



**LIFELONG LEARNING  
FOR ALL NETWORK**

# **Enhancing equity and inclusion in secondary education in Croatia: analysis and policy recommendations**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **Policy context**

According to the Croatian *Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* (Article 4, paragraph 2), education in primary and secondary<sup>1</sup> schools is based on equal educational opportunities for all students according to their abilities. According to the *National Plan for the Development of the Education System until 2027*, education should be inclusive, quality-driven and fair. One of the goals of the *National Development Strategy Croatia 2030* is to respect the right to education under equal conditions. However, data indicate the existence of educational inequalities in Croatia, with certain groups not receiving adequate support during their secondary education.

This publication provides an analysis of educational inequality challenges at the secondary education level in Croatia and proposes possible solutions in the form of policy recommendations. The analysis and recommendations were prepared by a working group of the Lifelong Learning for All Network, which brings together professional staff, researchers and civil society organisations dealing with the issue of educational inequalities in Croatia in a lifelong learning context, from the level of early and preschool education to higher education and adult education.

The analysis and recommendations were developed in late 2022 and early 2023, at the same time when a new overarching national education policy document was drafted and adopted: the *National Plan for the Development of the Education System until 2027* (hereafter: NPDES). The Network sees the analysis and recommendations as complementary to the NPDES, as the plan also identified educational inequalities as a key challenge of the Croatian educational system, and the mid-term vision of the plan is for the education and upbringing system to be "inclusive, quality-driven and equitable." Furthermore, the Network participated in the Government's public consultation on the NPDES, and the majority of the Network's proposals for strengthening the emphasis on equity and inclusion in the document were accepted. We believe that many of the recommendations presented in this document are complementary to the NPDES and can be implemented alongside the already planned measures. The longer-term measures proposed in the document are seen as actions that could be incorporated into future action plans and strategic documents to be adopted at the national level.

## **About the Lifelong Learning for All Network**

The Lifelong Learning for All Network was launched in October 2020 through the project "Thematic Network for Lifelong Learning Available to All", co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund and coordinated by the Institute for the Development of Education. The Network comprises 60 professional staff from 22 institutions (see Appendix 2. List of Network Members). The Network views the topic of educational inequalities through the prism of lifelong learning, which encompasses the following levels:

- early childhood education and care
- primary education
- secondary education (gymnasiums, vocational schools and art schools)
- higher education
- adult education (from primary to higher education, as well as non-formal education).

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'secondary education' (*srednje obrazovanje*) in the context of the Croatian education system corresponds to the level of upper-secondary education (ISCED 3). Types of secondary schools depending on the type of educational programme are gymnasiums (*gimnazije*), vocational schools (*strukovne škole*) and art schools (*umjetničke škole*).

The Lifelong Learning for All Network advocates for an equitable and inclusive educational system in Croatia. Equity and inclusion in the context of education are closely related terms that address various forms of educational inequalities. The Network defines these terms and their interrelation in accordance with definitions provided by UNESCO (2017):

- **Equity** in the context of education refers to the *principle* of ensuring that "all learners are considered equally important." The principle implies that learners are diverse and that many learners may be disadvantaged compared to others during the learning process due to their personal characteristics and external circumstances. The principle of equity seeks to ensure that all learners successfully participate in education and achieve educational outcomes, regardless of such characteristics and circumstances.
- **Inclusion** in the context of education refers to the *process* of removing barriers to access, participation and successful completion of education. The process involves implementing measures at the level of educational institutions and the educational system aimed at equalising opportunities among learners. In this sense, the inclusivity of the educational system is the foundation for achieving equity in education.

From 2020 to 2023, the Network conducted **six research studies on educational inequalities** at all levels of education in Croatia, resulting in 14 journal articles and book chapters. The research carried out by the project's thematic working groups was the following:

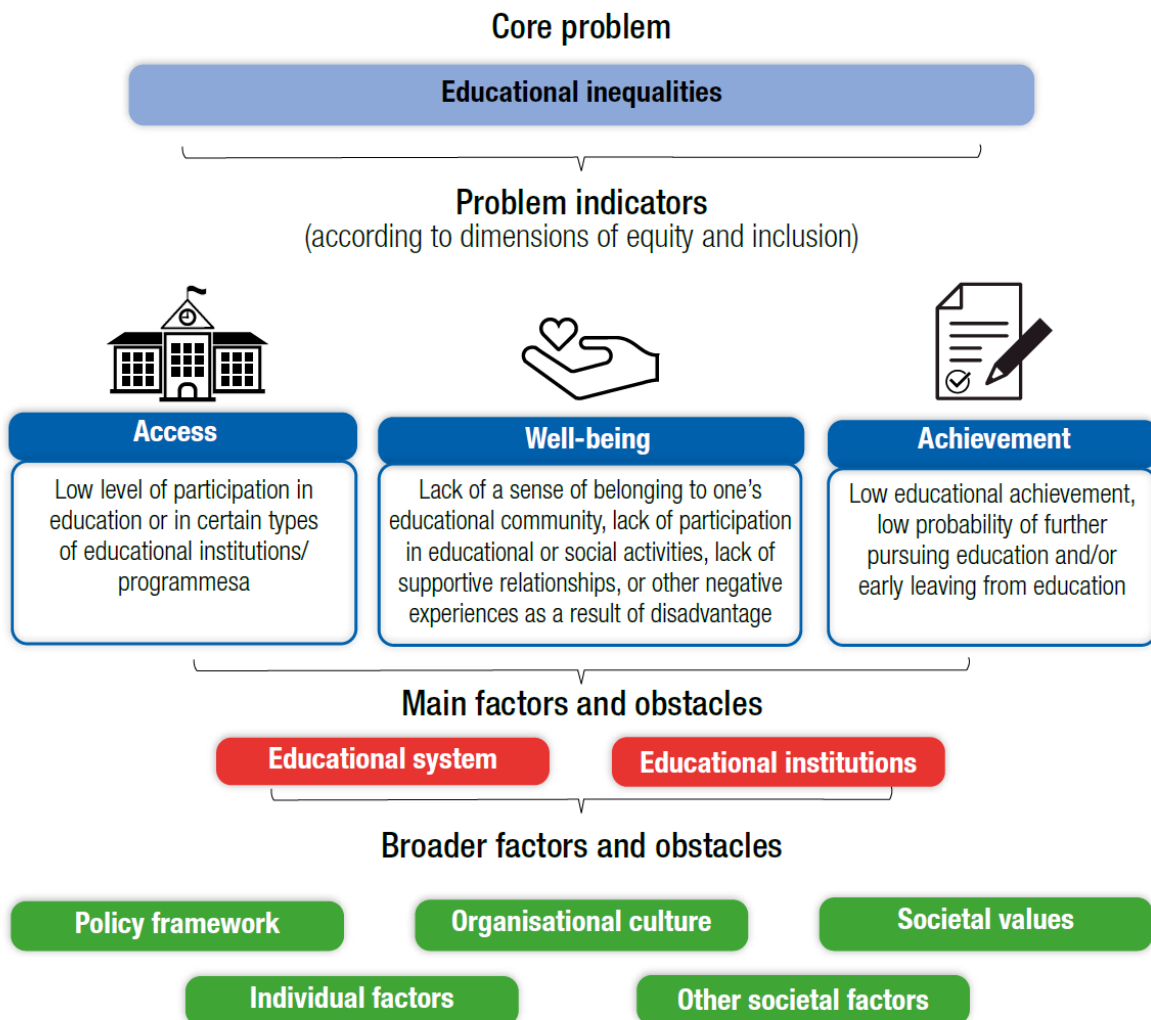
- study on the attitudes of policymakers, educational institutions and other stakeholders about educational inequalities **at every educational level** (Farnell [ed.], 2022)
- study on the experiences of teaching staff and professional staff related to educational inequalities **in early childhood education and care and primary education** (Bouillet and Brajković, 2023.a; Bouillet and Brajković, 2023.b)
- study on the experiences of teachers and students related to educational inequalities **in secondary education** (Puzić et al., 2023)
- study on dropout in **higher education** (Odak et al., 2023; Matković, 2023.a)
- study on educational inequalities in **adult education** (Matković and Jaklin, 2021; Matković and Jaklin, 2023; Matković, 2023.b)
- study of the framing of **educational inequalities in strategic documents of the Croatian government** (Šćukanec Schmidt et al., 2023)

