



MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Models and Recommendations for work in conditions related to COVID-19 disease

Pedagogical/School Year 2020/2021

September 2020

Foreword

Dear school directors¹, I am pleased to welcome you at the beginning of a new pedagogical and school year and wish you success in your work.

I especially welcome you, dear children and students, parents, and guardians, because again in this year we join with you in the care and responsibility for the health and future of this country.

I also welcome dear educators, teachers and professional associates who, together with school directors, are the bearers and promoters of positive changes and most deserving for successful resistance of the education system to all challenges and allow the system to successfully navigate the restless sea.

To teach and educate children and students is a great obligation that requires a lot of love and sacrifice, therefore your call is one of the most responsible, but also the noblest. You open your life's perspective to children and students, teach them new knowledge, educate them to become full-fledged people and exemplary citizens, good children of their parents and honest friends.

The education system is the cornerstone of our future and the key to building a modern civil society. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that as a society we persevere together in the successful education and education of our children and students based on national and European values and on the awareness of the richness and uniqueness of each individual.

Since only by mutual acceptance and constant work, advocacy and trust can we improve the educational system, I believe that we will successfully cooperate in this pedagogical and school year by accepting and coping with new challenges.

We share with you the responsibility for all goals set, because together we have shown that with commitment to the goals, success will be achieved. The Ministry of Science and Education together with the agencies of the system will provide you with professional support, since only through joint work can we create the conditions for kindergartens and schools that teach and that can respond to the needs of the time we live in.

Behind us is a pedagogical and school year that we will remember for a long time, and ahead of us is a year full of challenges. The first of them is the beginning of a new pedagogical and school year, organization of work and creation of conditions for quality work of institutions.

The document we present you proposes three models and offers recommendations for educational work and teaching in kindergartens and schools in conditions related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. The aim of those recommendations is to ensure as secure as possible conditions for conducting educational work with the acceptance of specificity regarding the age of children and students, as well as different conditions for work in educational institutions.

¹ Terms used in this document for males and females are neutral and refer to both male and female individuals.

The recommendations are related to the Croatian Institute for Public Health (CIPH) document *Instructions for Prevention and Suppression of the COVID-19 Epidemic Related to the Work of Preschool Institutions, Primary and Secondary Schools in the School Year 2020/2021* of 24 August 2020. They refer to measures to be implemented in all kindergartens and schools. This is an open document subject to changes and improvements. I believe you will find answers to most of your questions here. Those questions that remain open will be resolved with dialogue, mutual respect, and open communication.

Regardless of the model and when it will be activated, it is necessary to consistently implement all measures and recommendations for work. This protects our own health and indirectly the health of our families and citizens of the Republic of Croatia.

Let us be aware of the changes we will see in kindergartens and schools and we should not perceive them as obstacles, but rather as a challenge. Let us respect the instructions and measures related to adherence to physical contact, hand disinfection, wearing masks, because each of us has an important role in preserving the health of ourselves and the community. It is important that we become aware to teach others that the role of each of us is irreplaceable.

Let us be inspired by the positive aspects of returning to kindergartens and schools (such as meetings with friends, playing, learning and acquiring new knowledge), as well as by the knowledge that kindergarten and school environment is a natural environment crucial for the development and personal integrity of children and students in which they feel the best.

With synergy and togetherness, let us make our educational system healthy, safe, and strong. Let us be and stay responsible!

In this atmosphere, I wish all of us an incentive environment and a successful new pedagogical and school year.



Prof. Radovan Fuchs, PhD

Minister of Science and Education

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Introduction

This document proposes models and offers recommendations for educational work and teaching in kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia in the pedagogical/school year 2020/2021 under conditions related to the COVID-19 disease. The document is a logical sequence of events and documents related to the education system, drafted during the previous period in conditions related to COVID-19 disease, which we emphasise here.

On 4 March 2020, the Minister of Health issued a decision declaring the danger of the outbreak of the infectious disease COVID-19 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus for the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia (Class: 011-02/20-01/143, Reg. no.: 534-02-01-2/6-20-01). On 10 March 2020, this disease was placed on the [List of Infectious Diseases](#) whose prevention and control are of interest to the Republic of Croatia. On 11 March 2020, the Minister of Health declared the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The World Health Organisation declared on 11 March 2020 a pandemic of the COVID-19 disease.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted on 13 March 2020 the *Decision on the Suspension of Teaching in Higher Education Institutions, Secondary and Primary Schools, and the Regular Operation of Preschool Education Institutions and the Establishment of Distance Education* (Class: 022-03/20-04/92, Reg. no.: 50301-27/04-20-1, Official Gazette, No. [29/20](#) and [32/20](#)). Under the conditions of the proclaimed epidemic in the territory of the Republic of Croatia, the Decision ceases teaching in higher education institutions, secondary and primary schools, as well as regular work related to the admission of children in institutions of preschool education and obliged the Ministry of Science and Education (hereinafter: the Ministry) to coordinate activities and dynamics of establishing distance education.

The Ministry, together with the agencies of the system ((CARNet, University Computing Centre (SRCE), Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO), Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMPEU), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO)), has developed the concept of distance education.

Since primary school students attending lower elementary education at that age are not ready to use digital tools independently, the Ministry, in cooperation with the public broadcasting company (HRT), established distance education (Channel 3 School) for the youngest students. For older students (from the 5th grade of primary school onwards), 15 minute video lessons were made, which were presented according to the national schedule. Video lessons were made for high school graduates and various digital materials as a preparation for state graduation exams. The students of higher elementary education were provided with equipment and access to the Internet. Technical support to schools was provided by [CARNet](#).

Regarding the implementation of distance education, the Ministry has prepared instructions for schools ([Instruction to All Primary and Secondary Schools Regarding the Continuation of Distance Education](#)

[Organization](#) and [Communication Technology Guidelines](#)) with the aim of establishing communication channels and using content in accordance with the age of students.

School directors were gathered in a virtual classroom where they received the necessary information. At school level, each school has opened a virtual teachers' lounge involving all teachers and professional associates of the school. A virtual class was opened for each class, containing all students and their teachers.

The basic principle of distance education was that content and learning should be accessible to all students. For remote education to work, each student needed access to the Internet and a device at home. Since many students did not have access to the Internet at home due to their socio-economic disadvantage, telecommunications companies joined and provided SIM cards and free access to digital educational facilities. More than 90,000 tablets were distributed to students, and 26,000 computers were purchased for teachers.

In the meantime, the epidemiological situation has improved significantly and on 7 May 2020 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the *Decision on the Manner of Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools as well as in Higher Education Institutions and Performing the Regular Work of Preschool Education Institutions* (Class: 022-03/20-04/182, Reg. no.: 50301-27/04-20-1, Official Gazette, No. [55/20](#)) which, under the conditions of a proclaimed epidemic in the territory of the Republic of Croatia, regulates the method of teaching in primary and secondary schools and in higher education institutions, as well as performing regular work of preschool education institutions.

According to the aforementioned decision, for primary school students from grades I to IV, education should be carried out in part as a form of education that students attend in school, and in part as distance education, and for primary school students from grade V to VIII and high school students education continued to be organized in the form of distance education. In preschool institutions, regular work was planned to continue with the adherence to the instructions of the Croatian Institute for Public Health (hereinafter referred to as the CIPH), from 29 April 2020, for the prevention and suppression of the COVID-19 epidemic for early and preschool education institutions and primary school institutions in which the possibility of taking care of early and preschool age children and primary school students attending lower elementary education was ensured.

In accordance with the decision of the Government, the school year ended as follows:

Primary school students attending lower elementary education returned to school in mid-May, and students of higher classes of primary schools continued with the distance education model. A mixed model of instruction was used, combining distance education with classes in schools. On 5 June 2020, airing of Channel 3 School stopped; however, prepared digital materials remained available to all students.

The Ministry has drafted new [Recommendations for the Organisation of Work in Lower Elementary Education and Instructions for Evaluation](#), as well as [Recommendations for Work with Early and Preschool Age Children in Kindergartens](#).

The majority of high school students finished their school year using distance education models, except for students who had to attend practical exercises, final and supplemental exams, and remedial exams in school. It was also possible to maintain professional apprenticeship with employers where epidemiological recommendations allowed it. Additional classes were also organized in schools for students who needed to correct negative evaluations, in accordance with the Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, No. [64/20](#)) enabling easier transition to a higher class of vulnerable groups of students. State graduation exams were held in June and at the beginning of July (8 June to 2 July) in two blocs: compulsory objects and electives.

Since elaboration and adoption of the model of distance education, as an activity, was envisaged in the [National Reform Programme 2020](#) of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry prepared the [Action Plan for the Implementation of Distance Education](#) on 3 July (Class: 602-01/20-01/00395, Reg. no.: 533-01-20-0001) which, should the epidemiological situation require the implementation of some form of distance education, should be applied in the school year 2020/2021.

Since it was difficult to predict in July what would happen in September regarding the epidemiological situation and what the situation with the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease would be at the beginning and during the pedagogical and school year 2020/2021, the Action Plan took three scenarios into account: (1) regular education at school (mostly “live” education), (2) mixed education model and (3) mostly distance education. In the Action Plan, emphasis is placed on elaboration of the distance education model.

According to the first scenario, all students return to school at the beginning of the new school year and spend most of their time at school. This model shall include, where appropriate, certain periods in which the teaching will be carried out according to the distance education model because it is appropriate or necessary in real conditions if the epidemiological situation deteriorates briefly. Furthermore, for individual groups of students who, due to illness or other obligations, fail to attend classes, distance education may be organized.

According to the second scenario, education is partly conducted in schools, and partly at home with the help of information and communication technology. For this scenario, it is necessary that all students have access to digital materials and a virtual learning and teaching environment, as this allows a flexible approach to deciding which classes or groups of students will stay in schools. As an example of the application of the mixed education model in the Action Plan, listed are two versions of the document of the *Recommendations for the Organisation of Work in Lower Elementary Education and Instructions for Evaluation* – [the first one](#) valid for the first two weeks after the return of primary school students attending lower elementary education to schools in a very strict epidemiological framework from 11 May to 25 May and [the second one](#) valid from 25 May 2020.

The third scenario implies that the school year 2020/2021 starts with the use of the distance education model at the beginning of the educational year, and that most of the teaching during the year will be done

according to the distance education model. It is proposed that the approaches described in the [Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools Concerning the Organization of Distance Education using Information and Communication Technology](#) and accompanying [Recommendations on the Organization of Student Working Day and Instructions for Evaluation during Distance Education](#) be used in this scenario. It is also proposed to revise, adapt, and supplement the Guidelines and Recommendations given the rich experience of educational institutions in the system of education, but above all teachers, students, and parents with online education. In addition, the emphasis was placed on the need to adjust the burden on students of all ages and to guide students in an online environment, as well as on the need to complement these recommendations and guidelines with new concrete examples of good practices.

Part One

Models and recommendations for educational work

This document examines models for performing educational work in kindergartens and schools and offers recommendations for work to educational workers. In the part related to distance education, the document leans on the [Action Plan for the Implementation of Distance Education](#) in such a way that the proposals and positive experiences and solutions related to such a form of teaching are considered an integral part of it and will in practice be improved.

Likewise, this document leans on all other positive experiences and solutions thus far, as well as documents created in the period from March 2020 to the present. We primarily refer to the instructions of the CIPH related to the prevention and suppression of the COVID-19 epidemic in educational institutions, from which we single out:

1. [Instructions for Prevention and Suppression of the COVID-19 Epidemic for Early and Preschool Education Institutions and Primary School Institutions in which the Possibility of Taking Care of Early and Preschool Age Children and Students Attending Class is Ensured](#) of 29 April 2020
2. [Instructions for Prevention and Suppression of the COVID-19 Epidemic Related to the Work of Preschool Institutions and Lower Elementary Education, as well as Special Class Departments and Work with Children with Difficulties Who have Teaching Assistants](#) of 20 and 29 May 2020
3. [Instructions for Implementation of Practical Exercises, Remedial Classes, Remedial and Supplemental Exams in Secondary Schools and the Defence of Final Paper in Secondary Vocational Schools](#) of 13 May 2020

In particular, this document builds on the measures proposed by the [Working Group](#) appointed on 7 August 2020 (Class: 023-03/20-06/00054, Reg. no.: 533-05-20-0002), elaborated in the CIPH document:

4. [Instructions for the Prevention and Suppression of THE COVID-19 Epidemic Related to the Work of Preschool Institutions, Primary and Secondary Schools in the School Year 2020/2021](#) (hereinafter: the Instructions) of 24 August 2020

The [Instructions](#) of 24 August precede this document and are considered to be an integral part thereof. In the Instructions, the emphasis is placed on health and epidemiological component, while the Recommendations place an emphasis on educational (pedagogical) component. These are, therefore, complementary documents that complement each other. Where we did not consider it necessary to interpret the text from the [Instructions](#), we did not do so in the Recommendations. Therefore, for the completeness of information, it is necessary to examine the contents of both documents, as well as the contents of two documents published in the meantime by the CIPH. These are:

1. [Selected Health and Organizational Issues Related to the Work of Preschool Institutions, Primary and Secondary Schools in the School Year 2020/2021](#) of 1 September 2020; and

2. [Diseases and Health Conditions that May Increase the Risk for Serious Forms of COVID-19 Disease](#) of 2 September 2020

If certain issues remain open even after reading the aforementioned documents, the Ministry will resolve them in mutual cooperation using dialogue, mutual respect, and open communication.

Specificities related to the work of institutions implementing special programmes for students with developmental difficulties and additional issues arising from them will be addressed by the Ministry through direct communication with the aforementioned institutions and in cooperation with the Education and Teacher Training Agency.

Three models

This document proposes three models of educational work in kindergartens and schools under conditions related to the COVID-19 disease. These are: educational work and teaching in the institution, mixed form of educational work/education (part in the institution, part distant) and distance educational work and education. These are flexible models that can be modified or supplemented locally in accordance with the epidemiological situation and new findings on the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 disease.

Regardless of which of the models will be activated and at what time, we recommend to all educational institutions consistent implementation of the measures and recommendations for work proposed in this document, as well as in the [Instructions](#). The measures proposed in the [Instructions](#) are presented in Table 1 according to the proposed models for organising educational work/education.

