

**International students attending a full course of study in
Croatia in the period 2017 – 2023**

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International mobility of students - developmental aspects and challenges

Many factors at the individual, institutional, national and global levels influence patterns of international student mobility. These include personal ambitions and aspirations for better employment prospects, the lack of high-quality higher education institutions in the home country, but also the ability of higher education institutions abroad to attract talent, as well as educational policies that encourage the internationalisation of education.¹ The attractiveness of certain study destinations for international students is strengthened by their cultural, linguistic and geographical proximity, as well as the increasing number of internationally ranked universities.

During the past 20 years, international student mobility at the global level has experienced a significant increase, as traditional study destinations, as well as emerging study destinations, have attracted an increasing number of students. According to data from the UNESCO² International Institute for Educational Planning, student mobility at the global level increased from 2 million to 6.36 million between 2000 and 2020.³ In the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (hereinafter: OECD) during 2021, an average of 7% of students enrolled in tertiary-level programmes conducted outside their home country. According to the OECD report *International Migration Outlook 2022*⁴, in the period since 2010 there has been a strong increase in student mobility in OECD countries, with the most common destinations being the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Germany and Turkey, and a significant increase was also recorded in the Baltic countries and Slovenia. At the same time, with the increase in the number of mobile students, there is also diversification, although the main countries of origin are still China and India, which make up 22% and 10% of all international students, respectively.

Furthermore, analyses of international mobility data have indicated a move towards multipolarity, as a larger and more diverse set of new study destinations in Asia, South America, Africa and the Middle East emerges⁵. According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning, Europe is the leading destination (continent) for international students, with as many as 1.52 million international students attending tertiary education in the member states of the European Union in 2021 (hereinafter: the EU). Europe is also, after Asia, the second region from which the highest number of students goes on mobility.

Certain EU member states are particularly attractive destinations for international students. During 2021, 376,400 international students, or 25% of all international students in the EU, studied in Germany, followed by France (17%) and the Netherlands (9%). Although Europe, and especially EU countries, attracts a large number of students from all continents, most of the mobility still takes

¹OECD (2021). *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators* [online] Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/5a49e448-en> [10/11/2023]

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – UNESCO.

³UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 2023. [online] *Outbound internationally mobile students by region*. Data available at: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> [10/11/2023]

⁴OECD (2023). *International Migration Outlook 2023*. [online] Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b0f40584-en> [10/11/2023]

⁵ Glass, C.R., Cruz, N.I. (2023). Moving towards multipolarity: shifts in the core-periphery structure of international student mobility and world rankings (2000–2019). *Higher Education*, 85, 415–435. SpringerLink [online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00841-9> [10/11/2023]

place between EU countries. More specifically, international students come to study in countries that are culturally, linguistically and geographically close to them. In the context of the EU, Croatia has a lower share of international students in the student population and a relatively larger number of international students from neighbouring countries compared to other EU and OECD member states.

At the same time, the National Education Development Plan for the period 2021 – 2027 envisages strategic action aimed at raising the level of internationalisation of higher education, whereby special attention will be paid to the sustainability of studies in foreign languages and the removal of obstacles to attracting international students to study in the Republic of Croatia.

In addition to numerous development aspects, in recent years multiple crisis situations have affected the mobility of international students. Brexit has changed the trend of student mobility between British and EU citizens. The great impact of Brexit on educational and economic activities is due to the fact that the United Kingdom has been the main destination of about 38.4% of mobile students in Europe since 2014⁶. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected international mobility in many OECD/EU countries. Many countries have imposed travel restrictions and border closures to limit the spread of the epidemic. The health crisis has made it difficult for international students to carry out the administrative procedures necessary to enrol in universities abroad and travel to that country to continue their studies. Most OECD/EU countries closed their national borders and many higher education institutions were physically closed during the pandemic⁷. Despite this, the overall share of internationally mobile students across the OECD remained stable between 2019 and 2021. However, at the global level, in several countries the share of international students decreased significantly during the period of restrictive epidemiological measures. In Australia, it fell from 28% of all students to 22% between 2019 and 2021, while in New Zealand it fell from 21% to 12%. In both countries, the largest decline occurred between 2020 and 2021: a drop of 4 percentage points in Australia and 5 percentage points in New Zealand.

It is also important to mention the potential impact of the increased number of displaced persons from Ukraine due to the war on the number of foreign citizens in higher education. Most countries have introduced some form of support measures to help Ukrainian nationals and integrate them into education such as language courses, academic support/mentoring, financial grants and reserved places in education, and a number of higher education institutions in EU member states have also introduced their own exceptional measures to support Ukrainian students and scientists.

Overview of data on international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia in the period from 2017 to 2023

Definition of international students attending a full course of study

According to the OECD definition⁸, international students are those who have obtained their previous educational qualification in another country and are not citizens of the country in which they attend

⁶Sanchez Barrioluengo, M. and Flisi, S. (2017). *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*[online]. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC108895>

⁷OECD/European Migration Network (2021).The impact of COVID-19 in the migration area in EU and OECD countries [online] Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/00-eu-emn-covid19-umbrella-inform-en.pdf> [10/11/2023]

⁸OECD (2023). OECD Data – International student mobility [online]. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/students/international-student-mobility.htm> [11/11/2023]

study programmes at the tertiary level. When information on the country in which students obtained their previous educational qualification is not available, information on the country of permanent or habitual residence or citizenship is used to approximate the number of international students.

International students can further be divided into those who achieve long-term mobility with the aim of obtaining a qualification (*degree mobility*), i.e. attending a full course of study, and those who achieve short-term mobility with the aim of acquiring ECTS (or some other) credits (*credit mobility*).

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of data on international students whose country of origin (according to citizenship) is not Croatia, and who are enrolled in higher education institutions in Croatia with the aim of obtaining a higher education qualification, i.e. they spent the entire study period in Croatia at at least one level of study. The report covers the period from 2017/2018 to 2022/2023, and was created on the basis of data sets prepared by Srce – University Computing Centre. The source of primary data is the Student Rights Information System for the needs of the Ministry of Science and Education and the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

This report does not include incoming international students as part of international academic mobility programmes such as the Erasmus+ programme, bilateral international mobility programmes, CEEPUS⁹ and similar programmes; regardless of whether it is short-term mobility for studies or traineeship (*credit mobility*) or mobility for the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification (*degree mobility*).

Methodological note

Available sources of statistical data on international mobility are traditionally based on citizenship or nationality. However, from a methodological perspective, it is necessary to take into account that some of the international students were not mobile for the purpose of studying, but already lived and studied in the country of study. The more mobility and migration increase around the world, the less suitable citizenship becomes as an approximation of student mobility. Also, before studying, people may have lived and studied in a country whose citizenship is not theirs and may have moved to their country of citizenship for the purpose of studying. Also, some students may have moved to another country for the purpose of studying and become citizens of that country during their studies. These students are mobile for the purpose of studying, but they are not foreigners.

The magnitude of error due to different definitions was tested using statistical data from countries that collected data on citizenship and the country of previous educational qualification.¹⁰ Based on such statistical data available for a selected number of countries, it was estimated that about one-quarter of international students in European countries were not mobile for the purpose of studying and vice versa, that is, about one-tenth of students mobile for the purpose of studying were not foreigners.¹¹

Share of international students in the student population

The share of international students with the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification (*degree mobility*) in the student population (total number of local and international students enrolled in higher education institutions) differs among EU member states. According to Eurostat data¹², during 2021 Luxembourg had the largest share of international students with the purpose of

⁹ Central European Exchange Programme - CEEPUS

¹⁰Teichler, U., Ferencz, I., Wächter, B. (2011). Mapping Mobility in European Higher Education. Overviews and Trends.

¹¹Maria Kelo, Ulrich Teichler, Bernd Wächter (ur.). Bonn: Lemmens, 2006. ISBN 3-932306-72-4.

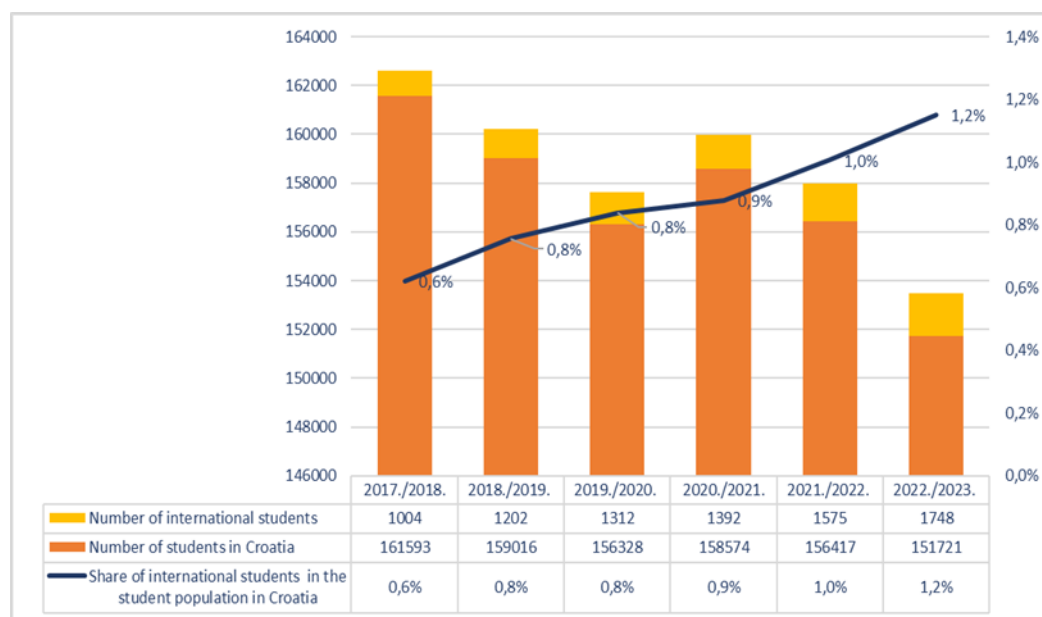
¹²Eurostat (2023). *Learning mobility statistics*. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Learning_mobility_statistics#Students_from_abroad [11/11/2023]

obtaining a higher education qualification (degree *mobility*) in the student population (49.3%), followed by Cyprus (21.8%), while in 11 member states at least 1/10 of the population are international students.

