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European Network to Support  
Guidance and Counselling

Lifelong Career  
Guidance in Croatia

## Croatia

Capital: Zagreb

Official language: Croatian

Land area: 56,542 km<sup>2</sup>

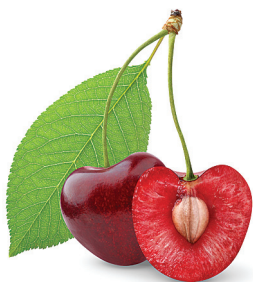
Population: 4,284,889 (in 2011)

Population density: 75.8/km<sup>2</sup>

Declaration of independence: 1991

GDP per capita: 17,819 \$

Currency: Kuna



## Lifelong Career Guidance in Croatia

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# 1 ○ INTRODUCTION

In the Republic of Croatia vocational guidance services have been systematically rendered for several decades. The Croatian Employment Service plays an important role in the field of lifelong career guidance in Croatia. The tradition of providing services has lasted since 1931 when the first Counselling Station for Occupation Selection was established in the Employment Service. The career guidance services have been continuously developed and improved, aiming at various target groups: primary and secondary school students, college students, unemployed persons, people with difficulties accessing the labour market, employees, employers and anyone who needs help in making career choices.

The planning and implementation of lifelong career guidance activities include partners in the fields of education, employment, social inclusion, private institutions and civil society organisations. The majority of activities are implemented within the framework of state institutions and agencies, although the non-governmental sector is also included in the implementation of the activities.

The *Lifelong Guidance Forum* (whose establishment is in progress) will act as a counselling network that will bring together key stakeholders from the fields of education, employment and social inclusion for a more efficient development of policies, measures and activities, as well as a more coordinated provision of lifelong guidance services.

## 2 › THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Career guidance activities in Croatia are defined in various legal acts, such as the Act on Employment Mediation and Rights During Unemployment<sup>1</sup>, Act On Professional Rehabilitation And Employment Of Persons With Disabilities<sup>2</sup>, the Primary and Secondary School Act<sup>3</sup>, the National Curriculum Framework for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary Education, the Adult Education Act<sup>4</sup>, as well as a number of other policies and strategies compatible with European documents and guidelines in the field of lifelong career guidance (Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance, EU Council of Ministers, 2004, 2008).

## 3 ∨ CAREER GUIDANCE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system in Croatia includes several levels: one year of compulsory preschool education (according to the new Act on Preschool Education from July 2013); eight years of primary education; secondary education; higher education and adult education.



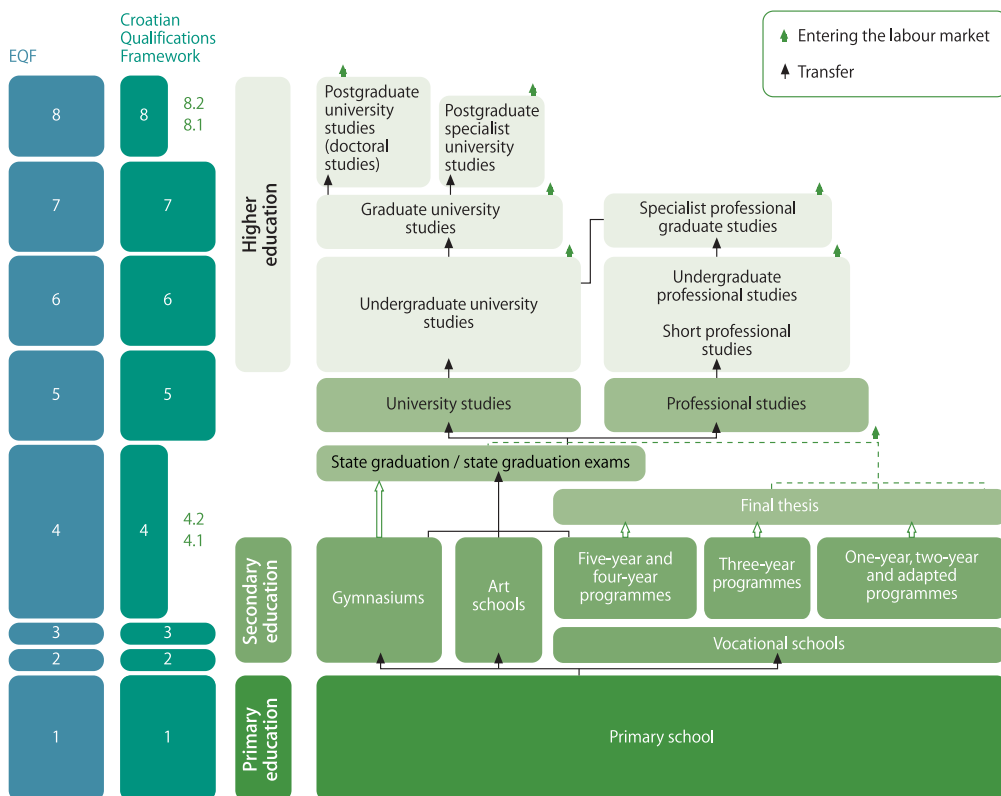
<sup>1</sup> The Act On Employment Mediation And Rights During Unemployment was adopted by the Croatian Parliament (OG 80/08, 94/09, 121/10).

