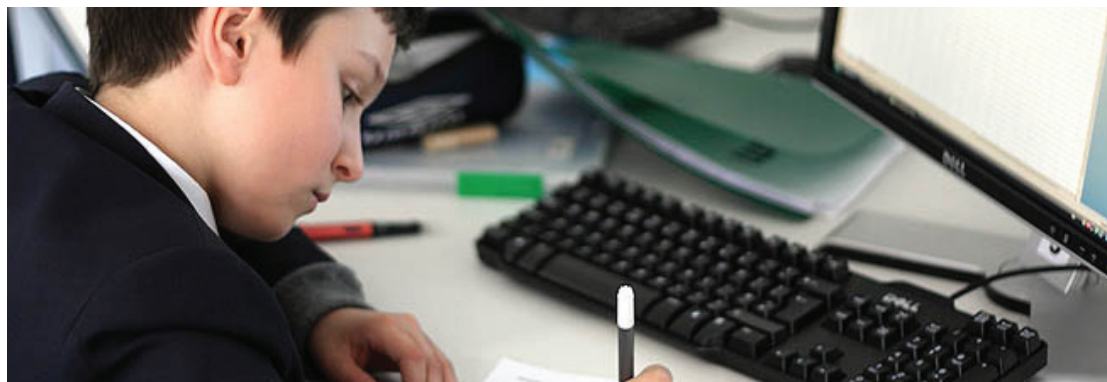
**THREE-YEAR PROGRAMMES** which prepare students for working in the field of industry, economy and crafts. It is also completed with final exam. Practical part of the program is carried out largely in the work process (by the employer) and a smaller part in school. Upon completion of the three-year vocational education there is possibility for employment or for acquiring higher level of qualifications by continuing education with requirements of additional and/or differential exams, and with fulfilment of certain conditions given by the higher education institutions;



**PROGRAMMES FOR ACQUISITION OF LOWER LEVEL QUALIFICATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION** which are, by organizational and performance characteristics similar to the three-year vocational programme, knowledge and skills are acquired both in schools and work process. It is also completed with the final exam. Upon completion of the programme for the acquisition of the lower level qualification of secondary education there is possibility for employment or for acquiring higher level of qualifications by continuing education with requirements of additional and/or differential exams, and



**SPECIAL OR EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** which provide lower or secondary level of education for students. Education of students with disabilities is organized as individualized procedure in regular or special classes and educational groups and students with several development disabilities are educated in special institutions. It is important to emphasize that further efforts are being taken to provide specific education for each student, according to their abilities.





There is also an **experimental program of vocational high school**, in which students acquire specific professional skills and good general education knowledge, and it is the basis for continuing education at higher education institutions. The main characteristic of vocational high school module is flexibility and subordination of rapid technological change and alignment with the business and labour market needs. **Vocational high school is completed by passing the state graduation exam.**

According to the latest data for the school year 2014/2015, the number of students which are attending **four-year vocational programmes** is **76 211**, while the **three-year vocational programmes** are being attended by **34 945 students**. The total number of students attending vocational schools is **117 384**.

**List of schools, which are implementing vocational training programmes**, can be found on the web site of the Ministry, following the link:

<http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=9437&sec=2253>.



## EDUCATIONAL SECTORS

Due to the fact that **66, 9%** of regular students in the academic year 2014/2015 were enrolled into a programme of vocational education, it is clear that the **system of vocational education in Croatia is of great importance**. Since nowadays problems all over the world mainly refer to the high level of unemployment and decrepit economy, we have developed a practical basis, which represents **educational sector profile**, as an **essential component of qualification planning**. There are **14 educational sectors in the field of the Croatian secondary education**, which have been established by the Decision on establishment of educational sectors in vocational education. Those are: Agriculture, nutrition and animal health; Forestry and wood processing; Geology, mining, oil and chemical technology; Textile and leather; Graphic processing and audio-visual design; Mechanical engineering, ship-building and metallurgy; Electrical Engineering and Computing, Architecture and Geodesy; Economy, trade and business administration; Tourism and catering; Transport and Logistics; Health and social care; Personal, protection and other services and Art.