In several member states such as Spain (3.6%), Italy (3.4%), Greece (2.8%) and Croatia (2.7%),¹³ the share of international students attending a full course of study is relatively low compared to other EU member states.

Despite the fact that comparatively (according to Eurostat data) Croatia is not among the most important destinations for international students at the EU level, the data on international students attending a full course of study in Croatia monitored by Srce based on the Student Rights Information System (Figure 1) indicate a slow growth in the number of international students from year to year (1004 – 2017/2018, compared to 1748 – 2022/2023) while in relative terms, international students attending a full course of study make up only 1.2%¹⁴ of the total student population in the academic year 2022/2023 where it should be emphasised that compared to the slight increase in the number of international students, the entire student population in Croatia decreased by about 7% in the previous seven years.

Figure 1. Share of international students (full course of study) in the total number of students in the Republic of Croatia (%), 2017 – 2023



¹³ The displayed share of international students with the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification/international students attending a full course of study is based on [Eurostat](#) data and shows the share of international students who have the status of full-time students (enrolled in a higher education study programme with the intention of graduating from it in the country of destination/Croatia) in the total student population. The share shown includes all international students who reside in Croatia for the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification, including those who achieve this type of mobility within the framework of mobility programmes, such as bilateral mobility programmes, and excludes students who reside in Croatia on short-term mobility (so-called *credit mobility*).

¹⁴ Data sets on international students in Croatia monitored by Srce do not include international students with the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification who stay in Croatia as part of the mobility programme, therefore the presented share of international students in the student population differs from the more comprehensive Eurostat data shown in the previous paragraph. Eurostat data shows the comparative position of Croatia in relation to other EU member states regarding international students attending a full course of study/international students with the purpose of obtaining a higher education qualification.

Profile of international students

During the seven-year period (from the academic year 2017/2018 to the academic year 2022/2023) a total of 3,408 international students¹⁵ attended Croatian higher education institutions at all levels of study, with the largest number of students (49%) in the age group 24 – 29, and the smallest number of students (5%) those older than 35 (Figure 2). Also, among international students, women are more represented (54.34%) than men (46.66%). Despite the overrepresentation of women, the gender distribution in relation to the field of study reveals that among those who attend programmes in the field of technical sciences there is still a higher share of men (62%), similar to that in the field of biotechnological sciences (63% men).

According to the type/level of study, in the total number of international students in Croatia from 2017 to 2023 (3408), the highest number attended integrated undergraduate and graduate study programmes (48.74%, 1661) or undergraduate study programmes (37.44%, 1276), followed by students who attended programmes at the graduate level (12.44%, 424), while the lowest number of students attended professional study programmes (1.17%, 40) and programmes at the postgraduate level (only 0.21%, 7), of which only 0.12% (4) were in doctoral study programmes. In this case, the data presented are not sufficient to understand the situation, especially in the case of doctoral students, given that this report does not show complete data on the number of incoming international students because foreign nationals attending a full course of study in Croatia who come through the mobility programme are not included. Therefore, it is necessary to look at complete data on international students at the level of postgraduate studies (taking into account those who stay in Croatia as part of the mobility programme) in order to adequately define the internationalisation strategy at all levels of study.

It is important to point out that at the level of OECD¹⁶ countries, there is a clear increase in the number of international students at higher levels of study programmes, so that in 2020, only 5% of international students are at the level of undergraduate studies, and even 24% are at the level of postgraduate (doctoral) studies. Despite the limitations in drawing conclusions based on the data presented, the distribution of international students by type of study (Figure 4) indicates a reverse trend in Croatia, since the number of foreign citizens enrolled in undergraduate and integrated undergraduate and graduate studies is increasing year by year (Figure 4).

¹⁵The data refer to the number of international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia, which are monitored in the Srce data sets, and does not include students who during the same period stayed in the Republic of Croatia with the purpose of obtaining a qualification as part of the mobility programme.

¹⁶OECD iLibrary (2023.) *International student mobility* [online]. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/ec0742a4-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/ec0742a4-en#boxsection-d1e29153> [11/11/2023]

Figure 2. Age distribution of international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia, 2017 – 2023

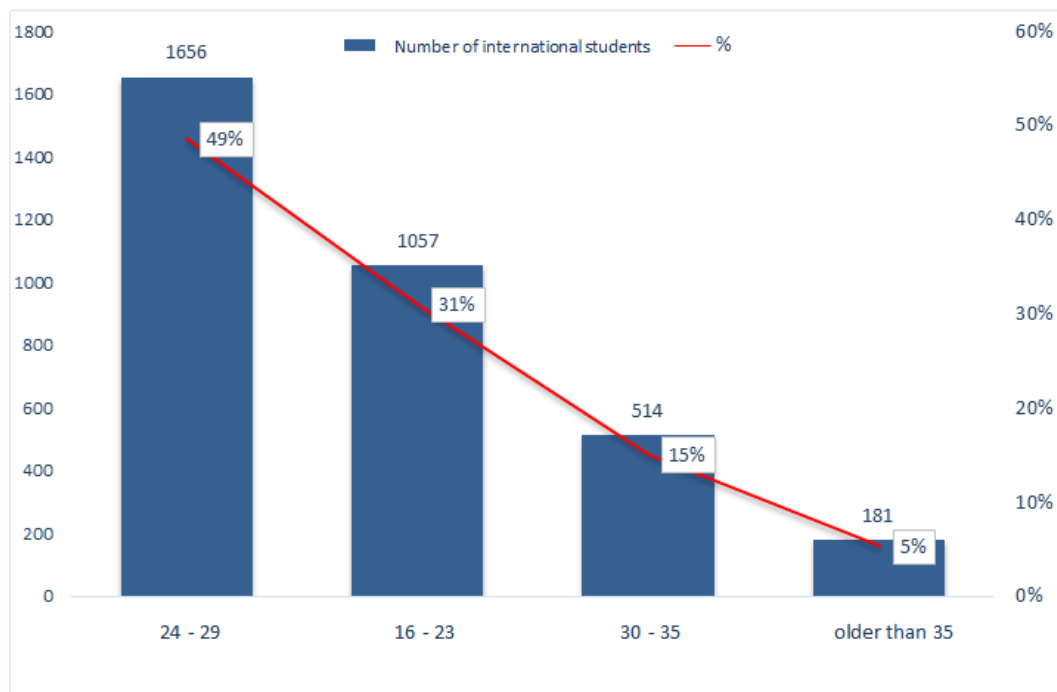


Figure 3. Gender distribution of international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia by field of study, 2017 – 2023