Table 1: Measures planned to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection according to individual models for organising educational work/education

Measures	Model A	Model B	Model C
getting to know the instructions	+	+	+
physical distancing	+	+	/
hand hygiene	+	+	/
hand disinfection	+	+	/
Organization of work with children/students			
• include all children/students	+	+	+
• each educational group/class remains in a single room	+	+	/
• educational work performed in the form of a block lesson or a triple lesson (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject), cumulative or by performing education in one or two weeks	- KG + schools	- KG + schools	- KG + schools
• introduction of two shifts for schools that have worked in one shift thus far	+	+	/
• cleaning of premises at the beginning or end of each shift	+	+	/
• introduction of shifts for primary school students grades 5 to 8 and for secondary school students	+	+	+
• organization of classes in such a way that the classes do not start/end at the same time	+	+	+
• formation of smaller groups (for example, division of an educational group and classes into two groups)	- KG - 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS	- KG - 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS	- KG - 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS
• recesses organized at different times	+	+	/

• avoiding physical contact between children and students from different educational groups/classes	+	+	/
• Common premises			/
- minimize passing through common premises	+	+	/
- ensure there is no contact between groups	+	+	/
- avoid touching surfaces or object while passing through	+	+	/
- establish/mark the route in advance	+	+	/
- organize movement in one direction through hallways, or mark the path of movement	+	+	/
• spending as much time as possible outdoor	+	+	/
• children/students sit one behind another or one next to another	- KG + schools	- KG + schools	/
• barriers placed on tables	+ KG + schools	+ KG + schools	/
Organization of space			
• premises in which groups spend time are separated	+	+	/
• meals served in a room in which children/students reside	+	+	/
• food pre-divided into portions or packaged meals	+	+	/
• food is served in the cafeteria	+	+	/
• staying in cafeteria, sports hall, library ² and other common premises organized according to groups (maintenance of prescribed distancing)	+	+	/
• avoiding entrance of unauthorized personnel into the institution	+	+	/
• organized use of sanitary facilities	+	+	/
Employees with chronic diseases			
• employees with chronic diseases are advised to wear a mask	+	+	/
• extremely vulnerable individuals must not stay in the institution based on the approval of a primary care physician or a family doctor	+	+	/
• individuals suffering from most chronic illnesses can work in the facility	+	+	/
entering and leaving the institution			
• the institution keeps records of entry / exit	+	+	/
• maintaining a distance of at least 1.5 m when entering/leaving the institution	+	+	/
• all visits to the institution are prohibited	+	+	/
children and students do not share their supplies and belongings with other children/students	+	+	/
possibility of parents entering kindergartens (during adjustment), school (1 st grade of PS), as well as parents of children with disabilities	+	+	/
children actions after entering kindergarten or school	+	+	/
organization of work of the institution	+	+	/
providing a room for a child / student in poor health	+	+	/
entry and delivery to the institution (only in necessary cases)	+	+	/
cleaners	+	+	/
ventilation of facilities	+	+	/
cleaning of facilities	+	+	/
Special work footwear	+	+	/
face masks*	- KG - 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS	- KG - 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS	/
gloves - when helping a child / student with developmental disabilities to maintain personal hygiene	+	+	/
a visor - a professional communication mediator and a person who is in a special room with a child who has developed signs of illness during his stay in the institution	+	+	/
measuring temperature and monitoring the onset of symptoms	+	+	/
Employees			
• daily temperature measuring	+	+	/

² See Guidelines for the Operation of School Libraries in Conditions of COVID-19 Disease by Croatian Institute for Librarianship of 10 June 2020.
http://matrica.nsk.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Smjernice-za-rad-s-%CC%8Ckolskih-knjiz-%CC%8Cnica-u-uvjetima-bolesti-COVID-19_20200610.pdf

• record book	+	+	/
• treatment of a febrile worker, i.e. persons with other symptoms of an infectious disease	+	+	/
travel to school via public or organized transportation	+	+	/
compliance with measures prescribed for public transport	+	+	/
organization of educational work/teaching in such a way that not all children/students come to school at the same time	+	+	/
increasing the frequency of organized transportation	+	+	/
Children/students			
• touching the face (no/touching mouth, nose, eyes, and face)	+	+	/
• sneezing and coughing (covering mouth and nose)	+	+	/
• cutlery (avoid sharing)	+	+	/
didactic equipment and toys (regular washing and disinfection)	+	+	/
physical activity and music education	+	+	/
physical education classes in the gymnasium/in the open	+	+	/
use of outdoor space	+	+	/
class, educational groups may not merge during physical education, in the locker room and in the gymnasium	+	+	/
education and information			
posters (as reminders), videos and education for students and employees	+	+	/
placing information posters in key places that serve as reminders of hygiene protocols	+	+	/

LEGEND: / Not relevant, + Measures planned, - Measures not planned

KG-kindergarten, PS – primary school, SS– secondary school

* Only if it is not possible to respect the distancing prescribed by the [Instructions](#)

By following the aforementioned measures, we protect the health of children/students, educators, and all employees in educational institutions, and indirectly the health of our families and citizens of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, it is extremely important to implement the aforementioned measures, adhere to instructions related to the arrival, entry and exit from the institution, movement through the institution, schedule and organization of work in the institution, educational group and class, as well as in cafeteria and sanitary facilities.

Our primary goal is to organize educational work/education in the institution face-to-face because this type of work has a significant advantage in relation to other forms and is most suitable for children and students. This kind of work gives children and students better opportunities for mental health and overall development in the educational sense. This particularly applies to children in kindergartens and young students in primary school who need support in many aspects, including emotional and social skills, development of writing skills, reading, computing etc.

Starting point of this document

The main starting point of this document is:

- kindergarten and school play a key role in education and the environment in these institutions is irreplaceable in shaping a unique and integrated person

- education system is a cornerstone and human resources generator crucial for the development of society, the economy, and the personal development of every citizen.

With these principles, we are firmly focused on:

- systematic education as a public good harmonized with the highest cultural and civilizational values,
- harmonious and comprehensive development of children and students,
- vocational and professional education based on high quality occupational standards and qualifications developed according to the principles of competitiveness and innovation, with permanent use of new scientific insights, adequate use of information and communication technologies and development of digital technologies.

Our principles are:

- harmonious and meaningful connection of all educational levels,
- equality of educational opportunities for children and students,
- scientifically grounded education,
- competence and quality of the holders of educational activities and educational management,
- quality of teaching and external evaluation,
- pedagogical and school pluralism,
- high professional ethics,
- culture of inclusiveness,
- the European dimension of education,
- shared responsibility.

Models of work in the pedagogical year 2020/2021

It is not possible to carry out distance educational work for children of early and preschool age in a manner similar to students. However, thanks to the efforts of school directors, educators and professional associates, two-way communication with parents was established during the last period with great effort and the parents were given support and professional assistance to work with their children at home. Teachers continuously monitored the performance of activities, parents and children, and children's works were published on kindergarten websites.

Teachers and professional associates shared experiences and materials with each other, and associations that gather teachers and professional associates greatly provided them with assistance and support.

During May 2020, the majority of early and preschool age children returned to kindergarten and the work could continue in accordance with the planned epidemiological measures, but there will also be children who will return to kindergarten only at the beginning of the new pedagogical year, as well as those who are

just starting kindergarten. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers and professional associates study recommendations for working with children who return to kindergarten after the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease using available research and expert articles or other sources.

In the pedagogical year 2020/2021, a complete closing of all kindergartens in the Republic of Croatia is not planned, and in the case of recommendation from epidemiologists, the following is possible:

- a) interruption of work of one or more educational groups in the event of a confirmed coronavirus infection by one or more teachers of a particular group or children,
- b) closing of one or more kindergartens in a given city, municipality, or county.

For early and preschool age children, educational work in the pedagogical year 2020/2021 may, depending on the epidemiological situation, be carried out:

- a. **in a kindergarten for all children,**
- b. according to a **mixed model** - educational work in kindergarten is performed for children in educational groups who are not in isolation, and in the case of an exceptional situation and based on the recommendation of the competent epidemiological service, educational work is performed by two-way communication with parents whose children cannot go to kindergarten or are in self-isolation. Communication can also be made live, and working materials can also be delivered to parents to help them work with a child at home;
- c. **live distant**, i.e. two-way **communication with parents** in the case of an exceptional situation and based on the recommendations of the competent epidemiological service. Communication can also be made live and working materials can also be delivered to parents to help them work at home with a child who cannot go to kindergarten or is in self-isolation.

Distant educational work with children included in preschool programmes in kindergarten or at school is exceptionally possible only if it is established that the planned programme cannot be implemented by the end of May 2021.

Live communication allows face-to-face contact and is recommended in all communications with children, provided that parents/guardians are also included in it.

Both early and preschool children have their daily schedule, and it is important to draw up a schedule for foreseeable activities for children who cannot go to kindergarten or are in self-isolation in order to achieve a clear structure of the day.

Therefore, teachers, professional associates, and parents of early and preschool age children should agree on the exact schedule of communication with the child or more children and only at a time when the child should be involved in educational work in kindergarten. The time of live communication with children and parents can be adapted according to the age of the child, activities in which the child can be involved and other specific needs and capabilities.

Models of work in the school year 2020/2021

Three models are planned for the implementation of classes in the school year 2020/2021 (see Table 2). These are: (1) model A: education in school, (2) model B: mixed education (partly in school, partly distance education), (3) model C: distance education.

By decision, the Government of the Republic of Croatia activates all models, and the school decides on the implementation of a particular model (A, B and C) in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters.

Which model and at what point will be applied depends greatly on health recommendations related to the epidemiological situation in Croatia at the national and local level at the beginning of the school year or at any time during the school year.

In case of worsening or improving of the epidemiological situation at a local level, the decision on closing/opening of an educational group or a class at a particular school or a certain school in a county shall be made by the institution's director in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, which shall be reported to the Ministry by the director on the same day.

In the case of a favourable epidemiological situation, the competent local headquarters, at the proposal of the school and with the consent of the founder, may decide that the aforementioned models of education do not have to be implemented for a particular school.

Table 2: Education models in the school year 2020/2021

Model A – education in school	Model B – mixed education	Model C – distance education
<p>All students attend school (this model implies that all students are educated in the school in compliance with epidemiological Instructions of the CIPH).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools that operate in a single shift: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> organize education with adherence to the Instructions by the CIPH introduce a second shift (for example, lower elementary education in the morning, higher elementary education in the afternoon) Schools that operate in two or more shifts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> organize education with adherence to the Instructions by the CIPH 	<p>Students partially attend school, partially are educated in the form of distance education (this model implies that students in grades 1 to 4 attend school, while students in grades 5 to 8 and secondary school students partially attend school and are partially educated in the form of distance education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary school students in grades 1 to 4 attend school with adherence to the Instructions by the CIPH Primary school students in grades 5 to 8 and secondary school students are separated into two groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> one group attends school, while the other is educated in the form of distance education 	<p>All students attend distance education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education starts and is performed using the distance education model.

<p>(2) organize education with mandatory wearing of face masks with adherence to the Instructions of the CIPH</p> <p>Exemptions:</p> <p>* for students who are in a highly vulnerable group, classes are organized as distance education;</p> <p>** for students who are absent from school because they are positive for coronavirus, who are in self-isolation, classes are organized as distance education;</p> <p>*** for students from different classes (during elective, optional, additional and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, preparatory and supplementary Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well) if it is not possible to organize work in classes and thus avoid contact of students from different classes, classes are organized in the form of distance education</p>	<p>(2) the groups alternate according to the following model: (1) cycle that lasts one week or (2) 3+2/2+3 days regime</p> <p>Exemptions:</p> <p>* for students who are in a highly vulnerable group, classes are organized as distance education;</p> <p>** for students who are absent from school because they are positive for coronavirus, who are in self-isolation, classes are organized as distance education;</p> <p>*** for students from different classes (during elective, optional, additional and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, preparatory and supplementary Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well) if it is not possible to organize work in classes and thus avoid contact of students from different classes, classes are organized in the form of distance education</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Government of the Republic of Croatia activates all models by decision. The application of each model (A, B, and C) is decided by the school in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, except in the case of a <i>lockdown</i> for the whole country when the Government decides on the application of Model C at the national level. 		

MODEL A – EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

Model A implies that all students are educated in the school face-to-face with adherence to epidemiological [Instructions](#). The constraints are of such nature that the spatial and human resources conditions enable the implementation of the educational process in school, while observing epidemiological measures. A prerequisite for this is increased personal hygiene, hand disinfection and keeping the largest possible physical distance between students in primary schools grades 1 to 4, while primary school students in grades 5 to 8 should have a physical distance of 1.5 meters in classrooms, i.e. in high school classrooms a physical distance of approximately 2 meters between all individuals (students and teachers).

If primary school students in grades 5 to 8 are not provided with a physical distance of 1.5 m in classrooms, i.e., in high school classrooms a physical distance of approximately 2 m between all individuals (students and teachers), students and teachers are obliged to wear masks.³

For students who are in a highly vulnerable group,⁴ of which the competent doctor issues a certificate, as well as for students who are absent from school because they are positive for coronavirus and who are in self-isolation, education is organized in the form of distance education.

In addition, if during the realization of certain forms of education (for example elective, optional, additional, and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, preparatory and supplementary Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well, etc.) it is not possible to avoid physical contact of students from different classes, it is not possible to organize work in classrooms and thus avoid contact of students from different classes, classes are organized in the form of distance education.

Given the fact that a greater number of students at school also means a greater risk of infections being transmitted, for schools that have worked in one shift so far, it is proposed to work in two shifts (the transition to two shifts does not apply to schools with a very small number of students in relation to school spatial capacity, as well as those that can ensure the recommended physical distance).

The application of this model is decided by the school in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters. In case of worsening of the epidemiological situation at a local level, the decision on closing/opening of an educational group or a class at a particular school or a certain school in a county transitioning to another model shall be made by the institution's director in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, which shall be reported to the Ministry by the director on the same day.

MODEL B – MIXED EDUCATION

Model B implies that students follow classes in part in school, partly remotely. The model is applied when restrictions are of such nature that the spatial and human resources conditions do not enable the implementation of the educational process in schools without complying with epidemiological measures, i.e. when, due to the constraints arising from the [Instructions](#) by the CIPH, due to space or personnel conditions, it is no longer possible to teach all students in the school face-to-face. As a rule, this means that

³ In accordance with the opinion of the CIPH, a visor cannot replace a mask, but can only be used together with a mask for additional safety. Medical masks and visors are necessary for teachers/educators only if the child/student develops signs of illness while in the institution, while the sick child/student needs to be provided with a mask (if the impaired health condition of the child/student permits wearing a mask). In this case, such child/student is isolated in a separate room until his/her parent/guardian arrives, and a teacher/educator who supervises the child/student should use a visor, mask, and disposable apron.

⁴ For more information on individuals who are in a vulnerable group, please read the document by the CIPH, [Diseases and Health Conditions that May Increase the Risk for Serious Forms of COVID-19 Disease](#) of 2 September 2020

due to epidemiological measures not all students can have school classes at the same time, but priority groups of students who will have school classes must be determined, and for other students it is necessary to ensure that they occasionally have school classes and occasionally distance education. It is possible that students alternate and one week attend school and the other stay at home.

As part of this model, for students from grade 1 to 4, education is organized at school with increased personal hygiene, hand disinfection and keeping the largest possible physical distance, while students from grade 5 to 8 of primary school and secondary school students are divided into two groups. Dividing a class into two groups implies that while one group follows classes at school, the other group follows classes remotely.⁵ For such groups, education is organized in cycles lasting one week or 3 +2/2 +3 days regime. Groups of students per cycle should be permanent (fixed). This method of work is not in accordance with the basic pedagogical instruction on educating all students of one class department simultaneously and is, in terms of child well-being, most unfavourable. Therefore, it is recommended that this model be used only when other proposed measures (e.g. start of classes at different times, etc.) do not allow for a distance between students in the classroom to exceed 1.5 m in primary school, or approximately 2 m in secondary school, i.e. when there are objectively justified reasons for not wearing masks. This model is primarily one of the possibilities in schools with a higher number of students (division of classes) or a higher number of classes in schools that work in shifts.

For students who are in a highly vulnerable group,⁶ of which the competent doctor issues a certificate, as well as for students who are absent from school because they are positive for coronavirus and who are in self-isolation, education is organized in the form of distance education.

In addition, if during the realization of certain forms of education (for example elective, optional, additional, and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, preparatory and supplementary Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well, etc.) it is not possible to avoid physical contact of students from different classes, for these groups of students classes are organized in the form of distance education.

The application of this model is decided by the school in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters. In case of worsening or improving of the epidemiological situation at local level, the decision on closing/opening of an educational group or a class at a particular school or a certain school in a county or transitioning to another model shall be made by the institution's director in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, which shall be reported to the Ministry by the director on the same day.

⁵ Distance education in this case entails two-way communication at a distance between students and educators, as well as independent work of students at home. Synchronous and asynchronous communication is recommended.

⁶ For more information on individuals who are in a vulnerable group, please read document by the CIPH, [Diseases and Health Conditions that May Increase the Risk for Serious Forms of COVID-19 Disease](#) of 2 September 2020

MODEL C – DISTANCE EDUCATION

Model C implies that all students are educated remotely at the beginning of the school year, which implies, among other things, two-way distance communication between students and teachers/educators, as well as independent work of students from home. If this model is applied, the approaches described in the [Action Plan for the Implementation of Distance Education](#) will be used, and according to the [Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools Concerning the Organization of Distance Education using Information and Communication Technology](#) and accompanying [Recommendations on the Organization of Student Working Day and Instructions for Evaluation during Distance Education](#).

