

## September – the month of new beginnings

September is traditionally the month of new beginnings. First graders meet their school desks and books for the first time, while everyone else continues to gain new knowledge. The importance of education is undeniable as is the cornerstone of all social activities and a process that lasts for the whole life, consisting of constant intertwining of formal and non-formal education. In order to mark September and the beginning of the new school year, and soon the academic year, we have prepared a short overview of statistical data in the area of education in Croatia and analysed the changes in the last ten years.

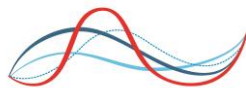
### ***Number of kindergartens on the rise***

The education system in Croatia begins with preschool education, which includes upbringing, education and care for preschool children. It is realised through educational, health care, nourishment and social care programmes for children from six months of age until school age. It is implemented in preschool institutions, and includes kindergartens, which can be state-owned (founded by the Republic of Croatia or a unit of local government and self-government), privately-owned (founded by legal entities, natural persons and religious communities) and other legal entities implementing preschool education programmes, such as libraries, various health, social, cultural and sports institutions and organisations, as well as basic schools. Kindergartens are public institutions that provide preschool education as a public service.

Observing the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, it is noticeable that there were 33.2% more reporting units that implemented preschool education programmes, as compared to the 2007/2008 school year. Out of that, there were 26.9% more kindergartens and 94.2% more other legal entities, such as schools, library playrooms and other institutions and organisations.

The total number of children covered by any preschool education programme at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year compared to the same period of the 2007/2008 school year increased by 22.5%. Observing full-time employees in kindergartens, it is noticeable that their number increased in the observed period, by 38.2%. It is interesting that there were 44.6% more kindergarten teachers and 44.8% more pedagogues in the share of full-time employees in kindergartens in the same period.

Preschool programmes are part of the preschool education and are compulsory for all children in the year prior to entering basic school. For children who attend kindergartens, preschool programme is integrated into the regular programme. According to the latest available data, those for 2016/2017, the preschool programme covered 6.3% less children who had not attended a preschool programme that was integrated into the regular preschool programme of kindergartens, as compared to 2006/2007.



### ***There were 9.5 pupils per one teacher***

Most children enter the compulsory basic education system at the age of seven, and the results show that at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, 20.3% of pupils under the age of seven started their first grade.

As compared to the 2007/2008 school year, the number of basic schools at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year decreased by 0.9%, that is, the number of regular basic schools decreased by 2.2%, while the number of basic schools for disabled children and youth increased, by 43.1%. The County of Split-Dalmatia had the highest number of basic schools at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, followed by the County of Osijek-Baranja.

Observing the number of full-time teachers in regular basic schools, it is noticeable that the number of teachers at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year was 2.5% higher than in the 2007/2008 school year, while the number of teachers in basic schools for disabled children and youth decreased by 18.2% in the same period. Furthermore, observing these two periods, it is noticeable that the number of full-time female teachers in regular basic schools increased by 6.2%, while the number of male teachers decreased by 15.8%.

The number of pupils in regular basic schools at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year decreased by 15.5%, as well as the number of pupils in basic schools for disabled children and youth, by 24.4%, compared to the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year.

The comparison of the number of pupils in regular basic schools with the number of teachers shows that the trend of decrease in the number of pupils continued. At the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year, this ratio was 1:12.5, while at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, this ratio was 1:9.5.

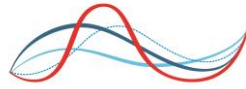
### ***Pupils most often enrol at technical and related schools***

After the basic school, pupils continue their education in secondary schools, that is, secondary education, which, depending on their education plan and programme, consist of grammar schools, vocational schools (technical and related schools, industrial and crafts schools) and art schools (music, ballet and fine arts) schools.

At the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, there were 4.2% more regular secondary schools (grammar schools, technical and related schools, industrial and crafts schools) compared to the same period of the 2007/2008 school year. However, there were 15.5% less students in these schools.

Comparing the latest available data for the aforementioned period, it is noticeable that the share of technical and related schools increased compared to grammar schools. At the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, the number of technical and related schools increased by 9.6 percentage points, which was evident in the number of students in these schools, which increased compared to the number of students in grammar schools, by 14.6 percentage points.

Observing the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year in the same way, it is noticeable that the trend was the same, but the figures show that the number of technical and related



schools increased, by 13.8 percentage points, as well as the number of students, by 18.0 percentage points, compared to grammar schools.

### ***Increasing number of students who graduate and enrol***

Since 2010, the state exit exam has been compulsory for all grammar school students, while the students of four-year vocational schools are obliged to take it if they want to enrol at a university, since in Croatia, the state exit exam is a precondition for enrolment at institutions of higher education. Institutions of higher education in Croatia include polytechnics, schools of professional higher education, faculties and art academies.

Looking at the number of enrolled students, it is noticeable that 15.6% more students enrolled in the winter semester in the 2017/2018 academic year, compared to the same period in the 2007/2008 academic year.

The number of students enrolled at institutions of higher education in Croatia was also on the rise, as well as the number of students who graduated. Data show that 56.1% more students graduated than in 2007.

Professional or university studies (undergraduate and graduate) are most often completed by the persons aged from 22 to 24, while the academic title of the master of science/specialist is most often acquired by the persons aged from 30 to 34. The average age of masters of science and specialists who completed their postgraduate studies in 2017 was 37.7.

The comparison of 2017 and 2007 shows that in 2017, there were 53.6% more doctors of science than in 2007, which can be attributed to the introduction of the Bologna programme and the possibility of enrolling at doctoral studies immediately after the completion of the graduate university study. The average age of doctors of science in both of the observed periods was 39. The highest number of doctoral dissertations in 2017 were defended in the field of Biomedicine and health, while in 2007, the highest number of doctoral dissertations were defended in the field of Social sciences.

Observing the academic staff at institutions of higher education, it is noticeable that in the 2017/2018 academic year, the number of academic staff increased by 22.6% compared to the same period in the 2007/2008 academic year. The most numerous among them were doctors of science, whose number increased by 12.1 percentage points compared to the 2017/2018 academic year.

Education is a lifelong process, which is also confirmed by the famous Latin proverb *Vivere tota vita discendum est*, or in English: We spend our whole lives learning to live, as well as by the latest available data from the Adult Education Survey 2016. The Adult Education Survey is a survey that collects data on adult (persons aged from 25 to 64) participation in education, training and learning within the context of lifelong learning. The Survey included data on adult's participation in formal and non-formal education, and informal learning one year prior to the interview. The results of the Survey indicate that the highest number of respondents who participated in non-formal education, 39.8% of them, attended workshops and seminars, of which 90.2% were employed.