



OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN CROATIA

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Legal Framework

- Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity (2022)
- Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science (2022)



Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity

Main goals:

- modernizing the system of higher education and scientific activities
- connecting the needs of the labour market, economy and society as a whole with the system of higher education and scientific research
- emphasizing the social role of higher education and higher education institutions
- lifelong learning
- internalization of higher education and science



Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science

Key changes:

- full autonomy of Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in conducting the external quality assurance processes
- stipulating the establishment of internal quality assurance system by all higher education institutions
- focus on quality assurance evaluation procedures
- key evaluations:
 - institutional accreditation (reaccreditation, 5-year cycle)
 - study programme accreditation



Higher Education System

- fully aligned with the European Higher Education Area (48 European countries committed to implementing the Bologna Process)
- public and private higher education institutions
- binary higher education system - university and professional studies
- accredited programmes according to the Bologna structure: 3 cycles of HE (Bachelor, Master, PhD programs)
- student workload expressed in ECTS credits



Higher Education Institutions

117 higher education institutions

14 universities: 10 public, 4 private

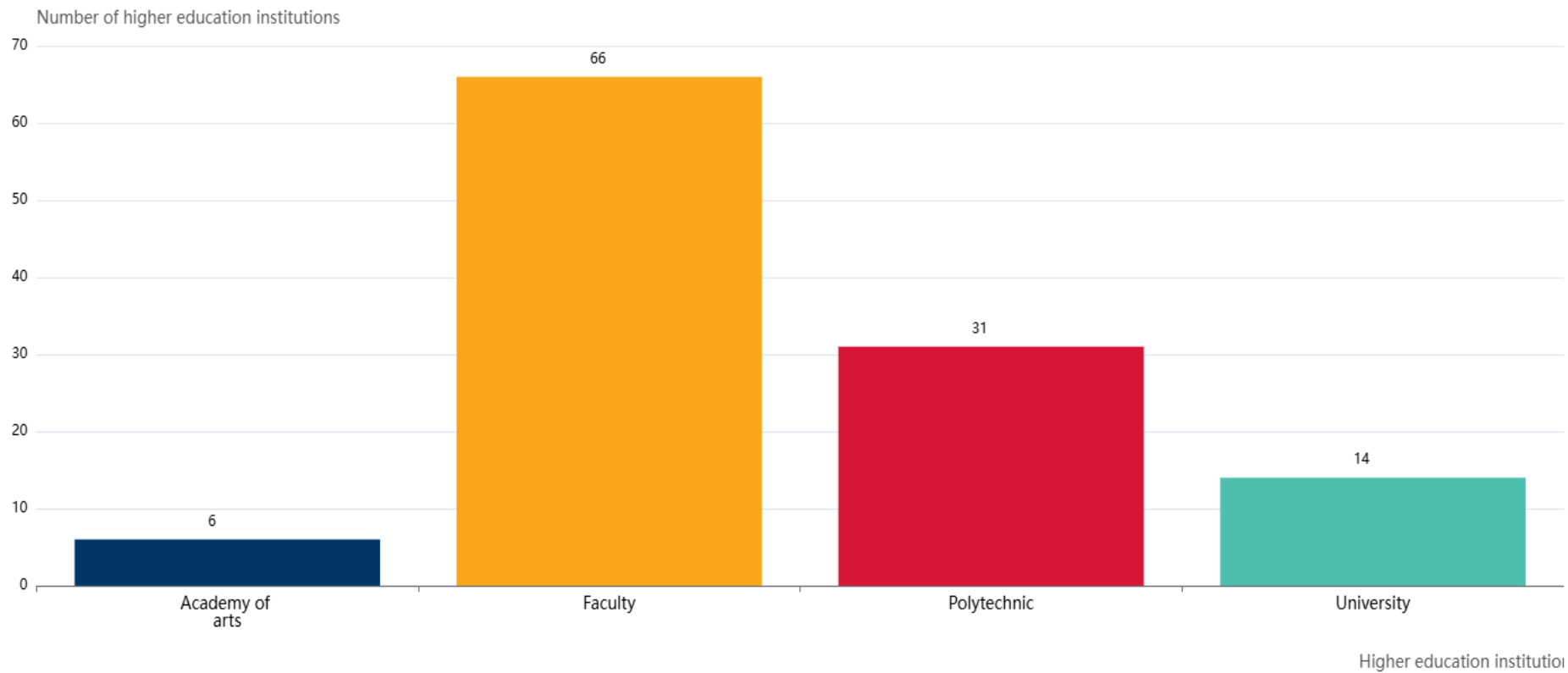
72 faculties and academies of arts

31 universities of applied sciences: 13 public, 18 private