## ART EDUCATION

Educational programmes as a part of art programmes in the Republic of Croatia are implemented in **art, music and dance schools**. Students, enrolled into secondary art schools, which implement art programs are completing their education with the final exam and can take state graduation exam if they want to continue their education at higher education institutions.

**Music school** is attended by students with skilful musical expression. Goal of the music education system is to enrich the society with art of music by the professional musicians. Music education is developed according to the **music curriculum in four years of duration**. Students, enrolled into secondary music schools have **special possibility**: they can only attend a **music school and become a musician**, or they can **simultaneously attend another secondary school**. Their education is completed with the final exam but they also have the right to take state graduation exams if they want to continue their education at higher education institutions.



**Dance education** is an artistic education process, which combines physical, emotional and intellectual abilities of students. This school develops artistic personality with strong abilities of expression by movement. The goal of secondary dance school education is training the body as an instrument of dance expression, which includes development of motoric, affective and cognitive student abilities. Dance education is performed due to the **dance curriculum in four years of duration**. Students, enrolled into secondary dance schools have a **special possibility**: they can attend **just a dance school to become a professional dancer** or they can **simultaneously attend another secondary school**. Future professional dancers are completing their education with the final exam but if they have desire, they can also take state graduation exams if they want to continue their education at higher education institutions.



List of **music and dance schools**, as well as a list of **art programs** in all Croatia counties can be found on the Ministry's website, by the link:

<http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3485>



under the „File“ category.

## HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

Number of students attending general high school education programme in school year 2014/2015 was **53 652**. Students who choose a high school programme for continuing their education can, due to the curriculum, choose between:



**GENERAL HIGH SCHOOL**, which includes a balanced ratio of general education subjects;



**LANGUAGE HIGH SCHOOL**, which emphasizes learning of foreign languages and in the third and fourth grade instead of one of the natural science subjects (biology, chemistry, physics) students can choose the extended foreign language programmes;



**GRAMMAR HIGH SCHOOL**, in which Latin and Greek are taught during all four years of education;



**SCIENCE and MATH HIGH SCHOOL**, which emphasizes math, physics and computer science classes during all four years of education, and provide students with the ability to choose expanded programme of mathematics and computer science instead of a second foreign language and



**SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL** where the foundation of education is seen as a balanced relation of mathematics, chemistry, physics and biology, with special emphasis on laboratory exercises, and within the optional part of the programme, students can choose between learning another foreign language or basics of ecology.


Students who are **actively involved in sports** and who achieve **outstanding results** have possibility of enrolment into **Sports high school** in Zagreb or in the **special sports classes in other schools**. Organization of the work and classes are adjusted to the specific needs of athletes.

The right to apply for the enrolment in sports classes have those candidates who are in the ranking of a particular national sport federation.






Recognizing diverse needs of their students, Croatian secondary education system, in particular high schools, offers the opportunity to **attend several subjects in one of several foreign languages - English, German or French**. Classes are usually held with the help of both Croatian and foreign language textbooks, but are organized according to the Croatian curriculum. This means that students who attend this programme learn the same content as everyone else, except that the teaching is held in one of the three above-mentioned languages.

**A list of high schools, which perform classes in a foreign language, as well as a list of schools that implement high school programs** can be found on the Ministry's website, following the link: <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3389> under the „File“ and „Bilingual programmes“ category. 

## STATE GRADUATION EXAM

State graduation exam is a set of exams responsible for verification and evaluation of students' knowledge, skills and abilities, gained during elementary and secondary school education, according to the prescribed curriculum.

State graduation exam is conducted by taking several exams, which are equal for all students and taken at the same time, under the same conditions for everybody. Primary goals of the state graduation exam are setting a clear value judgment that only with learning; personal commitment and hard work one can achieve success, determination of knowledge and education as fundamental values of the society and change of the public perception of education, schools, teachers and entire educational system. State graduation exam is organized and conducted by an independent public institution under the supervision of the ministry responsible for education. In Croatia, **National Centre for the Evaluation of Education** is competent authority for organization and implementation of state graduation exam. [www.ncvvo.hr](http://www.ncvvo.hr) 

**State graduation exam includes compulsory and optional part.** Exams in compulsory part can be taken at two levels: **A**-higher and **B**-basic level. Exams in optional part are taken exclusively at the higher level.