Given the rich experience of educational institutions in the education system, but primarily the experience of teachers/educators, students and parents with online education, the aforementioned [Guidelines](#) and [Recommendations](#) will be revised, adapted, and amended.

The implementation of this model is decided by the school in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, except in the case of a *lockdown* at the national level when the government decides to apply this model for the entire country.

In case of improving of the epidemiological situation at local level, the decision on closing/opening of an educational group or a class at a particular school or a certain school in a county or transitioning to another model shall be made by the institution's director in cooperation with the founder and the competent local headquarters, which shall be reported to the Ministry by the director on the same day.

Part Two

Recommendations for work in the pedagogical/school year

Although we are still confronted with the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease, a number of measures have been abolished and at this moment there are no obstacles to education work in kindergartens and school institutions being carried out directly, i.e. face to face.

Returning to kindergartens and schools is crucial for raising and educating children, especially for their emotional, cognitive, social, and professional development. It is particularly important for children and students at risk, as well as children and students from vulnerable groups. This is the primary reason why it is necessary to ensure that all children return to kindergartens and students return to schools.

Nevertheless, it is still necessary to take into account the epidemiological situation and the measures to be followed. Therefore, the CIPH has, in cooperation with the Ministry, the founders of educational institutions (Croatian County Association, Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia, Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia, and City Office for Education of the City of Zagreb), Croatian Association of Primary School Directors and Croatian Association of Secondary School Directors, Croatian Teachers' Union, Independent Trade Union of Workers in Secondary Education of Croatia, Croatian School Employees' Union – Preporod, Independent Union in Science and Higher Education, Education and Teacher Training Agency, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Agency for Science and Higher Education, National Centre for External Evaluation of Education, and CARNet, developed the [Instructions](#) for the start of pedagogical and school year 2020/2021.

The results of conducted **research and analyses, as well as the experience** of epidemiologists and all stakeholders in the education system regarding the organization of education during the COVID-19 disease epidemic in 2019/2020, as well as the experiences of other EU countries, were used in the elaboration and proposing of the [Instructions](#).

These recommendations lean on the [Instructions](#) and are intended for founders of preschool and school institutions, directors, educators, teachers, professional associates, and other employees of educational institutions and parents.

The aim of development of recommendations is **to ensure as safe as possible conditions** for conducting educational work with acceptance of specificity regarding the age of children and students and different working conditions in educational institutions.

The recommendations point to measures to be implemented in all kindergartens, i.e. schools, and provide possible examples that directors will apply or choose as one of the possibilities for safer work in an institution according to the specific characteristics of a particular institution. Namely, due to large

differences in the number of students in schools (Figures 1 and 2), but also in the facilities itself,⁷ **it is not possible to offer the same solutions for the organisation of work** even during the coronavirus epidemic, as it would not be possible to offer such solutions in other circumstances.

In addition, the difference between schools is in the organisation of work in one, two or three shifts (see Figures 3 and 4). In one shift, education is organised mainly in smaller and district primary schools/classes, and 38.28% of primary and secondary school students are educated in one shift (Table 3). The majority of students (58%) of primary and secondary schools attended education in two shifts, while in 14 parent and district primary and secondary schools education was performed in three shifts (Table 3).

Table 3: Organization of work in shifts in parent and district primary and secondary schools in the school year 2019/2020.

Organization of work in shifts	Number of schools	% of schools	Number of students	% of students
School does not work in shifts, but continuously during the entire day	21	0.86	5,819	1.26
School works in only one shift that does not alternate	1,536	62.64	157,533	34.18
School works in only one shift that alternates	59	2.41	18,959	4.11
TOTAL IN ONE SHIFT	1,595	65.05	182,311	38.29
School works in two shifts that alternate	728	29.69	243,124	52.75
School works in two shifts that do not alternate	94	3.83	26,169	5.68
TOTAL IN TWO SHIFTS	822	34	269,293	58
School works in three shifts	14	0.57	9,287	2.02
TOTAL	2,452	100	466,710	100

Source: Šer, August 2020

Therefore, the role of directors in the organization of work is of utmost importance and the most important decisions on the selection of the most appropriate teaching model in the school will be made by the directors, school committees and founders, in agreement with the county civil protection headquarters.

It is not possible to predict whether and when the epidemiological situation will change not only in the Republic of Croatia, but also at the level of a city, municipality or county, and we all have to be open to possible changes of the model and switching to a model that will be applicable in a particular situation.

All should be prepared for quick changes – directors and educators, teachers, professional associates, and other employees, as well as children/students and their parents, but also all those providing assistance and support in realization of not only the prescribed number of hours, but also enable quality education.

⁷ The largest primary school in school year 2019/2020 had a total of 1,222 students, but classes were organized in parent school with 653 students divided into 30 classes and nine district schools, three of which had 100 students or more. The largest primary school in which all teaching was organized in a single facility had 1,081 students divided into 43 classes, while the smallest primary school had only 10 students.

Figure 1. Number of primary school students in 2019/2020.

Total number of students at the school	School	% of schools
do 10	1	0,11%
11 do 50	33	3,60%
51 do 150	190	20,74%
151 do 300	237	25,87%
301 do 500	229	25,00%
501 do 750	164	17,90%
751 do 1000	49	5,35%
više od 1000	13	1,42%
Total	916	100,00%

Figure 2. Number of secondary school students in 2019/2020.

Total number of students at the school	School	% of schools
do 10	3	0,75%
11 do 50	10	2,50%
51 do 150	56	14,00%
151 do 300	107	26,75%
301 do 500	126	31,50%
501 do 750	80	20,00%
751 do 1000	14	3,50%
više od 1000	4	1,00%
Total	400	100,00%

Source: Šer, August 2020

Figure 3. Teaching organized in shifts in parent primary schools in 2019/2020.

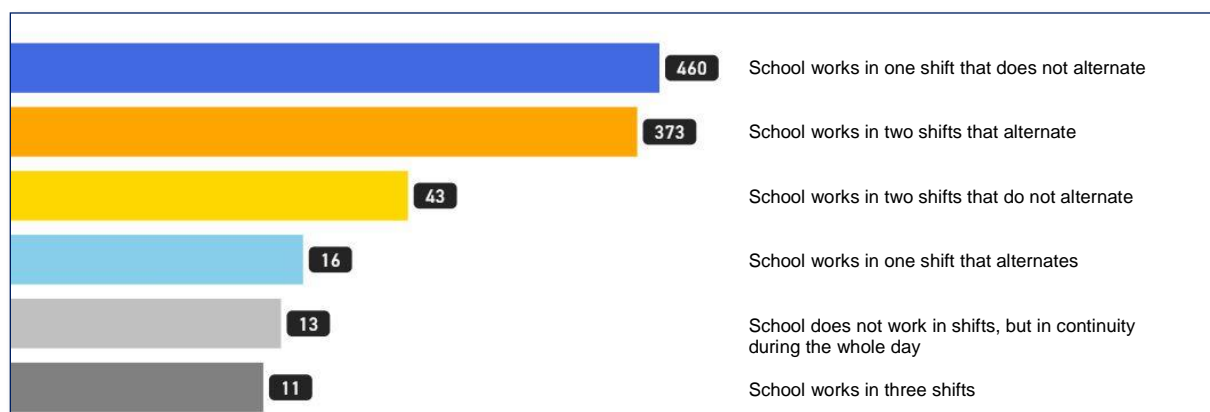
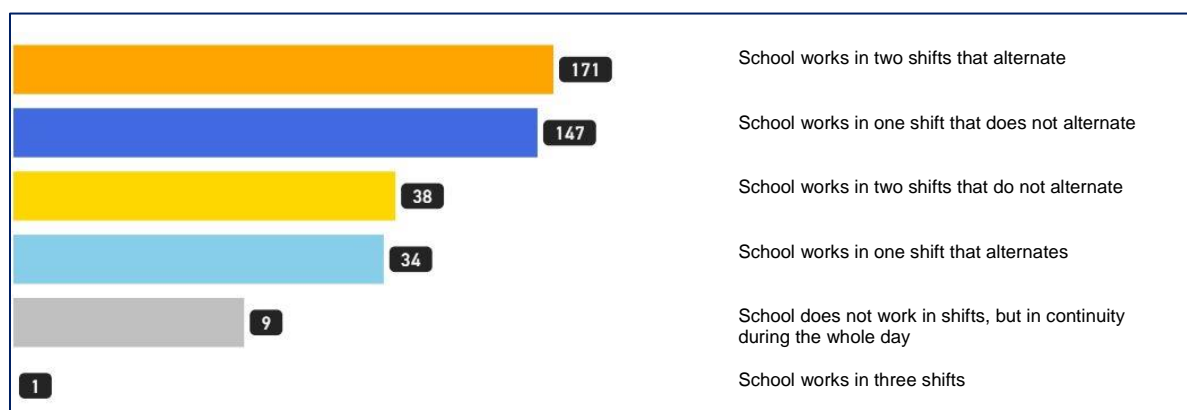


Figure 4. Teaching organized in shifts in secondary schools in 2019/2020.



Planning the beginning of pedagogical/school year

Founders and director of kindergartens and schools are obliged to consider and agree on the procedures, needs, and activities that must be implemented before the beginning of the pedagogical or school year, in accordance with the [Instructions](#) and these recommendations (Table 4).

It is recommended to communicate remotely (for example, the founders organize videoconferences for all institution directors and for administrative department employees in counties responsible for education, i.e. the City Office of the City of Zagreb responsible for education).

OBLIGATIONS AND CAPABILITIES OF FOUNDERS

Table 4: Envisioned activities of founders of institutions for the prevention of the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Activities	KG	School
1. Face masks	-	- 1. – 4. PS + 5. – 8. PS + SS
2. hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection products	+	+
3. installation of ventilation	+	+
4. increasing the number of educational groups and employment	+	-
5. implementation of preschool programmes for each child	+	-
6. possibility of working in another appropriate space	+	+
7. additional vehicles for transport	+	+
8. enabling children/students with developmental difficulties the right to aid	+	+
9. equipping with information and communication technology and professional training	+	+
10. placing barriers on tables	-	+
11. installation of transparent barriers during keeping watch in kindergartens/extended stay between students of different class departments/extended professional procedure programme between students of different educational groups or classes	+	+
12. education in one shift and two shifts	-	+
13. changes to the organization of classes	-	+
14. new educational groups of extended stay and employment	-	+
15. Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well	-	+

Legend: KG-kindergarten, PS – primary school, SS– secondary school

If required by spatial conditions, **the founder**, based on a proposal from the director, in accordance with the [Instructions](#) and these Recommendations:

for educational institutions:

- **is obliged** to provide face masks for primary school students in grades 5 to 8 and secondary school students;⁸
- **is obliged** to provide the necessary products for hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection;
- **is allowed to** install ventilation on the ceiling in rooms where children/students stay, which pulls the air out of the room/classroom and secures fresh air supply;
- **plans** the possibility of alternate organised transport of students;

for kindergartens:

- **is obliged to enable an increase in the number of educational groups and employment of new educators** in kindergartens with more children than prescribed,⁹
- **is obliged to enable the performance of preschool programmes** for each child in the year before going to school and, if necessary, request the Ministry's approval to perform the aforementioned programme and at the school institution closest to the place of residence of children in order to reduce the risk during the transport of children;
- in case of an increase in the number of educational groups in kindergartens,¹⁰ **consider** the needs and **possibilities of working in another appropriate space** where programmes of early and preschool education can be carried out and, in accordance with regulations, request authorisation from the Ministry for working in such changed circumstances;
- if necessary, **provide additional vehicles** in accordance with the [Instructions](#) for the transport of children to kindergarten,
- **is obligated**, even in the event of coronavirus epidemic, to grant children with developmental difficulties the right to the support of assistants (third educator) or professional-communication intermediaries or assistants for care and escort,
- **is obliged** to enable **the recruitment of new educators and other employees** during the epidemic or as a replacement for an absent employee,
- **can**, for the purposes of keeping watch over children from different educational groups, install transparent barriers in larger rooms (halls, meeting rooms, etc.) if that space can be divided into

⁸ On 26 August, the CIPH issued the *Recommendations for Manufacturers of Textile Masks Intended for Schools* https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Preporuke_za_proizvodjace_tekstilnih_maski_za_skole_26_08.pdf

⁹ See Article 22 paragraphs 2 to 5 and Article 23 of the National Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education (Official Gazette, number [63/18](#) and [90/10](#))

¹⁰ Given the age of early and preschool age children and the needs of working parents, it is not possible to envisage a mixed model of work in kindergartens according to which some children would be involved in kindergarten and some children in distance education, i.e. two-way communication between educators and parents. This model can only be applied to children placed in isolation.

two or more parts and separated by a transparent partition so that children of one educational group stay in a separate area;

- **enables** kindergartens to **be equipped with information and communication technology (ICT) and professional training** related to the possibility of using ICT and digital tools for communication between employees and educational workers with parents, since it is not recommended to hold meetings in kindergartens,
- in case of isolation of children of one or more educational groups, **provides timely two-way communication with parents.**

for schools:

- **can**, in accordance with measures, **ensure the installation of barriers** on tables in order to reduce the risk of infection between students,
- **may**, to a school that organized teaching in one shift, **approve¹¹ teaching to be organized in two shifts** during the school year 2020/2021, in order to reduce the contacts between students and employees, but only in schools that have justified reasons for such change (this does not apply to schools with very small number of students and those with appropriate spatial capabilities) ;
- **is obligated to consider the need to change the organisation of classes**, i.e. the need to separate students into two or more classes, i.e. educational groups for children with developmental difficulties, but only if the number of students in class exceeds the prescribed number;¹²
- **may establish new extended stay classes and employ teachers** in extended stay, but only if the school has appropriate spatial conditions for this, since in accordance with these Recommendations and the [Instructions](#), physical contact between students from different classes should be avoided, and instructions related to the distance between students in educational groups of extended stay must be followed,¹³
- exceptionally, **may allow** for an extended stay for two or more classes to be organized in one room, but exclusively provided that students from each class are divided by a partition and only if the school has a sufficiently large space (hall, cinema or meeting room) and that this space can be divided into two or more parts and separated by a transparent barriers so that students from different classes remain in separated areas;
- **is obliged** to enable the implementation of the Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well, taking into account the [Instructions](#) according to which physical integration of students from different classes should be avoided;

¹¹ In accordance with Article 28 paragraph 9 of the Primary and Secondary Education Act, the daily and weekly organization of work is determined by the annual plan and programme of the school, but due to the obligations of the founders, the school cannot change shifts on its own. The founder is obliged to determine the justification of the transition and the method of shift work and the possibility of organizing transport in the changed circumstances.

¹² See the provisions of the [Ordinance on the Number of Students in Regular and Combined Classes and Educational Group in Primary School](#)

¹³ See Article 10 paragraph 2 of the [Ordinance on the Number of Students in Regular and Combined Classes and Educational Group in Primary School](#)

- for schools with insufficient space, especially schools working in three shifts, as well as those schools in which teaching is performed for several schools, **it may find another suitable space** for performing primary or secondary education and, in accordance with regulations, request authorisation from the Ministry for working in such changed circumstances;
- if necessary, **it provides a larger number of buses or other vehicles** for the organised transport of children to and from school in order to meet the prescribed measures and reduce the risk of infection.

OBLIGATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DIRECTORS

Kindergarten and school directors know best what is necessary for work in their institutions, and they have a great responsibility not only for enabling educational work to take place in conditions that require maximum epidemiological safety, but also for the best possible realization of programmes/curricula.

A director cannot ensure everything required by the [Instructions](#) and proposed recommendations without the support of the founders, local communities, employees and parents. Therefore, directors, but also educators, teachers and professional associates (hereinafter: the educational workers) **receive help and assistance** not only from the CIPH and epidemiologists in counties and cities, but also from **the Ministry, CARNet, Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO), Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMPEU), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO)** and others, and information on this can be found in the fourth chapter of these Recommendations.