Higher Education Institutions

Number of higher education institutions - Higher education institution type



Higher education institution



Integrated and Non-integrated Universities

Non-integrated universities

- public (Universities of Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, Split)
- constituents – faculties and academies of arts – legal entities

Integrated universities

- private (Algebra Bernays University, Catholic University of Croatia, Libertas International University, VERN University)
- public (Universities of Dubrovnik, Zadar, Pula, Slavonski Brod, University North, Dr. Franjo Tuđman Defense and Security University)
- constituents – departments



HE system in Croatia

	Levels	Duration & Credits
<p>UNIVERSITY STUDIES</p> <p>University study programmes qualify students to work in science and higher education, private and public sectors, and society in general, as well as to develop and apply scientific, artistic and professional knowledge</p> <p>* In some professions (e.g. medicine, law), undergraduate and graduate studies are integrated in a one-tier programme</p>	UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES	3 - 4 years (6 - 8 semesters) 180-240 ECTS
	UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDIES	1 - 2 years (2 - 4 semesters) 60-120 ECTS
	UNIVERSITY SPECIALIST STUDY (ADVANCED MASTER)	1 – 2 years
	DOCTORAL STUDIES (PhD)	3 years
<p>PROFESSIONAL STUDIES</p> <p>Professional study programmes provide students with an appropriate level of knowledge and skills required to work in applied professions, as well as direct integration into the working process</p>	PROFESSIONAL 'SHORT CYCLE' STUDIES	2 years 120 ECTS
	PROFESSIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES	3 - 4 years 180-240 ECTS
	PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE STUDIES	1 - 2 years 60-120 ECTS