Based on the results of this newly conducted research, as well as on insights from previous studies, the Network's working groups prepared an in-depth analysis and synthesis of educational inequality challenges at each level of the educational system in Croatia. Each working group then formulated policy recommendations for enhancing equity and inclusion, as well as horizontal recommendations for the educational system as a whole. Drafts of all recommendations were subject to structured dialogues in the form of roundtable discussions and "e-consultations" (gathering feedback through virtual channels) held during 2023.


This publication presents the results of this process for secondary education, with separate sections on strengths (highlighting good practices for addressing equity), challenges (identifying existing educational inequalities) and policy recommendations (with proposals of policy objectives and measures). The target groups of this publication are primarily national institutions in Croatia in the field primary education, local and regional authorities and educational institutions that can incorporate these recommendations into educational reforms, programmes, and initiatives. The publication will also be of value to all other local and international stakeholders in the field of education to raise awareness of various possible ways to mitigate and, in the long run, prevent educational inequalities in Croatia.

## 2. METHODOLOGY FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations presented in this publication are based on an in-depth analysis of educational inequalities at the level of secondary education in Croatia. The data sources referenced in this analysis include both results of research conducted in the project by members of the Lifelong Learning for All Network, as well as previously available research, national documents and statistical data. In this analysis, the “problem tree method” was applied, which categorises identified problems in a hierarchy of cause-and-effect relations. Due to the complexity of the problem of educational inequalities, the Network’s members created a specially adapted problem-tree structure, as presented in the diagram below, and linked the research findings to different parts of the problem tree:



The first part of the Network's analytical framework is based on defining three **dimensions of equity and inclusion in education** and formulating indicators of educational inequality related to each dimension. Based on this framework, each problem identified by the Network through its research is then categorised into one of the dimensions.

Dimensions	Definition	Problem indicator
 <p><b>Access</b></p>	<p>This dimension relates to ensuring the conditions and removing barriers for individuals to access educational institutions or programmes that match their needs or educational objectives.</p> <p>The dimension requires the educational system to ensure availability, physical access and affordability of educational institutions/ programmes. It also relates to ensuring equitable and inclusive admission procedures and encouraging the enrolment of learners from disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p><b>Low level of participation in education or in certain types of educational institutions/ programmes</b></p>
 <p><b>Well-being</b></p>	<p>This dimension relates to ensuring an optimal experience for all learners in the educational system, leading to a comprehensive and balanced development of each individual's potential. In defining the concept of well-being, the Network has adopted the European Commission's definition of the concept of "well-being at school" in the context of the European Education Area (European Commission, n.d.), slightly adapting it in the context of lifelong learning. According to the adapted definition, well-being in the lifelong learning context means that all learners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel safe, appreciated and respected;</li> <li>• actively and purposefully engage in educational and social activities;</li> <li>• possess self-confidence and the feeling of autonomy and self-efficacy;</li> <li>• have supportive relationships with other learners and teaching staff;</li> <li>• feel that they belong to their educational community and are content with their experience in the educational process.</li> </ul> <p>In the context of equity and inclusion, this dimension implies that the educational system fosters an equitable and inclusive environment in educational institutions, that equitable and inclusive teaching methods are applied and that appropriate material conditions are ensured for learners, especially those from disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p><b>Lack of a sense of belonging to one's educational community, lack of participation in educational or social activities, lack of supportive relationships, or negative experiences due to their disadvantaged status</b></p>
 <p><b>Achievement</b></p>	<p>This dimension relates to reducing the differences in educational achievements among different groups of learners, preventing early school leaving and stimulating further education after completing a programme.</p> <p>The dimension implies that the educational system entices recognising difficulties which some learners have in the educational process and providing adequate academic and social support in the educational process, especially for disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p><b>Low educational achievement, low probability of further pursuing education and/or early leaving from education</b></p>

Educational inequalities primarily stem from broader societal inequalities and their interaction with educational institutions and the educational system, which is why these two categories are listed as the **main factors and obstacles**. However, considering the complexity of educational inequalities and the need for a holistic understanding of how to prevent them, the analysis encompasses **broader factors and obstacles** which (directly or indirectly) may have a negative impact on equity and inclusion in education. The following categories of the broader factors are identified based on inductive analysis of stakeholders' attitudes on educational inequalities and analyses of other studies and documents.

<b>Broader factors and obstacles</b>	<b>Types of challenges</b>
Policy framework	Challenges in educational policies or other areas of public policy that directly or indirectly negatively impact equity and inclusion in education.
Organisational culture	Challenges related to norms, practices, management and networking among key institutions in the system (national/local authorities, educational institutions, etc.).
Societal values	Challenges related to the extent to which education, equity and inclusion are valued in society.
Individual factors	Challenges related to motivation, competences and educational choices of individuals. These factors are manifested in the context of broader societal factors (see below).
Other societal factors	Challenges related to broader socioeconomic and sociocultural factors and unequal distribution of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

The value of the Network's analytical framework is that it enables a comprehensive overview of a highly complex problem. The resulting "problem trees" present an innovative way to show connections between various factors and obstacles in a structured and simple way. More importantly, this framework clearly states that, although certain obstacles may be removed in the short- or medium term with specific measures, it is difficult to influence the broader factors, which require long-term, thorough changes not only in public policy, but also at a societal and individual level.



### 3. STRENGTHS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Before focusing on problems and policy recommendations, it is important to acknowledge and recognise positive policies and practices in the system and to assess the potential of new and upcoming initiatives for enhancing equity and inclusion in secondary education. In this section, we provide a summary of the strengths identified in the system and remarks on further options for improvement. The following sections will present the problem analysis and policy recommendations.

- **Financial aid policies for secondary students from disadvantaged groups have been adopted or improved.** Scholarship programmes have been implemented at the national and local level, especially for members of the Roma minority and for shortage occupations. For secondary students who are members of households recognised as entitled to the guaranteed minimum income, compulsory textbooks are financed from the budget of Croatia. Funding of transportation, textbooks and secondary student dormitories has also been implemented at the local level.

