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# Slovenian and Croatian students' perspective on European dimension in education: Analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 European module

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper on the primary level is to explore Slovenian and Croatian students' knowledge and orientation toward future thought the European dimension in education as operationalized in ICCS 2016. On secondary level to determine are there differences in any construct populating four domains of the European dimension in education between Slovenian and Croatian students. The European dimension in education is measured by students' results on ICCS 2016 European module. ICCS 2016 operationalized the European dimension in education through four domains populated with ten constructs. Slovenian and Croatian students' composite result on the European dimension in education, as results on domains and constructs populating domains of the European dimension in education, were analyzed using secondary data analysis. On the domains of the European dimension in education related to the students' attitudes towards civic societies and systems and students' attitudes towards civic participation, Slovenian students show more positive attitudes than Croatian counterparts ( $p < 0.05$ ). On constructs populating domains of a European dimension in education, there is a fuzzy picture. Slovenian students have a more positive perception of the European future and attitudes toward political consumerism, while Croatian students have more positive attitudes towards European cooperation, the EU, and freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe. When the European dimension in education is analyzed as a composite indicator there aren't statistically significant differences in results of the Slovenian and Croatian students'. Results point to the deficient efforts present within the Slovenian and Croatian educational systems regarding the preparation of pupils for the role of European citizens.

**Keywords:** civic society; civic principles; civic participation; civic identity; ICCS 2016.



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### 1. Introduction

As a supranational conglomerate of national states, European Union [EU] from its very formation faced challenges in creating social cohesion and a positive individual stance toward the idea and reality of the EU. Because the EU's main focus was on economic cooperation as a means of developing European national economies and countering strong economic pressures from the US in the early and China in the contemporary phase, the creation of a common European identity and values was put on hold. As it became obvious that the EU is unable to function purely as an economic and political Union, culture and education rose to prominence as answers to the need of creating common European values that would hold the EU together. Since its first attempt to formulate an EU stance toward educational practice and policy, the European dimension in education was one of the main fields of interest. As Mulcahy (1991, p. 214) writes: "by the early 1960s, however, education began to attract attention, though it was not until the mid-1970s that tangible progress in dealing with it became evident. By 1976 the Community [EU] had agreed on a course of action that has guided its activities in the field ever since, and in 1977 this course of action was published in the form of a pamphlet appropriately entitled *Towards a European Education Policy*. If only in embryonic form, this policy statement gave one of the earliest expressions to the notion of the European dimension" in education.

The European dimension in education was not only one of the first attempts to use education and culture as social glue of the EU, but it is also one of the most persistent EU policies from its introduction till today (Mulcahy, 1991; Ryba, 1992). Development of the European dimension in education can be traced

from the idea that is only mentioned in principle in the first documents of (European) education policy - for example in the document *For a Community Policy in Education* (1973), through its strong foundation in Council of Europe and European Commission documents - *Recommendation on the European Dimension of Education* (1989), *Green Paper of the European Dimension of Education* (1993) and the *Treaty on European Union* (1992/3), to the exceptionally important space given to it in the strategic guidelines *Development of European education in the future - Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('Education and Training 2020')* (Turk & Ledić, 2013, p. 187-188; see also Turk & Ledić, 2014; Turk, et al., 2015).

As its development was long and fostered by different EU policies, the theoretical development of the European dimension in education needed to start with a clear definition of the term. In most of the scholarly literature European dimension in education denotes the promotion of public understanding, interest, and positive attitudes towards an idea of the EU (European Commission, 1974; Karlsen, 2002; Keating, 2014) within population included in compulsory education.

Since the European dimension in education represents the most important aspect of EU educational policy it "lies at a point of tension between precisely the two notions of 'unity' and 'diversity'" (Ryba, 1995, p. 26) that are characteristic of the EU. On one side is a unity of all



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Member states in the Union and on the other are the unique cultural and historical realities of each national state (Ryba, 1995). This tension is central to the *Green Paper on the European Dimension of Education* (Commission of the European Communities, 1993, p. 3) which points out that “education has as one of its aims the preparation of young people to exercise their responsibilities in a wider social and economic area. It is in this perspective that the development of a European dimension in education must be seen as an important factor in the adjustment of the educational process to the new economic, social and cultural environment.” The importance of the *Green Paper on the European Dimension of Education* lies in a straightforward argument about the legal base found for the introduction of the European dimension in education in form of Article 126 of Chapter 3 of the Treaty of Maastricht (Council of European Communities & Commission of the European Communities, 1992). Article 126 states that “the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between the Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and complementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity“ (Council of European Communities & Commission of the European Communities, 1992).