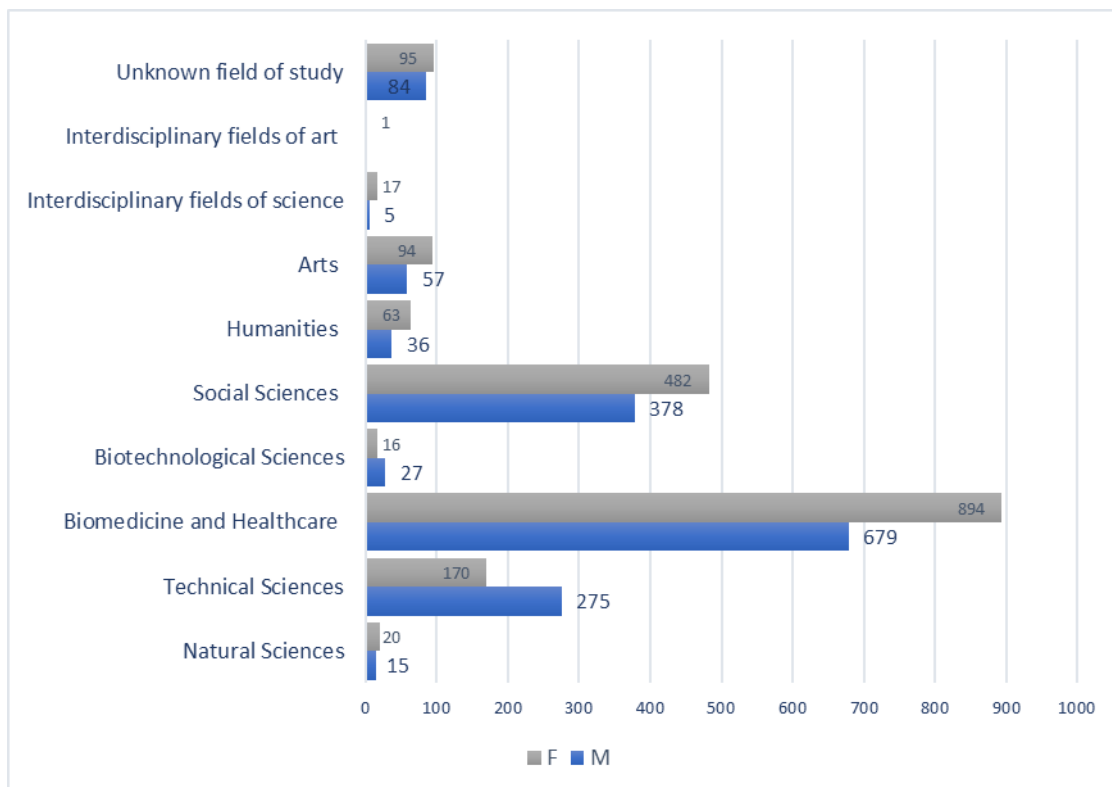
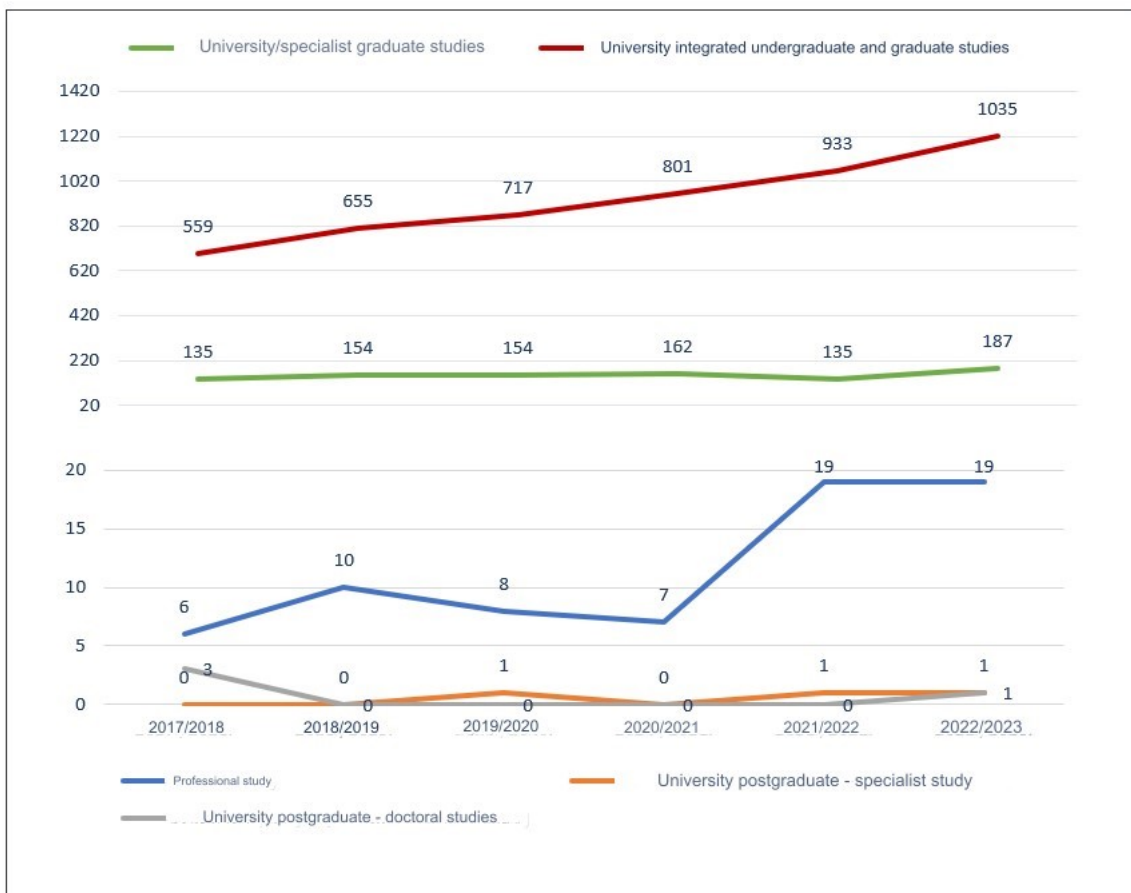


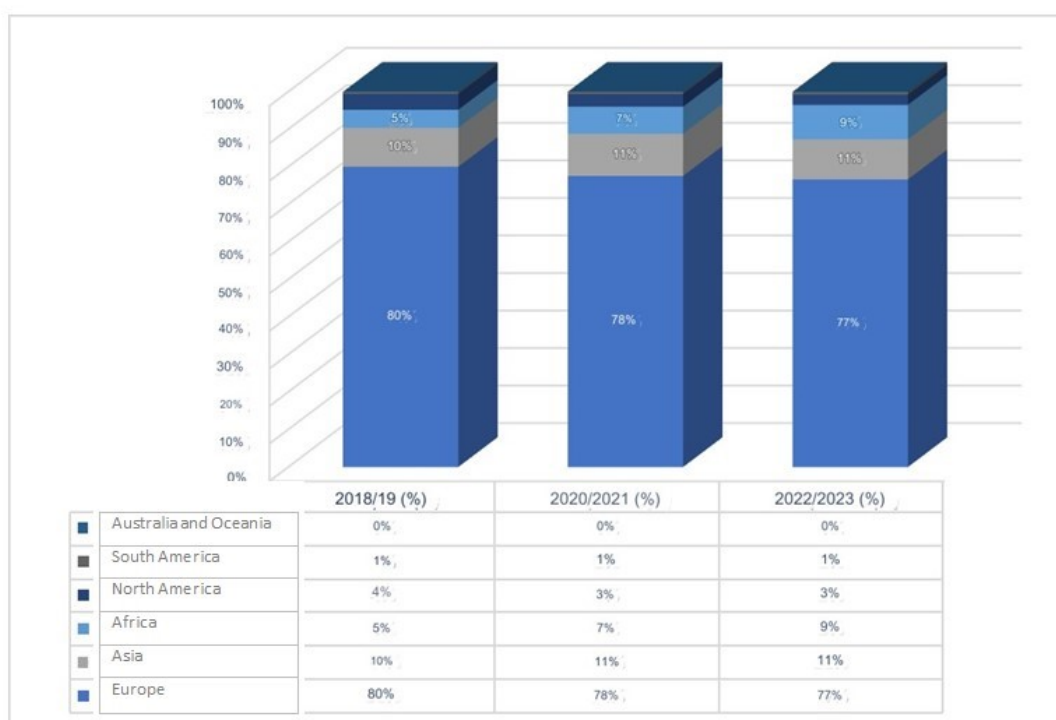
Figure 4. Number of international students by type of study, 2017 – 2023



Countries and regions of origin of international students

OECD data in the report *International Migration Outlook 2022* indicate that students tend to choose a destination country within the geographical region of their country of origin, which was the case for 29% of international students in OECD countries during 2021. Figures 5 and 6 show that knowledge of the language, cultural and historical ties, and geographical proximity influence the choice of Croatia as a destination. Similar to the majority of other EU member states, the majority of international students come from other regions of Europe, especially the EU countries, and it should be noted that according to Eurostat data, Croatia, along with Slovenia and Slovakia, has the largest share of incoming students from other European countries.