*Despite this progress, many of the implemented policies have not had achieved their intended results. The national scholarship for members of the Roma minority is lower than those awarded locally and funding for transport, textbooks and student dormitories for multiple disadvantaged groups has been introduced only at the local and not the national level, leaving certain local and regional administrative units at a disadvantage.*

- **Teaching assistants have been introduced in secondary schools to support secondary students with disabilities.**

*However, there are numerous problems regarding the status and inadequate working conditions of teaching assistants for secondary students with disabilities, as well as the problem of short-term project funding, which brings into question the sustainability of the measure and leads to uncertainty for beneficiaries.*

- **Secondary schools in Croatia have the option of employing professional staff of various profiles who support the well-being of secondary students.**

*The law provides for the employment of pedagogues, psychologists and specialists in the field of educational rehabilitation, however, not all secondary schools have professional staff of all the required profiles. Furthermore, there are challenges regarding the availability and workload of professional staff: they are not evenly available to all secondary schools. Also, the prescribed standards regarding the required number of employed professional staff in relation to the number of children are not being followed (cf. state-of-play analysis of the National Plan for the Development of the Education System till 2027). Some specialist profiles are in shortage in the labour market. Existing professional staff are often overworked, and their involvement could cause some teachers to insist it is "not their job" to take care of the well-being of secondary students.*

- **The Croatian government adopted the National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the period from 2021 to 2027, which contains measures pertaining to education.**

An action plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Roma Inclusion has been adopted, proposing a number of measures aimed at ensuring equal access of Roma to quality, inclusive education. At the level of secondary education, the Plan highlights measures against segregation and measures to reduce differences in the completion of secondary education of children belonging to the Roma ethnic minority.

*Unfortunately, only about a third of Roma students participate in education at secondary level.*

- **The Croatian government has adopted an action plan for the integration of persons granted international protection, which contains measures related to education.**

Action plans for the integration of asylum seekers, which contain measures related to education, have been adopted at the local level (e.g. City of Zagreb).

*The National Action Plan had been in force between 2017 and 2019, and a new plan has not been adopted since.*

- **The Ministry of Science and Education has issued a call for applications for school prevention programmes from 2020 and adopted the Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence in Schools.** The call for applications for funding the implementation of school prevention programmes represents a particularly valuable initiative for ensuring the well-being of students, such as mental health care.

*Although initiatives are often introduced, they are introduced without addressing current systemic/horizontal issues or connecting key actors and sharing knowledge and experience. All too often this leads to a waste of resources. Additionally, the amounts allocated to schools are relatively low on average, bringing the result into question.*

## 4. CHALLENGES: ANALYSING EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES

This chapter presents a table summarising the educational inequalities identified at the level of secondary education. The analysis is followed by recommended objectives and measures to address these problems.

### 1. CENTRAL PROBLEM

**Educational inequalities at the level of secondary education**

### 2. PROBLEM INDICATORS

Access

- **A significant number of students fail to enrol in their secondary school of choice, in accordance with their educational aspirations.** Capacity occupancy is at its highest in gymnasiums, especially in math and science schools. Vocational programmes with access to matriculation are less represented (about 90.9%), while the least attended schools are those with three-year programmes.  
Source: Matković and Šabić (2022)
- **Secondary students from economically and culturally privileged families are more likely to attend gymnasiums, while students from less privileged families are more likely to enrol in vocational schools.**  
Sources: Puzić, Odak and Šabić (2019); Puzić, Šabić and Odak (2021)
- **Three-year vocational schools have a higher proportion of students of lower socioeconomic status, students with disabilities and students belonging to the Roma national minority.**  
Sources: Matković et al. (2013); Baranović (ed.) (2015)
- **There is gender inequality by type of school.** More female than male secondary students attend gymnasiums, especially comprehensive and language gymnasiums. There are significantly more male students in four-year vocational school programmes such as mechanical engineering and electrical engineering, while there are significantly more female students in programmes such as economics and healthcare. There are more male students in industrial and trade schools, although there are significantly more female students in programmes related to personal services.  
Source: CBS (2022)
- **There are numerous other disadvantaged groups facing challenges in accessing secondary education:**
  - Roma: Only 31% of Roma children aged 14 to 19 attend school (Source: Croatian government, 2021)
  - Secondary students from rural areas, small towns and islands (Source: Baranović, ed., 2015, Klepac, 2016)
  - Secondary students with disabilities
  - (Source: Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, 2022).
  - Although there are numerous other empirical insights on potentially vulnerable groups, research data is scarce, suggesting the need for further research.

## 2. PROBLEM INDICATORS

### Well-being

- **There are challenges related to mental health, stress and anxiety at the level of the secondary school population.**  
Source: Kozjak Mikić, Jokić Begić and Bunjevac (2012)
  - **Gymnasium students are more exposed to mental health challenges, stress and anxiety.**  
Source: Kozjak Mikić, Jokić Begić and Bunjevac (2012), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b)
  - **Vocational school students have a higher number of absences from classes than gymnasium students.**  
Sources: MSE (2022)
  - **There are gender differences in the type of negative experiences faced by secondary students: female students experience more stress, while male students have more unexcused absences.**  
Sources: Petak, Brajša-Žganec (2014); Kozjak Mikić, Jokić Begić and Bunjevac (2012), Keresteš (2021) Ambruš, Budeš, Liković, Mihaljević and Mirković Knaus (2021) Školski e-Rudnik [Vol. 2]; Ministry of Science and Education (2023)
  - **Secondary students with disabilities are exposed to a number of challenges that affect their well-being in schools.**  
The labour market lacks qualified professionals to support secondary students with hearing impairments Students with behavioural disorders and mental health impairments are often expelled from secondary school due to a large number of unexcused absences or aggressive behaviour. Secondary students with visual impairments face challenges with timely provision of textbooks Challenges were also noted with transportation and accommodation in student dormitories, as well as with the implementation of practical classes in vocational programmes.  
Source: Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities (2020)
  - **Young people from various disadvantaged groups are exposed to numerous challenges and problems during their secondary education.**  
These groups include:
    - students from families with lower socioeconomic status
    - children with developmental disabilities
    - Members of the Roma minority
    - LGBTQ+ students
    - Students from alternative care
    - students from rural areas, small towns and islands
    - children of Croatian veterans
    - students with asylum/refugee status
    - students commuters
    - homeless people and those at risk of homelessness
    - student parents
- Sources: Puzić et al. (2021), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b), Press (2022.) ; Matkovic (2010), Kletečki Radovic, Vejmelka and Družić Ljubotina (2017), Bilić and Balog (2019)

## 2. PROBLEM INDICATORS

<i>Achievement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low level of all types of literacy among secondary students compared to other OECD countries included in PISA research.</b> <u>Source:</u> Markočić Dekanić et al. (2020)</li> <li>• <b>Weaker results of vocational school students at the state graduation exam compared to secondary school students.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Školski e-Rudnik (e rudnik 3) MSE (2022); Šabić (2019);</li> <li>• <b>Students of three-year vocational schools face greater obstacles in further pursuing education.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Buković, Matković (2018); Matković, Lukić, Buković, Doolan (2013); Baranović (2015) <b>Secondary school success and aspirations for further education are related to students' socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Košutić, Puzić and Doolan (2015); Puzić, Gregurović and Košutić (2016); Puzić, Odak and Šabić (2019), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b)</li> <li>• <b>Children from households with fewer quality interactions between family members have a lower success rate in education.</b> <u>Source:</u> Luketić (2018)</li> <li>• <b>Although early school leaving in secondary education in the Croatia is significantly lower than the EU average, it is associated with a lower level of parental education and lower household income.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Matković (2010); Jugović and Doolan (2013), Jugović, Doolan (2013); Tomić, Botrić, Žilić (2018), Ratkajec Gašević and Horvat in Zovko et al., ed. (2022).</li> <li>• <b>Secondary students with disabilities are at greater risk of dropping out of secondary education early.</b> <u>Source:</u> Popović, S. and Buljevac, M. (2016).</li> </ul>
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## 3. MAIN FACTORS AND OBSTACLES

