The Status of Inclusive Education in Croatian VET schools

Based on the results of baseline study „Regional Support for Inclusive Education

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CROATIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: THE CONTEXT

- The context of profound economic and social crisis and ever-increasing youth unemployment

- No changes in the structure of the system in last decades

- Comparing to EU countries, Croatia has shorter compulsory and general education and shorter primary education

- Tertiary educational attainment in 2012 (age 30 – 34): 23.7% (EU target 40%)

- Basic skills - Level 1 or lower in PISA: (EU target 15%)
  - Reading 22.5%
  - Mathematics 33.2%
  - Science 18.5%

- Early school leaving: the lowest rate in Europe - 4.2%
  - VET pupils (in particular in 3 –yr programmes)
  - Boys
  - Disadvantaged minorities, including Roma

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The Structure of the Croatian Education System
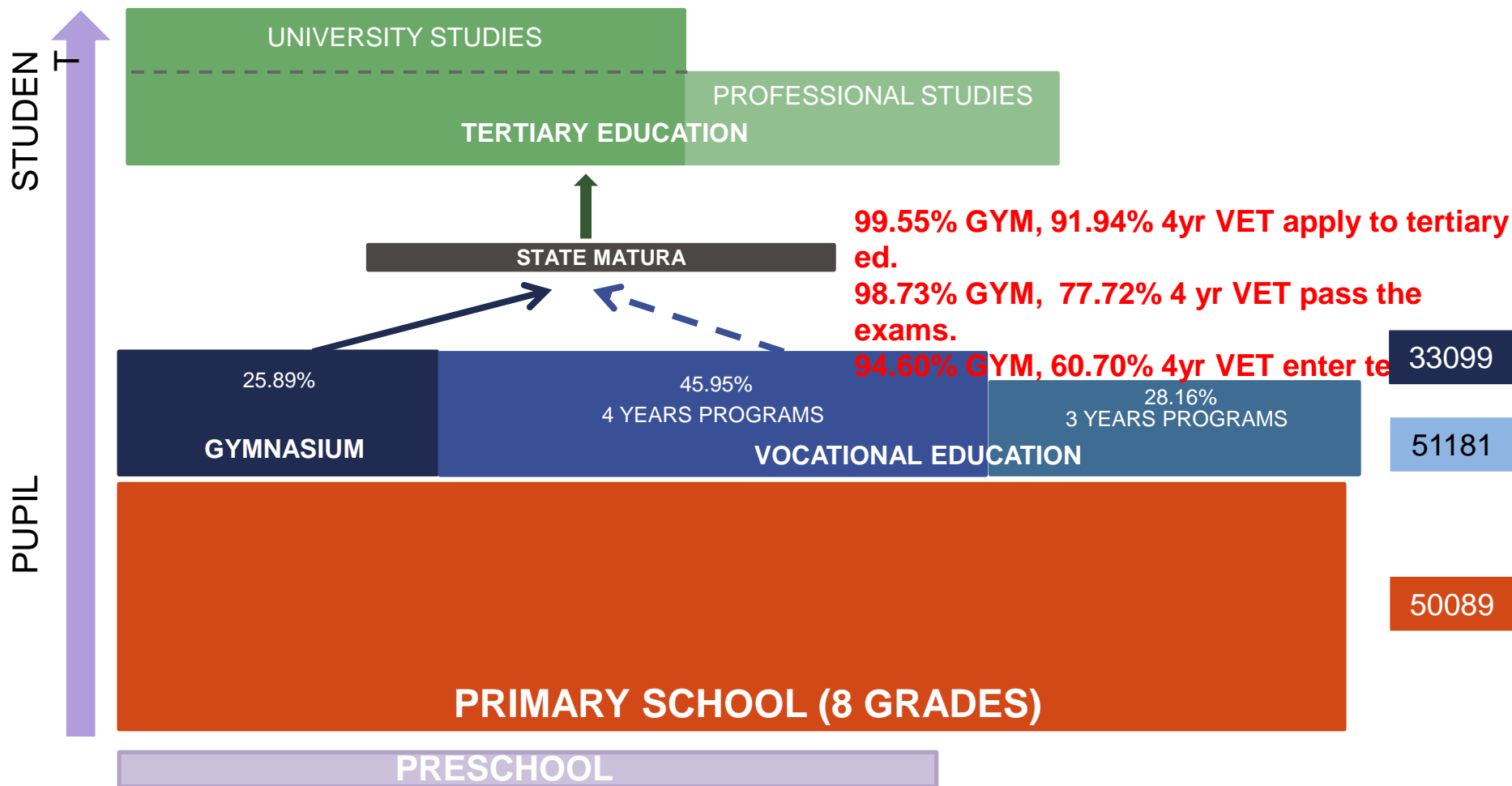
Secondary education - VET

- Secondary education is not compulsory, but enrolment is generally high: GER 98%; NER 93%.