The initial part of this paper's introductory section analyzed political motivation and background for a conceptualization of the European dimension in education, and the rest of this section will deal with implications of the European dimension in education for education in practice. On a practical level, the European dimension in education is introduced in schools through six elements: teaching about Europe, pupil mobility and exchange, the European school record card, foreign language teaching, European schools and schools of an international nature, and teacher mobility and training (Neave, 1984; Mulcahy, 1991). The right combination of the six mentioned elements provides schools with stimulus for the development of pupils' knowledge about Europe and the EU and a positive and active stance toward living and taking an active role in Europe and the EU (Commission of the European Communities, 1993). Concerning the European dimension in education “schools have the task of helping the younger generation to develop an awareness of the feeling of belonging to Europe and to begin to understand that Europe is present in many areas of daily life” (Barthélémy, 1999, p. 78). School activities related to the development of the European dimension in education have to be complemented by out-of-school activities (Barthélémy, 1999) realized by different actors. Ryba (1995, p. 28) points out that “it is possible to distinguish four principal groups of personal or institutional actors who have contributed to the development of ideas and practice regarding the European dimension [in] education: individuals; voluntary associations; public authorities at national and regional levels; and international organizations.”

Regardless is it implemented on the level of educational policy or practice and national or international context, “all EU member states (and most candidate countries) now have a European dimension to their citizenship education, at least at lower secondary-level education” (Keating, 2014, p. 95). Because of the nature of EU policy in general, and in the field of education in particular, the European dimension in education became an integral policy in all



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EU countries which means that their educational system implemented the development of the European dimension in education as one of its aims.

### 2. The European dimension in education in Croatia and Slovenia: literature review

The first mention of a European dimension in education in Croatia is found in Zidarić's (1996) paper analyzing the emergence, development, and current position of the European dimension in education. All later development of the European dimension in education in Croatia is related to the activities within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka.

Ledić and Turk (2012) analyzed challenges of the European dimension in education and concluded that in the Croatian context on theoretical level European dimension in education is neglected within national educational policy and in need of a clear theoretical framework and measurable indicators.<sup>1</sup> Sablić analyzed the presence of the European dimension in education in the *National Curriculum Framework for Preschool, Elementary, and Highschool Education* (MZOŠ, 2010) and concluded that the "European dimension in education is becoming the main instrument for the promotion of the European identity and citizenship" (Sablić, 2014, p. 85) within *National Curriculum Framework*.<sup>2</sup> Bušjeta (2015, p. 17) conducted a comparison of Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian fourth-grade gymnasium History textbooks and concluded "that the history textbooks in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are still preoccupied with factual representations of events, which does not leave much space for the methods of teaching and learning required by the European dimension in education."

After analyzing national legislative and strategic and development documents of Croatian educational policy Ledić and associates stated that the European dimension is present in binding documents of national educational policy and strategic and development plans for education (Ledić et al., 2016). They concluded that "school counselors in elementary and high school have generally positive image toward European Union" (Ledić et al., 2016, p. 90). Analyzing teachers' perspective of the European dimension in education Vignjević Korotaj and associates (2020, p. 129) concluded that "most of the geography teachers in an elementary and high school recognized determinants of the concept of a European dimension in education." Extending their research in the same direction Vignjević Korotaj and associates sought "to determine if the European dimension in education is present in geography textbooks for primary schools, as well as to explore how it is represented in them" (Vignjević Korotaj et al., 2020, p. 177). They

<sup>1</sup> Until present, it is unclear what are (or what should) be indicators of a European dimension in education both in the context of the national and European educational policy.

<sup>2</sup> Results presented in this paper are offering a different picture because results of Croatian students on a composite indicator of the European dimension in education fall just a bit above the central value of 2. Looking from 2014. until today we can then draw at least two conclusions. First, the presence of the European dimension in education within the *National Curriculum Framework* stopped on a policy level, or second, teachers are not prepared for the cross-curricular implementation of a European dimension in education.



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concluded “that European dimension in education indicators are not significantly present in any of the textbooks; where they are present, it is mostly to transfer factual knowledge about Europe or the EU“ (Vignjević Korotaj et al., 2020, p. 189). Vignjević Korotaj and associates confirmed earlier findings of Turk and associates (2015) which pointed out that Croatian school teachers “show relatively poor understanding of the objectives of the framework for European cooperation in the area of education and training, which can be considered the failure of the national education policy.”<sup>3</sup> Analyzing elementary school teachers' initial education for implementation of citizenship education in Croatia research (Beroš, 2021, p. 588) concluded that “a comprehensive system for the development of competencies necessary to elementary school teachers for the implementation of the first and second cycle of CE curriculum“ doesn't exist. And the same is with teachers' professional development and competence profile needed to foster development and acceptance of knowledge and positive attitudes about Europe and the EU because this process has many elements in common with the teachers' professional development and competence profile needed for the implementation of the Citizenship education.