Educational system	
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary school enrolment criteria are based on primary school grades and do not include enough criteria to promote equity and inclusion.</b> <u>Source:</u> Lifelong Learning for All press release (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Regional unavailability of educational programmes.</b> <u>Source:</u> Matković, Šabić (2022.)</li> <li>• <b>Principals of vocational secondary schools perceive that their students face more challenges in accessing higher education.</b> <u>Source:</u> Puzić et al. Vocational Education and Training System Development Programme (2016 - 2020)</li> <li>• <b>Restricted choice of secondary education for students with disabilities based on programme availability.</b> <u>Source:</u> Popović, S. and Buljevac, M. (2016).</li> </ul>
<i>Achievement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Three-year vocational programmes have an insufficient number of general education subjects and students do not have the direct possibility of taking the state matriculation exam, making it difficult to access higher education.</b> <u>Source:</u> CEDEFOP (2020)</li> </ul>

### 3. MAIN FACTORS AND OBSTACLES

#### Educational institutions

<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>At the level of primary education, students are provided with stereotypical patterns of educational/career guidance.</b> Students with poorer achievement are directed to vocational three-year programmes, while female students are guided towards humanities, arts and social sciences. <u>Sources:</u> Vocational Education and Training System Development Programme (2016 - 2020), Baranović, ed. (2015)</li> </ul>
<i>Well-being; Achievement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Challenges with teachers: professional burnout among high-quality and motivated teachers; unprofessional delivery of classes and lack of motivation among other teachers.</b> <u>Source:</u> Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Differences in approaches to school management.</b> <u>Source:</u> Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Problems identifying secondary students with emotional and psychological difficulties, as well as with disabilities, to provide them with additional support.</b> <u>Source:</u> Kozjak Mikić, Jokić Begić and Bunjevac (2012), Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Lack of support systems for secondary students with poor school performance and children with disabilities.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Puzić et al. (2022), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b)</li> <li>• <b>Lack of support from professional services for teachers.</b> <u>Source:</u> Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Lack of professional guidance and career counselling in secondary schools.</b> <u>Source:</u> Odak and Puzić (2019)</li> <li>• <b>Lack of school-parent cooperation.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Miljević-Riđički, Pahić (2010) (for the Roma community) Puzić et al. (2022)</li> </ul>

### 4. BROADER FACTORS AND OBSTACLES

<b>Public policy framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The short duration of compulsory education (8 years) negatively affects the possibility of achieving better educational goals and reducing inequality.</b> <u>Source:</u> Puzić, Gregurović and Odak (2018)</li> <li>• <b>The education system does not recognise a number of disadvantaged groups, e.g. students with mental health problems, LGBTIQ+ students, migrant children, young mothers, etc.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Štambuk (2022), Puzić et al. (2022), Jugović and Bezinović (2020)</li> <li>• <b>Shortage of professions such as mathematics, physics and informatics teachers; low teacher salaries; low retention in the teaching profession.</b> <u>Source:</u> Markočić Dekanić et al. (2019), Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Difficult recruitment of professional staff for working with secondary students with disabilities.</b> <u>Sources:</u> Popović and Buljevac (2016), Puzić et al. (2022)</li> <li>• <b>Insufficient student quotas at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation.</b></li> </ul>
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4. BROADER FACTORS AND OBSTACLES	
	<p><u>Source: Puzić et al. (2022)</u></p>
<b>Organisational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inadequate level of cooperation of educational institutions with social welfare centres, attributed to the undercapacity of these centres.</b> <u>Source: Puzić et al. (2022)</u></li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dominant value of “meritocracy” in education</b>, without sufficiently taking into account different starting positions of students (e.g. with regard to predominant social attitudes and to specific family or health situations). <u>Source: Puzić et al. (2022)</u></li> <li>• <b>Perception of lower reputation/prestige of vocational education, especially trade schools, compared to gymnasium programmes.</b> <u>Source: Buković, Matković (2018)</u></li> <li>• <b>Predominance of gender and other stereotypes affecting the teaching process and student guidance.</b> <u>Source: Jugović (2015, 2017)</u></li> <li>• <b>Education is not sufficiently recognised as a social value, reinforced by the low social status and reputation of the teaching profession.</b> <u>Source: Markočić Dekanić et al. (2019)</u></li> </ul>
<b>Individual factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary students from underprivileged backgrounds do not have sufficient information to make quality decisions about educational choices.</b> <u>Source: Odak and Puzić (2019)</u></li> <li>• <b>“Self-exclusion” of secondary students continuing their education after secondary school has been observed.</b> Due to limited socioeconomic resources and the lack of relevant information students often conclude that a certain educational path is “not for them” or want to avoid choosing an educational path associated with a certain risk. <u>Sources: Puzić, Odak and Šabić (2019); Puzić, Šabić and Odak (2021):</u></li> <li>• <b>Underdeveloped competences in learning methods of learning, differences in academic self-efficacy of students between various groups</b> <u>Source: Ristić Dedić et al. (2017), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b)</u></li> <li>• <b>Insufficient technical capabilities of certain households for remote learning (computer equipment, Internet connection, etc.).</b> <u>Source: Puzić et al. (2022)</u></li> </ul>
<b>Other social factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poverty and inequalities related to family socioeconomic and sociocultural status as dominant factor of educational inequality that shapes educational conditions and quality of life of students</b> <u>Sources: Baranović, ed. (2015); Kletečki Radović, Vejmelka and Družić Ljubotina (2017), Puzić et al. (2023a, 2023b)</u></li> <li>• <b>Lack of public services in smaller communities (e.g. timely psychological help outside of school; early intervention and support for children with disabilities; public transport).</b> <u>Source: Perak (2021)</u></li> <li>• <b>Emergence of crises that widen the gap of existing inequalities (COVID-19 pandemic, earthquake).</b> <u>Source: Ristić Dedić and Jokić (2021), European Parliament (2022)</u></li> </ul>

## 5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: OBJECTIVES




In this section we propose recommendations in the form of overall and specific objectives of future public policies aimed at reducing educational inequalities in secondary education in Croatia. The specific objectives are grouped into six thematic areas, based on a structure developed by the Lifelong Learning for All Network and which is applied to all educational levels (from ECEC to higher education and adult education). In the next section we present recommendations of concrete policy measures to achieve those policy objectives.

The recommendations are complementary with the **National Plan for the Development of the Education System until 2027**, as the Plan also identified educational inequalities as the key challenge to the educational system in Croatia. The mid-term vision of the plan is to make the educational system “inclusive, high-quality and equitable”. The recommendations can serve as an important resource in planning and implementing the measures for secondary education suggested in the Plan.