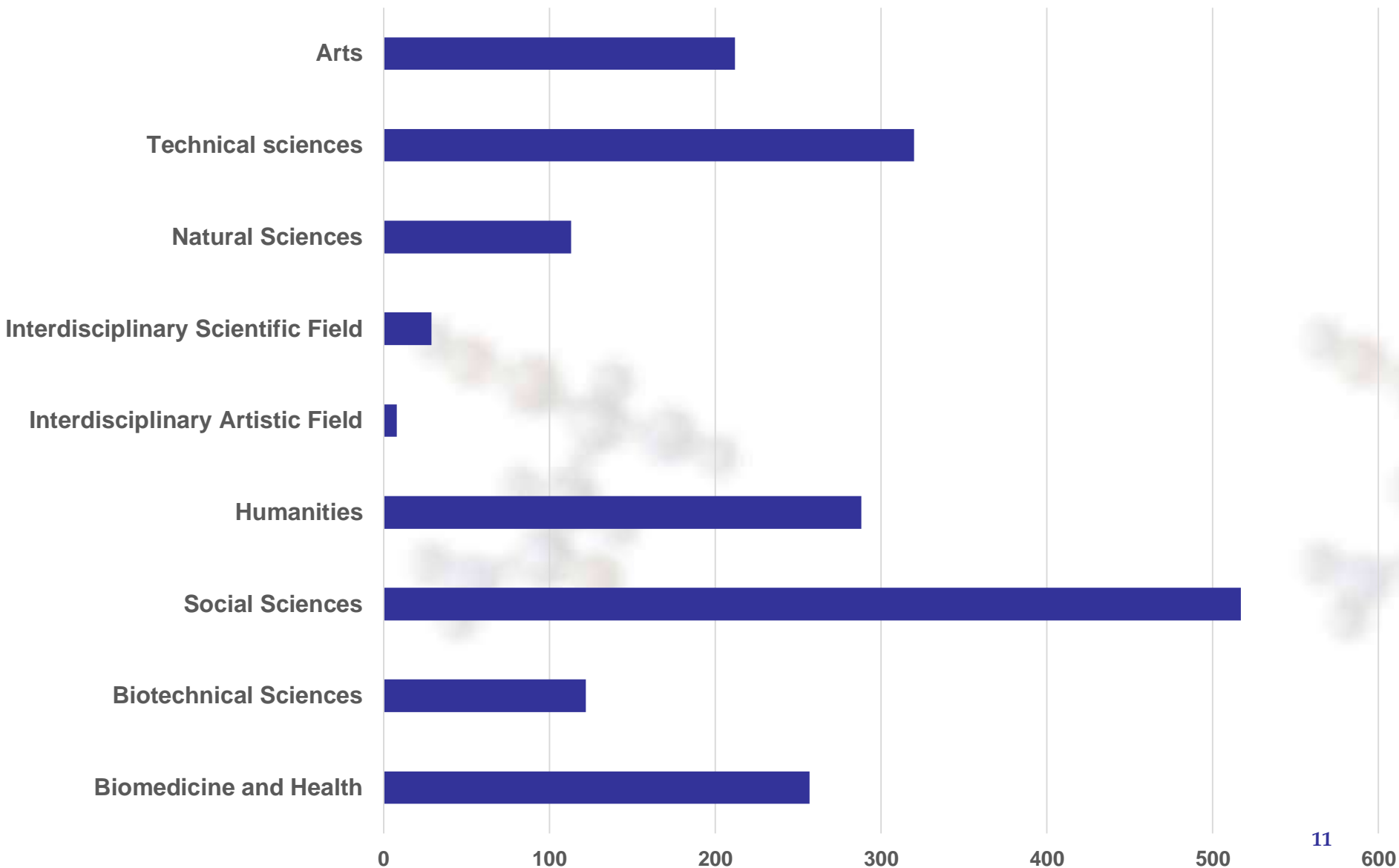


Study Programmes at Croatian Higher Education Institutions

- a total of **1868** accredited study programmes
 - 1716 in Croatian
 - 152 in foreign languages (majority in English – 147; 3 in Italian, 1 in German, 1 in Slovene)
 - 32 online study programmes
 - 65 joint study programmes (17 are carried out in partnership with foreign higher education institutions)



Study programmes according to area of science / arts





Students

Number of students (2025/2026)

- 147 419 (total)
- 131 707 (public HEI)
- 15 712 (private HEI)

University of Zagreb (58 436 students)



Teaching Staff

- teachers at the university are employed in scientific-teaching and artistic-teaching positions: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor and Full Professor with Tenure
- teaching positions for language instruction in university programmes: lector, senior lector and lector advisor
- teaching, science and institutional work



Teaching Staff

- teachers at the university of applied sciences are employed in teaching positions: Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Professional Study Professor, Tenured Professional Study Professor
- teaching positions for language instruction: lecturer, senior lecturer and lecturer advisor
- teaching positions in the artistic field: répétiteur, senior répétiteur, and répétiteur advisor, as well as artistic associate, senior artistic associate, and artistic advisor
- mostly teaching



Research institutes

- 25 public research institutes
- researchers at the institutes are employed in research positions: Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, Research Advisor, Tenured Research Advisor
- scientific projects and conducting research
- 17.000 researchers
- 60% of the researchers are employed in higher education
- international cooperation – cca 250 bilateral scientific research projects are being implemented



Financing of Public HEI and Research Institutes

- new model of financing
- *Regulation on Programme-Based Funding of Public Higher Education Institutions and Public Research Institutes in the Republic of Croatia*
- programme contracts: provide for multiannual funding of **the basic, developmental, and performance-based budget components** from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia
- concluded with all research institutes (25), all public universities (9) and two universities of applied sciences for the period 2024-2027



Content of the Programme Contract

The programme contract contains provisions on:

- **strategic and specific objectives** to be achieved within the agreed programme period
- **measurable indicators** for the achievement of the agreed objectives
- **development activities** and their contribution to the achievement of the agreed objectives
- **the basic, developmental, and performance-based budget components**
- **the total amount of funds** allocated under the programme contract (and annual allocation)
- the expected annual revenue from earmarked and own sources
- the conditions for exercising the right to the amount of the performance-based budget component
- the obligation to report on and monitor the implementation indicators of the programme contract



Programme agreements – division of duties

- **Ministry:** responsible for negotiations, contracting and monitoring
- **Agency for Science and HE:** responsible for evaluation, including expert review panels assessing the achievement of agreed targets and indicators
- Result-based monitoring system provides evidence on improvements in teaching quality and institutional development.



Government Priorities and Measures in Higher Education and Science

MEASURES FROM THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2027

- **Advancement of IT infrastructure of HE** in line with EU initiatives related to digital transformation of education, establishing the Central Database of HE including Register of Diplomas as a key element of improving the graduate tracking system
- Advancement of **internal and external quality assurance of HE** (in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assistance in HE)
- **updating study programmes by increasing their relevance for labour market and society** in line with the Croatian Qualifications Framework (Qualifications' Standards and Occupational Standards)



Priority area: Advancement of IT infrastructure of HE

- **National Strategy of Digital Croatia** (all sectors)
- Key measure for HE: **e-Universities project** (implemented by CARNET) including:
 - improving the digital teaching infrastructure at HEIs
 - introducing digital teaching tools
 - strengthening digital competences of teachers



e-Universities project - continued

- a separate activity aimed at the establishment of a new Central Database of HE (implemented by the University of Zagreb Computing Centre/SRCE)
- the new Information System of Evidences in HE/ ISEVO) includes:
 - Register of Applicants for HE
 - Students' Register
 - Register of Employees of HEIs
 - Digital Register of Diplomas



STEM

- Legal framework for programme funding allows for the modernisation of study programmes including the design of **new study programmes in the STEM field**
- **STEM and ICT State Scholarships** (introduced in 2022): enhanced accessibility and inclusion of study programmes of strategic interest
- 1501 STEM State Scholarships in the acad. year 2025/2026
- STEM Teaching Studies State Scholarships – employment at schools without a public call



STEM

- despite of the general decline of the overall number of students enrolled at HEIs in Croatia, the number of students enrolling teaching programmes in STEM has increased by 11%
- **the rate of IT specialists** in the labour force 4.9% (EU average 5%, 2024) – not only graduates in STEM (EU definition, State of a Digital Decade – Country Report Croatia, EC)
- rate of women in ICT specialists: 21.5% (EU average 19.5%, 2024).



Priority Area: Social Dimension of Higher Education

MEASURES

- further development of social dimension of HE in line with the National Plan for Enhancing Social Dimension
- promoting RPL (recognition of prior learning) in HE – implementation of the National Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning in the Higher Education System
- upgrading student standard by continuation of the State Scholarship Programme for students of lower socio-economic status, students in STEM and shortage occupations (co-funded from the European Social Fund)



Priority Area: Internationalisation

MEASURES

- further internationalisation of Croatian HE: increasing outgoing and incoming mobility rates; support to alliances of European Universities; sustainability of study programmes in English
- implementation of the Act on Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Education Qualifications which includes automatic recognition (entered into force in 2022)
- **international cooperation through EU European Universities initiative - 8** Croatian higher education institutions are members of alliances of European universities (universities of Split, Zadar, Rijeka, Osijek, Zagreb, and Dubrovnik, as well as two universities of applied sciences – PAR and ZŠEM)

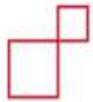


Priority Area: Research and Innovation

- improving the system of institutional funding for universities and scientific institutes to motivate scientific productivity, efficiency and knowledge transfer through direct investment and increased scientific research funding
- increased investment in research infrastructure and organisational capacities of universities and scientific institutes
- introducing a new enabling framework for the advancement and career development of researchers
- introducing a more efficient institutional and programming framework for research and development funding schemes



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for your attention**

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