- 350 VET programmes – 14 broad sectors

- 4 yrs programmes: entry to labour market but also access to the State Matura

- 3 yrs programmes: no direct access to the Matura exams, no direct pathway toward tertiary education

- Interest of pupils for 3 yrs programmes is steadily declining – enrolment halved in past 15 years

- Admission selective only in 4-yrs programmes

- Positive discrimination measures for some groups of pupils (direct entry, additional points)

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Results of the baseline study „Regional support for Inclusive Education" in VET schools

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The schools

Gospodarska škola Čakovec (543 pupils): 4yrs and 3 yrs: agriculture, food, veterinary medicine, transport and logistics, textile and leather, security, personal services

Ekonomska i upravna škola Osijek (802 pupils): 4yrs economist, secretary, administrative clerk.

Gimnazija B. Frankopana Ogulin (442 pupils): mixed school, 4yrs and 3 yrs: economy, business administration, tourism, salesmen
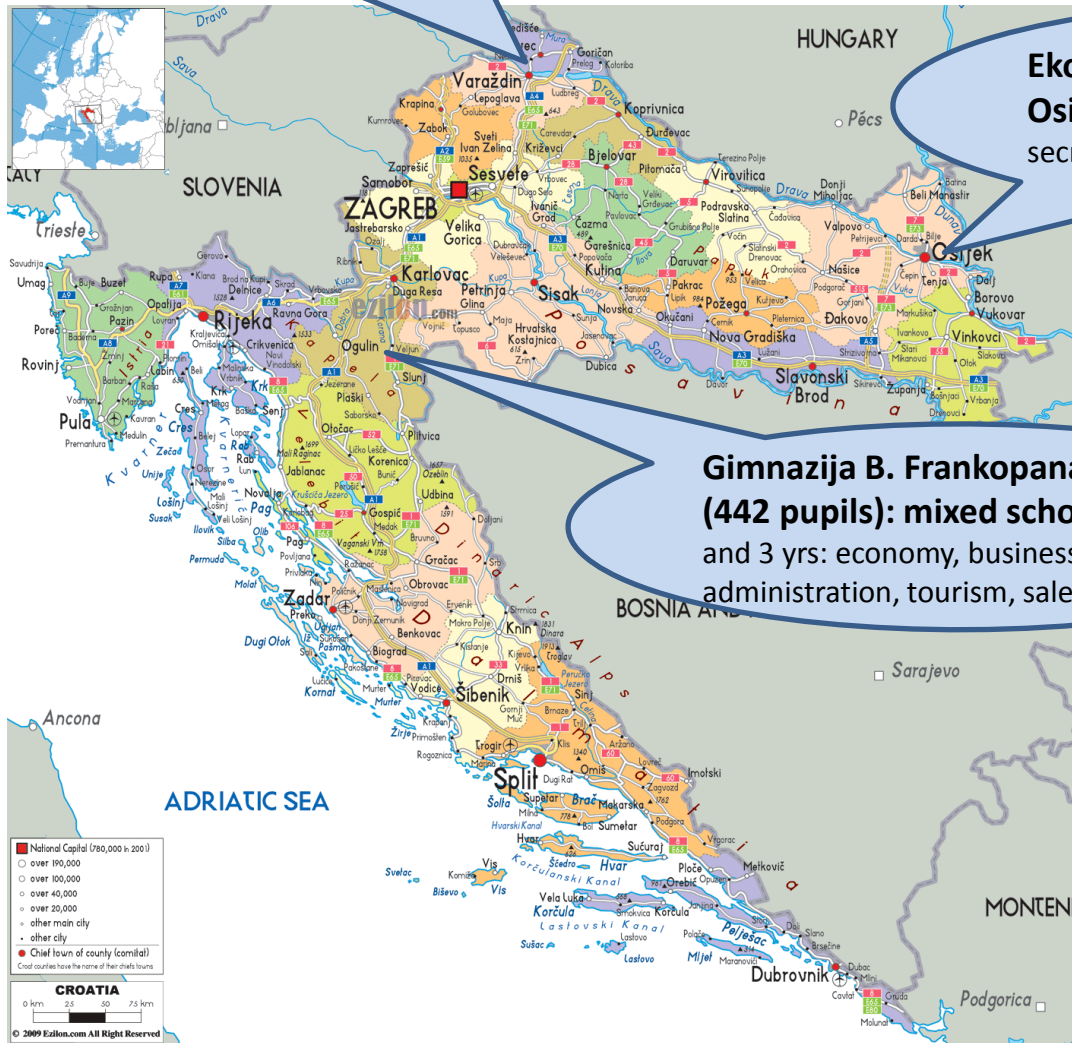
Index for inclusion

	Average VET	Average other schools
Inclusive teaching and practice approach (C)	3.98	4.10
Inclusion practices for entry into school (A)	3.59	3.76
Inclusion within school (B)	3.32	3.46
Community involvement (D)	3.06	3.27
Index for inclusion	3.49	3.65