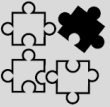

### Overall policy objectives

1. **Ensure equal access to quality secondary education for all students**
2. **Reduce social and gender inequalities in choice of secondary school type**
3. **Provide support to secondary students to reduce achievement gaps and reduce the risk of early school leaving**
4. **Improve the well-being of students in secondary education, especially students from disadvantaged groups**

### Specific policy objectives

Thematic area	Specific objectives
 <p><b>1. Policy framework</b></p>	<p><i>The public policy framework is well defined by various national strategies related to education. The Lifelong Learning for All Thematic Network sees the current framework as satisfactory and believes that the problem analysis and policy recommendations can be incorporated into that framework.</i></p>
 <p><b>2. Accessibility</b></p>	<p>2.1 Remove obstacles to students enrolling in secondary schools in accordance with their educational goals</p> <p>2.2 Reduce gender inequalities in choice of secondary school type</p>
 <p><b>3. Financial support</b></p>	<p>3.1 Ensure regional availability of public funding for textbooks, transportation, accommodation and scholarships for secondary students from disadvantaged groups</p> <p>3.2 Provide technical preconditions for learning support</p> <p>3.3 Systematically address the lack of qualified teaching staff, especially in small communities</p>



 <p><b>4. Support for learners</b></p>	<p>4.1 Provide professional support for mental health and well-being of secondary students.</p>
 <p><b>5. Support for teaching staff</b></p>	<p>5.1 Enhance teacher competences for equity and inclusion 5.2 Provide teacher support to prevent professional burnout</p>
 <p><b>6. Inclusive institutions</b></p>	<p>6.1. Define and ensure the development of competences of head teachers in an inclusive school context 6.2. Define and ensure the development of competences of professional staff in an inclusive school context</p>

## 6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: MEASURES



### 1. Policy framework

*The public policy framework is well defined by various national strategies related to education. The Lifelong Learning for All Thematic Network sees the current framework as satisfactory and believes that the problem analysis and policy recommendations can be incorporated into that framework.*



## 2. Accessibility

<b>Specific objective 2.1.</b>	<b>Remove obstacles to students enrolling in secondary schools in accordance with their educational goals</b>
<b>Measures</b> <sup>2</sup> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the capacity and quotas for most popular schools/programmes</li> <li>• Provide targeted support for removing obstacles to accessing secondary schools</li> <li>• Improve the professional guidance of students in primary schools to raise awareness and aspirations for various types of secondary schools and future career paths</li> <li>• Introduce equity and inclusion criteria to secondary school enrolment criteria</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a model of evaluation and assessment in primary school based on principles of equity and inclusion since they affect students' enrolment in secondary school</li> <li>• Foster primary school educational culture that reinforces education and career aspirations of its students</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA, secondary schools
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measures 2.6 (increase the number of students in gymnasium programmes), 2.8 (vocational guidance) and 3.7 (visibility of vocational education).</i>

<b>Specific objective 2.2</b>	<b>Reduce gender inequalities in choice of secondary school type</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt guidelines for gender equality at primary school level, including gender balance in choosing educational and career paths</li> <li>• Inform male and female students in primary schools on gender non-stereotypical educational and career paths</li> <li>• Improve the professional guidance of male and female students in primary school for the formation of aspirations for various types of secondary schools and later career paths</li> <li>• Provide scholarships for gender non-stereotypical selection of secondary school programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic monitoring and analysis of the results of research and evaluation on gender differences in educational outcomes and subsequent use of the results for the purposes of improving educational policies</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA, school founders (local and regional authorities), schools
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measures 2.6 (increasing the number of students in gymnasium programmes), 2.8 (vocational guidance) and 3.7 (visibility of vocational education)</i>

<sup>2</sup> Short-term/medium-term measures refer to measures that could be adopted over a period of 1 to 4 years. Long-term measures refer to measures that could be adopted over a period of 5 to 10 years



### 3. Financial support

<b>Specific objective 3.1.</b>	<b>Ensure regional availability of public funding for textbooks, transportation, accommodation and scholarships for secondary students from disadvantaged groups</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a model in which the state would centrally identify specific needs of individual counties for additional support for secondary students from disadvantaged groups and allocate funds accordingly</li> <li>• Advocate that all local and regional authorities include disadvantaged groups in the criteria for scholarship awards</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an analysis of school transportation accessibility for secondary students from distant places; based on the results of the analysis, proposing changes in lines, routes or timetables of public transport or subsidizing other means of transport</li> <li>• Propose a plan for the construction of secondary student dormitories in cities attracting students from remote places</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, local and regional authorities
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>There are no related measures in NPDES. We propose adding these measures to new priorities and/or addressing them through other public policy mechanisms.</i>

<b>Specific objective 3.2.</b>	<b>Provide technical preconditions for learning support</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide dedicated space and IT equipment in schools for secondary students who require access outside school hours</li> <li>• Provide equipment that can be loaned out to students from disadvantaged groups</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical support, maintenance and refurbishment of equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, founders of secondary schools
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measure 10.3. (school equipment)</i>

<b>Specific objective 3.3.</b>	<b>Systematically address the lack of qualified teaching staff, especially in small communities</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number and the amounts of scholarships for secondary students of programmes of shortage teaching occupations</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, local and regional authorities
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measure 2.4 (working conditions and professional development)</i>



## 4. Support for learners

<b>Specific objective 4.1.</b>	<b>Provide professional support ensuring student well-being</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a national framework for well-being in schools</li> <li>• Collect data on the well-being of all secondary school students</li> <li>• Analyse collected data and compare it to the results of other research on student well-being</li> <li>• Identify schools with the greatest need for mental health and wellbeing support</li> <li>• Provide support through an interdisciplinary approach in cooperation with local stakeholders (local NGOs, Croatian Social Service Agency, schools, school medicine practices, parents, extra-institutional psychologists, etc.)</li> <li>• If necessary, form mobile teams composed of mental health professionals</li> <li>• Include well-being as a priority in preventive programmes funded by MSE</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Specific NPDES Objectives 6-8 focus on providing targeted support to students with disabilities, gifted students and members of national minorities. We propose including other disadvantaged groups and introducing these measures into new priorities and/or addressing them through other public policy mechanisms.</i>



## 5. Support for teaching staff

<b>Specific objective 5.1.</b>	<b>Improve teacher competences for equity and inclusion</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-/medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct training on equity and inclusion for teachers in cooperation with civil society organisations</li> <li>• Improve PPDME training programmes and introduce content related to equity and inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement professional development/training programmes for teachers at college level aimed at increasing equity and inclusion in schools</li> <li>• Improve curricula for initial teacher education and include subject-matter that promotes equity and inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, higher education institutions, NGOs
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<p><i>Connect with NPDES measure 2.4 (working conditions and professional development).</i></p> <p><i>Specific NPDES Objectives 6-8 focus on providing targeted support to students with disabilities, gifted students and members of national minorities. We propose including other disadvantaged groups and introducing these measures into new priorities and/or addressing them through other public policy mechanisms.</i></p>

<b>Specific objective 5.2.</b>	<b>Support for teachers and professional staff to prevent professional burnout</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a national framework for well-being in schools</li> <li>• Identify the needs of teachers and professional staff working with disadvantaged groups</li> <li>• Provide support in cooperation with local stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA, schools, NGOs
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measure 2.4 (working conditions and professional development)</i>



## 6. Inclusive institutions

<b>Specific objective 6.1.</b>	<b>Define and ensure the development of competences of head teachers in an inclusive school context<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adjustments to the current occupational and qualification standard of head teachers, taking into account the addition of the inclusive dimension to the contents of the document</li> <li>• Ensure the availability of initial training programmes for head teachers that develop competences for inclusive education and inclusive school management</li> <li>• Ensure the availability of programmes for long-term professional training of head teachers that develop competences for inclusive education and inclusive school management</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> (long-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonise constituent acts (laws, regulations, etc.) that govern the education system in Croatia with the principles of inclusive management, taking into account all levels and segments of the education system.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA, AVETAE, ASHE, universities, higher education institutions accredited for initial training of teaching staff, associations of heads of primary and secondary schools
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measure 2.9 (quality of management)</i>

<b>Specific objective 6.2.</b>	<b>Define and ensure the development of competences of professional staff in an inclusive school context</b>
<b>Measures</b> (short-term/ medium-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the availability of programmes for the initial training of professional staff that develop competences for inclusive education</li> <li>• Ensure the availability of programmes for long-term professional training of professional staff that develop competences for inclusive education</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	MSE, ETTA, AVETAE, ASHE, universities, higher education institutions accredited for initial training of teaching staff
<b>NPDES reference</b>	<i>Connect with NPDES measure 2.4 (working conditions and professional development)</i>

<sup>3</sup> Kovač (2022) could serve as the basis for the implementation of measures.