In the case of Slovenia European dimension in education entered into the research scene through Rizman's (2003) analysis of the relationship between Slovenian and European identity in which he points out the tension between Slovenian and European identity maintaining that idea of European identity can pose an opportunity and threat to the Slovenian identity at the same time. Although European identity is seen as an integral part of national educational policy “the analyses of the syllabi show that no syllabus contains a definition about European identity or citizenship. The objectives related to European identity are written in general terms (at the beginning of the syllabi) but are not specified for each grade. They just mention that students have to know these two terms at the end of schooling“ (Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011, p. 313). In newer discourse of Slovenian educational policy incorporation of the European dimension in education is seen as an important goal. To foster its realization in schools Government's communication office published *EU v školi: Priročnik za učitelje o Evropski uniji z delovnimi listi* (Krajc et al., 2010). This teaching material provides teachers with basic information about the history, symbols, politics, and life in the EU and methodical exercises ready to use in the classroom. In the research field, Resnik Planinc (1998; 2012; Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011) conducted extensive research on the European dimension in teaching geography. In a small sample meta-analysis of research on students' attitudes towards European dimension and European identity within school geography curricula spanning through 15 years, Resnik Planinc (2012, p. 18) concluded that “most young people ... are moderately indifferent

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<sup>3</sup> Starting from the premise that “that European values are part of the concept of a European dimension in education” Pavičić Vukičević (2019, p. 65) concluded that there are differences within teachers when the variable of age is taken into account. Pavičić Vukičević (2019, p. 79) concludes that „global values“ are more important to young relative to older teachers, while at the same time older than younger teachers are more proud to be Croatian citizens and citizens of the European Union.” Pavičić Vukičević's research deals only marginally with the European dimension in education but focuses on the larger subject of the European values, and therefore is excluded from the main body of literature review.



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to Europe and maintain traditional attitudes towards identity and nationality. This, however, is not to claim that their attitude towards Europe is over-skeptical, but rather that ‘Europe’ is, for the most part, viewed in instrumental terms.“

On the level of teaching content in “official syllabi for subjects Geography and History“ (Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011, p. 305) “some references to Europe are mentioned and explained in detail and some of them are not mentioned at all“ (Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011, p. 312). In syllabi for subjects Geography and History “European institutions are very rarely mentioned. They are not mentioned at all in lower secondary school syllabi for Geography and History. Even in the secondary school syllabi, the institutions are not mentioned; only two institutions, European Parliament and European Council are mentioned in the syllabus for History“ (Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011, p. 312). Symbols of EU are not used at all and “the terms Europeans and European identity and citizenship are used, but rarely“ (Resnik Planinc & Ilc Klun, 2011, p. 312).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Data

To investigate the attitudes of elementary schools’ pupils in Slovenia and Croatia towards European future and identity, which make up a core of European dimension in education, data from EU member countries participating in *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* [ICCS] were used. ICCS is a cyclical international comparative large-scale assessment in education conducted by the IEA in 1999 (as CIVED study) and 2009 and 2016 as ICCS (Rožnam & Cortes, 2019). In the research presented in this paper, analysis was restricted to countries of interest, Croatia and Slovenia, and the 2016 assessment cycle. The ICCS 2016 assessment framework consisted of “four content domains: civic society and systems, civic principles, civic participation, and civic identities” (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 21), and each domain included an aspect of a European dimension in education. Combining these domains European questionnaire was developed and included in ICCS 2016 “with a focus on elements that were viewed as pertinent to the region” (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 28).

In this paper, following ICCS 2016 European questionnaire, the European dimension in education is conceptualized through four domains and defined as a combination of students’ attitudes, perceptions, expectations, and opinions about Europe and current realities, problems, and opportunities faced by Europeans. European module included ten constructs operationalized through questionnaire-type items and placed in four domains of a European dimension in education.

In the domain of *students’ attitudes toward civic society and systems* constructs reflecting *students’ perceptions of the European future, attitudes toward European cooperation* and *attitudes toward the European Union* were measured (Schulz et al., 2016). *Students’ perceptions of the European future* were measured through a “new question with possible scenarios for the European future, asking students to rate the extent of their likelihood of occurring“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 26). *Attitudes toward European cooperation* were measured through “new question designed to measure students’ endorsement of cooperation between European countries regarding a range of different issues“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 26), and



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*attitudes toward the European Union* were measured through a “question containing statements about the EU designed to measure students' attitudes toward this institution“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 26).