- Index for inclusion lower in VET schools than in primary schools and gymnasium

- The differences were rather small, but consistent

- The same ranking of dimensions in all schools

Inclusive teaching and practice approach

- Scores calculated based on the responses of school staff who were in general more positive (socially desirable answers)

- The highest estimations (above 4.3) on items „Equal treatment gender", „Equal treatment ethnicity", „Equal treatment religion"

- High estimations also on items „Students well informed about classroom rules", „Inclusive practices important part of the job", „Provision of the opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities"

- Parents' views:

   24.1% children are not treated fairly by teachers;

   22.2% children do not receive support from school when needed;

   19.1% children are not happy at school

Inclusive practices for entry into school

- Students' responses were more negative than parents'

- For all groups the lowest score was obtained on item „Steps taken by the school to familiarise students and their parents prior to their enrolment"

- Parents from large city in particular lack information about school prior to enrolment

- In the mixed school, VET students gave more positive responses on items „Students helped on entry" and „Familiarisation prior to enrolment" than their gymnasium colleagues

Inclusion within school

- Based on students' responses

- Perception of system fairness and of teachers' equality in approach of every students is rather infavourable

- The least positive scores on „Feels that teachers treat students equally", „Feels involved in formulating rules", „Feels that classroom rules are fair"

- The average value on „Feels that teachers treat students equally" is 2.17

- No gender differences were obtained in general

- Students from 4-th grade were more critical on most items

- Students from 3-rd grade believed more that teachers are friendly and that teachers treat all students equally

- In the mixed school VET students experienced more bullying and claimed that other students are less friendly

Community engagement

- The lowest overall score

- More critical parental responses

- Lower estimations for secondary schools than primary

- The most problematic item for all respondents' groups – „Parents are involved in the school activities"

- Average scores given by parents is 1.82

- Parents disagreed with the statement more than teachers

- „Equal treatment of families, irrespective of their background" higher scores given by teachers and school staff than parents

Link school - job

- Contents learned at school relevant for future job: (very)much 42.2; Somewhat 30.7%; No 27.1%

- Skills relevant for future job: (very)much 38.7%; Somewhat 37.2%; No 24.1%

- Future plans:

Look for job	29,1%
Further education	7,7%
University	45,4%
Family business	2,3%
Don't know	15,4%

- 58.7% one year or more would be needed to find a job

- Schools collaborate with other organisations to ease transition to employment/next education cycle: (very)much 22%; Somewhat 35%; No 43.0%

Recommendations based on the results of the baseline study „Regional support for Inclusive Education" in VET schools

School-family partnership

- Enhance cooperation with parents, by widening and diversifying communication with parents, involving parents in different aspects of school life, using parental resources (their life experience, skills, expertise, time etc.)

- Develop action plans for building partnership that would facilitate parental active participation

- Special emphasis should be given to familiarisation of families with schools prior to enrolment or at the entrance point

- Facilitation of involvement of families coming from underprivileged social backgrounds. Schools should initiate dialogs with these families.

- Help schools in devising mechanisms and building capacities for working with families.

School-local community partnership

- Currently, cooperation is mostly on administrative level

- No incentives for building closer links

- Enhance cooperation with local community, by establishing and maintaining links with individual members of the communities, local institutions and associations, being responsive to local community needs, nurturing local community specificities, using community resources of different kind etc.

- Utilise resources of parents and other community members which are naturally linked to the schools

Engaging pupils in school policy development

- Whole school approach in working on the schools policies

- Need to widen pupils' active participation

- Involve students in rule-making processes (e.g. in development of code of conduct and specific classroom rules)

- Provide other means through which students can make significant contributions to decisions that are of particular relevance to their academic and school life.

- Communicate with students in clear and timely manner about all relevant issues, especially about those related to students' assessment and evaluation

- Ask for students' contribution to the development of school tasks and assessment tools

Support for pupils with special needs

- Secure continuous high-quality additional support for students with special needs and monitor their adaptation and progress

- Various types of remedial teaching, assistance during regular teaching process, educational and career guidance and counselling etc.

- Schools may, at the proposal of the school founder, with the approval of the Ministry, engage educators (assistant teachers) to support students with special needs in school setting

- Financing of the assistant teachers is the responsibility of local governments or NGOs – extra challenge for schools in less developed areas

- Development of fair and effective system for employment, training and licencing of assistant teachers (one measure in the new National Strategy)

Inclusive education in Educational Policies

- No awareness of differential treatment of different groups of pupils within schools – mismatch between school staff's and students/ parents' perspectives

- Educational inclusion is predominantly framed narrowly in terms of the integration of students with disabilities or, sometimes with inclusion of Roma children into the education

- Broadening of the definition is needed

- Raising awareness of the issues of diversity and of the benefits of inclusive education

- Enhancing the capacities of school staff for designing and implementing inclusive education policies and practices

Thank you for listening!