## APPENDIX 1: DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The Lifelong Learning for All Network advocates for ensuring **every individual's** right to high-quality education throughout their entire life, resulting in a positive learning experience, a sense of well-being within their educational community and ultimately educational outcomes that match each person's capacities.

The Network is particularly committed to providing individualised support to persons from **disadvantaged groups**. The Network defines disadvantaged groups as those at greater risk of unequal access to education, lower well-being during the educational process and lower educational achievements due to circumstances or characteristics beyond their control. Examples of such circumstances and characteristics in a lifelong learning perspective (from early to adult age) are presented in the table below.

### *Circumstances and characteristics of disadvantaged groups in the context of lifelong learning (from early to adult age)*

Social and family circumstances:	Individual characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socioeconomic status (low SES and poverty)</li> <li>• Place of residence (in rural, remote and isolated areas)</li> <li>• Membership of ethnic, linguistic and/or religious minorities</li> <li>• Status of refugee, migrant, or asylum-seeker; unaccompanied children; economic migrants</li> <li>• Challenging family circumstances (single-parent families; conflictual family relationships; parental deviant behaviour; familial abuse or neglect; etc.)</li> <li>• Children in alternative care</li> <li>• Exposure to exceptional circumstances such as natural disasters, wars, pandemics, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental risks and delays</li> <li>• Behavioural and/or mental health problems</li> <li>• Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD)</li> <li>• Developmental difficulties and disabilities (e.g. sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, motor disorders, autism)</li> <li>• Chronic illnesses</li> <li>• Traumatic experiences (e.g. death of a parent)</li> <li>• Giftedness</li> <li>• LGBTIQ+ identity</li> <li>• Gender (which can result in unequal outcomes due to stereotypical gender roles)</li> </ul>

Many circumstances and individual characteristics may intersect and, consequently, result in multiple dimensions of disadvantage (e.g. lower socioeconomic status, remote geographical location and challenging family circumstances).

The Network recommends terminological consistency in policy documents by using the term "disadvantaged groups" and by defining the term through a broad definition that considers exposure to various social circumstances and individual characteristics resulting in educational inequalities.



## APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL NOTES ON RECOMMENDATIONS

### Specific objective 2.1

#### **1. Increase capacities and the number of enrolment places in the most sought-after schools/programmes**

Since many students fail to enrol in their secondary school of choice, the educational system needs to ensure flexibility in determining the number of enrolment places based on demand for certain programmes, while ensuring a quality connection with labour market needs, as well as ensure the sustainability and stability of the system (without sudden changes in funding levels for institutions or discontinuation of programmes for in-demand occupations due to current changes in demand levels). It will be particularly important to expand the capacities of gymnasiums and sought-after vocational schools. This can be achieved through a strategic process of making projections of the number of enrolment places by school founders (local or regional authorities), taking into account trends in demand for specific schools and programmes as well as negative demographic trends and societal needs.

#### **2. Ensure targeted support to remove barriers to access to secondary schools**

Secondary students sometimes avoid applying to their secondary school or programme of choice due to the unavailability of schools or programmes in their local/regional area. The educational system needs to improve infrastructure conditions related to transportation, accommodation, and meals for students attending school away from their residence. The system also needs to ensure that secondary students from disadvantaged groups who wish to enrol in a particular programme not available in their local community can receive adequate financial support to cover the costs of attending school or programme elsewhere. Financial support may include:

- subsidised transportation
- subsidised accommodation
- subsidised meals
- scholarships

Data from the National Information System for Enrolment in Secondary Schools can be used to plan this measure to identify the places where candidates applying for certain types of high school programmes come from.

On the other hand, it is necessary to remove physical barriers to access to secondary schools, i.e., to remove architectural barriers that prevent access to secondary schools for students with developmental disabilities.

#### **3. Improve career guidance for primary school students to inform and raise aspirations for various types of secondary schools and later career paths**

Secondary students sometimes "self-exclude" during the process of choosing secondary schools, i.e., they avoid applying to their secondary school or programme of choice for reasons not necessarily related to their abilities and interests, but rather due to factors such as stereotypes and prejudices associated with social background, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability or perception of academic success.

Timely career guidance and counselling at the primary school level can empower students to consider various educational and career paths guided by their intrinsic interests, affinities, and capabilities. Such career guidance presupposes an interactive process and dialogue through workshops, rather than solely through information channels or through the use of psychodiagnostic instruments. The implementation of this measure in schools can be ensured in collaboration with regional career advising centres (CISOK centres) and/or civil society organisations. This measure should be linked to measure 2.8. from the NPDES, which foresees an active role for teachers in the process of career guidance and counselling.

This measure may include conducting a national information campaign to inform primary school students about educational and career pathways, as well as informing and counselling parents of primary school students about possible educational and career options for their children.

#### **4. Introduce criteria to promote equity and inclusion in secondary school admission criteria**

The previous Regulation on Elements and Criteria for Selecting Candidates for Enrolment in the First Grade of Secondary School (Articles 18, 19, 20, 21) provided the right to an additional point for candidates from three different disadvantaged groups: students with disabilities (“health difficulties”); students “living in difficult educational conditions caused by unfavourable economic, social, and educational factors”; and students belonging to the Roma national minority. According to the new regulation, the criterion of an additional point for students with disabilities and those living in difficult educational conditions has been removed. Instead, the aforementioned groups are given priority in admission when two or more candidates have the same number of points from the elements scored for admission. The right to one additional point remains only for children without parents or appropriate parental care and members of the Roma national minority (who are entitled to two additional points). This change further complicates access to the secondary school of choice for disadvantaged groups. The proposal is particularly problematic when considering that the regulation still provides up to 4 additional points for results in knowledge competitions and sports competitions or even direct enrolment.

Measures need to be taken to create a fair and inclusive education system in Croatia and prevent educational inequalities. Giving additional points and advantages in admission is one way to achieve this goal. Therefore, it would be fairer not to abolish the additional point for students with health difficulties and those living in difficult educational conditions (according to Articles 18, 19, and 20 of the current Regulation) and to give priority in admission to all disadvantaged groups listed in the Regulation (in Articles 18, 19, 20, and 21 of the current Regulation).

#### **Long-term measures**

Reducing the cohort of young people due to negative demographic trends could partially address the problem, since the number of enrolment places increases as the number of children decreases.