In the domain of *students' attitudes toward civic principles* constructs reflecting *students' attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants, perception of discrimination in European societies, views on age limitations for young people, and attitudes towards freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe* were measured (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 27-29). *Students' attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants* were measured by a scale of five questions reflecting attitudes toward immigrants (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 28). *Students' perception of discrimination in European societies* was measured with “a new question presenting students with several statements about discrimination, for which they should rate their agreement or disagreement“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 29). *Students' views on age limitations for young people* were measured with “a question asking students to choose between different legal age limits that they prefer for a number of different behaviors, including buying alcohol, voting, and driving licenses“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 28), and *students' attitudes towards freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe* were measured by a scale consisting of a “modified set of six items measuring students' attitudes toward freedom of movement“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 29).

The domain of *students' attitudes toward civic participation* was operationalized through construct reflecting *students' attitudes toward political consumerism* which were measured by “a question asking students to rate their agreement or disagreement with several statements about political or ethical consumerism“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 31).

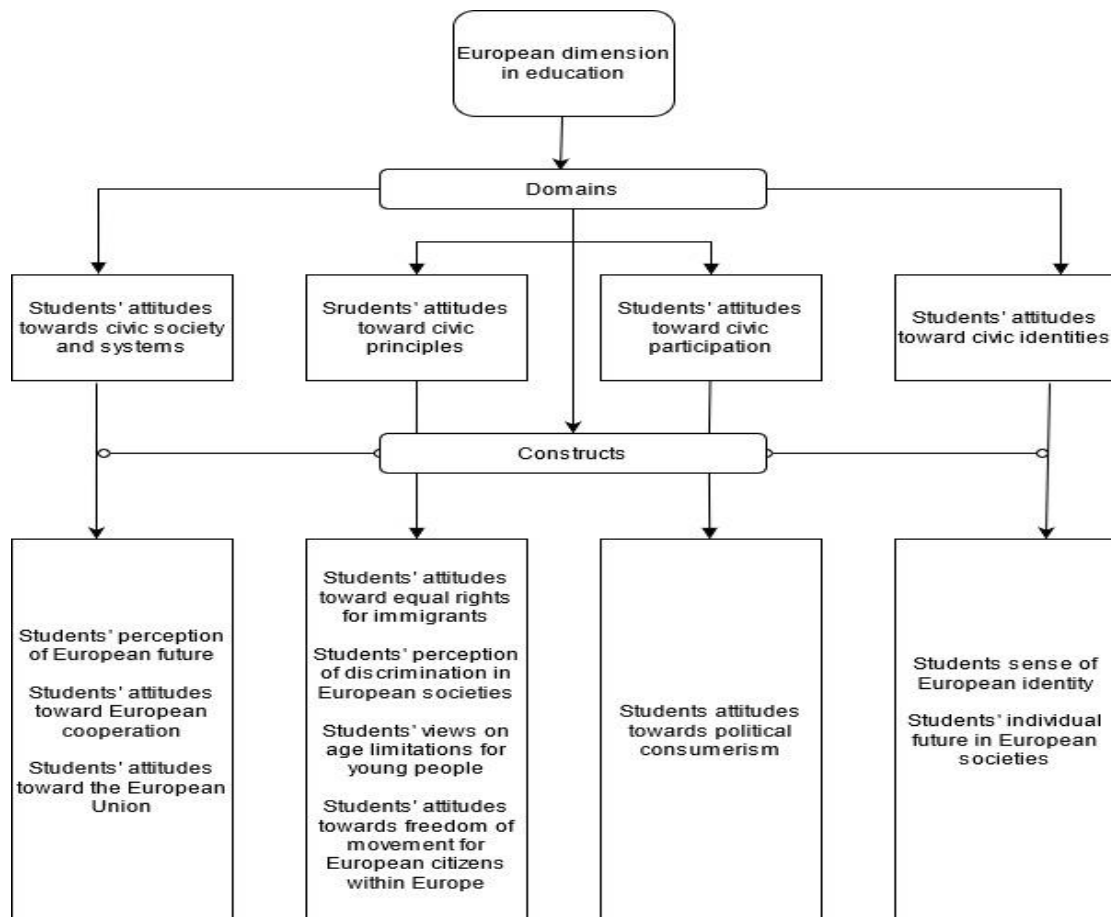
The domain of *students' attitudes toward civic identities* was operationalized through two constructs reflecting *students' sense of European identity* and *perceptions of their individual future in European societies*. *Students' sense of European identity* was measured with a question from ICCS 2009 cycle “about the extent to which lower-secondary students have developed a sense of European identity“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 32) and *students perceptions of their individual future in European societies* was measured with a question about “the likelihood of finding employment and better financial conditions in the future“ (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 33).