It is up to directors to assess risks and to propose risk reduction options to the founders, the Board of Directors/School Committee, and employees and, according to epidemiological measures, make it possible to perform educational work in the institution. Directors are therefore recommended to make the necessary evaluations and, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to select the best possible ways to perform educational work. We recommend that directors assess the situation in their institution and find opportunities for preparing the start of pedagogical/school year 2020/2021.

Recommendations to the directors regarding the **evaluation of the need to provide conditions** for the start of a new pedagogical/educational year are as follows:

for kindergartens directors:

1. **to determine** whether the number of children enrolled in educational groups is greater than the prescribed:
 - inform the founder and request **an increase in the number of educational groups** and employment of a new educator,

- implement the **employment** procedure in accordance with the regulations (preferably immediately for 60 days, then publish a tender);
2. according to the number of children in educational groups:
- a. **determine** the need for changing rooms in which educational work will be performed according to the number of children
 - if necessary, **develop a new room arrangement** according to the number of children in the educational group;
 - b. **identify** the need and capabilities of temporary **conversion of the existing area** in the kindergarten
 - inform the founder and request assistance and support to secure the necessary funds and equipment,
 - repurpose, if necessary and possible, the area for educational work;
 - c. **determine** the need to find **additional space**
 - **inform** the founder and **request** the possibility of temporary work in other areas whereby concrete proposals can be made (moving children of one or more groups to another location, e.g. to a regional facility with appropriate space),
 - if there is an opportunity for working in another area, which is not already an existing facility of the kindergarten, **ask** the Ministry via electronic mail, in accordance with the regulations, for approval to work under changed conditions,
 - after receiving the decision from the competent administrative department for education in the county, i.e. the City of Zagreb, **start** work in those other areas.

for school directors:

1. to determine in accordance with the number of students in the class/educational groups with programmes for children with development difficulties (hereinafter: educational groups) whether it is necessary to request an amendment to the Decision on the Number of Classes/Educational Groups for Students with Development Difficulties:
 - **to request** an amendment of the Decision from the competent administrative department, i.e. the competent Ministry for secondary schools,
 - **request** via electronic mail the approval of the Ministry for prior approval for new employment of teachers/educators or increasing the scope of work,
 - if a replacement for an absent teacher/educator is required, it is recommended to hire a person who is placed on the redundancy list, the same is recommended if the school has the need for new employment,
 - if there are no persons on the redundancy list, the school will publish a tender and carry out the prescribed procedure (in accordance with regulations it is possible to employ an individual for a period of up to 60 days without publishing tenders) ;

2. **to plan** the possibility of working according to different models (models A, B and C);
3. on the basis of the number of classes and the number of students, **to determine** in each of the facilities where education is performed whether, in compliance with the [Instructions](#) (each class has its own classroom), education can be performed **in one shift or whether it is necessary to introduce teaching in two shifts**:
 - **consider the need to change the weekly work organisation** (instead of working in one shift, working in two shifts), **inform** the school board and employees about the change of work – in two shifts and **inform** the founder of the planned change
 - if **the founder considers the change of organization justified**, **inform** the employees and school board of the change in the weekly work organisation, and **draft a schedule for work** in shifts
 - **inform** parents and students about changes in the organization of work in school year 2020/2021
4. **to determine** if, according to the number of classrooms in each school facility, educational work in one or two shifts can be carried out:
 - a. determine the need and opportunity for **temporary conversion of premises**
 - **inform the founder and school board** and convert the space as soon as possible (for example, convert teachers' lounge into a classroom because teachers are not allowed to assemble in the teacher's lounge);
 - b. the need to find opportunities for **work in other premises** (outside the school)
 - **inform** the founder and **request** to temporarily realize teaching in other premises, and provide concrete suggestions where possible,
 - if opportunities are found, request approval of work under changed conditions from the **Ministry** electronically, in accordance with regulations,
 - after the consent has been received, **start** classes in those new premises;
5. **to determine** the possibility of removing **excess furniture** in order to increase the space for recommended distancing between students and, in agreement with the employees, temporarily remove excess furniture.

Directors are obliged to:

- **realize** all other preparations for the beginning of the new pedagogical/school year;
- prior to the beginning of the pedagogical/educational year, **determine which employees** must not work in the institution on the basis of the decision taken by the primary health care doctor, because they are in highly **vulnerable groups**¹⁴ and **submit data** on such

¹⁴ For more information on individuals who are in a vulnerable group, please read document by the CIPH, [Diseases and Health Conditions that May Increase the Risk for Serious Forms of COVID-19 Disease](#) of 2 September 2020.

employees **to the founder** of the kindergarten, and in the case of schools, to the competent administrative department in the county, which will then submit joint data for all institutions to the Ministry,

- **determine which children/students** cannot or are not allowed to be admitted to the institution because they are in a **highly vulnerable group** (as confirmed by the competent doctor)¹⁵ and to deliver data on these children/students to the **founder of the kindergarten**, and in the case of schools, to the competent administrative department in the county, which will then submit joint data for all institutions to the Ministry,
- **determine**, depending on the number of children/students transported by organised transport, the possibility of **transport for children/students** in accordance with the [Instructions](#) and in case of inability of transport realization, urgently **inform** the founder in the prescribed manner in order to ensure transport realization,
- depending on the number of students with development difficulties involved in transport adjusted to their needs, **determine** the possibility of **transportation for students** in accordance with the [Instructions](#) and in case of inability of transport realization, urgently **inform** the founder in the prescribed manner in order to ensure transport realization,
- **determine** the ability to comply with the [Instructions](#) for the implementation of special programmes for children/students with developmental difficulties,
- **determine** the protocol for arrival, entry and exit for children/students based on the number of children/students and the number of entries into the institution,
- **develop a protocol for the movement in corridors** and the use of sanitary facilities that are closest to room/classroom,
- **appoint** and **entrust** employees who will **keep watch at the entrance** and who will measure and record the temperature of the employees upon entering and leaving the institution;¹⁶
- **elaborate** a detailed plan for maintaining **hygiene** and prescribed disinfection (who is responsible for what, when and where);
- to **hold** meetings of educational/teachers' councils, as well as meetings with other employees (outdoor, in an institution or online, depending on the number of employees, the spatial conditions in which the meeting can be held and on the health condition of employees) in order to meet and agree before the beginning of pedagogical/educational year regarding the organisation and capability of educational work,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ All employees are required to measure their body temperature every day before coming to work, and it is recommended to measure the temperature every day with a non-contact thermometer for all employees upon arrival at the institution, as well as when leaving the institution

- **inform** parents of children/students via available communication channels regarding the organisation of work in the institution, transport, measures to be followed (e.g. e-mail notification or publication of notification on the institution's website, etc.),
- **publish** a tender for employment in accordance with the regulations,
- in accordance with the regulations, **adopt** the planned documents¹⁷ (annual plan and programme, school curriculum).

Kindergarten directors are obliged to:

- inform **the founder about the need to change the organization of work** in kindergarten, but also about the **possibilities of using ICT** and digital tools in working with children and in two-way communication between educational workers and parents and children in case the child cannot come to kindergarten due to isolation.

We recommend to kindergarten directors to identify the needs and **plan professional trainings** for educators and professional associates and professional associates related to the use of ICT and digital tools!

School directors are obliged to:

- **determine** the manner of handing **textbooks** and other equipment to children while adhering to epidemiological measures and inform parents of the time and manner of the same,
- **enable** the realization of block lessons (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject) for students in primary school grades between 5 and 8 and secondary school students, but also for students in primary school grades between 1 and 4 for classes taught by subject teachers (foreign language, electoral subjects, etc.), and it is particularly important to reduce the number of teaching days in one week of teachers/educators working in two or more schools,
- **consider** the possibility of conducting elective, optional, additional and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure for students with developmental disabilities, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, programme of Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well, in a way that such classes are organized **without mixing students from different classes** (if this is not possible, it is necessary to provide distance education for such types of classes),

¹⁷ For this school year, the Ministry will coordinate the development of a framework annual performance curriculum (GIK) for each subject according to weeks/months which will determine the set of basic educational outcomes/teaching contents that students should achieve at the national level and teachers should apply and adapt according to the needs of their students in order to best achieve educational outcomes. Educational workers are also autonomous in the development of their own implementation curricula, while taking into account the specifics of the epidemiological situation and the models of work that are proposed and elaborated in this document

- exclusively **plan** the realization of distance education for students involved in **education in a health care institution** during the epidemic,
- urgently, if there is a need, in accordance with the Ministry's notice of 28 August 2020, **request** additional employment of cleaning staff in primary schools,
- **prepare** and **adopt decisions** on **weekly responsibilities** in accordance with regulations whereby teachers need to know that due to the epidemiological situation changes are **possible** in the workplace (whether they are working at school or from home), as well as other changes that the current epidemiological situation will require.

Transport of children and students

Given the different modes of transport of children/students, it is not possible to prescribe uniform measures, but founders and directors will have to arrange transport in accordance with the prescribed measures towards the mode of transport.

For students who are transported via public transport, the procedure is pursuant to the [Recommendations for Working in Activities of Transporting Passengers by Bus during the Coronavirus Epidemic \(COVID-19\)](#).¹⁸ Students should be advised to avoid **crowds, gatherings on** bus, train or tram **stations** and to wash their hands more often. These recommendations also apply to students for whom transportation is organised.

In accordance with these Recommendations, **wearing a mask is mandatory** on the bus. Since younger children and students with developmental difficulties are also transported to institutions, wearing a mask should be considered according to their age and capabilities – the condition of the child and in special cases consultation with epidemiologists is recommended.

In organised transport, it is recommended to **draft a sitting plan** for children/students, according to which individual students sit in the same place every day upon arrival and departure from school.

Students from the same family can sit next to each other. It is also desirable that students that are in the same class adhere to epidemiological measures. If students enter several stations and attend the same class, it is good to predict the possibility of sitting in the same part of the bus.

For children/students with developmental difficulties who are transported via special vehicles, in case they are transported at different times, **disinfection of the vehicle** is mandatory (seats, handles etc. before the

¹⁸ Recommendations for Working in Activities of Transporting Passengers by Bus during the Coronavirus Epidemic (COVID-19) available at: <https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preporuke-za-rad-u-djelatnosti-prijevozputnika-autobusima-tijekom-epidemije-koronavirusa-COVID-19.pdf>

entry of the second group of students). If foreseen, a **companion may accompany children/students with developmental difficulties**.

In the case of an organisation based on a mixed model according to which a part of the students will be educated at school, while the other part will be educated in the form of distance education, there may be no need to increase the number of buses or introduce new lines, as some of the students will not be included in transport.

The school cannot change work in shifts without the consent of the founder, since any change requires a different organisation of transport.

Entry into educational institution

Entrance into all institutions is forbidden to all individuals who are sick or are in self-isolation.

Outdoor areas (yard, garden, playground) and indoor spaces of the institution cannot be entered by persons who have elevated body temperature, respiratory symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath or who are at risk of being in contact with individuals positive for COVID-19 or who are suspected of being infected with coronavirus, especially if they are in self-isolation (see the [Instructions](#)).

Consequently, the sick:

- **parents** are not allowed to bring children to or take children from institutions,
- **employees** are not allowed to come to work,
- **children and students** are not allowed to enter the institution and participate in educational work, as well as in practical education, i.e. lectures and exercises.

All institutions should adhere the measures listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Recommendations and possibility of entering institutions

Measures	Kindergarten	Primary school	Secondary school
Bringing and taking children to parents / guardians	to the entrance to institution while maintaining a distance of at least 1.5 m in relation to other parents and children	only 1st grade students and students included in the extended stay to the entrance to the institution while maintaining a distance of at least 1.5 m in relation to other parents/guardians and children	X
Time of arrival and entry into the institution	- agree with the parents for each individual child in accordance with their work obligations	- if necessary, with a time delay between classes, depending on the number of classes, the number of students in the school and the number of entrances to the school (see the text related to entry into the institution)	

Taking children/students from the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a parent takes a child into the institution and leaves it in the care of an educator- during that time, other children are watched by other employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- students arrive at school alone or their parents accompany them- if they are accompanied by their parents, students are taken by or given to a parent/guardian by a responsible teacher in front of the entrance into the institution, except on the first day of school in the case of primary school 1st grade students (pursuant to the decision of the director) or in the case of a student with developmental difficulties	X
Entry of parents/guardians of children with developmental difficulties	if there is a need for it and if the parent/guardian does not have symptoms due to which he/she is not allowed to enter the institution		
Disinfection of hands at the entrance to the institution where dispensers with hand disinfectant are installed	mandatory disinfection for employees and other adults entering kindergarten	compulsory disinfection or hand washing for all who enter the school premises (see the Instructions)	
Shoes soles disinfection	possible for all who enter the premises of the institution		
Daily measurement of body temperature with a non-contact thermometer for employees	mandatory for all employees of the institution on arrival and departure from work ¹⁹		
Changing clothes	Mandatory. After entering the institution, a child goes to a wardrobe, leaves the jacket, and puts on the slippers.	After entering the institution, a student goes to a wardrobe or other area for leaving jackets and puts slippers on. If there is no wardrobe, a student should keep the shoes he/she came in a sealed plastic bag. The school can also have plastic shoe covers in case an individual student forgets to change shoes	Not mandatory
Compulsory hand washing with soap and water before and when entering an area or a classroom, several times a day	Yes	Yes	Yes
Going outside the premises of the institution during educational work ²⁰	-	Forbidden	Not recommended
Wearing masks	-	+ in grades 5 to 8 of primary school – in accordance with the Instructions	Yes – in accordance with the Instructions

For the purposes of reducing contacts between students from different educational groups in kindergarten/classes, children/students are entering the institution according to a schedule drawn up by the institution. All entrances to the institution are used for the entry/exit of children/students.

For early and preschool age children, entrance according to educational groups can be organized, but due to the different needs of parents/guardians, i.e. the time of bringing children to the institution, each institution, based on previous experience and in accordance with the [Instructions](#), will adopt a plan and a

¹⁹ All employees are required to measure their body temperature every day before coming to work, and it is recommended to measure the temperature every day with a non-contact thermometer for all employees upon arrival at the institution, as well as leaving the institution.

²⁰ The premises of the institution include the yard, as well as other associated premises of the institution in which it is allowed to stay and perform educational work/teaching if such is necessary for the organization of educational work, and it can be ensured that students when entering and leaving such premises do not meet with students from other classes.

timetable for entering, taking children, dressing and going to appropriate room. Due to a different time of bringing children to kindergarten, it is necessary to take care that children of different educational groups do not stay together in the same area. Exceptionally, if transparent barriers are placed in a larger room in such a way that children from one educational group are separated from children from another educational group, it is possible to have standby duty in one room that meets the conditions for this (hall, meeting room, etc.).

For children/students with developmental difficulties in special class departments and educational groups, entrance to the institution is planned separately and in accordance with the needs and capabilities of each child/student.

Time delay of students' entrance into the institution of 15 or 30 minutes between individual classes (see the [Instructions](#)).

In district schools/classes where the education is performed for:

- **one class**, students enter school at the same time,
- **two classes**, students of one class enter/leave 15 minutes after the first students entered, unless the school has two entrances, and the students can enter their classroom without physical contact with the students from other classes,
- **three or more classes** of the same grade enter with a time delay of 15 to 30 minutes between them.

In district schools or schools with a larger number of classes of the same grade, depending on the number of students and the number of entrances, the school may choose one of the modes shown in Table 6 or opt for a different solution.