<sup>2</sup> The Act On Professional Rehabilitation And Employment Of Persons With Disabilities was adopted by the Croatian Parliament (OG 143/02, 33/05).

<sup>3</sup> Primary and Secondary Education Act (OG 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 94/13).

<sup>4</sup> The Adult Education Act was adopted by the Croatian Parliament (OG 17/07)

Figure 1: Diagram of education in Croatia



**Preschool education:** children aged six months until the beginning of primary school<sup>5</sup>.

**Primary education** begins with enrolment in the first grade of primary school; it is compulsory for all children and normally lasts from six or seven until fifteen years of age. A system of primary adult education is established for persons over the age of fifteen who have not completed primary education.

**Secondary education** in Croatia takes place in gymnasiums, vocational and art school programmes. Students enrol via an electronic enrolment system based on their achievements in primary schools, as well as personal abilities and preferences. After completing five-year and four-year programmes, it is possible to take a state graduation exam and enrol in higher education institutions.

**Higher education** in Croatia includes university and professional studies. University studies include three levels (undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate) and train students to develop and apply scientific and technical achievements. Professional studies train students for professional occupations and prepare them for immediate employment. They include short professional studies and professional bachelor studies on the first level and specialist professional graduate studies on the second level.

**Adult education** in Croatia has a long tradition of institutional activities through a network of public open universities - public adult education institutions - and covers all forms of education of persons over the age of 15, helping them to acquire qualifications required for the first occupation, retraining, professional development, improvement of knowledge and skills, including active citizenship training.

<sup>5</sup> Since the new Preschool Education Act (OG 94/2013) came into force in 2013, one year of preschool education is obligatory for all children before entering primary school.

# Lifelong career guidance activities in primary and secondary schools

Lifelong career guidance is a part of the lifelong learning concept and it accounts for decision making related to learning and education throughout the life of individuals.<sup>6</sup>

Developmental educational activities in primary and secondary schools are primarily performed by non-teaching staff: pedagogues, psychologists, special education teachers, social workers and librarians. Besides their duties, expert associates in schools also provide career guidance services to students, i.e. they analyse individual educational needs of students, assess their abilities and motivation, present further education opportunities to students, parents and teachers, at the same time encompassing the labour market needs. They also provide counselling for students with special needs and cooperate with professional services of the Croatian Employment Service and other institutions relevant for counselling. School pedagogues are the most widely profiled expert associates. They take part in all phases of educational activities, from the planning stage to evaluation assessment. They also perform career guidance activities, especially if the school does not employ a non-teaching staff psychologist. A school psychologist provides guidance counselling services to students, monitors their development and progress.