Figure 5. Geographical distribution (by continent) of international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia

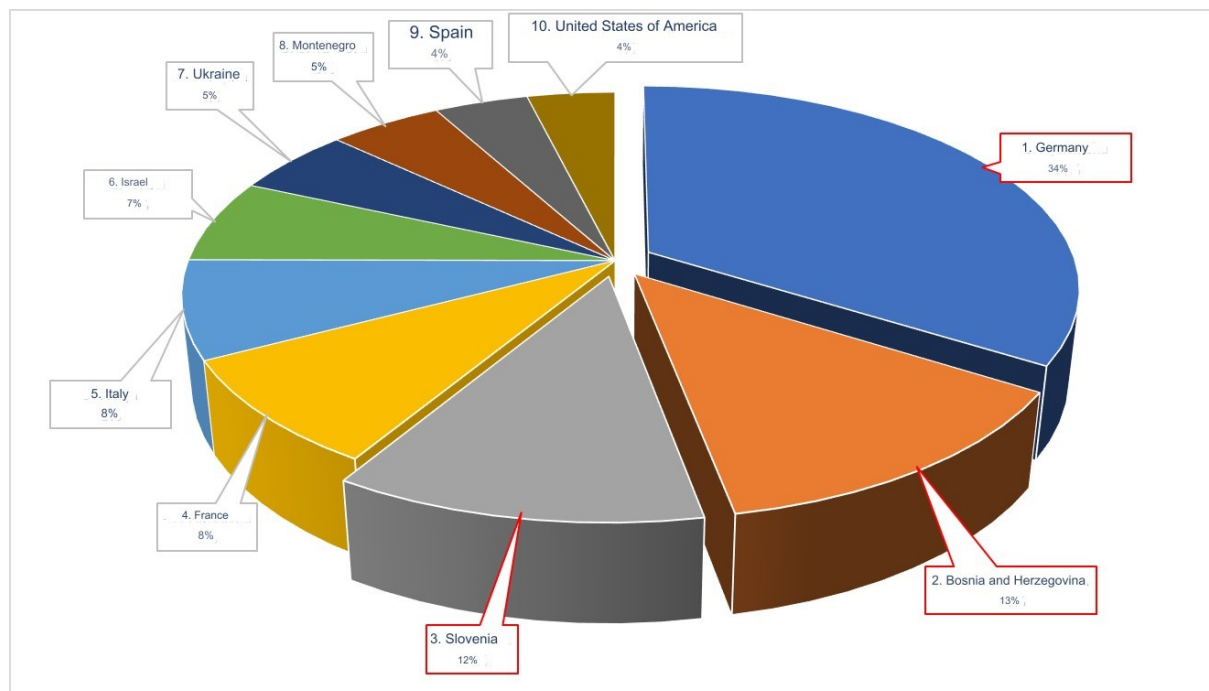


During the seven-year period (from the academic year 2017/2018 to the academic year 2022/2023) citizens of 110 countries studied in Croatia. Figure 6 contains the "Top 10" countries of origin (according to citizenship) of international students in the previous seven years. Among the international students, the majority came from Germany (34%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (13%)¹⁷, Slovenia (12%), followed by citizens of France (8%), Italy (8%) and Israel (7%), Ukraine (5%), Montenegro (5%), Spain (4%) and the United States of America (4%). It is evident that the largest number of international students comes from the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe, with the exception of citizens of Israel (7%), Ukraine (5%) and the United States of America (4%). There is also a noticeable increase in the number of Ukrainian students in Croatia, from only 10

¹⁷ This share does not include students with dual Croatian-Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizenship, since they are considered resident students.

(2017/2018) to 182 (2022/2023), which is primarily the result of an increased number of displaced persons from Ukraine residing in Croatia.

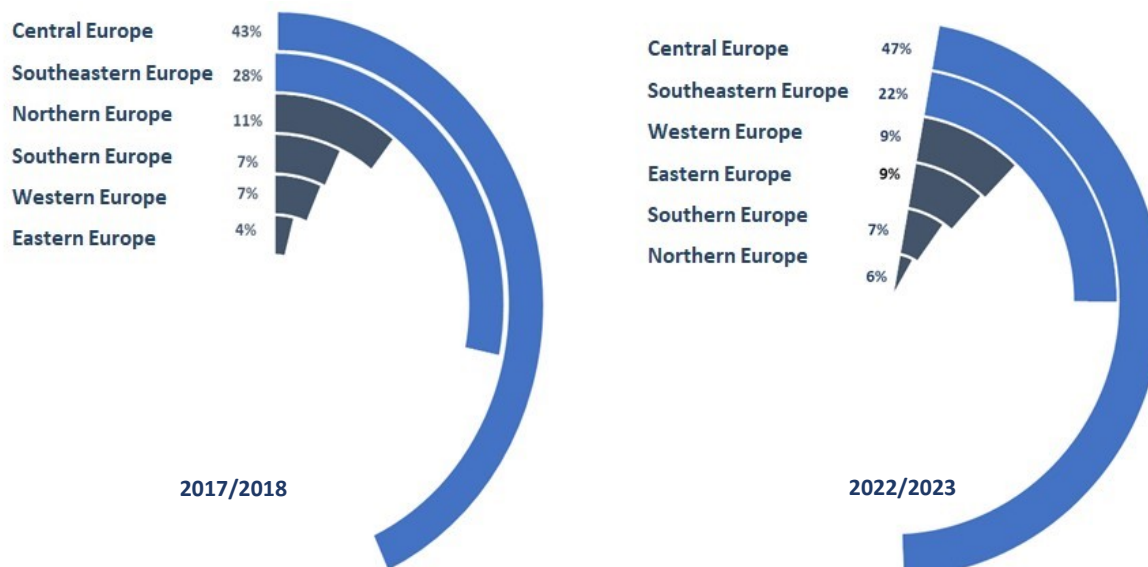
Figure 6. TOP 10 – Most common countries of origin (citizenship) of international students attending a full course of study in the Republic of Croatia, 2017 – 2023



The distribution of international students according to the regions of Europe (Figure 7) shows that in the academic year 2022/2023 the number of students from Central Europe increased (47%, compared to 43% in 2017/2018), while the share of international students from Southeastern Europe decreased (22% in 2022/2023; 28% in 2017/2018). The share of international students from Northern Europe was reduced by almost half (6% in 2022/2023, compared to 11% in 2017/2018), while the share of students from Eastern Europe doubled during the same period (from 4% in 2017/2018 to 9% in 2022/2023).

In addition to that, as Figure 5 shows, looking at the geographical distribution of international students by continent, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the diversification of international students is not noticeable. As in the previous seven years, the vast majority of international students are citizens of other EU member states. Before the COVID-19 pandemic (2018/2019), as many as 80% of international students in Croatia came from other European countries, mainly from Central Europe (most often Germany and Slovenia) and Southeastern Europe (most often Bosnia and Herzegovina), 10% of students originated from Asia, followed by Africa (5%) and North America (4%), while the fewest international students were from South America (1%) and Australia and Oceania (less than 1%). During 2020 and 2021, the period in which restrictive epidemiological measures were introduced at the global level, the number of international students from Europe (- 1%) and Asia (- 1%) decreased slightly, and the share of international students from Africa increased slightly. Although a more detailed analysis is needed to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic mobility, it is noticeable that in the academic year 2022/2023 compared to the academic years 2020/2021 and 2018/2019 there was no significant redistribution of international students (by continent), with the exception of an increase in students from Africa (+4%) in the total number of international students in Croatia.

Figure 7. Distribution of international students by region of Europe, before and after the COVID-19 pandemic



Scientific fields and study programmes of international students

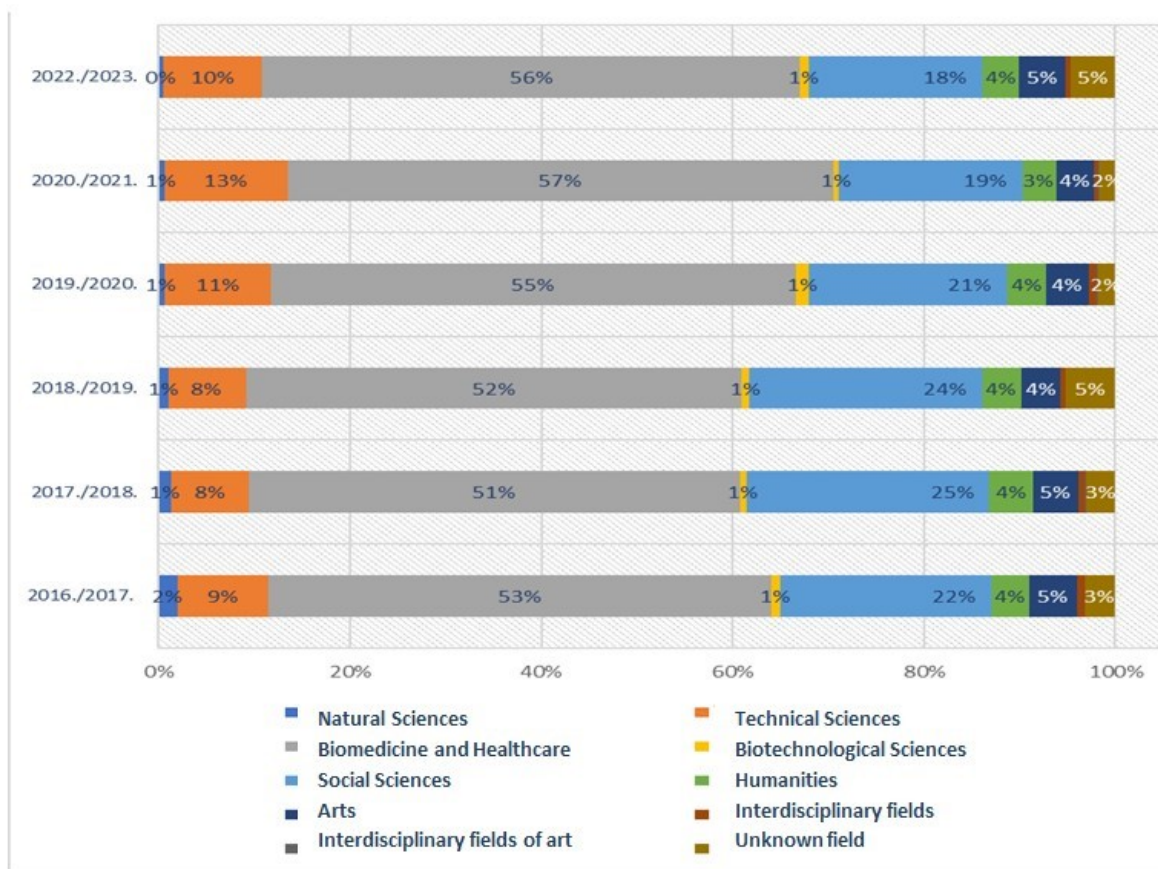
According to the OECD report¹⁸, international students more often than students from their home country choose a study programme in the STEM field (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), especially natural sciences and information and communication technologies. In contrast, there is a high degree of variation among EU member states in terms of the share of international students by field of study, reflecting at least to some extent their specialisation. For example, slightly more than one-fifth of all international students who studied in Italy in 2021 attended a study programme in the field of arts or humanities, while 28.7% of international students in Germany attended a study programme in the field of engineering, manufacturing or construction. Business, administration and law were the most common fields of study for international students in 15 EU member states, while health or social care was the most common field of study in eight member states.

