

29th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)
Space Societies, Professional Associations and Museums (5)

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SPACE AND SOCIETY – INITIAL SPACE EDUCATION IN CROATIA

Abstract

By February 2018, the Republic of Croatia was the only member of the European Union (EU), which had no formal cooperation with the European Space Agency (ESA). In February 2018 an initial cooperation agreement was signed, and the Republic of Croatia was represented by the Ministry of Science and Education.

Eight-year elementary education in the Republic of Croatia is compulsory and free for all children between the ages of six and fifteen. Following elementary education, secondary education enables everyone, under equal terms and according to one's capabilities, to acquire knowledge and skills required for work or continuation of education. Higher education is a precondition for a successful society. Therefore, one of the main tasks of the Ministry of Science and Education is creation of an intellectual nucleus which would raise the quality of space related educational programs which can be done on several or all educational levels.

Primary school students learn about the universe through the subject "Nature". Nature explores astronomy, biology, physics, physical geography, geology and chemistry. By learning about nature, from matter-making particles, through the living and inanimate world on Earth, to the greatest structures in the universe, children are taught nature in an integrative fashion. The emphasis is on understanding the basic concepts of biology, physics and chemistry and understanding the methods in which natural sciences research and produce scientific facts.

Astronomy is extra-curricular activity in elementary and secondary school. Additional classes and extracurricular activities are planned for the school curriculum and the annual school plan and program according to the guidelines of the national curriculum.

By accessing the European Space Agency, there will be a need for staff trained in different aerospace areas, and at the level of the initial contract, Croatia will be able to obtain important information for modernizing the school system. We propose a plan to utilize students from space related fields (astronomy, astrophysics and astronautics in specialist studies such as physics, geophysics, computing and robotics, etc.) to provide training in elementary and secondary school, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Science and Education, to help raise awareness and interest in space related topics, STEM in space, and especially to raise interest of girls in Aerospace and STEM fields.

With this document, we want to point out the existing educational context in Croatia, and the future need for improvement in the field of space activities.