## **Specific objective 2.2.**

### **1. Develop guidelines for gender equality at the level of primary schools, which include gender balance in the selection of educational and career paths**

These guidelines can be based on the publication Kožić Komar, V., S. Cesar, and V. Pavlović (2021). Guidelines for Achieving Gender Equality in Schools. Zagreb: Forum for Freedom of Education.

### **2. Inform students about gender-non-stereotypical educational and career paths**

Activities may include informational campaigns and the appointment of ambassadors to raise awareness of the benefits of a wide range of choices. In addition to students, it is desirable to inform parents or guardians.

### **3. Improve career guidance for primary school students to form aspirations for various types of secondary schools and later career paths**

Timely career guidance and counselling at the primary school level can empower students to consider various educational and professional paths guided by their intrinsic interests, affinities, and capabilities.

Such career guidance presupposes an interactive process and dialogue through workshops, rather than solely through information channels or through the use of psychodiagnostic instruments.

### **4. Provide scholarships for gender-non-stereotypical choices of high school programmes**

Scholarships for gender-non-stereotypical choices of secondary school programmes, besides resulting in an increase in the number of gender-non-stereotypical choices of high school programmes, can have a particularly positive effect on students from disadvantaged groups.

## **Specific objective 3.1.**

### **1. Develop a model whereby the state determines the need for additional support for students from disadvantaged groups from the central level to the counties and allocates funds accordingly**

Such a model seeks to ensure that students from disadvantaged groups receive targeted support. Financial support may include subsidised transportation, subsidised accommodation, subsidised meals, scholarships.

Data from the National Information System for Enrolment in Secondary Schools can be used to plan this measure to identify the places where candidates applying for certain types of high school programmes come from.

### **2. Advocate for including disadvantaged groups in the criteria for scholarships awarded by all LSGs**

The existence of criteria related to students from disadvantaged groups contributes to increasing fairness and can contribute to reducing educational inequalities.

### **Long-term measures**

**1. Conduct an analysis of transportation possibilities to school for students from remote areas. Based on the analysis results, propose changes to public transportation lines, routes, or schedules, or subsidise other forms of transportation**

Data from the National Information System for Enrolment in Secondary Schools can be used to plan this measure to identify the places where candidates applying for certain types of high school programmes come from.

**2. Develop a plan for the construction of student dormitories in cities where students from remote areas gravitate**

Data from the National Information System for Enrolment in Secondary Schools can be used to plan this measure to identify the places where candidates applying for certain types of high school programmes come from.

### **Specific objective 3.3.**

**1. Increase the number and amount of scholarships for students in study programmes for deficit teaching professions**

Some teaching professions are in short supply on the labour market (e.g., teachers of mathematics, physics, informatics), and the proportion of inadequately represented teaching increases. Scholarships will contribute to increasing the number of enrolled students in study programmes for deficit teaching professions.

## Specifični cilj 2.1

### **1. Povećati kapacitete i broj upisnih mjesta u najtraženijim školama/programima**

Budući da brojni učenici ne uspiju upisati srednju školu u skladu sa svojim obrazovnim ciljevima, sustav treba osigurati fleksibilnost u određivanju broja upisnih mjesta s obzirom na potražnju za određenim programima, uz osiguravanje kvalitetne poveznice s potrebama tržišta rada, kao i održivosti i stabilnosti sustava (bez naglih promjena u razini financiranja ustanova ili ukidanja programa deficitarnih zanimanja zbog trenutnih izmjena u razini potražnje). Posebno će biti važno proširivati kapacitete gimnazija i traženih strukovnih škola.

Navedeno se može postići strateškim procesom projekcija upisnih mjesta na razini osnivača škola na lokalnoj ili regionalnoj razini, koji uzima u obzir trendove u potražnji određenih škola i programa te negativne demografske trendove i potrebe društva.

### **2. Osigurati ciljanu potporu za otklanjanje prepreka pristupu srednjim školama**

Učenici ponekad odustaju od prijave u željenu srednju školu ili programme zbog nedostupnosti škole ili programa u njihovoj lokalnoj/regionalnoj sredini. Sustav treba unaprijediti infrastrukturne preduvjete koji se odnose na prijevoz, smještaj i prehranu učenika koji se školuju izvan prebivališta. Sustav također treba osigurati da svaki učenik iz skupina u nepovoljnom položaju koji želi upisati određeni programme koji nije dostupan u lokalnoj sredini može dobiti adekvatnu financijsku podršku za pokrivanje troškova pohađanja škole ili programa u drugom mjestu. Financijska potpora može uključivati:

- subvencionirani prijevoz
- subvencionirani smještaj
- subvencionirana prehrana
- stipendije.

Za planiranje ove mjere mogu se koristiti podatci iz Nacionalnog informacijskog sustava upisa u srednje škole radi identificiranja mjesta iz kojih dolaze kandidati koji se prijavljuju na određene vrste srednjoškolskih programa.

S druge strane, nužno je ukloniti i fizičke prepreke pristupu srednjim školama, tj. ukloniti arhitektonske barijere koje onemogućuju pristup srednjim školama učenicima s teškoćama u razvoju.

### **3. Unaprijediti profesionalno usmjeravanje učenika u osnovnoj školi za informiranje i podizanje aspiracija za razne vrste srednjih škola i kasnijih profesionalnih usmjerenja**

Učenici se ponekad „samoisključuju“ u procesu odabira srednjih škola tj. odustaju od prijave u željenu srednju školu ili programme zbog razloga koji nisu nužno vezani uz njihove sposobnosti i interese (npr. stereotipi i predrasude koji su povezani uz društveno porijeklo, etnicitet, socioekonomski status, teškoće, percepciju akademske uspješnosti).

Pravodobno profesionalno savjetovanje i usmjeravanje na osnovnoškolskoj razini može osnažiti učenike da razmotre razne obrazovne i karijerne putove koji su vođeni njihovim intrinzičnim interesima, afinitetima i mogućnostima. Takvo profesionalno usmjeravanje pretpostavlja

interaktivan proces i razgovor putem radionica, a ne isključivo putem kanala informiranja ili putem korištenja psihodijagnostičkih instrumenata. Provedba ove mjere u školama može biti osigurana u suradnji sa CISOK centrima i/ili organizacijama civilnog društva. Ovu mjeru treba povezati s mjerom 2.8. iz Nacionalnog plana razvoja sustava obrazovanja koja predviđa aktivnu ulogu nastavnika u procesu profesionalnog savjetovanja i usmjeravanja.

Ova mjera može uključivati provođenje nacionalne informativne kampanje za informiranje učenika osnovnih škola o obrazovnim i profesionalnim usmjerenjima, kao i informiranje i savjetovanje roditelja osnovnoškolaca o mogućim obrazovnim i profesionalnim usmjerenjima za svoju djecu.