Figure 8 refers to the distribution of international students in Croatia by field of study. In the period from 2017 to 2023, the most common scientific field of study of international students is biomedicine and healthcare, and in the past seven years, a continuous growth of international students in this field has been noticed (53% in the academic year 2017/2018, 57% in 2022/2023). They are followed by the social sciences, in which there has been a noticeable decline in the number of international students over seven years (22% in 2017/2018, 18% in 2022/2023), while in third place are students in

¹⁸OECD (2023). *International Migration Outlook 2023*, Paris: OECD Publishing, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b0f40584-en>. [11/11/2023]

the field of technical sciences, who make up about 10% of international students in Croatia. It is precisely in this field that the number of international students increases year by year, and in the academic year 2022/2023 there were even 92% more international students in the field of technical sciences compared to 2017/2018. The fewest international students in Croatia choose study programmes in the field of natural sciences (2% in 2017/2018 and less than 1% in 2022/2023) and biotechnological sciences. It is precisely in the field of natural sciences in Croatia that there is a noticeable trend of decreasing the number of international students in the previous seven years (as much as 60% less compared to the previous academic year 2017/2018).

Figure 8. Distribution of international students by field of study, from the academic year 2017/2018 to 2022/2023

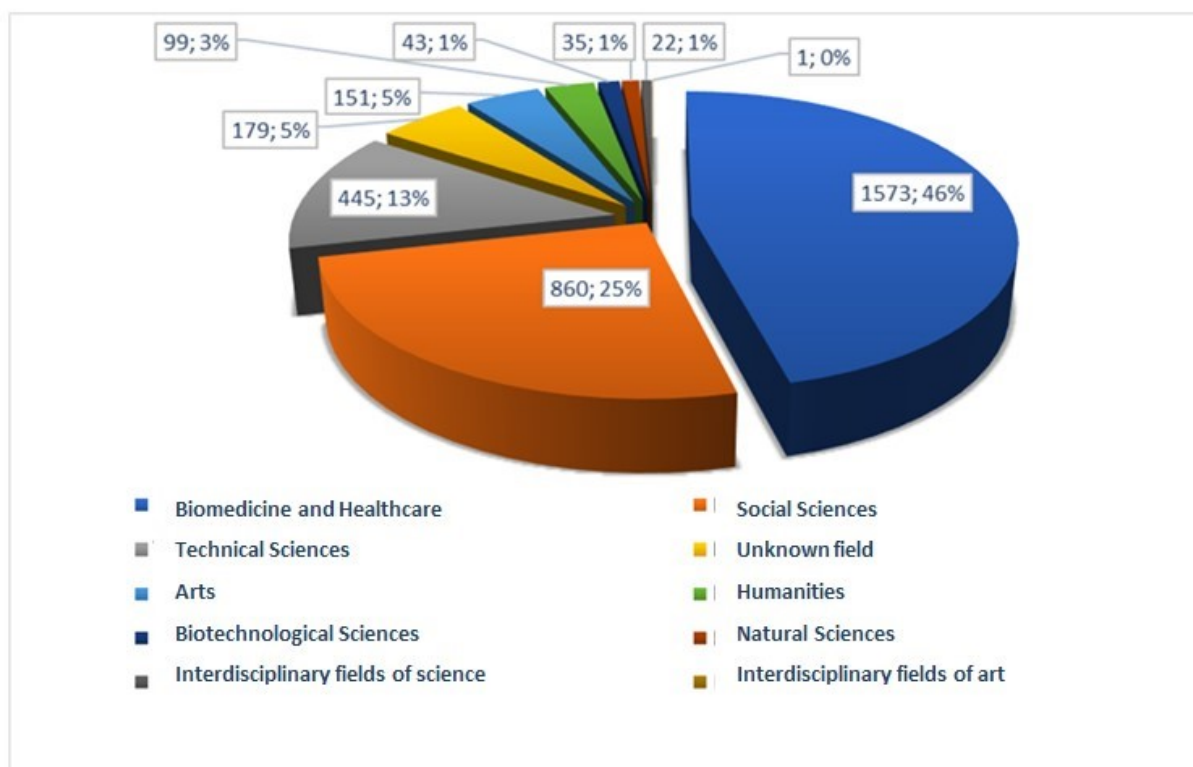


Data broken down in more detail by field of study (Figure 9) and study programme (Figure 13) show that there is a significant concentration of international students (as many as 1,227 of them during the period from 2017 to 2023) in several study programmes, namely undergraduate studies or integrated undergraduate and graduate studies (Figure 10) primarily in the study of medicine (in Croatian and English) and study programmes in electrical engineering, information technology and computing (1001), followed by study programmes in the field of management, entrepreneurship and related programmes (349). A particularly high proportion of international students in the fields of medicine, dental and veterinary medicine is specific to Croatia, and it should be noted that programmes in these fields are conducted in English, which also indicates a higher level of internationalisation of certain higher education institutions. The number of those who attended foreign language studies in Croatia (55) or study programmes in the field of finance and related programmes is the lowest. This is in accordance with the trends in the field of academic mobility according to which international students more often choose internationally oriented study programmes conducted in foreign languages and more often in the STEM field.

Also, it is noticeable that international students in the field of biomedicine and healthcare (Figure 11) according to their country of origin are mostly from Germany (671), Israel (145) and Slovenia (121). In contrast, in the field of social sciences (Figure 11), the largest number of international students

comes (according to citizenship) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy and Montenegro, Germany and Ukraine. The increase in the number of students from Israel in the field of biomedical sciences and healthcare is also specific to Croatia. The increased number of international students from Israel is partly the result of cooperation between Israel and the Republic of Croatia in the field of medical education and research, which is defined by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia and the State of Israel in the field of health and medicine.¹⁹ In addition, in 2019, the Ministry of Health of Israel made a decision²⁰ on exceptional approval of the right to recognise the diplomas of the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb. This decision equalizes the diplomas previously obtained by Israeli students at the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb and enables further equal academic education for Israeli students at the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb as well as in Israel, i.e. in OECD member states.

Figure 9. Distribution of international students attending a full course of study in Croatia by field of study in the period 2017 – 2023



¹⁹Memorandum of Understanding is available at:

<https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2022/Studeni/167%20sjednica%20VRH//167%20-%2014%20c%20Memorandum.pdf> [11/11/2023]

²⁰ The announcement of the Ministry of Health of Israel is available at:

<https://www.health.gov.il/English/Services/MedicalAndHealthProfessions/GeneralMedicine/Pages/default.aspx> [11/11/2023]

Figure 10. Distribution of international students attending a full course of study in Croatia by level and field of study