## Children and students with special educational needs

The *National Curriculum Framework* ensures appropriate learning conditions for children and students with special educational needs.<sup>7</sup> For this purpose, educational institutions have a duty to provide students with necessary support, either internally (in the institution) or with the support of other institutions.

### Students with disabilities

The aim of the *National Curriculum Framework* for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary Education is to ensure that students at preschool, primary and secondary education level acquire the highest level of knowledge and develop their skills and abilities in accordance with their capacities, so that one day they can live, learn and work independently, reaching their full potential. The principle of inclusive education is to ensure that children and students with disabilities acquire expected learning outcomes while learning in the classroom together with other peers. An educational institution becomes an interactive learning community which seeks to provide students with a sense of accomplishment and to prepare them for the world of work and life in adulthood, i.e. for lifelong learning.

### Gifted and talented students

The *National Curriculum Framework* puts emphasis on the identification and development of capabilities of talented and gifted students. However, of all the methods employed in the Croatian education system, those employed when working with gifted students are the least developed. Educational institutions are responsible for discovering talented and gifted students and ensuring the development of their capabilities, focusing on meeting the specific cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs of talented and gifted students, with constant monitoring and evaluation of their achievements.

<sup>6</sup> In the field of education lifelong career guidance is defined by the Primary and Secondary Education Act (OG 87/08, 86/09, 92/10 and 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 94/13.), the National Curriculum Framework for pre-school education and general compulsory education in primary and secondary schools, and the Primary and Secondary School Curriculum.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Education Development Plan 2005 - 2010 and the Primary and Secondary Education Act, students with special educational needs include students with disabilities of various manifestations and extent of damage and gifted students.

The *National Curriculum Framework* for Preschool, General Compulsory and Secondary Education caters for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of competences of lifelong career guidance through elective courses and cross-curricular topics. The topics related to career guidance are discussed in subjects of social sciences and cross-curricular topics, such as: Nature and Society, Civic Education, Psychology, Sociology, Ethics, etc., but also in modules integrated into educational subjects such as Production and Consumption, Career Guidance and Lifelong Learning, Citizens and Entrepreneurship, etc.

In order to support the final year students in primary and secondary schools with adequate help in choosing education or occupation, the National Curriculum Framework prescribes analysing students' needs for career guidance services.

For this purpose, every year the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports publishes a brochure on secondary school enrolment possibilities. Also, to inform students about different curricula in secondary and higher education, educational institutions organise promotional activities on a regular basis, such as *Open Door Days*, *Welcome 8<sup>th</sup> Graders (Dojdi osmaš)*, *Career Days*, *Craft Fairs*, *Job Fairs*, *University Fairs*, etc.

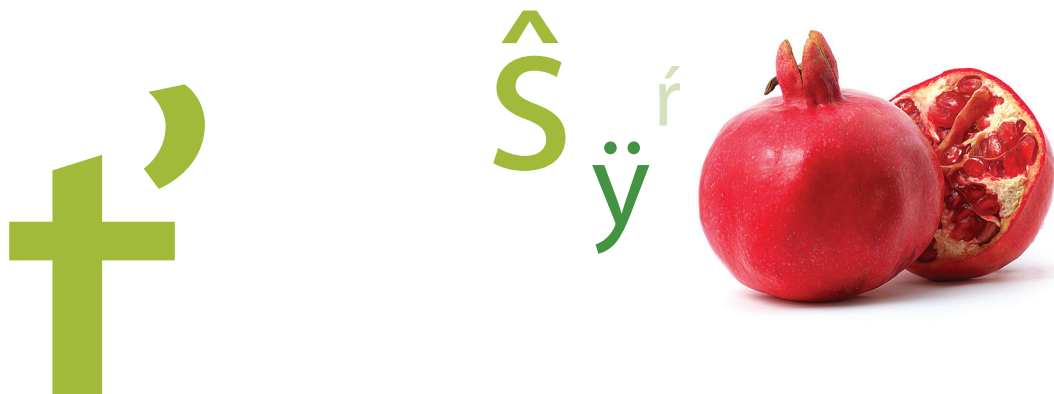
The education system in cooperation with the Croatian Employment Service begins with the implementation of activities of career guidance of students in final grades of secondary school. Students are provided with information about further education and/or employment opportunities and are advised to take part in all events organised by higher education institutions.

