



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
VARAŽDIN COUNTY
PREFECT
Varaždin, 15th September 2020

EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE AMONG AER MEMBERS ABOUT THE MEASURES IN EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN AND ITS AFTERMATH

Initiative of the Chair of the Committee for Education, Culture and Youth, Mr. Radimir Čačić
(Varaždin County, Croatia)

Dear all,

First of all, I hope you are all doing fine in these unusual, challenging and exceptional times.

This crisis has definitely left consequences we will have to deal with for a long time. The most important challenge, of course, is the medical one, and I am sure that we learned some and that we will be better prepared for a new potential wave. But the consequences are and will for quite some time be felt in economy and society as a whole.

Another important aspect, which belongs to the fundamental human rights and which was affected by the pandemic was the **educational system**. It required a highly coordinated approach of all the included parties (schools, ministries, regional governments – depending on the level of the competences, teachers, pupils and parents), but it also required the main technical precondition – internet access and tools for the online classes). In most countries, distance teaching and learning opened a new dimension for creative solutions and adaptability of the included parties.

On the example of Varaždin County, we can share with you following information:

- all our primary and secondary school pupils have tablets
- Informatics is taught from the 1st grade of primary education, and although it is an optional

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subject, even 90% of pupils attend these classes

- on the national level, we have a CARNET network (Croatian Academic and Research Network), a computer system through which a great number of individuals employed in different institutions use CARNET network services and network information services and other resources. Among other things, this enables distance learning and teaching.

Still, the whole educational system needs some improvements, better coordination with the national television, equipment and tools. A good thing is that we also have School television active in one of the vocational high- schools in our region and they also played an important role during the lockdown. This is definitely the topic in which we would like to hear the experiences of other regions.

The school year 2020/2021 in Croatia started on 7th September. Varaždin County government, in cooperation with schools, headmasters, carriers and the competent Ministry, did everything in its power to ensure a normal start of education. There are more than 9.500 pupils in primary schools, almost 7.000 pupils in secondary education, and 3.000 employees in educational system in Varaždin County. Although we are known as a County which introduced high educational standards, among which is also schooling in one shift, this year, due to epidemiological circumstances we had to ensure classes in two shifts in some bigger schools.

Furthermore, we continue with the work of centres of excellence with 800 highly motivated pupils, who have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in specific subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Informatics, Croatian language, Entrepreneurship, Chemistry, New Technologies, Biology and Communications, thereby providing high standard of teaching and learning.

In order to be better prepared for the new wave of potential lockdown or online classes, I am suggesting that AER members exchange experience and best practice examples. I believe that AER is the right platform with the help of which we can achieve that goal.

For that purpose, a questionnaire has been prepared, which will enable us to get feedback from you. The results of this important and hopefully useful survey will be kindly shared with all the AER members. Maybe some of the solutions used in some other country will help you to improve the educational models in your region, within the scope of your competences.

You are, of course, more than welcome to consult and send this questionnaire to your administrative departments for education, or any other entity, responsible for education in your respective region.

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As the chair of the AER Committee responsible, among other things, for education, I feel obliged to do everything in my power and competences to help the AER membership to overcome the challenges like these. I really do hope that by this small project we can help each other in overcoming the challenges in this and similar unprecedented situations.

Finally, I wish you all a successful new school year, with as little negative consequences as possible. Hopefully, mutual learning and cooperation will help us overcome the obstacles and challenges ahead.

Varaždin County has always been open to bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and we are also interested in cooperation through EU-funded projects.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ms Larisa Križan Breljak, e-mail: larisa.krizan-breljak@vzz.hr.

We kindly ask you to fill in the questionnaire until 2nd October 2020 at the latest.

Sincerely yours,

Prefect of Varaždin County
Chair of the AER Committee
of Culture, Education and Youth

Radimir Čačić

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