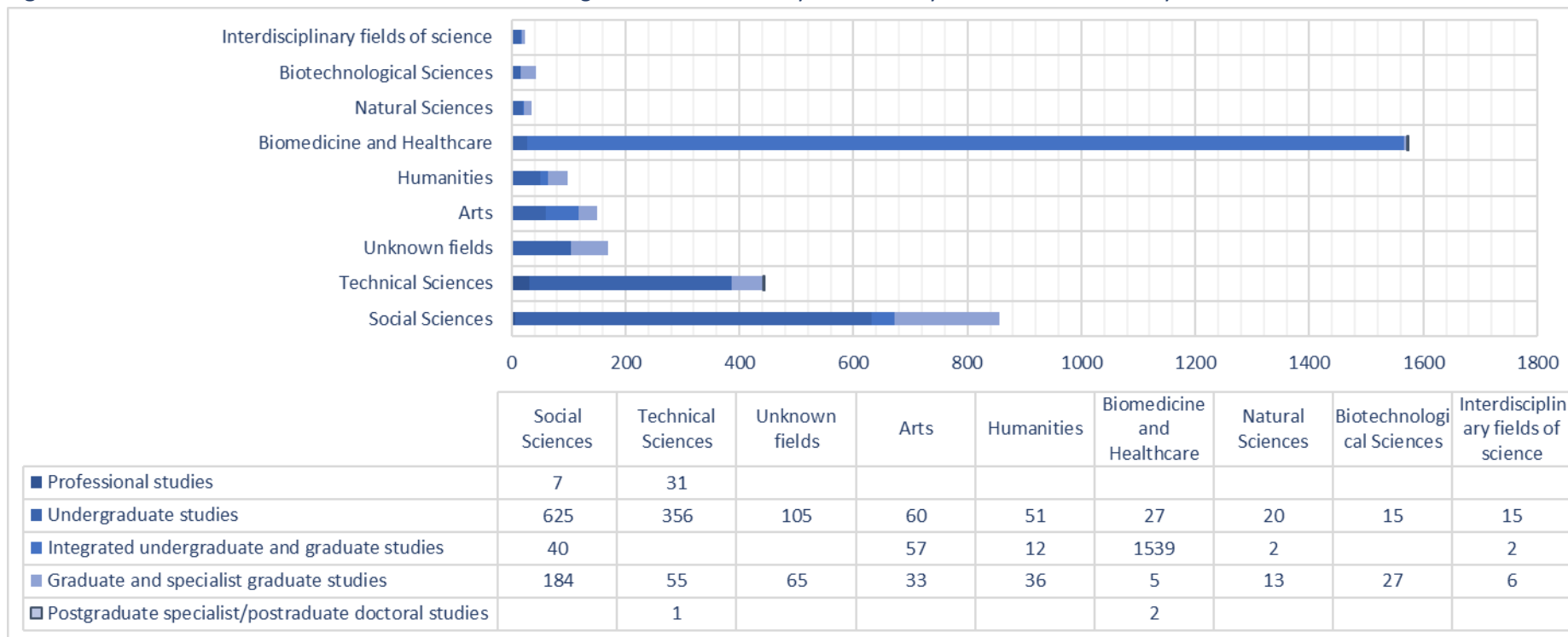


Figure 11. Gender distribution (citizenship) of international students in the period 2017 – 2023:
Biomedical Sciences and Healthcare

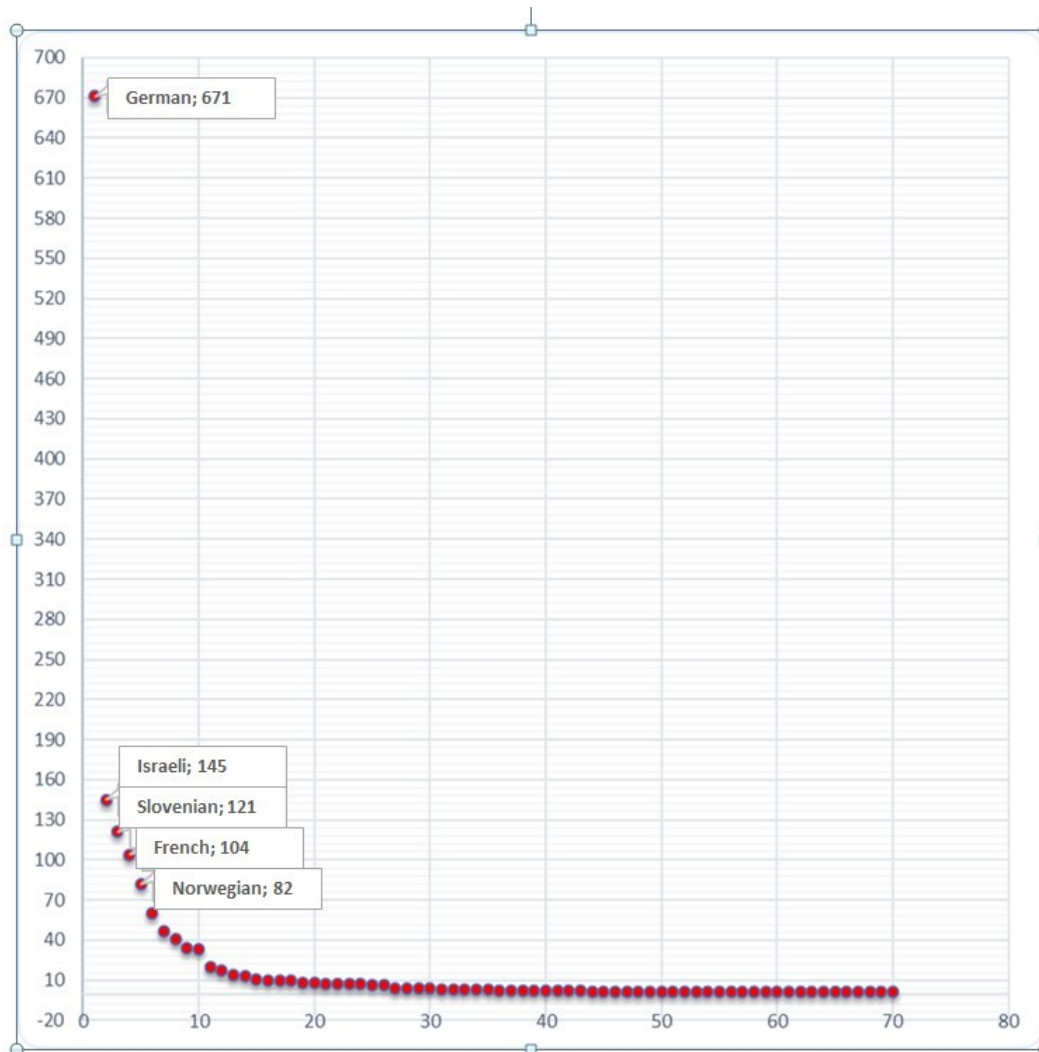


Figure 12. Gender distribution (citizenship) of international students in the period 2017 – 2023: **Social Sciences**

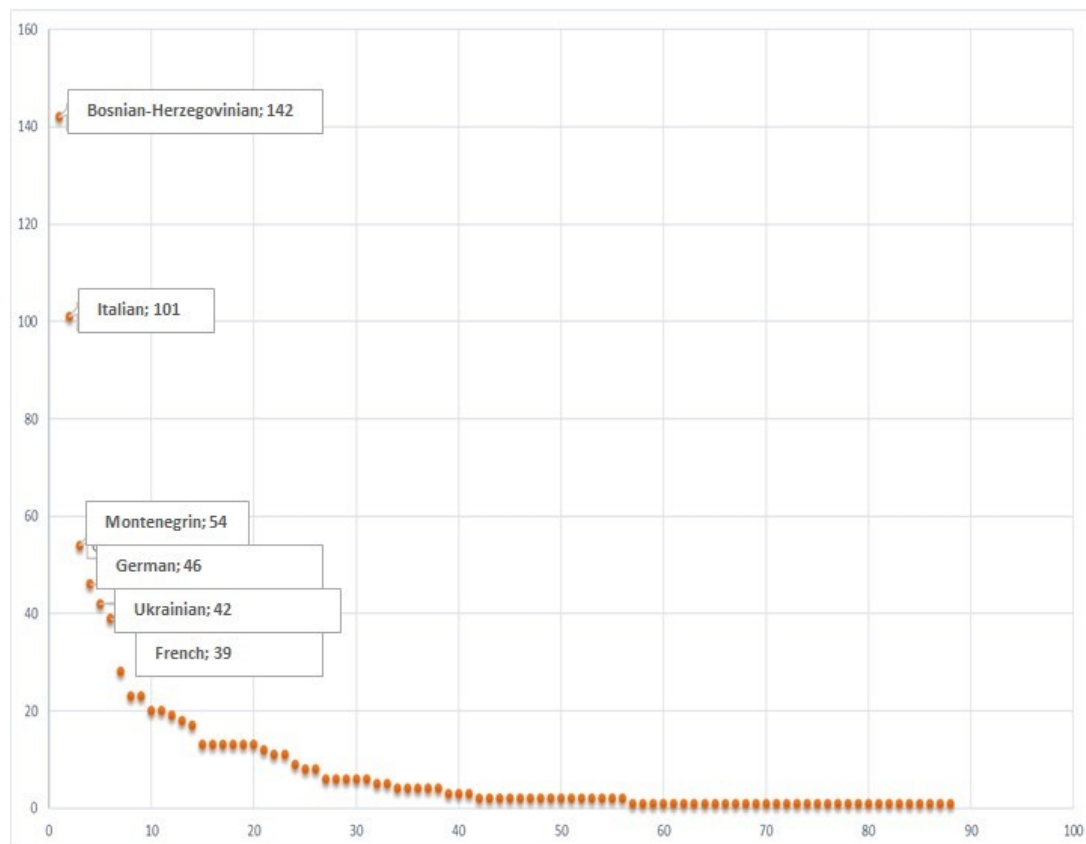
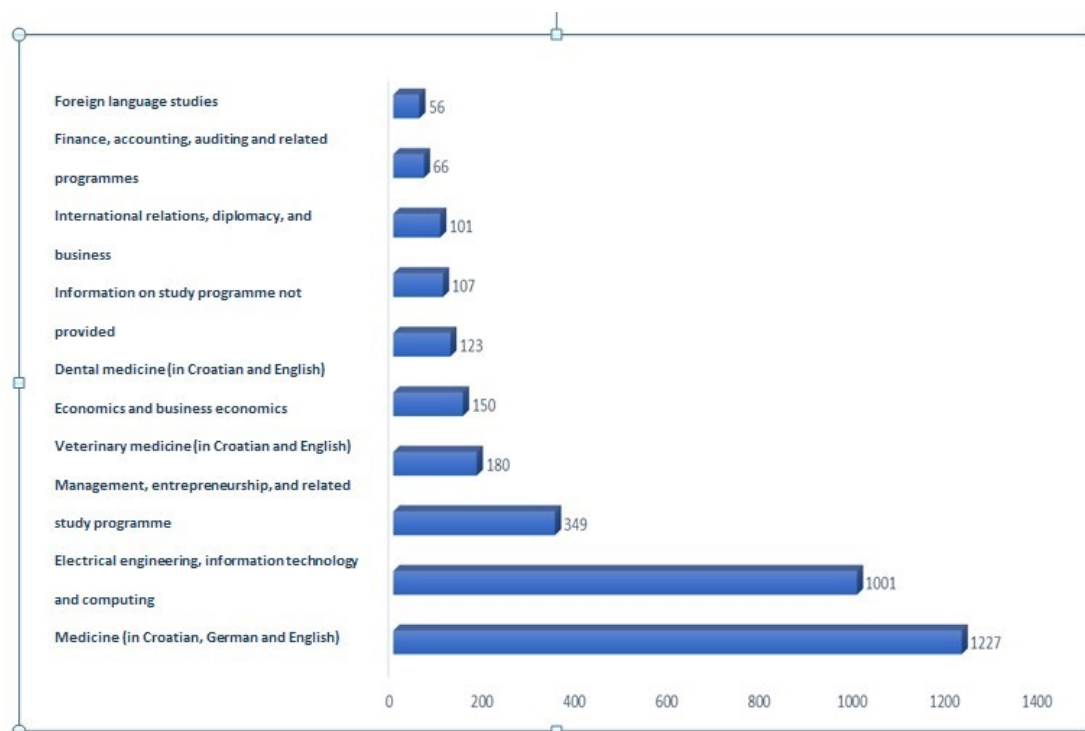