## Career guidance in higher education

The system of providing support to students in the field of career guidance and career management skills is organised as part of counselling for students intended for overcoming students' personal difficulties. A special group consists of prospective students in need of counselling in the process of recognition of prior knowledge acquired through formal and/or informal education. Inspired by good practice examples in other EU countries, career development centres are currently developed at universities and other higher education institutions, such as e.g. the Student Counselling and Support Centre at the University of Zagreb.

## Career guidance in adult education

Adult education institutions function as public and private institutions where classes are adapted to the needs of employed participants (evening classes, weekends). Almost all adult education institutions, private higher education institutions, some state institutions of higher education, private secondary and primary schools for adult education are gathered in the Croatian Association of Employers in Education (HUP - UPO). Some members of the HUP-UPO also have career management centres. Participants in the adult education system have the opportunity to analyse their capabilities for career development and focus on educational programmes that will help them reach their full potential, at the same time taking into account the needs of the local labour market.





# 4 / LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT

The key role in the field of career guidance in the employment sector is played by the Croatian Employment Service.

Lifelong career guidance services are based on the principles of accessibility and *flexicurity* (in 22 regional offices and eight newly established Centres for information and career counselling - CISOK), and they are offered to people in various stages of professional development. To address as many potential beneficiaries as possible and increase the efficiency of services, career guidance services are organised according to the "funnel system" (Figure 1).

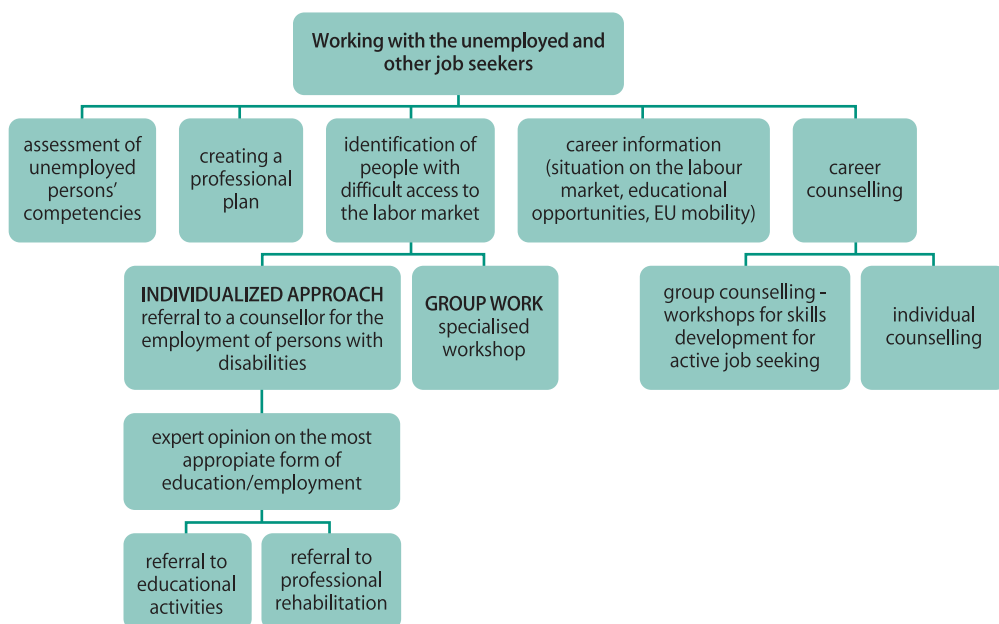
Figure 1: Career guidance services - "funnel system"



The majority of those in search of career guidance services are informed through brochures, leaflets, and various types of group information. Individual counselling services are intended for persons who need individual approach, who develop and increasingly use self-help methods based on new technologies and e-counselling. Disadvantaged individuals are instructed to attend group and individual career counselling. Emphasis is also put on identifying students with health difficulties and those facing social exclusion at an early stage. Career guidance services for the unemployed and other job seekers are provided by counsellors, specialists for career guidance, primarily psychologists, pedagogues, social workers or experts with related educational qualifications received further training as career counsellors. The process of career guidance also involves an employment counsellor and, if necessary, a physician specialised in occupational medicine.