Table 6. Options for entering educational institutions

Number of entrances	Number of classes of the same grade	Entry time
Regardless of the number of entrances	regardless of the number of classes, it is recommended that student who transported by the same bus or van enter at the same time	depending on bus arrival, if possible before other students
1 entrance	one class	time delay of 15 minutes between classes
	two or more classes	time delay of 15 minutes between students from the same class
**2 entrances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students, grades 1 to 4 enter via one entrance - students, grades 5 to 8 enter via another entrance 	time delay of 15 minutes between students from different classes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students, grades 1 and 2 of secondary school via one entrance, students grades 3, 4 and 5 enter via another entrance 	

3 or more entrances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - entrance closest to classrooms is determined - students enter according to classes 	time delay of 10 to 15 minutes between students from the same class
Direct entrance into classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students enter the classroom directly, but in front of the classroom it should be possible to disinfect shoes because they have to go to the dressing room through the classroom 	X

* Students that are transported to school enter the institution simultaneously. On duty teacher or responsible employee meets them at the entrance. It is recommended that a teacher waits for them in the classroom in order to prevent prolonged contact between students from different classes.

** The entry schedule is given as an example and each school can adopt a different one.

Spatial conditions and educational work

Due to the diversity of institutions in the number of children/students, educational groups and employees, as well as the number of rooms/classrooms, practicum rooms, sanitary facilities and other spaces and the organisation of work in schools in one, two or more shifts, each director is obliged to **make special preparations for creating a safe environment** for performing educational work.

In schools where education is performed in two or three shifts, it is necessary to **plan time for cleaning** school premises before students and employees enter the school.

For each educational group/class, it is necessary to **determine** a room/classroom in which the daily educational work will be carried out except in the case of physical education classes, practical classes, and exercises.

Exceptionally, for students from grade 5 to 8 of primary school or secondary school students, a daily change of classrooms is possible if such is necessary when education is performed in specialised classrooms such as computer science education, the acquisition of particular outcomes in physics, chemistry or professional courses, where it is desirable that the education in a particular subject be held that day the form of block lesson or triple lessons. In this case, all education during the day is held in a specialised classroom/practicum in order to ensure compliance with the [Instructions](#).

When determining rooms/classrooms in which educational work/education will be carried out, it should be taken into account that the third educator in a preschool institution, an auxiliary staff member for the care of early and preschool age children, a teaching assistant, a professional communication intermediary etc. are counted into the **total number of persons** in educational group/class.

When defining rooms/classrooms it is necessary to **consider the possibilities of using the shortest path possible from entering into the building to the wardrobe and room/classroom** in order to reduce contacts between children/students when entering the building. Educational work can also be performed in facilities that are not normally intended as rooms/classrooms but meet the necessary conditions (e.g.

teachers' lounge since educational workers are not allowed to assemble in a common room, smaller gymnasium, etc.).

Institutions that do not have a wardrobe, it is necessary to **exactly determine where and how clothes and footwear will be left or kept**.

In schools where teaching is organized in one shift, students should be **allowed** to leave footwear in a wardrobe or in an area intended for such use.

It is **recommended** that institutions where special programmes are carried out for students with developmental difficulties organize leaving of not only footwear, but also all other belongings that children/students usually take home every day.

It is necessary to **specify and determine the schedule for the use of sanitary facilities** and ensure conditions that allow regular hand washing which is of particular importance for the preservation of the health of children/students and employees.

In classrooms, it is:

- necessary to place **desks and tables in a way that students sit behind each other or next to each other** in order to avoid face-to-face contact as much as possible. In classes with fewer students it is possible to arrange desks in a different way, but taking into account that the students are facing each other as little and possible,
- possible to install **barriers on desks** between students in order to reduce the risk of infection. The possibility of setting up a barrier may be decided by directors in agreement with educational workers, school boards and founders, and may include representatives of the local community and seek expert opinions regarding the possibility of their installation and effectiveness of risk reduction (see the [Instructions](#)).

Rooms should be **ventilated regularly** (see the [Instructions](#)).

Educational work outdoors. While the weather is favourable, educational work can also be performed outdoors (terraces in front of educational group/classroom; outdoor classrooms), while avoiding contact between children/students from two educational groups/classes.

It is also possible to use children's playground, but only following the [Recommendations on the Manner of Putting Children's Playgrounds into Function and how to Practice Recreational Sports Outdoors during the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Disease](#).²¹

Didactic and other equipment should be disinfected and/or washed regularly.

²¹ Recommendations on the Manner of Putting Children's Playgrounds into Function and how to Practice Recreational Sports Outdoors during the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Disease: <https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Dje%C4%8Dja-igrali%C5%A1ta-i-rekreativno-bavljenje-sportom-na-otvorenom.pdf>

Education in the form of block lessons (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject) or block classes (for examples, students are taught chemistry one week, while the next week they are taught physics or one week art culture, and another week music culture)²² can contribute to the safety of students and employees and reduce the need for frequent disinfection of didactic materials.

In case of additional epidemiological instructions/measures, educational institutions shall be obliged to act accordingly.

Students attend education in one classroom except in the case of the following:

- **physical education** performed in the open as long as possible, and when gymnasium is used, the same can be used for only one class during a single lesson or a block lesson, after which the cleaning of the gymnasium, locker room and sanitary facilities is necessary. In accordance with the [Instructions](#), sports games are not recommended and, epidemiologically speaking, the [Recommendations for Training and Sports and Recreational Activities in Closed Sports Facilities](#)²³ are applied indoors,
- **classroom for practical education in vocational schools**, whereby practicum and equipment are mandatorily cleaned/disinfected before the entry of students from other class (tables, tools, machines, etc.).

Didactic equipment used in several classes, i.e. one that a teacher/educator carries with him/her from one class to another, **should be disinfected** before taking it from one class to another.

The daily schedule is performed with the beginning that **depends on the defined schedule of entry into school** and **there is a possibility that in certain cases school bell** that marks the beginning of education, i.e. the end or beginning of classes, would not be used.²⁴

Recesses should be organised at different times in such a way that students do not come into contact with students from other classes and are allowed to venture outside of their classroom only in necessary situations.²⁵

When performing shorter programmes with preschool age children and in schools (elective, optional, additional and remedial classes, extended stay, extended professional procedure program, language and culture classes of national minorities according to Model C, preparatory and supplementary Croatian

²² In the case of organization using a mixed model according to which a part of students attend school from home one week, and attend school the other, or in situations when one part of the same class attends school, while the other is educated in the form of distance education, block lessons for subjects that are taught only once a week would mean that students are educated in the form of distance education only or are in school and when planning block lessons, differences in expected outcomes need to be taken into account.

²³ Recommendations for Training and Sports and Recreational Activities in Closed Sports Facilities: https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preporuke-za-treninge-u-zatvorenom_2.pdf

²⁴ The abolition of school bell provides greater flexibility in organizing classes and recesses in such a way that each class can have recesses at different times and that recesses can be longer (for example 20 minutes), which ultimately allows going out to the yard.

²⁵ Classes should start and end education and have recesses at different times according to predetermined schedule in order to avoid meeting in hallways. For the purposes of physical, emotional and mental health and well-being, as well as maintaining better attention during education, it is necessary that students have recesses during times when they can leave their classrooms and go outside if possible (when the weather allows it).

language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well etc.) it is necessary to avoid physical integration of children/students from different educational groups/classes (see the [Instructions](#)):

- It is recommended to perform shorter programmes with preschool age children for one educational group, i.e. without integrating children from different groups.
- It is recommended to only perform those extracurricular activities involving students from the same (one) class.

Exceptionally, for students from different classes in extended stay, it is possible to organise work in one larger room, but only if transparent barriers between students from different classes are installed and there is no possibility of contact between students from different classes.

Music activities and music education

The [Instructions](#) state that children and students should be encouraged to participate in cultural activities in order to express their creativity. Cultural activities forming a part of a curriculum such as music culture education should be carried out. During music activities in kindergarten and in music education classes, when singing, students should be positioned so that they do not face each other (small groups and larger distance when singing).

A choir and orchestra in music schools are often organized for students of different schools and often include students from different music school classes, in which case it is necessary to act in accordance with the [Recommendations for the Operation of Music Schools during the Coronavirus Epidemic \(COVID-19\)](#).²⁶

Meals in kindergartens and schools

Meals can be organised in a **room/classroom or in a cafeteria** in the manner prescribed by the [Instructions](#), with children/students being led to cafeteria by a teacher/educator who had education with students before that. If meals are organised in a cafeteria, it is necessary to prepare **a schedule for using cafeteria** taking into account the age of children and the time when the students entered school, and it is possible to install barriers on tables as prescribed by the [Instructions](#).

²⁶Recommendations for the Operation of Music Schools during the Coronavirus Epidemic (COVID-19): https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preporuka_za_rad_glazbenih_skola.pdf

It is mandatory to **keep distance** between children/students, and depending on cafeteria size, the time for lunch and/or snack of children/students can be organized at different times. Cafeteria needs to be cleaned (tables) between entrances of two groups of children/students.

In case of distance education, i.e. the absence of children/students in a kindergarten/school, it is necessary to take into account the reduction in the quantity of food that needs to be prepared. It is recommended that founders notify parents in advance regarding meal payment for days in which a child/student is absent. Namely, some founders demanded that parents pay for a diet or a part of a diet for times when children were not in kindergartens, and the Ministry received several complaints and letters seeking the assistance of the Ministry in solving the problem.

Gathering of educational workers in institutions

Teachers/educators and professional associates do not gather in the teacher's lounge.

It is recommended to avoid unnecessary contacts between educational workers and other employees in order to reduce the risk of infection. Communication between educational workers should be regular and meetings should be organized in an online environment or other form guaranteeing physical separation and adherence to measures.

First day/days in the institution

Given the epidemiological situation and measures for keeping the distance between children/students and recommendations regarding the entry of other persons into educational institutions, it is necessary to adapt the first day of pedagogical/educational year to the [Instructions](#), according to the possibilities of organizing work in a particular institution.

Therefore, it is not possible to make a single recommendation, instead each institution will find the best solutions with the implementation of epidemiological measures.

FIRST DAY FOR EARLY AND PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

In kindergartens, for children who are entering early and preschool education system for the first time, the time for adjustment was planned and a parent was allowed to stay with a child in a kindergarten or educational group. We are aware of the fact that younger age children need adjustment to new environment,

educators and peers, but due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease, this year it is necessary to harmonize the possibility of parents staying with the [Instructions](#) in order to ensure that all children, employees, parents, and families are as safe as possible and to reduce the possibility of infection.

In accordance with the [Instructions](#), a **parent can enter a kindergarten with adherence to epidemiological measures** (he/she must change footwear or wear plastic footwear covers, he/she must wear a facial mask, disinfect hands, etc.).

A parent can stay in a kindergarten with a child for a maximum of 15 minutes a day. The director is obliged to prepare a schedule for parents' stay in kindergarten groups and inform them in due time. It is not recommended for a larger number of parents to stay in the same room at the same time.

A larger number of parents and children from an educational group can stay for more than 15 minutes only in an open space, but with obligatory adherence to distancing and parents must wear face masks.

FIRST DAY FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

It is common to organise events for first grade students and that parents accompany their children. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease, **it is not recommended to organize events**, but it is possible to plan that students come to school with one parent in order for children and parents to meet the teacher, and this needs to be organized for **each class in a separate room or out in the open**.

If one parent comes with a child and if he/she enters the classroom with their child, a special time should be planned when there are no other students in the school and subject to all epidemiological measures. In accordance with the [Instructions](#), **parents should not stay within school facilities for longer than 15 minutes**.

Since textbooks will also be distributed to students, it is necessary to **elaborate a protocol and determine distribution procedure** to children and parents.

Teachers can also use the first day to **organize a parental meeting**, i.e. giving instructions related to the organisation of operations, familiarizing children and parents with the [Instructions](#) and these recommendations and arrange possibilities for distance communication between them because it is not recommended that parents enter schools. If possible, the meeting may be held **in an open space** or the meeting should be held **online** or by using other available communication channels, but only if all parents have the opportunity to do so. **Communication that will in any way put certain parents and children in an unfavourable situation is not recommended.**

FIRST DAY FOR OTHER PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Prior to 7 September 2020, i.e. the first day of the educational year, **students should be informed of the time of their arrival at school** and of the compliance with all **instructions**, as well as of the **classroom** in which they will be educated.

The instructions prescribed in respect of transport, entry/exit, as well as any other shall apply from the first day.

Since **textbooks** will be distributed to students, it is necessary to **elaborate a distribution protocol**.

The duration of education on the first day can be adapted to the specificities of space and the number of students, **and it is desirable that only a head teacher stays in a classroom with children**, and not other teachers/educators. A school can also plan to conduct education on the first day, depending on the decision of each school.

Head teachers are obliged to notify all students regarding rules and obligations, risks, and instructions to be followed, taking into account the age of the students, as well as their specific characteristics, especially in the case of students with developmental difficulties.

Parental meetings and employee meetings should be planned using **digital equipment** for distance communication. In exceptional circumstances, meetings are also allowed outdoors.

Communication between teachers/educators is mandatory, as well as **communication with students' parents** in order to emphasize the progress of students or possible difficulties. Head teachers play a key role in such communication.

Daily and weekly organization of work – schedule

A schedule is usually given to students on the first day of school year and in many schools, education is organized according to it. In some cases, a schedule is prepared for the first weeks of education, but after that education is usually organized according to the same schedule except in situations where changes are needed due to the absence of teachers/educators or students' absence, e.g. in the case of a multi-day field teaching.

In most cases, a schedule for all subjects is evenly distributed during a week and educational year and students have multiple subjects during a single day.

However, it is also possible to plan most activities/education in the form of block lessons (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject) and that students have fewer subjects. In addition, the so-called block-education is also possible.

Block classes (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject) in some schools and for some subjects were utilized more frequently, while they were not utilized in others. The fact is that a block class (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject) depending on the programme/curriculum, activities, and expected outcomes of a particular subject and the planned number of classes in one week may have advantages and disadvantages, but since one of the main objectives is to preserve the health of students, educational workers, and families of students and employees, **it is recommended that education is organized in the form of a block class** (two or three consecutive classes of the same subject).

How can block classes reduce the risks to students and employees?

According to the [Instructions](#), contacts should be reduced to a minimum in order to reduce the risk of infection, and from the presented example, it can be seen that teaching in block classes contributes to this.

A teacher/educator and the students will be in contact less often, and the number of teachers/educators performing education during one day in a class is smaller, which in turn reduces the number of persons they come into contact with during the day. In addition, a large number of teachers/educators work in two or more schools and the introduction of two consecutive classes of the same subject can reduce the number of days a week in which teachers will come to one of the schools in which they work. Furthermore, travel, as well as contact with students from different schools, can increase the risk. Namely, if a teacher who works in two or more schools becomes infected with coronavirus, not only will he/she not be able to teach in three schools, but it is also possible to expect an increased risk for everyone he/she will be in contact with.

Therefore, it is recommended that directors and schedulers draft a schedule comprising of two consecutive classes of the same subject for elective subjects with students grades 1 to 4, and for other subjects for primary school students grades 5 to 8 and secondary school students.

Education in the form of three consecutive classes of the same subject is also possible, but several factors that can have negative effects for students need to be kept in mind, such as forgetting, if students do not participate in education or activities of an individual subject for a week. For this reason, education in certain subjects (e.g. foreign languages) should not be planned in this form, especially for primary school students.

In some schools, education is also organized in the form of **weekly blocks** (cycles or block education), for example one week students are taught biology and science (4 classes per week), and another week history

and geography (4 classes per week). Such an organization can also influence the reduction of contacts, but can cause difficulties, e.g. in the case of students attending school one week and are educated at home the other.

In the case of cycles it is recommended that they are organised in such a way that a particular class is divided into two groups of students and that groups alternate in attending classes at the school (1 week cycles or 3+2/2+3 day regime). Groups of students per cycles should be permanent (fixed). This proposal is incompatible with the basic pedagogical guideline that education is organized for all students at the same time and in terms of child well-being is the most unfavourable.