Operationalization of European dimension in education in ICCS 2016 through domains and constructs is shown on next page in figure 1.



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Figure 1: Operationalization of the European dimension in education in ICCS 2016



Data used for purposes of this paper were obtained from “ICCS 2016 international database (IDB) [that] contains student civic knowledge test data and international student, teacher, and school questionnaire data collected in the 24 countries around the world that participated in the study” (Köhler, 2016, p. 7). ICCS 2016 IDB includes “student responses to the international civic knowledge test items, the responses to the international student, teacher, and school questionnaires, and responses to the regional student questionnaires” (Köhler, 2016, p. 9). In research presented in this paper responses to the European student questionnaires “related to students’ attitudes and perceptions relevant to the region” (Köhler, 2016, p. 10) were analyzed.





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### 3.2 Hypotheses

H1. There are no differences in results of Slovenian and Croatian students on four domains of the European dimension in education.

H2. There is no difference in results of Slovenian and Croatian students on constructs populating four domains of the European dimension in education.

H3. There is no difference in results of Slovenian and Croatian students on the composite indicator of the European dimension in education.

### 3.3 Method

After analyzing research hypotheses and available data, the methodology of secondary data analysis was used. The basis for analysis was the *ICCS 2016 international database* [ICCS 2016 IDB] containing data collected to “investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in a range of countries in the second decade of the 21st century” (Carstens & Köhler, 2016, p. 1). ICCS 2016 IDB provides “comparable data for 24 countries from around the world providing an international perspective from which to examine educational practices and student outcomes in civic and citizenship education” (Carstens & Köhler, 2016, p. 2). Data from ICCS 2016 IDB provide a perspective of “the students, the teachers teaching in the target grade at their school and their school principals” (Köhler, 2016, p. 9) on citizenship education including the European dimension in education. In the case of Croatia and Slovenia, a comparable number of schools and students participated in ICCS 2016 (Table 1).

To secure validity and reliability of procedure guiding answers for obtaining validity and reliability in secondary data analysis were followed: population from which sample was drawn was appropriate (primary school pupils), the independent variable was contained in ICCS 2016 IDB (pupils nationality) as were independent variables of interest (pupils results on European dimension in education and constructs populating European dimension in education), it was possible to (partly) generalize results from the samples to the general populations and no special authorizations were needed to obtain ICCS 2016 IDB (Devine, 2003; Boslaugh, 2007; Smith, 2008; Vartanian, 2010; Johnston, 2014) containing responses from Slovenian and Croatian students on the ICCS 2016 European module.

Table 1: School and student sample sizes

Country	Originally sampled schools (n)	Student survey		Percentage of a sample (%)	
		Participating schools (n)	Participating students (n)	Schools	Students
Croatia	178	175	3896	54,7	57,8
Slovenia	150	145	2844	45,3	42,2
<b>Sample</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>6740</b>		
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>97,6</b>	<b>100</b>		

Source. Weber (2016, p. 47.)



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For testing research hypotheses t-test for independent samples was used and performed by SPSS Statistics v. 23 with merged databases of European student questionnaires from Slovenia and Croatia.

### 4. Students' attitudes about domains of the European dimension in education

Students' attitudes about domains of the European dimension in education are shown in Table 2 on the next page. With a high level of confidence, we can maintain that Croatian students have a more positive outlook of the common European future than their Slovenian counterparts. Croatian students have a more optimistic outlook about the European future and cooperation. But the same is not true about students' attitudes towards civic participation, where Croatian students show weaker agreement with a need for incorporating positive practices of political consumerism (Gundelach, 2020; Kam & Deichert, 2020) in everyday life. In domains of students' attitudes toward civic principles such as equal social and political rights, equality, age-based limitations of individual's rights, and freedom of movement within Europe there aren't statistically significant differences between Slovenian and Croatian students. In the domain of attitudes towards civic identities, there too aren't statistically significant differences in results between Slovenian and Croatian students on their sense of European identity and individual future in European societies. These findings are analyzed closely in the section on students' attitudes about constructs populating domains of a European dimension in education (Table 3, p. 11).

When the European dimension in education is taken as a composite indicator there aren't significant differences in Slovenian and Croatian students' attitudes which means that the third research hypothesis is accepted. Analysis of results on domains of a European dimension in education showed that there are statistically significant differences between Slovenian and Croatian students' and therefore the first hypothesis is refuted (Table 2).