## The development of career management skills

Special emphasis in working with the unemployed is placed on the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to increase employability and improve professional development of individuals. Career management skills denote methods of collecting and using information about oneself, education and occupational possibilities and the world of work. Thereby, special emphasis is placed on the development of entrepreneurial competences important in transitional periods of one's career. The most common form of counselling services to the unemployed and other job seekers is *group work* aimed at providing expert assistance to persons facing difficulties after having lost their job or not being able to find one. In order to improve the quality of lifelong career guidance services and to strengthen the competences of counsellors for group work, the Croatian Employment Service participated in the *NAVIGUIDE project*. As part of the project, an online database and a manual containing 100 group work career guidance methods were published.



## Early interventions in working with students

For the purpose of early identification and timely provision of expert assistance to people at risk of social exclusion, career guidance activities begin already in the final years of primary and secondary school. Career guidance of students begins with the *Survey of career intentions* of all final year students of primary and secondary schools. The survey identifies undecided students and students with health and other developmental disabilities who need professional assistance in choosing further education. Also, the results of the survey indicating current trends in students' career intentions are forwarded to partners in the field of education and employment. A new system of analysing students' career intentions via e-surveys, to be conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is currently being established.

Students with disabilities are referred to a psycho-diagnostic analysis including psychological testing, interview and, if required, medical examination by an occupational health specialist. This is followed by an assessment of a team of experts who recommend educational programmes in accordance with individual capabilities and needs of students, as well as the labour market needs.

Job fairs, career guidance days and other events related to advertising craft occupations required on the labour market are organised to provide information to students.

## Providing services to customers of all age groups

A variety of self-help services is available to facilitate access to jobs, the labour market, education, and career development opportunities. The Croatian Employment Service has launched a computer programme for career guidance called *Moj izbor* (My Choice). The program includes a database of occupations (350), photographs of occupations, information on education and employment opportunities in Croatia and a possibility to self-assess one's interests and skills through an interactive questionnaire. *Moj izbor* is used in the Centres for information and career counselling, primary and secondary schools and adult education institutions. It is designed for users over the age of 13; primary and secondary school students, university students, unemployed persons, employed persons who are considering changing their occupation and everyone looking for information about different occupations.

## Employment training

Employment training includes preparation, professional selection, referring candidates to educational programmes, monitoring their performance, as well as financing and co-financing of educational programmes.

Educational programmes are designed to increase employability; an unemployed person is included in the employment training if the educational programme is in line with the labour market needs and with their mental and physical abilities.

## Professional rehabilitation

Special notice is given to work with unemployed persons with limited access to the labour market, especially persons with disabilities. In order to prepare an unemployed person with disabilities for future employment, different steps are taken to identify their working and general skills; they are provided with career counselling services, their professional abilities and training (retraining or additional training) possibilities are estimated, as well as potential programmes for the maintenance and improvement of working and social skills that can be attended until employment. The emphasis is put on an individual and holistic approach to the unemployed person. Unemployed persons with disabilities have the opportunity to take part in various forms of group counselling, adjusted according to the type of disability, with the aim of promoting active approach to job seeking and offering them social and psychological support. One of the basic services in the field of employment of persons with disabilities is advising them to increase their involvement in the open labour market by attending educational activities. Professional rehabilitation activities are carried out in cooperation with the civil sector and other stakeholders in the fields of education and employment.