In some schools, teaching of certain subjects is organized **in stages**, e.g. during the first semester of the year and during a part of the second semester, and afterwards for other subjects, provided that the subjects are taught the same number of hours in a year. Although such a way of organising work can reduce the risk, its application is not recommended in this school year due to the specific epidemiological situation, since the Ministry will, in the view of the situation above, coordinate the drafting of a framework annual performance curriculum (GIC) for this school year for each subject according to weeks/months that teachers/educators will apply and adapt according to the needs of their students with the aim of achieving the best educational outcomes.

Consequently, given the different situations, it is necessary to consider which operational scenario is the best in this situation and which of them can be applied in relation to the particularities of not only the subjects, but also programmes/curricula of individual schools (vocational schools have a specific organisation of work due to practical education and it is certain that the organisation of work can and needs to be adapted to the curriculum not only during a day or a week, but also for a certain period).

It should also be noted that in schools with a higher number of students in a class it is possible to have a mixed education model according to which a part of students of the same class will attend classes from home, and a part at school or one part of the class is at school, and a part is educated in the form of distance education, but it is **not recommended to perform certain subjects only in the form of distance education**. This model is not suitable for students of younger age, i.e. primary school students.

In accordance with the [Instructions](#) for students involved in special programmes according to the partial integration model, educational work shall be organized exclusively in a special class in order to reduce the risk of infection and to protect the health of students by applying epidemiological measures. During the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease, educational rehabilitator - teacher will perform art, music, technical, and physical education subjects in communication with teachers of the classes in which students are integrated.

For students who, due to more significant motor difficulties or chronic illnesses, cannot attend classes, and for whom the school has obtained the approval by the Ministry for the organisation of education at home, education can be organized at the student's home or in the form of distance education. Teachers/educators who are to educate students at home have to agree with student's parents whether the education will be organized in student's home or in the form of distance education. It is not recommended that more than one teacher/educator visits student's home in a single day. A teacher/educator is obliged to adhere to the [Instructions](#) and is recommended to wear a mask. Given the epidemiological situation, age of students, and abilities of students, it is possible to organize education according to a mixed model (distance education and education at home).

Additional educational (educational-rehabilitation procedure programme and extended professional procedure programme) and rehabilitation programmes for students with developmental difficulties are implemented exclusively within the same class /educational group, as well as those rehabilitation programmes implemented in groups. Rehabilitation programmes, carried out by professional associates, can be realized individually in the working premises of professional associates while complying with all epidemiological measures. If it is not possible to avoid merging students from different classes/educational groups in organising the implementation of the extended professional procedure programme, educational work can be organised according to model B (part of education at institution and part in the form of distance education) or model C (distance education) for these groups of students.

When drafting a schedule and planning educational operations, the following must be taken into account:

- for this school year, the Ministry will coordinate the development of a framework annual performance curriculum (GIK) for each subject according to weeks/months which will determine a set of basic educational outcomes/teaching content that students need to achieve at the national level, which teachers/educators will apply and adapt to the needs of their students in order to achieve the best educational outcomes. Educational workers are autonomous in drafting their own performance curricula, taking into account the specificity of the epidemiological situation and the working models proposed and elaborated in this document,
- for distance education, it is necessary to develop a custom schedule and the method of realizing distance education, considering that students need more time to achieve outcomes than if they were educated at school. Particular attention should be paid to daily and weekly load of students regarding their obligations according to individual subjects and student activities.

Part Three

Planning, implementation, and evaluation of education in the school year

PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Students start their school year in school and are educated live. Other forms of education such as distance education shall be adjusted according to the actual situation in the population related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. Schools and other educational institutions should be ready for quick and efficient adaptation in realization of live education, i.e. for online education in those cases where necessary. It is extremely important that, even in the conditions of the pandemic and epidemic, **equal quality of education is ensured to all students**. This means that regardless of the socio-economic status of their family, special educational needs, origin, belonging to a certain vulnerable group and type of school they attend, all students have equal conditions for education and they have the right to quality education based on equal initial conditions, which is the basic precondition for achieving a fair educational system. Fair educational systems with targeted measures and active support to sensitive groups of students endeavour to maximally mitigate the impact of unfavourable factors on learning and achievement of defined educational learning outcomes.

Learning, teaching, and evaluation in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia is based on legal and strategic documents. With regard to these documents, general guidelines, and recommendations to be implemented in accordance with these principles in cooperation between all institutions and individuals competent for **planning and implementation of education** (competent agencies, primary and secondary schools, teachers, and parents) are presented in the remainder of this document. Parents, especially in the realization of distance education, represent a valuable component in the educational system in achieving educational outcomes, and close and active mutual cooperation between school and parents is recommended. These general recommendations and guidelines are the basis for further operationalization and elaboration.

In the school year 2020/2021, in the existing epidemiological circumstances and with the planned education model which provides for the prevailing implementation of live education with effective supplementation i.e. distance education, it should be strived that all students, in accordance with their capabilities, achieve educational outcomes in educational content prescribed for individual subject curricula/education programmes in order to enable them an unobstructed vertical transition to the next educational cycle, continuation of education, and professional and personal development.

When planning education in the school year 2020/2021, the emphasis should not only be on short-term effects such as the number of lessons realized, the amount of curriculum processed, or the achievement of certain educational outcomes, but rather on long-term consequences of potential interruption of live education on students, families, economy, and society as a whole should be taken into account. Despite the efforts to achieve educational outcomes/curricula prescribed for a given class in its entirety, in existing epidemiological circumstances that cannot be fully anticipated, **it is necessary to define a set of basic**

educational outcomes/curricula that students need to achieve in order to enable students to continue their education and professional and personal development.

Given the circumstances in which the school year 2019/2020 ended, key educational outcomes and curricula from the previous grade should be included in the planning. Basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes in key subjects are mechanisms for protecting individuals from undesirable consequences caused by sudden changes in society. The development of individuals and a knowledge-based society makes future economic growth sustainable and the society as a whole more responsible. The importance of basic knowledge and competences is also stressed by the European Union in its Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020), which sets out the goal that by 2020 the share of fifteen-year-old students who do not reach the basic level of reading, mathematical, and science literacy in each Member State should be less than 15%. We would like to emphasize that according to the set goal of the ET 2020 we should continuously **plan to achieve educational outcomes that foster and develop basic reading, mathematical, and science literacy** of all students. The latest PISA survey showed that the achievements of Croatian students in these key areas are statistically significantly below the OECD average, i.e. that the basic level of reading literacy in Croatia is not attained by every fifth student (22% of students), mathematical literacy is not attained by every third student (31% of students), and science literacy is not attained by every fourth student (25% of students). **Further reduction of the share of students without basic knowledge and competences in key subjects due to the interruption of education in schools would mean that Croatia could in the future face a large proportion of citizens with underdeveloped skills necessary for the functioning in a modern society and on labour market.** As we stated above, according to PISA results, when planning education, whether real or virtual, the **emphasis should always be placed on raising the literacy of our students regardless of the amount of educational outcomes achieved.** Reproductions of content at the expense of development of thinking such as logical and critical thinking should be avoided because in an era of global connectivity, **information/facts are easily accessible at all times and in every part of the world, but it is important that students know how to evaluate, assess, and understand them and apply them** in real situations.

The planning of education is particularly important, especially in a model that includes live and distance education, in which, given the circumstances, it is not clear in advance what the relationship between these two forms of education will be. Particular attention should be paid to planning key educational outcomes/curricula, student activities, strategies and forms of teaching and learning that can be successfully achieved using both live and distance education. In drafting performance/educational curricula (in some cases even educational plans), it is extremely important to clearly distinguish which education units should be taught live and which are suitable for distance education.

At the start of the school year, it is necessary to determine to what level students have achieved key educational outcomes/acquired educational content from the previous grade. This evaluation should be approached formatively. **Students should receive a clear feedback regarding acquisition level of their**

knowledge and skills (for example, high, medium, basic, or insufficient). The results of this formal evaluation should serve as a starting point for teachers to include basic educational outcomes/curricula in the annual curriculum/programme.

Decisions on the adoption of individual subject curricula of general education subjects in the school year 2020/2021 introduce new subject curricula in primary and secondary schools in accordance with the decisions adopted for each subject and published in the Official Gazette. In doing so, **special attention should be paid to subject curricula in grades 3 and 7 of primary school and in grade 3 of secondary school**, because students in those grades were taught in the previous grade according to the curriculum and in the middle of the educational cycle their educational paradigm changed and their education is continued according to curriculum approach.

Particular attention should be paid to education, support, and monitoring of teachers' pedagogical work in the field of planning and programming of education and evaluation. Recently published results of the international survey TALIS 2018 show that teachers in Croatia have the greatest need for professional training precisely in the field of individualised learning and ICT use in teaching. Similarly, PISA 2018 results show that more than a third of teachers do not have technical pedagogical skills to apply ICT in education. More than half of high schools claimed that they do not have enough experts to provide technical assistance. These indicators point to the need to train teachers and educators in the field of ICT application in learning and teaching.

Students should be given clear and short instructions for work and the use of materials in performing assignments in distance education. Instructions should also contain **clearly defined deadlines** for the assignment and realization of assignments, taking into account working conditions such as the working environment of students, the level of autonomy, and the specific educational needs and, accordingly, appropriately foresee the possibility of individual support to individual students.

Special attention should be paid to psychological and mental well-being of students and teachers/educators by **ensuring assistance and support of professional associates and competent services.** An institution should have developed mechanisms for timely detection of needs for psychological-pedagogical intervention and take the necessary measures to ensure adequate assistance and support for children and students, teachers/educators, and parents. Therefore, institutions should actively implement the recommendations of strategic documents and regulations and build excellent cooperation based on two-way communication between all stakeholders.

In order to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children and students and to reduce the risk of deepening differences between children and students, institutions should have developed **mechanisms for identifying disadvantaged children/students** and take necessary measures to ensure sufficient resources and adequate learning conditions.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education in this document implies **two-way** distance **communication** between students and teachers, as well as **independent work** of students at home. Teachers use didactic approaches that are suitable for distance education and enable active involvement and work of all students and “two-way” communication.

Activities in e-education can be performed **synchronously** (simultaneously, at the same time or at a shorter time interval) and **asynchronously** (at different times, i.e. without defined short target time intervals).²⁷

While synchronous communication enables the connection and exchange of information by several participants at the same time, asynchronous communication is more suitable for assignments that require reflection and more time to be realized. While synchronous communication occurs in real time, asynchronous communication does not require participants to be online simultaneously, which gives them time to shape their response and communication or delay it.

Since primary school students attending lower elementary education are not ready to use digital tools independently, **the Ministry will in cooperation with the national broadcasting company (HRT) establish distance education (Channel 3 School) for the youngest students.** For older students (from primary school grade 5 onwards), video lessons will be made that can be realized synchronously (simultaneously, i.e. at the same time or at a shorter time interval) and asynchronously (at different times, i.e. without defined short target time intervals).

When using distance education, a custom schedule, or a custom way of realizing distance education is created because students need a clearer orientation and more time to solve assignments and adopt materials than if they were in school. Special attention is paid to daily and weekly load of students regarding their obligations in an individual subjects and activities. It is proposed that distance communication between teachers and students be coordinated by the head teacher. Student instructions for work should be short, clear, and understandable, and assignments must be in accordance with their age and abilities.

When preparing and establishing the form of distance education, approaches described in the [Action Plan for the Implementation of Distance Education](#) will be used, and according to the [Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools Concerning the Organization of Distance Education using Information and Communication Technology](#) and associated [Recommendations for the Organisation of Work Days and Instructions for Evaluation during Distance Education](#).

²⁷ <http://edupoint.carnet.hr/referalni/obrazovni/mkod/metodika/sinasin.html>

Documents for the pedagogical/school year 2020/2021

DOCUMENTS IN KINDERGARTENS

In accordance with Article 21 of the *Preschool Education Act* (Official Gazette [10/97](#), [107/07](#), [94/13](#) and [98/19](#)) preschool institutions are obliged to adopt an annual operational plan and programme as well as a curriculum for kindergartens.

Annual operational plan and programme and curriculum for pedagogical year 2020/2021 has to be adopted by the Board of Directors of a kindergarten by 30 September 2020, and the same can be adopted at a session to be held in the kindergarten after the departure of children, subject to epidemiological measures or at a meeting organized at a distance.

When drafting and adopting an annual operational plan and programme of a kindergarten, it is necessary to take into account the epidemiological situation and pay special attention to **children health care programme, hygiene and nutrition, and social welfare programmes**. It is not recommended to realize programmes that would include children of different educational groups in the planned way, but primarily for children of a single educational group.

Furthermore, when drafting a kindergarten curriculum for pedagogical year 2020/2021, it is necessary to foresee possible deviations from what is planned, as well as deviations from activity timetable.

The documents obligatory also include a plan regarding the **possibility of working using two-way communication** with parents for children who might be in isolation, as well as for children who are not able or are not allowed to attend kindergarten for health reasons.

It is also necessary to plan the **work of professional associates with children and parents** who need help and support, for children who are in kindergarten and those who cannot attend it.

It is not recommended that children go for visits or excursions during the calendar year 2020, and if the conditions for such activities are created, they can be subsequently planned and supplemented in the kindergarten documents.

The preschool programme must be planned and it must be implemented by a preschool or school institution in which it is realized in accordance with regulations in the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 May 2021.²⁸ In a case that a programme cannot be realized in a kindergarten or school institution, it should be taken into account that it must be realized within the prescribed deadline and in exceptional cases it is possible to **realize it at a distance**.

²⁸ See the Ordinance on Preschool Programme Content and Duration (Official Gazette, number [107/14](#)).

For parents and children who are yet to participate in early and preschool education programmes, it is possible to plan and hold the first parental meeting in a kindergarten or outside of a kindergarten, but at a time when there are no children in those facilities and subject to epidemiological measures. Parents are not allowed to enter the kindergarten without a mask and prior disinfection of footwear and hands. Attendance is forbidden to parents and children who are in isolation, i.e. those who cannot enter the institution pursuant to the Measures.

DOCUMENTS IN SCHOOLS

Annual operational plan and programme and school curriculum for the school year 2020/2021 has to be adopted by the School Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Primary and Secondary Education Act. Parental Council sessions related to the adoption of school documents can be held at a distance in accordance with the possibilities of the Council members. It is also recommended to hold Teacher Council meetings at a distance (see the [Instructions](#)). All sessions to be held at the school should be subject to epidemiological measures and after the school day ends.

Annual documents, in accordance with the laws, propose planning of all components prescribed by the laws, but also indicate the **possibility of realizing distance education**, as well as possible deviations from what is planned due to epidemiological situation.

It is also necessary to take into account in advance the **possibilities of introducing mixed model** in schools that have larger number of students in each class and it is not possible to provide the space necessary. Accordingly, model B is used (dividing classes into two groups: one group attends school, the other group is at home).

When drafting annual operational plan and programme and curriculum, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Ministry will, for this school year, coordinate with the development of framework annual performance curriculum (GIK) for each subject according to weeks/months which will determine a set of basic educational outcomes/teaching content that students need to achieve at the national level, which teachers/educators will apply and adapt to the needs of their students in order to achieve the best educational outcomes. Educational workers are autonomous in drafting their own performance curricula, taking into account the specificity of the epidemiological situation and the working models proposed and elaborated in this document.

Secondary vocational schools are recommended to also plan the possibility of realizing practical education and professional apprenticeship. Practical education, whether carried out only in school premises, combined in school premises and in an economic operator or only in an economic operator (which depends on the education programme/vocational curriculum), primarily must enable students to achieve the annual prescribed number of education.

When practical education is realized in school, classes are divided into educational groups with a smaller number of students, as prescribed by the National Secondary Education Pedagogical Standard, teaching plan and programme for a certain profession/vocational curriculum for the acquisition of qualifications, and education can be organised in cycles. All groups of students will come to school alternately, for example, alternating 1 +1 week or 2 +3/3 +2 days.