Figure 13. Distribution of international students in the Republic of Croatia by study programme



Selection of destination and higher education institution

The destination (city) to which international students come is largely determined by the location of higher education institutions, but it can also indicate a greater degree of international cooperation and internationalisation of study programmes at individual higher education institutions. As Figure 14 shows, it is evident that Zagreb, as the location of the largest and most numerous higher education institution (University of Zagreb) and the largest number of colleges and universities of applied sciences, is the primary destination of the largest number of international students. As Figure 15 shows, it is noticeable that at the level of university components, as many as 40% of international students annually attended the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb, while other faculties/universities were the destination institution for 10% or fewer students annually. After Zagreb, the coastal cities (Rijeka, Split, Dubrovnik) represent the most frequent destinations of international students.

Annex 14. Distribution of international students in the Republic of Croatia by destination/location of higher education institutions

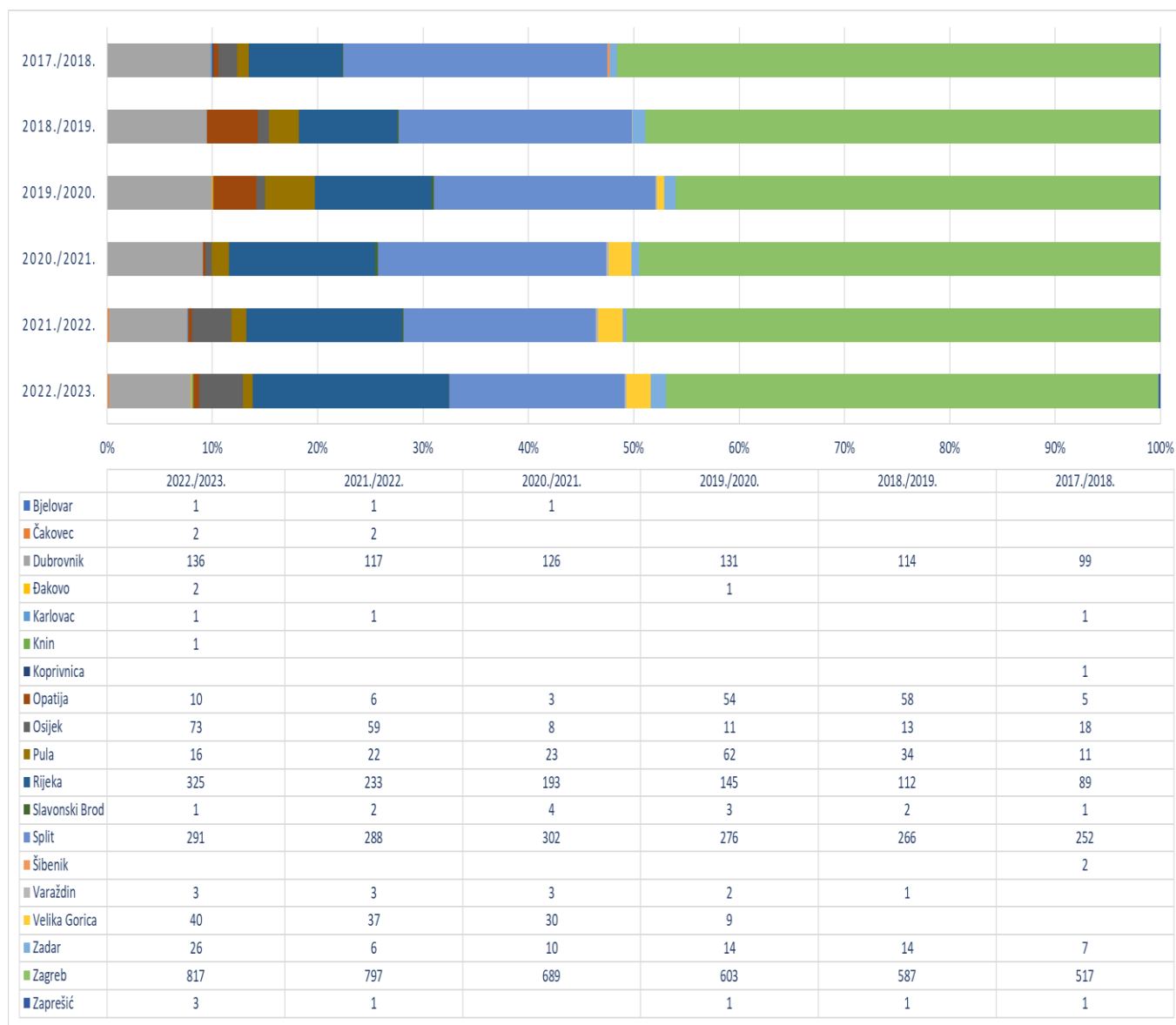


Figure 15. Distribution of international students by higher education institutions (%), 2017 – 2023

% percentage in the total number of enrolled international students per academic year

No. – number of enrolled international students per academic year

Higher Education Institution	2017/ /2018 No.	2017/ 2018 (%)	2018/ 2019 No.	2018/ 2019 (%)	2019/ 2020 No.	2019/ 2020 (%)	2020/ 2021 No.	2020/ 2021 (%)	2021/ 2022 No.	2021/ 2022 (%)	2022/ 2023 No.	2022/ 2023 (%)
EFFECTUS University College	4	0,4 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	2	0,1 %
European Business School Zagreb		0,0 %		0,0 %	3	0,2 %	2	0,1 %	2	0,1 %		0,0 %
Istrian University of Applied Sciences	1	0,1 %		0,0 %	2	0,2 %	3	0,2 %	4	0,3 %	2	0,1 %
Libertas International University	20	2,0 %	20	1,7 %	30	2,3 %	27	1,9 %	36	2,3 %	32	1,8 %
Međimurje University of Applied Sciences in Čakovec		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	2	0,1 %	2	0,1 %
Zagreb School of Business	1	0,1 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	7	0,5 %	3	0,2 %	4	0,2 %
RIT Croatia	68	6,8 %	77	6,4 %	90	6,9 %	97	7,0 %	99	6,3 %	117	6,7 %
Josip Juraj Strossmayer	18	1,8 %	13	1,1 %	12	0,9 %	8	0,6 %	59	3,7 %	75	4,3 %



University of Osijek													
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula	10	1,0 %	34	2,8 %	60	4,6 %	20	1,4 %	18	1,1 %	14	0,8 %	
University North	1	0,1 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	
University of Dubrovnik	31	3,1 %	37	3,1 %	41	3,1 %	29	2,1 %	18	1,1 %	19	1,1 %	
University of Rijeka	91	9,1 %	167	13,9 %	189	14,4 %	191	13,7 %	235	14,9 %	308	17,6 %	
University of Slavonski Brod	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	2	0,2 %	4	0,3 %	2	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	
University of Split	252	25,1 %	266	22,1 %	268	20,4 %	301	21,6 %	286	18,2 %	287	16,4 %	
University of Zadar	7	0,7 %	14	1,2 %	14	1,1 %	10	0,7 %	6	0,4 %	26	1,5 %	
University of Zagreb	444	44,2 %	515	42,8 %	464	35,4 %	571	41,0 %	594	37,7 %	678	38,8 %	
VERN' University	8	0,8 %	12	1,0 %	13	1,0 %	22	1,6 %	83	5,3 %	14	0,8 %	
Zagreb University of Applied Sciences	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	3	0,2 %	3	0,2 %	3	0,2 %	2	0,1 %	
Marko Marulić Polytechnic in Knin		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	
Aspira University of Applied Sciences		0,0 %		0,0 %	2	0,2 %	1	0,1 %	2	0,1 %	4	0,2 %	
Edward Bernays University of Applied Sciences	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	7	0,4 %	13	0,7 %	
PAR University of		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	23	1,3 %	