**Compulsory exams of the state graduation exam are Croatian, mathematics and foreign language**, except for the grammar high school students and students, who attend schools in minority languages. Students get to choose which exams they want to take as compulsory, according to their personal preferences and capabilities, and the entry requirements and criteria, which have been set by higher education institutions. Tests, in more than one version for each examination period, are made by the expert working group, which consists of high school teachers and university professors.

In order for students to have a quick direct access to the results achieved at the state graduation exam **National Information System of Application and Enrolment into Higher Education Institutions (NISAEHEI)** is designed. NISAEHEI is a central information administration service that significantly simplifies the application and enrolment into higher education institutions for candidates interested in taking the state graduation exam and continuing their education at higher education institutions. The system covers process of expression of interest for selected study programmes, exams application and it provides access to the results and the possibility of admission to higher education institutions.

## ADVANTAGE OF STATE GRADUATION EXAM



State graduation exam implementation has set the **national standards for the evaluation of students' school achievements** at the end of the four-year secondary education, and the same results are evaluated for admission to the higher education institutions. State graduation exam is ensuring greater objectivity in the assessment of student achievements because students' knowledge is evaluated by **neutral evaluators** - teachers who are abiding the rules and evaluation criteria in relation to all students in the Republic of Croatia. **Students' success in state graduation exam shows objective student knowledge and achievement comparable with all other students in the Republic of Croatia.**

## STUDENT DORMITORIES –help both to students and parents

Secondary schools also include **student dormitories**. **Student dormitories are educational institutions** at the level of secondary education, which, as a part of their educational programmes, provide adequate place (accommodation and meals) for students while attending secondary education. Student dormitories are not equivalent to schools and they have a special work organization. Their work organization is based on the humanistic and developmental paradigm and individual needs and interests of students.

Educational programmes in student dormitories **help the student and his parents** in achieving quality comprehensive development and education, as well as transition to a young educated man.

**List of all dormitories in the Republic of Croatia** is available at the Ministry's website, at the link: <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2248>.



## INFORMATION

Very useful information can be found at the following links:



### **Primary and Secondary School Education Act**

[http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=11934;](http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=11934)



### **Vocational Education Act**

[http://www.zakon.hr/z/383/Zakon-o-strukovnom-obrazovanju;](http://www.zakon.hr/z/383/Zakon-o-strukovnom-obrazovanju)



### **Art Education Act**

[http://www.zakon.hr/z/516/Zakon-o-umjetni%C4%8Dkom-obrazovanju;](http://www.zakon.hr/z/516/Zakon-o-umjetni%C4%8Dkom-obrazovanju)



### **Strategy of Education, Science and Technology**

[http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014\\_10\\_124\\_2364.html;](http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_10_124_2364.html)



### **Crafts Act**

[http://www.zakon.hr/z/297/Zakon-o-obrtu;](http://www.zakon.hr/z/297/Zakon-o-obrtu)



### **National Pedagogy Standard for Secondary Education**

[http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=11935&sec=2197;](http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=11935&sec=2197)



### **Croatian Qualification Framework Act**

[http://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru.](http://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru)

## DID YOU KNOW?

Someone wise once has said the goal of education is turning mirrors into windows. The beginning of the education system in Croatia was in the 10th century and education has still remained one of the most important poles of the Croatian society. Even though until the 18th century education was exclusively related to the church and the clergy and systematic education began with Maria Theresa, today in Croatia education is a fundamental human right. However, in some parts of the world, education is still an unfulfilled childhood dream. According to the data released by UNECSO, 124 million of children and young adolescents around the world in year 2013 were not enroled into a school, and 47% have never been planned to attend a school. Furthermore, girls represent 53% of all children who are not enroled into a school.

According to the last census released by the Croatia Central Statistics Bureau, there are fewer illiterate persons and the number of highly educated people is increasing, among whom there are more women than men. 30.8% of the population in year 2011 had only elementary education, and the percentage of population with finished only secondary school education in 2011 was 52.6%.

Therefore, we should appreciate given opportunities because some children can only dream about them.

**EDUCATION**  
is the **MOST**  
*Powerful*  
**weapon** *for*  
**CHANGING** THE  
**WORLD.**

Nelson Mandela

**WE SHOULD CHANGE THE WORLD TOGETHER!**