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## 5 • CENTRES FOR INFORMATION AND CAREER COUNSELLING



There are altogether eight Centres for Information and Career Counselling (CISOK), established in seven cities in Croatia: Zagreb, Slavonski Brod, Osijek, Koprivnica, Varaždin, Šibenik and Zadar. The Centres provide information on educational and employment opportunities in Croatia and abroad, enabling independent search of published job vacancies, as well as the use of different online tools - the Questionnaire for self-assessment of personality traits associated with work, Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and other web portals, such as *Burza rada* (Job Market) and *Statistika online* (Statistics online). CISOK counsellors provide assistance in defining professional goals and plans. In cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, through counselling, thematic workshops, lectures, presentations, seminars and panel discussions they provide necessary information about education, employment or lifelong career planning and development possibilities.

*Informing and Career Counselling Centres* (CIPS) are also established within the Employment Service. They provide information on job opportunities, labour market conditions, job vacancies, occupational and educational opportunities. CIPS Centres operate on the principle of self-help; allowing for the use all web tools and writing job applications and CVs in the Centres.

## 6 • INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PROJECTS IN DEVELOPING LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

Prior to Croatia's accession to the European Union reforms in areas relevant for the life and work of citizens have been introduced and Croatian national legislation has been adapted to the EU legislation. A growing importance of lifelong career guidance is reflected in further development of legislation for the regulation of lifelong career guidance, in strengthening of administrative and human resources, in adapting the counselling services to the needs of specific target groups, in active participation in European associations important for career guidance and in improving career management skills. In recent years, the number of project-based activities financed by the EU has significantly increased.



## European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN)



As of 1 January 2011, the Republic of Croatia has become a full member of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), with the consent of the ministries of labour, employment, and education. During the implementation of the Work Programme of ELGPN for the period from 2011 - 2012, one of the outcomes was the creation of the Guidelines for Lifelong Guidance Policy in the EU Member States, to help policy-makers and other interested parties determine the current state of development of lifelong career guidance in their country or region, identify issues that require attention and propose improvement using good practice examples in other European countries. In these guidelines, Croatia is represented by two good practice examples in the field of lifelong career guidance: "Partnership based approach to early intervention in Croatia" and "Partnership based model of CMS for persons with disabilities in Croatia".

## International association for educational and vocational guidance

Croatia is a member of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) that accounts for the exchange of experience of experts through publications and professional conferences. The Croatian Employment Service is a member of IAEVG.

## Euroguidance network



Euroguidance Centre Croatia was founded in 2011 within the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes. It is a member of the European network of national centres supporting systems of career guidance in Europe. Euroguidance network was established in 1992-1993 within the Petra programme, in order to support exchange of data and information on the national education and training systems and learning opportunities within the Union. It promotes mobility and enables professional assistance for guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand educational, training, and employment opportunities.

## European employment services network (EURES)



After Croatia's accession to the European Union, the Croatian Employment Service has become a member of the European Employment Services Network (EURES). The purpose of EURES is to provide information, counselling and mediation services for both employers and job seekers in the EU, but also to help European citizens benefit from the principle of free movement of people.



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The Act On Employment Mediation And Rights During Unemployment (OG 80/08, 94/09, 121/10).

The Act On Professional Rehabilitation And Employment Of Persons With Disabilities (OG 143/02, 33/05).

The Adult Education Act (OG 17/07)

## Selected websites

Ministry of Labour and Pension System: <http://www.mrms.hr/>

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports: <http://www.mzos.hr/>

Croatian Employment Service: <http://www.hzz.hr/>

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN): <http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/elgpn>

Euroguidance Croatia, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes: <http://mobilnost.hr/index.php?id=454>

## Statistical data sources

Croatian Employment Service: <http://www.hzz.hr/default.aspx?id=4137>

Croatian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.dzs.hr/>

Statistika online / Statistics online: <http://statistika.hzz.hr/>

E-survey about primary school students further education: <http://www.hzz.hr/default.aspx?id=11163>





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