#### **4. Uvesti kriterije za poticanje pravičnosti i uključivosti u kriterije upisa u srednju školu**

Prošlim Pravilnikom o elementima i kriterijima za izbor kandidata za upis u I. razred srednje škole (čl. 18., 19., 20., 21.) bilo je osigurano pravo na jedan dodatni bod za kandidate iz tri različite skupine u nepovoljnom položaju: učenici sa zdravstvenim teškoćama; učenici koji žive u otežanim uvjetima obrazovanja uzrokovanim nepovoljnim ekonomskim, socijalnim te odgojnim čimbenicima; učenici pripadnici romske nacionalne manjine. Prema novom Pravilniku ukida se dodatni bod za učenike sa zdravstvenim teškoćama i one koji žive u otežanim uvjetima obrazovanja (uzrokovanim nepovoljnim ekonomskim, socijalnim te odgojnim čimbenicima). Umjesto dodatnog boda, navedenim se skupinama daje prednost pri upisu u slučaju kada dva ili više kandidata imaju izjednačen broj bodova iz elemenata koji se boduju za upis. Pravo na jedan dodatni bod ostaje samo djeci bez roditelja ili odgovarajuće roditeljske skrbi te pripadnicima romske nacionalne manjine (koji imaju pravo na dva dodatna boda). Ovom izmjenom se dodatno otežava pristup željenim srednjim školama skupinama u nepovoljnom položaju. Prijedlog je posebno problematičan ako se uzme u obzir da Pravilnik i dalje osigurava do 4 dodatna boda za rezultate u natjecanjima iz znanja i sportskim natjecanjima ili čak izravan upis.

Potrebno je poduzeti mjere za stvaranje pravičnog i uključivog sustava odgoja i obrazovanja u Hrvatskoj te sprečavanje obrazovnih nejednakosti. Upravo je davanje dodatnih bodova i prednosti pri upisu jedan od načina postizanja toga cilja. Stoga, bilo bi pravičnije da se ne ukine dodatni bod za učenike sa zdravstvenim teškoćama i one koji žive u otežanim uvjetima obrazovanja (prema člancima 18., 19. i 20. važećeg Pravilnika) te da se uz dodatni bod daje prednost pri upisu svim skupinama u nepovoljnom položaju navedenim u Pravilniku (u člancima 18., 19., 20. i 21. važećeg Pravilnika).

#### **Dugoročne mjere**

Smanjivanje kohorte mladih zbog negativnih demografskih trendova moglo bi pridonijeti djelomičnom rješavanju problema budući da se broj upisnih mjesta povećava smanjivanjem broja djece.

#### **Specifični cilj 2.2.**

##### **1. Donijeti smjernice za rodnu ravnopravnost na razini osnovnih škola, koje uključuju i rodnu ravnotežu u odabiru obrazovnih i karijernih putova**

Navedene smjernice mogu se temeljiti na publikaciji Kožić Komar, V., S. Cesar i V. Pavlović (2021.) Smjernice za ostvarenje rodne ravnopravnosti u školama. Zagreb: Forum za slobodu odgoja.

##### **2. Informirati učenike i učenice o rodno nestereotipnim obrazovnim i karijernim putovima**

Aktivnosti mogu uključivati informativne kampanje te imenovanje ambasadora koji bi osvještavali o prednostima širokog spektra odabira. Osim učenika poželjno je informirati i roditelje ili skrbnike.

### **3. Unaprijediti profesionalno usmjeravanje učenika i učenica u osnovnoj školi za formiranje aspiracija za razne vrste srednjih škola i kasnijih karijernih putova**

Pravodobno profesionalno savjetovanje i usmjeravanje na osnovnoškolskoj razini može osnažiti učenike da razmotre razna obrazovna i profesionalna usmjerenja koji su vođeni njihovim intrinzičnim interesima, afinitetima i mogućnostima.

Takvo profesionalno usmjeravanje pretpostavlja interaktivan proces i razgovor putem radionica, a ne isključivo putem kanala informiranja ili putem korištenja psihodijagnostičkih instrumenata.

### **4. Osigurati stipendije za rodno nestereotipne odabire srednjoškolskih programa**

Stipendiranje rodno nestereotipnih odabira srednjoškolskih programa, osim što rezultira povećanjem broja rodno nestereotipnih odabira srednjoškolskih programa, može imati posebno pozitivan učinak na učenike iz skupina u nepovoljnom položaju.

#### **Specifični cilj 3.1**

##### **1. Razviti model prema kojem bi država iz centralne razine prema županijama utvrdila potrebe za dodatnom podrškom za učenike iz skupina u nepovoljnom položaju te alocirala sredstva**

Takvim modelom nastoji se osigurati da učenici iz skupina u nepovoljnom položaju dobiju ciljanu podršku. Financijska potpora može uključivati subvencionirani prijevoz, subvencionirani smještaj, subvencioniranu prehranu, stipendije.

Za planiranje ove mjere mogu se koristiti podatci iz Nacionalnog informacijskog sustava upisa u srednje škole radi identificiranja mjesta iz kojih dolaze kandidati koji se prijave na određene vrste srednjoškolskih programa.

##### **2. Zagovarati da kod svih JLPS koji dodjeljuju stipendije u kriterije uđu i skupine u nepovoljnom položaju**

Postojanje kriterija koji se odnose na učenike iz skupina u nepovoljnom položaju doprinosi povećanju pravičnosti i može pridonijeti smanjenju obrazovnih nejednakosti.

#### **Dugoročne mjere**

##### **1. Izraditi analizu mogućnosti prijevoza do škole za učenike iz udaljenih mjesta. Na temelju rezultata analize predložiti izmjene u linijama, trasama ili redu vožnje javnog prijevoza, ili subvencionirati druge oblike prijevoza**

Za planiranje ove mjere mogu se koristiti podatci iz Nacionalnog informacijskog sustava upisa u srednje škole radi identificiranja mjesta iz kojih dolaze kandidati koji se prijave na određene vrste srednjoškolskih programa.

##### **2. Izraditi plan izgradnje učeničkih domova u gradovima prema kojima gravitiraju učenici iz udaljenih mjesta**

Za planiranje ove mjere mogu se koristiti podatci iz Nacionalnog informacijskog sustava upisa u srednje škole radi identificiranja mjesta iz kojih dolaze kandidati koji se prijave na određene vrste srednjoškolskih programa.

### **Specifični cilj 3.3.**

#### ***1. Povećati broj i iznos stipendija za studente studijskih programa za deficitarna nastavnička zanimanja***

Na tržištu rada nedostaje nekih nastavničkih zanimanja (npr. deficitarni su nastavnici matematike, fizike, informatike) te se povećava udio nestručno zastupljene nastave. Stipendiranje će pridonijeti povećanju broja upisanih studenata u studijske programe za deficitarna nastavnička zanimanja.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASHE – Agency for Science and Higher Education

AVETAE – Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education

ETTA – Education and Teacher Training Agency

EU – European Union

MSE – Ministry of Science and Education

NCEEE – National Centre for External Evaluation of Education

NPDES – National Plan for the Development of the Education System until 2027

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4. Academy for Political Development: Ivana Novoselec
5. Croatian Association for Early Childhood Intervention: Marina Šimanović
6. Public Open University Zagreb: Tihomir Žiljak
7. Nansen Dialogue Centre: Ivana Milas; Valentina Mikulić
8. Association of Cities in the Croatia: Lucija Jusup
9. Parents' Association "Step by Step": Matea Biloglav; Karmen Stipeč; Renato Vuk
10. Association for Development of Higher Education "Universitas": Vesna Kovač; Ivana Miočić
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13. University Counselling Centre, University of Rijeka: Ivanka Živčić-Bećirević; Tamara Martinac Dorčić; Sandra Nuždić
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15. Croatian Andragogy Society: Dražen Maksimović; Siniša Kusić; Morana Koludrović; Anita Zovko
16. Human Rights House Zagreb: Tina Đaković
17. GOOD Initiative: Branimira Penić
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22. Ambidexter Club: Martina Horvat
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