

Foreword

Higher education plays a vital role in OECD member and partner countries in educating learners, driving innovation and contributing to economic development. Higher education systems operate in a context of accelerating technological advancement, the growing imperative for sustainability, and continuously increasing societal expectations. Policy makers and institution leaders are faced with the need to adapt to the increasingly diverse needs of learners by developing more flexible, responsive programmes and learning pathways.

Digitalisation has been promoted as a means to enhance inclusion and efficiency in rapidly evolving higher education systems. It has the potential to make education more accessible for students unable to attend traditional on-campus classes. It can also facilitate more personalised teaching and learning approaches, stimulate wider and deeper collaboration through virtual means, and reduce the cost of education.

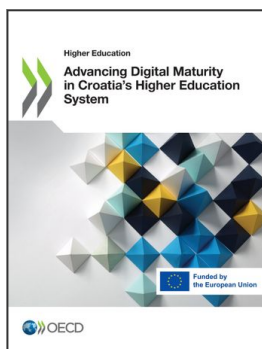
The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid transition to reliance on digital technologies. Many instructors and students were insufficiently prepared for the sudden transition and had negative experiences of emergency remote instruction. Attention is now turning to important questions not considered or prioritised during the emergency period. How should learning and assessment be redesigned so digital technologies are used effectively? How should quality assurance be adapted to new modes of delivery? What are the associated needs for investment in financial and human resources?

The Croatian government views digitalisation as a way to improve access to higher education and increase its attractiveness to national and international students. It is investing substantial funds to modernise digital infrastructure and build capacity for effective integration of digital technologies into the higher education offer. This report provides an account of the activities and findings of the “Assessing the Digital Readiness of Croatian Higher Education Institutions” project, which was carried out by the OECD and funded by the European Union. The primary objective of the project is to provide support and advice to Croatian authorities as they develop their strategic approach to higher education digitalisation.

The report offers an assessment of Croatia’s general digital readiness and the digital maturity of its higher education institutions. It reviews and reflects on emerging international trends related to standards, supports and practices for enhancing the quality of digital higher education. It also provides technical advice for public authorities on the prioritisation of investments in digital infrastructure. Finally, draft guidelines for institutions are presented, aimed at supporting and advising their strategic development processes and investment strategies with respect to digitalisation.

The report forms a body of advice that is intended not only to support immediate national projects, but also inform future policy developments related to digitalisation in Croatia’s higher education system.

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