Table 2: Slovenian and Croatian students' results on domains of the European dimension in education

Domain	Country	M	SD	t	df	sig
Students attitudes towards civic societies and systems	Croatia	1,96	0,30	6,82	6711	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	1,91	0,33			
Students attitudes towards civic principles	Croatia	2,46	0,28	0,72	6722	.471 (-)
	Slovenia	2,46	0,29			
Students attitudes towards civic participation	Croatia	2,16	0,50	8,44	6575	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	2,05	0,50			
Students attitudes toward civic identities	Croatia	1,73	0,44	0,78	6717	.044 (-)
	Slovenia	1,74	0,39			
<b>The European dimension in education</b>	<b>Croatia</b>	<b>2,06</b>	<b>0,27</b>	<b>1,89</b>	<b>6569</b>	<b>0,59 (-)</b>
	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>2,05</b>	<b>0,25</b>			

Note.  $p < 0.05$



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### 5. Students' attitudes about constructs populating domains of the European dimension in education

On constructs of students' attitudes towards equal rights for immigrants, students' perception of discrimination in European societies, students' sense of European identity, and students' individual future in European societies there aren't statistically significant differences in results between Slovenian and Croatian students (Table 3, p. 11).<sup>4</sup>

Both Slovenian and Croatian students agree that immigrants should have an opportunity to continue practicing their costumes, lifestyle, and language and have an opportunity to vote and opportunity for education (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 306). Students' attitudes about discrimination in their country show that discrimination is present in everyday doing. Both Slovenian and Croatian students marginally agree that in their country it's "common [that] woman have lower salaries, immigrants are more exposed to unfair treatment than other groups, gay and lesbian people are often bullied, [and] young people are often discriminated against" (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 307). These attitudes are strengthened with Slovenian and Croatian students' sense of European identity that is very strong, and that is obvious from just mentioned results on attitudes towards discrimination. While students' agree that discrimination is present in their society's everyday doings' they also think this should change and their societies should become more tolerant and inclusive when faced with national, racial, religious, or any other difference. Slovenian and Croatian students strongly agree that they are proud to live in Europe, they see themselves as Europeans and feel that they are part of Europe and the EU which makes them proud. Strong acceptance of geographical, moral, and value location within European tradition present within the surveyed population of Slovenian and Croatian students' culminates in a strong sense of European identity, which in turn is strengthened by a positive perception of students' individual future in European societies. Slovenian and Croatian students think that it's likely and very likely that in the future they will find a job they like and which will make their finical situation better than that of their parents, and in final instance give them an opportunity to start a family.

On following constructs there are statistically significant differences between Slovenian and Croatian students (Table 3): students' perception of the European future, attitudes towards European cooperation, attitudes toward the European Union, views on age limitations for young people, attitudes toward freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe, and attitudes toward political consumerism

While both Slovenian and Croatian students think that in the future it's likely that there will be stronger cooperation, greater peace among European countries, less air and water pollution, and terrorism threats Slovenian students maintain a stronger positive outlook about positive outcomes of political, social, and ecological challenges European countries will face in future. But results show that this positive outlook on challenges that European counties will face in the future doesn't correlate with students' attitudes towards European cooperation because Croatian, and not Slovenian, students are in stronger agreement about the need for European-

<sup>4</sup> In ICCS 2016 reverse scoring was used and that is taken into account when results are discussed.



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wide cooperation on issues such as protection of the environment, guarantees for high levels of employment, and students' mobility (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 306). In line with these results, Croatian students' attitudes toward the EU are more positive than the attitudes of their Slovenian counterparts. Croatian students strongly agree that the EU provides a guarantee for respecting human rights, safe living, resolving ecological issues, strong national economy, and rule of law within individual countries and EU, while Slovenian students are not in such strong agreement about their positive attitudes about the EU (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 309). While there is no interaction between a positive outlook about the European future and a positive view of the common European future as a result of cooperation on issues European countries will face, Croatian students maintain a more positive attitude toward freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe. Croatian students are in a higher agreement about the benefits of freedom of movement within Europe for purposes of employment, education, and tourism (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 308). This finding can be explained by a high level of work-related and quality of life-related migrations within the Croatian population in general and the youth segment of the population in particular, which is a result of the youth's negative outlook on the expected future in Croatia.