Applied Sciences													
University of Applied Sciences RRiF	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	2	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	
University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	3	0,2 %	
College of Occupational Health and Safety		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	
Bjelovar University of Applied Sciences		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	
Karlovac University of Applied Sciences	1	0,1 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	
Polytechnic of Rijeka	3	0,3 %	3	0,2 %	3	0,2 %	5	0,4 %	4	0,3 %	4	0,2 %	
Šibenik University of Applied Sciences	2	0,2 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	
University of Applied Sciences in Velika Gorica		0,0 %		0,0 %	9	0,7 %	30	2,2 %	37	2,3 %	40	2,3 %	
Dag Hammarskjöld University College of International Relations and Diplomacy	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %		0,0 %	
University of Applied Sciences in	4	0,4 %	1	0,1 %		0,0 %	1	0,1 %	1	0,1 %	3	0,2 %	

Information Technology – VSITE													
Algebra University (being established)	8	0,8 %	23	1,9 %	20	1,5 %	26	1,9 %	36	2,3 %	45	2,6 %	
Catholic University of Croatia							1	0,1 %					
University of Applied Health Sciences	3	0,3 %	2	0,2 %	3	0,2 %	7	0,5 %	5	0,3 %	7	0,4 %	
Zagreb School of Economics and Management	21	2,1 %	22	1,8 %	16	1,2 %	23	1,7 %	27	1,7 %	18	1,0 %	
Total number of enrolled students per academic year	1004		1202		1312		1392		1575		1748		

Conclusion

Based on the data presented, despite the fact that they do not represent a complete picture of incoming student mobility in Croatia, certain specificities and trends in the national context can be observed.

A continuous increase in the number of foreign nationals at Croatian higher education institutions over the past seven years is noticeable, but despite this, they made up only 1.2% of the student population in the academic year 2022/2023.

Through a more detailed analysis, it is necessary to determine which are the attractive factors of study programmes in the field of biomedicine, healthcare and technical sciences, and how to encourage internationalisation in other scientific fields as well.

The geographical distribution of international students according to their countries of origin and the fact that more than 80% of students in Croatia come from EU member states indicate a strong influence of cultural and historical ties on the selection of Croatia as a study destination. It is necessary to develop cooperation and encourage mobility outside Europe, and research in the field of academic mobility suggests increasing multipolarity and the development of new study destinations, especially in Asia, which attract an increasing number of students, but also significantly participate in incoming international mobility. For example, at the EU level, 25% of international students in 2021 were from Asia and 17% from Africa, while in Croatia around 10%.

Also, based on the data presented, no changes are evident in the overall structure of students under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are noticeable changes in the regional distribution of international students at the European level (in Croatia, the number of students from Eastern Europe has increased, while the number of those from Southeastern and Northern Europe has decreased). At the same time, there was a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens (87% more compared to the academic year 2017/2018) enrolled in higher education institutions in Croatia with the aim of obtaining a higher education qualification.

Finally, data on international students in Croatia needs to be monitored in the medium and long term period and viewed in a broader context, taking into account educational policy measures implemented until 2023 as well as planned measures that will be implemented with the aim of increasing the internationalisation of higher education.

In the National Education Development Plan for the period 2021 – 2027, the component of internationalisation of all levels of education, including higher education, is significantly emphasised. Key measures implemented in the period from 2014 to 2020 related to: increasing the mobility of students and teachers, removing obstacles in regulations as well as internal obstacles at higher education institutions (in particular, increasing the recognition rate of ECTS credits) and increasing the number of courses taught in foreign languages.

The planned measure until 2027 is expected to increase the level of internationalisation of higher education in line with contemporary European trends by improving the quality of the higher education system. Special attention will be paid to the sustainability of studies in foreign languages and the removal of obstacles to attracting international students to study in foreign languages for the purpose of obtaining a qualification in the Republic of Croatia. The aforementioned strategic action with the aim of increasing internationalisation can in the medium term contribute to further improvement of the quality and increase of the number of incoming students. In addition to the



mentioned measures, it is possible to develop targeted activities on the basis of the presented data with the intention of improving the conditions for increasing incoming mobility in certain fields.

Annex

The number of international students enrolled in higher education institutions in Croatia by citizenship, academic years (from the academic year 2017/2018 to the academic year 2022/2023)

Citizenship	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Afghan	1	2	1	2	1	1
Albanian	7	10	11	11	10	13
Algerian						1
Argentinian					1	1
Armenian	1	1	4	1		
Australian	1	1				2
Austrian	11	11	13	14	15	19
Azerbaijani			2	2	2	3
Bangladeshi				2	5	2
Belarusian	2	3	3	2	2	6
Belgian	2	1	1	3	6	1
Beninese						3
Bolivian	1	1	1			
Bosnian-Herzegovinian	121	132	131	121	130	137
Brazilian	2	2	1	2	4	3
British	25	26	30	20	21	31
Bulgarian	4	12	6	8	9	10
Burundian	1	1	1			1
Cypriot				1	1	1
Montenegrin	33	37	50	49	51	68
Czech	1	5	2	1	1	1
Chilean	1		1	1	1	3
Danish			3	2	4	3
Egyptian	3	5	5	4	7	9
Estonian	1					1
Ethiopian						2
Filipino	1	2	1	1	1	2
Finnish	2	9	8	6	5	7
French (European part)	1	1			1	1
French	19	24	32	71	79	110
Ghanaian			1	1		2
Greek	4	4	4	3	4	6
Georgian						1
Indian	2	4	3	7	13	16
Indonesian	2					
Iraqi	1	1	6	2	2	3
Iranian	4	5	7	7	7	5

Irish	2	4	5	3	5	8
Icelandic	1					
Israeli	53	64	71	90	98	92
Japanese	2	3	2	1	1	5
Yemeni						1
Jordanian	3	2		1	1	1
South African	5	5	6	7	8	6
South Korean	5	7	8	8	8	7
Cameroonian	2	2	3	3	2	4
Canadian	14	15	14	12	9	8
Qatari	1	1	1			
Kazakh	2		1		1	2
Kenyan			2	2	2	1
Chinese	8	12	14	19	16	14
Chinese (Hong Kong)				1	1	2
Colombian	1	2	2	2		
Congolese	1	2	6	7	5	1
Kosovar	21	21	16	18	19	16
Costa Rican				1		
Kuwaiti					1	
Latvian	1	4			2	2
Lebanese	3	3	4	5	5	4
Libyan			2	3	2	2
Lithuanian	1	6	6	5	7	5
Luxembourgish	1	1			1	1
Hungarian	14	17	19	16	21	16
Macedonian	27	25	24	27	18	23
Malaysian						1
Maltese			2			1
Moroccan	1	1		1	1	2
Mauritian	1	1	1			
Mexican	1	2	4	3		
Moldavian	2	1	3	1	1	1
Mongolian				3	3	4
Namibian	1			1		
Nepali					1	5
Nigerien				6	1	
Nigerian	2	3	2	2	2	10
Dutch	5	5	5	5	20	11
Norwegian	41	43	46	46	42	37
New Zealand	1	1				
German	196	261	300	344	447	485
Pakistani	1	1	1	2	1	7
Peruvian	1					
Polish	16	10	19	12	14	5
Portuguese	3	12	15	14	22	8

Romanian	7	17	21	13	18	15
Russian	20	21	17	21	20	23
Saint Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla						1
Sierra Leonean						1
Syrian	6	8	6	10	7	6
United States of America	28	37	38	40	45	39
American Samoan	1	1				
Slovak	5	10	4	2	2	4
Slovenian	115	105	100	118	117	116
Sri Lankan						2
Serbian	16	19	23	29	30	40
Sudanese			1		1	1
Spanish	9	30	33	13	26	14
Swedish	42	35	34	33	28	23
Swiss	1	2	3	2	6	10
Thai	3	2	2	2	2	
Taiwanese						1
Italian	36	56	68	63	61	59
Tanzanian						1
Trinidad and Tobago		1	1	1	1	1
Tunisian						1
Turkmenian	1	1	3	3	1	1
Turkish	6	3	6	8	6	7
Ugandan				1	1	1
United Arab Emirates	1					1
Ukrainian	10	13	17	14	27	101
Uruguayan						1
Uzbek						1
Venezuelan	2	2	1	2	2	2
Vietnamese			1		1	
Zambian	1	2	1			
Zimbabwean				2	2	2
Total	1004	1202	1312	1392	1575	1748