When practical education is realized at an economic operator, it is important to note that it is not allowed to have a larger number of students from different classes in an economic operator at the same time, especially in the case of a smaller economic operators. Teachers in charge of monitoring student education in an economic operator must agree with the economic operator on the most appropriate method of monitoring students (teacher's arrival in economic operator with adherence to the prescribed epidemiological measures, via phone or e-mail).

Likewise, educational plan and programme for a given vocation prescribes the number of hours of professional apprenticeship that a student must complete in a particular year of education in order to finish a given grade or complete his or her education.

Professional apprenticeship will be organized by the secondary vocational school in such a way that, in agreement with the economic operator, the school will prepare a schedule for student professional apprenticeship, also in such a way that there is not a large number of students in the economic operator at the same time, especially in the case of smaller economic operators.

It is important that students, when going to practical education and/or professional apprenticeship in economic operators, follow the recommendations issued for a specific activity pursued by the economic operator.

The school is also obligated to plan the following:

- a) **realization of education according to model C** for students belonging to national minorities, and the teaching realization will be conducted in accordance with the [Instructions](#);
- b) **realization of additional and supplementary education** as well as extracurricular activities, although these activities will be realized exclusively for students from the same class or in the form of distance education in accordance with the [Instructions](#) during the COVID-19 epidemic in order to reduce risks;
- c) **Croatian language classes for children who do not speak Croatian language or do not speak it sufficiently well:**
 - we emphasize that the [Instruction](#) provide for education without mixing students from different classes, and the programme of preparatory or supplemental teaching of the Croatian language can be realized at school or at a distance,
 - if possible, students who are or are going to be included in preparatory teaching of the Croatian language at a distance, in accordance with regulations, should be included in attending regular

classes at school they are enrolled in, particularly relating to subjects in which insufficient Croatian language proficiency does not represent a significant obstacle to understanding the subject matter.

It is recommended to plan field education outside the classroom where the time of realization does not need to be specified since the possibility of realization depends on the epidemiological situation.

We would like to emphasize that on 21 August 2020 the CIPH issued [new recommendations](#) regarding the **possibility of field education related to the COVID-19 pandemic** available on the CIPH web site.

For primary schools realizing **extended stay** and/or **extended professional procedure**, since it is recommended in the [Instructions](#) not to merge students from different classes, it is necessary to determine parents' needs and, in agreement with the founders and units of local self-government, consider whether and how the number of educational groups can be increased, but only if spatial conditions allow it.

If the founder is unable to provide extended stay for all students who have expressed interest in this type of educational work, it is recommended that extended stay be organized for **lower primary school grades (1 and 2)** and for other classes according to spatial conditions and the capabilities of the founder.

Exceptionally, in order to enable students to join extended stay programme or extended professional procedure programme, it is possible to install transparent barriers in a school with a sufficiently large room that will enable the separation of students from different educational groups, but only in such a way that there is no contact between students from different classes/educational groups (the work should be organized so that a teacher can see each student and students can communicate with each other, taking into account measures prescribed by the [Instructions](#)).

When the weather allows it, students participating in extended stay can also be outside.

Teacher duties

The duties of teachers and professional associates should be prepared in accordance with the regulations. Therefore, a teacher has the same duties as if there is no epidemic of COVID-19, but **every teacher should also be prepared for changes** such as substitutions of colleagues, changes in the model educational work realization, etc.

When drafting duties for teachers and professional associates, as well as other employees, the Director should **have data on employees who will not be able to teach at school**. The list of highly vulnerable groups of diseases and health conditions and conditions for their stay in school is in accordance with the

rules of the medical profession.²⁹ For each highly vulnerable person or a person who shares a household with a highly vulnerable person, it is necessary to consider the situation individually taking into account the current epidemiological situation. The decision on this is made by a primary health care physician, as well as decisions on any other special protection measures such as wearing a mask, etc.

A student who is not able or not allowed to attend school and who will be missing from school for a long time and needs a **computer/tablet and Internet access** in order to perform all assignments, they will be delivered by the school in agreement with child's parents (if there is a need for this) and the student will **use that equipment during his/her absence from school and return the same upon returning to classes**. It is expected that some students who will not be able to go to school will not know how to use various tools and will need help and support. For security reasons, it will most likely not be possible to provide then help at their homes, and help should be provided in the form of live communication.

Recommendation to parents

In accordance with regulations, early and preschool education is not compulsory except for preschool programmes, but primary and secondary education are mandatory. Epidemiologists systematically emphasise the fact that a **child/student in an educational institution is as safe as at home**. Exceptions are **children/students who are in a highly vulnerable groups**³⁰ for which it is recommended in the [Instructions](#) to be **educated exclusively remotely** during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educators will provide **assistance and support** to parents of such children through two-way communication, taking into account the age of children, their abilities and capabilities. Schools will ensure that such students participate in distance education, depending on their age and communication possibilities and abilities to use digital tools for students.

For other children/students, education will be realized **in school**, and if the epidemiological situation requires, with the aim of reducing communication between a larger number of students, it is possible to realize education in the form of a **mixed model** (partly in school, partly at distance) or only in the form of **distance education** in extreme necessity. Mostly remote realization of education is also planned if part of students, entire classes, or even the entire school, need to be isolated.

For the purpose of children safety in kindergartens and schools, the [Instructions](#) recommend measures that need to be adhered by all, including parents of children/students.

Parents of children/students who were already involved in educational work in institutions during May are **informed with measures** related to bringing and taking children, the need to measure and register child's

²⁹ More on this in a document by the CIPH, [Diseases and Health Conditions that May Increase the Risk for Serious Forms of COVID-19 Disease](#) of 2 September 2020

³⁰ Ibidem.

temperature every day before going to institution, rules to be followed (e.g. social distancing, different time of entry into the institution, etc.).

Parents whose children are yet to be enrolled in a kindergarten or the first grade of primary school can learn about the measures that need to be followed from the [Instructions](#), and they will be informed of the same when their child starts attending a kindergarten or school.

Parents of older students who were educated remotely until the end of teaching year 2019/2020 are recommended to, in a timely manner, **familiarize themselves with the measures and to adhere to them.**

Parents must be aware that the epidemic requires strict compliance with measures and that any non-compliance increases the risk of infection.

Therefore, parents are recommended to talk with their children, regardless of their age, **as often as possible about what they have to do to protect their health, but also about the health of family members, peers, and others.**

We would like to emphasize the fact that the realization of educational work in kindergartens is organized without merging educational groups, i.e. teaching is realized **only for students of the same class** or educational group with programmes for students with developmental difficulties.

Parents of children/students who will not be able to attend kindergarten/school or those who will be educated remotely, depending on the age of the child, should provide assistance and support to their child. **Additional and remedial classes** will be organised for students who need them. Although this form of education is not mandatory, it is recommended that parents encourage their children, based on the opinion of a teacher/educator, to participate since working with a teacher live can greatly contribute to child's advancement, i.e. to the achievement of better outcomes and results.

Although parents are limited regarding entering an educational institution, **parents have an obligation to monitor their child's progress.** This is why the communication between educational workers and parents is planned in this year also. When communicating with educational workers, distance communication at the agreed time and only during working days is recommended.

A student is obliged to attend classes, and a parent is obliged to justify the absence of his/her child in case of illness or to request child's absence in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance on Criteria for Imposing Pedagogical Measures.³¹

We also emphasize that the CIPH has issued [Advice for Parents regarding Operations of Kindergartens and Schools](#) of May 2020, available on their website.³²

³¹ Ordinance on Criteria for Imposing Pedagogical Measures (Official Gazette, number [3/17](#) and [94/15](#))

³² Advice for Parents regarding Operations of Kindergartens and Schools of 25 May 2020 can be accessed at: https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Savjeti_za_roditelje_22_05_2020.pdf

Part Four

Support in the work of kindergartens and schools

The Ministry, in cooperation with system agencies (Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO), CARNet Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMPEU)), provides systematic assistance and support to kindergartens and schools, i.e. directors, teachers, educators and professional associates, as well as the founders. This support will also be provided in this pedagogical and school year. In fact, it will be more intense. Therefore, the remainder of these recommendations present brief information about the forms of support that kindergartens and schools can expect.

Before that, we present several key steps to be taken in the coming months:

- at the start of pedagogical and school year 2020/2021, schools, with the support of CARNet, need to open virtual classes. CARNet should collect feedback from schools and teachers on procedures and recommendations for opening virtual classes and appropriately adjust recommendations.
- Schools should organise preparations for the implementation of the mixed model and distance education model (potential scenarios can be prepared by drafting a plan based personal previous experience and these Recommendations).
- Schools should distribute equipment to students, teachers and educators, including equipment under procurement as a part of the Comprehensive Curricular Reform II (CKR II) and e-School projects, in accordance with the guidelines of the Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS 2018.
- Professional development (professional training) should continue as planned and teachers should be particularly motivated to participate in training (CKR II project).
- Encourage cooperation among teachers in schools and virtual classrooms, in accordance with the guidelines of the Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS 2018.
- It is necessary to organize expert teams that will work on the preparation of video materials and other materials for learning and teaching during pedagogical and school year (CKR II project).

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

The Ministry performs administrative and other assignments related to preschool, primary and secondary education systems in Croatia and abroad.

Regarding the pedagogical/school year 20019/2020, the Ministry, in cooperation with system agencies (CARNet, University Computing Centre SRCE, Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO), Agency for Mobility and EU

Programmes (AMPEU), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO)), has developed a concept of distance education, adopted the [Action Plan for the Implementation of Distance Education](#) which, if the epidemiological situation require the implementation of some form of distance education, should be applied in school year 2020/2021.

In the process of digitisation, the Ministry's priority was to ensure the **digital independence of teachers**, which implies providing laptops for teachers, equipping classrooms with projectors and smart boards. During 2019, 1,269 laptops were purchased from the CKR II project for professional associates and 26,755 laptops for teachers through the e-School project. In 2020, the same quantity of equipment will be procured for the remaining teachers. Projectors and smart boards were procured for classrooms that lacked such equipment.

In addition, the Ministry also focused on **equipping students** as part of the project titled Support to the Comprehensive Curricular Reform (CKR I and CKR II), financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). So far, tablets have been procured (91,641 tablet) for all primary school students in fifth and seventh grade and 10,000 tablets for primary school students attending lower elementary education, which are used under the supervision of teachers.

In this pedagogical and school year, the Ministry will continue to develop and improve the education system, as well as digital transformation. In this regard, the procurement procedure for the school year 2020/2021 includes the purchase of equipment for students and teachers financed through two existing projects - CKR II and e-Schools: the purchase of 109,885 tablets for primary school students worth HRK 154,561,609, and the purchase of 26,755 laptops for teachers worth HRK 88,950 000.

For the purposes of providing support to system stakeholders, the Ministry has opened a call centre with three telephone lines through which it is possible to obtain information and answers to inquiries related to the application of the [Instructions](#) and these Recommendations every working day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. By calling the following telephone numbers, expert support is ensured related to:

- early and preschool education and lower elementary education: 01/4594 181
- higher elementary education: 01/4594 182, and
- secondary schools and dormitories: 01/4594 183.

In addition, a unique e-mail address idemouskolu@mzo.hr has also been opened.

The Ministry will also continue providing professional support and assistance to directors and educational workers, and in this school year it will coordinate the development of a framework annual performance curriculum (GIK) for each subject according to weeks/months which will determine a set of basic educational outcomes/teaching content that students need to achieve at the national level, which teachers/educators will apply and adapt to the needs of their students in order to achieve the best educational outcomes.

Since primary school students attending lower elementary education at that age are not ready to use digital tools independently, the Ministry, in cooperation with the public broadcasting company (HRT), will establish distance education (Channel 3 School) for the youngest students. For older students (from the 5th grade of primary school onwards), 15 minute video lessons will be made that can be performed synchronously (simultaneously, i.e. at the same time or at a shorter time interval) and asynchronously (at different times, i.e. without defined short target time intervals).

We are aware that accessibility and equipment are a crucial, but not a sufficient condition for quality pedagogical work. This is why the Ministry, together with the Government of the Republic of Croatia, plans to attract additional funds from EU funds during 2020-2024 in order to:

- quality upgrade the existing digital learning, which would also be adapted to the realization of distance learning in exceptional situations,
- ensure quality education from the earliest age and increase the coverage of children in kindergartens from the age of 4 until starting primary school;
- gradually introduce day-long classes for primary school students, which will directly contribute to improving students' educational achievements, ensuring equal opportunities for all students, improving the well-being of students and their families, and increasing the autonomy and responsibility of schools.

EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING AGENCY

In accordance with the Education and Teacher Training Agency Act and the Statute, the [Education and Teacher Training Agency](#) (AZOO):

- provides expert assistance and provides guidance to institutions, their directors, teachers, educators, professional associates in the implementation of educational activities,
- organises and conducts professional training of educational workers and directors,
- conducts expert-pedagogical supervision through direct expert-pedagogical insight into the educational work of institutions, the work of educational workers and the work of directors as an expert head of an institution.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease was proclaimed until the end of the school year 20019/2020 the advisors of the Agency provided professional advisory assistance to schools, directors, and educational workers. Professional assistance includes monitoring the realization of educational activities in educational institutions with the aim of providing a comprehensive advisory assistance in finding solutions to specific problems in teaching and learning, proposing effective development strategies and guidelines, and instructing educational institutions, their directors, teachers, educators, and professional associates in the implementation of educational activities.

The Agency's advisers were associates in the creation of the following documents that became current with the implementation of distance education:

- [Recommendations for the Organisation of Work in Lower Elementary Education and Instructions for Evaluation;](#)
- [Instructions for Work of Preschool Institutions and Special Classes and Work with Children with Difficulties Who have Teaching Assistants;](#)
- [Instructions for Practical Exercises, Additional Classes, Remedial and Supplemental Exams in Secondary Schools;](#)
- preparation and organization of the continuation of competitions for the school year 2019/2020 according to epidemiological measures prescribed by the CIPH
- instructions for early and preschool age children care after opening of kindergartens.

When the pandemic was proclaimed, the Agency established a team of advisors who answered questions of stakeholders every day with the aim of providing educational support. The Agency's advisers made video lessons for individual subject areas for primary and secondary school students (approximately 500 video lessons were recorded for lower and higher elementary education, as well as lessons for the Italian and Serbian national minorities).

During the past pedagogical/school year, the Agency organised a series of expert meetings for primary and secondary school directors.

In the pedagogical/school year 2020/2021, the Agency will continue to provide professional support and assistance to directors and educational workers. The forms of providing professional assistance will depend on the epidemiological situation and decisions, instructions, and agreements with the Ministry. According to the [AZOO Expert Meeting Schedule for 2020](#), the Agency plans expert meetings with the adherence to epidemiological recommendations, monitoring the organisation and implementation of educational work in kindergartens, i.e. teaching in schools, and intensive provision of professional assistance. Continuous on-line communication with directors of the County Expert Council is planned.

The Agency will continue to provide professional support and assistance to educational workers, monitor the organisation and implementation of teaching, and intensively provide professional assistance. Expert assistance is also reflected in the proposal of annual performance curriculum (GIK) whose development, in cooperation with the Agency, will be coordinated by the Ministry this school year and teachers will apply them and adapt them to the needs of their students in order to achieve educational outcomes.

Educators, teachers, professional associates, and directors may request professional assistance and support in the preparation and implementation of educational work by sending a message to the following e-mail addresses:

1. Gea Cetinić, MSc, gea.cetinic@azoo.hr

2. Prof. Vladimira Brezak, vladimira.brezak@azoo.hr
3. Igor Rukljač, M.A (Prim. Ed.), igor.rukljac@azoo.hr
4. Djurdja Kulušić, Msc, djurdja.kulusic@azoo.hr
5. Prof. Sanja Jelovčić, sanja.jelovcic@azoo.hr.