Besides attitudes related to different aspects of the common European future and the impact of the EU on everyday expectations and chances of students, statistically, significant differences between Slovenian and Croatian students are present on constructs that measure views on age limitations for young people and attitudes towards political consumerism (Table 3). Slovenian students place mean age for buying alcohol and cigarettes, getting a credit card and driving license, voting in local and national elections, getting a job, and getting married at age of 16 while Croatian students place age limitations for young people until the age of 18. Consistent with the general lower age for mentioned everyday practices Slovenian students also place a lower age limit for taking an active part in political practices as voting and score higher on the construct of attitudes toward political consumerism. While they maintain that forms of formal political participation should be available to youth at a lower age than their Croatian counterparts' Slovenian students also have a higher agreement that consumerism in nature is a political act. Therefore Slovenian students strongly stress that "people should not buy goods coming from non-democratic countries, ... produced by companies using child labor... whose production has a negative impact on the environment... produced by the companies violating the social right of their employees" (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 308). Slovenian students also agree, in a higher degree than their Croatian counterpart's, that "people should buy [only] products that can be recycled afterwards [and] green products even if they are more expensive" (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 308).

Since there is a statistically significant difference in results of Slovenian and Croatian students' on several constructs populating domains of the European dimension in education (Table 3) the second hypothesis is refuted.



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Table 3: Slovenian and Croatian students' results on constructs of the European dimension in education

Construct	Country	M	SD	t	df	sig
Students perception of European future	Croatia	2,32	0,38	9,70	6484	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	2,22	0,35			
Students attitudes towards European cooperation	Croatia	1,49	0,41	13,22	6559	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	1,62	0,41			
Students attitudes toward the European Union	Croatia	1,90	0,52	8,87	6619	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	2,01	0,48			
Students attitudes towards equal rights for immigrants	Croatia	1,84	0,55	1,64	6638	.101 (-)
	Slovenia	1,81	0,56			
Students perception of discrimination in European societies	Croatia	2,43	0,42	1,06	6430	.289 (-)
	Slovenia	2,42	0,42			
Students views on age limitations for young people	Croatia	3,61	0,53	11,79	6393	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	3,45	0,53			
Students attitudes toward freedom of movement for European citizens within Europe	Croatia	2,04	0,40	12,95	6161	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	2,18	0,43			
Students attitudes toward political consumerism	Croatia	2,16	0,50	8,44	6575	.000 (+)
	Slovenia	2,05	0,50			
Students sense of European identity	Croatia	1,63	0,54	2,22	6625	.026 (-)
	Slovenia	1,66	0,52			
Students individual future in European societies	Croatia	1,83	0,49	0.513	6632	.608 (-)
	Slovenia	1,82	0,57			

Note.  $p < 0.05$



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### 6. Conclusion

Through historical development up to the present moment, education was seen as an important aspect for the success of European integrations (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2007; Beroš & Pongračić, 2019), and efforts were made to incorporate European social, ethical, and political values into the educational process in European countries. On the level of the European educational policy, this effort was conceptualized through the European dimension in education that represents an integral part of European countries' educational systems, including Slovenia and Croatia. Findings presented in this paper point out that there significant differences in results on domains of a European dimension in education between Slovenian and Croatian students'.

These findings are further strengthened by the analysis of individual domains of the European dimension in education since results showed that Croatian students scored higher on domains of attitudes towards civic societies and systems and attitudes towards civic participation. To yet further deepen these findings results on individual constructs populating domains of the European dimension in education were analyzed. On six constructs statistically significant difference in results were found while on four constructs there wasn't statistically significant differences in results between Slovenian and Croatian students'. These differences are located in all constructs populating the domain of students' attitudes towards civic societies and systems and in half of the constructs populating the domain of students' attitudes towards civic principles. Since found differences aren't pointing in direction of one country but instead are mixed between Slovenian and Croatian students', and there isn't a clear direction in results it isn't possible to say that in any of the analyzed countries students' have more positive attitudes about Europe in general and EU's institutions in particular, nor toward European values and perceived common European future. This conclusion is confirmed by results of Slovenian and Croatian students' on a composite indicator of a European dimension in education where both groups of students have a marginally positive attitude toward civic societies, systems, principles, participation, and identities. Presented results paint a fuzzy picture of Slovenian and Croatian students' attitudes and perceptions on different aspects of the EU in general and also on the internal functioning and expectations from the EU.

Since Slovenia became a Member of the EU in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 Slovenian educational system is much longer part of the EU educational policy and therefore it was plausible that Slovenian students' will have higher results on the composite indicator of the European dimension in education, and especially on constructs of students' sense of European identity and attitudes toward the EU. But results (Table 2 and 3) show that is not the case and that Croatian students score higher (in case of attitudes towards the EU,  $p < 0.05$ ) on constructs related to the EU. Maybe expectations from the EU within Slovenian youth were too high and unrealistic, and when these were not fulfilled positive orientation towards European identity and EU in general weakened. In the case of Croatian students' more positive stance toward the construct of European identity is present and especially towards the EU. Croatian students' had high expectations of the impact of Croatia becoming a member state of the EU and their primary orientation toward the EU was utilitarian and therefore effect of unfulfilled expectations (Ilišin, 2011) set in, but later than in the case of Slovenian students. While this research shows that



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Croatian students have more positive attitudes toward the EU, the EU's unfulfilled expectations linger among youth, and that is confirmed by another part of the ICCS 2016 results which show that after five years as a member of the EU "only slightly over one-third of Croatian students feel strong belonging to the community" (Šalaj, 2019, p. 13). Higher acceptance of European identity and more positive attitudes toward the EU are connected to the students' perceived opportunity for work and quality of life-related migration within the EU. In the Croatian national context, EU membership also offers many opportunities for the national youth policy related to the sectors of the civic society and education. But youth themselves has to put much more effort (Kovačić, 2019) than in the past if their expectations from the EU are going to be satisfied within Croatia and not elsewhere.

Open question about the implementation of a European dimension in education in schools' everyday workings remains to be answered. While literature overview offers insight into teachers' and schools counselors' perspectives on the European dimension in education, research on students' attitudes related to the constructs of the European dimension in education and composite indicator of a European dimension in education is scarce. Presented research shows that a clear framework encompassing initial teacher education, professional development, and implementation of the European dimension in education in schools' everyday workings exists neither in Slovenia nor in Croatia. This situation offers one part of the answer to the fuzzy picture of Slovenian and Croatian students' presented by the results on the ICCS 2016 students European module.

This research provided evidence that there is still work left to be done before Slovenian and Croatian students start feeling and acting as an integral part of the EU in case of civic principles, identity, and attitudes towards civic societies and systems. In this process, national political elites have a leading role and responsibility (Beroš & Pongračić, 2018) and they have to start with real consolidation of "democracy on institutional and representative level" (Čular & Šalaj, 2019, p. 21). Education in general, and citizenship education especially, is an integral part in process of students' positive political socialization and serious effort have to be made if Croatian (Beroš & Pongračić, 2018; 2019; Beroš, 2020; 2021) and Slovenian educational policy want to be a positive and not a negative factor in youth's development of positive attitudes towards EU, European identity and acceptance of shared European future. For that purpose clear and comprehensive framework for implementation of European dimension education along a horizontal axis of the national educational system in Slovenia and Croatia is needed. This framework should be complemented with a matrix of initial and continuous teacher education that should be a result of a dialogue between national educational policy, universities, students, schools, and all profiles of educational specialists.

From the literature review presented in this paper, it is obvious that in dealing with the European dimension in education shift from exploring educational professionals' perspectives and discourses of national educational policies, toward exploring students' attitudes and everyday school interactions with dimensions and constructs of the European dimension in education would be beneficial. If going in this direction it would be useful to always take into account mezzo and macro relationships that permeate the educational process. The first ones are obvious in still dominant processes Europeanization and globalization of education, and the second ones



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steam from interactions of national and European educational policies and their implementation in practice. Positioning the European dimension in education on the cross-section of the abovementioned processes to possess a challenge since Europeanization and globalization alone are problematic and highly debated processes. But it also offers a possibility at least on level of educational policy and practice, to rethink the substance of the idea of common Europe and European identity, and start giving it new meaning in face of new challenges laying ahead European citizens.

This research offered a closer look into the European dimension in education from the standpoint of students' from two young Central and Eastern European democracies whose respective *Democracy Index* (DI, 2016) for 2016 were 7.51 in the case of Slovenia and 6.75 in the case of Croatia which is higher than mean result for the region that is 5.43. Slovenian and Croatian DI from 2016 puts Slovenia at the top position of flawed democracy going towards full democracy, while Croatia is in a position of marginally flawed democracy close to a hybrid regime (DI, 2016). The results of DI (2016) give a partial confirmation of the presented conclusions since they fit with the results presented in this paper. As the presented research show Slovenian students perceive their country as faulted in respect to democratic practices and principles, but to a significantly lesser extent than their Croatian counterparts.

The limitations of this paper are as follows. As in the case of published works based on ICCS 2016 data in this research aggregated data by country were used that could result in neglecting "any within country variation that might be important" (Rožman & Cortes, 2019, p. 76). Therefore, national research on students' attitudes towards and knowledge of EU and Europe, and the impact of the European dimension in education on students' perception related to the Europe and EU in general and European identity and values in particular, would take into account regional specifics of the Slovenia and Croatia would offer a deeper perspective into the matter.





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