Educational workers can also receive professional-pedagogical assistance from senior advisors of the Agency for individual subjects/areas.

AGENCY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO) provides support in working with directors and educational workers by organising and implementing professional training for employees in the vocational education and adult education system by:

- strengthening competencies and professional development of vocational teachers for working with students and adults,
- support for the implementation of new curricula oriented towards learning outcomes,
- support to teachers of vocational subjects regarding the adoption of new technologies,
- professional training of trainee teachers.

Furthermore, as a part of the quality assurance system in vocational education and adult education, the Agency conducts professional-pedagogical supervision activities in vocational schools and supervises the professional work of adult education institutions. The Agency also provides support (consultation, workshops, direct communication with schools and teachers, etc.) for the implementation of vocational curricula and adult education programmes.

When the pandemic was proclaimed, the Agency established a **Centre for Information and Support for Important Inquiries** (realization of virtual teaching in vocational schools, student competitions, recognition of foreign qualifications, expert exams, promotions, implementation of adult education programmes in virtual environment, inquiries of the European Social Fund users in the field of education).

Within 72 hours, the Agency developed and launched the ***Portal for Supporting Distance Teaching for Vocational Schools and Adult Education Institutions*** – <https://nastava.asoo.hr/>. Between March and June 2020, the Agency collected, processed, and published 6,336 digital materials for interdisciplinary and sectorial specific topics. The materials were collected from vocational teachers and adult education teachers, higher education institutions, and in cooperation with the Croatian Chamber of Commerce (HGK) and the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK), and employers. The Portal was visited by 26,000 users.

The Agency provided support to directors and vocation subject teachers, i.e. adult education institutions in conditions of distance education.

Furthermore, the Agency has drafted and published the [Recommendations for Validation and Evaluation during Distance Education for Vocational Education and Adult Education System](#). The Agency also developed the [Recommendations for the Evaluation of Students in the Formal Adult Education System](#) and established a *weekly reporting system* on programme implementation and the evaluation of participants in distance education. *Guidelines for Completing the Self-Evaluation Process* related to *The Instructions for Validation and Evaluation during Distance Education* have been developed (the Ministry, April 2020) and the chapter *Teacher Evaluation and Self-Evaluation* (page 23).

In the school year 2020/2021, the Agency will provide support and assistance to all directors and educational workers regardless of the education model:

- the Agency's advisors will provide continuous **direct support to schools** and institutions in adapting the implementation of curricula and realization methods in a virtual environment and combined work,
- if necessary, the Agency will publish materials on its portal for supporting distance education for vocational schools and adult education institutions – <https://nastava.asoo.hr>;
- a new **module for professional training of vocational teachers** will be developed, i.e. the methods of education and evaluation in the virtual environment and combined work (e.g. *flipped classroom*, *blended learning*, etc.),
- on the basis of the developed module, **professional training will be organized and carried out** for teachers and andragogical workers in two cycles,
- a meeting for directors of vocational schools will be organised with the aim of exchanging information and supporting the implementation of education in the context of the coronavirus epidemic,
- an International Andragogical Symposium will be organized on the topic of programme implementation in the circumstances of the coronavirus epidemic.

The Agency will also continue to provide direct support within the *Centre for Information and Support*:

1. for the realization of virtual education in vocational schools, inquiries relating to vocational subjects are to be sent to: nastava@asoo.hr;
2. for vocational education and adult education system, student competitions, recognition of foreign qualifications, expert exams, promotions, and other inquiries within the competence of the Agency are to be sent to: infocentar@asoo.hr;
3. for the implementation of adult education programmes in a virtual environment, inquiries are to be sent to: progimis@asoo.hr;

4. inquiries by the European Social Fund users in the field of education are to be sent to: defco@asoo.hr.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF EDUCATION

The [National Centre for External Evaluation of Education](#) (NCVVO) performs external valuation activities in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia and the tasks of conducting exams based on national standards.

In the school year 2019/2020, the Centre experts designed and launched a new digital platform [U centru mature](#) (at the centre of state exams) by unifying a series of activities via which the Centre makes available its perennial knowledge and experience in the preparation and implementation of state graduation exams and other external evaluation exams to the public.

Although digital materials in the previous school year were primarily intended for graduates and secondary school teachers as an aid in the circumstances of distance education and preparation for state graduation exams, the Centre continues to supplement the *online* knowledge base with digital materials, which at the moment focuses on facilitating the evaluation process for all teachers facing a new evaluation process in changing circumstances. The aim is to make available the Centre's accumulated knowledge in order to put focus on those competencies that must be adopted during secondary education and possible ways of evaluating educational outcomes.

Digital materials contain guidelines for quality preparation for taking state graduation exams, guidelines for performing assignments and evaluating educational outcomes, and an assignment base. Each assignment is associated with an educational outcome that is examined by that assignment, the type of assignment, the answer key (solution), and the example of how to solve the assignment. In addition, it is possible to ask additional questions related to the understanding of the educational content which are answered by experts with years of experience, assignment authors, and state graduate exam evaluators.

In addition, students have the possibility to write essays for exercises, which are then evaluated according to criteria for the evaluation of essays at the state graduation exam. Digital platform [U centru mature](#) is linked to profiles on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) which greatly facilitate transparent and timely sharing of important information and advice within the scope of the Centre's work.

Viber bot is also being prepared, as well as two-way Viber community that will enable obtaining of verified and accurate feedback as soon as possible. In addition, it is planned to hold a large number of *online* educations, which have proven to be an excellent tool that achieves maximum efficiency with minimal financial resources. *Online* education will be directed towards all teachers, and thematic presentations “PISA Results through the Prism of TALIS Research” are planned for employees of the Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education.

All communication between the experts of the Centre, as well as with external associates, will continue through a “Virtual office” built on a free Discord platform. As a specially designed in-house solution for *online* communication that meets the Centre's security standards, Discord met all set criteria related to security, implementation speed, simplicity, and above all free transition to *online* realization.

In the pedagogical year 2020/2021, the Centre will continue its quality monitoring and assurance activities in the early and preschool education system, which will be adapted to the new circumstances and needs of the system. Activities are planned to examine how kindergartens operated at the time of the introduction of measures, which difficulties are currently encountered, i.e. what are their real needs in the coming period. The main focus of the study is the quality of implementation of curriculum of early and preschool education and the dimension of well-being of children and professional staff, as well as challenges of organisation of work in relation to specific conditions. Focus groups with target groups of key stakeholders and survey tests on samples of subjects to be carried out in the *online* environment will be used for the purposes of gaining an insight. The results will be used for a better understanding of the needs of early and preschool education system and providing support to institutions in the form of recommendations at system level and concrete measures for improving the quality of work of kindergartens and ultimately for the improvement of elements of the model of self-evaluation of early and preschool education institutions whose implementation will allow the Centre to provide long-term support in ensuring the quality of early and preschool education.

According to the same methodology, focus groups with target groups of key stakeholders for the implementation of *online* teaching (teachers, educators, professional associates, and directors) and state graduation exams (members of the school exam committee) will also be conducted as well as, consequently, interviews on samples of the above mentioned subjects in the *online* environment.

Online lectures of the experts of the Centre will begin in October:

1.) *Online* lecture topic **Guidelines for Drafting Exam Assignments**

which is intended for all primary and secondary school teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach, who want to repeat basic concepts on the design of an exam and those who want to create their own assignments and tests for the purpose of learning evaluation and the evaluation of teaching outcomes.

2.) *Online* lecture topic **Guidance on the use of Assignments from Previous State Graduation Exams**

which is intended for teachers who want to use already existing standardised assignments that are part of previously conducted state graduation exams, but it is also appropriate for all high school teachers, especially teachers of this year's generation of graduates, but also for all others who want to improve the quality of evaluation of educational outcomes.

Materials that are an integral part of a digital platform [U centru mature](#) are:

- [Guidelines](#)
- [Digital materials — Examples of test assignments](#)
- [Daj pet \(High Five\) – flyers](#)
- [S kazalištem na maturu](#)
- [Podcast](#)

CARNET

CARNet's role in the implementation of distance education in the last year was significant.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease in Croatia, regular live education has been suspended and distance education was introduced on 16 March.

CARNet's goal was to **provide infrastructure and the necessary platforms and tools** to organise school operations in a virtual environment and distance education, as well as to provide user support to schools. In this regard, support for distance education from March 2020 to the end of the school year 20019/2020 was implemented in almost all segments of CARNet's operations.

Network and system resources were optimized with constant **monitoring of security risks**, in order to ensure easy use of remote learning platforms and tools. Experts supporting education and users prepared **instructions for directors, teachers, students**, as well as parents for supported platforms and tools and provided permanent user support in multiple communication channels.

Despite the crisis and all the challenges that teachers and students faced and with the efforts of all stakeholders, the transition from traditional teaching to virtual curricula for higher grade primary school students, as well as for secondary school students, was ensured.

By 16 March 2020, all schools in the Republic of Croatia had to establish a **virtual teachers' lounge and virtual classes** on one of the offered platforms via which users had to register with their AAI@Edu.Hr electronic identity. Virtual classes had to be organized in such a way that teaching is organized in a particular virtual class for all subjects taught in that class. Therefore, the recommendation was to use a single selected platform at school level.

For the implementation of distance education, CARNet has published on <https://www.carnet.hr/udaljenoucenje/> website an overview of solutions, available CARNet's services and tools which users can access using their electronic identity in AAI @EduHr system. **Teachers, educators, and students can use all of the aforementioned services and tools free of charge**, and if they need help, numerous written instructions and video instruction are available.

Schools chose between *Microsoft Office 365*, *MS Teams* and *MS Yammer*, then CARNet's distance education system *Loomen*, as well as *Google G Suite for Education* with *Google Classroom* tool.

Teachers also had other Office 365 platform tools available, such as *OneNote Class Notebook*, *Outlook*, etc., and videoconference tools – *Cisco Webex Meetings*, *Adobe Connect*, *Google Hangouts*. Video conferences can also be organized within *MS Teams* system; thus, some teachers also used this option.

Teachers had various digital educational contents available at their disposal at a repository of digital educational content **Edutorij** (<https://edutorij.e-skole.hr/share/page/home-page>), **e-Lektira** portal (<https://tesla.carnet.hr/>), **Nikola Tesla portal for distance education** (<https://tesla.carnet.hr/>) and the **CARNet Meduza** portal with video content (<https://meduza.carnet.hr/>).

In the period when distance education was realized in the Republic of Croatia, the number of users of the *Microsoft Teams* application in Office 365 system jumped from an average of 4,000 in January and February 2020 to 178,500 users in March. During the same period, the number of users of *Yammer* social network grew from an average of 11,000 users to 183,144 users.

Approximately 57,400 users used a new *Google G Suite for Education* service in May and June. In the same period, *Google Classroom* was used on average by approximately 40,000 users.

Loomen had more than 50,000 new unique users in March 2020 compared to March 2019, which is almost 87% increase in the number of unique users. In April 2020, there were 33,660 more unique users than in April 2019, i.e. 64% increase in the number of unique users. In order to enable users to use *Loomen* system in class without problems, the system received two other separate versions - *Loomen2*, intended for primary school education and *Loomen3*, intended for secondary school education, and users were redirected to those systems after the basic *Loomen* system capacities were exceeded. At the end of the previous school year, *Loomen2* had a total of 9,060 users and 447 classes, while *Loomen3* had 15,319 users and 1,090 classes.

Access to these (and many other) services in the education system requires the use of electronic identity from AAI@EduHr system, whose capacities have also proved limited when the entire education system switched to online environment, and in the first weeks of online education those limitations were one of the reasons for the periodic inability of users to register in certain services. University Computing Centre SRCE is responsible for AAI@EduHr system and its task was to optimize system capacities.

It is clear from the above that the use of all systems has significantly increased, which at the same time meant a greater burden on infrastructure and customer support in CARNet.

Customer support was provided by CARNet's helpdesk at **phone number** 01 6661 555 and e-mail **helpdesk@carnet.hr**, every day from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. During higher load periods, the helpdesk responded to e-mails from 0-24.

From March to June 2020, more than 20,000 inquiries regarding distance education and nearly 100,000 queries related to other CARNet services were answered for schools that started to more intensively use CARNet services for distance education, such as e-mail, schools websites, electronic identities, etc.

The introduction and realization of distance education was a major challenge that schools overcame and started a digital transformation. During the implementation of online education, CARNet conducted an **action survey** with a group of 11 teachers and school directors throughout Croatia that monitored the implementation of online education, and after the end of the teaching year, CARNet conducted a **distance education survey** using a questionnaire for directors, teachers and parents and is actively working on recommendations and training preparations. CARNet will continue to provide schools with necessary tools and information and provide customer support for distance education, and the decision to their implementation will be made by schools based on an analysis of needs of individual school, employees, and students.

Although **teachers and educators** have numerous CARNet services at their disposal, they are ultimately **autonomous in organising classes and their online teaching and independently choose the application they will use for their teaching**, depending on the age of their students, subject, pedagogical approach, and school needs. It is extremely important to bear in mind the perspective of students who, during the course of online education must use various platforms and tools used by teachers and schools for the realization of teaching, and then in self-regulation of their own learning without the direct presence of teachers, which is particularly difficult for younger students, and is challenging to older students.

CARNet will also provide the same scope of support to its customers during the coming period.

AGENCY FOR MOBILITY AND EU PROGRAMMES

The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes as a public institution within the Ministry's system operates in the fields of science, education, and youth. Its activities support educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia by promoting and implementing a series of EU programmes in the field of education, the most important being previously mentioned *Erasmus+*.

During the period of distance education, which began on 16 March 2020, the Agency provided continuous support to educational workers in the Republic of Croatia through its *eTwinning* initiative, while *eTwinning* was simultaneously promoted as an alternative platform for learning and teaching.

The National Service for support of *eTwinning Croatia* at the Agency initiated the opening of **eTwinning HR ambassadors** of eTwinningLive Group on 13 March 2020. The group contains instructions for the use of digital platforms, working materials, web tools, projects, video materials in Croatian and English, the chronology of events during distance education and teaching in Croatia, and all other relevant materials of the Ministry.

The Agency portals regularly published stories of *Erasmus+* programme and *eTwinning* users who presented their experience in the realization of distance education and thus helped and motivated other teachers and educators.

In total, *eTwinning* ambassadors held 42 webinars and 2 Twitter chats with nearly 2,500 participants. The themes of those webinars were web tools, evaluation (of what was learned), and mental health. If you wish to watch the webinars, they are available on the YouTube channel *eTwinning Hrvatska* of the Agency and in **eTwinning HR ambassadors** group.

In school year 2020/2021, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes is ready to continue to support all educational staff in the part of preparation and use of ICT tools and materials for the successful realization of distance education.

References: [links in the document](#)

Concluding remarks

The Ministry would like to thank all those who have contributed in any way to the preparation of these recommendations. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to the members of the [Working Group](#) that proposed the measures elaborated in the CIPH document [Instructions for Prevention and Suppression of the COVID-19 Epidemic Related to the Work of Preschool Institutions, Primary and Secondary Schools in the School Year 2020/2021](#).

We also wish to thank the agencies within the education system (Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO), Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMPEU), CARNet), educational workers, experts and social partners, the founders of educational institutions, employees of the CIPH, and the interested public, since all of them contributed to the quality and improvement of this document with their critical reflections and suggestions, as well as raising public awareness and the creation of a broad understanding regarding the importance of education as cornerstone and human resources generator crucial for the development of society, economy, and personal development of every citizen.

The aim of these Recommendations is to ensure as secure conditions as possible for the realization of educational work in kindergartens and schools with acceptance of specificity regarding the age of children and students, as well as adherence to different working conditions in educational institutions.

This is an open document subject to changes and improvements. I believe that directors, educational workers, the founders, parents, and the public will find answers to most of their questions here. Those questions that remain open will be resolved with dialogue, mutual respect, and open communication.

